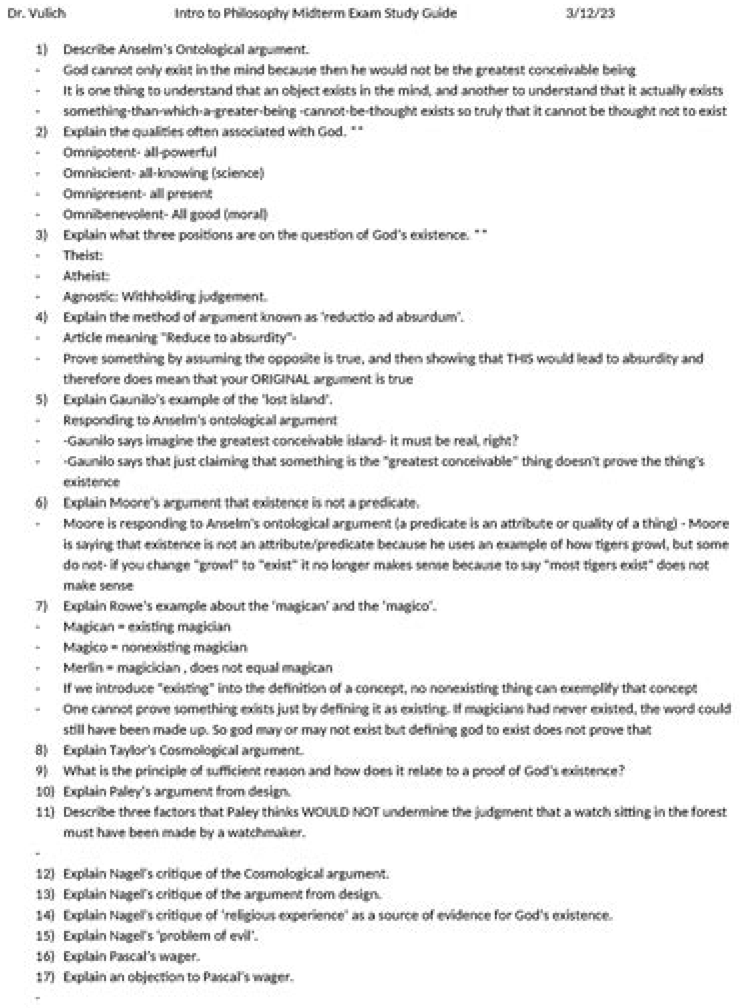
Intro To Philosophy Study Guide



Dr. Vulich Intro to Philosophy Midterm Exam Study Guide 3/12/23

1) Describe Anselm's Ontological argument.
- God cannot only exist in the mind because then he would not be the greatest conceivable being
- It is one thing to understand that an object exists in the mind, and another to understand that it actually exists
- something-than-which-a-greater-being -cannot-be-thought exists so truly that it cannot be thought not to exist

2) Explain the qualities often associated with God. " "
- Omnipotent- all-powerful
- Omniscient- all-knowing (science)
- Omnipresent- all present
- Omnibenevolent- All good (moral)

3) Explain what three positions are on the question of God's existence. " "
- Theist:
- Atheist:
- Agnostic: Withholding judgement.

4) Explain the method of argument known as 'reductio ad absurdum'.
- Article meaning "Reduce to absurdity"-
- Prove something by assuming the opposite is true, and then showing that THIS would lead to absurdity and therefore does mean that your ORIGINAL argument is true

5) Explain Gaunilo's example of the 'lost island'.
- Responding to Anselm's ontological argument
- -Gaunilo says imagine the greatest conceivable island- it must be real, right?
- -Gaunilo says that just claiming that something is the "greatest conceivable" thing doesn't prove the thing's existence

6) Explain Moore's argument that existence is not a predicate.
- Moore is responding to Anselm's ontological argument (a predicate is an attribute or quality of a thing) - Moore is saying that existence is not an attribute/predicate because he uses an example of how tigers growl, but some do not- if you change "growl" to "exist" it no longer makes sense because to say "most tigers exist" does not make sense

7) Explain Rowe's example about the 'magican' and the 'magico'.
- Magican = existing magician
- Magico = nonexisting magician
- Merlin = magicician , does not equal magican
- If we introduce "existing" into the definition of a concept, no nonexisting thing can exemplify that concept
- One cannot prove something exists just by defining it as existing. If magicians had never existed, the word could still have been made up. So god may or may not exist but defining god to exist does not prove that

8) Explain Taylor's Cosmological argument.
9) What is the principle of sufficient reason and how does it relate to a proof of God's existence?
10) Explain Paley's argument from design.
11) Describe three factors that Paley thinks WOULD NOT undermine the judgment that a watch sitting in the forest must have been made by a watchmaker.

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12) Explain Nagel's critique of the Cosmological argument.
13) Explain Nagel's critique of the argument from design.
14) Explain Nagel's critique of 'religious experience' as a source of evidence for God's existence.
15) Explain Nagel's 'problem of evil'.
16) Explain Pascal's wager.
17) Explain an objection to Pascal's wager.

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Intro to philosophy study guide is a vital resource for anyone embarking on the journey of understanding fundamental philosophical concepts and ideas. Philosophy, often referred to as the "love of wisdom," delves deeply into questions concerning existence, knowledge, morality, and the nature of reality. This study guide aims to provide an organized overview of key topics, philosophers, and concepts that are central to the field of philosophy, assisting students in navigating their introductory courses and enhancing their understanding of this profound discipline.

Understanding Philosophy

Philosophy is a broad and diverse field that encompasses various branches and schools of thought. At its core, philosophy seeks to explore essential questions about human existence and the universe. To better understand philosophy, it is helpful to break down its primary branches:

1. Major Branches of Philosophy

- **Metaphysics:** The study of reality and existence. It addresses questions such as "What is there?" and "What is the nature of being?"
- **Epistemology:** The study of knowledge and belief. It explores questions like "What is knowledge?" and "How do we know what we know?"
- **Ethics:** The study of moral values and rules. It examines concepts of right and wrong, good and evil, and justice.
- **Logic:** The study of reasoning. It focuses on the principles of valid inference and correct reasoning.
- **Aesthetics:** The study of beauty and art. It questions what constitutes beauty and how we perceive artistic value.

Key Philosophical Concepts

As you embark on your study of philosophy, familiarizing yourself with fundamental concepts will provide a solid foundation for your understanding. Here are some essential philosophical concepts:

1. The Socratic Method

The Socratic Method, named after the philosopher Socrates, is a form of cooperative argumentative dialogue. This technique involves asking and answering questions to stimulate critical thinking and illuminate ideas. Key components include:

- Engaging in dialogue to explore different viewpoints.
- Challenging assumptions and beliefs.
- Encouraging self-reflection and deeper understanding.

2. The Problem of Evil

The Problem of Evil is a philosophical dilemma concerning the existence of evil in a world governed by an omnipotent, omnibenevolent deity. It raises questions such as:

- If God is all-powerful and all-good, why does evil exist?
- What role does free will play in the presence of evil?
- Can the existence of evil be reconciled with the concept of a benevolent God?

3. Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is an ethical theory that suggests the best action is the one that maximizes overall happiness or utility. Key proponents include Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Important points to consider include:

- The principle of the greatest happiness: Actions are deemed right if they promote happiness and wrong if they produce the opposite.
- The consideration of consequences: Utilitarianism emphasizes the outcomes of actions rather than intentions.
- Critiques: Some argue that utilitarianism can justify immoral actions if they lead to a greater good.

Influential Philosophers and Their Contributions

Throughout history, numerous philosophers have shaped the landscape of philosophical thought. Here are a few influential figures and their contributions:

1. Plato

Plato, a student of Socrates, is known for his works on metaphysics, ethics, and politics. His most famous concept is the Theory of Forms, which posits that non-material abstract forms represent the most accurate reality.

2. Aristotle

Aristotle, a student of Plato, made significant contributions to various fields, including logic, ethics, and natural sciences. He introduced the concept of virtue ethics, emphasizing character and virtue as the basis for moral decision-making.

3. Immanuel Kant

Kant is known for his work in epistemology and ethics. He proposed the Categorical Imperative, a principle stating that one should act only according to that maxim which one can will to become a universal law.

4. Friedrich Nietzsche

Nietzsche challenged traditional moral values and introduced concepts such as the "will to power" and the "Übermensch" (Overman). His work encourages individuals to create their own values and embrace life's challenges.

Study Tips for Philosophy Students

Studying philosophy can be daunting due to the complexity of ideas and arguments. Here are some effective study tips to enhance your learning experience:

1. Read Actively

Engage with the texts by taking notes, highlighting key points, and summarizing arguments in your own words. Active reading fosters a deeper understanding of the material.

2. Discuss with Peers

Participate in study groups or class discussions. Engaging with others can provide new perspectives and clarify challenging concepts.

3. Write Reflectively

Keep a philosophical journal to reflect on your thoughts and questions. Writing helps organize your ideas and deepen your understanding of complex topics.

4. Explore Secondary Sources

Supplement your reading with secondary sources, such as commentaries and analyses. These resources can provide context and clarify difficult passages.

5. Practice Argument Analysis

Develop your critical thinking skills by analyzing arguments. Identify premises and conclusions, evaluate the strength of arguments, and consider counterarguments.

Conclusion

An **intro to philosophy study guide** serves as a valuable tool for navigating the intricate world of philosophical thought. By understanding the major branches, key concepts, and influential philosophers, students can build a solid foundation for their studies. Embracing the principles of active reading, discussion, and reflective writing will enhance your philosophical journey, allowing you to engage thoughtfully with the profound questions that define this discipline. Whether you are pursuing philosophy as a major or simply seeking to enrich your understanding of the world, this study guide will equip you with the essential tools needed for success in your philosophical endeavors.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the main branches of philosophy covered in an introductory course?

An introductory philosophy course typically covers key branches such as metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, logic, and aesthetics.

How does philosophy differ from other fields of study?

Philosophy differs from other fields in its focus on fundamental questions about existence, knowledge, values, reason, and reality, often employing critical thinking and logical analysis.

What are some famous philosophical texts that are essential for beginners?

Some essential texts for beginners include Plato's 'The Republic', Descartes' 'Meditations on First Philosophy', Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason', and Nietzsche's 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra'.

Why is critical thinking emphasized in an intro to philosophy study guide?

Critical thinking is emphasized because it equips students with the skills to analyze arguments, identify fallacies, and construct well-reasoned conclusions, which are crucial in philosophical inquiry.

What role does ethics play in introductory philosophy?

Ethics plays a significant role in introductory philosophy as it examines moral principles, questions of right and wrong, and how individuals should act, often prompting discussions on contemporary moral issues.

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