Writing Assignment No. 4

Write a brief essay (four to five pages) on one of the following topics.

1. Background: In *Prometheus Bound*, the hero vigorously denounces Zeus; he confidently predicts that Zeus will be humbled, that Zeus’s rule will either end or change, and that he (Prometheus) will be liberated. But the play was written for an audience that continued to worship Zeus as king of the gods as well as worshiping Prometheus as a free and active god. Prometheus’ name means “forethought,” and he obviously had not only forethought but foresight when he predicted a happy end for his story—although the two plays that followed *Prometheus Bound*, and in which Aeschylus developed that story, no longer exist.

Paper prompt: Considering the fact that the story of Prometheus has a happy ending, and Prometheus knows that it does, is there any good reason why he shouldn’t just submit to Zeus, rather than complaining about him? If you respond to this prompt, remember to keep in touch with the text of *Prometheus Bound*; don’t just fill your paper with abstract speculations.

2. “Assuming that Aristophanes’ portrait of the political and intellectual life of Athens is basically correct, Strepsiades’ response—bringing down the Pondertorium by force—was the best thing that Strepsiades could have chosen.” Agree or disagree with that statement.

3. Someone has said, “Plato imagines that by the time he reaches the end of the *Symposium* he has presented an argument that cannot be challenged. But this is untrue. There are many parts of Plato’s argument that can be successfully challenged by counterarguments.” Find an important part of Plato’s argument in the *Symposium* and challenge it with your own counterargument. Note: Plato’s argument is found in the dialogue between Diotima and Socrates, not in the earlier parts of the book.

4. At first glance, at least, the Socrates we see in the *Symposium* and the Socrates we see in *The Clouds* appear to be different people. There have been many way of accounting for the difference. For example: Professor Cox said in lecture that Aristophanes was simply using Socrates to represent all philosophers and sophists, despite the fact that the real Socrates, whom we see in the *Symposium*, was not like many of them: he was not interested in the study of nature or in educating students for money. But it is possible that Aristophanes’ satire of Socrates in *The Clouds* identified actual shortcomings in the Socrates whom we see in the *Symposium*, shortcomings that were real, though perhaps not obvious at first glance. If you think this is true, show that it is, with evidence from the *Symposium* and from *The Clouds*. 
5. Would anything of intellectual value be lost if the Alcibiades episode were not included in the *Symposium*?

Turn in your essay at the **end of lecture on Friday, March 2**. At the same time, you need to send an electronic copy to the anti-plagiarism website Turnitin.com.

In working on your paper, pay special attention to the Handbook sections on "Checking Your Arguments" and "Conclusions" (pp. 17-24), and to your section instructor's discussion of pronoun problems.

This is a good opportunity to remind everyone that if you use other people’s words as if they were your own you are committing academic dishonesty, which at UCSD is severely punished. It is also *very* easy to discover.