

THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

EXAMINATION FOR THE DEGREE OF B.A.

JUNE 1998

# Ancient Philosophy

6455/6113

Time: two hours

In addition, candidates are allowed ten minutes,  
before the examination begins, to read the paper

Answer Question 1 (24 marks) and any other two questions (18 marks each)

Comment on any THREE of the following: (8 marks each)

- (a) *Most of the first philosophers thought that principles in the form of matter were the only principles of all things: for the original source of all existing things, that from which a thing first comes-into-being and into which it is finally destroyed, the substance persisting but changing its qualities, this they declare is the element and first principle of existing things.*

How did the Milesians (Thales, Anaxamander, Anaximenes) account for the existence of the physical world?

- (b) *Justice consists in not transgressing the laws and usages of one's state. Therefore the most profitable means of manipulating justice is to respect the laws when witnesses are present but otherwise to follow the precepts of nature. Laws are artificial compacts, they lack the inevitability of natural growth. Hence to break the laws without detection does one no harm, whereas any attempt to violate the inborn dictates of nature is harmful irrespective of discovery by others, for the hurt is not merely, as with the law-breaker, a matter of appearance or reputation but of reality. Justice in the legal sense is for the most part at odds with nature.*

Explain the antithesis of 'artificial' and 'natural' put forward by Antiphon. Is this the same doctrine as that put forward by Thrasymachus in the Republic?

- (c) *SOCRATES: Look at it this way. Suppose that while we were preparing to run away from here (or however one should describe it) the Laws and communal interest of Athens were to come and confront us with this question: 'Now Socrates, what are you proposing to do? Can you deny that by this act which you are contemplating you intend, so far as you have the power, to destroy us, the Laws, and the whole State as well? Do you imagine that a city can continue to exist and not be turned upside down, if the legal judgements which are pronounced in it have no force but are nullified and destroyed by private persons?' How shall we answer this question, Crito and others of the same kind?*

Explain this argument put forward by the 'Laws' Do you consider it a valid one?

- (d) *MENO. But how will you look for something when you don't in the least know what it is? How on earth are you going to set up something you don't know as the object of your search? To put it another way, even if you come right up against it, how will you know that what you have found is the thing you didn't know?*

*SOCRATES: I know what you mean. Do you realise that what you are bringing up is the trick argument that a man cannot try to discover either what he knows or what he does not know? He would not seek what he knows, for since he knows it there is no need of the inquiry, nor what he does not know, for in that case he does not even know what he is to look for.*

According to the Meno, how is it possible to learn anything?

- (e) *'So you can see how right we were guess just now that self-discipline was like a kind of concord.'*

*'Why?'*

*'Because, unlike courage and wisdom, which made our state brave and wise by being present in a particular part of it, self-discipline stretches across the whole scale. It produces a harmony between its strongest and weakest and middle elements.'*

Explain the relationship between self-discipline and the other virtues (courage, wisdom, justice) present in Plato's ideal state.

- (f) *Since man stands upright, he has no need of legs in front; instead of them nature has given him arms and hands. Anaxagoras indeed asserts that it is in his possession of hands that makes man the most intelligent of animals. But surely it is reasonable that it is because he is the most intelligent animal that he has got hands. Hands are an instrument; and nature, like an intelligent man, always assigns an instrument to the animal that can use it; as it is more in keeping to give flutes to a man who is already a flute-player than to provide a man who possesses the flutes with the skill to play them.*

Explain the point which is here being disputed, and its importance for the philosophy of Aristotle.

- (g) *Since liberality is an immediate disposition with regard to the giving and receiving of money, the liberal man will not only give and spend the right amount with the right objects, in great and small matters alike, and do it with pleasure; he will also accept the right amounts from the right sources. For since his virtue is an intermediate condition in respect of both giving and receiving, he will do both in the right way, because right giving implies right receiving, whereas wrong receiving is incompatible with it.*

Explain how liberality conforms to Aristotle's doctrine that a virtue is a mean. What are the extremes to be avoided?

- (h) *How, I ask you, can you consistently admire both Daedalus and Diogenes? Tell me which of these two you would say was a wise man, the one who hit on the saw, or the one who on seeing a boy drinking water from the hollow of his hand, immediately took the cup out of his knapsack and smashed it, telling himself off for his stupidity in having superfluous luggage about him all that time, and curled himself up in a jar and went to sleep.*

Comment on the two kinds of wisdom that Seneca is discussing, and explain his preference for the cynic Diogenes over the inventor Daedalus.

- (i) *And since pleasure is the first good and natural to us, for this very reason we do not choose every pleasure, but sometimes we pass over many pleasures, when greater discomfort accrues to us as the result of them: and similarly we think many pains better than pleasures, since a greater pleasure comes to us when we have endured pains for a long time. Every pleasure then because of its natural kinship to us is good, yet not every pleasure is to be chosen: even as every pain also is an evil, yet not all are always of a nature to be avoided. Yet by a scale of comparison and by the consideration of advantages and disadvantages we must form our judgement on all these matters. For the good on certain occasions we treat as bad, and conversely the bad as good.*

Explain the Epicurean doctrine of pains and pleasures

- 2 Explain the cosmological system of Empedocles. Why does he operate with six original elements when the early Ionians required only one?
- 3 Socrates has been called 'the wisest of the Sophists'. What were the principal similarities and differences between him and them?
- 4 Discuss the importance of the analogy of the cave to Plato's metaphysical, educational, and political views.

Aristotle's ethical system has been described as 'enlightened self-interest'. Do you agree?

6. In your opinion, is the Stoic philosophy useful in catering both for those who have prestige and power and those who have not?
7. What parts of conventional religion did the Epicureans accept, and what parts did they reject? Why?
8. In the light of your study of Ancient Philosophy, do you think that there is an absolute standard of right and wrong behaviour, which we must try to discover, or are questions of right and wrong essentially practical questions, to be resolved by studying which actions are acceptable or not acceptable to a particular society?