

**ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY**  
**(Welch's Ph. D. General Examination)**

**January 30, 2004**

Answer four of the following questions from at least three different sections. In each case you should defend your claims and make your answers as detailed as possible. You should also cite secondary literature and text when and where appropriate, giving specific examples.

You have four hours and the questions are of equal weight, so you should spend about one hour on each question. But, you should not be rigid about this. Some questions lend themselves to briefer answers than others.

**I. Socrates**

1. Describe in detail (using at least one example from an elenctic dialogue) the Socratic *elenchus*. Critically discuss two different interpretations of this method. What are the crucial differences between the interpretations and what considerations favor one interpretation the other?
2. Defend in detail what you take to be the best interpretation of the so-called doctrine of the unity of virtues in the elenctic dialogues.
3. Critically discuss what you take to be the best interpretation of Socrates' view of the relationship between virtue and happiness.
4. What is the Socratic fallacy? Is it Socratic? Is it fallacious?
5. Critically discuss at least two interpretations of Socrates' view concerning obeying the law. What are the crucial differences between the interpretations and what considerations favor one interpretation the other?

**II. Plato**

1. Defend what you take to be the best interpretation of the theory of recollection. Is Plato committed to it? If so, what considerations lead him to adopt it and how successful is it? If not, why does Plato discuss it in the dialogues he does?
2. What is meant by the 'philosophical economy of the theory of Forms'? Critically discuss its salience to Plato.
3. Defend in detail what you take to be the best interpretation of Glaucon's challenge.
4. How plausible is the city/soul analogy used by Plato in the *Republic*?
5. It has been argued that according to Plato knowledge is only of forms and belief is only of sensibles or ordinary objects. What considerations favor such an interpretation and what considerations argue against it?

**III. Aristotle**

1. Discuss in detail Aristotle's views concerning primary substances. What are some paradigm examples? What are their salient characteristics? Are his views concerning primary substances consistent from one work to another? Defend your answers.

2. Critically discuss the following definition of virtue as found in *Nicomachean Ethics II.6*: Virtue, then, is a state of character with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it.
3. What is the nature of Aristotelian ‘proof’ or *apodeixis*? How, if at all, does it mesh with Aristotle’s general philosophical method?
4. Defend in detail what you take to be the best interpretation of Aristotle’s function argument.
5. Critically discuss Aristotle’s solution to the Third Man Argument.

#### IV. **Miscellaneous**

1. Platonic metaphysics has often been described as a reconciliation of Parmenides and Heraclitus. Critically discuss this view
2. Discuss in detail the *nomos/phusis* debate among the Sophists.
3. Defend in detail what you take to be the best interpretation of the Stoic’s cataleptic impression. What problem or problems is it supposed to resolve? How successful is it?
4. Explain the tension between the Stoic account of virtue and their deterministic physics. How do the Stoics attempt to resolve this tension? How successful are they?
5. It has often been claimed that ancient skepticism is to be distinguished from modern skepticism on the grounds that it is not merely an epistemological doctrine, but it promotes a particular way of life. Critically discuss this view.

**ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY**  
**(Hussain's Ph. D. General Examination)**

**September 21, 2007**

Answer four of the following questions from at least three different sections. In each case you should defend your claims and make your answers as detailed as possible. You should also cite secondary literature and text when and where appropriate, giving specific examples.

You have four hours and the questions are of equal weight, so you should spend about one hour on each question. But, you should not be rigid about this. Some questions lend themselves to briefer answers than others.

Section I

6. What is the Third Man Argument? How does Aristotle's metaphysics purport to avoid it? How successful is he?
7. What are the major considerations Aristotle raises against Plato's so-called theory of Forms? How persuasive do you find these objections?
8. Explain the debate in Aristotelian scholarship concerning the nature of individual properties (or the entities at the bottom of the non-substance categories) in the *Categories*. What is at stake in these debates and how do you think the debate should be resolved?
9. How does Aristotle's doctrine of the hylomorphic analysis of substance help to resolve the problem of change? What problem or problems does this doctrine raise for the rest of Aristotle's doctrine of substance?
10. What does Aristotle's doctrine of natural teleology amount to and how plausible is it?
11. Is there a unified project in *Metaphysics VII (Zeta)*? If so, what is it and how successful is it? If not, why not?
12. Aristotle has been thought to be committed to individual or particular forms (as opposed to universal forms) in *Metaphysics VII (Zeta)*. What is it to be committed to individual (or particular forms)? What might have motivated Aristotle to such a commitment? What problems are associated with such a commitment?

Section II

13. Critically discuss the following definition of virtue as found in *Nicomachean Ethics II.6*: Virtue, then, is a state of character with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it.
14. Explain the debate between the inclusivist and the intellectualist (or dominant) account of Aristotelian *eudaemonia*. After discussing the considerations that can be offered on behalf of each account, explain why you prefer one account over the other.
15. It has been claimed 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. Why would anyone think this? Do you agree or disagree?
16. Critically discuss the first definition of soul (*psuche*) in the *De Anima* at 412a27-28 – according to which a soul is “the first actuality of a natural body which has life potentially.”

17. Some have maintained that Aristotle's *De Anima* provides a functional account of the soul. Critically evaluate this interpretation.

### Section III

18. It has been frequently pointed out that "there seems to be a sharp discrepancy between the methods of scientific reasoning recommended in the *Analytics* and those actually followed in the *Physics*." Carefully explain how you believe this apparent discrepancy is best accounted for.
19. Critically discuss the relationship between dialectic (*dialectike*) and demonstration (*apodeixis*).
20. At various places in the corpus Aristotle distinguishes between things prior in nature and things prior to us. What does this distinction amount to and how plausible is it?
21. How according to Aristotle are the first principles of a science discovered and/or known?
22. What is the science of being qua being? Does Aristotle think that such a science is possible? Why or why not?
23. What is Aristotle's doctrine of focal meaning? It is introduced to resolve what problems? How plausible is the doctrine?
24. What is Aristotle's account of future contingent truths in *De Interpretatione*? How successful is his account?
25. Critically evaluate the claim that in the *Posterior Analytics* Aristotle argues for a foundationalist epistemology.

**ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY**  
**(Jones' Ph. D. General Examination)**

**March 11, 2008**

Answer four of the following questions from at least three different sections. In each case you should defend your claims and make your answers as detailed as possible. You should also cite secondary literature and text when and where appropriate, giving specific examples.

You have four hours and the questions are of equal weight, so you should spend about one hour on each question. But, you should not be rigid about this. Some questions lend themselves to briefer answers than others.

**V. Socrates**

6. What is the Socratic Problem? What do you think is the best response?
7. Defend in detail what you take to be the best interpretation of the so-called doctrine of the unity of virtues in the elenctic dialogues.
8. It has been maintained that all Greek ethics is eudaemonist. Is Socrates in the elenctic dialogues of Plato a eudaemonist and if so of what variety?
9. What is the Socratic fallacy? Is it Socratic? Is it fallacious? How if at all do your answers to these questions impact your view of the so-called Socratic *elenchus*?
10. In Plato's *Apology* Socrates is made to proclaim that the unexamined life is not worth living. What is meant by this and how does Socrates recommend examining one's life?

**VI. Plato**

6. What is Meno's paradox? Socrates is made to describe it as an eristic argument (*eristikon logon*). Is this an accurate description of the paradox? Why or why not?
7. What are Platonic Forms? What considerations lead Plato to postulate such entities? And what are the most severe difficulties that the postulation of such entities must face?
8. Defend in detail what you take to be the best interpretation of Glaucon's challenge.
9. At the end of the fourth book of Plato's *Republic* Socrates is made to distinguish three parts of the soul. Critically evaluate this tripartite theory of the soul (discussing its motivations, arguments, and challenges).
10. It has been argued that according to Plato knowledge is only of forms and belief is only of sensibles or ordinary objects. What considerations favor such an interpretation and what considerations argue against it?

**VII. Aristotle**

26. Explain the debate in Aristotelian scholarship concerning the nature of individual properties (or the entities at the bottom of the non-substance categories) in the *Categories*. What is at stake in these debates and how do you think the debate should be resolved?

27. It has been claimed 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. Why would anyone think this? Do you agree or disagree?
28. It has been frequently pointed out that "there seems to be a sharp discrepancy between the methods of scientific reasoning recommended in the *Analytcs* and those actually followed in the *Physics*." Carefully explain how you believe this apparent discrepancy is best accounted for.
29. Explain the debate between the inclusivist and the intellectualist (or dominant) account of Aristotelian *eudaemonia*. After discussing the considerations that can be offered on behalf of each account, explain why you prefer one account over the other.
30. Critically discuss Aristotle's solution to the Third Man Argument.

VIII. **Miscellaneous**

6. Explain in detail what the challenge was that was posed by Parmenides in his poem on 'The Way of Truth' for subsequent philosophers. Then describe at least one response to this challenge and assess how successful it was.
7. Discuss in detail the key features of the Sophists. Given this account, critically evaluate the claim that Socrates was a Sophist.
8. Defend in detail what you take to be the best interpretation of the Stoic's cataleptic impression. What problem or problems is it supposed to resolve? How successful is it?
9. To what extent are the ethical theories of the Epicureans and Stoics developments of Aristotle's ethics? What are the key differences? On what issues are these thinkers in basic agreement?
10. It has often been claimed that ancient skepticism is to be distinguished from modern skepticism on the grounds that it is not merely an epistemological doctrine, but it promotes a particular way of life. Critically discuss this view.