

Topics for the Third Paper—Undergraduates

THE PAPER MUST BE TURNED IN BY DEC. 5; NO LATE PAPERS ALLOWED. PLAN AHEAD! LEAVE SLACK FOR EMERGENCIES!

1. At *Rep.* 610c–d, Plato argues that if your soul weren't immortal, then when you became unjust, you'd die. Critically assess his argument, bringing to bear the treatment of the just and unjust soul in Books II–IX.
2. Plato's *Parmenides* 131e–132b contains a famous argument (the so-called "Third Man Argument" or TMA) against the theory of Forms. However, it is unclear whether this criticism is supposed to be directed at the theory of Forms as we see it in Plato's other dialogues (i.e. Plato is offering self-criticism of his own view) or whether the criticism is supposed to be directed at a misconceived version of the theory of Forms (i.e. Plato is criticizing a possible way of understanding the Forms, but not his own view). How should we understand this argument? In answering this question, you may either offer your own arguments for why the argument does strike Plato's own view (because he accepts its premises), or why it does not strike Plato's view (because Plato does not in fact accept one or more of its premises). Alternatively, you may pick some scholar who has argued for one of the preceding two views and then argue why that person's view does not succeed in condemning or saving Plato from the TMA.
3. Recall Williams's complaint that the political design of the *Republic* is incoherent. Critically assess Lear's solution. Can Lear's account—which turns on the dynamics of an evolving sensible particular—be understood as part of Plato's metaphysics of immutable Forms?
4. Plato's *Sophist* seems to exemplify a new method for doing philosophy that we have not seen in the dialogues we studied earlier in the course, the method of "division." Explain how the method works. (For this task, you should also consult the *Phaedrus* and *Statesman*.) Explain why Plato might be attracted to this method as an attempt to answer Socrates' "What is *F*?" question. Should he have been satisfied with this approach as a means of acquiring knowledge? Why or why not?

5. The speech of Protagoras, in the dialogue that bears his name, seems to set up the claims about cooperative division of labor that we see as the starting point of the extended thought experiment of *Rep.* II–IX. Is Plato accepting Protagoras' view after all? If not, why not?
6. The Equals Argument and its variants suggest that sensible particulars will be F and not- F , for many and probably all values of F . Is the Beautiful City both just and not just? Why or why not? What should we conclude about the uses to which we can put Plato's utopian blueprint?
 - You are welcome to write on further topics of your own invention. However, we recommend that you consult with the instructors as to the suitability of your paper topic.
 - Read "Writing Your Philosophy Paper: Common Problems to Avoid" (online, accessible from the *Requirements* page).
 - Please cite Plato by dialogue and Stephanus numbers.

Good working!