PHI 171 – Problems of Philosophy – Fall 2014

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Sample Exam Questions

The final exam will consist of 20 multiple choice questions. You will gain one point for each correct answer. You will lose one point for each incorrect answer. So, by guessing right, you'll gain points, but by guessing wrong, you'll lose points. Below are same sample questions. *Sometimes more than one answer is correct.*

1. Where did philosophy begin? Pick the least inaccurate.

   ☐ It began in Ancient Greece.

   ☐ There are beginnings of philosophical thinking in Ancient Greece, India and China.

   ☐ It began with Parmenides and Zeno.

   ☐ The first philosophers were Anaximander and Confucius.

2. Why does St. Augustine think that the present does not exist?

   ☐ Because the present has no extension. Even one second can be further subdivided into smaller and smaller time intervals.

   ☐ Because everything that exists now will be gone soon. The present tends to its non-existence.

   ☐ Because time flows and what flows does not exist.

   ☐ Because time only exists in the mind.

3. What does Parmenides say about change? Pick the most accurate

   ☐ That it does not exist because something cannot come out of nothing.

☐ That change is impossible because it requires that something comes out of nothing, which is impossible.

☐ That change cannot be conceptualized, although it might still exist.

☐ That thinking about change leads to paradoxes.

4. How does Zeno show that movement is impossible?

☐ He claims that movement requires to go through an infinite number of time intervals in a finite space, which is impossible.

☐ He claims that movement requires to go through an infinite number of space intervals in a finite time, which is impossible.

☐ He claims that movement requires to reach a point, and a midpoint, and another midpoint, etc., which is impossible.

☐ He claims that movement exists in time, and that time is infinite while space is not, so movement is impossible.

5. What is not relative in Einstein's theory of special relativity?

☐ The flow of time is uniform for different reference frames.

☐ The speed of an object is the same for different reference frames.

☐ The speed of light in a vacuum is the same for different reference frames.

☐ Every measurable physical quantity is relative. That's the great achievement of Einstein's theory.

6. Who is Patricia Churchland? Pick the most accurate

☐ A philosopher and a neuroscientist

☐ A writer

☐ A philosopher and a neuroscientist who thinks we have no soul

☐ A philosopher and a neuroscientist who thinks that even our ethical judgments, emotions and feelings are the result of brain structures and chemicals in the brain

7. What does a careful reading of the Libet experiment show?

☐ That free will does not exist

☐ That determinism is true

☐ That some of our actions are predetermined

☐ That the conscious decision to act in a certain way is preceded by electrochemical activity in the brain

8. Which definition of free will is incompatible with determinism, according to van Inwagen?

☐ Free will as the power to do what one wants, desires and wishes

☐ Free will as the power to choose without external constraints

☐ Free will as the power to do otherwise

☐ Free will as the power to have acted otherwise

9. Why was Mary in a black-and-white room?

☐ Because that was the starting point of Jackson's argument. There isn't any specific reason why, except that's what Jackson wrote in his article. This is a silly question, really.

☐ Because Mary was color blind.

☐ Because Mary knew everything about physics and but she could not see colors.

☐ Because when Mary got out of the room, she could see colors.

10. What is the Chinese Room Argument?

   □ An argument that shows that syntax is different from semantics

   □ An argument that shows that computers are less intelligent than human beings

   □ An argument that shows that Artificial Intelligence will produce powerful computers

   □ An argument that shows that even if a computer can pass the Turing Test, we cannot say that the computer truly understands words and sentences

11. What is St. Anselm's definition of God?

   □ A really great being

   □ The being than which nothing greater can be conceived

   □ An all-powerful and all-knowing being

   □ The being that cannot be thought to exist in the mind only

12. Consider the following incomplete version of the cosmological argument:

   Something undergoes change in this world. What undergoes change must have a cause. If the cause undergoes change, it must have a cause as well. The cause, then, must also have a cause of itself. And so on.————MISSING PART HERE—————There must be a first cause. The first cause must be an uncaused cause. The first cause, which is uncaused, is what we typically call God. Therefore, God Exists.

   How should the above argument be completed?

   □ There cannot be more than one first cause.

   □ There cannot be a cause without a first cause.

   □ But this process cannot go on forever, for there cannot be an infinite regress of causes.

   □ But this would be circular.

13. Read the following quotation (adapted from St. Thomas Aquinas):

> It seems that God does not exist; because if one of two contraries be infinite, the other would be altogether destroyed. But the word 'God' means that He is infinite goodness. If, therefore, God existed, there would be no evil discoverable; but there is evil in the world. Therefore God does not exist.

What does the quotation say? Pick the most accurate

- ☐ That God must destroy all evil

- ☐ That God does not exist

- ☐ That since God exists, there cannot be any evil, but since there is evil, God cannot be infinite goodness

- ☐ That since God is infinite goodness, there cannot be any evil, but since there is evil, God cannot exist

14. Which of the following is not true of an *a priori* statement?

- ☐ That it can be true

- ☐ That it can be false

- ☐ That its truth does not depend on sensory data

- ☐ That it must always be true independently of experience

15. What is the name of the philosopher who used the expression "Archimedean Point"?

- ☐ Aristotle

- ☐ St. Thomas Aquinas

- ☐ Descartes

- ☐ van Inwagen

16. What is it that we cannot doubt according to Wittgenstein, and why?

☐ We cannot doubt what words refer to, because, if we could doubt that, we would not be able to make sense of what it means to "doubt" in the first place.

☐ We cannot doubt the findings of science because they justify many of our beliefs.

☐ We cannot doubt that God exists because the meaning of the word "God" implies that God exists.

☐ We cannot doubt that we have hands when we see them because if we doubted what our senses tell us, then nothing could be certain.

17. Why should we donate money to the poor according to Peter Singer? Pick the most accurate.

☐ Because being selfish is bad and we should help people who suffer

☐ Because if we have money we could live without, we should not spend them on things that are of less moral significance than saving people's lives

☐ Because people's lives are more important than the pleasure we derive from spending money we could live without

☐ Because poor people are like drowning children

18. What does Rawls' difference principle say?

☐ Economy inequalities are justified provided people deserve what they have.

☐ Economic inequalities are justified provided they benefit the least advantaged.

☐ Economic inequalities are justified provided everybody has the same opportunities.

☐ Economic inequalities are justified provided people are free to pursue their dreams.

19. What is the thesis defended in this philosophical quotation (slightly adapted from David Chalmers)? Pick the most accurate given what the text says.

> The word "consciousness" is used in many different ways. It is sometimes used for the ability to discriminate stimuli, or to report information, or to monitor internal states, or to control behavior. We can think of these phenomena as posing the "easy problems" of consciousness. There is no obvious obstacle to an eventual explanation of these phenomena in neurobiological or computational terms.
>
> The hard problem of consciousness is the problem of self-awareness. Humans beings have subjective self-awareness. We can say that a being is conscious in this sense: it is self-aware of its perceptual experiences, bodily sensations, occurrent thoughts, and more.
>
> There is no question that experience is closely associated with physical processes in systems such as brains. It seems that physical processes give rise to self-awareness, at least in the sense that producing a physical system (such as a brain) with the right physical properties inevitably yields corresponding states of self-awareness. But how and why do physical processes give rise to self-awareness? Why do not these processes take place "in the dark," without any accompanying states of awareness? This is the central mystery underlying that hard problem of consciousness.
>
> What makes the easy problems easy? For these problems, the task is to explain certain behavioral or cognitive functions: that is, to explain how some causal role is played in the cognitive system, ultimately in the production of behavior. To explain the performance of such a function, one need only specify a mechanism that plays the relevant role. And there is good reason to believe that neural or computational mechanisms can play those roles.
>
> What makes the hard problem hard? Here, the task is not to explain behavioral and cognitive functions: even once one has an explanation of all the relevant functions in the vicinity of consciousness—discrimination, integration, access, report, control—there may still remain a further question: why is the performance of these functions accompanied by self-awareness? Because of this, the hard problem seems to be a different sort of problem, requiring a different sort of solution.

☐ That consciousness can be explained in physical terms.

☐ That consciousness cannot be explained in physical terms.

☐ That the easy problem of consciousness can have a physicalist solution, but the hard problem of consciousness cannot.

☐ That the easy problem of consciousness can have a solution based on brain processes, but the hard problem of consciounsess seems to require a different solution.

20. What is the author suggesting in this philosophical quotation (slightly adapted from William James)?

> Consider religion. We are supposed to gain, even now, by our belief, and to lose by our non-belief, a certain vital good. Secondly, religion is a forced option in the sense that we cannot escape the issue by remaining skeptical and waiting for more light, because, although we do avoid error in that way if religion be untrue, we lose the good, if it be true, just as certainly as if we positively chose to disbelieve. . . Skepticism, then, is not avoidance of option; it is option of a certain particular kind of risk. Better risk loss of truth than chance of error— that is your faith-vetoer's exact position. He is actively playing his stake as much as the believer is; he is backing the field against the religious hypothesis, just as the believer is backing the religious hypothesis against the field. To preach skepticism to us as a duty until "sufficient evidence" religion be found is tantamount therefore to telling us, when in presence of the religious hypothesis, that to yield to our fear of its being error is wiser and better than to yield to our hope that it may be true. It is not intellect against all passions, then; it is only intellect with one passion laying down its law.

☐ It is better to believe in God than not to believe.

☐ It is better to be skeptical about God's existence.

☐ Clifford's principle that we can only believe when we have sufficient evidence is mistaken.

☐ The hope for the truth and the fear of error are the same.