1.3 Arguments and the core essay

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 30 marks**

KEY WORDS argument • premise • valid • sound • fallacy • philosophical issue • counter-argument

Objective

Build the skills for the **core essay**: read a stimulus (a picture or a short text), find the **philosophical issue** in it, and write a clear argument with **counter-arguments** and a **conclusion**.

You must be able to:

- identify the philosophical issue raised by a stimulus
- state an argument in premises and a conclusion
- distinguish valid and sound arguments
- identify common fallacies
- plan a core essay

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

Arguments

An **argument** gives **premises** (reasons) for a **conclusion**. It is **valid** if the conclusion must be true *when* the premises are true; it is **sound** if it is valid *and* the premises are true.

Valid but not sound: All birds can fly. Penguins are birds. So penguins can fly. (Premise 1 is false.)

Common **fallacies**: attacking the person (*ad hominem*); a false choice between two options; a slippery slope with no evidence; begging the question (the conclusion is hidden in a premise).

From stimulus to issue

Stimulus: *a photo of an elderly woman looking at a photo of herself as a young girl.* Possible issues: Is she the same person? What makes a life one life? Does a person change their nature?

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■ **Core essay plan**

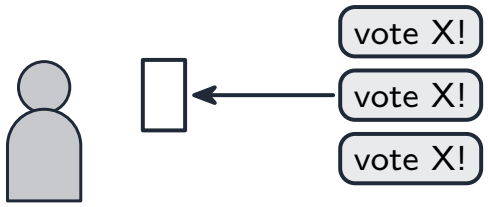
1. **Issue**: name the philosophical issue in the stimulus and the question you will answer.
2. **Thesis**: your answer.
3. **Argument**: two or three arguments, each with a philosopher's view and an example.
4. **Counter-arguments**: the strongest objection and your reply.
5. **Conclusion**: a judgement, with its limits.

2 Practice

2.1 Distinguish a **valid** argument from a **sound** argument. [2]

2.2 Look at this argument: "Robots will never think. My uncle, who builds robots, says so, and he is an expert." Name the weakness in the argument, and rewrite it as a stronger argument. [3]

2.3 Identify a **philosophical issue** raised by this stimulus: *a cartoon of a person in a voting booth who sees three advertisements on their phone, all telling them how to vote.* Explain why it is philosophical and which part of the core theme it links to. [4]

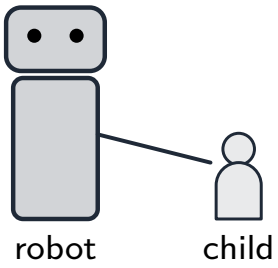


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2.4 Plan a core essay on the stimulus in 2.3. Include the issue, a thesis, two arguments with philosophers, a counter-argument and a conclusion. [6]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 *(Core theme style.)* Stimulus: *a photograph of a humanoid robot holding a child's hand in a hospital.* With explicit reference to the stimulus, discuss a philosophical issue about **being human** that it raises. [15]



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Solutions

Marking: **M1** a correct method, **A1** the correct answer, **B1** an independent mark.

Each answer shows the steps, then the **result**.

2.1

valid: if the premises are true, the conclusion must be true (the form is correct); sound: valid and all the premises are actually true

2.2

it is an appeal to authority: one expert's opinion, with no reasons; and it ignores other experts who disagree; a stronger version gives a reason, e.g. "Thinking needs understanding; robots only follow rules (Searle's Chinese Room); so robots do not think"

2.3

an issue, e.g. are our choices free if they are shaped by others?; philosophical: it is a conceptual question about freedom, not only a factual question about advertising; link to freedom in the core theme: free will and influence on desires; reference to a view, e.g. compatibilism: free if acting on one's own desires; but are these desires one's own?

2.4

issue and question clearly stated; thesis that answers the question; first argument with a philosopher, e.g. hard determinism: the choice is caused by influences; second argument, e.g. compatibilism: still free if the person reflects and endorses the choice; counter-argument with a reply; a conclusion with a judgement and its limits

3.1

Mark with the markbands: [13-15] clearly focused on the question, clear explanation of the philosophical issue, relevant philosophers and arguments used accurately, counter-arguments evaluated, well-developed critical analysis, different perspectives evaluated, a reasoned conclusion; [10-12] focused, mostly accurate knowledge, analysis with some evaluation; [7-9] some focus, relevant knowledge, mostly narrative or description with limited analysis; [4-6] little focus, limited knowledge, mostly narrative; [1-3] little understanding of the question. Points that may be included: identifies a clear issue from the stimulus, e.g. can a machine care? what makes us human?; explicit reference to details of the stimulus; clear thesis; argument from personhood criteria (self-awareness, moral agency); argument from functionalism: if it does what caring does, it may care; counter-argument: Searle's Chinese Room or qualia: no inner experience; human relationships and recognition: the child may treat it as a person; ethical implications, e.g. trust and responsibility in care; evaluation of the strongest view; a reasoned conclusion

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