

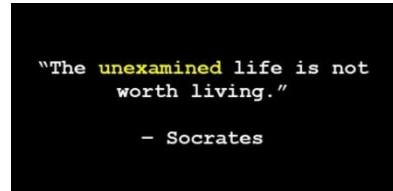
## Welcome to Philosophy and Ethics A Level!

This document is designed to give you an introduction to some of the concepts that you will study as well as to provide insight into the standard of work that is expected. You would do well to familiarise yourself with the specification that can be found here: [AQA Religious Studies 2017](#).

You will have **four** lessons a week; two with Miss Enright studying Ethics and two with either Mr Maher or Miss Callanan studying Philosophy.

We expect you to complete the following tasks in preparation for your first lessons with us. If you have any difficulties, please contact us:

- Miss Enright: [enrightc@salesian.hants.sch.uk](mailto:enrightc@salesian.hants.sch.uk)
- Mr Maher: [maherr@salesian.hants.sch.uk](mailto:maherr@salesian.hants.sch.uk)
- Miss Callanan: [callananm@salesian.hants.sch.uk](mailto:callananm@salesian.hants.sch.uk)



### Task1: Philosophy Bridging Task:

- a) Read the attached resource on Plato.
- b) Make notes putting key words and concepts to memory, (mind maps are often useful).

In one of your first Philosophy lessons you will complete a task based on this material.

### **What sort of question will I be asked?**

#### Examples:

Explain Plato's Analogy of the Cave

Explain the representations in Plato's Analogy of the Cave

Explain what Plato is trying to tell us in his Analogy of the Cave

*(Explanations always require more from you than a description of the story. Understanding the meaning behind the analogy is essential).*

**How long will the test be?** 30 minutes – in your first Philosophy lesson

**What will I have to do?** You will complete one explanation essay question without notes.

**How long does my essay have to be?** 2 sides of A4 is a good length

**Will I be allowed notes in the test?** No. This is why preparation is essential.

**What are you looking for?** We want to see that you have done your reading. This means that you will include key words and knowledge from your reading in your explanation. A real positive at this stage is that you read the question and are able to answer that question directly. Detail and evidence is essential in philosophy so ensure that you prepare by creating a summary of what you have read and put it to memory.

**What should I do if I don't understand?** Don't worry. Philosophy can be tricky to read at first and you may have to read it several times. Ensure you print out the document and make your own notes. Highlight things! You may want to read around the topic for inspiration however I will not expect you to include anything that is not in the reading on here. The next step would be to speak to us. You will also have a couple of lessons before your bridge test where we will give you an overview of this topic. This should clarify any uncertainty and is a chance to ask questions.

## Reading for Philosophy bridging task:

### Plato

#### 1. The Analogy of the Cave

*Candidates should explore what might be represented, in the analogy of the cave, by: the prisoners, the shadows, the cave itself, the outside world, the sun, the journey out of the cave and the return to the prisoners. They should be able to discuss the validity of the points being made in this analogy.*

#### The Story:

Plato illustrated his ideas about knowledge (epistemology) in the analogy of the cave. ('Republic' VII). We are to imagine an underground cave which has an opening towards the light. In the cave are human beings, with their legs and necks chained from childhood in such a way that they face the inside wall of the cave and have never seen the light of the sun. Above them, between the prisoners and the mouth of the cave, is a fire, and between them and the fire is a raised way and a low wall, like a screen. Along this raised way there pass men carrying statues and figures of animals and other artificial objects, in such a manner that the objects they carry appear over the top of the low wall or screen. The prisoners, facing the inside wall of the cave, cannot see one another nor the objects being carried behind them. All they see are the shadows of themselves and of the objects projected onto the wall they are facing. One prisoner manages to loosen his chains so he can turn round and see the objects illuminated by the sun. The prisoner goes out, is dazzled at first but is eventually able to see real objects and then finally he is able to gaze upon the sun itself and realise that all things depend on it for their existence.

#### Explanation:

This is one of Plato's best known works from the *Republic*. Plato felt it was his duty to present to his fellow citizens of Athens a better way of living and understanding the world around them. As a dualist, Plato wanted to highlight his belief that we are not just our physical body but that we also have an immaterial mind or soul. As a rationalist he presents the Analogy of the Cave to explain in human terms the reality, or the deceptive 'appearance' of the world we live. In the Analogy he seeks to encourage us to see beyond our senses, enlightening our minds and seeing the world the way it really is, not just how it appears to our senses. His Analogy represents the journey of the enlightened philosopher who eventually discovers another world, reality or as Plato calls it the world of forms or 'ideals'. The Analogy is then a series of representations which can be explained as follows.

#### The Meaning and Representations:

- a) **The Prisoners:** The prisoners represent the majority of humankind who remain all their lives in a state of confusion/illusion perceiving only shadows of reality and hearing only echoes of the truth. Their view of the world is inadequate, distorted by their own passions and prejudices and by the false teachings and rhetoric of others. These are the chains that stop the prisoners seeing the truth and moving to the truth. Yet the prisoners cling to these distorted views, believing them to be true, and so they do not wish to escape from their prison house.
- b) **The Shadows:** The shadows the prisoners see reflected on the back wall of the cave, created by the **artificial** objects being carried along the path in front of the fire, which is behind them, represent the material world available to the senses. The prisoners think it's all real. However, in reality it is all only a pale reflection of something else. This is the world of opinion, guesswork and illusion. The prisoners cannot see behind them to see what is making the reflections, the reflections are themselves not clear due to the poor light and flickering of the fire and the objects making the reflections are only poor copies of the real things so what the prisoners see are images of images, not even images of the real.
- c) **The Cave:** The Cave represents the sensory world in which we live, what Plato calls the world of sight. This is not the real world. Because of this, Plato says that what we say and our language is also poor. When we

speaking about things we simply express opinions and reflections since we are talking about reflections and our understanding of them.

- d) **The Outside World:** This is the world of Forms, the place of true and real objects which the prisoner first encounters when they come out of the cave.
- e) **The Sun:** This represents the Form of The Good. Plato says the escaped prisoner understands or sees the Form of the Good last of all. Firstly the prisoner sees the objects in the world of forms and only later realises that everything depends for its existence on the sun. The prisoner sees the form of the Good as the author of all things and source of reason and truth
- f) **The Journey outside and return to the prisoners:** The prisoner, who escapes from the cave through pure thought or reasoning, gradually attains an intellectual knowledge of the truth, of what is real and certain. At first the prisoner is blinded by the light and is distressed but gradually sees the truth and realises that the sensory knowledge gained of the shadows in the cave only gives us opinions which can be wrong but which people think is truth. The prisoner therefore questions all their old ideas. This process is what Plato refers to as **enlightenment**. For Plato this escape represents the rising or ascent of the soul into the intellectual world. The person who escapes comes to understand what Plato called the 'Forms' (the things the prisoner sees in the light of the sun outside the cave). Finally he comes to understand the Form of the Good (represented by the sun), the highest Form, 'the universal cause of all things right and beautiful the source of truth and reason' ('Republic'). The prisoner, who has realised the truth that the world depends for its existence on the Sun, returns to the cave to teach the other prisoners the truth. He tries to convince the cave dwellers that the shadows on the cave wall are but flickering reflections of the 'real' things. But they don't believe him. They point to the cave wall and say that what they see is all there is and that the journey to the light is of no use since it stops you from seeing the shadows. Finally they kill him. What Plato was illustrating in the Cave is the philosopher's road from shadowy images to the true ideas behind all natural phenomena. He was probably also thinking of Socrates, whom the 'cave dwellers' of Athens killed because he disturbed their conventional ideas and tried to light the way to true insight.
- g) **The Fire:** The fire represents the soul which Plato believes pre-existed in the world of forms. Just as the fire in the cave allows the prisoners to see the shadows, so our soul allows us to see 'shadows' of the forms in the physical world. This represents the dim recollection we have of the World of Forms through our soul.

#### **Strengths of the Analogy:**

Plato uses a familiar example to engage us with a complex philosophy. He wants to engage the masses and allow them to empathise with the state of the prisoners before presenting them with a reality. He uses the analogy to support his dualistic views and it can be argued that it becomes clear the relationship between forms and phenomena since it is represented by objects making shadows on a wall; something we can tangibly understand. The argument for another world is also incredibly compelling since it fits in with many religious teachings we come across today. Many people believe in a soul and a life beyond the physical and Plato as an initial thinker will have presented this to them as a viable option. Plato uses evidence such as our innate knowledge of 'good' and 'beauty' to persuade the reader that this knowledge must come from the world of forms. As human beings we are also aware that our senses can be deceived eg. a stick looks bent when placed in water when in fact we know it is not and so Plato's philosophy draws from our own experiences of the physical world causing us to question whether we can rely on a physical 'reality'. Plato's philosophy is timeless for this reason.

#### **Weaknesses of the Analogy:**

Plato simply asserts that there are two realms but never really gives us a compelling reason to believe in the world of forms. The analogy is based on this assumption as opposed to leading to it. Plato overlooks the importance of sensory experience which we can study and understand. A scientist such as Richard Dawkins would claim that in knowing the physical world changes we are not deluded but have the means to study that change and make sense of it. We cannot do this with the world of forms. Aristotle would say that the analogy pushes the boundaries of logic and makes a huge jump from the observation that the physical world is sometimes deceptive to the idea that another realm of forms must exist because of this. Due to scientific advances we now have the means to explain our physical in way Plato at the time would not have access to.

Might be useful in addition: [Plato's Cave](#) or [Plato's Cave 2](#)



**Mind-map your thoughts on the following statements:**

- 1. 'There is such order and beauty in the world, I think that it is reasonable for people with faith to conclude there must be a God':**
  - Consider reasons for/against
  - Consider further questions this gives rise to such as 'could order be by chance?'
  - Articulate your current view on the above (including your thoughts in agreement and your thoughts in disagreement)
  - Presents reasons for your current position
  
- 2. 'Nothing comes from Nothing'; the universe could not simply pop into existence without a cause':**
  - Consider reasons for/against
  - Consider further questions this gives rise to such as 'does everything require a cause?'
  - Articulate your current view on the above (including your thoughts in agreement and your thoughts in disagreement)
  - Presents reasons for your current position
  
- 3. 'People who claim to have had Religious Experiences, in reality have mental health issues':**
  - Consider reasons for/against
  - Consider further questions this gives rise to such as 'Is this a respectful way of looking at one of the most powerful and creative forces in human history?'
  - Articulate your current view on the above (including your thoughts in agreement and your thoughts in disagreement)
  - Presents reasons for your current position

## **Task 2: Ethics Bridging Task:**

In Ethics you will study a range of theoretical approaches to moral philosophy (the study of what is right and wrong). For many of these, you will need to be able to make practical application to contemporary issues of ethics relating to matters of life and death.

Your task for the first Ethics lesson is to research a range of these issues, creating a file with your evidence. This should be a combination of relevant news articles, journals, parliamentary comment and, of course, books. You are advised to gather evidence for as much of this as you can, but a minimum is expected of two issues from both groups.

The topics you should be looking into are:

### **1. Issues of human life and death**

- embryo research; cloning; 'designer' babies
- abortion
- voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide
- capital punishment.

### **2. Issues of non-human life and death:**

- use of animals as food; intensive farming
- use of animals in scientific procedures; cloning
- blood sports
- animals as a source of organs for transplants.

Suggestions for where to look:

- Any reputable newspapers/website: The Guardian, The Telegraph etc.
- Institute of Medical Ethics – [www.instituteofmedicalethics.org](http://www.instituteofmedicalethics.org)
- The BBC News site
- [British Medical Association](#)
- Ethical Studies (R Bowie)
- The Moral Maze (D Cook)
- The Puzzle of Ethics (P.Vardy) *can be bought quite cheaply from Amazon and would be a good purchase for the A Level, alongside The Puzzle of God.*
- Peter Singer – any books/articles

Good luck and we look forward to formally meeting you in September!