

# Philosophy 101

Exam Review

April 30, 2015

## Review Questions

## Question 1

Camus thinks that the best way to deal with the absurdity of life is

- A. *despair*
- B. *defiance*
- C. *happiness*
- D. *irony*

## Question 2

Nagel thinks that we find life absurd because

- A. there are no objective values*
- B. God does not exist*
- C. we are capable of self-reflection and questioning why we do what we do*
- D. life is ironic*

## Question 3

Epistemic foundationalism is the thesis that

- A. knowledge is derived from experience*
- B. we can divide our knowledge into 'basic' knowledge and the knowledge which is derived from it*
- C. all knowledge requires proof*
- D. we can know that an external world exists*

## Descartes on Skepticism

# The Method of Doubt

**DOUBT:** We must suspend judgment concerning any proposition whose truth is not known with absolute certainty

# The Method of Doubt

- ① Assume foundationalism about knowledge
- ② Apply DOUBT to the foundations of knowledge
- ③ See if any of the propositions constituting those foundations pass DOUBT



# The Stages of Doubt

## ① Sense-Perception

- doubt about individual bits of sensory knowledge

## ② Dreams

- doubt about sensory knowledge in general

## ③ An all-powerful deceiver

- doubt about (almost) all knowledge

# The Problem with Perception

But what about the very best of perceptual conditions?

*there are many other beliefs about which doubt is quite impossible, even though they are derived from the senses — for example, that I am here sitting by the fire, wearing a winter dressing-gown, holding this piece of paper in my hands, and so on (13)*

# Dreams

- Even seemingly favorable perceptual cases must be doubted because we cannot prove that we aren't dreaming
  - there is no totally trustworthy criterion that can tell us we're awake rather than asleep

# Dreams

## Two Objections

- ① When we dream, our dreams consist of various imaginary things/events. But these images must be based on something, otherwise how could we imagine them?
- ② Wouldn't I still know basic logical & mathematical truths while asleep (e.g. ' $A=A$ '; ' $2+2=4$ ')?

# The Evil Demon Argument

*I will suppose therefore that not God, who is supremely good and the source of truth, but rather some malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning has employed all his energies in order to deceive me. I shall think that the sky, the air, the earth, colours, shapes, sounds and all external things are merely the delusions of dreams which he has devised to ensnare my judgement (15).*

## The Evil Demon Argument

- ① I can sometimes be certain that I am perceiving a material object  $M$  only if I can sometimes be certain that  $M$  is causing my perceptual experience
- ② I can sometimes be certain that  $M$  is causing my experience only if it is not the case that any (every) perceptual experience caused by  $M$  could be caused in some other manner
- ③ Any (every) perceptual experience caused by  $M$  could be caused in some other manner (e.g. by an evil demon)
- ④  $\therefore$  I can never be certain that I perceive  $M$

# The Cogito Argument

- If the possibility of massive deception by an evil demon means that I must deny the certainty that there is even a material world, is there anything of which I can be certain? Is it possible that even I don't exist?
  - No: "cogito ergo sum" or "I think, therefore I exist"
  - The cogito argument is immune to radical doubt
    - We can substitute anything for "think" — e.g. "doubt", "believe", "judge", etc.

# The Cartesian Problem

- We can be sure of our *own* existence but can we be sure of the existence of anything else?
- Do we know what we're thinking better than we know anything in the objective world?
- How do we build out from the certainty of our own existence to the certainty of the existence of anything else, either other minds or other physical objects?



## Exam Review

## Time & Place

- MORR 141
- 10:00 to 12:00 noon, Tuesday, May 5th
- <http://registrar.unl.edu/final-exam-information-spring>

# Content

- Free will and determinism
  - connection between free will and responsibility
  - compatibilism vs. incompatibilism
    - PAP & Source requirement
    - Frankfurt cases
  - Strawson's 'basic argument' against free will

# Content

- Mackie's error theory
  - ethics vs. meta-ethics
  - non-cognitivism
  - error theory
    - argument from disagreement
    - argument from 'queerness'

# Content

- Camus & Nagel on absurdity of life
  - Camus' answer to absurdity
  - Nagel's criticisms of standard arguments for absurdity
  - Nagel's argument for the source of absurdity
  - Nagel's answer to absurdity

# Content

- Cartesian skepticism
  - Descartes's quest for certainty
  - The method of doubt
    - three kinds of attitude towards a proposition (belief, disbelief/denial, agnosticism/suspension of judgment)
  - The three stages of doubt
    - sense perception, dreams, and the evil demon
  - The only thing of which one can be certain
    - knowledge of one's own existence – I think, therefore I am'
  - Problems with Descartes's argument
    - do we really know our own minds better than anything in the external world?

# Format

- ① Argument extraction (2, 10 pts)
- ② Definitions (4, 3 pts)
- ③ Multiple choice (14, 2 pts)
- ④ Short essay (2, 20 pts)

## Argument Extraction (Pick 2 of 3)

- ① What's the conclusion of the argument?
- ② What support does the conclusion have?
- ③ What material is essential to the argument and what is extraneous?
- ④ Is the argument valid?
  - if yes, why?
  - if no, why?
- ⑤ Is the argument sound?
  - if no, which premise (or premises) is false?



## Definitions (Pick 4 of 5)

**Determinism:** For any state of the subject, that subject's states are necessitated by the condition of its previous states plus the laws of nature.

**Internalism:** objective values must be intrinsically motivating — knowledge of a moral requirement entails being motivated to follow that requirement

## Multiple Choice (14 questions)

- Free will and determinism
- Mackie's error theory
- Camus & Nagel on absurdity of life
- Cartesian skepticism & Moore's Proof

## Short Essay (Pick 2 of 3)

- Mackie's error theory
  - difference between ethics & meta-ethics
  - error theory
  - two arguments for the error theory