

## Plato Guide

PHIL410

Reading: Plato, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Parmenides* excerpts (*Phaedo* 64c-67c, 72e-84b, 95a-107a; *Republic* 474b-480a, 504e-509b, 514a-535a; *Parmenides* 130e-135d)

Some Terminology:

- Forms: Plato's concept for ultimate reality; his term *eidos* usually translated as "form" or "idea"; immaterial, immutable, eternal, accessible only by intellect; examples include Justice, Goodness, Beauty, the Large, the Equal, etc.
- Soul: a translation of *psyche*, may equally be translated "mind" – doesn't have the religious overtones we ordinarily associate with the term; in certain contexts, the soul is equivalent with the rational intellect

General questions:

1. What is Plato's theory of reality and how does it relate to what we do/can know?
2. How does Plato explain our knowledge of empirical reality?
3. Does Plato face any of the skeptical difficulties faced by the Moderns?

### *Phaedo*

In general, we see here Plato arguing for the immortality of soul by reference to the nature of the Forms and our relationship to them. This reveals a good deal about their nature, as conceived by Plato. The context of this dialogue is Socrates' impending execution.

64c-67c

1. How does Plato conceive the nature of mind (soul) and body? What are the basic characteristics of each? How are the two related?
2. What is the role of the body in knowledge? What is the role of the soul?
3. How would Kant view Plato's claims about knowledge (pure thought, pure knowledge) at 66a and 66d?

72e-84b

4. What does Plato mean by representing sensation as "deficient" by comparison with the objects of thought (i.e., the Forms)?
5. Why does Plato think that our capacity to judge two things "equal" means that (a) we recollect knowledge obtained prior to birth and (b) the soul is therefore immortal?
6. In what ways is the soul like an eternal Form? In what ways is the body unlike the eternal Forms?
7. What makes a soul "pure"? What makes it "impure"? Is the notion of an impure soul coherent? (Bonus Fun Question: What happens to the souls of those who are too attached to the bodily?)

95a-107a

8. What relationship does Plato suggest obtains between goodness and reality?
9. What is it, according to Plato, for 1 and 1 to make 2, or for 1 to be divided into 2?
10. What is it, according to Plato, for Simmias to be taller than Socrates but shorter than Phaedo?
11. What makes fire hot? What makes the number three odd? What makes a body living? How is this related to thinking the soul immortal?

### *Republic*

474b-480a

1. How does opinion differ from knowledge? from ignorance? What is each “set over”?

504e-509b

2. How is the Good related to the other Forms?
3. If the sun gives light to make things visible to the eye, how does the Good relate to truth, being, and the intellect?

514a-535a

4. What view of knowledge is suggested in the Cave allegory?
5. What is the relationship between perceived reality and reality per se, as Plato understands it?
6. What are “being” and “becoming”, as Plato uses these terms?

### *Parmenides*

In this Dialogue, Plato has Parmenides challenging a young Socrates to explicate the theory of Forms. A number of difficult criticisms are advanced.

130e-135d

1. A given instance of a Form must instantiate it either wholly or partially. Why is this a difficulty for Socrates?
2. Why does Parmenides think that there must be infinitely many Forms of a given kind?
3. Why does Parmenides think that if Forms exist, they cannot be known by us?