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SKU: 9780190698744-TEST-BANK

Sample Exam Questions

PART I: PHILOSOPHY

Bertrand Russell, "The Value of Philosophy"

Essay Questions

1) Explain why and in what respect Russell thinks that philosophy is importantly different from other fields of inquiry.
2) How does Russell argue that philosophy is a "good of the mind"?
3) According to Russell, what is the value of "speculative interest," and how does philosophy help to keep it alive?

Multiple-Choice Questions

*1. According to Russell, science is valuable *primarily* for . . .
a. Its effects on mankind in general
b. Its effects on the student
c. The technology it produces
d. None of the above

2. Which of the following best characterizes what Russell means by the "practical man prejudice"?
a. Overlooking the value of philosophy
b. Taking science to be the only valuable subject to study
c. Taking philosophy to be the only valuable subject to study
d. Overlooking the fact that the goods of the mind are as important as the goods of the body

*3. According to Russell, philosophy aims at which of the following types of knowledge?
a. The kind that gives unity and system to the body of the sciences
b. The kind that results from a critical examination of the grounds of prejudices and beliefs
c. All of the above
d. None of the above

4. According to Russell, philosophy doesn't give definite answers to its questions because …
a. As soon as definite knowledge is possible, the subject ceases to be called philosophy
b. Part of the value of philosophy is its uncertainty
c. The kinds of questions it asks must remain insoluble
d. (a) and (c)

*5. According to Russell, the "man who has no tincture of philosophy" . . .
a. Takes the world to be definite, finite, and obvious
b. Contemptuously rejects unfamiliar possibilities
c. Goes through life imprisoned by local prejudices
d. All of the above

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6. Which of the following isn't a reason Russell offers as to why philosophy is valuable?
a. It keeps alive our sense of wonder.
b. It increases our knowledge as to what may be
c. It allows one to rationally defend one's personal aims
d. Contemplating philosophical subjects enlarges one's Self

*7. According to Russell, what is the problem with philosophies that assimilate the world to Man?
a. They aren't actually philosophies
b. They impair any attempt at forming a union between the Self and not-Self
c. They diminish our feeling of certainty
d. There is no such problem, according to Russell

8. For Russell, the "free intellect" . . .
a. Will see without a here and a now
b. Values abstract and universal knowledge
c. Disvalues knowledge in which one's personal history factors
d. All of the above

*9. According to Russell, which of the following is a benefit of making one's mind accustomed to freedom and impartiality
a. That one will become more free and impartial in the world of action and emotion
b. That one will be able to live a materially comfortable life
c. That one will be better fit to find out the Truth in all philosophical matters
d. That one will be able to recognize right from wrong

10. Philosophy, for Russell, is to be studied . . .
a. For the sake of finding definite answers to questions of human interest
b. For the sake of finding the answers one needs to go on in this world
c. For the sake of the questions themselves
d. For the sake of improving the world

Multiple-Choice Answers:
1. a
2. d
3. c
4. a
5. d
6. c
7. b
8. d
9. a
10. c

True/False Questions

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*1. According to Russell, philosophy is valuable for the same reason science is valuable.
*2. Russell holds that philosophy is valuable because of the answers it gives one to questions of human interest.
*3. For Russell, man isn't the measure of all things.
4. A benefit of studying philosophy, according to Russell, is that it frees one from one's circle of private interests.
5. Russell contends that philosophy does not involve uncertainty, despite common thought.

True/False Answers:
1. F
2. F
3. T
4. T
5. F

Plato, "Apology: Defence of Socrates"

Essay Questions

1) What activity is Socrates referring to when he says that he has gone around "examining" the citizens of Athens?
2) How does Socrates reconcile the claim that he is the wisest person with the claim that he knows nothing?
3) Reconstruct and evaluate Socrates' argument that it is not rational to fear death.

Multiple-Choice Questions

*1. Evenus is a . . .
a. Craftsman
b. Poet
c. Sophist
d. Politician

2. According to the oracle at Delphi . . .
a. Socrates would be tried by Athens
b. Socrates would be found innocent
c. Socrates would be condemned to death
d. There is no one wiser than Socrates

*3. Why does Socrates take himself to be wiser than the people he interviews?
a. He finds he knows more than they do
b. He finds they aren't as good at arguing as he is
c. He finds they think they know things they don't actually know, and he doesn't
d. He finds they are unjust

4. After hearing the oracle's answer, Socrates goes around Athens and interviews . . .
a. Politicians
b. Poets

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c. Craftspeople
d. All of the above

*5. Socrates stands charged of . . .
a. Obstructing justice
b. Corrupting the youth
c. Murder
d. All of the above

6. According to Socrates' analogy, Athens is like a _____ and he is like a _____.
a. horse; gadfly
b. gadfly; horse
c. teacher; student
d. student; teacher

*7. Why doesn't Socrates try to gain sympathy from his jury?
a. He doesn't believe it will work
b. He doesn't have children, or anything which can gain him sympathy
c. He believes he should only be acquitted on the basis of justice and the law
d. All of the above

8. After being found guilty, what alternative punishment does Socrates ultimately suggest?
a. A fine of 1 Mina
b. A fine of 30 Minas
c. Exile
d. Imprisonment

*9. After being condemned to death, what is Socrates' prophecy?
a. That Athens will decline after his death
b. That there will never be anyone as wise as he is
c. That after death he will be with heroes and wise people in Hades
d. That killing him will only bring more critics like him

10. According to Socrates, it is harder to avoid _____ than it is to avoid death.
a. knowledge
b. wickedness
c. cowardice
d. truth

Multiple-Choice Answers
1. c
2. d
3. c
4. d
5. b
6. a

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7. c
8. b
9. d
10. b

True/False Questions

*1. Socrates is found guilty and exiled from Athens.
*2. For Socrates, while justice is important, it is more important to protect your own life
*3. Plato and other students of Socrates offer to pay a fine of 30 minas for him.
4. Socrates argues that death is the most frightening thing possible, but he is ready to face it.
5. Socrates finds that no one he interviews is wiser than he is, because everyone he interviews thinks they know something, even if they don't know it.

True/False Answers

1. F
2. F
3. T
4. F
5. T

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PART II: GOD AND EVIL

Saint Anselm, "The Ontological Argument"

Essay Questions

1) What is Anselm's distinction between existence in the understanding and existence in reality? Explain.
2) What is Anselm's argument that God exists in the understanding?
3) Why does Anselm think that existence in reality is greater than mere existence in the understanding?

Multiple-Choice Questions

*1. Anselm is seeking to _____ the truth of God.
a. better understand
b. believe in
c. test
d. None of the above

2. According to Anselm, one cannot _____ God unless one _____ God.
a. believe in; understands
b. understand; trusts
c. understand; believes in
d. trust in; understands

*3. According to Anselm, God . . .
a. Is omniscient, omnipotent, and all good.
b. Doesn't exist.
c. Is that which nothing greater can be conceived.
d. Only exists as a concept in our minds.

4. Which of the following best characterizes Anselm's question?
a. Does God exist?
b. Does God exist in our understanding?
c. Is God that which nothing greater can be conceived?
d. Can anything be conceived that is greater than God?

*5. Which of the following best characterizes the position Anselm argues for?
a. It is possible for God to exist only in one's understanding
b. If God exists in one's understanding, necessarily God exists
c. God cannot exist, even in one's understanding
d. God only exists in one's understanding

6. Anselm uses his painter analogy to distinguish between . . .
a. Something existing in one's understanding and it existing in reality
b. True and false belief
c. Belief and knowledge

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d. None of the above

*7. Choose the answer that best fills in the missing step in Anselm's argument:
(i) God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived.
(ii) God exists in one's understanding.
(iii)

(iv) But then we can conceive something greater than God.
(v) This is a contradiction, so if God exists in our understanding, God must exist.
a. If God exists in one's understanding, then God must exist in reality.
b. It is possible for something to exist in one's understanding but not in reality.
c. God is also something greater than can be conceived.
d. If God only exists in one's understanding, we could still conceive of God existing in reality.

8. According to Anselm, it is absurd that we can conceive of something greater than God . . .
a. Because God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived.
b. Because then a created thing would pass judgment upon its creator.
c. Because then a created thing would rise above its creator.
d. All of the above

*9. According to Anselm, not only is God that which nothing greater can be conceived, God is also . . .
a. Something greater than can be conceived.
b. What gives meaning to our lives.
c. Omniscient, Omnipotent, and All good.
d. The truth.

10. How, for Anselm, could one truthfully believe God doesn't exist if it is conceptually impossible?
a. One might regard the words "God does not exist" as meaningless or take them in an unusual sense
b. One might understand God, but simply not believe in God
c. One might have given it very little thought
d. None of the above

Multiple-Choice Answers
1. a
2. c
3. c
4. a
5. b
6. a
7. d
8. d
9. a

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10. a

True/False Questions
*1. Anselm argues that God likely exists.
*2. Anselm holds that one can understand God without believing in God.
*3. Anselm holds that God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived.
4. For Anselm, God is not only that than which nothing greater can be conceived, God is also greater than can be conceived.
5. Anselm believes one can't understand God and truly believe God doesn't exist.

True/False Answers
1. F
2. F
3. T
4. T
5. T

Saint Thomas Aquinas, "The Existence of God"

Essay Questions
1) Why does Aquinas think that a series of causes cannot go back to infinity?
2) Reconstruct and evaluate Aquinas's argument that if everything could fail to exist, then there would have been a time at which nothing existed.
3) Why does Aquinas think that we can't explain everything merely in terms of natural phenomena?

Multiple-Choice Questions
*1. According to the ontological argument, God exists because . . .
a. No ontology could be complete without including a being that necessarily exists
b. God by definition necessarily exists
c. God exists in thought
d. God is that than which nothing greater can be meant, and if God didn't exist, He wouldn't be greatest

2. Against the ontological argument, Aquinas argues that even if God means "that than which nothing greater can be thought" . . .
a. This doesn't do anything to guarantee that God exists in anything more than thought
b. There could still be things greater than God that exist
c. God still must exist, because there must be a first efficient cause
d. None of the above

*3. The first objection to God's existence states that by God we mean something infinitely good, and . . .
a. Nothing could be infinitely good, so God doesn't exist
b. This isn't the only way someone could define God, so God doesn't necessarily exist

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c. God's existence is thus inconsistent with there being bad things in the world, so God can't exist
d. God must precede the notion of goodness, and this would be a contradiction, so God doesn't exist

4. Central to Aquinas's first argument for God's existence is the claim that . . .
a. Something can change itself
b. Whatever undergoes change must be changed by another thing
c. Actuality and potentiality are the only real properties something can have
d. There is no real change

*5. According to Aquinas, why can't something be its own efficient cause?
a. Because then there would be no first efficient cause
b. Because series of causes can't back to infinity
c. Because then it would be prior to itself, which is impossible
d. None of the above

6. According to Aquinas's third argument, why must God exist?
a. Because something must exist of necessity
b. Because otherwise there would be a time when nothing existed
c. Because otherwise nothing could exist now
d. All of the above

*7. For Aquinas, there must be something maximally true, good, and noble, because . . .
a. God must exist.
b. There are a limited number of things in the world.
c. There must be something by which to measure gradations of goodness, truth, and nobility.
d. All of the above.

8. According to Aquinas's fifth argument, God must exist because . . .
a. Things that lack consciousness still act with purpose, and they need something to direct them
b. God is the greatest entity, and to be the greatest entity, God must exist
c. Arrows must be directed by archers
d. Objects within nature have no purpose

*9. Which of the following best characterizes Aquinas's response to the objection that God can't exist because there is evil in the world?
a. Since God is supremely good, He would only allow evil to exist if He could bring good out of it
b. In order for good to exist, evil must exist
c. God is infinitely good
d. None of the above

10. According to Aquinas, we must trace purposeful acts back to a cause higher than human reason and will because . . .

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a. Humans are created by God
b. Everything in nature works for a definite end
c. These can change or go out of existence
d. None of the above

Multiple-Choice Answers
1. d
2. a
3. c
4. b
5. c
6. d
7. c
8. a
9. a
10. c

True/False Questions
*1. Aquinas rejects the ontological argument for the existence of God.
*2. According to Aquinas, it is possible that something that undergoes change to cause that change.
*3. According to Aquinas, something can't be its own efficient cause.
4. Aquinas holds that it is an open question whether or not God exists.
5. For Aquinas, it is possible that something come into existence from nothing.

True/False Answers
1. T
2. F
3. T
4. F
5. F

William Paley, "Natural Theology"

Essay Questions
1) Why does Paley think that we would have to conclude that a watch was designed?
2) Even if we grant that the watch was designed, how does this help us argue for the existence of God?
3) Paley says that the question under consideration is *not* how the first watch came into existence. Why not? And what question *is* under consideration?

Multiple-Choice Question
*1. According to Paley, how would we respond if asked how a watch we found in a heath, or meadow, got there?
a. We would suppose it could have always been there
b. We wouldn't know how to answer such a question

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c. We would suppose that the watch was at some point created by someone
d. None of the above

2. For Paley, why wouldn't we stop supposing someone created the watch if we find out it is imperfect?
a. Because watches are different from rocks
b. Because it is still unlikely to be a natural feature of the heath
c. We would stop supposing the watch was created by someone if we find out it is imperfect
d. Because the purpose of the watch would still be evident

*3. Of the following considerations, which *isn't* one Paley considers regarding our reaction to finding the watch?
a. The fact that we're familiar with watches
b. The fact that the watch might be imperfect
c. The fact that we may not understand how the watch works
d. None of the above

4. According to Paley, why wouldn't it affect our reaction to finding the watch if we didn't understand how certain parts worked?
a. It would affect our reaction, according to Paley
b. Because finding it in a heath is enough
c. Because it is still different from a rock
d. Because through the decay of its parts we'd eventually see the watch's design

*5. For Paley, which of the following is implied by a law?
a. An agent
b. A power
c. An agent and a power
d. None of the above

6. What feature does Paley ask us to consider being added to the watch we find?
a. It produces replicas of itself
b. It plays music
c. It is made of stone
d. It grows larger

*7. If the watch produces replicas of itself, how is it different from a carpenter, according to Paley?
a. Carpenters are people
b. Carpenters cause the relation between the parts of what they create and its use
c. Carpenters have to study a craft
d. Carpenters aren't found in fields

8. Why doesn't it matter, for Paley, that the found watch might have been created by another watch?
a. Because it is so unlikely the case

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