

Presocratics

Each of the Milesians (Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes) proposed a different candidate for the *archē* of the *kosmos*. What were these candidates, and what were the arguments that each thinker offered, or at least seems to have offered, for his own? In other words, recount the *development* of Milesian thought. How was each successive thinker an improvement upon his predecessor?

What was the Pythagorean *tetraktus*? Explain the musical and mathematical facts that it represented to the Pythagoreans, and show how they seem to have thought that these facts could account for *kosmos*. What problem arises for this account? Also, show how the *tetraktus* appears to have influenced later Greek thought.

After Pythagoras' death, his followers split into two camps. What were some of the doctrines preserved by the *akousmatikoi*, and how might these doctrines have been related to those of their rivals, the *mathematikoi*?

Xenophanes said of himself that he spent sixty-seven years "tossing my thought throughout the land of Greece." Which later trend in the thought of both Heraclitus and Parmenides, who differ so much from the Milesians who preceded them, might be traced back to this solitary, itinerant philosopher.

Heraclitus said mysteriously, "Changing, it rests." Explain this aphorism by illustrating it with three of Heraclitus' other examples on the subject of change. He also said, "The road up and the road down are one and the same." Next explain this aphorism by illustrating it with three of his other examples on the subject of opposition. How might Heraclitus have synthesized these several examples, and the thoughts they express on change and opposition, into one account – one *logos* as he described it – of the *kosmos*? What problem arises for this *logos*? Can it be solved?

What are two differences between the One of Melissus and that of Parmenides? What reasons did Parmenides offer for his two beliefs about the One which Melissus would later reject? Why does Melissus diverge on these points from the teaching of his predecessor?

What are some of the apparent flaws in Parmenides' monism? How might one or more of these flaws be remedied by his oracular claim that "the same thing is for thinking and for being."

What was the main problem that Anaxagoras seems to have worried about? What are the main principles of the philosophy that he developed to solve this problem? How well do these principles fit with one another?

How did Empedocles synthesize and elaborate the physical investigations of the Milesians, Xenophanes, and Heraclitus, combining the eclectic result with the moral teachings of Pythagoras and a dash of the old animistic mythology, in order to preserve the *phanomena* denied by the austere philosophy of Parmenides.

How did the atomists think that the diversity of changing, visible *phainomena* could be explained by the existence of unchangeable, invisible *atoma*? What were some of the features they attributed to these *atoma*? What were some of the arguments and analogies that they used to bridge the gap between the *atoma* and the *phainomena*? What criticisms can be made of this account? What new problems did it bequeath to philosophy?

What are Democritus' four arguments for the existence of void? Present and evaluate each in turn.

Recount a short history of skepticism that summarizes the contributions of: Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Zeno, Democritus, Protagoras, the "Dissoi Logoi," and Socrates.

What did the following philosophers have to say on the subject of divinity: Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Anaxagoras, Critias, Socrates.

Explain the origins of the distinction between *nomos* and *phusis* in atomistic philosophy. Next show how this distinction assumed paramount importance for the political thinkers of the Sophistic movement. Mention at least Thucydides, Critias, and Antiphon.

It is often thought that morality requires humans to have freedom of will, to be free of necessity. How could the writings of Democritus and Gorgias have contributed to the climate of moral skepticism in the 5th century?

Parmenides argued that *nothing cannot be*, and thus revolutionized philosophy. What is Gorgias' dazzling but largely ignored argument on the other side – namely, that *something cannot be*. Who has the better argument?

In his *Encomium of Helen*, Gorgias argued that Helen may have been compelled by *logos* to betray her husband. What is his argument (*logos*)? By this *logos*, which is part of a rhetorical tour-de-force (*logos*), Gorgias is attempting to compel us to exonerate her. However, in the final section of his speech (*logos*) on Nothing, he argues that even if something could be, and even if we could know it, it could not be communicated. Why not? What is his *logos*? Is there any inconsistency in his thought (*logos*) about *logos*, not to mention his practice of it? Would Gorgias be bothered by a charge of inconsistency?

Socrates and Plato

Beyond the dullness of the one and the brilliance of the other, what is the most important difference between Xenophon's and Plato's two versions of Socrates' trial? What are some of the similarities between these versions?

In the *Apology*, Socrates stands charged with corrupting the young and not believing in the gods of the city. What are his arguments against these charges? Why does he think that refuting these explicit charges will nonetheless be insufficient for his defense?

What is Socrates' argument in the *Gorgias* that suffering injustice is better than doing it?

Pythagoreans taught a purification of the soul and believed in its immortality through metempsychosis. Plato's *Phaedo* begins as a conversation with a Pythagorean. (This part has been excerpted from your text's version.) What is the role of purity and impurity in this dialogue? According to Socrates in this dialogue, what is pure, and what impure? How are the two related, if at all?

How does Thrasymachus' definition of justice in Book 1 of the *Republic* exhibit the doctrines of the other Sophists we read (Antiphon, Gorgias, and Critias), as well as the words and deeds depicted in Thucydides.

In Book 1 of the *Republic* Socrates seems (on the surface at least) to have refuted Thrasymachus' definition of justice as the advantage of the stronger. What are some problems with Socrates' "refutation"?

Contrast the role of love (*erōs*) in the *Symposium* to its role in Books 8 and 9 of the *Republic*. Are either of these roles related to Love (*Philotēs*) in Empedocles?

What is the paradox of learning presented in the *Meno*? Is the so-called Doctrine of Recollection a good solution to this problem? If you think it is not a good solution, present three criticisms of it. If you think it is a good solution, present two of the criticisms that we considered in class and offer replies to them.

What is the argument in the *Meno* that *akrasia* (commonly known as weakness-of-will) is impossible? How does the more sophisticated psychology of Book 4 of the *Republic* render it once again possible? If you believe that *akrasia* is possible, but do not accept Plato's psychology, how can you account for *akrasia*?

What role does *Nous* (Mind) play in Anaxagoras' cosmology? In Plato's *Phaedo*, Socrates recounts the disappointment he experienced when he learned how limited this role was. Why was he disappointed? How can the Form of the Good, developed in the Books 6 and 7 of the *Republic*, be understood as Plato's fulfillment of the hopes Socrates mistakenly placed in Anaxagoras' *Nous*?

What is Socrates' argument in Book 2 of the *Republic* for what we have called the Principle of Specialization (P.O.S.)? Is it a sound argument? Whether sound or unsound, show how Socrates uses it in his imaginary construction of the perfect city. In Book 4,

once this construction is far enough along, he then looks within it for a sustainable definition of justice. What is the definition he eventually finds? Is it sustainable? To what extent does it depend on the argument for P.O.S.?

Herodotus reported a debate among Persians over the best form of government. In what ways has Plato adopted the terms and logic of this debate? In what ways has he elaborated it? Have his apparently arcane doctrines of being, knowledge, and the soul helped him think more deeply about something as practical as politics?

Present Plato's account of pleasure found in *Republic* Book 9. Has this account evolved from Socrates' use of pleasure in the *Gorgias*? If so, how can we explain this evolution as a product of the more sophisticated psychology of the *Republic*?

No philosopher has had more influence on Western culture than Plato. As we have seen, however, he himself was influenced by at least the following assortment of peculiar thinkers: Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Hippocrates, Herodotus, the Sophists and Thucydides; not to mention Socrates. First, show as many of these influences upon Plato's *Republic* as you can. Secondly, would you say that in the end Plato reconciles the tensions among these disparate thinkers, creating a tenable synthesis of their best ideas? Or would you say instead that his philosophy – and thus, in a way, our own – is but a patchwork of oddities?