

Question Bank

Literary Criticism and Theory Semester 5

Plato

1. How does Plato link the themes of rhetoric with writing in his dialogues? Comment by focusing on the final speech of Plato in *Phaedrus*.
2. What is the role of the Egyptian myth in *Phaedrus*? Does Plato's reliance on myths undermine his speculations on the philosophical truth of his dialogue?
3. What is the reason behind Socrates's critique of writing? How would you place his critique within the philosophical schema elaborated within *Phaedrus*?
4. Does Plato's discussion on rhetoric downplay the utility of books. To what extent is this proven or disproven by the structure of *Phaedrus* itself?
5. What is the relationship between rhetoric, dialectic, and philosophy in *Phaedrus*?

Longinus

6. Describe, in detail, the five sources of Sublime in Longinus's *On Sublime*.
7. "Longinus does not interpret the Sublime in his monograph directly, but merely describes its characteristics and sources to give the impression of a powerful interpretation." Do you agree? Explain.
8. Longinus's monograph can be divided into two parts—content and rhetoric. Do you agree? Elaborate with instances from the text.
9. Comment upon the aesthetic importance of the Sublime on the basis of his division of its sources into content and style.
10. Longinus is considered to be the first Romantic critic despite his emphasis on a poet's ability to craft his work. Elaborate.

Hume & Burke

11. Discuss Burke's understanding of 'taste' as disinterested appreciation, a function of an organ of the mind.
12. Discuss the manner in which empirical science intersects with aesthetic criticism in Edmund Burke's essay.
13. Discuss Burke's understanding of imagination as outlined in the essay. Why can it not produce anything absolutely new?
14. With reference to Hume & Burke, is it correct to argue that "aesthetics was born in the mid-18th century as a discourse of the body"?
15. Critically evaluate the statement that "aesthetics in 18th C was more of a social intentionality than a language for aesthetics".
16. Discuss the relationship established between reason/ logic and aesthetics in Hume and Burke. Is it correct to argue that "aesthetics was born in this period as the 'sister' of logic"?
17. Discuss the significance of 'beauty' in Hume and Burke.
18. How far is training/practice/knowledge important to the idea of 'taste' in Hume and Burke? Why?

19. How do the two essays by Hume and Burke differ in their attempt to establish a universal standard of taste?
20. Discuss Hume's position on the idea of 'a-priory' reasoning in matters of aesthetics. What is the alternative that he provides?
21. What is the difference between taste and sentiment in Hume's essay?
22. In your assessment, has Hume succeeded in reconciling subjectivity and objectivity? Discuss in detail.
23. What is the function of the example of the two wine tasters in the framework of Hume's argument? Discuss in detail.

Kant

24. Describe the mental process leading to what Kant calls an "aesthetic judgment" or a "judgment of taste."
25. Why, according to Kant, isn't it possible to make "a pure judgment of taste" as soon as "interest" enters the picture?
26. How does Kant's use of the term "disinterested[ness]" encapsulate what he has been saying about the purity of a proper aesthetic judgment?
27. How does Kant define judgments about "the agreeable" and "the good"? Why aren't these kinds of judgment aesthetic? Provide your own examples of a judgment about the agreeable and the good, respectively.
28. Why, according to Kant, do we suppose we have the right to other people's agreement once we have declared an object beautiful? That is, we would not demand that everybody like chocolate ice cream just because we like it, but we would insist that our statement, "this rose is beautiful" is a universally correct judgment. Why?
29. According to Kant, do we feel pleasure before making a judgment of taste, or do we make the judgment first and then feel pleasure? What reasons does he provide for his answer?
30. What does Kant appear to mean by the terms "design" and "form"? How do these two terms differ from "charm" and "emotion"? Why is the design of a presentation or object central to a judgment of taste?
31. What role does "sensation" play in the making of an aesthetic judgment? Does Kant disdain sensation or sensory experience, or does his desire to abstract from it stem from some other purpose? Explain.
32. According to Kant, what is "free beauty"? What examples does he offer? Why is it important that our liking for such objects does not refer to any definite concept, i.e. that we don't refer the object to a fixed purpose or concept?
33. How do you understand Kant's terms "common sense" (*sensus communis*) and "purposiveness without a purpose"? What significance do they hold for Kant's claims about the human value of aesthetic judgment? (518-19)

Bakhtin

34. Bakhtin regards time and space as "forms of the most immediate reality". Critically comment on the above statement.
35. Is it correct to argue that the concept of 'chronotope' was developed to advance the functionality literary genres?

36. According to Morris "chronotope is a cognitive concept as much as a narrative feature of texts." Do you agree? Give reasons.
37. Critically evaluate Bakhtin's teleological view of the history of narrative literature.
38. Bakhtin sees literary forms as mediated response to historical processes. Comment on the above statement.
39. Why does Bakhtin call the world of Greek romances as "abstract-alien"?
40. Do you agree with Bakhtin that language is fundamentally chronotropic? Give reasons for your answer.

Nietzsche

41. How is Wagner's aesthetic important for Nietzsche's discussion on ascetic ideals?
42. "Nietzsche's understanding of ascetic ideals is deeply influenced by Schopenhauer." Do you agree with this assessment? Elaborate.
43. Nietzsche comes in a line of long critiques of Kantian aesthetic ideals. Comment.
44. For Nietzsche, aestheticism and asceticism are two sides of the same coin. Elaborate.