



Greek philosophy: Plato and the Pre-Socratics [PY 1085]

Introductory reading

Hamlyn, D.W. *A History of Western Philosophy*. (Viking, 1987).

Irwin, Terence *Classical Thought*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Barnes, J. (ed.) *Early Greek Philosophy*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987).

Hamilton, E. and H. Cairns *Plato: Collected Dialogues*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

Sample examination questions

1. 'The ordering, the same for all, no god or man has made, but it was, is and will be: fire ever-living, being kindled in measures and going out in measures.' (Heraclitus fr. 30.) Discuss.
2. What is the Heraclitean logos that people do not comprehend?
3. 'What is for saying and for thinking must be.' (Parmenides fr. 6.) How does this claim figure in Parmenides' argument?
4. Is the unreliability of the senses a premise or a conclusion for Parmenides?
5. Can Achilles overtake the tortoise?
6. Do Anaxagoras' views provide him with effective replies to Zeno's arguments against motion and plurality?
7. Were the ancient atomists sceptics?
8. If Socrates' disavowal of knowledge is sincere, is he entitled to conduct the elenchus?
9. What is the connection between Socrates' search for definitions of virtue and Plato's Theory of Forms?
10. 'One excellent argument [for the recollection theory] is that when people are questioned, they state the truth about everything for themselves – and yet unless knowledge and a correct account were present within them, they would be unable to do this.' (Plato *Phaedo* 73a.) Discuss.
11. Is the tripartite soul of the *Republic* an advance over the immortal soul of the *Phaedo*?
12. Does Plato have a satisfactory account of the difference between knowledge and belief?
13. Why might Plato be less certain that there are Forms of Man or Mud than that there are Forms of Beauty and Largeness?
14. 'We are in the habit of positing one Form for each multiplicity to which we give the same name.' (*Republic* X.) Is this a reasonable basis for the theory of Forms?
15. Does Plato offer a satisfactory refutation of relativism in the *Theaetetus*?

16. How far does the Sophist explain what it is to be what is not?
17. Does Plato offer a satisfactory account of naming in the Cratylus?