

EARLY GREEK PHILOSOPHY

1. Greek Terms (30 minutes)

In the exam booklets provided, write a paragraph for each of the following Greek philosophical terms explaining its significance. First provide an English translation—or a range of English meanings, when the word cannot be precisely translated. Then discuss the philosophers to whom the term is most important and the role it plays in their philosophies.

δίχνη

θεός

αίτια

ἀρχή

τετρακτύς

2. Essay on Early Greek Philosophy (1 hour)

According to Aristotle, what is “the firmest principle of all,” and what is his ‘argument’ for giving it this privileged status? Is this argument valid, sound, persuasive? “Some people take Heraclitus,” he then writes, to have contradicted this principle. What three Heraclitean fragments, for example, might have led them to interpret him this way? Explain each in turn. Was Aristotle (or for that matter Hussey) right that these people misunderstood Heraclitus, “the riddler”; or was it rather Aristotle (and Hussey) who misunderstood him?

3. Essay on German Appropriations of Early Greek Philosophy (1 hour)

One translation of Parmenides’ fr. 3 reads “For the same thing is for thinking and for being.” This seems plausible on both textual and philosophical grounds. Textually speaking, it agrees with fr. 6.1, “that which is there to be spoken and thought of must be” (as well as fr. 8.35–36). Why is it also plausible, philosophically speaking? The other translation of fr. 3, “For thinking and being are the same,” appears far less philosophically plausible, at least when it is read in isolation. What objections might be raised against it, if you were to read it on a fortune cookie? That said, however, when it is read in the broader context of the Way of Truth, Nietzsche thinks Parmenides had to mean this. Why? If this be Parmenides’ meaning, what three mistaken interpretations has the Western philosophical tradition given it, according to Heidegger? How does he interpret it instead?