

The Nature and Function of Language

Philosophy · Practice Test · 20 Questions

1. According to Bergson, what is the primary function of language?

- A) To express individual thoughts
- B) To communicate for collective action
- C) To describe reality in detail
- D) To create artificial habits

2. Bergson compares speaking to which natural human ability?

- A) Breathing
- B) Seeing
- C) Walking
- D) Eating

3. Hannah Arendt distinguishes between intimate conversations and dialogue. What is the focus of intimate conversations?

- A) The common world
- B) Public events
- C) Individual feelings and experiences
- D) Political issues

4. According to Arendt, when does the world become human?

- A) When it is created by humans
- B) When it is perceived by an individual
- C) When it becomes the object of dialogue
- D) When it is described in books

5. Hegel argues that thought is impossible without what?

- A) Sensations
- B) Intuition
- C) Words
- D) Emotions

6. For Hegel, what happens to a thought that remains without words?

- A) It becomes perfectly clear
- B) It remains confused and vague
- C) It is immediately understood by others
- D) It is the highest form of thought

7. What does Wittgenstein mean by 'The limits of my language are the limits of my world'?

- A) Language is only a tool for communication.
- B) Our understanding and perception of reality are shaped by our linguistic abilities.
- C) The number of words we know determines our physical world.
- D) Only educated people can truly understand the world.

8. According to Heidegger, how does human existence relate to language?

- A) Humans possess language as a tool.
- B) Humans are language.
- C) Language is an acquired skill.
- D) Language is secondary to biological needs.

9. Heidegger suggests that internal thought is akin to what?

- A) A silent debate
- B) A visual image
- C) A musical melody
- D) A physical action

10. What does Jankélévitch refer to as 'indicible'?

- A) Things that are difficult but possible to express
- B) Things that are so profound they inspire endless discussion
- C) Things that are impossible to express due to an obstacle
- D) Things that can only be understood through music

11. Jankélévitch associates the 'indicible' with which concepts?

- A) Love and beauty
- B) Mystery and faith
- C) Death and extreme trauma
- D) Poetry and music

12. What does Jankélévitch describe as 'ineffable'?

- A) Things that block speech
- B) Things that are too painful to speak about
- C) Things that one never finishes speaking about because there is so much to say
- D) Things that are inherently silent

13. According to Jankélévitch, which art form is particularly suited to expressing the ineffable?

- A) Painting
- B) Sculpture
- C) Music
- D) Literature

14. Plato believed that words serve to:

- A) Create social bonds
- B) Express individual emotions
- C) Name things correctly and guide reason
- D) Facilitate practical action

15. Aristotle defined humans as 'political animals' endowed with what?

- A) Reason
- B) Tools
- C) Speech (logos)
- D) Emotions

16. Sartre suggests that speaking is an act that:

- A) Always perfectly conveys our feelings
- B) Can reveal the freedom of the subject and influence others
- C) Is primarily for internal reflection
- D) Is a learned social convention

17. In the context of the 'silence' text, what does Boileau's quote 'Ce qui se conçoit bien s'énonce clairement' imply about the 'ineffable'?

- A) That the ineffable is truly impossible to express.
- B) That silence is always a sign of a confused thought, not an impossibility of expression.
- C) That only poets can truly conceive of the ineffable.
- D) That clarity in expression is irrelevant to deep thought.

18. What is the core idea of Heidegger's philosophy regarding language?

- A) Language is a tool for understanding the world.
- B) Humans are defined by their ability to use language.
- C) Language is a biological necessity for survival.
- D) Language is a social construct that evolves over time.

19. According to Bergson, why does language simplify reality?

- A) Because humans are inherently simple beings.
- B) Because language is primarily a tool for action.
- C) Because reality itself is simple.
- D) Because words are inherently imprecise.

20. What is the main argument presented by Arendt regarding the role of dialogue?

- A) Dialogue is a form of entertainment.
- B) Dialogue is essential for political discourse.
- C) Dialogue humanizes the world and allows for shared understanding.
- D) Dialogue is a private activity for personal reflection.