

Some Arguments from the *Phaedo* for Platonic Forms

I. From Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Book I.6:

- (1) Sensibles are in flux.
- (2) Whatever is in flux is unknowable.
- (3) Therefore, sensibles are unknowable.
- (4) But there is some knowledge.
- (5) Therefore there are some nonsensible objects of knowledge: Forms.

What kind of flux is meant in premise (1)? It could be

- (a) synchronic flux, or the compresence of opposites (S is both tall and not-tall at the same time)
- (b) diachronic flux, either weak or strong

If we accept synchronic flux as the kind Aristotle is talking about in his argument, we have this revised version:

- (1) Sensibles suffer compresence of opposites (synchronic flux).
- (2) Whatever suffers the compresence of opposites is unknowable.
- (3) Therefore, sensibles are unknowable.
- (4) But there is some knowledge.
- (5) Therefore there are some nonsensible objects of knowledge: Forms.

II. From Plato, *Phaedo* 74b-d:

- (1) Equal sticks and stones sometimes, staying the same, appear equal to one and unequal to another.
- (2) The equals themselves are never unequal.
- (3) Therefore, the equal itself and equal things are not the same.

1. How does Plato plan to refute both skepticism and relativism? What claim will he make to refute both at once?
2. How is the Theory of Forms a response to Heraclitus?
3. Explain how the 2 arguments of I on the *Phaedo* handout are related. Why is it necessary to revise the argument into the second version?
4. Explain the argument of II (*Phaedo* 74b-d) on the handout; is it sound?
5. For what range of knowledge claims does Plato think the Theory of Forms is valid? Do you agree? What Forms, if any, would you argue existed?
6. Why does Plato need to argue that the soul must be immortal? Can the Theory of Forms stand without an immortal soul and the theory of recollection (see 72e-73a)?
7. State and explain Polemarchus' definition of justice (conventionalism). What are Socrates' arguments against him? Does he successfully refute him?
8. What is Thrasymachus' definition of justice? Is it a virtue, on his account? Does Socrates refute his arguments?
9. What is the Craft Analogy of virtue? Does justice seem to be like a craft? If it is, does the analogy make it possible to respond to Thrasymachus' argument?
10. Glaucon and Adeimantus offer the challenge to Socrates to prove that justice is not something to be valued only for its effects. In support of their claim that no one is willingly just, they offer the tale of Gyges' ring. Explain the tale and how it is intended to support the view; does it do so?
11. Explain the three-fold division of goods. What kind of good does Socrates think justice is? Do you agree?
12. State and explain Plato's argument that the soul has three parts in *Republic* IV. How does principle P work here? Is the argument sound?
13. Explain the Sun analogy and the Divided Line. How is the sun like the Form of the Good? In what realms do they exist and illuminate other entities? Does the Divided Line explain the different realms of being successfully? Explain how the realms of the knowable and opinable are related and how they differ. Finally, what is the metaphysical underpinning of both images?
14. Explain the Allegory of the Cave, and how it is another way to express the same truth Plato illustrates in the Sun analogy and the Divided Line. Why should the philosopher return to the cave after seeing the sun?
15. Does Plato commit the so-called fallacy of irrelevance in the *Republic*?
Reconstruct the main argument of the *Republic* and assess whether or not he meets the challenge of Glaucon and Adeimantus. Is their challenge a fair one?