

History of Ancient Philosophy Exam

Answer exactly three (3) questions from the following four sections, with no two questions from the same section. In each case, you should defend your claims as well as you can and make your answers as detailed as possible. You have two hours for the entire examination, so you should devote approximately 40 minutes to each answer.

I. Socrates

1. In various places throughout Plato's early dialogues Socrates claims to be ignorant. Some have taken these claims to be sincere, while others have taken them to be ironic. Critically discuss what you take to be the most plausible interpretation of these claims, making sure to explain how you would respond to the most serious objections to the interpretation you choose.
2. Critically discuss Socrates' divine mission as he describes it in the *Apology*. What does he attempt to accomplish in practicing this mission? Is Socrates capable of accomplishing what he is attempting? Why or why not?
3. Defend an interpretation the Socratic *elenchus* against what you take to be the best competing interpretation? As you do so, use a specific example from the dialogues.

II. Plato

1. Critically evaluate one of Plato's arguments in any of the dialogues for the immortality of the soul.
2. Carefully explain the challenge found in *Republic* II to which Plato is attempting to respond in the main argument of the *Republic*. (It is often referred to as "Glaucon's Challenge.") Then, either explain how successful Plato is in responding to this challenge, or explain why such a challenge should not be raised.
3. What is Plato's method of hypothesis as presented in his middle dialogues? How does he think it solves the Meno paradox? (Be sure that you explain what the Meno paradox is in your answer.)
4. The *Parmenides* is a dialogue in which Plato presents what appears to be some devastating objections to his Theory of Forms. Present and discuss some of those objections. Do you think Plato gives up his Theory of Forms in that dialogue or do you think he is simply working out his Theory and trying to modify it? Explain.

III. Aristotle

1. Critically discuss Aristotle's doctrine of natural teleology. What is it and how plausible is it? Defend your answer.
2. Critically discuss Aristotle's theory of change. How does it lead to the introduction of the hylomorphic analysis of the primary substance?
3. Discuss Aristotle's distinction between the "said of as of a subject" relation and the "being in a subject but not as a part" relation, and explain how he uses both to generate the categories; be sure to present each of his categories and some examples of each; discuss whether Aristotle's categories are meant to be grammatical distinctions or ontological distinctions.
4. Critically discuss the apparent tension between Aristotle's conception of happiness (eudaimonia) in the central books (II-V) of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and book X. Is it a genuine inconsistency? If not, how do you think the tension is resolved?
5. Critically evaluate the claim that Aristotle's conception of happiness, and hence his eudaemonistic ethical theory, depends on his theory of the soul and the human soul in particular.

IV. Miscellaneous

1. It has sometimes been claimed that a great deal of Greek philosophy was devoted to coming to grips with Parmenides argument for monism. After explaining what Parmenides argument is and what is meant by the above claim, evaluate it.
2. Explain how the Epicurean philosophers accommodate human freedom in an atomistic universe. Critically evaluate this view.
3. It has been claimed that all Greek ethical theories are eudaimonistic. How plausible is this claim? Defend your answer.