

## First Paper Topics

Write a paper no longer than 1800 words, about 5-6 pages, on one of the topics below. Please turn your paper in to my box in 208 Pearsons by 4 pm on Monday, March 31. *This is different than the due date in the syllabus.* Please write down when your paper was submitted, especially if it is late. Thank you and good luck!

1. Plato regarded Glaucon's description of why justice is valued as posing a challenge; the *Republic* is devoted to meeting this challenge. What is the challenge? Give what you regard as a compelling reason for rejecting Glaucon's challenge. For example, Hobbes didn't seem to think that it was a pressing concern. His reply to the Fool is very much like Glaucon's account of justice, but he seems to have regarded it as perfectly satisfactory. (You don't have to discuss Hobbes, I just mention him as an example.) Whatever objection you choose, how might Plato respond? What do you think? Does Glaucon pose a significant challenge for justice or not?
2. I said Plato's analogy between the city and the soul faces a dilemma and that he has to choose between an attractive picture of the city and a plausible picture of the soul. Roughly, a city whose "reasoning" part regulated its "desiring" part in the way that the reasoning part of the soul regulates the desiring part would be harshly repressive. Rob disagreed with my criticism. According to him, Plato sees the desires of a good, well-ordered soul as moderate. To put it another way, the good person doesn't want things so indiscriminately and violently that the reasoning part has to constantly repress it. If so, the analogy doesn't look as bad as I said it was. I like both interpretations quite a lot. So I would like you to settle it. Which one of us is right? To do so, you should characterize our differing interpretations of Plato, give your reasons for preferring one, and respond to what you regard as a compelling objection.

3. Do people in what Hobbes called a state of nature really have a right to all things, “even to one another’s body”? Why does Hobbes believe that this is so? Give what you regard as a compelling objection to Hobbes’s argument. How might Hobbes respond? What do you think? Does Hobbes have a good argument for this conclusion or not? If he doesn’t, do you think that would have any bearing on his account of the origin and nature of the state?
4. Broadly speaking, Hobbes believed that the purpose of the state is to ensure our safety while Plato and Aristotle thought that the purpose of the state is to enable us to live good lives. Hobbes’s account is probably closer to the actual history of the state’s origins, but what does that mean for us now? Given that we don’t live in a violent state of nature, why shouldn’t we regard the purpose of the state along the lines that Plato and Aristotle favored? Why might someone think that we should agree with Plato and Aristotle? Give what you regard as a compelling objection to their broad political philosophy. Finally, what do you think: what is the purpose of the state?
5. Consider these statements concerning Iraq in 2003. Captain Al Lockwood, spokesman for the British forces in Iraq, responding to calls to stop looting in Baghdad: “The last thing that we want is to be seen to be oppressing them when they’re just having their first taste of freedom.” Donald Rumsfeld, US Secretary of Defense: “Freedom’s untidy ... Free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things. They’re also free to live their lives and do wonderful things, and that’s what’s going to happen here.” In what ways would Hobbes agree with Lockwood and Rumsfeld that the people of Iraq were more free in 2003 than they had been previously? In what ways would he disagree with their assessment of the situation there? Who do you think is right?