



## **Introduction to Philosophy**

### **Introductory reading**

Unlike other courses, there is a single textbook for this one. It is:

Guttenplan, S., J. Hornsby and C. Janaway *Reading Philosophy*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003).

You will be sent a copy of this book when you register any qualification.

*Reading Philosophy* is constructed around various philosophical problems. It contains texts related to these problems, as well as commentaries and invitations to the reader to think about specific issues raised by the texts. As you will see, the book aims to introduce you – in an active way – both to classic philosophical problems and to the reading of philosophical texts.

The final examination will contain questions relating to each of the chapters in the book, and you are not required to read anything other than what is contained in it. Below is a sample of the kind of question you might encounter. (Note that they are closely keyed to the texts in *Reading Philosophy*.)

### **Sample examination questions**

1. In his First Meditation, how does Descartes attempt to show that there is reason to doubt everything one believes?
2. In connection with the Second Meditation, Hobbes said that it was possible that something that thinks should be something corporeal. Do Descartes' arguments succeed in ruling this possibility out?
3. Strawson states the principle: 'If we are to talk coherently about individual consciousnesses or minds...we must know the difference between one such item and two such items.' Is this principle acceptable? Does it make a problem for Descartes?
4. Is Hume right to think that tragedy is more enjoyable to an audience the more they suffer painful feelings? How successful is he in explaining why this might be so?
5. Do we, as Feagin alleges, take pleasure in our distress at the sufferings of tragic characters? Does this help us to understand the ethical significance of tragedy?
6. Williams distinguishes between two elements in the idea of equality: equality of opportunity and equality of respect. What is the difference between these? Is there any reason to think that there could be a problem in practice of combining equality of opportunity with equality of respect?
7. What does Nozick mean to show using the example of Wilt Chamberlain? Does the example succeed in showing this?
8. What, according to Lemmon, differentiates the Platonic dilemma from the Sartrean one? Is this difference significant for our understanding of moral dilemma?
9. Does Mill's use of the principle of utility threaten the reality of moral dilemmas? In so far as there is a tension between Mill's theory and the reality of moral dilemmas, what is the best way of

resolving it?

10. Outline and evaluate Locke's account of persons and their identity.
11. Is it really possible for one person to change bodies with another?
12. '[T]he will turns at once, like a weathervane on a well-oiled pivot in a changeable wind...It turns successively to all the motives that lie before it as possible, and with each the human being thinks he can will it, and thus fix the weathervane at this point; but this is a mere deception.' (Schopenhauer) What are Schopenhauer's reasons for saying 'this is a mere deception'? Are they good reasons?
13. Strawson doubts that the question whether determinism is true is a significant question for morality. What arguments does he give for doubting this?
14. Hume gives two definitions of 'cause' in the Treatise. Say how these definitions differ from one another. Do you think we could accept them both?
15. What are Anscombe's reasons for denying that causal relations are instances of exceptionless universal generalisations?
16. What distinction do Boyle and Locke make between primary and secondary qualities? Explain and assess two arguments, given by Boyle and/or Locke, for making the distinction.
17. 'An idea can be like nothing but an idea.' (Berkeley) How does Berkeley argue for this claim? What conclusions does Berkeley draw using this claim?