

Chapter 01: Philosophical Questions

True / False

1. Important decisions may inspire philosophical questions, but trivial incidents usually do not.

a. True

b. False

ANSWER: False

2. The point behind philosophical questions in general is to teach us how to arrive at answers that are so clear and convincing that we will cease our questioning.

a. True

b. False

ANSWER: False

3. A student with a true “gift” for philosophy will find it easy to take part in philosophical discussions from the start.

a. True

b. False

ANSWER: False

4. Rene Descartes’s philosophical method was based on a clear authority structure that one already knows is reliable.

a. True

b. False

ANSWER: False

5. If you pinch yourself and feel it, that’s sure proof that you are not dreaming, but are indeed awake.

a. True

b. False

ANSWER: False

6. The philosopher Socrates did not willingly go to his death because he believed he had the right to life.

a. True

b. False

ANSWER: False

7. The old quip “There are no atheists in foxholes,” seems to mean that when faced with death, we all search for some ultimate source of support.

a. True

b. False

ANSWER: True

8. Unlike his contemporary, Pelagius, Augustine thought it was more important to have faith than to do good works.

- a. True
- b. False

ANSWER: True

9. Scientists tell us that we are wrong to believe that ordinary material objects, like chairs, are solid objects.

- a. True
- b. False

ANSWER: True

10. It is impossible that only one person should know the meaning of a word in English; a word has meaning in English; a word has meaning in English because English speakers basically agree on its meaning.

- a. True
- b. False

ANSWER: True

11. Because we almost always see ourselves from the inside, we may have trouble forming an adequate conception of ourselves.

- a. True
- b. False

ANSWER: True

12. The point about imagining whether we'd step into the "happiness box" is to show that we might be dreaming even if think we are awake.

- a. True
- b. False

ANSWER: False

13. In the ancient Greek tragedy Iphigenia, the warrior Agamemnon believes he will be victorious in the Trojan War if he sacrifices one innocent child.

- a. True
- b. False

ANSWER: True

14. Libertarians appear to embrace determinism because they believe that when a soldier panics, he has in some sense chosen to panic and should be held responsible for his actions.

- a. True

b. False

ANSWER: False

15. It is impossible to imagine societies in which people are happy and prosperous while not being free.

a. True

b. False

ANSWER: False

Multiple Choice

Philosophy very often proceeds through

16. New Question

a. faith.

b. making a series of statements without supplying underlying reasons.

c. disagreement.

d. achieving universal consensus.

ANSWER: c

If all of the philosophical questions in Chapter 1 share a common thread, it is that answering them

17. New Question

a. requires you to articulate what you believe about yourself and the world.

b. requires that you articulate a clear reason for believing in God.

c. requires you to reject everything you had believed about yourself and the world.

d. requires you to articulate a theory of the mind and body.

ANSWER: a

Descartes's approach to philosophy was to doubt everything until he could prove it to his own satisfaction. The first premise of his philosophy was

18. New Question

a. that God exists.

b. that he could not doubt his own existence.

c. that the world exists.

d. that other people exist.

ANSWER: b

His respect for the laws and his own sense of honor were so strong that Socrates decided the most important thing for him to do would be to show his belief in his own principles by dying for

19. New Question

- a. Nathan Hale.
- b. Descartes
- c. St. Augustine.
- d. Jesus Christ.

ANSWER: a

It is sometimes suggested that what makes human beings unique is that, unlike

20. New Question

- a. we have sensation.
- b. we are reflective.
- c. we are biologically alive.
- d. we lack a purpose.

ANSWER: b

St. Augustine and Pelagius argued about whether

21. New Question

- a. it is more important to believe in God or to do good works.
- b. God exists.
- c. there is a soul.
- d. animals can be saved.

ANSWER: a

Scientists tell us that the chair

22. New Question

- a. is a solid material object.
- b. is a solid material object, existing in six dimensions.
- c. is a spiritual substance, existing in our minds.
- d. is a spiritual substance, existing in our minds.

ANSWER: d

One apparent difference between minds and physical things is that

23. New Question

- a. minds can be directly observed by anyone, but physical things cannot.
- b. minds cannot be directly observed by anyone, but physical things can..
- c. minds are unchanging, but physical things can change.
- d. minds can change, but physical things can't change.

ANSWER: b

About five hundred years ago, Copernicus was one of the first people to question the belief that

24. New Question

- a. the sun moved around the earth.
- b. the sun moved around the earth.
- c. humans evolved through biological evolution.
- d. the world was created by God.

ANSWER: a

Writing up a list of virtues is a way of

25. New Question

- a. understanding whether one is free or not.
- b. trying to prove that one is or is not dreaming.
- c. trying to prove there is a mind.
- d. seeing what we value in ourselves and what kind of a person we think is ideal.

ANSWER: d

By pondering the question of whether you should step into the “happiness box,” you will learn about

26. New Question

- a. how to become happy.
- b. what you value.
- c. whether you are free or not.
- d. whether you are good or not.

ANSWER: b

If there are no guarantees of ultimate reward and punishment,

27. New Question

- a. then it still does not follow that there are no reasons to be good.
- b. then there can be no reason to do good.
- c. then the Ancient Greeks were right when they claimed God does not exist.
- d. then life is meaningless.

ANSWER: a

We already admit that the rule to not kill other people has exceptions. If, then, we encounter a band of cannibals that has long practiced the custom of killing and eating the weakest among them, then

28. New Question

- a. we should probably repeal our own rule proscribing killing.
- b. we should endorse their actions as justifiable exceptions.
- c. we can condemn their actions because we believe that killing is always wrong.
- d. we can't condemn their actions because we believe that killing is always wrong.

ANSWER: d

People who believe that all our actions, even those we appear to have chosen freely, are in fact caused by a prior set of conditions or influences,

29. New Question

- a. are relativists.
- b. are determinists.
- c. are libertarians.
- d. believe there is a “causal gap” in nature.

ANSWER: b

In Plato’s Symposium, Diotima argues that

30. New Question

- a. philosophy is the nearest thing to immortality that a mortal can attain.
- b. human beings, like the gods, are immortal.
- c. procreation, whether of children or works of cultural importance, brings humans nearest to immortality.
- d. humans seek immortality in vain.

ANSWER: c

Objective Short Answer

31. Why did Socrates go willingly to his death?

ANSWER: He believed he had an obligation to respect the laws of his city even when those same laws condemned him to death. And/or: His respect for the laws and his own sense of honor were so strong that he decided the most important thing for him to do would be to show his belief in his own principles by dying for them.

32. Why would it be wrong simply to equate “reality” and what is most true with what is most evident to our senses? Give an example.

ANSWER: Sometimes what is evident to our senses turns out to be an illusion, and what is obvious turns out to be untrue. For example, scientists tell us that our belief that the chair is obviously and evidently a solid object is not correct, because the chair is really an enormous complex of invisible particles, atoms, and molecules in various arrangements. (There may be other examples, including ones not found in the text.)

33. Why can’t you simply know directly that other people have minds as well as bodies?

ANSWER: The problem is that mental events and processes—such as our feelings and our thoughts—can be known directly only to the person who has them, whereas our physical traits can be observed by almost anyone.

34. Why, in the absence of a social consensus that the earth moves around the sun, would we have a hard time knowing that the opposite is true?

ANSWER: Our ordinary way of talking is still riddled with words and phrases such as “sunrise,” “sunset,” and “summer constellations” as if the earth were indeed stationary. We are also usually unable to provide convincing, scientific reasons for why the earth moves around the sun.

35. What is the point of the question “Should you step into the happiness box?” Give an example.

ANSWER: The point of the question is it helps you to understand what you value. For example, if you value pleasure and contentment, you obviously ought to get in the box. If, on the other hand, you value relationships with other people, fulfilling ambitions, and doing something, you certainly wouldn’t get in the box. (There may be other examples, including ones not in the text.)

36. Why aren’t good people necessarily happy?

ANSWER: The events of life sometimes punish the wicked and reward the good, but unfortunately not all that often.

37. Suppose Mary is a determinist but continues to insist that she has “free choice.” What would you say in response to her?

ANSWER: If Mary is a determinist then she thinks everything that happens, even our most carefully deliberated and (apparently) freely chosen actions, is totally caused, or determined, by a set of prior conditions and influences. This implies that there is no such thing as a “free choice” because no one ever “chooses” to do anything that he or she is not determined to do anyway.

Essay

38. Pick one of the sixteen questions raised in Chapter 1 that intrigues you, and write an essay that answers the question in your own terms. Make sure you (a) construct an argument, with supporting reasons for your answer, and then (b) raise one point that either presents an opposing argument to your point of view or develops an alternative response to the question.

ANSWER: See Chapter 1 for questions.

39. Pick one of the sixteen questions from Chapter 1 and interview two to four people (family, friends, acquaintances, fellow workers, etc.) about how they would answer the question. Try to be active in the interview process—for example, ask them questions like “What do you mean by that?” “Why do you believe that?” and “Why is that important?” Be sure to take notes or to record the interviews. Then write an essay describing what you learned about your interviewees’ beliefs and values. Highlight points of agreement and disagreement between them. Finally, say what you learned about your own philosophical convictions through this experience.

ANSWER: See Chapter 1 for questions.

40. Pick one of the sixteen questions from Chapter 1, and construct a fictional dialogue in which two or more people engage in a discussion about what the question means, and why. Have fun with the dialogue, but try to make the conversation a genuine, probing discussion. Have the respondents (one of whom can be you—or Socrates) ask one another questions like “What do you mean by that?” “Why do you believe that?” and “Why is that important?” As you write the dialogue, try to feel the issue out and see what viewpoint seems the strongest and why. The dialogue can end with mutual agreement between the participants or with the participants agreeing to disagree.

ANSWER: See Chapter 1 for questions.

41. Reread the questions from Chapter 1, and look for interrelationships between two or more of them. Focus on whether what you think about one question (e.g., the question about the “happiness box”) has implications for what another question (e.g., the free-choice question) might mean, or how one might answer it. Do you have to answer one question before answering the other? Write an essay in which you describe the results of your investigation.

ANSWER: See Chapter 1 for questions.

42. Write your own question and attempt to answer it. Make sure you (a) construct an argument, with supporting reasons for your answer, and then (b) raise one point that either presents an opposing argument to your point of view or develops an alternative response to the question.

ANSWER: Answers will vary.