Philosophy Bridging Work

This Document and therefore the hyperlinks are available on the Huish A Level Philosophy Website (essential links) - you can also make a copy of this document and complete anything online if you would prefer.
https://shorturl.at/gyTV1

The Aim	How will this be assessed?
To introduce you to some of the key concepts in Philosophy and to get you thinking about aspects of course material.	You will be asked to produce and discuss your answers in your first week of Philosophy lessons. A grade 1-3 will be given for your work. See below for criteria. You will need to hand in a copy of your work.

What should you do if you find the work difficult?

Firstly, give it a go! Or leave it for a day or two to 'sink in', and then have another try. Philosophy sometimes takes a while to understand, and it's amazing what a bit of time can do.

Secondly- contact me
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If you find something very challenging, seeing something explained in a different way can help.

http://www.alevelphilosophy.co.uk/
http://philosophypages.com/
Crash course Philosophy Playlist

Success Criteria:

1 – All answers are completed in detail with clear reference to the reading and evidence of wider reading using the resources from the instruction sheet. Deeper thinking in response to questions utilising one's own thoughts and examples with no material copied verbatim from the sheet or from the internet. Justified answers that demonstrate a good understanding of the logic of argument through analysing details of arguments. Able to converse fluently about extra resources.

2 – All answers are attempted to a good standard. Some attempt at sourcing wider reading and applying this to questions. Some deeper thinking which demonstrates an ability to analyse the logic of arguments using example and/or evidence. Reference to the information sheet for support, with some evidence of wider reading, but used in a fluent, thoughtful manner rather than copied directly. Answers provide some justification using evidence/examples with some analysis of reasoning. Able to converse effectively about extra resources.

3 – Some answers are attempted, but not all. Responses are brief and omit key terminology made apparent in the sources. Some explanations are presented but lack clarity or depth. Examples or reasoning are stated but unexplored. Sections are extracted verbatim from the information sheet or the internet. Not able to provide any meaningful knowledge of extra resources.

Work to be completed by your first lesson in September.

    1. Choose <u>**one**</u> of the resources from the boxes below and write an article summarising:
what it was about, philosophical issues raised, issues you found interesting and why, what questions it has raised and what you have learned. *Hint: aim to write a short paragraph about each of these areas.*

Film/TV	Articles
- The Good Place Season 1 (Netflix) - Westworld Season 1 - The Truman Show (Film) - Inception (Film)	'The Ancient Greeks' Guide to Propaganda and Disinformation' *(An article about the nature of truth and the importance of argument)* Click here - How to live the "good life." An article on Aristotelian ethics. Click here
Podcasts - The Partially Examined Life *('A podcast by some guys who were at one point set on doing philosophy for a living but then thought better of it.')* - In Our Time *(BBC podcast on a variety of different ideas and themes with a variety of guests.)* - The Philosophy Guy *(This is about the many philosophical ideas that are popularised by our culture through films etc.)*	**Talks** - The Surprising Science Of Happiness *(A talk about how happiness is formed by the mind.)* Click here. - Questions No One Knows The Answers To. Click here.

2. Define/explain- **max. 50 words** for each. Use the reading material below to do this, and also click on each word for a hyperlink to a video resource.

    a. [Philosophy](#)
    b. [Metaphysics](#)
    c. [Epistemology](#)
    d. [Ethics](#)

3. Explain the difference between a good argument and a bad argument using the paragraph about *'how philosophy is done'* below. Use terms like 'premise' and 'conclusion'. Aim to write **about 50 words.**

4. Personal reflection. Why did you choose to take Philosophy? What do you hope to get out of it? What do you think you are going to find most interesting or enjoy the most about this course? Do you have any questions or concerns about the course and what you will be covering?

Continue your learning…

There are many wonderful resources available if you wish to immerse yourself in philosophy more. You can always look at more than one of the resources suggested above, or you can take a look at any of the following:

- **Sophie's World** by Jostein Gaarder. This is a useful book for those who are starting out on their philosophical journey and follows the journey of a Norwegian girl called Sophie as she discovers the history of philosophy. It is a reworking for young readers of a classic Philosophical work called "The History of Western Philosophy" by Bertrand Russell. If you would like a greater challenge - you could go to this source text.

- **Talks** about philosophy range from really long to really short and cover every issue you could imagine. You could start by looking at the talks by David Eagleman on [Brain over Mind](#)

- **Article** -why study Philosophy (benefits, links to careers etc.) [LINK](#)

Reading material for Questions 2 and 3.

1. **What is philosophy?**

Philosophy is quite unlike any other field. It is unique both in its methods and in the nature and breadth of its subject matter. Philosophy pursues questions in every dimension of human life, and its techniques apply to problems in any field of study or endeavor. No brief definition expresses the richness and variety of philosophy. It may be described in many ways. It is a reasoned pursuit of fundamental truths, a quest for understanding, a study of principles of conduct. It seeks to establish standards of evidence, to provide rational methods of resolving conflicts, and to create techniques for evaluating ideas and arguments. Philosophy develops the capacity to see the world from the perspective of other individuals and other cultures; it enhances one's ability to perceive the relationships among the various fields of study; and it deepens one's sense of the meaning and variety of human experience.

This short description of philosophy could be greatly expanded, but let us instead illustrate some of the points. As the systematic study of ideas and issues, philosophy may examine concepts and views drawn from science, art, religion, politics, or any other realm. Philosophical appraisal of ideas and issues takes many forms, but philosophical studies often focus on the meaning of an idea and on its basis, coherence, and relations to other ideas. Consider, for instance, *democracy*. What is it? What justifies it as a system of government? Can a democracy allow the people to vote away their own rights? And how is it related to political liberty? Consider *human knowledge*. What is its nature and extent? Must we always have evidence in order to know? What can we know about the thoughts and feelings of others, or about the future? What kind of knowledge, if any, is fundamental? Similar kinds of questions arise concerning art, morality, religion, science, and each of the major areas of human activity. Philosophy explores all of them. It views them both microscopically and from the wide perspective of the larger concerns of human existence.

How Philosophy is Done

As a kind of inquiry, philosophy is aimed at establishing knowledge and understanding. Once we raise a philosophical issue, whether about the nature of justice or about the nature of reality, we want to ask what can be said for or against the various possible answers to our question. Here we are engaged in formulating arguments. Some arguments give us better reasons for accepting their conclusions than others. Once we have formulated an argument, we want to evaluate the reasoning it offers. If you want to know what philosophers do, this is a pretty good answer: **philosophers formulate and evaluate arguments**.

Once a philosophical position is considered:

• We want to ask what arguments can be advanced in support of or against that issue.

• We then want to examine the quality of the arguments. Evaluating flawed arguments often points the way towards other arguments and the process of formulating, clarifying, and evaluating arguments continues.

• This method of question and answer in which we recursively formulate, clarify, and evaluate arguments is known as **dialectic**. Dialectic looks a lot like debate. **The goal of a debate** is to win by persuading an audience that your position is right and your opponent's is wrong. **Dialectic, on the other hand**, is aimed at inquiry. The goal is to learn something new about the issue under discussion.

Dialectic is sometimes referred to as the Socratic Method after the famous originator of this systematic style of inquiry.

Arguments

The common sense everyday way to assess a claim for truth or falsity is to consider the reasons for holding it or rejecting it.

An argument is a reason for taking something to be true. **Arguments consist of two or more claims, one of which is a conclusion**. The conclusion is the claim the argument purports to give a reason for believing. The other claims are the **premises**. **The premises of an argument taken together are offered as a reason for believing its conclusion.**

Some arguments provide better reasons for believing their conclusions than others. In case you have any doubt about that, **consider the following examples:**

1. Sam is a line cook. 2. Line cooks generally have good kitchen skills. 3. So, Sam can probably cook well.

1. Sam is a line cook. 2. Line cooks generally aren't paid very well. 3. So, Sam is probably a millionaire.

Assuming the premises in the first argument are true, we have a good reason to think that its conclusion is true. The premises in the second argument give us no reason to think Sam is a millionaire. So **whether or not the premises of an argument support its conclusion is a key issue**. Now consider these examples:

1. London is in England.

2. England is south of Scotland.

3. So London is south of Scotland.

1. London is in Wales.

2. Wales is west of England.

3. So London is west of England.

Again, the first of these two arguments looks pretty good, the second not so much. But **the problem with the second argument here is different**. If its premises were true, then we would have a good reason to think the conclusion is true. That is, **the premises do support the conclusion**. **But the first premise of the second argument just isn't true**. London is not in Wales. So the latter pair of arguments suggests another key issue for evaluating arguments. **Good arguments have true premises**.

That is pretty much it. A good argument is an argument that has true premises that, when taken together, support its conclusion.

So, evaluating an argument involves just these two essential steps:

• Determine whether or not the premises are true.

• **Determine whether or not the premises support the conclusion (that is, whether we have grounds to think the conclusion is true if all of the premises are true).**

2. **Metaphysics**

Metaphysical issues are concerned with the nature of reality. Traditional metaphysical issues include the existence of God and the nature of human free will (assuming we have any). Here are a few metaphysical questions of interest to contemporary philosophers: **What is a thing? How are space and time related? Does the past exist? How about the future? How many dimensions does the world have? Are there any entities beyond physical objects (like numbers, properties, and relations)? If so, how are they related to physical objects?** Historically, many philosophers have proposed and defended specific metaphysical positions, often as part of systematic and comprehensive metaphysical views. But attempts to establish systematic metaphysical world views have been notoriously unsuccessful.

In just the past few decades metaphysics has returned to vitality. As difficult as they are to resolve, metaphysical issues are also difficult to ignore for long. A better way to understand metaphysics as it is currently practiced is through a better understanding of how various claims about reality logically hang together or conflict. Metaphysicians analyze metaphysical puzzles and problems with the goal of better understanding how things could or could not be. Metaphysicians are in the business of exploring the realm of possibility and necessity. They are explorers of logical space.

3. **Epistemology**

Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge and justified belief. **What is knowledge? Can we have any knowledge at all? Can we have knowledge about the laws of nature, the laws or morality, or the existence of other minds?** The view that we can't have knowledge is called **skepticism**. An extreme form of skepticism denies that we can have any knowledge whatsoever. But we might grant that we can have knowledge about some things and remain skeptics concerning other issues. **Many people, for instance, are not skeptics about scientific knowledge, but are skeptics when it comes to knowledge of morality**. Some critical attention reveals that **scientific knowledge and moral knowledge face many of the same skeptical challenges**.

Even if we lack absolute and certain knowledge of many things, our beliefs about those things might yet be more or less reasonable or more or less likely to be true given the limited evidence we have. Epistemology
is also concerned with **what it is for a belief to be rationally justified**. Even if we can't have certain knowledge of anything (or much), questions about what we ought to believe remain relevant.

4. **Ethics**

While epistemology is concerned with what we ought to believe and how we ought to reason, Ethics is concerned with what we ought to do, how we ought to live, and how we ought to organise our communities. Sadly, it comes as a surprise to many new philosophy students that you can reason about such things. **Religiously inspired views** about morality often take right and wrong to be simply a matter of what is commanded by a divine being. **Moral Relativism**, perhaps the most popular opinion among people who have rejected faith, simply substitutes the commands of God for the commands of Society. Commands are simply to be obeyed, they are not to be inquired into, assessed for reasonableness, or tested against the evidence. Thinking of morality in terms of whose commands are authoritative leaves no room for rational inquiry into how we ought to live, how we ought to treat others, or how we ought to structure our communities. Philosophy, on the other hand, takes seriously the possibility of rational inquiry into these matters. We don't have a universal theory in science, why would there be a universal theory in morality?

So we might think of metaphysics as concerned with "What is it?" questions, epistemology as concerned with "How do we know?" questions, and ethics as concerned with "What should we do about it?" questions.

General Uses of Philosophy

Much of what is learned in philosophy can be applied in virtually any endeavor. This is both because philosophy touches on so many subjects and, especially, because many of its methods are usable in any field.

General Problem Solving

The study of philosophy enhances, in a way no other activity does, one's problem-solving capacities. It helps students to analyse concepts, definitions, arguments, and problems. It contributes to students' capacity to organise ideas and issues, to deal with questions of value, and to extract what is essential from masses of information. It helps students distinguish fine differences between views and discover common ground between opposing positions. And it helps students synthesize a variety of views or perspectives into a unified whole.

Communication Skills

Philosophy also contributes uniquely to the development of expressive and communicative powers. It provides some of the basic tools of self-expression—for instance, skills in presenting ideas through well-constructed, systematic arguments—that other fields either do not use, or use less extensively. It helps students to express what is distinctive about their views; enhances their ability to explain difficult material; and helps to eliminate ambiguities and vagueness from students' writing and speech.

Persuasive Powers

Philosophy provides training in the construction of clear formulations, good arguments, and apt examples. It thereby helps one develop the ability to be convincing. Students learn to build and

defend their own views, appreciate competing positions, and indicate forcefully why they consider their own views preferable to alternatives. These capacities can be developed not only through reading and writing in philosophy, but also through the philosophical *dialogue*, in and outside the classroom, that is so much a part of a thoroughgoing philosophical education.

Writing Skills

Writing is taught intensively in many philosophy courses, and many regularly assigned philosophical texts are unparalleled as literary essays. Philosophy teaches interpretive writing through its examination of challenging texts, comparative writing through emphasis on fairness to alternative positions, argumentative writing through developing students' ability to establish their own views, and descriptive writing through detailed portrayal of concrete examples: the anchors to which generalisations must be tied. Structure and technique, then, are emphasised in philosophical writing. Originality is also encouraged, and students are generally urged to use their imagination and develop their own ideas.

The Uses of Philosophy in Educational Pursuits

The general uses of philosophy just described are obviously of great academic value. It should be clear that the study of philosophy has intrinsic rewards as an unlimited quest for the understanding of important, challenging problems. But philosophy has further uses in deepening an education, both in college and in the many activities, professional and personal, that follow graduation.

Understanding Other Disciplines

Philosophy is indispensable for this. Many important questions *about* a discipline, such as the nature of its concepts and its relation to other disciplines, do not belong *to* that discipline, are not usually pursued in it, and are philosophical in nature. Philosophy of science, for instance, is needed to supplement the understanding of the natural and social sciences derived from scientific work itself. Philosophy of literature and philosophy of history are of similar value in understanding the humanities, and philosophy of art is important in understanding the arts. Philosophy is, moreover, essential in assessing the various standards of evidence used by other disciplines. Since all fields of knowledge employ reasoning and must set standards of evidence, logic and epistemology have a general bearing on all these fields.

Development of Sound Methods of Research and Analysis

Still another value of philosophy in education is its contribution to one's capacity to frame hypotheses, do research, and put problems into manageable form. Philosophical thinking strongly emphasizes clear formulation of ideas and problems, selection of relevant data, and objective methods for assessing ideas and proposals. It also emphasizes development of a sense of the new directions suggested by the hypotheses and questions one encounters in doing research. Philosophers regularly build on both the successes and failures of their predecessors. A person with philosophical training can readily learn to do the same in any field.

The Uses of Philosophy in Various Careers

The value of a field of study must not be viewed mainly in terms of its contribution to obtaining

the first job after graduation. Students are understandably concerned with getting their first job, but it would be short-sighted to concentrate on that at the expense of developing potential for success and advancement once hired. What gets graduates initially hired may not yield promotions or carry them beyond their first position, particularly given how fast the needs of many employers evolve with changes in social and economic patterns. It is therefore crucial to see beyond what a job description specifically calls for. Philosophy need not be mentioned among a job's requirements in order for the benefits of philosophical study to be *appreciated* by the employer, and those benefits need not even be explicitly appreciated in order to be *effective* in helping one advance.

Employers want—and reward—many of the capacities that the study of philosophy develops: for instance, the ability to solve problems, to communicate, to organise ideas and issues, to assess pros and cons, and to boil down complex data. These capacities represent *transferable skills*. They are transferable not only from philosophy to non-philosophy areas, but from one non-philosophical field to another. For this reason, people trained in philosophy are not only prepared to do many kinds of tasks; they are particularly well prepared to cope with change in their chosen career field, or even move into new careers.

As all this suggests, there are people trained in philosophy in just about every field. They have gone not only into such professions as teaching (at all levels), medicine, law, computer science, management, publishing, sales, criminal justice, public relations, and many other fields.

In emphasising the long-range benefits of training in philosophy, whether through a major, a minor, or a sample of courses in the field, there are at least two further points to note. The first concerns the value of philosophy for vocational training. The second applies to the whole of life.

First, philosophy can yield immediate benefits for students planning postgraduate work. Philosophy students regularly outperform students from other disciplines. As law, medical, business, and other professional school faculty and admissions personnel have often said, philosophy is excellent preparation for the training and later careers of the professionals in question. In preparing to enter fields which have special requirements for postgraduate study, such as computer science, management, medicine, or public administration, choosing philosophy as a second major (or minor) alongside the specialised degree can be very useful.

The second point here is that the long-range value of philosophical study goes far beyond its contribution to one's livelihood. Philosophy broadens the range of things one can understand and enjoy. It can give self-knowledge, foresight, and a sense of direction in life. It can provide special pleasures of insight to reading and conversation. It can lead to self-discovery, expansion of consciousness, and self-renewal. Through all of this, and through its contribution to one's expressive powers, it nurtures individuality and self-esteem. Its value for private life can be incalculable; its benefits for public life as a citizen can be immeasurable.