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# PHILOSOPHY SUMMER SCHOOL 2012

## 6th August – 10<sup>th</sup> August

### Day 1:

10.30 – 10.45: Welcome and Introduction

10.45 – 1.00: Epistemology

In this opening session we will tackle one of the most important questions in philosophy – what is knowledge? With a close focus on the work of philosopher Edmund Gettier, whose 1963 article on knowledge threw into doubt the definition of knowledge as ‘justified true belief’. We will be analyzing Gettier’s ideas in detail, and attempting to come up with our own solutions to the ‘Gettier Problem’.

1.00– 1.45: Lunch

1.45 – 4.30: The Challenge of Scepticism

The afternoon will continue on the theme of knowledge, with a close look at the challenge that scepticism poses. For each and every piece of knowledge there is a scenario incompatible with that knowledge that you can’t rule out – could we, after all, be brains in vats, or plugged into the Matrix? Students will have the opportunity to study and debate the merits of scepticism and some responses to it, examining in particular the work of Robert Nozick, Keith de Rose and A.J. Ayer.

### Day 2:

10.30 – 1.00: Personal Identity

One of the core problems in metaphysics is the establishment of identity over time. What makes me the same person as I was when I was a baby, or even as I was yesterday, – if indeed this is the same person? Are you most fundamentally an immortal soul, as Descartes thought, or was John Locke closer to the truth when he argued that personal identity consists in consciousness extended backwards, in terms of memories? Students will be encouraged to explore their own ideas of what personal identity consists in, and also to engage in close textual analysis of thinkers such as Descartes, Locke and the contemporary philosopher Derek Parfit.

1.00– 1.45: Lunch

1.45 – 4.30: Continental Philosophy

Continental philosophy, which is practiced by, among others, Nietzsche, Foucault, Derrida, Sartre and Schopenhauer, places less emphasis on formal logic and the scientific method than does the Anglo Saxon analytic tradition. These thinkers emphasise the importance of understanding philosophy within specific contexts, and tend to be far more engaged with



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political and sociological questions than their British and American counterparts. This half-day will introduce students to continental philosophy as a method, as well as the key tenets of important figures in continental philosophy.

**Day 3:**

10.30 – 1.00: Aesthetics

What is art? What makes some art 'better' than other art? What is the difference between art and entertainment? Should the creation of beauty in society be a collective endeavour supported by the state? Is the intention of the creator important to our judgements about an artwork? Does art require a human creator at all? This session will use a wide variety of visual and performance artworks to explore students' intuitions about these ancient questions, and will also look at some classical responses to the problems of aesthetics, from ancient Greece to Postmodern America.

1.00 – 1.45: Lunch

1.45 – 4.30 Logic

Formal logic plays a crucial role in the anglo-saxon philosophical tradition, and in first year philosophy undergraduate courses. This seminar will look at concepts including possible worlds, consistency, validity, soundness and truth conditions. We will be translating ordinary English into first order propositional logical notation, and vice versa, and attempting simple formalised proofs. We'll also take a look at predicate logic, the system which allows us to look at the content of propositions rather than just the relations between them.

**Day 4:**

10.30 – 1.00: Meta-Ethics

What sort of claim are we making when discussing morality? Is the statement 'It is wrong to steal' attempting to affirm a truth about the world, or about the nature of relationships between human beings, or is it essentially an opinion, the fundamental meaning of which could be equally well expressed by 'Stealing – boo!'. In this seminar we will discuss the nature of morality, its truth aptness, and the potential impact of cultural differences on moral questions, using the work of J.L. Mackie, John Locke and Simon Blackburn.

1.00– 1.45: Lunch

1.45 – 3.15: Why be moral?

While much attention is devoted to different ethical theories and the arguments between their various adherents, attention is less often focused on a more foundational question – why should we be moral at all? Is a vision of human beings as moral saints, constantly sacrificing themselves to others, and ignoring personal projects and friendships an attractive one? Are some moral theories simply too demanding, or should we accept that morality is demanding and we must strive towards achieving it.

3.15 – 4.30: Morality and Future Generations



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Our consumption and pollution levels are approaching a point where there will be potentially disastrous and irreversible consequences for the natural environment, and the societies across the world are imposing huge debt burdens on taxpayers not yet eligible to vote. One of the most difficult and pressing issues in contemporary moral debate is the question of what obligations, if any, are owed to future generations. We will be looking at some of the latest scholarship on this issue, and students will be encouraged to formulate their own responses to this key issue.

**Day 5:**

10.30 – 1.00: Justice in Plato's *Republic*

Our search for justice will begin in Ancient Greece, as we delve into Plato's *Republic*. Students will be introduced to the challenge which Plato takes on – to prove that justice is not just good for its external consequences but that it is good for an individual to be just. We will explore Plato's conception of justice in an individual and in a city as he attempts to describe the harmony that results when everyone and everything is performing a role appropriate to its nature.

1.00 – 1.45: Lunch

1.45 – 4.30 How can we find justice?

After engaging with Plato's conclusions on questions of justice, we will be examining the method which he believed must be used: to find the Form of Justice, which is perfectly just in every respect, and is true for all places and all times. This approach will be contrasted with the that of modern political philosopher John Rawls, whose notion of finding justice behind a 'veil of ignorance' has been extremely influential in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, students will study the radical response of G.A. Cohen, who shortly before his death in 2009 published '*Rescuing Justice and Equality*', in which he tries to return the search for justice to its Platonic roots.