

Phi 111
Exam 1: Plato
2/26/19

In each of the two sections below, choose one question to answer. If you're uncertain about what the question is asking, please don't hesitate to ask me. In your Blue Book, make sure you identify what question you're answering by labelling your responses according to the numbering below. Good luck!

Section 1

- 1) The *Euthyphro* proposes, only to reject, many definitions of piety. Summarize and evaluate them. What are we to make of the fact that the dialogue apparently ends without characterizing piety successfully? Should we prefer the (superficial) Socratic, Wittgensteinian, or Heideggerian philosophical attitude toward such questions?
- 2) Explain the charges brought against Socrates in the *Apology*. Is his defense persuasive? Why or why not?
- 3) What are the reasons that Socrates gives in the *Crito* for thinking it unjust to flee Athens? How does his attitude toward the matter evince his commitment to philosophy as a way of life?

Section 2

- 4) Socrates says that "philosophy is preparation for death." Paying particular attention to the *Apology* and the *Phaedo*, explain what that means.
- 5) Socrates claims to be the wisest of all men, because he knows that he knows nothing. In reference to specific examples drawn from the dialogues, explain how he manifests that paradoxical understanding.
- 6) In the *Phaedo*, knowledge of the immortality of the soul is said to require "faith and persuasive arguments." Summarize the main arguments in support of the soul's immortality. Having finished with these metaphysical arguments, why might Socrates have concluded by giving a myth of the underworld?

Phi 111
Exam 2: Descartes
4/4/19

In each of the two sections below, choose one question to answer. If you're uncertain about what the question is asking, please don't hesitate to ask me. In your Blue Book, make sure you identify what question you're answering by labelling your responses according to the numbering below. Good luck!

Section 1

- 1) In the Third Meditation, Descartes gives a cosmological argument for God's existence. Explain and evaluate.
- 2) If God is perfect, this makes it hard to understand why we make errors. What is Descartes's response to the problem? Is his solution in the Fourth Meditation successful?
- 3) In the Fifth Meditation, Descartes attempts to prove God's existence for a second time, this time with what is known as the ontological argument. After summarizing the argument, explain what makes it unique among arguments for God's existence. Do any objections succeed in refuting it?

Section 2

- 4) The Platonic and Cartesian philosophies both challenge our everyday perception of existence. Explain.
- 5) Aiming to ground scientific knowledge of the world on a firm foundation of certainty, Descartes begins in the First Meditation by stating that we should treat anything that *could* be false as if it *were* so. Should we?

Phi 111
Exam 3: Kierkegaard

In each of the two sections below, choose one question to answer. If you're uncertain about what the question is asking, please don't hesitate to ask me. In your Blue Book, make sure you identify what question you're answering by labelling your responses according to the numbering below. Good luck!

Section 1

- 1) In the "Preliminary Expectoration," Silentio describes two knights: one of infinite resignation, one of faith. What are they, and what makes them different from one another?
- 2) Silentio considers in "Problema I" whether "a teleological suspension of the ethical" is possible. What does this mean, and why does the issue matter specifically in the context of the story of Abraham? Your answer should make reference to the "three spheres of existence" (aesthetic, ethical, and religious).
- 3) Given the nature of Abraham's absolute duty to God, Silentio claims in "Problema II" that Abraham cannot be viewed as a hero like Agamemnon. Why not?

Section 2

- 4) Silentio is a poet. Assess how his particular relationship to Abraham compares to the one between the poet and the hero. How does it shape the kind of text he ends up writing? Use specific examples from the text to illustrate your point.
- 5) Plato, Descartes, and Kierkegaard all see man in terms of a fundamental relationship to the divine (or God). Compare and contrast their respective characterizations of that relation.
- 6) "Philosophy is a way of life"—how so for Plato, Descartes, and Kierkegaard?