

Aristotle Paper

Due: Final Day of Class
Thurs. April 22nd

Choose one of the following topics and write a 5-8 page paper on it.

1. Theology: The Unmoved Mover

At the end of both his *Physics* and his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle argues that there is one unmoved mover – one god. What is his argument at the end of the *Physics*, and what are its flaws? How are these flaws remedied by the more sophisticated treatment at the end of the *Metaphysics*? Does the more sophisticated argument succeed? (The relevant passages are *Physics* VIII.6, 258b1-259a16, and *Metaphysics* XII.6-9, 1071b3-1075a12; in our text, pp. 657-8, 732-40.)

2. Teleological Ethics: The Function Argument

At the end of *Republic* Book 1 (352d4 – 354a2) Plato has Socrates develop an argument about the human function in order to argue in the end that justice is required for happiness. Briefly present and evaluate this argument. In Book 1 of his *Nicomachean Ethics* (1097b24 – 1098a17) Aristotle presents a similar argument, one that develops another argument about the human function in order to argue that the good life is one expressing virtue. Present and evaluate this argument in more detail. Before criticizing it, however, make sure that you have presented it in its strongest form. In order to do so, draw from the concepts and arguments that it assumes, concepts and arguments that are themselves elaborated elsewhere in the Aristotelian works we have read in this course. Your paper should concentrate on Aristotle's version of the function argument, and ultimately answer this question: in what ways, if at all, has Aristotle improved upon the version of his teacher?

3. Moral Psychology: An Explanation of *Akrasia*

In his *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle addresses the paradoxical conclusion of Socrates in the *Meno* that no one knowingly does what is bad – and rejects it, as usual, with qualification. What is Aristotle's qualified account of *akrasia*? Does this account successfully salvage the common belief that *akrasia* is possible? If you wrote your first paper on *akrasia*, you should present this paper as a continuation of your last, showing which specific part(s) of Socrates' reasoning Aristotle's account challenges. (The relevant passage is *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.3 1146b8-1147b19; in our text, pp. 810-813.)

Except for the length, which is slightly longer this time, the tips and specifications that applied to your first paper apply to this one. Please heed them. I would also add that you should cite Aristotle's text often, in order to ensure that you are remaining faithful to it. By contrast, quote him sparingly, in order to save precious space in your exposition. Quotes are needed only when his precise formulation of a point is important to your argument.

Submit your first paper stapled to the back of this second one. I will review it and grade this second one to a higher standard, assuming that you have incorporated the sort of comments I made on your first. Moreover, you were not required to submit a schema beforehand, but I am nonetheless expecting from these papers the same logical precision that so many of you exhibited in the first. As a result, you may wish to schematize the relevant arguments for your own purposes before writing.