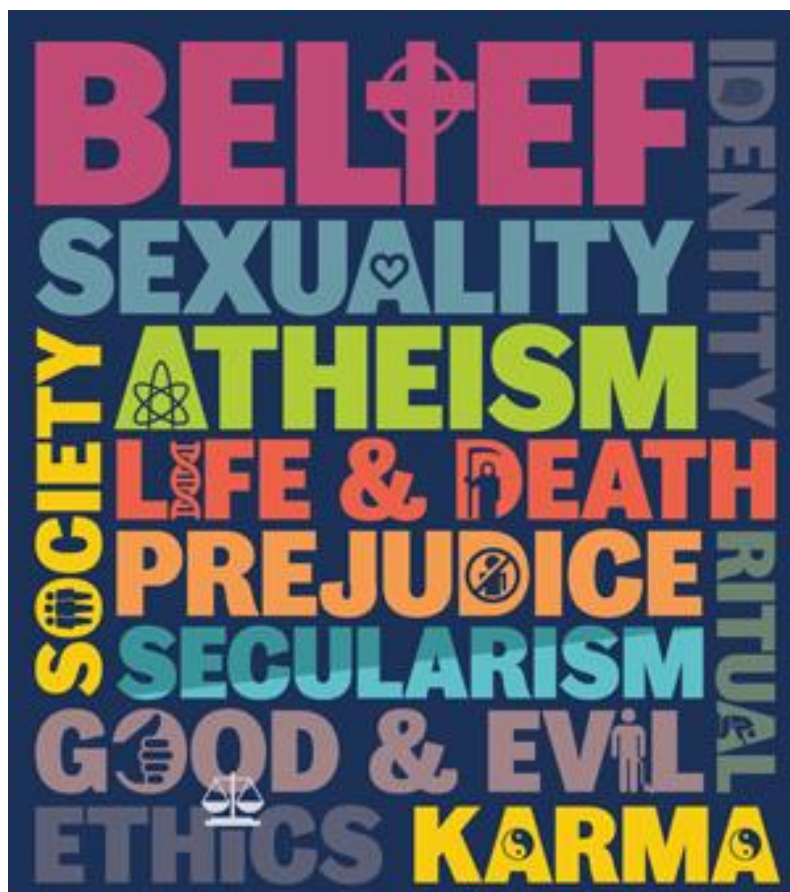


OCR

AS Religious Studies

Intro to Philosophy & Ethics

Workbook



Name:

Introduction to Philosophy

Philosophy is the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality and existence, especially when considered as an academic discipline.

Soren Kierkegaard: *"The thing is to understand myself. To see what God really wishes me to do: the things is to find a truth which is true for me, to find the idea for which I can live and die."*

Socrates: *"The unexamined life is not worth living."*



Therefore, to live life most fully means thinking about the meaning of our experiences, such as our adventures or friendships. Philosophy therefore is just an extension of this activity.

There are four branches of philosophy:

1. Logic (reasoning)
2. Epistemology (theory of knowledge)
3. Metaphysics (first principles of things, which includes abstract concepts like being, knowing, space, time)
4. Ethics (what is right or wrong)



Logic is the structure of arguments. Its main concern is whether an argument's conclusion logically follows on from the information (called premises). It searches for the validity of the arguments. An argument is valid if it is in a form that, if the information (or premises) is true, then the conclusion must also be true.

Aristotle's logic is also called 'syllogistic logic' because the **syllogism** is the most basic logical form within the system. The most famous example of a syllogism is:

- All men are mortal (premise 1)
- Socrates is a man (premise 2)
- Therefore: Socrates is mortal (conclusion)

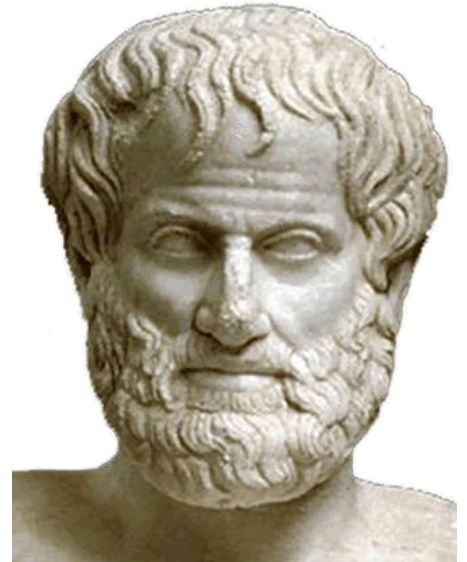
All p are q
r is p
Therefore r is q.

Another example:

- All women are awesome
- Miss Carr is a woman (believe it or not!)
- Therefore, Miss Carr is awesome

As we can see from the 'Miss Carr' example, although the argument is **logical** and **valid**, it is not necessarily **true**. So, being 'logical' doesn't mean an argument is 'true' or even 'sensible'.

Aristotle: "It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it."



Tasks:

1. What is philosophy?

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2. What does living fully mean to Socrates?

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3. What are the four branches of philosophy?

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4. What is Aristotle's logic called?

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5. What is an example of valid syllogism?

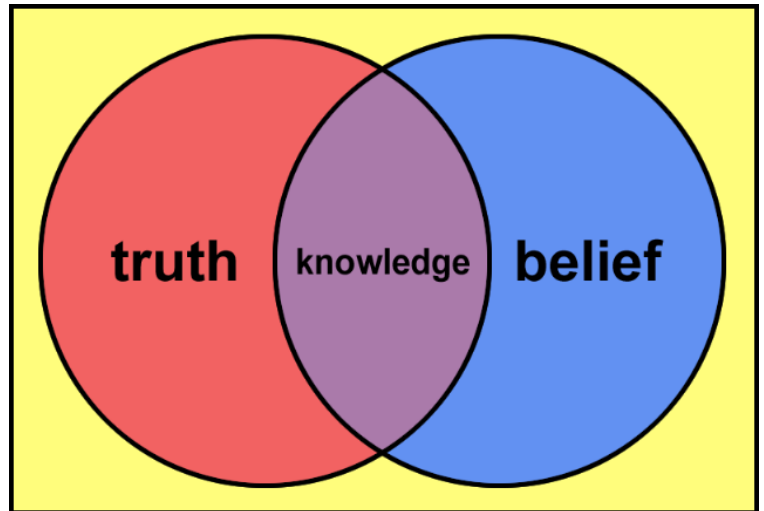
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6. What is an example of an invalid syllogism?

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Epistemology

This is sometimes called the Theory of Knowledge. It asks what we can really claim to know and includes questions such as whether and how I can have knowledge of the world outside of my own mind. It also asks questions about the difference between knowledge and belief. This matters for Philosophy of Religion as well as Religion and Ethics. Can we ever be said to 'know' God, or what is truly good?



Epistemology also asks questions such as: what can count as evidence? For example, what is sufficient evidence to prove God's existence?

The distinction between *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge is central to epistemology.

A Priori

This refers to knowledge which is not dependent on sense experience, but on the meaning of the words. For example, "a triangle has three sides." We know that this is true because of the meaning of the words in the sentence. A sentence like this is called a *tautology*. This means that by definition, the sentence or word is true. Another example would be, "All bachelors are male."

Sense experience is not required to know the meaning of a *tautology*. A priori knowledge, although not innate, means that it is known to be true or false simply by knowing the meaning of the words or sentence.

A Posteriori

This refers to things where our knowledge depends on sense experience. Knowledge of this kind is called empirical knowledge. A Posteriori statements can only be known through using the senses, i.e. by looking, listening, etc to see if the statement is true. For example, "my cat is playing with the computer mouse," is only true if you were to look and see that my cat was, in fact, playing with the computer mouse.

a priori
Something that can be known
without experience or sense
data.
If Socrates has more wine than Plato and Plato has more
wine than Aristotle, then Socrates has more wine than
Aristotle.
Five is a prime number.
Brothers are male siblings.

a posteriori
Knowledge requires
experience.
Bachelors are
unhappy.

Privacy of Experience / The Problem of other Minds

"My coat is green," is difficult to validate, because 'green' could mean different things to different people. I do not know what the colour looks like to you. Therefore, some a posteriori knowledge can become a problem because our experiences are personal and cannot be shared.



Tasks:

1. What is epistemology?

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2. What is central to epistemology?

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3. What is a priori knowledge?

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4. What is a tautology?

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5. What are a posteriori arguments?

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6. What is the Privacy of Experience or the Problem of other Minds?

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Sense experience and its problems

Q: If our knowledge of the outside world depends on our observations, then how do we make sense of the information? How do we turn our observations into the rules or physics of the universe?



Inductive reasoning can give us probabilities, but cannot give us certainties. E.g. if the sun has risen each morning in the East, then it will probably rise tomorrow morning in the East.

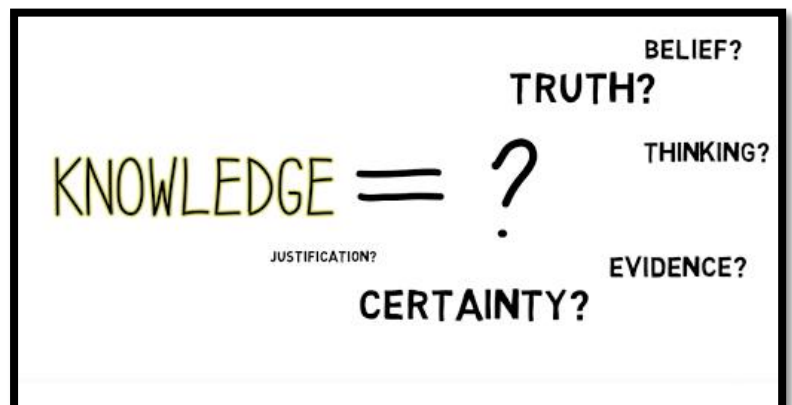
Philosophical Doubt

A posteriori judgements can never be wholly certain. It is unavoidable that they are uncertain, but this need not be a reason for total scepticism or sleepless nights. After all, many things in life are uncertain. We do not withhold friendship because we cannot prove that our best friend will never betray us, and there is no reason to despair of all our knowledge because we are aware of its limitations.

A good test about doubt is to ask whether doubt is reasonable? For example, I could have reasonable doubt that tables could think.

Knowledge and Belief

When can we claim that we know something and not simply that we believe it? Philosophers argue that there are four criteria (requirements) that must be met in order to claim knowledge – that we *know* something:



1. What we believe to be true **must in fact be true**. I cannot say that, 'I know Snæfellsjökull is the world's highest mountain' when it is not.
2. **We must believe** that what we believe to be true is really true. If someone said: "I think Paris is the capital of France, but I'm really not sure", we would not say he had knowledge. He has a belief, which happens to be true.

3. We must have sufficiently good reasons – not inadequate ones such as, “it’s in the newspaper, so it must be true,” or, “my dad says...” . This is called justification of our beliefs. There is a big debate on what counts as sufficient justification.



4. Our belief must not rest on any false information. For example, if I believed that every monarch was called Elizabeth, then I couldn't truly know that our current monarch is Elizabeth.

Metaphysics

'Metaphysics' deals with transcendent matters (matters that are beyond knowledge or understanding). Therefore, it deals with things beyond normal experience.

The central metaphysical question is: “what exists?” In metaphysics, asking whether a cat exists is just as much a metaphysical question as asking whether God exists.

Metaphysical theories are divided into two kinds:



1. Cosmological: This refers to theories of the whole being, e.g. the work of Plato. He gave a metaphysical account of the entirety of the universe in relation to the Forms.

2. Ontological: These theories are of whether things of a particular kind exist. They do not attempt to make a grand theory of everything. For example, to ask whether souls exist is an ontological question. It does not ask what other kinds of things might also exist.

Tasks:

1. What can inductive reasoning not give us?

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2. Explain the idea of philosophical doubt.

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3. Explain the four criteria that must be met in order to truly know something.

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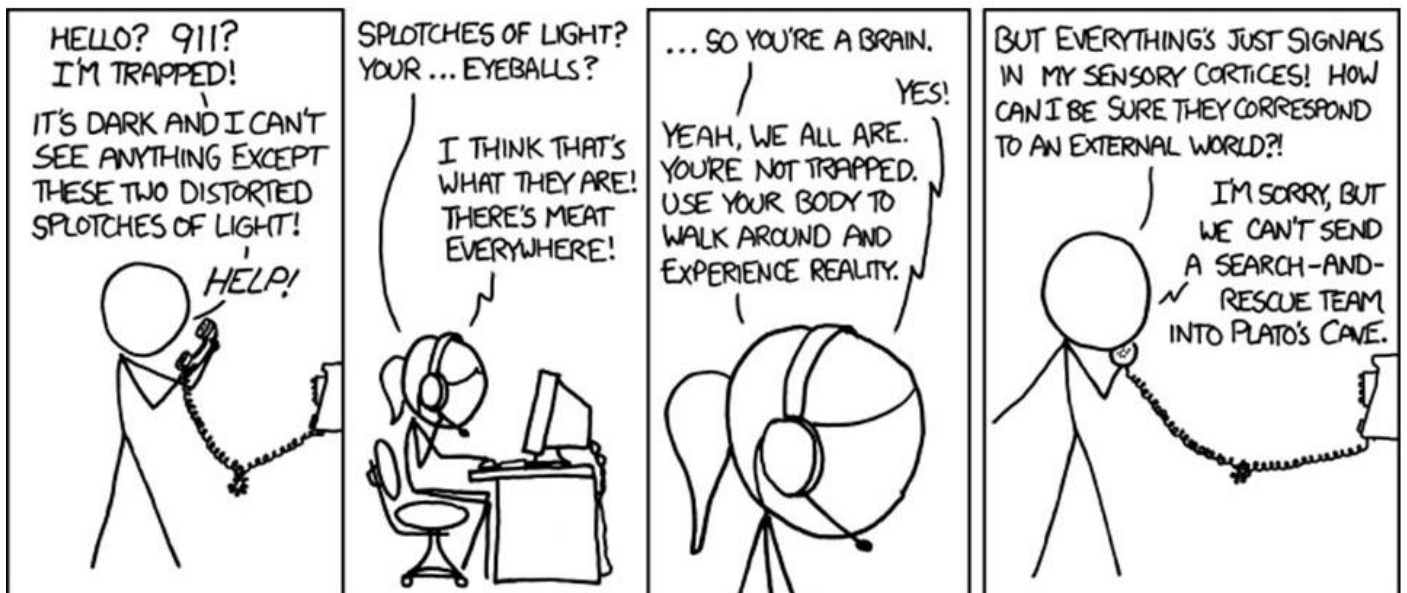
4. What does metaphysics deal with?

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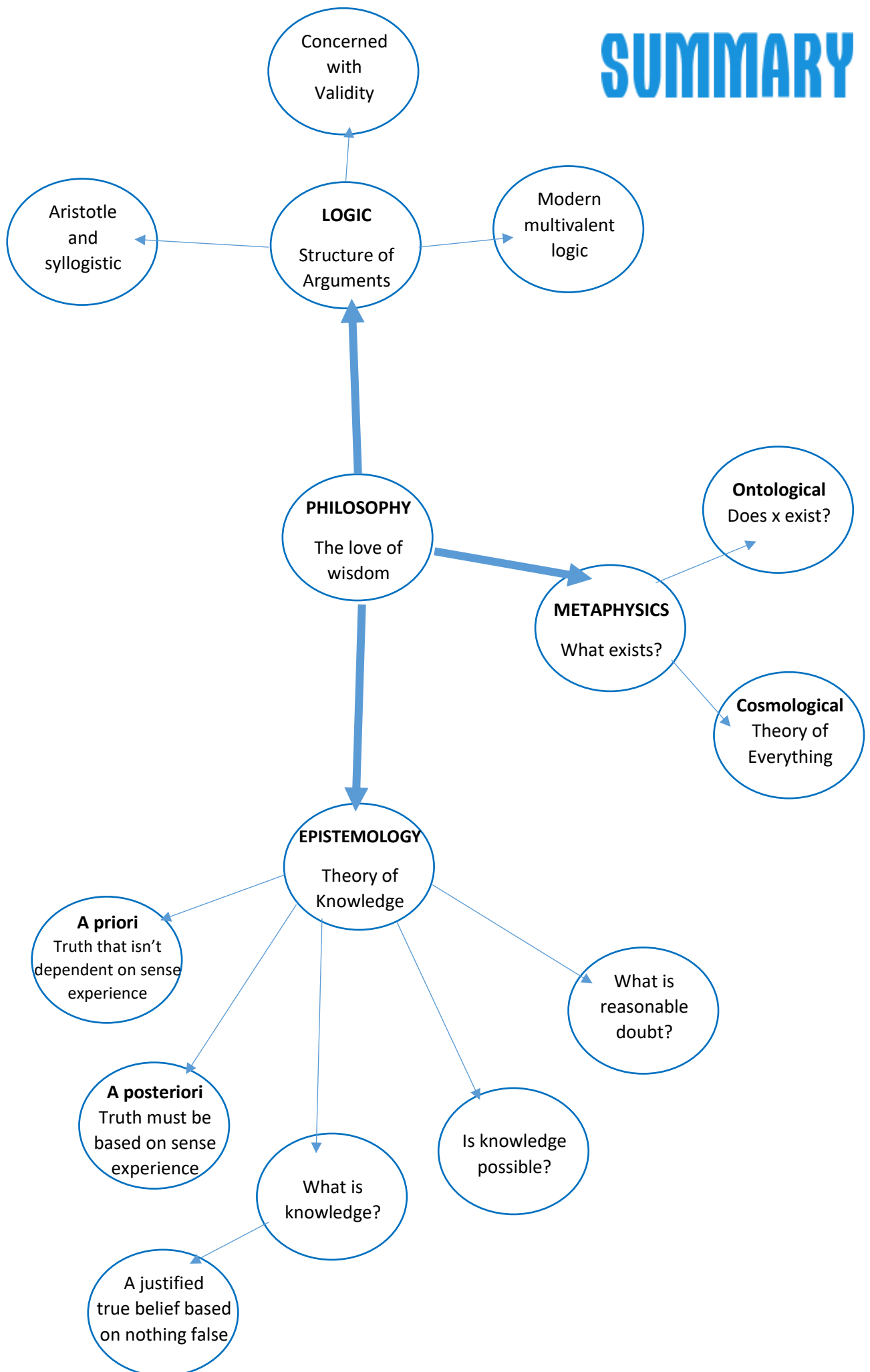
5. What are the two types of metaphysical argument? Explain them.

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Metaphysics



SUMMARY



TASK: Create your own detailed mind map of the ideas discussed in this workbook.

