### Instructor's guide for Adam Morton, Philosophy in Practice

This document gives the information you need to use *Philosophy in Practice* in an introductory philosophy course. There is advice on planning the course, which you should consult well before you begin to teach it. There is information about the content of individual chapters, including suggestions about how to use sections of the chapters in class and information about which sections combine well with which others, and "answers" to the questions asked in exercises. You will want to look at some of this material before beginning to teach the course, and consult it again as the course proceeds. There is an exposition of the teaching techniques that are most likely to work with this book. And there is a general attitude to teaching philosophy, which I expound in a little essay, "against lectures."

This book is meant for courses that are different from most philosophy courses. The instructor lectures less; the students talk more; there is an emphasis on working in groups. The reasons for preferring to teach in this way are described in "against lectures" and the basic technique is described in "the absolute basics" below. Section-by-section advice, tests, and information for planning classes are given in the "class-planning guide" below.

The instructor's guide is meant to go with the second edition of *Philosophy in Practice*. There are some significant changes from the first edition, particularly in chapter 2, where the section numbering has changed, but they are usually not relevant to the use of the guide. The guide itself will evolve, partly in response to your feedback. I would be grateful for any reactions to the advice in this guide and for your experiences in teaching from the book. Send them to me at:

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# PLANNING YOUR COURSE

The most basic decision is how much you are going to cover. You can revise your plan later, as you discover how much material your class can absorb in a week without becoming bored or overwhelmed. But you do need a plan to start with. For a onesemester introductory course I would expect to cover Parts I and II and a few topics from Part III. For a two-semester course I would work through the whole book. So in the onesemester case you have to decide which topics from Part III to include and whether you should skip topics from Parts I and II to make room for them. In fact, you have three crucial decisions to make.

What role is *Philosophy in Practice* going to play in your course? It could be the center of the course, the source of all the week-by-week reading, and the content of most classes. Or it could be augmented by other books. The most likely addition is some philosophical classics. Parts I and II are designed to go well with readings from Plato, Descartes, and Hume. (See the references to Plato in chapters 1 and 4, to Descartes in chapter 3, and to Hume in chapters 5 and 6 to see which selections from these authors would make the closest connections.) There are also discussions of Hobbes, Locke, Bentham, Mill, and Kant. So readings from some anthology such as John Cottingham's *Western Philosophy: An Anthology* (Blackwell, 1996) could easily accompany the book. In the "further reading" list for each chapter I have listed passages that are included in Cottingham's collection. I don't think it would work to make the course center on some other textbook and then to use *Philosophy in Practice* as a source of occasional activities. The transition from lecture and lecture-discussion to activity-centered teaching would be too abrupt.

How quickly will the course gather momentum? I have designed Part I to allow a very gentle start, if wanted, so that the general idea of philosophical enquiry can sink in very slowly. The practical form of the question is: how long will you spend on chapter 1? With relatively sophisticated students you could cover chapter 1 in a week – two or three class meetings – referring explicitly only to the core sections. (The planning information for the chapter specifies the core.) That would help clear time for doing more things later. On the other hand, if you want to gauge the class's ability more cautiously and to practice teaching techniques with them you could take two weeks, and cover most of the sections. Whichever your approach, it is worth thinking through what parts of chapter 3 you will cover while planning chapter 1. There is some overlap in content between 1 and 3, with the vital difference that chapter 2, on logical argument, comes between them and is presupposed in 3, and that 3 has a specific focus on Cartesian rather than Socratic skepticism.

What topics from Part III will be included? Part III includes discussions of materialism and the mind–body problem, social contract theories of ethics, religious versus secular bases for morality, primary and secondary qualities, free will, personal identity, verificationism, and scientific realism. You won't want to cover more than a few of these, but some may be on the list of topics that you would like to include. And my experience is that mind–body issues, and issues about the possibility of secular ethics, interest beginning students and make lively classes. So you may want to find a place for parts of chapters 12 and 13. Or alternatively, if your emphasis earlier has been on scientific method, doing chapter 10 intensively, you may want to complete the topic with a discussion of scientific realism from chapter 15. Here's a suggestion: let the class decide. Leave several weeks at the end of the course for doing topics from Part III, and then six weeks before the end of the semester ask the students to read the introduction and chapter objectives to chapters 12, 13, 14, 15. Then have a vote to choose two topics from the list above. If the two fall into the same chapter then cover all or most of the sections in that chapter, in order to bring out the links between them.

Having made these choices, you now have to make a week-by-week plan of reading. This must be *your* plan. The planning information in the class-planning guide will tell you which are the essential sections in each chapter, and you must then choose additional sections according to what interests you – most of us teach best on topics that interest us – and what you think will engage your class. I would expect that in a 14-week semester the result might be something like one of the following (but don't automatically adopt this – think what the constraints on your course are and what you want to do):

week 1: chapter 1
weeks 2 and 3: chapter 2
week 4: chapter 3
week 5: chapter 4
weeks 6 and 7: chapter 5
week 8: chapter 6
week 9: chapter 7 - vote on which Part III topics to cover
wek 10: chapter 8
week 11: chapter 9
week 12: Part III topic 1 or chapter 10
week 13: Part III topic 2
week 14: chapter 11

You will have to tell the class more than this, of course. They will need to know which sections of each chapter are to be read, and for which classes. And you will have to specify any additional readings, also week by week. I'd recommend deciding what variation on the plan above you will make, taking into account the exact number of weeks and classes you have, and then reading through the book together with the planning information in the "class-planning guide" in order to make this detailed plan.

<u>planning your course</u> – the <u>absolute basics</u> – <u>class-planning guide</u> <u>against lectures</u> – <u>essays</u> – <u>reading list</u>

## THE ABSOLUTE BASICS

The book is meant to be usable with a variety of course formats – three in particular: (a) one or two weekly meetings of the whole course plus a weekly meeting of smaller sections (of say 10–20 students); (b) two or three weekly meetings of a medium-sized group (20–30 students); (c) two or three weekly meetings of a large class (50 or more) which is not broken up into smaller sections. Formats (b) and (c) are similar in that the same teaching strategies can be adapted to both. Format (a) is in many ways more problematic. I return to it below. The book is also meant to be usable both in a relatively conventional course in which individual students study on their own and in a "team learning" course in which many activities are performed by teams of students and in which the team as a whole is often the object of assessment. For an exposition of the team learning mentality try the website of the University of Oklahoma team learning project. In any case, students will perform many activities from the book in groups (sometimes larger groups are divided into smaller groups). If your class has more than 15 or so students then you will have to form groups for many activities. I would recommend forming the groups yourself, rather than letting students form groups with their friends or with those sitting near them, and I would recommend having the groups remain constant throughout the course rather than getting formed every time. It helps if each group has roughly the same variety of abilities and temperaments in it. If there is some obvious source of variation in your class - educational level, or humanities versus science background, for example – then you can try to make sure that each group has roughly the same number of students in each relevant category. To get a variety of philosophical temperaments in each group, you might wait until you have done the questionnaire in "the contract" (see the notes on it in the "class-planning guide"). Then you can make sure that each group has roughly the same number of people with above and below average "ridiculous/true" scores. (Get the score for an individual by giving her 1 point for each claim labeled "ridiculous," 2 for each "impossible," 3 for each "on the way to truth," and 4 for each "true.")

Most sections in each chapter are either primarily expositions of some philosophical point or material for activities which explain and rehearse that point. (There are a few with an even mixture of the two.) Sections which are expositions of an essential point are nearly always immediately followed by one or two activity sections directed at that point. In the "planning information" lists in the "class-planning guide" these are listed as e.g. "1.1 essential – read for class; 1.2 essential – work through – rehearses 1.1." Students should read the exposition section before the relevant class, and usually should look at the activity section you have chosen. They should bring the book to class. The class will then usually be shaped by the activity. You must plan how it will proceed in advance. You cannot just go into the class with the instructions for the activity in that section and expect it to take care of itself. You have to think what points you want to see made during the class and how you can make them emerge if the activity and the discussion it leads to do not do so immediately. Thinking in terms of the ideas you would like to see mentioned helps free you from the danger of pushing the class mechanically through the activity even though a discussion has begun which is proceeding in a profitable direction. If things are going well let them go on. So you have to have thought: what kinds of discussion on this topic can this activity prompt, and how they can be nudged along those directions. The comments on particular sections give ideas about this, but of course you

have to think out what kinds of discussion you and your class can best have. So <u>for each</u> <u>class have three or four target points or ideas</u>, which you want to emerge during the class. Also have a plan for making them emerge. A good plan usually involves waiting to see if things go well without any prompting, plus a few prompts in case they are needed.

Another thing you must think out in advance is how the class is to be broken down into groups and subgroups. The detailed instructions for most activity sections are written with a larger class in mind, which is broken down into smaller groups (see above), which then re-form as a single class at some point. For a smaller class this is often not necessary, though some activities suggest dividing into groups of two or three at particular moments. Use the detailed description as a rough guide to what you will do with your class. Make a plan in advance, but then be prepared to throw it away as the class proceeds. Don't ruin a good class by insisting on sticking to the script. You may find that it takes longer to get through an activity than you expect. Don't rush: it will always take much longer to do it than to read the description of it. And it may require the students to read passages and examples, which, even if they have read the section in advance, may take them longer than you expect.

One frame that can work well is as follows. Prepare in advance several questions that you think they should be able to answer if they have understood the material. This is besides the plan you will have made for doing the activity with the class. At the beginning of the class write these on the board. Ask students, who should have read the relevant expositional section, to add any questions that they have. Then begin the activity, and let the discussion take its course, whether or not the activity is officially completed. Then go back to the list of questions. Some of them will not have been dealt with during the activity and discussion. So address them explicitly. (But you are doing this only after they have taken the initiative in framing the issues.)

This frame helps with a type (a) class structure, in which a larger class, normally used for a lecture, breaks down into smaller sections once a week. Avoid the temptation to try to frame the issues in the lecture and then to use the sections to discuss the lecture. The problem with this is that the students think of their role in the sections as discussing your lecture, rather than engaging with the philosophical issues themselves. This is especially likely if you are giving one or more sections yourself. It is better to reverse the order: use an activity to start a discussion in the class section and then to follow it up in the "lecture." You might write down in advance a number of points you wanted the students to be clear about, and a number of issues that you wanted raised, and ask them to read the relevant expositional and activity sections. Then the sections, the smaller groups, meet to rehearse the material, and then you meet with the section leaders to find out which points were not clear, which issues need more attention, and what problems and questions arose. These are then the material for your lecture. Since your lecture is a reaction to what the students have been doing in their groups, they should be able to react to it with more questions and comments.

You may have two "lecture" meetings a week and one smaller section. Then the pattern can vary. But I'd suggest that the normal pattern be that a topic begins with work in the

section followed by an interactive follow-up with the whole larger class followed by a class in which you answer questions, correct misapprehensions, and cover neglected points. You will have to set up the sections so that they feed into the follow-up. This will require coordination with the TA or colleague giving the sections. I strongly suggest that you have regular scheduled meetings at which you can find out exactly what went on in the smaller groups so that you can tune the larger meetings to them.

**Evaluation.** Students are used to getting marks for producing the right answers, so a subject where the concept of the right answer is problematic can be unsettling to them. They will want to know in advance how they are going to be evaluated, and they will appreciate feedback along the way as to how they are doing. My solution is to make the grade for the course depend on three components. The first component is obtained just by attending and doing any regular assignments. For example, each student might write out one page each week in reaction to a small part of a section covered that week. (Suggestion: have the pages handed in at the beginning of a class, so that students have to attend class to get that component of the grade, and have the grade not depend on any evaluation of the assignment but just on having done it. An attractive system is to have this mark be 10% of the final grade, which is automatically gained as long as 90% of the weekly assignments are submitted, but which drops to zero if more than 10% are missed without a really solid excuse.) The second component comes from tests given in class periods throughout the semester. These are easy, usually of a true/false format and easily graded, and gauge the student's basic grasp of concepts and terminology. In the classplanning guide I give tests for chapters 1 to 11. You may have to adapt these tests, depending on the material you actually cover and the rate at which you cover it, but once you see the tests you'll see how to expand or shorten them. The third component comes from an essay or term paper, which is described to the students as an opportunity for creative thinking and for formulating and defending their own positions. It would be reasonable to make the term paper count for 50% of the final mark. (You could also have a final exam and have a mix of something like: 10% weekly work, 30% for each of the tests, term paper, and final exam.) There are some suggestions about essay assignments elsewhere in this instructor's guide.

There is more material in the book than any course will cover, and indeed more in most chapters than most courses will cover. But you should encourage your students to read through the book beyond the required assignments. They may make some interesting connections.

When I talk to people who have had difficulty using this book, the reason usually seems to be one of three. They thought they didn't have to prepare their classes. Or they worked mechanically through the book, without planning what to cover in their particular course. Or they mixed lecturing and group-work in a way that stifled group activity. This teacher's guide should help you avoid all three.

<u>planning your course</u> – the <u>absolute basics</u> – <u>class-planning guide</u> <u>against lectures</u> – <u>essays</u> – <u>reading list</u>

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## **CLASS-PLANNING GUIDE**

### the contract

Part I chapter 1 chapter 4	<u>chapter 2</u> chapter 5	<u>chapter 3</u> <u>chapter 6</u>	
Tests for: <u>chapter 1</u> ,	chapter 2, chapter 3, cl	hapter 4, chapter 5, cha	apter 6
Part II <u>chapter 7</u> <u>chapter 10</u> Tests for: <u>chapter 7</u> ,	<u>chapter 8</u> <u>chapter 11</u> <u>chapter 8</u> , <u>chapter 9</u> , <u>.</u>	<u>chapter 9</u> chapters 10 and 11	
Part III chapter 12	chapter 13	chapter 14	chapter 15

## The Contract

Students may have read this before the first class meeting. It is important to get the atmosphere right from the very beginning, to make it clear that while you are the leader and decide how the course is going, they have to do a lot of the talking. (It's as if you are playing chess with them. They expect you to be playing white to their black, so that you take all the early initiatives. But in fact you are playing black, and while you can determine the configuration of the board at later stages of the game, you do this by skillful reactions to the initiatives they take.) They have to provide the materials for you and the rest of the class to work on, so in the first meeting you should get them to talk. The arguments (1)–(6) and the possible reactions to them described on pages xiv–xv can be used for this. If you do not expect enough of them to have copies of the book by this meeting you could photocopy the pages with claims (1) to (6) and distribute them at the class. Give them time to read and understand the six arguments, and then have them fill out the Ridiculous-to-True table. They must do this individually, before they see one another's answers. (There is an important general fact here, which is worth explaining to them. We are all affected more deeply by other people's opinions than we consciously admit. So if they know one another's answers before writing them down the result will be a smaller variation between different people's answers, and this will lead to a less interesting discussion.) Now you have to ascertain quickly which are the arguments on which there are the greatest divisions of opinion, that is, for which ones a significant proportion of the class has a very different reaction to another significant proportion. (So if 50% rates (1) as "Ridiculous" and 50% as "True," that counts as a maximum split, and

if a couple of people class (2) as "Impossible" and a couple as "On the way to truth" that is a pretty insignificant split.) Choose two or at most three of the largest splits, and simply point out that it is interesting that they disagree. Ask them what the roots of their disagreement could be, and what other disagreements are making them react in such different ways. Very likely this will be enough to get things rolling. If they are in an analytical rather than a combative mood, ask them what kinds of consideration could resolve the disagreement. Compare splits: are the same people on different sides on two different splits? Why? If most people on one side of a split are on the same side in another, look for someone who isn't: ask this person to explain why, although they agree with one bunch of people on the one issue, they agree with another bunch of people on the other.

Right from the beginning you must be picking up names and personalities. It helps tremendously if the students in the class learn one another's names. So if you address them by name and encourage them to address one another by name the process can begin. You can go round the room asking each student to state one fact about his or her self that others can use to remember them by. You should take notes of the general pre-philosophical positions that they seem to be expressing. Useful but not very subtle labels are: science-worshiper, conventionally religious, mystic, romantic, realist. Even by this class you may be noticing some people who express their views so confidently that they may inhibit others, or some who seem to be sharp but not confident. In this section I say that reactions to (2) and (6) are likely to indicate differences in "ways of thinking." One thing I mean to include in this is that people who have faith that some standard source of belief, whether it be science or religion or something else, are likely to differ on these questions from people who have a more mystical or individualistic attitude to knowledge.

I take the six arguments to focus on questions of how much faith we can put in some standard sources of information – science, religion, common sense – whether there are facts that we have no good way of knowing, and how to separate real fact from what we conventionally decide to believe. These are too abstract to match the diagnoses of their disagreements that the students are likely to produce, but they may be useful when the students find themselves struggling for words and you have to complete their half-expressed thoughts. (It is worth doing this quite explicitly. A student says "Oh, I guess that doesn't make much sense; I can't really say what I think about this," and you suggest an interpretation of what the student managed to say, adding "but I may be completely misunderstanding you." Then the student may be able to express what they wanted to, by saying in what ways they were not trying to say what you said.)

If the class seems very sophisticated and unconfused, you can try to shift the focus from the conclusions of the six arguments to the arguments themselves. "Yes, let's suppose that different people have radically different color experiences, but does the argument given here give a good reason for thinking that? Should it convince someone who didn't accept the conclusion?" This is a move that will confuse many students new to philosophy though, so you should take this line only if you are very confident about the students.

At this class or beforehand you should have given the students a written program of which readings they should be doing for which class meetings for the rest of the course. (This doesn't prevent you changing the program during the course, though you have to give them notice and tell them of the new program.) If there is a course website you should put the program on it. One advantage of doing this is that it takes away excuses from those who have not done the reading.

A discussion-centered course can make good use of email. You can pick one section each week and have students email you a *short* response to it. Then you will have time to consider how to weave the responses into a structured discussion. You will also discuss which of the more timid students actually have good things to say. The responses must be short because otherwise you will get swamped by them. Another technique is to have students email responses to each other, according to some constant or shifting pairing up of the class, copying them to you. It is very easy for this latter kind of plan to become chaotic though, if the instructions are not simple and easily followed and the plan does not survive the instructions being imperfectly followed. Your university may have a system whereby students in a course can post comments that other students in the course can read. If so you can make use of it. I mention below which sections I think are most suitable for email discussion.

## Part I

### Chapter 1

<u>Planning information</u>: [see below for explanations of the labels]

1.1 essential – read for class

Boxes 1 and 2: optional reading - email

- 1.2 essential work through rehearses 1.1
- 1.3 less essential work through
- 1.4 work through email
- 1.5 essential read for class
- 1.6 optional reading: not to be worked through in class

Box 3: optional reading: not to be worked through in class

- 1.7 less essential work through email rehearses 1.5
- 1.8 less essential work through email rehearses 1.5

1.9 essential: read for class – should be discussed in class

1.10 less essential – work through – rehearses 1.9

- 1.11 less essential work through
- 1.12 essential read for class should be discussed in class.
- 1.13 essential work through rehearses 1.12
- 1.14 less essential work through
- The <u>absolute core</u> of the chapter is sections 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 1.12, 1.13.

Here and in other "planning information" sections, "read" means the class should be asked to read the section, whether or not it is discussed in class. "Read for class" means that the class should read the section before a class meeting, *if* the topic is being covered. Usually that meeting will then work through a section that rehearses, follows up, the material in the section they have read. "Work through" means that the section has material for a group activity clarifying the material in it or another section. "Email"

means that the section provides material that could feed an email discussion between students or between students and teacher. Some sections are classified as "essential," others as "less essential," which generally give different ways of covering the same or closely related ground as the essential topics, and "optional," which are stimulating topics that are related to the theme of the chapter.

There are four sections that it is essential for the students to read in advance of class meetings (1.1, 1.5, 1.9, 1.12). For each of these sections there is at least one follow-up section that elicits discussion of it. For 1.1 there is 1.2, for 1.5 there are 1.7 and 1.8, for 1.9 there is 1.10, and for 1.12 there is 1.13. So if you plan to get through this chapter in a week you should schedule the required reading so that all three essential sections are read in advance, and in the class after they have read one of them a follow-up section is worked through. If you think your class is intellectually quite sophisticated and you would like to get through the preliminaries fast, you could cover the absolute core in two classes.

The <u>pedagogical aim</u> of this chapter is to establish the idea of questioning beliefs, even firmly held and apparently obvious ones. The student should leave the chapter understanding that it is not obvious what is obvious, and that the activity of looking for reasons for beliefs can have interesting and unexpected results.

## Chapter 1 – Comments on Sections

<u>1.1</u> This section should be read by students as a background to the rest of the chapter. It doesn't need class discussion, though students may want to raise questions about it.

**1.2** You should get the students to write down their scores on the questionnaire before you get to the crude classification of intellectual personality or the more subtle diagnosis. The discussion of the differences between students' answers should tend toward comparisons of the advantages and disadvantages of having the various personalities. What true and false beliefs are different personalities more or less prone to acquire? What practical activities are helped or hindered by having one or another intellectual personality? That is not to say that you should squelch a lively discussion if it is not going in this direction. But you should try gently nudging it toward some evaluative questions.

Students may protest against the labels that the diagnoses force on them. Ask them to say why the labels don't apply. Is it that the definitions used in the text are misleading? Is it an accident of the examples that were used? Why is the label unwelcome: what's wrong with being a dogmatist or having unconventional beliefs?

**1.3** Note that at least four of the claims have a religious aspect. It is thus likely that differences between students about their plausibility will be related to different attitudes to religion. The section should encourage a discussion on how such disagreements are resolved. So you might choose two people whose views are very different on one claim, for example (5) or (9), and ask each of them what discovery might make them agree with the other. Then, once this had established the idea that one can imagine evidence which one doesn't expect to find, you might ask the class what evidence might make them less

sure of (1), (6), or (11). Another purpose of this section is to undermine the idea that one either believes something or disbelieves it. Often one has no opinion, or has a slight tendency to believe which falls short of belief. So you might take (1), (6), (11) and ask which of them is more certain and which has the greatest chance of turning out to be false. Then move on to (4), (10), or (5), (7) – depending somewhat on which ones the class classifies as convictions – and ask the same questions. Is it equally hard to imagine evidence against (3) and (4)?

**1.4** This section is meant to bring out the fact that no authority is self-interpreting: one always needs to make decisions about what words mean and whether a principle applies to a particular case. You might discuss the problems of taking the Ten Commandments as a mechanical guide to morality. What does "thou shalt not kill" really mean (does it forbid killing in self-defense – does it permit capital punishment)? What counts as adultery? On the physics and chemistry textbooks example, you will probably find that the students easily see that problem (a) arises with (2), (b) with (3), and (e) with (1) and (4). They may need more prompting to see that (f) arises with (5) – does the law of the conservation of energy apply to human "energy"? – and that (c) arises with (6) – if the book mentions chemical or physical topics but contradicts other textbooks are we to count it as a textbook or as an imposter? Problem (d) is an all-purpose worry about any supposedly self-sufficient source of information, especially when combined with (e), but it doesn't particularly apply to any of (1)–(6).

The class will not need convincing that chemistry and physics textbooks could not be an all-purpose guide to belief. Ask them which of the problems that arose with the textbooks would also apply to other sources of belief: sacred books such as the Bible, perception, the things your parents taught you.

**1.5** This section has the heaviest prose so far, so you should check that the students found it readable. If they did not, each time they have read a section in preparation for a class you will have to spend time making sure that they were not baffled by it. The point of the section is to explain the appeal of trying to deal with the fear that we might be caught in a closed-belief trap by trying to show that many of our beliefs are certain, that there is no way that they could be false. You will probably find that the students do not find it plausible that most of our beliefs are certain, especially after working through the previous sections. But most of them will think that some of our beliefs are completely certain, and some of them will think that it is these beliefs that give us the only assurance we can have that everything we believe is not one systematic delusion. With luck, you will find that some students agree with this idea and others do not, so that it is clear that this is both an appealing and a controversial strategy.

You might find it useful to read section 2.1 before leading a discussion of this section, especially the discussion of how the authority of traditional belief might constitute a closed system of beliefs.

**<u>1.6</u>** This is included just for stimulation and amusement. The philosophical points are (a) how hard it is to know the truth even in simple situations and (b) the intuitive links between skepticism and paranoia.

**Box 3** This is also not intended for classroom discussion. The main point is the idea – associated with Quine and Duhem – that any belief can with enough ingenuity be reconciled with any evidence. Material such as this, and other boxes and sections such as

1.6 that are not meant for classroom discussion, may still provide a source of allusions and examples for discussions prompted by other sections. And reading them can help students get in the right frame of mind to have reactions to other sections.

**<u>1.7</u>** I think it would help to say explicitly to the class before working through this section: your inclination is probably not to take the tree-worshipers seriously, but working through the section might convince you that there could be a whole way of looking at the world which makes much more sense than at first seems possible, and from that point of view your beliefs seem absurd. (This is a way aliens might think, and they might be right.) So you will have to make the students write down serious objections to the tree-worshipers' view of the world, and then do some quick thinking eliciting responses to the objections. It would be best to have the class pool their objections, and then work together to think of the tree-worshipers' replies. The example of the flatearthers is similar. If you work through this part of the section yourself in advance you may be able to run the discussion in a less regimented way in which you simply ask the class for evidence that the earth is not flat, and for each piece of evidence show what standard belief a flat-earther might challenge in replying to it. One hard abstract question you might slowly find your way toward is: given that a clever enough flat-earther is unlikely to be caught in outright contradiction, is there something lacking in their whole system of beliefs, after they have made the changes necessary to preserve their position, which gives it the overall characteristics of a delusion?

**1.8** This section is nonessential but raises two potentially very useful issues. First, how social pressure works to make one believe things and sometimes disbelieve what one's own senses and intuitions tell one. The workings of the party on Winston can be taken as an exaggeration of the ways the desire to conform and the threat of being different work on each of us. Second, more subtly, how when we lose our grasp of how to tell what is true we begin to lose our grasp of what the difference between truth and falsity is. Winston begins to think that perhaps the party can change the past by declaring that things have happened.

**1.9** The aim of this section is to separate different things that "doubt" can mean, in order to focus on the philosophically most important sense, in which doubt does not aim at showing that a belief is false but that we do not have good grounds for holding it. (Or, yet more sophisticated, that we do not know whether we have good grounds.) To a philosophically trained person this distinction is as simple as the difference between rejecting a conclusion and rejection as a conclusion. But if you put the point this way to most beginning students a few eyes will light up while most of them will remain completely blank.

One point to making these distinctions is to show that you can be a philosophical skeptic without being insane. And you can be a philosophical skeptic about religion or morality – ask what our reasons are for believing in God or thinking that rape is evil – while being a Christian or a moral person.

**1.10** This section rehearses the distinctions between kinds of doubt. You will find that different students classify the doubts differently in part because of different interpretations of the motives and meanings of the speakers. For example, in (7) some students will take Belinda to be defending the possibility that murder is justifiable, and others will take her to be ironically challenging our confidence that our values are always

correct. So the real work is likely to be done in teasing out the reasons why students' answers deviate from the "obvious" responses, which are: (1) [(5)] vulgar doubt; (2) [(5)] (6) [(7)] (8) careful doubt; (3) (4) [(7)] philosophical doubt. (I have put in [square brackets] cases that could be classified in two ways equally naturally.)

**<u>1.11</u>** Make sure the students understand the "strongly agree *or disagree*," so that a firm atheist should put 4 by (a). As with 1.2, some students may challenge the labeling that the questionnaire applies to them, and this fact is to be exploited rather than glossed over. The most promising route to a philosophical discussion starts with the fact that some – perhaps most – of the students will come out as more skeptical about some kinds of beliefs than others. Why is this? Why might someone be dogmatic about science but not about religion? Why is someone who is dogmatic about religion likely not to be skeptical about moral matters? (The answer to this last is not nearly as obvious as it may at first seem.)

**<u>1.12</u>** This section introduces an important dimension to philosophical doubt and skepticism, to test and elicit reasons for our moral principles. The second half of the section brings out the tension between moral seriousness – thinking that some things are really wrong, and not just a convention we all agree to go along with – and skepticism. The resolution is philosophical doubt: one can take the wrongness of, say, murder with full seriousness and still ask where the wrongness comes from.

**1.13** The obvious answers are that Carina is cynical, [Arthur] and [Eduardo] are questioning, Betty and [Eduardo] are pathological, and [Arthur], Daniel, and Felicia are philosophical. (Again [square brackets] indicate cases that could be taken two ways.) Some may not think that Eduardo is pathological, and indeed he is a normal child, but I defined the term in a specific way to include everyone who does not understand the words adults use to express moral beliefs. One promising route to a discussion here is to ask whether the philosophical doubters can be sincere in their moral beliefs while still asking for reasons for them. A particular doubt may arise about Felicia, who seems to lack some features of a good person. Let that discussion go where it may, as long as it remains clear that the point is that a moral skeptic does not have to be a cynic, not that no moral skeptics are cynics.

The questions about which ones to associate with and which ones to permit to act on their convictions are there to elicit opinions about the value of moral skepticism. With luck, some people will say that they would rather not associate with Felicia, but that she should be allowed to go around undermining others. Probing why they say this will bring up some interesting issues.

**<u>1.14</u>** This section covers a historical topic that fits well with the themes of this chapter, but is not essential to it. Some students will be relieved to see famous philosophers like Socrates and Plato appearing, to reassure them that they really are studying philosophy. There's no point in doing this section unless it takes a whole class session, at least, and the students have read it in advance. (Of course, one option is to take two weeks and read the whole *Meno*, using this section as a guide.)

Of the four possible conclusions for the selection from the *Meno* all can be found in the passage. So none are really wrong. But the *main* conclusion, the one the others are meant to support, is that the definition of virtue as power is wrong. It is only by understanding the dialogue this way that we make it an instance of Socratic skepticism, in which people are shown not to understand basic issues as well as they think they do.

At the very end of the section the question is raised of whether you have to be able to define a word in order to understand it. The "Juliet" example is there to suggest that perhaps sometimes people do use a word without knowing much about what it denotes. (Love-struck teenagers may not know much about what love is, and to that extent have a weak grasp of the meaning of "love.") You might also allude to the test for legal responsibility sometimes invoked, that one can be held responsible for crimes if one understands the difference between right and wrong. If Socrates was right, would any of us pass this test?

## <u>Chapter 1 – Test</u>

Most students will find most of these questions easy. Some may provoke a useful moment of reflection. And some may be worth discussing afterwards, especially if most members of the class get some questions wrong.

### Mark each of the following assertions as True or False:

All beliefs are equally true.
Whenever someone believes something false there is evidence against it.
False beliefs can usually be defended against true evidence.
A moral skeptic is always cynical about moral matters.
A philosophical skeptic thinks that other people have false beliefs.
Religious dogmatism means believing in God.
If you know something you don't believe it.
If a belief is certain then there is no evidence against it.
If there is no evidence against a belief then it is certain.
In a false belief trap someone has so many false beliefs that they cannot understand the reasons why their beliefs are false.
The certainty assumption gives the only way out of the false belief trap.
Religious dogmatism is the only way of avoiding moral skepticism.

Note 1: Sometimes in response to a true/false question students may find that they know that one answer is the one that the course has been prompting, but in fact they believe the opposite. You could consider using a variant answering system in which students can write, for example, "F" rather than F, or the like, and then write a couple of sentences of explanation at the bottom or on the back of the test. Marks would be awarded for knowing what answers the course is prompting, but intellectual honesty would be its own reward.

Note 2: Students have access to this website too. You may worry that they will have seen the test in advance. I don't see this as a big worry, as if they have learned the right answers from seeing it in advance they will have reflected on the material. You may worry about students passing the answers on to one another. In that case put the questions in a different order, rephrase some of them, and add a few more of your own. You needn't say in advance what day you are giving the test.

### Chapter 2

Planning information:

2.1 essential – read for class – work through
2.2 less essential – read for class – work through
2.3 essential – read for class
2.4 essential – read for class
2.5 work through – rehearses 2.4
2.6 less essential – work through – email
2.7 essential – read for class
2.8 essential – read at least part for class – work through – rehearses 2.7
Box 4 optional reading: not to be worked through – email
2.9 optional reading: not to be worked through – email
2.10 less essential – work through
2.11 essential – read
The absolute core of the chapter is sections 2.4, 2.5, 2.7, 2.8

The <u>pedagogical aim</u> of this chapter is to introduce the idea of an argument for a conclusion, with the central example of proofs of the existence of God as an item of independent interest. The material on argument is wrapped up in a discussion of Reason, which need not be lingered on, as the issues will return in chapter 3. If you are short of time you could cover only the sections in the absolute core, listed above. In any case, classroom time should be concentrated on working through arguments – sections 2.4 and 2.7 – picking up an intuitive picture of how one gets from premises to conclusions, and the difference between valid and invalid ways of doing so. Do not expect most students to get completely clear on this after just a week or so. You could easily spend a month drilling the concept of a deductively valid argument into them. My experience, though, is that it works better to let the concept gather slowly, leading the students on with issues that are of more intrinsic interest.

You may be giving your course so that there is an emphasis on issues about religious belief. In that case section 2.2 will be more important than the labeling above suggests, and gives a different perspective on 2.7 than the rest of the chapter.

## Chapter 2 – Comments on Sections

**2.1** Though most of this section is expositional prose, it ends with an activity that can be done in class. The straightforward responses to the questions are that Miriam is appealing to the authority of normal shared belief (common sense, culture), Luc is appealing to the authority of his guru, Leah is appealing to the authority of scientific method, and Jean is appealing to the authority of a book. Miriam, Naomi, and Judith are simply doubting what their interlocutor says, while Leah is appealing to the authority of science. It could be argued that Naomi is also appealing to an authority, that of theories about childhood development. In all the cases the second speaker has a generally skeptical attitude, but the emphasis of the section should be on authority rather than skepticism. They are related in that skepticism and authority are natural enemies.

Skepticism usually draws on the authority of reason though, if only for its negative effect, thus making a link to 2.3.

**2.2** (i) is relevant to (c), and also to (b). (ii) is relevant to (b). (iii) is relevant to (a). (iv) is relevant to (b) and also to (c). (v) is relevant to (a). (vi) is relevant to (b), and also to (c). (vii) is relevant to (b) and (c). In using this section begin by simply eliciting the points/attitudes connections. The temptation then is to allow a discussion to develop in the form of a debate between adherents of (a), (b), (c), which might easily become a brawl between the religious and the nonreligious. An alternative would be to divide the class into three groups on some arbitrary basis and ask the first to produce two points in support of (a), the second two points in support of (b), and the third two points in support of (c). The points could be elaborations of (i)-(vii) or novel points. Stress to them that they are functioning like philosophical lawyers: they have to find two good supports for the attitude in question even if they do not personally share that attitude. Then when each group's points have been stated and explained, there may be time to move to a third phase in which you do ask people to say which of the attitudes they share. Each person then should say – or indicate with a show of hands in a large class – which of the points that have been produced -(i)-(vii) plus the new ones just produced - is most troubling for them. That is, which point they feel most strongly challenges their attitude, so that they wish they had a good reply to it. (I always find that a thoughtful reaction is produced in students when you ask them to choose the strongest argument for a position they do not hold.)

A subtle philosophical point that may emerge from the discussion is that although there may be beliefs which we cannot or ought not to support with arguments, the identification of these beliefs and the defense of their claim to be beyond argument is itself a matter of rational dispute. We can argue about what should be subject to argument.

**2.3** Students will very naturally be doubtful of the rationalist ambition of establishing substantial chunks of knowledge by reason alone. We live in an empiricist culture. So the easiest way of getting them to respect the power of reason is to stress three points. First, the negative power of counterargument: when some belief cannot be true, just thinking about it can often show that it is wrong. (See 3.3. and 3.4 for examples.) Second, mathematical proof, as showing that in some special areas at any rate we can establish conclusions just by reasoning. (Of course this can be challenged, but the claim is plausible, and challenging it leads to profitable discussion.) And while even committed believers these days tend to doubt that the existence of God can be proved, the ambition to do so does not seem ridiculous. Third, the deduction of further conclusions from information given by perception or authority, as when a detective discovers a clue and reasons to the identity of the murderer.

**2.4** One difficulty in getting across the idea of a deductively valid argument comes from the fact that the standard examples are of perfect self-contained arguments in which all the premises are explicit. But nearly all the arguments that we meet in everyday life rely on numbers of implicit premises. This can give the impression that all these everyday arguments are faulty. The best strategy is to say honestly that you are studying artificially simple examples of good and bad argument, where everything is out in the open, and that in real life telling when someone is arguing well or badly is a much subtler

business.

Many students find it surprisingly hard to identify the premises and the conclusions in an argumentative passage. Given a little argument laid out in "A, B, therefore C" form they can usually say whether it is convincing or not, and can usually separate judgments of the truth of the conclusion from judgments of the force of the argument without much difficulty. But if they are given a long passage like a newspaper column and asked to say what it assumes and what it concludes, they are more often baffled. My strategy – see 2.4 – is to provide short arguments, short enough that premises and conclusions can be identified by a sense of what might follow from what and by indicator words like "so" and "therefore." Then building up to seeing argumentative strategy in longer passages can happen slowly. In any case, the essential thing is that students know what the difference between premises and conclusions, or premises, or both.

**2.5** See the remarks above about the difficulty of identifying premises and conclusions. I have deliberately included arguments in which the conclusion is at the beginning rather than at the end. The arguments get progressively harder to structure and evaluate. (a)–(c) should not present much of a problem. (But (b) is an example of a good argument whose premises are not obviously true. So it forces the valid/sound distinction. (c) too: it should be an exercise in discriminating outrageous argument from outrageous premises.) (d) may be harder just because it is longer. The conclusion is signaled by "then," which is less explicit than "therefore." (f) is also potentially harder to grasp. I have deliberately used an example with terminology that may be unfamiliar to many, to stress that in assessing the validity of an argument, understanding the component propositions is less important than assessing its soundness. The conclusion is in the middle of the passage, not signaled by any indicator word. It is enough with (g) to get it laid out in standard form. The argument actually contains a fallacy, a confusion of "for each A there is a B" with "there is a B such that for each A," which I remark on at a couple of points later on in the book. But it is not important at this stage to dwell on this.

The first question, "which are more persuasive?" is deliberately naïve. In discussing different students' answers to it you should be able to bring out the difference between a valid argument – which would persuade a critical audience who accepted its premises – and a sound argument – which would lead a critical audience with true beliefs to a true conclusion.

**<u>2.6</u>** These arguments may be valuable because they may intrigue. It isn't obvious what is wrong with them. My own diagnoses are that in the first the second premise is, surprisingly, false. Some rare things are cheap, for example, cheap horses. In the second the conclusion is actually true: Moscow is to the west of London, though you have to go a long way west to get there. And in the third we either have to reject the third premise – amend it to "the brother of a brother is a brother when he is distinct from the first brother" – or accept that every male is his own brother. But there are other diagnoses, and it is the articulating of them that is likely to be valuable.

**2.7** Some of the arguments in 2.4 already contained several steps, so the basic idea here should not be too difficult. (There is a more sophisticated use of arguments within arguments, as in conditional proof, or arguments by reductio. But that is *not* to be

brought in here.)

The overall argument is not valid because the premises could be true and the conclusion false in a situation in which some people of the same generation are conformist and some nonconformist, and the children of unions between conformists and nonconformists are a mixture of conformists and nonconformists. The argument would be valid if we added the premise "at any time everyone is either a parent or a child and either all parents are conformist or all parents are nonconformists" (and the "hardly needs stating" premise "children grow up to be parents.") Are there weaker premises which will do the job? This is not an issue to spend class time discussing!

**2.8** It would help to get the class to read at least the Andrea/Brian dialogue in advance. The first of the skeleton arguments ("every event has a cause") can be found in Brian's intervention beginning "You do, you do,  $\ldots$ " The second ("we only understand") can be found in Brian's following intervention, beginning "Weren't you listening?" The third and fourth (both beginning "we do not understand") can't be found in the dialogue. The fifth "the causes of any event") is found in the next of Brian's interventions, beginning "We don't know why."

When you ask which of the arguments the students find more convincing, the discussion may expand to include other reasons for believing there is a God. That is alright, as long as the discussion is about arguments for the existence of God. It should not become an argument about the existence of God in general.

It is important that people be able to judge the force of arguments to conclusions they do not accept. So the reactions of nonbelievers to the five arguments are worth eliciting. Which are more nearly convincing and why? It is worth pointing out that Andrea in the dialogue has some arguments *against* the existence of God, though they are less explicitly stated, for example, in her interventions beginning "You're going to be disappointed" and "I suppose I think." You might expand on these arguments – ideally draw attention to them and let the class expand on them – and then ask those in the class who believe in a God which ones more nearly challenge their faith.

The last part of this section introduces the fundamental technique of refuting an argument by presenting a counterexample. This is discussed in more detail in 5.6. I think that providing formal counterexamples to the five arguments for God would be too hard at this point. I chose the second argument for counterexampling because one of its two component arguments – from the universe having a purpose to the existence of God – is very easy to counter. The other component goes from every intelligible event having a purpose to there being a single purpose to all events. That this is fallacious may be harder to see. I'd suggest just presenting obviously invalid parallel arguments such as "every child has a mother; therefore there is a Mother of all children" or "we only understand the value of an object when we see how much work went into making it; we do understand the values of objects; therefore there is an amount of work that went into all objects." Then after the penny has dropped, people will begin finding additional premises to undermine the parallel.

The material in the last paragraph of the section is included for the sake of stimulation, and needn't be worked through in class, though it may be useful with a class which finds issues about God uninteresting.

**2.9** Discussing paradoxes in class can be tricky, because there are individuals who will be very insistent that the reasoning is fallacious for some specific reason, and will take up

a lot of time explaining themselves. The teacher then is in the delicate position of agreeing that the reasoning is fallacious, but insisting that the mistake is more subtle than the student thinks. It is hard for the student in this situation to see that the teacher is not arguing for the paradoxical conclusion in disagreeing with their diagnosis of the fault in the reasoning. If you are discussing this section in class rather than leaving it as stimulating reading – and I am not trying to discourage you from doing so – I would recommend forcing a class discussion of which premises in the two arguments are better candidates for being abandoned (see the list in the text) before particular dogmatic diagnoses arise. The point is then made that the paradox can be avoided by abandoning a belief, which might be less painful than it seems at first.

**2.10** I am assuming that most students will have some sense of the dangers of picking up information from the internet. They will not have a specific list of worries though, and so this section may be of use as a means to practical skepticism. (I have taken some ideas from <u>the HONcode site</u>.) A class based on this section should begin with eliciting the kinds of false or misleading information that can result from ignoring each of the warning signs (1)–(7). A discussion of the general wariness appropriate to the internet could follow. This sets up the most important phase philosophically, a discussion of the ways in which the other sources listed may be really no more reliable than the internet.

Points I would expect to emerge, one way or another, in the course of this discussion are: textbooks rarely cite original sources or give the reader enough information to reproduce the relevant experiments; authorities often refer to one another in a circular fashion; life is too short to get evidence for everything; knowing that evidence could be found is important even when one doesn't actually check it; people can honestly and sincerely pass on information that is in fact false.

2.10 This section just rounds out the chapter and connects the issues with those that arise later. It would be good for students to read it, but it does not really need discussion.

## Chapter 2 – Test

(A) In each of the following three arguments, <u>underline</u> the premises of the argument, and circle the conclusion:

(1) Classical musicians are more highly trained than rock musicians. In order to play classical music at a professional level you have to study an instrument for years. But some rock musicians have only a few weeks of formal training.

(2) You might think that the hot summers we have had lately are conclusive proof that the world's climate is getting warmer. But this may not in fact be the case: the climate may not be changing at all. For a sequence of hot summers can be the result of chance, like throwing a die and its coming down six four times in a row.

(3) Everything in the Bible is true. The Bible says that we should not kill. Therefore it is wrong to wage war, for any purpose, for warfare inevitably involves killing.

(B) Beside each of the following four arguments mark either V for valid or I for invalid (not valid):

All cats eat mice. All mice can fly. Therefore all cats can fly.

All cats eat mice. All mice can fly. Therefore all cats eat flying things.

Some cats eat mice. Therefore some mice are eaten by cats.

You can fool all of the people most of the time. You can fool most of the people all of the time. Therefore you can fool most of the people most of the time.

### Chapter 3

### Planning information:

3.1 essential – read for class 3.2 work through – rehearses 3.1 3.3 less essential – email 3.4 work through - rehearses 3.1, 3.3 3.5 essential – read for class Box 5 optional reading 3.6 work through – fairly difficult – email. 3.7 essential – work through – rehearses 3.5 Box 6 optional reading 3.8 less essential – work through – rehearses 3.5 – email 3.9 less essential 3.10 optional topic – email 3.11 essential – read for class 3.12 essential – work through – rehearses 3.10 3.13 less essential – work through Box 7 optional reading The absolute core of the chapter is sections 3.1, 3.4, .3.5, 3.7, 3.10, 3.11

The <u>pedagogical aim</u> of this chapter is to get students to take the rationalist project seriously, at the same time as seeing its problems. The student should leave the chapter realizing that reasoning plays a very large role in forming our beliefs, while seeing that it is doubtful that reasoning alone can give certain knowledge of very much. A more specific focus is Descartes' project in the *Meditations*, including Cartesian doubt, the cogito, and the ambition of using the certainty of one's own existence as a foundation for other beliefs.

## Chapter 3 – Comments on Sections

**3.1** This is an expositional section, to be read in advance of class. The quotation from Wollstonecraft is fairly hard though, and it would be a good idea to see that the class does understand how the little précis I give just after the quote relates to what she actually says. I included the quote because it makes an important connection between optimism about the ability of a single person to think for herself and the courage to think that one can find ways in which the customs and moral ideas of one's society may be less than perfect.

**3.2** This section is meant to work through some issues raised in 3.1, especially those raised in the Wollstonecroft quote. It is intended to raise doubts about the ability of an isolated individual, however intelligent, to perform a thorough and profitable questioning of many of her culture's beliefs. It is not inevitable, though, that this is the direction the class will go. The way to get a discussion going is to do the first of the two activities of the section and to consider the scores produced. If they suggest that the class thinks that an individual by herself can think out how her culture is wrong, try asking "but Morton is clearly hinting the opposite, what reasons do you think he might have?" Also focus on the particular case of the status of women and ask why many very intelligent women in traditional cultures have not questioned their roles. If the scores suggest that the class is pessimistic about the prospects for an isolated rebel, use the list (a)–(c) in the second activity to elicit ways in which some topics may be more amenable to radical rationalism than others.

What role is the assumption that the person is very intelligent playing? Is there a trade-off between intelligence and the need to rely on the opinions of those around one?

**3.3** Galileo is not on the standard list of great philosophers, but I take him as providing the background to Descartes, via considerations about physics that are more accessible than Descartes' own physics. My hope is that reflecting on Galileo's thought experiments will make a case that one can at least exclude apparent factual possibilities by sufficiently rigorous, ideally mathematical, thinking about what they would involve. For all that, the section can be skipped if there is not enough time.

**<u>3.4</u>** This is an activity directed at the issues in 3.1. It should not be difficult to get a class to be explicit on the problems of the five theories. Then you have a chance to get a discussion going on how much help this would be in a scientific or philosophical enterprise. How near to the truth about – space-matter-energy, whether you are the only thinking being in the world, numbers – can we get by excluding theories that have no hope of being true? How much nearer to narrowing the list of possibilities down to one could we get on some of these topics than others? You might raise the radical Cartesian suggestion that if we were only good enough mathematicians we wouldn't need to do experiments in science.

(5) is of course a Russell-type paradox. You may have to explicitly derive the conclusion that the judge of the Outsiders both is and is not an Outsider. You may then have to prompt them a bit to get them to see that this means that the description of Russellia cannot be right.

<u>3.5</u> The most essential thing for the student to understand here is the use of a Demon possibility to undermine the reasons for believing something, and the difference between

this and the basic boring skepticism that just pokes holes in our grounds for belief one by one. It is important that the students understand that in order for Descartes' technique to work he does not have to convince you that deceiving spirits – or whatever, see 3.7 – are real, or even likely, but that you don't have evidence to show that they are not real.

<u>**3.6**</u> This activity makes a basic important point about the limited force of the basic skeptical argument – especially when combined with 3.8, and in fact they could well be done together. It is based on a logical point that can be hard to grasp though. See the second to last paragraph of the note for 2.7.

3.7 It is important to work through this activity. (If you are working through 3.8 then you could consider skipping it.) Students should be able to produce their own fantasies of extreme delusion. Everyone has theirs. You should discuss which ones undermine which bodies of everyday belief.

**3.8** This would work best if most people in the class have seen *The Matrix*, preferably not too long before. You might arrange a special out-of-class screening, if you have a video-equipped room handy. It is really only the first 45 minutes and, to a smaller extent, the very end, that is relevant. (But the whole film is so much fun; why break it?) Students should have no shortage of reactions to the film, and should have no difficulty seeing the connection with the idea of a Cartesian deceiver or a brain in a vat. Reflection on what the film is actually depicting may produce a shock, however: given the film's central premise, most of the action is illusory. So the fights, for example, never really take place. They must be depictions of the experience of characters in the film, though usually shown from a neutral perspective. (Are there other interpretations?) You should gently press the question of what is supposed to be real in the film until the point becomes clear. Some students' reactions may amount to an interesting "Kantian" line that sufficiently coherent experience is of something real, even if it is ultimately produced by factors quite different from the causes supposed in everyday life. (Bertrand Russell, in The Problems of Philosophy, makes the point that - to paraphrase - if physics is right then the real causes of our experience are so different from what common sense supposes that it is almost as if we were brains in vats.) Some students may combine the film and this section of the course to suppose that skeptical philosophy is trying to persuade them that they are in fact victims of a global deception. You should be clear that the aim is subtler than this. (But note the Russell point: there might be scientific reasons for thinking that there is something deceptive about much experience. Thought experiments won't show this, though.)

The first set of questions is meant simply to make sure that the students do see how the assumptions of the film work. You can begin them and break off when it becomes clear that they are clear on the issue. The second set of questions is more important. There are various ways of answering them; it is not to be assumed that when you probe hard enough the film doesn't work. Of course, you should let the discussion go in any philosophically relevant direction it wants, having started with any of these questions. The third set of questions is less focused; you can't count on starting a discussion with them. They are there partly to stimulate students who read them, and also so that if the discussion takes a course that seems to connect with these thoughts you can ask the students if this is a statement of what they had in mind. (And the answer may be: no, what I wanted to say is different in these ways . . .) Other films that could serve the same purpose in the course are *The Truman Show* and, though it is less to the point, *Pleasantville*.

**3.9** This nonessential section should be thought-provoking and sustain a discussion. The suggestion it invites the reader to consider is that to get a demon possibility that undermines a large body of beliefs without also making some other beliefs more certain we have to use very artificial – weird, crazy, metaphysical – demon possibilities in the direction of brains in vats and deceiving spirits (even further in those directions, perhaps). And the intelligibility of these possibilities is not obvious: they may just not make sense. What demon possibilities can you come up with that get around the worry expressed here, and how much sense do they make?

**3.10** This section is not only not essential to the main thread of the chapter or the book, it is longer and harder than average. But it will be of interest to students who have come to philosophy through religion, or for whom the course so far has touched a vein of religious doubt. It encourages the students to see that there are different ways of combining a skeptical attitude with religious belief or disbelief. If you assign this section as reading, you should allow class time to discuss it. Then you should, by using the graph the text suggests filling in or otherwise, get the class to compare the appeal of the different positions described. Make sure they grasp fideism, which suggests that while skepticism is not a friend of dogmatism it is a friend of faith. What is the faith that this suggests. Is it an optional business, in that equally rational people could follow it or not follow it? Could a skeptic suggest that it was an illusion? What should the attitude of someone who has faith be to someone who does not (on each of these positions)?

Early in the section Protagoras' relativism is mentioned. I have cut from the second edition Plato's objection that the position is self-refuting: if Protagoras is right then his own view is true only for him. Intelligent students are likely to make this point themselves, and then you might guide them to ways later skeptics and relativists have got around this reply, for example, instead of saying "no belief is true absolutely" saying "all beliefs can be challenged" or "there are good reasons for and against believing anything."

**3.11** This is a section the class must read, in advance. It is rehearsed in 3.12.

3.12 It is essential to work through this section in class. It *looks* hard, in that the positions of Russell and Sartre used here come from sophisticated theories. But in fact the ideas, taken out of context, are not so difficult to grasp. STAGE ONE: you are not always sure that you exist because (Russell) what you take to be "me" in your thinking might not be you, or because (Sartre) you might have no awareness of a self at all. I'd strongly recommend doing the (a) to (d) exercise quite literally to get this point home. (a) and (b) are the naturally Russellian stories and (c) and (d) are the naturally Sartrean stories, but it is worth lingering on suggestions that link things differently, as they would suggest links between Russell's position and Sartre's. STAGE TWO: even when you/Descartes explicitly think "at any rate this me that I'm thinking about now exists" you may wrong, because (Russell) the "me" may not be a single thing that can reasonably be labeled "me" at all, or (Sartre) it may be a process rather than an entity. The second stage is harder to understand than the first; I'd suggest letting it emerge from a free discussion of the first part. So you might do the (a) to (d) exercise and then raise the issue of whether any of this should bother Descartes. Then do the (1) to (3) exercise. Cartesian reply (1) invites problem (iii), (2) invites (ii), and (3) invites (i). In a way

(3)/(i) is the metaphysically most interesting, since it suggests that there need be no thing that does the thinking. You might try out responses to fantasies like this: there are two computers, and one thinks "I think" and the second then thinks "I am" plus a false memory (produced by its program) of having thought "I think." Is there a self in this story? Or suppose that all thoughts by all people are events in the mind of God. What kind of thread is necessary in order that the stream of my thinking forms a "self" distinct from the stream of your thinking?

**3.13** This section rounds off the chapter and links it to the larger sequence of ideas. Still, it is not essential to cover it. The (1) to (6) activity at the end of the section could combine well with 3.6 or 3.8. The aim is to show that there are more and less certain beliefs, and that even when beliefs are intuitively certain one may be more certain than another. A discussion could go in the direction of a classification of certain beliefs (of dimensions along which there is a more or less certain contrast.) The class could find themselves discovering the differences between – for example – analytic truths, introspectively given facts, beliefs basic to the way we think, and beliefs which we cannot easily imagine alternatives to. The content of **Box 7** could well be covered at the same time. The link is the very unlikely possibilities one has to consider in sorting out degrees of certainty. The point about implicit premises made in the box is important: that often a belief will seem completely certain until you begin to look carefully at it, and then sometimes it begins to seem not just not certain but doubtful.

<u>Chapter 3 – Test</u> (See comments for chapter 1 test.)

Mark each of the following assertions as True or False:

A rationalist aims to prove that all of the beliefs of her culture are true.

A rationalist aims to prove that all of the beliefs of her culture are false.

Rationalism builds on the discovery that we don't have to do experiments to know that some theories are wrong.

To clear the ground for building an error-free system of belief we have to decide that everything we previously believed is false.

To clear the ground for building an error-free system of belief a rationalist will consider all of his beliefs to see whether any of them might be false.

You can know just by thinking that Descartes existed.

According to Descartes, "I exist" follows from "I think."

If you were a brain in a vat you would not exist.

If you were a brain in a vat you would be wrong in thinking that you are sitting at a desk.

Once he has proved that he exists Descartes has no problem proving that he is not deceived by an evil spirit.

If you are walking along thinking about music you are certain that you exist.

If you are walking along thinking about music you temporarily don't exist.

**Planning information:** 

- 4.1 essential read
- 4.2 less essential suitable to work through in class rehearses 4.1
- 4.3 essential suitable to work through in class rehearses 4.1
- 4.4 not essential but desirable read for class
- 4.5 work through rehearses 4.4
- 4.6 essential read for class
- 4.7 essential work through
- 4.8 not essential but desirable read for class work through email
- 4.9 optional topic email
- 4.10 optional topic read email
- 4.11 essential read for class.
- The absolute core of this chapter is 4.1, 4.3, 4.6, 4.7, 4.11. The chapter is a lot richer if 4.4 and 4.5 are included though.

The pedagogical aim of this chapter is to make the students consider seriously the idea that you can get clearer about moral issues by thinking and arguing. Positions much weaker than a full moral rationalism will allow thought to grip morality, of course. But moral rationalism is easily understood and relates clearly to the rationalistic epistemology of the previous chapter. An obstacle here is a use of a naïve moral relativism that students will use more as a protection against disturbing thoughts than out of real conviction. I think the best attitude to it is gentle ironical subversion – you don't really think that, do you? – rather than frontal assault. Plato is valuable here because his ideas are challengingly alien while every now and then hitting a note that seems just intuitively right.

## Chapter 4 – Comments on Sections

**4.1** This should be a quick and not very challenging read that students can easily get through before class. It is followed up by two actitivity-based sections, 4.2. and 4.3. Either would be adequate, though I have listed the longer 4.3 as essential because it touches more central questions. (But if you are doing only one, it makes a big difference which one you find more interesting.)

**4.2** The crucial point in doing this activity is to make sure that the differences between the claims (1) to (4) are vivid. The Rama and Sitta questions are meant to do this, but you may need to dwell on the issue, and you may prefer other ways of doing it. There are two main connections with moral rationalism. First, that the most natural candidate for an a priori moral principle needs to be carefully formulated: there are lots of choices. (The same would happen with arithmetic or geometry or set theory.) Second, that when you think about even the simplest moral principle in an abstract way you move into confusion, from which you can emerge in a very different place.

There is also a point about philosophical method here. If you don't focus hard on what an assertion literally says, you run it together with similar claims which can have quite different consequences. A "Chinese whispers" activity can bring this out: one person whispers a simple but syntactically indirect sentence into the ear of another – "the only necessary people are good people," for example – who whispers it into the ear of

another, and so on for four or five more. Then each says what she heard: they tend to be logical as well as phonetic variants of the original.

**4.3** This is a big activity and will take a whole class session. It would be best if the students had read it in advance to make the material somewhat familiar. Working through the activity is straightforward though. You shouldn't hurry; everything that needs to be explained or discussed along the way should be, and it is better to take two classes to get through it than to force it. The important moment comes at "Political Arithmetic" when the justice-inducing force of the various factors is assessed. I expect that imbalance of power and proportion in the bottom group will come out as decreasing justice and voluntariness and social mobility will come out as increasing justice. Resentment of inequality is a less predictable factor. I would guess that reactions to it are very sensitive to the background of the students. In any case, students are less likely to agree about it than the others. Consensuses and disagreements should be noted, and the possibilities for thinking out moral/political issues noted.

Disagreements are likely about the relevance of resentment and of social mobility. Does it make a society less unjust if few notice or mind (consider the position of women in a traditional patriarchy)? Does it make a society less unjust if by hard work and a bit of luck more able people can get status and goods that their initial positions denied them (but what about the less energetic or less talented)? Discuss these for their own sake, only making the methodological point about moral rationalism as a kind of a footnote.

Sophisticated students will want to distinguish between injustice and other ways a society can be flawed. Keep this distinction in mind as a possible diagnosis for disagreements that are not being clearly articulated.

The directions in the text presuppose that you have a large class which is divided into smaller groups. It is clear what to do and what to omit if the class is functioning as one group.

**<u>4.4</u>** This section and the next are about Plato's *Republic*, a topic that you could skip. But I would advise doing them, in order to show how one famous philosopher did hope to do ethics by pure reason. They thus link closely to 4.3, on the topic of justice. The design of institutions is an obvious entry point for ideas about reason in ethics. 4.4 is a purely textual section; it is meant to be read for a class in which 4.5 is worked through.

**<u>4.5</u>** This will take a whole class period. (Or more. Again, let it take what it needs.) The students will have to read through the passages from Plato in class, even if they have looked through them in advance. The activity directed at claims (1) to (6) is one that you can approach very directly with any group. It might be best to begin with eliminating the claims classified as C: not conclusions of the passage. (4) and (6) should appear as non-conclusions: (4) because Glaucon's argument, that in his thought experiment the just person would behave unjustly, presupposes that there is a difference between just and unjust, and (6) because Glaucon thinks that in normal conditions there is a motive for acting justly (but it is a self-interested motive). Sorting out the remaining four claims into (A) and (B) is harder. As I read the passage, the A-claims, the main conclusions, are (2) and (5), and the B-claims, the more incidental ones, are (1) and (3). For (1) and (3) appear as conclusions of subarguments leading to (2) and (5). Some students may read the passage differently, and you should ask them what structure they think the argument as a whole has. (The question should make sense to them from chapter 2.)

The suggestion in the text of putting the classification in a table and comparing results is best done very quickly, just to see if there is a lot of disagreement between individuals. If there is, you will have to go carefully through the points made just now.

If the class is going to take two sessions to work through this section, a natural place to break is between this activity and the following one, based on a different passage.

The second activity of this section also centers on a passage from the *Republic*. This one argues for a much less intuitively natural conclusion, though one that Plato himself is suggesting rather than rejecting. The activity does not involve structuring the argument in the passage, but rather considering three arguments that roughly fit it, and comparing them. You will need enough time for the class to read and digest all three (or you could do just the first two). Of the objections (a) to (e), I would say that (b) and (d) are relevant to (ii), (c) is relevant to (i), and (e) is relevant to (iii). (a) is a dummy, relevant to none of them, stuck in to make sure everyone is awake.

The fact that, though the arguments have the same conclusion, they are vulnerable to different objections should be pointed out as generally important. (There can be crappy arguments for true conclusions.)

To my mind the third argument, the most elaborate, is the nearest to being convincing. But you should be able to get some respect for all of them, and for Plato's general line here, by presenting them as ways of developing the thought that you can't have a good society unless the people in it are good.

**<u>4.6</u>** This description of the pros and cons of moral relativism is deliberately neutral. In fact it tries to elicit some sympathy for the view, to help the students articulate their own sympathies. Some of the issues then raised, explicitly and in the back of the students' minds, are then worked through in 4.7

**4.7** It should not be difficult to make this activity work. It would help to have a straw poll in advance, in which students identify themselves as being generally for or generally against moral relativism. (No fence-sitting allowed.) Then work through the arguments one by one, making sure they are understood, and recording how convincing students find them. (There is no right and wrong about this.) Then force the pro-relativism students to identify the anti-relativism arguments they find most challenging, and vice versa. If, as is most likely, they hold on to their positions in spite of admitting the force of contrary arguments, they will be searching for holes in the arguments. Then you're away.

**4.8** Another activity on moral relativism, this one designed to elicit intuitions against it. Turnbull's actual position is quite subtle. While his description of the Ik is often used to make the point that one can describe a culture objectively and also say that it is morally awful, he explores the possibility that these judgments are superficial: they are the kinds of things that people can say when they are not starving. The activity I describe could be a way of getting a structured discussion of these issues going, but you might also have the students read all eight passages from Turnbull and then just let them take the discussion where they want to.

**<u>4.9</u>** The relation between law and morality is not essential here. But it does give a good lever on issues about moral relativism since to a large extent what is legal clearly is relative to time and place. So if relativism is *not* true we should expect some things to be

legal but wrong, and the questions about the moral force of different laws are meant to bring this out. I would suggest going quite quickly through the reactions to the For and Against arguments and then focusing on the possible laws 1 to 6. It is quite likely that when you have stated the questions about them the discussion will take on a life of its own. That's fine, of course.

**4.10** A nonessential topic that will interest many students. The quotation is from *The Second Sex*. Notice how although existentialism seems at an opposite extreme from moral rationalism, the de Beauvoir quote seems to express a very definite moral attitude. Is this an inconsistency?

**4.11** The debates in and provoked by this chapter are likely to be inconclusive. This final section offers a diagnosis of what lies behind the disagreements, and some suggestions about how a position might combine the insights of both rationalism and relativism. Students could read this section on their own, with no classroom rehearsal. But if you want to discuss it in class and want a structured activity, then 4.8, if not already done, would serve. The connection to make is that 4.11 suggests that we should reject both extremes, and that the descriptions in 4.8 invite us to reject relativism while Turnbull's reflections invite us to reject rationalism.

# Chapter 4 - Test

(This test is based on the objectives stated at the beginning of the chapter.)

## For each question circle the best answer

- Why is moral rationalism often based on a principle of impartiality? (a) because it is fair (b) because it looks like a true principle that we can know by use of reason (c) because Jesus, Confucius, and several modern philosophers have all defended the principle.
- (2) What factors can increase the justice of a society? (a) equality of opportunity; (b) equality of happiness; (c) equality of unhappiness.
- (3) How does Plato think that he can prove what an ideal society would be like? (a) by making mathematical calculations; (b) by describing an ideal person; (c) by imagining societies and then thinking hard about their good and bad qualities.
- (4) Which of these are (beginnings of) arguments against moral relativism? (a) what is legal in one country is illegal in another; (b) we can judge whether the principles people in a culture live by are fair or unfair; (c) we should tolerate other cultures.
- 5) How is existentialism different from moral relativism? (a) existentialism is concerned with values individuals adopt while moral relativism is concerned with values cultures adopt; (b) existentialism says that life is meaningless while moral relativism says that life has the meaning your culture gives it; (c) existentialism says that people make their own values and moral relativism says that there are only values relative to a culture.
- 6) Which of the following should we expect of a moral philosophy? (a) a list of right and wrong actions; (b) a way of understanding the values of all people; (c) a description of what disagreements over right and wrong are disagreements about.

#### Chapter 5

Planning information:

- 5.1 essential read for class
- 5.2 essential work through rehearses 5.1
- 5.3 essential read for class
- 5.4 essential read for class work through rehearses 5.3
- 5.5 less essential read for class work through
- 5.6 essential read for class work through
- 5.7 essential read for class
- 5.8 less essential read for class
- 5.9 less essential read for class work through rehearses 5.7
- 5.10 essential read for class email
- 5.11 optional topic read for class work through email
- 5.12 not essential read for class work through email
- The absolute core of this chapter is 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, 5.7, 5.10.

The pedagogical strategy of the chapter is to contrast induction and deduction by explaining both at the same time with similar techniques. The analogs for induction of Venn diagrams, used in section 5.7, are thus essential. (And though 5.6 is not listed as part of the absolute core, it would not fit the pedagogical strategy to skip it.) In fact, there is much less of this chapter that can be omitted than most. You can't expect a very brief exposition of deductive logic like this one to generate a real facility with even elementary logic, so the discussion of syllogisms is meant to motivate the complex of ideas of validity/counterexample/Venn diagram. Another way of putting it: a traditional logic course first gives you a lot of practice with patterns of valid argument and then progresses to precise meta-concepts of validity and invalidity. My strategy is to use examples of valid and invalid argument to motivate rough concepts of validity and invalidity. Judgments about particular arguments can then be left to the student's common sense. I am sure this is better for beginning students, and prevents the philosophically central ideas from getting lost in logical details.

I would recommend not trying to get through this chapter in a week of a normal class schedule. Two weeks makes more sense.

### Chapter 5 - Comments on Sections

**5.1** This expositional section sets the theme of the chapter as induction – so deduction will later emerge as a contrast to it, but not until 5.4.

**5.2** It is important to work through this, to make sure the students have understood the kinds of reasoning that count as simple induction. In MORTALITY the conclusions that follow straightforwardly by simple induction are (ii), (iii), (iv). Conclusions (i) and (v) can be supported by inductive arguments whose data includes the data here, but simple induction, as defined, won't get them from this data alone. The contrast between (iii) and (iv) may raise worrying issues that are dealt with in 5.12. A series of further questions leads on to questions that hint at a conclusion students may draw for themselves, that you

have to know more than that a conclusion is got by simple induction to know whether you should believe it. MICROBIOLOGY is not very difficult or puzzling, but it does take a bit of figuring out.

**5.3** This is another purely expositional section, introducing the idea that reasoning it is perfectly reasonable to follow can still sometimes lead to false conclusions, thus setting the stage for 5.7. It is worth pointing out that this undercuts a key rationalist assumption. You could ask students to read both 5.1 and 5.3 before a class in which you work through 5.2

**5.4** Now deduction enters. Syllogisms are here because they're easy, and because they link to Venn diagrams, making the idea of validity and the relation to induction clearer. Students could read through the section in advance of a class in which you work through the activity at the end. (I think the answers are evident. The last example is interesting because it is not just a quibble that the "nearly" stops it being a syllogism in Barbara. Choose the right cases – and a threshold for "nearly" such as 80% – and you can easily show that it is not valid; the premises can be true and the conclusion false. This is worth pointing out. Ask them about "most.") I suspect that most classes will not take a whole class session to get through 5.4, so you could have the class read 5.3 and 5.5 in advance, and then work through 5.4 and the activity at the end of 5.5 in class.

**5.5** (See the remark just above about combining the activity at the end of this and 5.4.) The students are not expected to grasp even the beginnings of the symbolism of propositional or relational logic here; the point is just to see that valid arguments come in families. The point that when the premises are false the conclusion of a valid argument can be either true or false tends to be surprising, so it is worth dwelling on it. (I think it's the idea that you can start with falsehood and by good reasoning get to truth that is disconcerting. Your destination does not validate your starting point.) In the activity at the end (7) and (4) can begin a TTT pattern, (2) and (1) can begin an FTF pattern, and (7) and (5) can begin a TFT pattern. (There are other solutions too.)

**5.6** Though this section takes only three pages the central ideas, of validity and counterexample, can be hard to grasp. So it is worth spending a whole class just on this, working through the examples (a)–(d) slowly. (The examples are chosen to stress again the point that validity of argument and truth of conclusion are independent questions.) You could add (i) and (ii) from 5.5 if you wanted more examples, or make up your own.

**5.7** The careful discussion of deductive validity is meant to allow a non-paradoxical statement of the important fact about induction: it is often reasonable but it is not deductively valid. No need to go through extravagant Humean ideas about induction not being rational in order to get the point across. (The Humean points are worth making, as this section does, but only once the distinctions are in place.) The diagrams should combine in a simple way with the diagrams of the previous sections: inductive reasoning looks like a partially unrolled Venn diagram, valid in the exposed bit but with possible counterexamples hiding in the unrolled bit. 5.9 rehearses this connection.

**5.8** This section gives some cultural background to "the problem of induction." One subtle aim of the section is to forestall the impression that beginning philosophy students sometimes get, that inductive reasoning always gives true conclusions, but there is a

lurking skeptical doubt that someday it may fail. It fails routinely, and we have to live with that fact.

**5.9** This is a pretty straightforward activity, rehearsing 5.7 and 5.8. It could lead to a discussion of the areas in which we expect inductive reasoning to be more and less reliable. These expectations are in part based on inductive reasoning: does this invalidate them? (No, but the class may take some convincing on this point.)

**5.10** The point is to show how resistible the arguments from the fallibility of induction to skepticism are. At the same time these arguments are important and should be discussed. After getting the content of this section clear, three general positions can be contrasted. The first is "Hume's problem is a nightmare that we cannot dispel but can usually ignore"; the second is "Hume's problem is a healthy limit on the claims of science"; and the third is "Hume's problem is a manageable question of which patterns of inference will succeed how often under what conditions." Force the students to choose which one they are more attracted to, and talk it out. (One technique "Morton is maneuvering us toward the third conclusion: how can we resist him?")

5.11 A topic that would not be closely related to induction were it not for Hume. If the class is reading Hume, this section may be needed to separate issues about cause from issues about induction.

**5.12** An easy approach to grue (see Box 10) but still potentially confusing, and to be avoided if the class's grasp of the issues is delicate. It is also useful if they are having no problems and need stimulation. If you want to take these issues further 10.10 rehearses them.

Chapter 5 – Test

# (1) Which of the following are syllogisms in Barbara?

- (a) All trees are made of wood. Anything made of wood burns. Therefore anything that burns is a tree.
- (b) All cats chase mice. All mice have tails. Therefore all cats have tails.
- (c) All cats are animals. All cats are mammals. Therefore all mammals are animals.

(2) Draw a Venn diagram showing that each of the following is invalid:

- (a) All dogs bark. Therefore everything that barks is a dog.
- (b) All mice are cute.

All cute things are pink. Therefore all pink things are mice.

# (3) Which of the following are arguments by simple induction?

(a) It was warm in Key West last January; it was warm in Key West the previous January; I have never heard of January in Key West that was not warm. Therefore it is always warm in Key West in January.

(b) Three years ago on the hottest day in Edinburgh it was 25 degrees centigrade; two years ago the hottest day was 28 degrees; last year it was 30 degrees. Therefore in a year or two it will be 32 degrees on the hottest day in Edinburgh.

(c) All the samples of neolite in my laboratory dissolve in sulphuric acid. All the samples of neolite in other laboratories dissolve in sulphuric acid. There are no samples of neolite outside laboratories. Therefore neolite dissolves in sulphuric acid.

(4) <u>Which of (a), (b), (c) in (3) is more convincing as evidence for its conclusion?</u> [Write on the space below. Give a brief reason.]

# Chapter 6

Planning information:

6.1 essential - read
6.2 essential - read for class
6.3 essential - work through - rehearses 6.2
6.4 essential - read for class - work through
Box 12 not essential - email
6.5 essential - read
6.6 essential - read for class
6.7 essential - read for class
6.8 less essential - work through
6.9 less essential - work through - rehearses 6.10 - email
6.10 essential - read
The absolute core of this chapter is 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7

The pedagogical strategy of this chapter is to show that we do not have to equate reasonableness with certainty. We can distinguish the more and less reasonable among things that are doubtful. A critical discussion of Hume is the main device for doing this. The point about reason is linked to ideas about toleration, as explained in 6.5 and 6.6, and these links are explored in the rest of the chapter. It is essential to the strategy to cover either 6.6 and 6.7 or 6.8; if time is short you could skip one of them.

Chapter 6 – Comments on Sections

6.1 This section just puts the chapter into perspective. It should be clear without classroom explanation, but students should read it.

**<u>6.2</u>** This is an exposition of Hume, trying to elicit sympathy for his position. It goes with 6.3, which works through actual short passages of Hume.

**6.3** Hume's English is old enough for students to have to read it slowly. When working through this section in class have the students go directly to the modernized paraphrases in [square brackets]. (My scholarly colleagues would not have forgiven me for leaving out Hume's actual words, though I can choose translations of Plato or Descartes into clear modern English.) The correlations between (a) to (d) and the passages should be no problem. The very abstract arguments (2) and (4) seem to me to have force against the general line in A, though they don't connect with it very specifically; (3) is a line that could be taken, but Hume has an obvious reply to it ("some people want pain; what's so unreasonable about that?" (1) is a quibble that could be avoided by rephrasing the example. (5) is to my mind the most forceful: is Hume saying you can rationally want just anything, including, for example, wanting A or B but wanting neither A nor B, or wanting A more than B and B more than C and B more than A? (6.4 develops this point.) Of (i) to (iv), (iii) seems to me the only defensible choice.

In using this section to prompt a discussion I would first have the class read the passages and then very quickly check comprehension with (a)–(d), explicitly or informally, before focusing on (A). I'd pose the question "Is A right?" and hope that things developed from there. (1) to (5) would be brought in only if the discussion needed some shaping. (It would be best to have asked the class to read the section in advance, thinking about the (1) to (5) activity in particular.) This could then lead on to a discussion of how (A) relates to the other passages. What is the attitude to thought and reasoning that it expresses? And after that had got going you could ask if any of (i) to (iv) are good expressions of the possibilities raised.

**<u>6.4</u>** This section makes an important subtle point, that the fact that reasoning rarely gives certain conclusions doesn't prevent us from distinguishing good from bad reasoning. It makes this point under the cover of making a cruder point, that there is good and bad reasoning, but the examples it uses are ones where certainty doesn't apply.

It is a mixed exposition and activity section. The examples at the beginning of the section are not linked to any formal activity, though you could easily focus on one or another example and ask for their reactions to it and what they think it illustrates. The activity with (A) to (H) is much more structured. I think the way to make it work is to raise the examples one by one and ask what is wrong with the thinking of the person in question, eliciting informal descriptions, which you then link to (1) to (6). The intended links are (A)–(1), (B)–(5) or (6), (C)–(4), (D)–(2) or (5), (E)–(1) or (2), (F)–(3), (5), or (6), (G)–(5), (H)–(1). As the alternatives suggest, I don't think it's obvious what labels to apply. Perhaps the students can come up with some better ones. I expect it to be uncontroversial that the people in (A), (C), (D), (E) are exhibiting some kind of irrationality – and that is enough to make the main point. Other cases are going to be controversial. (H) is interesting in showing that a belief can be logically flawed but the person holding it might be described as just making a mistake rather than being irrational. What would we have to add to the description to make Henrik irrational?

**6.5** Although this is a short exposition which students should be able to take in without classroom explanation, this section is important to the overall argument of the chapter. It makes the connection between reason's surviving the loss of certainty about facts and its surviving the loss of certainty about values. It is definitely not obvious that this symmetry holds. All the chapter argues is that some naïve reasons for thinking that when certainty goes reason is powerless are not convincing in either case. Some students may want to argue that although we have good inductive and other methods for getting conclusions about the world which we can reasonably believe, though they will sometimes have to be revised, we do not have anything analogous for values. Encourage these students. Ask them to find out exactly how much of this chapter, and of chapter 11, they have to disagree with.

**<u>6.6</u>** This is to be read in advance of a classroom session in which 6.7 is worked through.

**<u>6.7</u>** Although this section is on the surface a test of tolerance (and most students will think that toleration is a virtue, and its opposite is bigotry) a less apparent purpose is to distinguish kinds and reasons for giving and withholding tolerance, so that it is no longer so obvious that it is a virtue to tolerate all alien values, however deeply held.

The important thing in this activity is to react to the examples, so you should allow time for the point of each one to emerge, rather than rushing to the point-scoring. In (6) the class may not find good examples of acts that are (arguably) harmless to others which someone might consider immoral. Suicide by terminally ill people is one example; consenting homosexual activity is another. Examples (6) and (7) link with issues arising in 6.8, so you can curtail the discussion of them if it is taking too much time and you will later be getting to 6.8. Example (5) links to issues in 6.9, so the same applies. The examples do not contain descriptions of really repulsive values: no religions based on child abuse, no brainwashed subservient women, no public burning of widows, no racist theology. The discussion should be lively without these, if the pulls in different directions implicit in the examples are exploited. But if things seem too bland and disagreements are not emerging, you could always spice things up by asking if the reactions to (3) or (6) are unchanged if a suitably higher-charged example is used instead.

If the discussion has gone well, there is no need to linger over the scoring. You should have students score themselves quickly, and soon after rate themselves as type 1 or type 2 tolerant or intolerant. If the discussion has dragged, you may linger on whether the labelings produced by the scoring are fair or accurate, what "tolerant" and "intolerant" mean, and whether the type 1/2 tolerant/intolerant diagnoses do catch the reasons behind individuals' patterns of response. (See the note above for section 1.2.)

The activity at the end of the section is directed at a large class that can be broken down into smaller groups. It won't work if examples (6) and (7) have already been talked out, so you have to anticipate doing it, or keep it in your mind to do if you have time.

**<u>6.8</u>** There is no preceding expositional section for this largely activity-based section, because the quote from Mill with which it begins is clear enough on its own. So if you are working through this section in class you should first make sure that the quote has been read and digested. In a small group you could then go first to (i)–(vi) and ask each of them what problems it makes for the harm principle, after a short discussion of each, fitting (A) or (B) to it (or deciding that neither fits.) My answers would be that (A) fits

(ii), (iv), (v), (B) fits (i), (iii), (vi). That is not to say that they are all equally powerful objections to the principle. To my mind (v) has no force: some may disagree. (vi) may seem cryptic It could be filled out with an example of someone spying on his neighbors' love-making: he could be argued to be doing them no harm, except inasmuch as they object. One thing to be careful of is the direction in which (B) objects to the principle. The problem is not that the principle ignores the harm done, e.g. to atheists at the thought that others worship gods, but rather that it includes this distress as harm, thus giving a ground for interfering with religious (or irreligious) activity.

In a larger group you must either explicitly ask for each of (i) to (vi) which of (A), (B) it fits best, or divide the group into subgroups with instructions to discuss each of (i) to (vi) and then fit it to (A) or (B).

The first thing to do in discussing the revisions (1) to (3) is to be clear about how they differ from the original. It shouldn't be hard to elicit from the class that (1) adds a rationality requirement, (2) specifies kinds of damage, excluding those that arise just because of people's attitudes, and (3) combines the amendments of (1) and (3). After quickly discussing the content of (1) to (3) you could ask which of the four possibilities – Mill's original principle and the three modifications – is too strong – allows too much to be forbidden too much – and which is too weak – doesn't permit us to forbid things we might have good reason to.

The second half of the section discusses Mill's attempt to give motivation for toleration. Again the quote is clear on its own, and you need only briefly make sure it has been understood, in which case you should include the clarifying paragraph I have added, leading down to (I) and (II). Your aim then is to get a discussion going on whether in fact it is in the public interest to have free discussions. Consider each of (a) to (d) and whether there should be unrestrained discussion on such topics. Then ask whether the reasons for unrestrained discussion look like (I) or (II). It might help to cite the example of societies such as China, where the government has the aim of producing a sophisticated, technologically advanced society but without allowing open discussion of political or religious matters. Is it obvious that this cannot succeed? If not, does this suggest that free discussion is pointless, or that it is justified on some other grounds than general benefits to society? It might also help to pose explicitly the question of whether open discussion of religious questions will lead to agreement on true religious beliefs. It is easy to doubt this, but also easy to think that freedom of expression on religious matters is still a good thing. This suggests that its justification is something other than (II) (and something other than (I) in that monolithic religious societies are often harmonious and efficient).

The last part of the section is subtle, but important in that it makes the link with certainty. The Mill quote here is not as clear as the previous two, and needs the gloss I provide. If there is time, an open discussion of the issues raised in the final paragraph of the section could make many things fall into place. If there is no time for this, it is a good idea to ask the class to read through the last part of the section on their own.

**6.9** The aim of this section is to suggest that when we have strong scientific reasons for believing something this does limit the resources we are willing to commit to investigating alternatives, and this can be a kind of intolerance of them. So when discussion or investigation has a cost we use our best estimates of probability to help decide whether the cost is worth incurring. I would work through this section simply by

taking each example in turn and discussing it, in the class as a whole or divided into smaller groups, guided by the questions I pose. Then ask the whole class whether their (individual or group) reactions to (C) are different from their reactions to (A) and (B). The difference could take many forms besides the degree of disagreement mentioned in the text. It could be that different reasons for action are relevant in the different cases. For example, the desire to have a society in which different cultures and beliefs flourish may be relevant to (C) but not to (A) and (B). Or there may be variations on (C) which contrast more sharply with (B). For example, suppose that what the newcomers in (C) need to stay in business is use of a resource such as the park, and you are chair of the committee that decides access to it. Variations on (B) are also possible: suppose that the request is not from some religious group but from supporters of some scientific theory which is not completely impossible but which the majority of scientists think is wrong.

 $\underline{6.10}$  This section rounds off the chapter. It is not necessary to discuss it in class, but it would be desirable for the class to read it.

### Chapter 6 - Test

(This test is based on the objectives stated at the beginning of the chapter.)

For each of the questions below circle *two* acceptable answers:

(1) The reason that Hume thought that many beliefs are not based on reasoning is that he thought that :

(a) most people are irrational; (b) induction is not an operation of reason but of habit; (c) many beliefs are not based on anything that makes them certain; (d) anyone

can reasonably believe anything.

- (2) Hume thought that any desire is as reasonable as any other because:
  (a) reasoning tells you how to satisfy your desires, not which desires to have; (b) no one satisfies very many of their desires, whatever they are; (c) any desire can be based on any true assessment of the facts; (d) evil people are more rational than virtuous ones.
- (3) Hume's understanding of reason leaves out the following factors:(a) reason is an emotion; (b) beliefs can be inconsistent; (d) desires can be incoherent
  - (d) there are better and worse ways of handling data that is not certain.
- (4) It can be objected to Mill's harm principle that:(a) it allows my actions to be restricted by your reactions to them; (b) it allows people to do themselves harm as long as no one else is affected; (c) it encourages libel; (d) it permits people to hold views which are offensive.
- (5) Reasons for tolerating views which you think are wrong are:(a) in the end no belief is right or wrong; (b) the open discussion of these views

may harm no one but those who choose to discuss them; (c) discussion of them may show that they are true after all; (d) the people holding these views are not evil but just mistaken.

## PART II

In my notes for Part II I shall give less detailed advice than I did for Part I. By now you should know your class and how to use the book with it. So in the "planning information" notes I give most of what you need to know, and then most of the following notes on particular sections are concerned with possible answers to questions posed in activity sections. In Part II the chapters, except for chapter 11, do not combine moral and non-moral topics. Chapter 11 pulls threads together to give a sense of how the moral and non-moral ideas are linked, as the final sections of chapters in Part I did.

### Chapter 7

Planning information:

- 7.1 essential read for class
- 7.2 essential work through rehearses 7.1
- 7.3 essential (but less so than 7.2) work through rehearses 7.1
- 7.4 less essential read for class work through email
- 7.5 less essential work through rehearses 7.4 email
- 7.6 essential read for class
- 7.7 essential work through rehearses 7.6
- 7.8 essential read for class
- 7.9 essential work through rehearses 7.8
- 7.10 less essential work through email
- 7.11 less essential read
- 7.12 optional topic read email
- Box 14 optional topic email

The absolute core of this chapter is 7.1, 7.2, 7.6, 7.7, 7.8, 7.9

Chapter 7 – Comments on Sections

**<u>7.2</u>** The actions recommended by naïve utilitarianism are (a)–(ii), (b)–(i) or (iii), (c)–(i), (d)–(ii) or (iii), (e)–(iii). In (b) which of (i) or (iii) is utilitarian depends on the further consequences of the choice, as a discussion should bring out. Same for (d). Having got it clear that simple utilitarianism maximizes the pleasure balance in the whole world, neutrally, the discussion should center on ways in which this agrees and disagrees with what we normally consider right.

**7.3** You should make it clear that these are problem cases for naïve utilitarianism. Then you should discuss each in turn, bringing out the problems. In (A) the problem is about pleasure and pain and greatest amount. (Does art appreciation count as pleasure, and how do you compare it to the pain of hunger?) In (B) the problem is about pleasure and pain.

(Does a masochist get pleasure out of pain?) In (C) the problem is about bringing about. (The power station almost certainly will not cause a disaster, so is the small risk that it will to count as a bad consequence of it?) In (D) there is the same problem as in (A), but there is an additional problem about individual responsibility that may be squeezed under the heading of bringing about. (If an act makes it possible for people to do themselves harm, is it the act or the silly victims who have brought about the harm?) At this point you may move toward a less naïve utilitarianism, which focuses on happiness rather than pleasure (see section 7.4) and on probability of effects rather than inevitable consequences (see section 7.12).

**7.4** Though this is less essential it is a topic that students will find interesting and which should – together with 7.5 – provoke a good discussion. Of the four arguments (1) defends psychological altruism, (2) defends utilitarianism, (3) defends psychological hedonism, and (4) defends moral hedonism. The conclusions of the arguments may not seem exactly the same as the statements of the four positions: material for a discussion of variants on them.

**7.5** Uno is a moral hedonist; Dua is a utilitarian; Tria is a psychological hedonist; and Quartius is an epicurean. The class may want to reflect on which of these is giving the best general style of advice. The distinction between advice directed at producing the best life for the person concerned and advice directed at producing the best outcome for the world as a whole should emerge. Assumptions that blunt the contrast between acting morally and acting for one's own good can then be brought out.

**7.9** (i) is an objection to the first premise of (4). (ii) is an objection to the first step of reasoning of (3). (iii) is *not* an objection to the first premise of (4), since that premise does not say that only moral ideals involve happiness (of others or oneself). (iv) is an objection to the second premise of (1). (v) is an objection to the first step of reasoning of (2). (vi) is an objection to the second step of reasoning of (3). I suspect that the most promising route to a general discussion is to ask for reactions to (2). But objections to all four arguments would set the stage for this.

**7.10** The second option is the utilitarian choice in both cases, at least on a simple understanding of utilitarianism. You might discuss what other factors could be brought in by a utilitarian to block this simple consequence. You might also discuss whether the utilitarian choices might not be the right ones. And if not, what are they leaving out?

# Chapter 7 – Test

# Mark each of the following assertions as True or False:

- (1) If an action gives you a lot of pleasure then utilitarianism says you should do it.
- (2) Utilitarianism says you should consider your own happiness as well as that of everyone else.
- (3) Utilitarianism says that you should give more attention to people who are close to you than people you do not know.

- (4) Utilitarianism says that increasing happiness and decreasing suffering are important than rights and promises.
- (5) Hedonism and utilitarianism both say that people are motivated only by pleasure.
- (6) Bentham thought that happiness and pleasure were the same.
- (7) Mill thought that all pleasures were equally important.
- (8) Mill thought that there were higher and lower pleasures.
- (10) Utilitarianism considers only what will happen in the future.
- (11) Utilitarianism has a complicated formula for balancing the competing interests of different people and different values.
- (12) Everything that is desired is good.

### Chapter 8

### Planning information:

8.1 essential – read for class
8.2 essential – work through – rehearses 8.1
8.3 essential – read for class
Box 16 optional – email
8.4 essential – read for class – work through – rehearses 8.3
8.5 essential – read for class
8.6 essential – read for class
8.6 essential – work through – rehearses 8.5
8.7 less essential – work through – rehearses 8.5 – email
8.8 less essential – harder
8.9 less essential – work through – rehearses 8.8 – email
8.10 essential but needn't be covered in class – read
The absolute core of this chapter is 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6

### Chapter 8 - Comments on Sections

**8.2** It is not important to get an explicit list of the (a), (b), (c) factors for each case, though if you have a large class divided into smaller groups this will define the task for them. But you should nudge the discussion so that in each case the non-utilitarian moral concern emerges. In (1) honesty, principle, in (2) responsibility for particular people, respect for life, in (3) responsibility, respect, implicit promises. (And so on; there are different ways of expressing the concerns.)

**<u>8.3</u>** This will not be easy reading for many students. (But it's as simple as I can make it and still state Kant's views.) So you must make sure it has been digested.

**8.4** (i) objects to (1); (ii) objects to (3); (iii) objects to the inference from (3) and (2) to (4); (iv) objects to the inference from (1) to (2). The objections to the inferences will be harder to spot than the objections to the premises. If students note that, e.g. (iii) is targeted at (4) then you can push a little bit harder and ask what it shows is wrong with the argument, since after all it may at first seem just to be dogmatically denying the conclusion. Of course the objections may not be fatal, and you should ask both whether the points made in (i) to (iv) are right and whether they would scupper the argument even if they were.

The relationship between (iv) and the inference from (1) to (2) may be hard to see. (iv) could be taken as an objection to (1). But even if we grant (1), that motive is all that matters when we *judge* actions, the question remains whether it is all that a moral agent should *aim* at. (iv) suggests that it is not, and that a moral person should try to be competent as well as well-intentioned. So that is something, besides acting morally, that they should aim for.

I have marked this "read for class" as I would want students to have time to think about the relationship between the points and the structure of the argument.

**8.6** In (a) the consequentialist is Norbert and the deontologist is Martha. In (b) the consequentialist is Paolo and the deontologist is Ottavia. In (c) the consequentialist is Quinn, the deontologist is Sandra, and Roberta is a rule-utilitarian. (Rule-utilitarianism is defined in 8.8, but you don't need even to mention it. The point is that Roberta's line seems to have elements of both deontology and consequentialism.) The students may find (b) the hardest to diagnose; the point is that Paolo is focused on the grandchildren getting what they want - his consequentialism maximizes want-satisfaction rather than happiness – while Ottavia thinks that there is a fixed way that children in her family should behave. It would be good if the discussion brought out that there is a variety of things that different consequentialists can maximize and a variety of principles that deontologists can hold sacred. (a) should provoke a general discussion of ends justifying means. You may have to interject to point out that consequentialism doesn't give a completely free hand to adopt means to desirable ends: the overall balance of good over bad results has to be positive. The class may well think that shooting the drunk was wrong but shooting the would-be atomic bomber would not be wrong. Ask them what would be allowed to prevent the bomber. Torturing innocent people, shooting down airliners, pre-emptive bombing of a neighborhood? (It is not obvious that the resolute consequentialist position that says Yes to these is indefensible. But it does need defending.)

**8.7** This also rehearses 8.5, and should lead to the interesting questions: does a deontologist (from the students' point of view: an anti-consequentialist, who believes that there are things you mustn't do ever) have to say that you must always tell the truth, and never break promises? Is this just a sort of a trap that the consequentialist is trying to lure him into? The heading "Taking your mother's advice" alludes to an incident in Ann Fine's *Taking the Devil'sAadvice* – which could be called "never marry a philosopher" – which links with the theme here.

**8.9** This section picks up on ideas from the end of 8.8, but it can be worked through without first reading 8.8. It might be a good to ask the class first, after they have read all four arguments, which are the more powerful and challenging ones. Then classify them as consequentialist or deontological. There may be an interesting clash then between students' apparent loyalties and the arguments they find persuasive. (1) and (4) are consequentialist in spirit, and (2) and (3) deontological.

**8.10** This chapter ends not with a perspective-giving section by me but with an activity that asks the student to put the strands of the chapter together herself. It is not essential to do this. But it could be fun. It would be best to divide the students into small groups of two to four – even a class that is not normally subdivided would be split up for this one – and provide each group with a photocopy of the Jerry/Manuella contributions, cut into strips for them to put into order. The intended result is M2, J2, M1, J3, M3, J5, M5, J4, M4, J1. It would be interesting to know if there are other orders that make both logical and conversational sense. This activity could also be used as a test for the chapter.

# Chapter 8 – Tests

First test – the activity of 8.10

Second test

For each of the questions below circle the two wrong answers to it:

- (1) How does a morality that centers on motives differ from a morality that centers on consequences?
  - (a) Thinking about consequences will commit you to lying.
  - (b) Sometimes the motives of an action are unacceptable even though the consequences are desirable.
  - (c) People can do moral acts from bad motives.
- (2) What does Kant's categorical imperative say?
  - (a) You should act on principles that you could want everyone to follow always.
  - (b) You should act on principles that would have good consequences if everyone followed them.
  - (c) Treating people as ends in themselves is the same as acting out of a desire to be moral.
- (3) How can the idea that there are things no one should ever do be defended?
  - (a) By giving examples in which acts that no decent person could perform have good consequences.
  - (b) By giving examples in which acting from moral principle results in disaster.
  - (c) By arguing that if some acts are not forbidden then horrendous results will follow.
  - (d) By arguing that to act morally is to accept rules restricting your behavior.

- (4) How can consequentialism require more of us than conventional morality does?(a) By forbidding us to tell lies, even to avoid disaster.
  - (b) By requiring us to consider the consequences of our actions for all people equally.
  - (c) By allowing us to perform intuitively immoral actions if they have good consequences.
- (5) How can deontological ethics require more of us that conventional morality does?
  - (a) By forbidding some actions, whatever the consequences.
  - (b) By requiring us to contribute to famine relief.
  - (c) By requiring us to think of others as ends in themselves.

### Chapter 9

### Planning information:

- 9.1 essential if 9.3 not covered work through rehearses 9.2
- 9.2 essential read for class
- 9.3 essential if 9.1 not covered work through rehearses 9.2
- 9.4 essential read for class
- 9.5 essential work through rehearses 9.4
- 9.6 less essential read for class
- 9.7 less essential work through rehearses 9.6
- 9.8 optional work through email
- 9.9 not essential read for class
- 9.10 not essential work through rehearses 9.9
- 9.11 essential read for class
- 9.12 essential work through rehearses 9.11
- The absolute core of this chapter is 9.2, 9.3, 9.4, 9.5, 9.11, 9.12

## Chapter 7 - comments on sections

**9.1** and **9.2** both rehearse 9.2. You should ask the class to read 9.2 in advance of working through either. The self-classification in 9.1 is supposed to label people in ways that will lead to discussion. If people don't like their labels (e.g. the "mystic" label) they'll have to say why. And you can take people who have very different profiles according to the scores and ask them to probe their differences. For example, you could take the person with the highest number of (a) choices and the person with the lowest and ask them to explain their reactions to the *Medicine* item, and to comment on each other's explanation. Then you can ask people with in-between profiles to comment on the deeper roots of the differences between the first two people.

**<u>9.3</u>** (1) supports (a) or (b) [ambiguous, taken in isolation], (2) is opposed to (a), (3) supports (c), (4) supports (c), (5) supports (a), (6) opposes (a), (7) supports (b). If students take (4) supports (a) rather than (c) you might argue gently with them, but there

is no point in making an issue of it. You could refer them to 9.8 For (i): (2) (and is thus relevant to the tension between (1) and (2), both Aristotle). For (ii): (3) (but of course St Tom would not think of talk about angels as speculation).

**<u>9.5</u>** Points that I would expect to emerge from the discussion (so it's up to you to make them emerge):

• A visual description of an object does not state its function, or whether it is alive, or how it operates, or what it is composed of.

• Our words and concepts presuppose theories of how things work, what they are made of, and what the laws of nature governing their interactions are.

• Our visual and other experience is much richer than any manageable linguistic description can capture. When the description is in purely sensory terms then it is even harder to capture the experiential as well as the physical aspect.

I have expressed these in terms that would not be accessible to many of your students, so you will have to get the points across more patiently and interactively.

The second activity in which students write out their own "translations into sensedatum language" is best done by having students look at each other's translations and then commenting to the class on the differences between them.

**9.7** (A)–(1), (3), (7); (B)–(4), (1); (C)–(1), (4); (D)–(2), (3); (E)–(7). Of course, the class may find other good connections. (A) seems to me harder to read than the others. If you expect to be short of time or if your class is not good with old-fashioned prose you might ignore (A). The text describes a strategy for working through the material in small groups. A whole class could simply discuss the quotations one by one (possibly leaving out (A), or leaving it till last) and then quickly run through the list of objections afterwards, seeing which ones sum up points that have been made.

Of the unstated assumptions (i) is made in (C) and (B) and is vulnerable to (1). (ii) is made in (D) and is vulnerable to (1) and (2). (iii) is made in (B) and (D) and is vulnerable to (2). This is a harder activity than the first one. At any rate, by working through it you may be better prepared to guide the class through the first one.

(D) makes an interesting link between empiricism and moral relativism (not that either has to imply the other). (E) is a famous and fascinating thought experiment, Molyneux's problem, which twentieth-century psychologists such as Richard Gregory have worked on. You may find the class has very divergent opinions about (E).

**<u>9.8</u>** This is a combined exposition and activity section. In (i) to (v), the "idea" in (i) is a belief, in (ii) a concept, in (iii) a sensation, in (iv) a combined sensation and belief, in (v) a combined belief and concept. In (a) to (f), (a), (b), (f) refer to beliefs and (c), (d), (e) to concepts. (a), (b), and (d) could be taken both ways.

**<u>9.10</u>** I would rank the order of relevance of each of the problems (1) to (4) to each of the situations (a) to (g) as: (a)–(4), (3); (b)–(2), (1); (c)–(1), (3); (d)–(1), (3); (e)–(3), (1); (f)–(4), (3); (g)–(3), (4). Note how different kinds of limitations seem to apply to different kinds of knowledge. (d) has connections with (E) of 9.7; it raises difficult questions of the sameness of concepts. If Gabriel can understand enough physics to know the characteristics of red light then he can share a concept of "red" with sighted people. (h) was worded so as to avoid this issue.

<u>9.12</u>	
(i) –	(f) - (1), (7)
	(c) - (4)
	(d) – (6)
(ii)	(e) – (2)
(iii)	(a) - (5), (3)
(iv)	(a) - (5), (3)
(v)	(b) - (4)
	(d) – (6)
(vi)	(f) – (1), (8)

Though this may seem like a rather mechanical activity, the point it brings out is very interesting and important: that when we use A as evidence for B we usually (always!) take for granted some fact C, which itself can be supported with evidence, but only taking something else for granted. To see this is to move beyond the simple "foundationalist" model of evidence of traditional empiricism. As long as you get the students to begin to grasp this, and to begin to grapple with worries about circularity deriving from this, the activity is working. (These worries are treated in more depth in chapter 11.)

You can make this activity more animated and provoke a discussion by asking some probing questions. What would it take to convince you that the phases of the moon are caused by mice? What evidence could suggest that red-haired people feel pain differently? Could there be (scientific, empirical) evidence that the universe is, say, a hundred years old? For each of these, which of the assumptions that we usually take for granted with the subject matter in question would have to be suspended?

### Chapter 9 – Test

### Mark each of the following as true or false:

- (1) Empiricists believe that nothing exists unless you can see it.
- (2) Empiricists like science because it is hostile to religion.
- (3) Empiricists think that you can only think in words.
- (4) Empiricists approve of scientific theories that are based on evidence.
- (5) Empiricists believe that you should believe only what you have evidence for.
- (6) Empiricists believe that all evidence is based on the use of the senses.
- (7) Locke thought that children have innate ideas.
- (8) Locke thought that there are no innate ideas.
- (9) Locke used "idea" to mean something we believe and something we perceive.
- (10) Locke held that all thoughts are made up out of experiences.
- (11) Empirical evidence is always completely certain.
- (12) Empirical evidence is often completely uncertain.
- (13) People who disagree about a theory can often agree about what evidence would settle their disagreement.
- (14) For any theory there is evidence that would convince anyone who disbelieved it.
- (15) For any two people and any theory they disagree about there is usually some evidence that would bring them nearer to agreement

### Chapter 10

**Planning** information: 10.1 essential – read for class 10.2 essential – essential – work through – rehearses 10.1 10.3 less essential – read for class 10.4 less essential – work through – rehearses 10.3 10.5 less essential – work through – rehearses 10.3 10.6 less essential – work through – rehearses 10.3 – email 10.7 essential – read for class 10.8 essential – work through – rehearses 10.7 10.9 less essential – work through – rehearses 10.7 10.10 optional – work through – rehearses 10.7 10.11 optional - read - email 10.12 optional – read for class – work through – email 10.13 optional - read for class 10.14 optional – work through – rehearses 10.13 The absolute core of this chapter is 10.1, 10.2, 10.7, 10.8

## Important NOTE about chapters 10 and 11

These two chapters together end Part II. They contain much more material than you are likely to want to cover, so you will have to make real choices about what to leave out. Chapter 10 contains two independent sub-sequences of sections: 10.3 to 10.6 on knowledge of other minds, and 10.12 to 10.14 on the philosophy of science. You probably will have to completely skip one of these. And if you cover only the core of this chapter – though I'd recommend stirring in at least 10.3 and one of the sections rehearsing it also – then you can fuse this chapter and chapter 11 into a last part of your course.

## Chapter 10 – Comments on Sections

**10.1** The distinction here is important, easily grasped, and enlightening. Another way it is expressed in the literature is as a contrast between fear of error – having false beliefs – and fear of ignorance – lacking true beliefs (particularly of some desirable kinds). You could get a quite abstract discussion going with fairly sophisticated students by asking under what conditions the search for accuracy – fear of error – will satisfy the need for informativeness – fear of ignorance – as a by-product. Once those conditions are stated they are seen to be unrealistic, and a hidden premise of traditional epistemology begins to wobble.

**10.2** The question behind the activity is: when trying to find out interesting things about other people, must you inevitably take a risk that some of what you learn will be wrong? If you play it completely safe, will there be much of a pay-off? Good answers to the questions at the end of the section could be very varied, but I had the following sorts of things in mind. If you take no risks you are likely to learn only about people's patterns of

behavior. You are likely not to learn much about the causes of their behavior or their feelings. A more adventurous and informative method may tell you these things, but at the price of exposing you to deception and psychobabble. If the people around you are dishonest you *might* be best off being curious about what they do and not why they do it.

**10.4** (i)(a), (ii)(b), (iv)(a); (iii) can go either way. It is an (a) case if "you" have had such an experience, a (b) case otherwise. It is interesting that the attribution could be made by someone who had no such personal experience. (The example is based on an incident in which I broke a long non-running interval with a four-mile run ending with a very steep climb up to my house. As I was sitting on my doorstep, panting, my neighbor, a normally undemonstrative man, saw me and put his arm around me, overcome by the impression that I was in some great distress.) (v)(c), (vi)(d), (vii)(d). One point of (vii) is that "you" are unlikely to form the false conclusion that the argument from analogy indicates, suggesting that we have other bases for our beliefs about one another. I think these are easy questions, and the pay-off should come in the discussion they prompt.

**10.6** I'd take the answers (a)(ii), (b)(ii) or (iv), (c)(i), (d)(iv), (e)(i), (f)(ii) to be the natural ones, but students may come up with interesting defenses of other answers. From the answers you should be able to see if the class is generally inclined to give a high estimate of our capacity to know about ourselves or is skeptical about self-knowledge. If the first then you should try to undermine it, by stressing all the patterns of self-deception (12.9 and 12.10 may give you some materials). If the second then you should try to argue that if there were not some reliable core in what people say about themselves then we'd never begin to understand one another.

**10.8** I'd say: (1)-terrible–(iii)(iv)(v), (2)-weak/terrible–(ii)(iii)(v), (3)-terrible– (i)(iv)(vi), (4)-weak–(iv), (5)-good. (2) and (3) are explanations that might have been more convincing to people in other cultures; so are we being parochial in thinking of them as very weak? (4) is a famous example: the laws of optics and the arrangement of the solar system and the tower entail that the path of the sun will always track the shadow of the tower. So why does the explanation seem to have it backwards?

If doing this activity with a single group the examples may stand on their own – especially if *you* have worked through your answers to the questions – to provoke a discussion of what explains what. And of what explaining what is grounds for believing: what (1) could support a belief that human life must end, (2) that eclipses are harmless, (3) that there are likely to be five most serious diseases, (4) that the sun will stop rising when the tower is pulled down, (5) that if you heat the pipe the water will flow hot from the beginning? How reasonable are these beliefs? (How strong are the reasons these "explanations" give for them?)

**10.9** I'd react to the argument with (a), (b), (e), but my reactions are based on some personal standpoints. All of (i) to (v) can be backed up by the problems with the argument; I think (ii) is the best supported and most worrying; (iii) is clearly true if we take "show" in a strong way, as meaning to establish beyond a doubt. But you should invite the class to defend any of (i) to (v) as all are defensible. I think that, although this is not an essential section in terms of the structure of most courses, it is likely to be a lively and stimulating one to work through. (e) is a point to dwell on particularly: it is part of a sophisticated modern point of view that some things have no explanations,

including things which it was the aim of many past beliefs to make sense of. (Why do some people have all the luck?)

<u>10.10</u> (a), (b), (c), (e), (g). Of course, the interest lies in the reasons why these arise.

**10.12** None of the answers is uncontroversial, but mine would be (i) in principle falsifiable, unscientific; (ii) falsifiable, scientific; (iii) falsifiable, scientific; (iv) not falsifiable, not scientific; (v) not falsifiable, not scientific; (vi) not easily falsifiable, scientific; (vii) falsifiable with difficulty, scientific; (vii) falsifiable, unscientific. I've stuck in qualifications in deference to obviously controversial issues. The most controversial are (i) for which I would argue that the claim that actions are caused by beliefs, desires, and emotions is potentially falsifiable, and (vi) for which it is true that one can always postulate a new form of energy to account for some apparent violation of the conservation law, but it may be scientifically not very appropriate. As for (1) to (4) at the end of the section, in a class the best thing would be just to find out which members of the class subscribe to which ones and to note correlations with the intuitions about falsifiability evoked by (i) to (vi), and use this to identify differences of attitude to be argued out.

**<u>10.14</u>** In order to work through this in class, it would have to have been read, and digested, in advance. The class should write out brief answers to (1) to (4), (a) to (e), and (i) to (iii), and then in class you could discuss the relevance of these answers to the five features of science listed at the end of the section.

There is no specific **test** for chapter 10, as different courses are likely to use such different sections. After chapter 11 there is a combined list of questions on chapters 10 and 11, which you can draw from in making your own test.

## Chapter 11

<u>Planning information</u>:

- 11.1 essential read in advance
- 11.2 essential work through rehearses 11.1
- 11.3 essential work through rehearses 11.1
- 11.4 essential read in advance work through
- 11.5 less essential work through
- 11.6 fallibilism read

See the note about the use of chapters 10 and 11, after the planning information for chapter 10, above.

Chapter 11 – Comments on Sections

<u>11.1</u> There is a reference, in this section and later in the chapter, to the method of falsification in science, which is discussed in 10.12, which you may not have covered. So a couple of sentences of explanation from you might help.

**<u>11.2</u>** The box towards the end should be filled in like:

	hhhh	hhhthht	hhhthhtttht
impossible	reject	reject	reject
barely possible	reject	consider	consider
possible	reject	consider	consider/accept

The two conclusions that are not supported are (b) and (d). This is not to say that these conclusions are wrong, but that the example has not illustrated them.

I think that the best way to use this section is to have the class work through it as a homework assignment, and then to use difficulties they had doing this as a basis for a discussion of the three general points about background beliefs.

**<u>11.3</u>** The point of the story is to show how development of moral beliefs is prompted by factual discoveries (or at any rate, changes in factual beliefs). There are two deep underlying issues, which are not too hard for your class to grasp and discuss. Is this prompting a matter of reason (would it be irrational, intellectually wrong, for one's moral beliefs not to respond to these facts)? And does the process make its end point more objective than its beginning?

The answers to the specific questions about the example are: (i)–4, 5; (ii)–2; (iii)– 1; (iv)–4; (v)–3, 4, then (a)(v)(3); (b)(iii)(1); (c)(iv)(4); (d)(ii)(2); (e)(v)(4). You should use these as a way of getting at the deeper questions by asking of particular triples of moral development, factual discovery, and background belief (e.g. (ii)(2)(d)) whether having the background belief, and making the discovery, it would then be crazy not to change one's moral belief. Could you maintain that women were inferior creatures on discovering that the chief's wise decisions were all made by his wife? The importance of background beliefs in this is that they show that the process is not magic – we don't get moral development by deducing it from empirical facts but by stirring empirical facts in with other moral beliefs. (So, clever students will point out, we could instead reject the background beliefs. Yes; see where this leads.)

**<u>11.4</u>** The quotes from Goodman and Rawls are quite hard, but the process is illustrated by the simple example of how you modify a ban on killing, given conflicts with particular cases. The hard question that a discussion should engage with is whether, given lots of particular problems to think out, lots of empirical facts to accommodate, and lots of time to think out how to put all the pieces together, we will move to an overall more coherent and more defensible set of moral ideas. Do we get nearer to being able to reconcile a revulsion at killing with the need to defend ourselves and the fragility of the distinction between causing and allowing? (If the discussion is not taking flight, press on the causing/allowing distinction with reference to death: what is the difference between not helping someone who will die without your help, and killing them? That will get a reaction.)

**<u>11.5</u>** It would be asking a lot of the students to have them absorb and discuss the material in this section during one class session. Best to have them read the examples leading to the self-classification and work out their classification in advance. Best also to have read the dialogue in advance, though not to have answered any questions about it. Then in class you can begin by having them reread the dialogue and answer the questions about it.

Alfa is an optimist about moral progress, in the special meaning given the word earlier in the section. Beth begins the dialogue as a pessimist about moral progress, and ends it with a position that doesn't fit into any of the three labels very well. It would not be wrong to describe Beth as ending up as cautious about moral progress, since she remains doubtful that the changes amount to progress toward any truth. But Beth could also be described as someone who admits that there is progress in terms of moral convenience but doubts that there is progress in terms of moral truth. (You can press students who describe Beth as cautious about moral progress to explain her caution further.) Were Beth pushed on the consistency of accepting some progress while thinking that morality might be an illusion, the best replies would be the second and fourth. (The first doesn't make the asymmetry she wants; the third uses a picture of science that she has not accepted.)

The most important of the conclusions listed is that reflective equilibrium is like falsificationism. The only conclusion that is just not supported by the dialogue is the second, that there are dissimilarities between utilitarianism and empiricism. (There are; but the dialogue doesn't bring them out.)

If Beth had remembered what she didn't challenge at the white diamond point, then at the end she could have cashed out her option by asserting the third listed statement, that if reflective equilibrium exists then ethics resembles science. Alfa could best reply to what Beth says at the black diamond point with the first listed statement. It follows from his general assumptions while all the others would require some special new argument. (The second is consistent with his conclusions though. The fourth is of course inconsistent with them; he'd be crazy to take that line.)

At the black star point Beth makes a point that could be used to resist what Alfa says about the true morality being the one that works socially. Truth may require more than just ways of agreeing on beliefs; it may require links to real facts, of which perception gives one special kind. At the white star point Alfa is producing this theory about true morality. To accept the conclusions he is headed to you don't have to buy this theory. In fact you don't have to buy any line about moral truth or moral facts at all, as long as you accept that there is reasonable change of moral beliefs which works in a similar way in morality and science. (Of course, it's more interesting if you can get an account of moral facts, a moral realism too.)

If you run your class by beginning with one of the activities on the dialogue, then don't insist on doing them all. A discussion may get going which will make all the points that the later activities would make. On the other hand, you may begin, especially with a smaller group or one that talks freely, simply by saying "Beth seems not to be standing up to Alfa very robustly – does anyone want to argue more aggressively than she does?" Then bring in the points I make above at the appropriate moments. Or you could focus on the question at the very end of the section, and ask: "Alfa says that morality is true if it works socially: is this right? Does someone who buys into moral progress have to also buy this?"

<u>**11.6**</u> It is not essential to discuss this section in class, as long as it has been read. (But there may be questions and objections arising from it.) It could serve as the end-point in a course based on the first two parts of the book, possibly augmented with material from Part III, as discused in <u>planning your course</u>.

## Test questions on chapters 10 and 11.

These questions cover topics in chapters 10 and 11. You are unlikely to have covered all the topics, but you can draw from these to make up one or more tests to fit what you have done.

Some of the assertions below are clearly true, some are clearly false, and some are controversial, in that philosophers can make strong cases both for and against them. Mark each of them as True, False, or Controversial. (Philosophical remark: some of the controversial assertions are true and some false: but we may not know which for a long time, if ever.)

- (1) A way of acquiring beliefs is accurate when it gives very few false beliefs.
- (2) A way of acquiring beliefs is informative when it gives very few true beliefs.
- (3) A way of acquiring beliefs is accurate when it gives nothing but true beliefs.
- (4) A way of acquiring beliefs is informative when it gives enough true beliefs.
- (5) An informative way of acquiring beliefs will always result in many false beliefs.
- (6) An accurate way of acquiring beliefs can never be informative.
- (7) Older accounts of knowledge, such as empiricism, tend to aim at accuracy rather than informativeness.
- (8) Empiricism shows us how to achieve beliefs that are both accurate and informative.
- (9) Fallibilism aims at informativeness rather than accuracy.
- (10) Fallibilism aims at acquiring false beliefs as a means to useful beliefs.
- (11) Empiricism can easily explain why it is reasonable for you to believe that other people have experiences like yours.
- (12) The assumption that other people have perceptions and thoughts is a background belief for many other beliefs.
- (13) Empiricism aims at finding evidence for all beliefs, including background beliefs.
- (14) The argument from analogy claims that everyone has the same experiences.
- (15) The argument from analogy tries to show how you can use evidence about people's behavior to support beliefs about their minds.
- (16) The assumptions of folk psychology can serve as background beliefs for many of our beliefs about particular people on particular occasions?
- (17) Empiricism can easily show why the assumptions of folk psychology are true.
- (18) Empiricism has difficulty explaining why we have reasons for many of the background beliefs that we use when thinking about other people.
- (19) Folk psychology is the body of superstitions and traditional illusions that people believe about one another.
- (20) Folk psychology is the beliefs people use to explain what they and other people do.
- (21) When you have an explanation of why something happens you have to believe the explanation is true.
- (22) The inference to the best explanation says that when you have a good explanation of something, and you have no better explanation, then you should believe that what it says is true
- (23) Good explanations are more likely to be true than bad ones.

- (24) People always know what is true about their minds without being told.
- (25) People's friends usually know things about them that they do not know themselves.
- (26) When a person and someone who knows her well disagree about her mind or character, the person is always wrong.
- (27) The best available explanation of something we have experienced is always true.
- (28) Believing even the best possible explanation of a phenomenon will sometimes result in false beliefs.
- (29) If you reason by the inference to the best explanation then you have a chance of true beliefs you cannot get by reasoning by induction.
- (30) If you reason by the inference to the best explanation then you will sometimes get false beliefs that you would not have got by reasoning by induction.
- (31) The method of falsification says that when you can see how a hypothesis could be wrong you should accept it.
- (32) The method of falsification says that you should try to think of hypotheses that you could test.
- (33) If a theory is false then we can think of a test that will show that it is false.
- (34) The method of falsification says that when you have tried hard to test a hypothesis in a way that might have showed that it was wrong, and it has passed the test, then you should consider believing it.
- (35) The hypothetico-deductive method describes how, by having true consequences and explaining observed facts, a theory can come to be believed.
- (36) The hypothetico-deductive method describes the life cycle of a theory, starting with an imaginative idea and ending up either in the scrap heap or among accepted theories.
- (37) The hypothetico-deductive method gives reasons for believing that most scientific theories are true.
- (38) The hypothetico-deductive method gives reasons for believing that most scientific theories will eventually be refuted.
- (39) Fallibilism is the claim that we are usually wrong.
- (40) Fallibilism is the claim that just about any of our beliefs could turn out to be wrong.
- (41) When it looks at first as if some evidence supports a belief, it usually turns out that the connection between the evidence and the belief only holds if we assume some other beliefs.
- (42) Background beliefs connect evidence to beliefs.
- (43) Background beliefs are always true.
- (44) We can never tell whether a background belief is true.
- (45) If you are convinced a coin is biased then no amount of evidence can persuade you otherwise.
- (46) Some background beliefs make it very hard to find evidence against some theories.
- (47) Folk psychology makes it hard to find evidence against the belief that people have minds.
- (48) Sometimes experience changes our ideas about what is right and wrong.
- (49) If experience can change our ideas about right and wrong then some of those ideas must be true.
- (50) If experience changes your ideas about how you should treat others then you must already have had some ideas about how you should treat others.

- (51) Experience shows us that all people are morally more important than all animals.
- (52) Experience shows us that animals are just as morally important as people.
- (53) Experience that makes it reasonable to believe that all people are morally equal will only change the beliefs of people who already think that some people are morally important.
- (54) Reflective equilibrium is a situation where you can be sure that all your beliefs are true.
- (55) If your beliefs are in reflective equilibrium then your beliefs about particular events and about general principles will fit together in a coherent pattern.
- (56) The moral beliefs of good people are in reflective equilibrium.
- (57) The beliefs of very few people are in reflective equilibrium.
- (58) The aim of getting your beliefs nearer to reflective equilibrium is like the aim of believing testable hypotheses.
- (59) Moral beliefs that are in reflective equilibrium are true.
- (60) If you aim to get your beliefs nearer to reflective equilibrium then you should begin by clearing your mind of all traditional beliefs.
- (61) If you aim to get your beliefs nearer to reflective equilibrium then you can allow yourself to hold on to some traditional beliefs but you should find ways of testing them.
- (62) Fallibilists are very pessimistic about the possibility of getting any true beliefs.
- (63) Fallibilists are very pessimistic about the possibility of ever having no false beliefs.
- (64) Fallibilists are optimistic about the possibility of getting some true beliefs about important matters.
- (65) In both science and ethics our opinions change.
- (66) In both science and ethics our opinions are always getting nearer the truth.
- (67) In both science and ethics our opinions can always be changed by new discoveries.
- (68) Empirical evidence can often show that a scientific theory is wrong.
- (69) Empirical evidence can often show that a moral belief is mistaken.
- (70) If we had enough evidence we would be able to see what moral beliefs were best.
- (71) If we had enough evidence we would be able to know what theories of the universe are true.
- Note: The intended Controversial ones, with (in brackets) the more likely of the

True/False answers, are: 6 (F), 23 (T), 33 (F), 59 (F), 66, 70, 71

See also the note on "true/false" after the chapter 1 test.

### PART III

It would be a very unusual introductory course, either with many classroom sessions or with brilliant and speed-reading students, that would get through all three parts of the book in a semester. It is much more likely that you will cover much of Parts I and II, and use Part III as a resource for additional material. Which additional material depends on your interests and those of the class. (See the advice on <u>planning your course</u>, especially the suggestion that the class be allowed to choose which additional topics to cover.) In any case, you won't get this far until you have had a fair amount of practice with the kind

of course the book is meant for. So you shouldn't need such detailed advice. Below, for each chapter in Part III I give planning information as for earlier chapters. The most important information is which activity sections rehearse material in which text sections. And then I give very basic advice, mostly concerning activity sections.

There is a two-page introduction to the themes of Part III before chapter 12. It would be useful to have students read it before tackling whichever chapters from III you are going to use.

#### Chapter 12

<u>Planning information</u>:

12.1 essential - read for class
12.2 essential - work through - rehearses 12.1
12.3 essential - work through - rehearses 12.1
12.4 essential - read for class
12.5 less essential - read - rehearses 12.4 - email
12.6 less essential - read
12.7 less essential - work through - rehearses 12.6
12.8 less essential - work through - rehearses 12.4 and 12.6
12.9 essential - read for class
12.10 essential - work through - rehearses 12.9
12.11 optional - read - email
12.12 optional - work through - rehearses 12.4, 12.6, and 12.11

Advice: 12.2 and 12.3 could be worked through in a single class session. Although I have labeled 12.8 as less essential, it can make quite a lively class. In my experience 12.10 works well too. In discussing 12.9 you might point out that recent developments in brain imaging make the "brainoscope" less science-fictional than it may seem.

### Chapter 13

Planning information:

- 13.1 essential read for class work through
- 13.2 essential read for class
- 13.3 less essential read for class
- 13.4 less essential work through rehearses 13.3 and 13.5
- 13.5 less essential read for class
- 13.6 less essential works through 13.3 and 13.5
- 13.7 optional read
- 13.8 optional work through rehearses 13.7 email
- 13.9 optional read
- 13.10 less essential work through rehearses 13.7, 13.9
- 13.11 essential read for class
- 13.12 essential work through

Advice: This chapter begins with two sections that are largely text. The quotes in 13.1 should be enough to get a discussion going all by themselves, but in case everyone is hung over that morning I have included some questions that could get things moving. The connections between 13.1 and 13.2 are important. 13.2 deals with some less charged and more manageable versions of the questions in 13.1 and shows some ways of beginning to think about them. It is worth asking the class what the relations between the two sections are. Although the content of 11.3 is not essential, the historical perspective in it may make the issues more accessible for many students. The activity in 13.4 does not presuppose an acquaintance with the prisoner's dilemma explained in 13.5. You may think that the prisoner's dilemma is too advanced a topic for an introductory course, but my opinion is that, though it takes a little pounding to get the basic facts of it into one's head, the insight this gives is so fundamental that the sooner one gains it the better. If you choose not to cover 13.5 then you should also skip 13.6. You will then find that some allusions to prisoner's dilemmas in the last two sections of the chapter – marked as essential – will need to be explained to the students. Which sections you cover in this chapter depends on whether you are using it as an introduction to the metaphysics of morality or to political philosophy. Roughly, the first of these means sections 13.1, 13.2, 13.5, 13.11 are the core, and the second means that 13.2. 13.3, 13.5, 13.6, (13.7), 13.8, (13.9), 13.10 are. You may want to make the choice explicit to the class if you are asking them what topics they are interested in covering.

#### Chapter 14

### <u>Planning information</u>:

14.1 essential – read for class
14.2 essential – work through – rehearses 14.1
14.3 less essential – work through – rehearses 14.1
14.4 essential – read for class
14.5 essential – work through – rehearses 14.4
14.6 less essential – work through – rehearses 14.4
Box 24 optional – email
14.7 less essential – work through
14.8 essential – read for class
14.9 essential – work through – rehearses 14.8
14.10 less essential – read for class
Box 26 optional – email
14.11 optional – read for class – work through

Advice: You could easily skip the sections on free will (14.4 to 14.7) or personal identity (14.8 to 14.10), though they are marked as essential, if time or your preferences suggest not doing the whole chapter. The material on primary and secondary qualities (14.1, 14.2, 14.3) could also be omitted, but this would require some explaining to the class of allusions made to it in the expositions of the other topics.

Alternatively, you could cover free will and ignore primary/secondary. If so, you will have to ignore an analogy between free will and secondary qualities that shapes the exposition. That analogy, and the fact that the chapter is called "deep illusions," may give some students the impression that the free will sections are arguing that freedom is an illusion. Don't let them think that: it is important to see that both compatibilism and libertarianism conclude that freedom is real. Only hard determinism sees it as an illusion. The activities in 14.6 involve a fairly complex comparison of freedom and secondary qualities. A simpler way of using the material in 14.6 would be to go straight to the positions (i)–(iii) and discuss how they relate to the arguments (a)–(c). That would be a better procedure for most classes, unless you have discussed the freedom/secondary quality comparison in detail.

The topic of section 14.11, the meanings life can have, is not on many standard first-year philosophy syllabuses. But it is a topic that students will expect a philosophy course to address. You may find it a useful topic for a session approaching a holiday when you have finished one large topic and do not want to begin another large one. I find that the issue that provokes most discussion in this material is the contrast between transcendental approval and existential courage. Neither label will be familiar to students, but the general idea of the first will be familiar. The general idea of the second will not be, though some will find that it gathers together scattered thoughts for them. A way of framing the discussion is: just as social contract theorists claim that materialists can have full-blooded distinctions between right and wrong, so existentialists claim to have a godless account of the meaning of life. Can existential courage really do the work in maintaining one's sanity and self-respect that for many people transcendental approval does?

#### Chapter 15

Planning information:

1:	5.	1	essential	_	read	for	class
		_					

- 15.2 optional work through email
- 15.3 essential read for class
- 15.4 essential read for class, work through rehearses 15.3
- 15.5 optional work through rehearses 15.3
- 15.6 essential read for class
- 15.7 essential read for class, work through
- 15.8 less essential work through rehearses 15.8
- 15.9 less essential work through rehearses 15.8
- 15.10 essential read for class
- 15.11 optional read

Advice: Some of the topics covered in this chapter are quite hard. For an easy stroll through the issues you could stick to 15.1, 15.3, 15.4, 15.7, and 15.8. That would leave out interesting stuff though. I think the material in 15.2 is potentially very stimulating, but you have to judge if your class can digest it. 15.13 is, of course, not meant to

convince anyone that immortal superhuman beings exist, but that our theories of the world are the products of brains of one particular animal species.

<u>planning your course</u> – the <u>absolute basics</u> – <u>class-planning guide</u> <u>against lectures</u> – <u>essays</u> – <u>reading list</u>

#### ESSAYS

There is no difficulty in finding topics for essays. They can be very general, got, for example, by taking the "aims" of the parts of the book, listed just before the first chapter of each part, and rephrasing them. (The aim "understand why not being able to get certainty does not make relativism or moral relativism inevitable" becomes the questions "if we can't be certain must we be skeptics?" and "if we cannot be certain about right and wrong must we be moral relativists?") Or they can be more specific, got, for example, by asking students to expand on their reactions to an example in a particular activity. (This was a good source of essay topics when one class was particularly lively, leaving a feeling of unfinished business.) The difficulty is getting students to write essays that are philosophical: argumentative and relevant but not literal reports of facts or opinions found in books. I think that the idea of a philosophical essay is best acquired when the student has begun work on a particular topic. The student chooses a topic from a list, submits a draft or an outline, and is then given comments, which usually tell her to be simultaneously more original and less ambitious. Only once she has begun to work on a topic will she understand how one can be less ambitious and more original, given comments directed at her particular project. I have found that outlines work better than drafts for beginning students. If you give comments on a draft the student will usually simply add or subtract material from the draft rather than rethinking her approach in any fundamental way.

I have recently been proceeding as follows. I distribute a list of essay topics, consisting of a title question and a couple of sentences of explanation and warning. Then each student must, by a deadline (just past the mid-point of the semester), hand in a filled out essay outline sheet. See the sample below. I return these, with comments. If there is time, I see the students individually to discuss their outlines. (It is worth canceling a class or two to make time.) Then by another deadline they have to submit the essay, with the outline sheet attached to it. (That is in part to guard against plagiarism, and in part so that you can see if faults in the final essay are due to misleading advice I gave.) Students get a zero grade for the term paper unless it has been written on one of the set topics and the form has been submitted on time.

ESSAY OUTLINE SHEET (Fill this out and hand it in by the deadline of \_\_\_\_.)

Question:

The way I am interpreting this question: (3–4 lines).

Things I have read or plan to read that I shall consider and mention:  $(4 \ 0 \ \text{lines} - a \ \text{short summary of what is said in these works}).$ 

Short outline of my essay: (20 lines).

Main conclusion: (5 lines).

Biggest obstacle I have to deal with in arguing for this conclusion: (10–20 lines).

Doubts I have about my conclusion: (10 lines).

One original example relevant to my argument: (20 lines).

Explanation of how it is relevant: (5 lines).

Things I would like help with in writing this up: (10 lines).

<u>planning your course</u> – the <u>absolute basics</u> – <u>class-planning guide</u> <u>against lectures</u> – <u>essays</u> – <u>reading list</u>

## AGAINST LECTURES

In the past ten years many philosophy teachers have begun to teach in a different way. Many of us began to experiment with our teaching in order to cope with increasing class sizes. But then we found that the new methods actually worked better. The students learned more and what they learned looked more like philosophy. This book was written to be used in a course which conforms to two central ideas of these new methods. The first is that the way to learn philosophy is to do it yourself, rather than to memorize facts about the conclusions famous philosophers have reached. And the second is that listening to long lectures turns students' minds into a passive, receptive mode in which the critical faculties essential to philosophy are turned off. Let me first explain the problems of teaching philosophy.

**Teaching philosophy is hard:** In teaching philosophy you are trying to do two things which at first sight seem to be opposites. On the one hand you are encouraging your students to think for themselves, in fact trying to give them confidence to think about things they may have assumed were too hard for them, perhaps for anyone, to think about. And on the other hand you are trying to teach them to be critical, to reject things

that don't stand up to analysis. The first of these can sound like "there are no right answers, anything goes." And the second can sound like "this is wrong, that is wrong, look out, everything you are likely to think is wrong."

Teaching with lectures has many dangers. The victims of lectures want to be entertained, but they also want to be given information that they can remember or write down, and which they can reproduce in essays and exams. That's what lectures are for, isn't it? So the lecturer stands up and says "there are no right answers in philosophy; you have to think for yourselves." And the students write down in their notebooks "there are no right answers in philosophy; you have to think for yourselves," and wait for the lecturer to produce some more truths they can absorb and remember.

Small groups are better. In a small group students can learn the techniques of criticism and analysis that are at the heart of philosophy. Learn them by practicing them. And when they do this they can see that the critical spirit is quite consistent with the spirit of intellectual freedom. You *can* think things through for yourself until you get to conclusions that you are satisfied with, and at the same time accept that someone else might in an equally rigorous way accept very different conclusions. For you can see that some *reasons* for believing a conclusion are bad ones, but the range of things you can believe for good reasons is enormous. This is something you can only appreciate by experiencing it. And to experience it you have to muck in and get your mind dirty: argue, refute, and be refuted.

The obvious solution might seem to be not to have lectures. But teaching entirely in small groups is very expensive. One compromise solution that is going to be more and more common in higher education is the *fragmentable lecture*, that is, a lecture which follows a format such as the following. The lecturer introduces a topic for 15 or 20 minutes. Then the students break into small groups of from four to eight, which work through a task for which the lecturer's introduction has prepared them. Then there is a brief discussion involving the whole audience, followed by either another mini-lecture or another task.

Techniques for this kind of teaching have been developed for a number of subjects. The tasks usually consist in setting a problem and asking the groups to come up with the right answer. But in philosophy there are no right answers, at any rate, not in as simple a way as in many other subjects. So there is a problem for anyone wanting to teach philosophy this way, that of setting up manageable tasks which a group of fairly naïve students can perform, and for which there is a definite criterion of success. That is the problem that I think I have begun to crack.

**Tasks for small groups:** The activities in this book can be used in such fragmentable lectures, and also in smaller classes and discussion groups. The main resources for defining small group tasks in philosophy are *arguments*, *texts*, and *examples*. To perform argument-based tasks the students must first have some concepts of informal logic. They must know about premises, conclusions, validity, and soundness, and must know what is involved in supplying missing premises and counterexamples. That is one reason why in Part I of this book these concepts are introduced, and activities centering on them are

used. A text-based task will have one or more short philosophical texts, which the students have to react to or contrast. An example-based task will contain a number of briefly described examples, which the students have to relate to one or more philosophical positions.

Such tasks should satisfy four criteria.

- They are *self-contained*: although the ideas behind the activity will have been discussed earlier in the class or in previous ones, all the material needed to do the task is given in a very short space, usually on one page.
- They are *limited*: they require that the students tackle a very definite and intellectually contained problem.
- They are *objective*: there are better and worse solutions to the problem.
- They are *suggestive*: the search for the solutions will lead to much more interesting and intellectually open-ended questions, but these are not part of the official description of the task.

The second point, the limited nature of the task, may suggest the danger that students will see it as trivial. And the third point, its objectivity, may suggest that it is in fact trivial, since profound philosophical questions don't have uncontroversially right and wrong answers. But when you do an activity like those in Parts I and II of this book with a group of first-year students, you find that it is not very obvious to them what the better answers are. And you will find them giving some really surprising answers. Some of the answers will give opportunities to make basic points which might otherwise seem pedantic. And some will give opportunities for focused mini-discussions between students. (Managing both of these requires skill, but not the same skill as giving a lecture.)

The fact that it can be very unclear to students which responses are live candidates and which are impossible has an important consequence. Students can be very apprehensive about seeming stupid and ridiculous for what they say. So they can be reticent about speaking out, even when they know what they think. One solution to this is to use groups in such a way that individual responses are first aired in the comparative safety of a small group of other students and then exposed to a larger audience. Sometimes one person in a group can speak as their spokesperson, making it clear that it is the group consensus rather than the speaker's opinion that is being stated. In a large enough class you can use a "pyramiding" technique where students first do the activity in pairs or triples and then continue in larger groups of two or three of the pairs or triples, and then continue again in a discussion among the whole class. Some of the activities in the book are meant to allow pyramiding. As the course progresses, students will learn that they can say what they think without being ridiculed. Then it should be much easier to get students to volunteer opinions, to react individually to one another in the hearing of the whole class. And it should then be possible to call by name on individual students whose philosophical temperament you know.

"Incorrect" answers are valuable material. They can reveal that the students are interpreting a philosophical position in a way that you had not anticipated. They can show ambiguities in the exposition of even this book. And they can show that the students have in mind novel and interesting examples. It is always worth finding out why students produce responses that seem to you obviously wrong. But you have to do this without making them feel stupid or publicly exposed.

**The teacher's role:** Activities need setting up. Before a group can undertake an activity they have to understand the concepts involved in it, and they have to have some sense of the thread of ideas in the course which it is to relate to. You have to spend enough time explaining and situating so that the activity can then work. To do this you have to know your class. You cannot simply present the expositional content of the relevant section of this book as it is; you have to know which aspects will need emphasizing for that particular audience. It helps, especially at the beginning of a course, to have a particular group of students with whom you meet to discuss their attitude to the course; by sensing their preconceptions and their level of sophistication you can pick up valuable information about how to pitch the material for the whole audience.

Each activity in the book has instructions which describe a way in which it can be carried out. But you may often choose to use the material in a different way, to bring out points you want to make, to appeal to interests you know they have, or to fit your own teaching style. Often the procedure implicit in one activity can be used with another. For example, the activity in section 2 of chapter 15 is a fairly hard one. But it uses a procedure of asking students to predict which responses other students would make. If the prediction is wrong then explanations are called for, explanations of the prediction and of the unexpected response. This is a procedure that can be used in a range of other activities. In 15.2 the material that suggests the prediction is found earlier in the activity, but it does not always have to be. The classification of responses to questionnaire sections can be used to set up procedures of this sort: for example, students given an example-based activity can be asked to predict how other students, classified in accordance with a previous questionnaire, will respond to each example.

Whatever procedure you are using, it is mostly a method for getting things going. Very often the class will take over, moving spontaneously into a discussion that is not part of the intended procedure. Welcome this, as long as it is addressing the issues of that stage of the course. The class may be suggesting to you other procedures which work for them.

While groups are working at an activity you will not be addressing them. It is a bad idea to read a newspaper or mark essays during this time, as the class will then think of activity-based teaching as a way of allowing the teacher an easy life. Much better is moving from group to group, spending a few minutes with each, or joining a group for the activity, taking care not to dominate it and choosing different groups on different occasions.

Nearly every section of this book contains material for an activity, though some are primarily exposition sections and some are primarily activity sections. Every exposition section has a closely related activity section, as described in the planning information for each chapter in this instructor's guide. You may find that the material in some sections is too much to use in your class. In that case cut out some of it. Tell the class to do only those parts of the activity that you think they can handle in the time available. The last activity in a section is usually the hard one, so it may be the natural one to cut. But most classes are very mixed in ability, and the book deliberately includes some material for those students who need more challenging. Even if you explicitly avoid this material in your classes the brighter ones will find it. You may know who they are because they've found it.

It is not necessary to use every section for its activity. Some can be used as reading to set up a more traditional lecture or another activity. Some may be best done as activities after students have first thought about them as homework. A group discussion can be shaped around difficulties students found while working alone on a section before the class. Look ahead, use your knowledge of your class, and decide which sections to use for exposition, which for individual pre-class work, and which for group work in class.

**Questionnaires:** Throughout the book there are sections which are based on questionnaires, in which the students give responses to a number of short questions and then use a scoring system to apply various labels to themselves. These are supposed to expose the students to the issues implicit in the questions and to give them a sense of the meanings of the labels. They should also reveal to students that others have more radically differing philosophical attitudes than they may have imagined.

The classifications that emerge from the questionnaires can be exploited to set up discussions. People with different self-classifications can be expected to differ on related issues emerging in later sections. You should be able to elicit responses from students by saying, for example, "that sounds like a rather conventional response; people who scored themselves as tending more to scientific dogmatism may want to think whether they agree with it."

Some of the labels employed in these classifications may seem pejorative. Students may not like being labeled as dogmatists, for example. There are two responses to this. One is to explain that they are mere labels to sum up a complex intellectual attitude, and to ask the students to find a better description of the attitude that underlies that pattern of responses. Another is to ask them to explain why the label is not a fair description of what they think. This could, for example, be because the selection of questions in the questionnaire is biased. Either way, a discussion is started, and the students are forced to give reasons and to put their attitudes into words.

**Keeping things fun:** In preparing a class one third of your time should be spent in thinking about the philosophical ideas, and two thirds in thinking about how to present them. For each class think of a few points (two is enough) that you can make really vivid. There are many ways of doing this.

Props can help. I have several times given a class on identity-through-time, which is a fairly sophisticated topic for first-year students, using a large number of balloons. As the students wander into the lecture theater I am blowing up the balloons. The first topic is balloon sculptures. I tape the balloons together into various representational and abstract

sculptures and ask their opinions. Balloons pop and it gets slightly chaotic. Then we discuss whether one of the balloon sculptures that emerged at the beginning was the same as any that emerged at the end. The point gets made that a balloon sculpture is not the same as a collection of balloons, as shown by their different identity conditions over just a few minutes. During all this I have been putting balloons aside as they are replaced in a sculpture, so that I can spring the "ship of Theseus" puzzle on them: is a sculpture recreated with all the original balloons a better candidate for being the same sculpture as the sculpture that has undergone frequent changes of its parts? (See chapter 14 section 8.) At the end of the class I ask for comparisons with cars, plants, and persons. I find that the class spontaneously formulates very sophisticated theses about the identity conditions of members of these categories.

They can get tired of you and your voice. A guest lecturer can help. Someone introduced by you who then proceeds to demolish your favorite positions can be a salutary shock to them. A stylized dogmatic presentation of a position by someone who then withdraws, allowing you and the class to pick holes in what was said, provides practice in critical argument. The class can listen to a bland presentation full of apparently harmless opinions with the instructions "find three hard-to-believe claims in what this person will say." Know your class; use your imagination.

More ideas and materials can be found in many places. There is the journal *Teaching Philosophy*, and the journals *Philosophy Today* and the *Philosopher's Magazine*. Three stimulating books every philosophy teacher should know are:

Martin, Robert M. *There are Two Errors in the the Title of this Book*. Rosenberg, Jay. *The Practice of Philosophy*.

Wilson, Arnold. *Demonstrating Philosophy: Novel Ways to Teach Concepts*. There is also the team learning movement, based at the University of Oklahoma. Their point of view is summarized in print in

Michaelsen, Larry, Arletta Bauman Knight, and L. Dee Fink. *Team Learning: A Transformative Use of Small Groups* 

and on their website (at www.ou.edu/idp/teamlearning).

One last word: the students should expect to enjoy the course and to have their opinions changed by it. So should you.

#### READING

**Reading**: At the end of each chapter there is a reading list. Some of the books mentioned are too difficult for the average first-year student. (But remember, some of your class are not average first-year students.) If I had to choose 20 books to put on a library reserve

list to accompany a course derived from this book (especially Parts I and II) my list would be:

Annas, Julia. An Introduction to Plato's Republic. Bunnin, Nicholas, and Eric James. The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy. Chalmers, A. F. What is this Thing called Science? Cottingham, John. Rationalism. Cottingham, John (ed.). Western Philosophy: An Anthology. Harman, Gilbert. The Nature of Morality. Hempel, C. G. Philosophy of Natural Science. Hume, David. Inquiries. Hume, David. Dialogues on Natural Religion. Le Poidevin, Robin. Arguing for Atheism. Mackie, J. L. Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong. Martin, Robert M. There are Two Errors in the Title of this Book. Mill, John Stuart. On Liberty. Nagel, Thomas. What does it all Mean? O'Neill, Onora. Acting on Principle. Singer, Peter . Practical Ethics. Stroud, Barry. Hume. Taylor, Richard. Metaphysics. Turnbull, Colin. The Mountain People. Woolhouse, R. E. The Empiricists.

Of course, you may want to make a different selection from the full bibliography of the book, depending on the course you are giving.

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