

Senior Thesis

Guiding Philosophical Questions

Note: These questions are meant to help you brainstorm and move towards a focus for your Senior Thesis. Do not try to force each of the questions onto your texts. Instead, students should discover the questions that each text explores or addresses.

Goodness

- 1) What constitutes happiness for this author?
- 2) What prevents one from attaining happiness?
- 3) What false understandings of happiness are presented? What are the consequences of adopting such understandings?
- 4) What is the relationship between the good and lesser good?
- 5) What is common good? How is this related to individual goods?
- 6) What is this author's view of human nature? Are human beings naturally good? Inclined towards evil?
- 7) How does the author present the nature of evil?
- 8) What is the relationship between virtue and happiness?
- 9) What is virtue?
- 10) What is the nature of a particular virtue, according to the text?
- 11) What constitutes true friendship?
- 12) What vision of friendship is presented in the work?
- 13) What role does friendship play in the human experience?
- 14) What is the relationship between goodness and truth?
- 15) What is the relationship between goodness and beauty?

Truth

- 1) What constitutes wisdom, according to this author?
- 2) What is philosophy? What are the defining characteristics of the philosopher?
- 3) What is the relationship between human nature and truth?
- 4) If human beings desire the truth by nature, then why do so many people fall into error or falsehood?
- 5) What is the relationship between the divine and truth?
- 6) Which characters seek the truth most ardently? How does this pursuit impact them?
- 7) What is the nature of education? What are the primary stages of education? Is there a final stage?
- 8) What responsibilities come with a growth in wisdom?
- 9) In what respect is knowledge its own end?
- 10) What is the relationship between truth and beauty? And goodness?

Beauty

- 1) According to what universal standard can one assess beauty? What elements must be present in order for something to be genuinely beautiful?
- 2) Why is beauty important to humanity? What significant impact can it have on a human being or society?
- 3) Are false and true understandings of beauty presented in this work? What are some false understandings of beauty?
- 4) What is the relationship between beauty and ethics?
- 5) What is the relationship between beauty and truth?
- 6) What is the relationship between beauty and goodness?

Justice

- 1) According to what universal standard can one determine what is just?
- 2) What is the relationship between justice and liberty?

- 3) What constitutes the just man, according to this work?
- 4) Is it ever just to disobey or go against the law?
- 5) What is the relationship between law and justice?
- 6) Compare and contrast divine justice and human justice.
- 7) How is divine justice depicted in this work? Is it knowable?
- 8) How does justice allow us to understand the relationship between the self and the other?
- 9) What is necessary for human beings to understand and/or achieve justice?

Equality

- 1) What are different senses of the word “equal”? In what respect(s) are people equal? In what respect(s) are people unequal?
- 2) What is the difference between natural equality and political equality?

Liberty

- 1) What is the nature of liberty? What is the difference between authentic liberty and license? 2) What are the false understandings of liberty, and what are the consequences of adopting such understandings? 3) What is the distinction between natural liberty and political liberty?
- 4) What is the purpose of liberty?
- 5) Can the mutual pursuit of liberty lead to conflict?
- 6) What is the relationship between liberty and the good? Between liberty and truth?
- 7) What is the relationship between liberty and the common good?