

Foundational Concepts in Western Philosophy

Philosophy · Practice Test · 18 Questions

1. Which ancient Greek philosopher is credited with the Socratic method, a form of cooperative argumentative dialogue between individuals, based on asking and answering questions to stimulate critical thinking and to draw out ideas and underlying presuppositions?

- A) Plato
- B) Aristotle
- C) Socrates
- D) Heraclitus

2. René Descartes' famous dictum, 'Cogito, ergo sum,' which translates to 'I think, therefore I am,' serves as a cornerstone of his philosophy. What does this statement primarily aim to establish?

- A) The existence of God
- B) The certainty of self-existence
- C) The reliability of sensory perception
- D) The nature of reality as ideas

3. Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative is a central concept in deontological ethics. Which of the following best encapsulates its core principle?

- A) Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.
- B) The greatest happiness principle: actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness.
- C) Seek pleasure and avoid pain as the ultimate good.
- D) Virtue is the only true good, and vice the only true evil.

4. What is the fundamental question addressed by epistemology?

- A) What is the nature of reality?
- B) What is the nature of knowledge?
- C) What is the nature of morality?
- D) What is the nature of existence?

5. The concept of 'tabula rasa' (blank slate), prominent in empiricist philosophy, is most closely associated with which philosopher?

- A) Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz
- B) David Hume
- C) John Locke
- D) George Berkeley

6. In Plato's Theory of Forms, what are the Forms?

- A) Physical objects that can be perceived by the senses
- B) Mental constructs that differ from individual experiences
- C) Eternal, unchanging, perfect archetypes of things in the sensible world
- D) The sum total of all empirical observations

7. Which philosophical school, founded by Epicurus, posits that the highest good is pleasure, understood not as sensual indulgence but as the absence of pain and fear?

- A) Stoicism
- B) Cynicism
- C) Epicureanism
- D) Skepticism

8. Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the 'Übermensch' (Overman or Superman) is best understood as:

- A) A biologically superior human specimen
- B) A leader who governs through brute force
- C) A self-overcoming individual who creates their own values and meaning
- D) A proponent of nihilistic despair

9. The philosophical problem of induction, famously discussed by David Hume, questions the justification for:

- A) Deductive reasoning
- B) Scientific laws based on past observations
- C) Ethical pronouncements
- D) The existence of abstract concepts

10. Who is widely considered the founder of existentialism, known for his emphasis on freedom, responsibility, and the meaninglessness of existence prior to human creation?

- A) Jean-Paul Sartre
- B) Albert Camus
- C) Søren Kierkegaard
- D) Martin Heidegger

11. In Aristotle's ethics, the concept of 'eudaimonia' is often translated as:

- A) Duty
- B) Happiness
- C) Virtue
- D) Wisdom

12. What is the primary focus of metaphysics?

- A) The study of logical arguments
- B) The study of ethical principles
- C) The study of the fundamental nature of reality, existence, and being
- D) The study of how we acquire knowledge

13. The philosophical movement known as logical positivism, dominant in the early to mid-20th century, argued that statements are meaningful only if they are:

- A) Metaphysically true
- B) Based on faith
- C) Empirically verifiable or analytic
- D) Theologically sound

14. Which philosopher is famous for his allegory of the cave, illustrating the journey from ignorance to enlightenment and the nature of reality?

- A) Aristotle
- B) Socrates
- C) Plato
- D) Epicurus

15. The philosophical idea that 'the unexamined life is not worth living' is a famous assertion attributed to:

- A) Plato
- B) Aristotle
- C) Socrates
- D) Diogenes

16. Utilitarianism, a consequentialist ethical theory, advocates for actions that produce the greatest amount of:

- A) Individual liberty
- B) Justice
- C) Happiness for the greatest number
- D) Truth

17. Which philosopher is known for his development of the concept of the 'will to power' as a fundamental drive in human nature and existence?

- A) Arthur Schopenhauer
- B) Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel
- C) Friedrich Nietzsche
- D) Karl Marx

18. The philosophical problem of 'mind-body dualism,' which posits that the mind and body are distinct and separable, is most famously associated with which philosopher?

- A) Thomas Hobbes
- B) Baruch Spinoza
- C) René Descartes
- D) Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz