

PHL202 H5S Ancient Philosophy

Tentative Schedule

1. Introduction. Ancient Conceptions of Philosophy and Modern Approaches to Ancient Philosophy .

- a. How did the ancients conceive philosophy?
- b. What should we expect to learn from ancient texts?
- c. How should we read ancient philosophical texts? (What is special about ancient texts? How to read philosophy?)

Reading: (There are no readings scheduled for this session. You can start reading *Apology* and *Alcibiades* from Plato's volume.)

2. The Examined Life. First Approach to the Question of the Good Life: How Should I Live?

- a. Socrates as paradigm of the philosopher. Why do some people hate Socrates and why do others admire him?
- b. Socrates' conception of philosophy.
- c. Socrates' favorite objects of inquiry and of care: wisdom, truth and the best state of the soul (= virtue).

Reading: Apology.

3. Know Thyself. Second approach to the question of the good life: What am I?

- a. How should I live? (cont.)
- b. The Delphic command. Why do Socrates' interlocutors get angry? Kinds of ignorance.
- c. Socratic search for self-knowledge. Self-knowledge and friendship.

Reading: Apology, Alcibiades.

4. Love of Wisdom. Third approach to the question of the good life: can I become good?

- a. Can virtue be taught? Why is it important to know what virtue is?
- b. Socrates and the 'What is F?' question. Search for the definition of virtue. The *aporetic* section of the *Meno* as a model Socratic *elenchos*.
- c. Is the knowledge that Socrates searches attainable? The paradox of inquiry as a challenge to the Socratic method.

Reading: Meno 70a-81a.

5. Is Wisdom Attainable?

- a. Plato's solution to Meno's paradox: recollection. Introduction to the Forms.
- b. The method of hypothesis.
- c. The Socratic project unveiled: virtue is knowledge.

Reading: Meno 81a-100b, Phaedo.

6. Is Self-Knowledge Possible?

- a. Socrates' second sailing: more on the method of hypothesis and recollection. More on the theory of the Forms.
- b. Body-soul dualism. Immortality of the soul.
- c. The obstacles of embodiment: constant threat of irrational desires. Fear from death vs. death as a cure.

Reading: Phaedo.

7. Love of Wisdom (II).

- a. A new approach to the question about the teachability of virtue: the sophist. Protagoras' wisdom. The myth of Prometheus.
- b. Unity of the virtues.
- c. The denial of *akrasia* and the art of measurement.

Reading: Protagoras (selec.)

8. Is Wisdom so Desirable?

- a. The rhetorician's defense of the art of persuasion. Is success without wisdom possible?
- b. The politician's defense of the practical life. Callicles' attack on philosophy.
- c. Nature vs. convention. The public vs. the private. Socrates' afterlife myth.

Reading: Gorgias (selec.)

9. Challenge against Justice.

- a. Why be just? Glaucon and Adeimantus' challenge to justice. Thrasymachus' argument.
- b. Plato on the first steps of moral development.
- c. City-soul analogy.

Reading: Republic 1-3.

10. Moral Psychology and the Virtues.

- a. Parts of soul.
- b. *Akrasia*.
- c. Virtues of the soul and of the city.

Reading: Republic 4.

11. Philosopher Kings.

- a. The education of the philosophers.
- b. The Form of the Good.
- c. Review for mid-term exam.

Reading: Republic 5-7.

12. Midterm exam, in class.

13. Aristotle on Wisdom.

- a. Kinds and levels of knowledge.
- b. Aristotle's own history of philosophy. Criticism of previous thinkers, including Socrates and Plato.
- c. Theory of the four causes. Aristotle's defense of final causality in *Physics* 2.8.

Reading: Metaph. 1-3, 6, Physics 2.1-9.

14. Arguments against Plato's Forms.

- a. Why did Plato need separated Forms?
- b. Some arguments against the Platonic Forms: argument from relatives, one over many, third man argument.
- c. Arguments against the Form of the Good in *NE*. Some considerations about method in ethics.

Reading: Metaph. 1.9, NE 1.6.

15. Substance.

- a. What is being? Senses of being. Notion of substance.
- b. Notion of subject. Matter, Form and the relation between them.
- c. Generation of substances.

Reading: Metaph. 7.1-4,7-9.

16. Potentiality and Actuality.

- a. Notion of *dynamis*. Distinction between rational and non-rational *dynameis*.
- b. Distinction between *kinesis* (change) and *energeia* (actuality).

Reading: *Metaph.* 9.1-2, 5-7.

17. On the soul (I).

- a. Nature of the soul.
- b. Kinds of soul.
- c. Perception.

Reading: *De Anima* 1.1, 2.1-6, 11-12.

18. On the soul (II).

- a. Imagination (*phantasia*).
- b. Thought.
- c. On movement.

Reading: *De Anima* 3.3-5, 10-11.

19. Aristotle on the acquisition of knowledge.

- a. Knowledge of universals and of particulars.
- b. Aristotle's theory of definition.
- c. Aristotle's solution to the paradox of inquiry. Notion of *epagôgê*.

Reading: *Post An.* 1.1-4, 2.8-10, 19.

20. Aristotle on the human good.

- a. Everything aims at some good.
- b. Kinds of lives.
- c. The human function.

Reading: *NE* 1.1-5, 7.

21. Virtues of character.

- a. Notion of habituation. Teaching vs. habituation. Learning by doing.
- b. Doctrine of the mean.
- c. Natural virtues. Unity of the virtues. Relationship between *aretê* and *phronêsis*.

Reading: *NE* 2.1-7, 6.13.

22. Voluntariness.

- a. Issues about intention and motive.
- b. Praise and blame. Responsibility.
- c. Choice, deliberation and wish.

Reading: NE 3.1-5

23. Practical vs. theoretical wisdom.

- a. Kinds of knowledge (II).
- b. Distinction between *phronêsis* and *sophia*.
- c. Aristotle on the best life.

Reading: NE 6, 10.6-8.

24. Final considerations.

Reading: TBA