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PHILOSOPHY: FRAMING PROBLEMS, EXAMINING ARGUMENTS AND WRITING IN THE FINAL YEAR OF SECONDARY SCHOOL

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PHILOSOPHY: FRAMING PROBLEMS, EXAMINING ARGUMENTS AND WRITING IN THE FINAL YEAR OF SECONDARY SCHOOL

An original Lafayette Digital Products guide, translated into English from the French manuscript written on 11 October 2026, for students completing upper secondary school. The French text was drafted with the help of Codex, OpenAI's artificial intelligence assistant, then reviewed and corrected. This guide supports lessons and the reading of philosophical works; it is not an official educational certification. Numerical examples, people and situations identified as fictional are educational creations. References are used to check concepts or historical information; no third-party book is condensed in full.

Each chapter combines analysis, original examples, exercises with worked answers, common mistakes and a revision sheet. Attempt the exercises before reading their answers, then explain in your own words why each answer is justified. The worked answers provide reasoned approaches, rather than a guaranteed grade or an official examination marking scheme.

CHAPTER 1 - FRAMING A PROBLEM: NOTIONS, QUESTIONS, PRESUPPOSITIONS AND APPARENT CONTRADICTIONS

1. Entering a problem rather than collecting opinions

An ordinary conversation often begins with a preference: I like this work, I find this rule unfair, I want to be free. Philosophy does not ask us to erase these experiences. It asks us to understand what warrants a judgement and what might change it. When two people use the same word, they do not necessarily mean the same thing. For one, being free means encountering no obstacles; for the other, it means being able to decide according to a rule they recognise as their own. Disagreement can therefore precede any clash of values: it begins with a definition that has not been examined closely enough.

A notion is a general term around which several questions arise: justice, time, truth. A concept is a more precise determination developed for thinking: distributive justice, measured time, the truth of a proposition. This distinction is a working tool, rather than a rigid boundary between two dictionaries. A philosophical problem arises when plausible demands come into tension, or when a natural answer encounters a difficulty it cannot resolve without changing. Putting a question mark after an abstract word is therefore not enough. We must show why an immediate answer is not entirely satisfactory.

Consider a fictional situation. A class organises a debate; each student has two minutes. The rule seems egalitarian. One student, however, needs a communication device that slows her speech. Giving her more time seems to break equal treatment, but refusing

this adjustment seems to prevent equal participation. The problem is not whether equality is good. It is what should be equal: the duration, the effective opportunity to participate, or another relevant dimension. We discover that different measures can pursue the same demand, without every difference thereby being justified.

2. Defining without deciding in advance

A nominal definition clarifies how a word is used; a more ambitious definition seeks the characteristics of a reality. If we define freedom as the power to fulfil absolutely every desire, we have already made freedom impossible for several people who want incompatible things. That consequence can be examined, but it must not go unnoticed. A definition serves an enquiry when it makes its difficulties expressible; it closes the enquiry when it quietly contains the expected answer.

To examine a term, consider its opposite, neighbouring terms and uses. Depending on the question, the opposite of freedom may be servitude, constraint or dependence. Freedom and independence are not always synonyms: a musician depends on an instrument and rules to perform an interpretation freely. Nature can mean all physical realities, the characteristics of something, or what has not been made. A question about our duty towards nature is not addressed in exactly the same way as a question about the nature of duty. The same word does not make the objects identical.

A simple method is to write a provisional definition, then test it against a difficult case. If work is merely a painful activity, sporting effort necessarily becomes work, while enjoyable professional activity ceases to be work. If work is merely paid activity, indispensable domestic tasks disappear from the category. These objections do not prove that every definition is equally good. They reveal criteria that need clarification: transformation, purpose,

social recognition, payment, effort. Defining means explicitly choosing which differences matter for the question under examination.

3. Examining presuppositions

A presupposition is a proposition assumed by the wording of a question without being directly asserted. Asking why technology makes us unhappy assumes that it does. Asking which pleasure is sufficient for happiness assumes that some pleasure can suffice. We may retain an assumption provisionally; we must then say so. Otherwise, a question looks open while already imposing a thesis.

Not every presupposition is illegitimate. An enquiry needs intelligible terms and common ground. The difficulty is to distinguish useful conditions of enquiry from the disputable assertions it carries. Rephrase a leading question: under what conditions does a technology support or hinder a happy life? The new formulation allows opposing effects to be examined. It does not guarantee a balanced answer; it merely allows arguments, rather than the initial grammar, to determine the conclusion.

A second fictional example concerns an association asking: which member is responsible for our failure? The wording assumes a single individual's responsibility. Yet failure may result from missing information, inadequate organisation and decisions made by several people. Philosophical enquiry sometimes begins by rejecting an excessively narrow alternative. It must then propose a better question, rather than merely criticising other people's language. What conception of responsibility recognises individual initiatives while examining the collective conditions of action?

4. Genuine contradiction, opposition and tension

Two propositions are contradictory, in the logical sense studied here, if they cannot be true together and the negation of one corresponds to the other in the same context. Saying that an action is permitted and is not permitted, for the same person, at the same time and under the same rule, creates a contradiction. Saying that an action is legally permitted but morally questionable does not create that contradiction: the criteria differ. There is then a tension between legality and legitimacy that must be analysed.

An opposition can also concern degrees. A room may be relatively quiet for a visitor and too noisy for someone who needs to concentrate. The judgements use different thresholds and purposes. Before declaring that two speakers contradict each other, specify the object, time, meaning of the words and criterion of comparison. This check avoids artificial disputes and makes genuine disagreements more visible.

Not every philosophical problem is therefore a formal contradiction. Two goods may be compatible in principle and difficult to achieve simultaneously: protecting privacy and making public decisions open to scrutiny, keeping a promise and responding to an unforeseen event. Practical tension requires a reasoned ordering or adjustment. Do not automatically present it as a logical impossibility. Saying that a choice is difficult proves neither that every solution is arbitrary nor that a perfect solution exists.

5. Distinguishing types of question

A factual question asks what happened or what exists. A conceptual question examines what our categories mean and how they relate. A normative question asks what ought to be recognised, chosen or permitted. They intersect without becoming interchangeable. Knowing how many people approve a rule provides a social fact; it does not suffice to establish that the rule is just. Conversely, discussing a rule without understanding its actual effects can produce abstract, poorly informed arguments.

Moving from a fact to a norm requires an additional premise. If a practice is old, we still need to explain why its age would confer value. If a practice is new, we still need to establish why its novelty would count as progress. An enthusiastic adjective cannot bridge this gap. Philosophy analyses reasons that might connect a description to a judgement, while recognising that available information can limit a decision.

An idea's origin is not its foundation either. Someone learns a rule in their family; this explains how they encountered it, not why everyone ought to recognise it. A proposition may originate by chance and later acquire a sound justification. Conversely, a prestigious history may accompany a poorly grounded idea. This distinction will be useful in examining religion, science, law and cultural traditions.

6. A reference point in Plato's dialogues

In Meno, Plato stages a discussion about whether virtue can be taught. Socrates first asks what virtue would be, rather than accepting a mere list of qualities assigned to different roles. This reference comes from the dialogue itself, rather than a report of a contemporary educational experiment. We need not suppose that every historical exchange occurred word for word as written to examine its philosophical construction.

This brief reference illustrates a general difficulty: seeking a common property is not the same as collecting cases. Our original work then applies this difficulty to other objects. A list of courageous people does not yet define courage; it may nevertheless help identify a common feature and reveal a borderline case. The dialogue is therefore no excuse for dismissing examples. It encourages us to ask exactly what they help us understand.

7. Formulating a problem and a line of enquiry

For the question 'Can we learn to be free?', begin with two intuitions. Freedom initially seems to belong to someone who chooses for themselves; being taught therefore seems to risk subjection. Yet someone unable to understand their options or assess their consequences may depend on impulses and manipulation. The problem becomes: how can learning increase our capacity to decide without replacing personal judgement with obedience? The formulation specifies the tension and prepares criteria for examining it.

One possible approach begins by analysing dependence on a teacher, then considers the capacities made possible by learning, and finally examines the conditions of an education that enables learners to free themselves from their educator. This is not a

three-part recipe for every essay topic. Another topic will require another progression. What matters is that each stage resolves a difficulty and reveals a new one. A transition explains that change; it is not merely an announcement of the next number.

The introduction must make the problem intelligible to a reader unfamiliar with your draft. A brief example can introduce the difficulty, but must not consume the whole text. Define the necessary terms, show why two plausible answers are inadequate in isolation, then formulate the precise question. Avoid opening with a history of all humanity unless evidence supports it. A modest, accurate sentence is better than a spectacular generalisation.

8. Progressive exercises and worked answers

Exercise 1 - Classifying. Classify the following questions: at what time did the meeting begin? What is a free decision? Must we always respect a collective decision? Then explain why the third may require the first two.

Answer: the first is factual; the second conceptual; the third normative. To judge a collective decision, we need to know the conditions under which it was made and understand the notion of a free decision. This classification does not isolate three unrelated worlds. It indicates what an argument must provide: information, a definition or a justification of a norm. An answer giving only a time does not resolve the moral question; a definition does not replace checking the facts.

Exercise 2 - Correcting a leading question. Rephrase 'Why is art useless?' without presupposing the conclusion. Propose two different meanings of being useful.

One possible answer: 'Does the value of a work depend on its usefulness?' Being useful can mean producing an immediately

measurable practical effect, or contributing to a change in our perception and judgement. This difference opens an enquiry into criteria of value. It would be premature to conclude that every work is useful because every experience changes something: we still need to examine the nature and relevance of the effect.

Exercise 3 - Detecting an apparent contradiction. A library forbids conversation in one room and permits an interview with someone who is hard of hearing in another. A visitor says its rules contradict themselves. Assess the conclusion.

Answer: the location and conditions differ. A prohibition in one room and a permission in another do not, by themselves, constitute a contradiction. The visitor may nevertheless question the coherence of the purposes or the accessibility of the arrangement. Refuting the first argument is not enough to establish that the rules are entirely just. We must retain relevant criticisms after eliminating confusion.

Exercise 4 - Developing a problem. Starting from 'Can we be happy without being free?', write six lines containing a provisional definition of happiness, two conflicting reasons and a precise question. Do not cite any author.

One possible answer: if happiness means lasting satisfaction, a person may experience well-being where their choices are limited. Yet satisfaction obtained by preventing any examination of their desires seems to deprive them of control over their life. The question becomes the relationship between felt satisfaction and making one's ends one's own. This formulation does not yet impose the absolute superiority of one criterion: it identifies what needs to be argued.

Exercise 5 - Revising your initial formulation. Return to the problem you developed in the previous exercise. Imagine a strong

objection, then change a term or premise to answer it without abandoning the entire question.

Answer: one possible objection points out that no one controls every circumstance of their life. Requiring total independence would make freely achieved happiness impossible. We can distinguish control over all events from reflective participation in the choices still available. The revision improves the concept of freedom; it does not ensure that every constraint is acceptable. Good reasoning becomes more precise when confronted with an objection.

9. Common mistakes and revision sheet

One mistake is to repeat the essay topic as a question and call that a problem formulation. Another is to decide, in the definition itself, that only one answer is possible. Other errors include false disagreements, personal stories without analysis and lists of authors with no argumentative connection. To correct yourself, ask what is asserted, what is presupposed and what remains to be demonstrated. Underline each conclusion and find the reason supporting it.

Revision sheet: notion = a field of questions; concept = a precise determination useful for enquiry; presupposition = an assertion carried without explicit examination; problem = an articulated difficulty between plausible demands or reasons. A contradiction requires the same object, meaning and conditions. Origin is not foundation; a fact is not a moral justification. Defining, distinguishing and rephrasing serve a particular question, rather than a recital of vocabulary.

To check your understanding, explain the problem of equal speaking opportunities to someone else without reading this chapter. Ask them to invent a counterexample to your solution. If

you can recognise what changes and what remains, you are using the distinctions as tools. If you merely repeat the definition, try the exercise again with a concrete condition changed.

Sources and provenance: the framework of notions was checked in the official annex to the general Terminale philosophy curriculum, https://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/SPE8_MENJ_25_7_2019/15/9/spe238_annexe1_1159159.pdf ; primary reference: Plato, Meno, the older English translation by Benjamin Jowett available at https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1643/pg1643-images.html, the opening exchange on virtue. References consulted for the French manuscript on 11 October 2026. No passage from a third-party translation reproduced. Original LFDP analyses, fictional situations and worked answers.

CHAPTER 2 - TRUTH AND KNOWLEDGE: OPINION, BELIEF, EVIDENCE AND JUSTIFICATION

The situations presented are thought experiments or fictional examples. Their purpose is to teach us to distinguish questions, develop arguments and examine their limits, without turning an author's name into evidence.

1. A question becomes philosophical when it reveals a difficulty

'Can we trust our opinions?' seems to call for a yes or no. Yet we use opinions daily before possessing a demonstration, while some firmly held convictions turn out to be false. The difficulty lies in two demands: we must be able to act without checking everything, but believing strongly does not establish truth. Formulating a problem makes this tension explicit, rather than repeating the question in different words.

Begin by defining the terms without fixing them too quickly. Here, an opinion is a judgement we hold; it can be true or false, reasonable or poorly grounded. Trust can mean a personal feeling or an attitude justified by reasons. The question changes depending on whether we seek an absolute guarantee, sufficient justification or a practical rule for deciding.

A useful introduction therefore presents the problem, rather than an inventory of doctrines. It explains why an immediate answer would be inadequate and announces the line of enquiry. Philosophy consists neither in recounting everything we know nor in asserting that every answer is equally good.

2. Truth, certainty and justification are different

Truth concerns what a proposition asserts; certainty also describes the state of the person holding it. We can be certain of an error and hesitate over a true statement. Justification means the reasons we can offer to support a belief. Those reasons can be discussed, strengthened or refuted.

Imagine a stopped clock showing noon. Someone consults it exactly at noon and believes it is noon. Their belief is true in the scenario, but the coincidence does not make the clock a reliable source. The example distinguishes a correct outcome from a procedure normally capable of producing that outcome. It does not, by itself, demonstrate a complete definition of knowledge.

This distinction also applies to a digital assistant: a correct answer obtained once does not prove its method reliable in every case. Examining reasons, sources and conditions of verification remains necessary. A sentence's fluency is not a property establishing its truth.

3. Developing an argument: premises, connection and conclusion

An argument contains starting propositions, called premises, and a conclusion presented as supported by those premises. We must examine both the quality of the propositions and the relationship connecting them. In a valid deductive argument, the conclusion cannot be false if the premises are true. This validity does not guarantee that the premises are actually true.

Consider: 'Every object in this box is red; this marble comes from this box; therefore this marble is red.' The form is valid, but observation may refute the first premise. Conversely, 'this marble is red; the marbles in this box are red; therefore it comes from this

box' does not necessarily follow: another box might contain red marbles.

An essay must make the connection visible, rather than merely line up affirmative sentences. After a proposition, ask: why? What distinction supports it? What exactly does the example show? This discipline helps identify a conclusion broader than the reasons supporting it.

4. An example illustrates; a counterexample can refute

A favourable example shows that an idea can apply in a situation. It does not establish a universal assertion. If two testimonies prove accurate, we cannot conclude that every testimony is accurate. In contrast, a single false testimony refutes the proposition 'every testimony is true'.

A counterexample must target the actual statement, rather than a simplified version of an opponent's position. Answering 'some authorities can be reliable within their field' by showing that a celebrity is wrong about another subject does not directly address the thesis. We must examine relevant competence, opportunities for checking and reasons for trust.

A thought experiment isolates a distinction when an ordinary situation contains too many factors. Its value depends on the relevance of its assumptions. An imaginary scenario is not a historical fact and must never be presented as an experimental result.

5. Reason and experience: two poles, several positions

The rationalist tradition gives an important role to the resources of reason in establishing certain kinds of knowledge. Empiricist positions emphasise what experience contributes to forming and justifying our ideas. These orientations do not mean that every rationalist rejects the senses or every empiricist abandons reasoning.

A mathematical demonstration does not derive its necessity from the number of cases observed. Yet knowing a room's current temperature requires information about the world, rather than conceptual analysis alone. These examples encourage us to distinguish fields of knowledge before imposing a general opposition.

The objection to trusting reason exclusively concerns how its constructions connect with reality. The objection to accumulating observations concerns the justification of a conclusion going beyond cases already observed. Sound analysis asks which kinds of knowledge are sought, which resources make them possible and how far each permits us to conclude.

6. Doubting methodically

Doubt can provisionally suspend an assertion to examine its foundations. It can also become a systematic attitude rejecting every reason before evaluating it. These uses have different functions and consequences. Methodical doubt seeks to improve justification; indiscriminate rejection no longer distinguishes better-established assertions from weaker ones.

An approach inspired by the Cartesian demand for foundations asks what can be held as assured and how other knowledge connects with it. It must not be reduced to 'believe no one'. Similarly, recognising the limits of a proof does not automatically

support the opposite thesis. 'This proposition has not been demonstrated' and 'this proposition is false' are different assertions.

In practical life, waiting for absolute certainty can prevent necessary action. A justified decision then considers available evidence, consequences, values and opportunities for revision. This caution does not remove the need to check; it distinguishes a theoretical demand for certainty from the concrete conditions of responsible action.

7. Trust, testimony and authority

Most of our knowledge also depends on other people. Personally checking every observation, historical text or scientific result is impossible. Trusting others therefore need not mean abandoning thought; what matters is the reasons for that trust and how it can be corrected.

Relevant expertise, an explicit method, accessible sources and the possibility of challenge are criteria to examine. They do not make a person infallible. Authority in one field does not automatically confer authority in every other. Several identical messages may repeat a single source: their number does not establish independent confirmation.

To discuss a disagreement, first restate the opposing position in a way its defender could recognise. Then identify the precise divergence: a fact, a definition, an inference or a value. Two people may share the facts and differ over which consequences deserve priority.

8. From observation to scientific explanation

A hypothesis organises observations and allows testable consequences to be formulated. A model can simplify a phenomenon while providing good predictions within a particular domain. An observation that fits does not necessarily prove the hypothesis is the only possible explanation; an anomaly may also prompt examination of measurement conditions and auxiliary assumptions.

Comparing explanations therefore requires more than a spectacular example. We consider their coherence, the range of their predictions and how they confront varied observations. An assertion that can be modified after every result to remain compatible with everything loses its ability to guide a genuine test.

This analysis does not reduce every science to a single recipe. Methods also depend on objects and questions. It shows why accepting an idea must remain linked to examinable reasons, and why revising a result does not itself prove that all scientific knowledge is arbitrary.

9. An essay plan must produce a progression

A philosophical essay does not acquire coherence by mechanically adopting 'yes, no, perhaps'. Each part must address a difficulty left by the previous one. For our question about opinions, we could first explain their practical role, then the limits of subjective certainty, before distinguishing conditions of justified trust. This is one reasoned approach, rather than a universal plan.

A paragraph can develop a thesis, a reason, an interpreted example and a limitation. An author's name should introduce a precisely understood idea, rather than serve as an external guarantee. An approximate quotation attributed to a philosopher

weakens the argument; an accurate reformulation, identified as such, can be more useful.

When analysing a text, begin with the problem and sequence actually present. Show the function of a distinction or example before expressing a personal judgement. Making the text say what we already know about an author prevents us from reading its particular argument.

10. Exercises with suggested answers

A - Framing a problem. 'Should we always doubt?' Propose a tension. One possible answer: doubt protects against premature acceptance, but permanent suspension may prevent action or learning. We need to examine what justifies doubt and the conditions under which it can be lifted. This tension opens an enquiry; it does not already supply all its conclusions.

B - Identifying an inference. 'Every student who passed revised; I revised; therefore I will pass.' Answer: the premise presents revision as a necessary condition within this group, rather than a sufficient condition for success. The argument unjustifiably adds the reverse implication. We can explain the error without denying revision's usefulness.

C - Interpreting an example. A forecast predicts an event that occurs. What can we conclude? Answer: the outcome is compatible with the forecast. To evaluate a method, we must also examine other forecasts, events not predicted and conditions of comparison. An isolated success does not establish general reliability.

D - Developing a paragraph. Defend critical trust in testimony. One possible answer: specify relevant expertise, explain why it provides a reason for trust, give an example and retain opportunities for

checking. Do not conclude that every statement from an institution is infallible.

Revision sheet and sources

Remember: conviction is not truth; valid form is not true premises; a favourable example is not a universal proof; a limit of proof is not proof of the negation. To revise, reconstruct an argument without the text, find a genuine objection, then improve its formulation. The aim is to make your thinking examinable by another reader.

- [French Ministry of Education, published Terminale philosophy curriculum](https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/19/Special8/MENE1921238A.htm): working framework, consulted for the French manuscript on 11 October 2026.

- [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Epistemology](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology/), [Rationalism vs. Empiricism](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rationalism-empiricism/) and [Scientific Method](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/scientific-method/): academic discussion references, consulted for the French manuscript on 11 October 2026. No third-party article is translated, reproduced or condensed in full in this module.

Original LFDP writing, examples and exercises; no verbatim quotation.

11. A proposition, a fact and a reason

Saying that a proposition is true requires understanding what it asserts. 'The door is open' is insufficiently specified if we do not know which door and time are meant. Once the context is fixed, we can compare the assertion with the situation. The familiar correspondence model expresses this demand: what we say must fit what is. It does not automatically provide infallible access to all facts. We still need to examine methods of checking, the limits of observation and how the proposition was formulated.

Coherence concerns agreement within a set of propositions. It is necessary to avoid asserting an idea and its negation simultaneously under the same conditions. It is not, by itself, proof that the set describes the world. Two different fictional accounts may each be coherent. An empirical assertion needs a relationship with observations, rather than merely a satisfying arrangement of sentences. Conversely, an isolated observation cannot be understood without some rules of reasoning and concepts. Enquiry makes these demands work together.

A belief's usefulness raises another question. Someone may motivate themselves with an overly optimistic estimate and nevertheless achieve their objective. This favourable consequence does not make the initial estimate true. Some pragmatist approaches examine connections between thought, enquiry and consequences; they must not be caricatured as saying that every pleasing idea is true. In an essay, explain precisely the criterion being examined and the domain in which it claims to work. A philosophical school's name never substitutes for analysis.

12. Disagreement does not mechanically produce relativism

Two people may describe an event differently because they saw different parts, use different words or assess the same facts according to different priorities. Disagreement calls for enquiry into these differences. It does not prove that contradictory propositions are all true for each person. 'Everyone has their own opinion' concerns the existence of judgements; it does not establish their equal justification.

The opposite objection also deserves examination. Demanding a shareable truth does not permit us to dismiss someone's words before listening. Subjective experience may reveal an overlooked fact, particularly when one group's living conditions differ from another's. Testimony based on lived experience provides information, without making its interpretation complete and indisputable. Critical thinking must therefore take an experience seriously while examining the reasons drawn from it. Respecting someone requires neither attributing infallibility to them nor abandoning shared enquiry.

13. Comparing two fictional cases

Case A: a device regularly displays a time three minutes fast. Its user knows the discrepancy and corrects it. Case B: an unchecked device happens to show the exact time once. The first case presents an imperfect procedure whose known limitation can be compensated for; the second presents an exact result without a guarantee of method. This comparison shows why knowing an error can improve justification. It does not prove that every defect can be compensated for, or that the correction remains valid after the device changes.

Another case: two independent announcements provide converging information, while ten messages repeat the same initial

announcement. The raw number of messages does not measure the number of checks. Determining independence requires examining the origin of information, rather than merely the names of accounts sharing it. This fictional situation distinguishes social repetition from confirmation. It does not permit us automatically to declare a popular message false or an isolated one true.

14. Additional exercises with worked answers

Exercise E - Evaluating a criterion. Someone asserts: 'My account contains no contradiction, so it necessarily describes what happened.' Develop an objection and a possible improvement.

Answer: a fictional account may be coherent without corresponding to any real event. Coherence eliminates a logical defect, but does not replace empirical checks. Improvement requires adding relevant observations or documents, examining their provenance and distinguishing what they establish from what remains interpreted. We must also ask whether a competing explanation accounts for the same clues. This last question does not mean every explanation is equivalent.

Exercise F - Discussing testimony. Two people attended a meeting; one thinks a participant chose freely, the other that they were under pressure. They agree on the words spoken. Where might their disagreement lie?

Answer: it may concern the definition of freedom, social circumstances or relevant signs of pressure. We must ask which options were actually available and which consequences were anticipated. Agreement on the words spoken does not automatically resolve a judgement about the conditions of choice. Sound analysis begins by locating the disagreement, rather than assuming someone must be lying.

Exercise G - Writing a fair objection. In four lines, defend the idea that limited trust can be reasonable; then formulate a strong objection and a reply retaining opportunities for revision.

One possible answer: we often need to act on information received from others; relevant expertise and a checkable method give a reason for trust. The objection points out that even a competent institution can share a bias or make an error. The reply must not deny that possibility: it provides independent checks, attention to anomalies and a change of mind when reasons change. This trust admits degrees and correction, rather than being absolute.

15. Common mistakes and deeper revision

Three confusions recur: true means pleasant; coherent means real; disagreement means there is no truth. To correct them, specify the object of each judgement. A proposition's truth, an action's value and a person's feelings are connected but different questions. A proposition may be true and painful to hear; consolation may be appreciated and poorly grounded; a decision may be prudent despite incomplete information.

Additional revision sheet: identify a proposition's context; distinguish correspondence, coherence and consequences; examine the provenance of reasons; seek an objection that actually addresses the thesis; revise without automatically adopting the opposite opinion. Final recall exercise: without reading the text, explain why the stopped clock, the correction of a known bias and repetition of one source do not raise exactly the same problem. Understanding is demonstrated through these differences, rather than reciting three slogans.

Additional primary reference checked: René Descartes, Discourse on the Method, Part Four, where doubt leads to seeking a first assurance rather than endlessly celebrating uncertainty; an older translation is available at https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/59/pg59-images.html. Read for the

French manuscript on 11 October 2026. The explanations and exercises above are LFDP originals; no Descartes text or academic article reproduced.

CHAPTER 3 - REASON AND EXPERIENCE: RATIONALISM, EMPIRICISM AND THE LIMITS OF OPPOSITIONS

1. Why the distinction is necessary

One student learns to recognise a plant by observing several leaves. Another establishes a relationship between numbers through reasoning. These approaches draw on different resources, although each uses concepts and requires attention. The philosophical question is not to choose once and for all between looking and thinking. It concerns the origin, justification and scope of our knowledge. Can we know something independently of experience? What role do rules of thought play in what we call an experience?

Here, reason means a capacity to form concepts, connect propositions, seek reasons and examine their coherence. Experience can mean personally lived experience, organised observation or experimentation. These meanings must be distinguished. Having lived through much does not guarantee a demonstration's validity; conducting a scientific experiment does not merely mean feeling something. The same person can reason about observations and observe in order to check reasoning. Distinguishing them helps us understand their cooperation.

Rationalism and empiricism encompass varied approaches, rather than two uniform teams. A rationalist approach can recognise the need for observations in several domains. An empiricist approach can assign reasoning an important role. The opposition becomes useful when we specify a thesis: which ideas or justifications would depend exclusively on experience, and which might have other foundations? A general formula must not replace this examination.

2. Psychological origin and logical justification

Someone discovers a mathematical relationship by handling objects. This history of learning explains how they encountered the idea. To demonstrate it, however, they must produce reasoning that does not depend merely on the number of objects examined. The empirical origin of a discovery and the justification of its necessity are therefore not identical. Conversely, a hypothesis imagined without an initial observation can subsequently be tested against facts. A theoretical origin does not remove the need for empirical checking when a statement concerns the world.

We call a justification a priori when, in the sense studied here, establishing its validity does not depend on a particular observation. A posteriori describes a justification based on experience. The expressions do not mean before or after a date in a diary. A student may discover late a rule whose demonstration does not rely on their observations. The order of discovery must be separated from the order of reasons.

Original example: the sum of two even integers is even. For two integers a and b, write the numbers as 2a and 2b; their sum is 2(a + b), so remains divisible by two. The reasoning does not require us to examine every pair. Testing five additions helps us understand the pattern, but does not replace the general argument. In contrast, knowing whether five real objects each weigh two kilograms requires measurement or reliable empirical information. The calculation's structure does not provide the objects' mass.

3. Does experience provide sensations alone?

Perceiving does not consist in receiving a neutral list of signals. We recognise forms, compare situations, select features and use categories. In a fictional workshop, an apprentice sees a mark on a part; a technician recognises a sign of a defect. The difference may arise from training that enables the same visual information to be organised. Learning does not merely add memorised facts; it can change what we know how to distinguish.

This observation does not prove that an experienced eye is always correct. The technician may apply a familiar category too quickly. An informed interpretation remains open to examination. We must distinguish improved competence from the impossibility of error. If every observation is interpreted, this does not mean every interpretation is equivalent: some explain more differences and withstand independent checks better.

Experience can also contradict an expectation. Precisely because the world is not reducible to our concepts, we can learn something new. If we automatically modify every description to protect an idea, we lose this opportunity for correction. Rational thinking therefore does not merely preserve internal coherence; it recognises conditions under which information should lead us to revise a proposition.

4. Three primary reference points, without caricatures

In Book II of An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Locke asks how the mind receives the materials of its ideas and distinguishes sensation from reflection on its operations. This reference must not become an assertion that thinking is impossible or that only external impressions matter. The passage serves here to raise a question about the provenance of ideas. Neither the details of his entire doctrine nor their study are replaced by this remark.

In Section IV of An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Hume distinguishes relations of ideas from matters of fact, then examines reasoning that goes beyond what is currently observed. One issue is understanding why an observed regularity supports an expectation. This reference does not mean that Hume asks us to abandon ordinary action or denies every observation. It reveals a difference in justification.

In the introduction to the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant distinguishes knowledge beginning with experience from the question of whether it derives entirely from experience. This reference leads us to examine what the subject's capacities contribute to knowledge. It does not mean that everyone makes their world however they wish. The text opens an analysis of the conditions of knowledge; our guide retains only this central difficulty.

5. The problem of induction

Inductive reasoning moves from observed cases to a more general proposition or an expectation about unobserved cases. In a fictional scenario, a vehicle starts every morning for a month. Its owner expects it to start tomorrow. This expectation is reasonable under certain conditions, but it lacks the necessity of a demonstrated equality between algebraic expressions. A battery change, breakdown or different circumstance remains possible.

The point is not to claim that every expectation is equally good. It is to explain what justifies its degree of confidence. The number and diversity of cases, an understanding of mechanisms and stable conditions can strengthen an expectation. Yet they do not mechanically transform an empirical proposition into logical necessity. A conclusion can be strongly justified and remain open to revision. Practical certainty and the logical impossibility of the contrary are different.

A circular argument asserts that the future will resemble the past because it always has. It already uses the generalisation it seeks to justify. Recognising this difficulty does not make every prediction useless. It encourages precision about a prediction's status, assumptions and timescale. In an essay, do not confuse criticism of an argument's ultimate foundation with denying its usefulness under particular conditions.

6. Necessary, contingent, universal and general

A necessary proposition could not be otherwise within the framework establishing its necessity. A contingent proposition could be different without contradiction. A tree's presence in a courtyard is contingent; an integer defined as even being divisible by two follows from the concept's structure and the rules used. These examples do not resolve every debate about necessity; they provide an initial reference point to prevent confusing frequency with the impossibility of the contrary.

Universal means that a statement concerns every element of its specified domain. Depending on usage, general can describe a regularity admitting exceptions. The domain must be specified: all Euclidean triangles is not the same proposition as all figures drawn approximately on a sheet of paper. An imperfect measurement of a drawing does not directly invalidate a demonstration concerning an ideal construction. Applying it to reality, however, requires examining whether the model fits.

A map provides a useful original analogy. Its structure can be coherent; its scale and conventions can be perfectly known. We must nevertheless check that it represents the territory and its current state. Impeccable reasoning from an old map may lead to a practical error if a route has changed. The inference's formal quality and the information's material relevance are complementary demands.

7. Explaining an original disagreement

Two fictional students are deciding whether a learning method is better. The first observes that it helped three classmates; the second thinks its structure encourages repetition without understanding. The first has observations, the second an explanatory hypothesis. Neither yet has complete proof. We must define better: immediate memorisation, reuse after a month, understanding or independence? An apparent disagreement between reason and experience here conceals a problem of criteria.

A stronger enquiry combines a definition of the intended result, a relevant comparison and analysis of possible mechanisms. We could observe the ability to solve new exercises rather than merely repeat the same answers. We should also examine differences in students' circumstances. This scenario is not a real study of educational effectiveness. It shows how a concept makes observation relevant and how observation can modify an explanation.

The competing idea that only observations count encounters a limit: without a question or criterion, we do not know what to compare. The idea that an appealing structure guarantees success encounters the opposite limit: actual behaviour may not follow the model. The conclusion is not a vague formula that everything is complementary. It specifies which tasks belong to reasoning and which require checking the world.

8. Progressive exercises with worked answers

Exercise 1 - Distinguishing orders. A student discovers a numerical property by testing ten examples, then writes a demonstration. Which stage concerns discovery, and which claims to justify generality?

Answer: the tests can produce a conjecture and aid understanding. The demonstration seeks a general connection between assumptions and conclusion. We still need to check its validity: calling it a demonstration is not enough. The ten examples were not useless; their function differs. Analysis simply opposing bad experience to good reason loses this difference in role.

Exercise 2 - Checking an argument. 'Every bus I took this week was late; therefore every bus in this city will always be late.' Identify three unjustified extensions and formulate a more limited conclusion.

Answer: the argument moves from the buses used to every bus, from one week to every period, and from a past observation to all future occasions. A limited conclusion states that the journeys observed this week involved delays according to the specified criteria. A hypothesis about a network difficulty can be examined using other evidence. Limiting the conclusion does not deny the inconvenience observed; it adjusts its scope to available reasons.

Exercise 3 - Necessity and contingency. Classify 'this room contains twenty chairs' and 'a number divisible by two is even under the definition used'. What would be required to check each?

Answer: the first requires situated empirical information; the number of chairs could differ. The second here concerns the definition and arithmetical structure. An objection about a moved chair does not affect the arithmetical statement; a definitional error cannot be corrected merely by counting furniture. Always clarify words' meanings before classifying.

Exercise 4 - Reading a philosophical reference. Explain in your own words why beginning with experience does not necessarily mean deriving entirely from experience. Use an original example without attributing it to Kant.

One possible answer: encountering objects can introduce a classification problem and trigger thinking; the criteria and operations used to compare them cannot be reduced to the mere list of encounters. This explanation makes the distinction intelligible, but does not itself prove Kant's entire theory. We must retain this limitation rather than use a school example as a demonstration of a whole doctrine.

Exercise 5 - Planning a short philosophical essay. Propose a progression for 'Is experience sufficient to educate us?', with a precise objection at each stage.

One possible answer: experience exposes us to facts that thought cannot invent at will; however, numerous encounters may remain poorly interpreted. Concepts and rules of comparison are therefore necessary; yet these rules can confine observation within expectations. Reflective education then combines exposure to reality with revision of categories. This is one possible approach, to be developed through arguments; it guarantees no grade and does not replace writing the essay.

9. Common mistakes and revision sheet

Familiar caricatures attribute rejection of every sense to rationalists and rejection of every thought to empiricists. Other confusions equate a priori with an unexamined opinion, necessary with very frequent, or experience with automatically conclusive proof. Correct them by identifying the precise thesis, domain and type of justification. Read an author through a particular passage, rather than reducing them to an imaginary motto.

Revision sheet: an idea's origin differs from the foundation of its validity; induction goes beyond observed cases; valid deduction preserves truth under its assumptions; observation must be organised to answer a question. A priori and a posteriori concern

the status of reasons, rather than chronology alone. Thinking becomes more rigorous when it knows what its resources establish and what they leave open.

Primary sources checked for the French manuscript on 11 October 2026: Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Book II, Chapter I, https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/10615/pg10615-images.html ; Hume, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Section IV, https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/9662/pg9662-images.html ; Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, introduction, https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/4280/pg4280-images.html. Older English editions used to check reference points, without quotations or extended translation. All scenarios, exercise explanations and worked answers are LFDP originals.

CHAPTER 4 - SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: MODELS, EXPLANATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

1. Distinguishing knowledge from production

Science seeks, among other things, to develop justified knowledge and checkable descriptions and explanations. Technology organises means to obtain an outcome: making, transforming, communicating, preserving. They have many relationships, but are not synonyms. A technical practice may precede a scientific explanation of its effectiveness. Scientific research may have no immediate application in view. A technical instrument may then enable previously inaccessible observation, while new knowledge may transform manufacturing.

Know-how means a practical capacity not always reducible to a sequence of explicitly formulated propositions. Someone may skilfully adjust an instrument without explaining all the physics of its operation. This implies neither that their action is arbitrary nor that it provides a complete theory. Philosophical analysis asks which reasons justify trusting a practice and which information enables its effects to be transmitted, checked or corrected.

In a fictional situation, a group develops a device sorting objects by colour. Technical success is measured first by the task accomplished. Scientific explanation examines the signal, sensor and physical relationships used. Moral assessment also asks why the objects should be sorted, which errors are acceptable and who bears their consequences. The same device therefore opens several questions. An effective answer to the first does not close the other two.

2. Hypothesis, theory and model

A hypothesis is a proposition examined as a possible explanation or starting point. A theory is an organised set of concepts and relationships whose status depends on available reasons and checks. Theory does not merely mean an idea without evidence. A model represents certain aspects of an object to answer a question; it can deliberately simplify without becoming useless. A scale model, mathematical relationship and simulation do not perform exactly the same task.

A model of a journey between two cities may ignore details of every building because they are irrelevant to travel time. If the question concerns someone's access to a particular entrance, those details matter. Simplification is therefore judged by a purpose and domain. A model is not a reduced version of all reality that should suit every question. It is an instrument whose assumptions must be visible.

An explanation seeks an intelligible relationship between phenomena; a prediction states what should be observed under specified conditions. A relationship may predict adequately within a domain without being the final explanation of the entire mechanism. Conversely, understanding a general mechanism does not provide all the data needed for a precise prediction. Confusing these functions leads us to demand of a result something it does not claim to establish.

3. Testing without turning every success into complete proof

A test compares expected consequences with observations. If a consequence fails, we must examine the hypothesis, but also test conditions, measurements and auxiliary assumptions. This complexity must not become a way to rescue any idea after every failure. A serious approach states what might count against a proposition and what would justify its revision. Being unable to encounter any objection deprives a thesis of genuine checking.

Original example: two groups explain why an object wears out quickly. One invokes the material; the other its conditions of use. They must develop a comparison distinguishing these factors. Observing one worn object does not settle the question. Changing several conditions simultaneously may produce a result without identifying the cause. Organised enquiry seeks relevant contrasts, respects its constraints and distinguishes what it has checked from what it still assumes.

Reproducibility, access to a method and opportunities for challenge contribute to collective examination. This does not mean everyone can immediately reproduce every observation or that all sciences use the same protocol. Some study unique events through traces; others repeat controlled situations. The common demand concerns examinable reasons, rather than a single recipe applied regardless of the object.

4. A primary reference point in Francis Bacon

In Novum Organum, Bacon criticises habits preventing the mind from questioning nature and emphasises the role of instruments and methods. His connection between knowledge of causes and the capacity to act provides a reference point for our question. We must not attribute every contemporary scientific practice to him or present his text as a current operational manual. The passage checked here distinguishes confidence in an opinion from organising an enquiry.

New Atlantis depicts a research institution in a utopian narrative. It is a literary construction, rather than an account of an observed society. This difference in status matters: fiction can explore a relationship between knowledge, collective organisation and power without providing historical evidence of its effectiveness. We can thus discuss research purposes and social oversight without confusing narrative with experience.

5. Technological neutrality: a thesis needing clarification

One initial idea asserts that technology is neutral: only its use would be good or bad. It rightly emphasises that the same tool can serve several purposes and that users make choices. Yet it encounters a difficulty when a tool's design encourages certain behaviours, imposes constraints or distributes capacities unequally. A platform designed continually to attract attention is not identical to a simple interchangeable medium.

A competing idea attributes to technology a logic of its own that transforms practices. It permits examination of organisational effects, but becomes too strong if it eliminates every possibility of human decision. More precise analysis distinguishes several stages: design choices, conditions of access, actual uses, collective rules and unforeseen consequences. Responsibility can be

distributed without disappearing. We must identify what each actor could know and change.

Consider a fictional scheduling scenario. Software automatically assigns time slots in a shared room. It may optimise an occupancy rate while disadvantaging people available only at particular times. Selecting the criterion is already part of the design. Saying that the algorithm merely calculates does not answer the question of the chosen objective. We must examine whether the measured efficiency corresponds to the values the community wants to defend.

6. Being able to act and being obliged to act

An action's technical possibility does not establish its legitimacy. If information can be recorded, we still need to justify why, within which limits and for whose benefit. Conversely, recognising a duty does not guarantee the means to fulfil it. Reasonable discussion must therefore connect purposes, capacities and consequences, rather than automatically deriving a norm from an available fact.

Moral argument can examine rights, effects, commitments and conditions of autonomous choice. These criteria can come into tension. An innovation makes a service easier but changes its users' dependence; a device increases efficiency but reduces opportunities to challenge decisions. The point is not to condemn every change. It is to ask whether alleged gains are real, how costs are distributed and which alternatives remain possible.

Responsibility also has a temporal dimension. Some effects appear immediately, others later. No observed harm today does not prove there will be no future effect. Yet an imaginable possibility does not establish a certain danger either. We must distinguish ignorance, reasoned uncertainty and assessed risk, then examine proportionate, revisable decisions. The language of precaution

needs explanation, rather than use as an automatic permission or general prohibition.

7. Two original thought experiments

First experiment: a fictional city automates library management. The tool reduces searching time and expands access, but its classification makes certain works invisible. Compare three criteria: speed, accessible diversity and the ability to understand the classification. A faster system is not necessarily superior in all three respects. The question concerns purposes and their connections, rather than progress treated as a single number.

Second experiment: a group can produce a longer-lasting object that is harder to repair, or a less durable object with accessible parts. Durability alone cannot resolve the choice. We must define the relevant lifespan, uses and repair conditions. This fictional situation shows that an appealing criterion may conceal several assessments. Critical thinking does not stop at the name of a quality; it examines how that quality is measured.

In both cases, a solution can be argued for without being perfect. A rule for revision and checking results makes the choice more responsible. Recognising limitations does not mean every decision is arbitrary. It means distinguishing sufficient justification for action from an absolute guarantee we do not possess.

8. Progressive exercises with worked answers

Exercise 1 - Identifying questions. A device correctly sorts 95 fictional objects out of 100. Formulate a technical question, a scientific question and a distinct moral question.

One possible answer: how can sorting success be improved under the stated conditions? What mechanism explains the errors? What consequences do those errors have for affected people, and are

they acceptable? The fictional rate does not answer all three questions. We must also examine the composition of cases and the definition of success. The exercise attests no real system's performance.

Exercise 2 - A model's domain. A map simplifies a transport network and ignores stairs. Is it necessarily false? Give an answer distinguishing two purposes.

Answer: it may suit the representation of major connections and be inadequate for assessing a route's accessibility. Simplification must be judged relative to the question. If the map is presented as a complete description of accessibility, the omission becomes relevant. The same content can therefore have limited usefulness and make an excessive claim.

Exercise 3 - Testing an explanation. A hypothesis claims that an object functions poorly because of its colour. The manufacturer changes its colour, material and size; the new object works better. Can the result be attributed to colour alone?

Answer: several factors were changed; the result does not separate them. A suitable comparison is needed to examine their contributions under controlled, achievable conditions. The success is compatible with several explanations. Practical improvement does not automatically identify a cause.

Exercise 4 - Neutrality. Explain why 'everyone chooses how to use it' does not establish a device's neutrality, without eliminating all user responsibility.

One possible answer: design may make some actions easy and others difficult, select options or direct attention. These conditions influence use without determining every action absolutely. Responsibilities for design and use must therefore be examined

together. An influence is not an irresistible constraint; remaining freedom does not erase organisational effects.

Exercise 5 - Developing a normative argument. Using the shared-room example, defend a rule enabling an automatic allocation to be challenged. Give an objection and a reply.

One possible answer: a challenge procedure protects situations ignored by the initial criterion and allows errors to be corrected. An objection invokes slower service or abusive requests. The reply may provide explicit reasons, a limited procedure and revision of the common criterion. We must show why the cost of oversight is justified, rather than assuming every challenge is necessarily good or useless.

Exercise 6 - A short philosophical essay. Propose a tension for 'Is technological progress always human progress?', and a progression in two or three stages according to your argument.

One possible answer: technologies increase capacities and can free us from some constraints; yet new capacities can strengthen dependence or distribute benefits unequally. We must examine the criterion of human progress and collective conditions of use. One approach can move from genuine gains to their limits, then to rules for assessing them. Develop this through analysed examples, rather than a list of inventions.

9. Common mistakes and revision sheet

The main confusions equate theory with mere supposition, model with a total copy, practical success with certain explanation, and technical possibility with moral permission. Others present sciences as one method or make every error proof of arbitrariness. To correct yourself, distinguish a proposition's status, available checks, domain of application and purpose. Reasoned revision is an enquiry's strength, rather than automatic evidence of failure.

Revision sheet: science and technology cooperate without being identical; a hypothesis is examined; a model selects; a prediction and an explanation perform different functions. Design choices have effects; uses and collective rules also matter. Responsibility requires identifying actors, capacities, information and consequences. Progress must state its criteria and limitations.

Primary sources checked for the French manuscript on 11 October 2026: Francis Bacon, Novum Organum, Book I, particularly the opening aphorisms, https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/45988/pg45988-images.html ; New Atlantis, the narrative and account of Salomon's House, https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/2434/pg2434-images.html. Older editions serve to check limited references, without quotations or extended translation. All scenarios, exercises and educational explanations are LFDP originals. No diagnosis, clinical protocol or recommendation of a real device.

CHAPTER 5 - CONSCIOUSNESS, THE UNCONSCIOUS AND IDENTITY: PERSONHOOD, MEMORY AND OTHER PEOPLE'S GAZE

1. Different senses of consciousness and conscience

Consciousness can mean experiencing or perceiving something. It can also mean the capacity to relate to oneself as the subject of that experience. Moral conscience, another sense of the French term conscience, concerns judging what we believe we ought to do. These meanings intersect, but must not be confused. Someone can attend to a sensation without formulating a moral judgement; they can judge an action unjust without fully understanding the causes of their own judgement.

Immediate consciousness accompanies lived experience; reflection takes that experience as its object. In a fictional situation, a student listens to a piece of music, then tries to understand what she felt. The second moment adds a question about the first. Reflection can make an experience more intelligible, but does not automatically recover every detail. A subsequent description selects, organises and sometimes changes what is remembered.

The philosophical problem is this: does being present to oneself make complete self-knowledge possible? It seems to offer privileged access to our experiences, since no one feels exactly in our place. Yet our motives, habits and memories may remain partly opaque. We must therefore distinguish experiencing oneself from knowing oneself completely. This chapter examines the tension without proposing psychological diagnosis or therapeutic methods.

2. Being a subject and becoming an object of reflection

Here, the subject is the one to whom an experience belongs and who can say 'I'. An object is that towards which thought or observation is directed. When I reflect on my decision, I take an aspect of myself as an object without ceasing to be the subject of that reflection. This structure explains a difficulty: I cannot simply stand outside my entire life as a wholly independent observer. Yet it does not prevent progressive knowledge supported by clues and exchanges.

The Cartesian reference examined in Discourse on the Method connects thinking with assurance of the thinking subject's existence. We must not make it directly establish the entire content of a biography or the accuracy of every memory. Recognising that I think does not imply that every interpretation of my thoughts is true. A fundamental assurance and detailed knowledge have different scopes.

An original scene helps us examine this distinction. A student claims he declined an invitation solely to work. Later, he recognises that he also feared comparison with others. This change of interpretation does not prove he knew nothing about his initial decision. It shows that several motives can coexist and their ordering may be poorly understood. Self-knowledge sometimes improves without moving from total ignorance to complete transparency.

3. Numerical identity and resemblance

Two objects can look perfectly alike and remain distinct objects. Numerical identity concerns being one and the same reality; qualitative identity concerns shared properties. Two copies of a book have identical content but are not the same copy. This distinction allows us to ask about personal identity: how does someone remain the same person through changes in body, knowledge, projects and relationships?

We cannot require every property to remain permanent, since living involves change. The student who becomes an adult retains neither every characteristic nor every belief. Yet we recognise continuity and attribute commitments across time. We must seek what grounds this continuity without reducing identity to photographic resemblance. Body, memory, relationships and a life narrative provide criteria whose functions may differ.

Administrative identity connects documents and rights; lived identity expresses how we recognise ourselves in our experiences; moral identity enters into responsibility. These uses must not automatically be merged. Someone who no longer identifies with an earlier opinion generally remains connected to their history, but can explain the change. Saying they have become different does not, by itself, settle questions of promises or responsibility.

4. Memory and continuity: a reference in Locke

In the chapter on identity in his Essay, Locke distinguishes the identity of a human being from that of a person, examining consciousness across time. His prince-and-cobbler thought experiment isolates these criteria. It is a philosophical scenario, rather than an observed transfer. We retain this limited distinction without summarising his entire theory.

Our original example replaces the older narrative with a simple question. Someone signed a commitment several years earlier; they no longer remember the day's details, but documents and witnesses connect them with the act. Should we conclude that the absence of memory erases all responsibility? The criterion of immediate memory encounters a difficulty here. We must examine the commitment's nature, evidence and conditions of responsibility, without treating this question as individual legal advice.

Memory can contribute to continuity without being a perfect register. Memories exist, change or are absent; a personal narrative connects them. Yet a coherent narrative is not necessarily entirely accurate. Self-knowledge sometimes requires documents or other people's testimony, while retaining distinctions between facts, interpretation and evaluation. Dependence on traces does not reduce someone to a file.

5. The unconscious: distinguishing inattention from a dynamic hypothesis

In a descriptive sense, unconscious can mean what is not currently present to consciousness. A routine skill can operate without reflection on every detail. In psychoanalytic theory, the unconscious has a more specific meaning, associated with processes and conflicts that consciousness does not directly recognise. We must not identify every automatic action with this particular conception. The same word can refer to different levels of description.

In A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis, Freud examines, among other things, errors and omissions as phenomena open to interpretation. This primary reference is presented as a historical theoretical proposal, rather than proof that every forgotten thing reveals a particular desire. The book's clinical examples are not

reproduced. This guide permits neither interpreting a symptom, treating someone nor assessing an illness.

The philosophical problem remains: if the subject does not recognise some motives, how can they acquire justified knowledge of them? A hypothesis must be distinguished from a certain attribution. If every objection automatically becomes confirmation, the interpretation loses the possibility of being checked. Conversely, a limitation of immediate knowledge does not prove that no non-conscious motive exists. We must examine reasons and propositions' status rather than choose between absolute transparency and a total explanation by a hidden cause.

6. Habits, attention and freedom

Someone who has learned to grasp an object quickly does not analyse every movement each time. This automatisation can increase their capacities rather than remove freedom. They can direct attention towards other aspects of a task. The absence of detailed reflection is therefore not always a defect. We must examine what remains controllable, changeable and appropriate to the situation.

In a fictional scenario, a student automatically opens an application during a break. She subsequently decides to examine the circumstances triggering this action. Recognising a habit may allow her to change her environment or choice. It does not provide a general measure of her freedom or a diagnosis of dependence. The scenario merely shows that awareness can transform our relationship to action without instantly eliminating every constraint.

The idea that we are free only when every detail is conscious would be too demanding. The opposite idea that habits make all reflection useless would also be excessive. We can distinguish

routine actions supporting a project from routines obstructing it. Freedom then requires a capacity to revise ends and means, rather than total mental presence to every movement. The next chapter explores the connection between this capacity and determinisms.

7. Other people: obstacles, witnesses and conditions of recognition

Another person's gaze can trap someone within a label. An old mistake becomes their entire character; membership of a group becomes their entire identity. This reduction is questionable because it erases changes, individual differences and reasons for acting. Yet another person can also reveal an inconsistency the subject had not noticed or recognise a capacity they doubted. Other people are therefore neither merely mirrors nor merely obstacles.

Two fictional people are preparing a project. One describes herself as unable to explain her ideas; the other notices that she presents them clearly when she has a diagram. This observation may open a learning opportunity. It does not give the observer complete authority over the subject's identity. Reasonable exchange combines personal experience with shareable clues, rather than allowing one voice to define a person entirely.

Recognition has moral and social dimensions. Someone asks to be treated as capable of speaking and choosing, rather than merely as a classified object. This demand does not mean that every judgement they make must be approved. We can challenge a proposition while maintaining respect for the subject. Distinguishing the person from their assertion permits firm discussion without reducing them to an error.

8. Two tensions to argue through

First tension: self-knowledge sometimes requires distance, but we cannot abandon all personal experience. One possible solution multiplies perspectives while retaining opportunities for correction. It does not guarantee definitive knowledge. It offers a way to make reasons more explicit and compare interpretations.

Second tension: identity requires continuity, but must allow change. A promise connects different moments; a sincere change of opinion need not erase the past. The issue is how someone can answer for their history while revising projects. A theory requiring complete immutability does not accurately describe a life; a theory erasing every continuity makes lasting commitment difficult.

We must also avoid a discriminatory conclusion: no difficulty involving memory or consciousness permits this guide to remove someone's dignity or rights. Discussing philosophical criteria is not an administrative or clinical rule. Thought experiments isolate problems; they do not permit treating real people as unprotected illustrations.

9. Progressive exercises with worked answers

Exercise 1 - Consciousness and conscience. Classify: I perceive a light; I reflect on how I decided; I think I acted unjustly. Why can all three sentences concern one person without being equivalent?

Answer: the first describes consciousness of an object, the second self-reflection, the third moral judgement. They may follow one another or coexist, but their contents differ. Identifying a sensation does not guarantee knowledge of its motives; reflecting on a decision does not establish its moral value. These distinctions prevent unjustified movement from one meaning to another.

Exercise 2 - Identity. Two people have the same name and similar tastes. Can we conclude that they are the same person? Compare numerical and qualitative identity.

Answer: shared properties establish resemblance, rather than numerical identity. We need continuity criteria suited to the question. A common name does not erase distinct biographies. This simple answer prepares the harder question of someone's persistence despite changing properties: resemblance does not resolve everything.

Exercise 3 - Memory. Testimony contradicts a memory. Propose an enquiry that automatically sides with neither the memory nor the witness.

One possible answer: specify the fact, compare conditions of observation, seek relevant traces and distinguish factual detail from interpretation. A lived memory deserves attention but may be imperfect; an external witness can also be wrong. Convergence of independent reasons strengthens a conclusion without making an entire biography transparent.

Exercise 4 - The unconscious. Why does an action performed without detailed reflection not, by itself, demonstrate a particular psychoanalytic explanation?

Answer: absence of attention describes a phenomenon, whereas a particular theory explains its causes and relationships. Several explanations may be compatible with a routine action. Additional reasons and the status of a checkable hypothesis are needed. Do not turn this exercise into an interpretation of a real person or a diagnosis.

Exercise 5 - Other people. A friend says: 'You have changed your mind, so you are no longer the same person and your promises no longer count.' Develop a nuanced objection.

One possible answer: qualitative change does not necessarily eliminate personal continuity. Commitments may remain, but interpreting them requires circumstances and their nature. We can recognise sincere change without arbitrarily erasing every earlier relationship. The objection concerns the general inference, rather than a particular legal situation.

Exercise 6 - Philosophical essay. Formulate a problem for 'Is self-consciousness sufficient for self-knowledge?' and develop a transition between two stages.

One possible answer: experiencing oneself provides access no one else can entirely replace; yet motives and memories may remain partly opaque. A first stage recognises this privileged access, then a transition shows that experiencing is not explaining completely. A second examines methods of checking and other people's role. Finally, specify the kind of knowledge possible, without promising absolute transparency.

10. Common mistakes and revision sheet

Frequent errors confuse moral conscience with perception, identity with resemblance, absence of memory with absence of history, and habit with the theoretical unconscious. Others attribute an entire doctrine to a philosopher from one thought experiment or turn an example into a diagnosis. To correct yourself, always specify a term's meaning and a statement's status: lived experience, hypothesis, argument, testimony or rule.

Revision sheet: immediate consciousness differs from reflection; relating to oneself does not mean knowing oneself completely; numerical and qualitative identity must be distinguished. Memory and other people contribute to enquiry without being infallible. Unconscious has several uses. Reflection on personhood preserves dignity and replaces no individual clinical or legal judgement.

Primary sources checked for the French manuscript on 11 October 2026: Descartes, Discourse on the Method, Part IV, https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/59/pg59-images.html ; Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Book II, Chapter XXVII, https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/10615/pg10615-images.html ; Freud, A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis, introductory lectures and distinction between processes, older edition https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/38219/pg38219-images.html. Limited references, without quotation or reproduced clinical protocol. Original LFDP analyses and exercises.

CHAPTER 6 - FREEDOM AND DUTY: CHOICE, DETERMINISMS, AUTONOMY AND CONSTRAINTS

1. Identifying what we call free

Freedom does not always describe the same property. Someone may be free to go out because no prohibition prevents them, able to go out because they have transport, and yet hesitate through fear. Absence of external obstacles, effective capacity and self-control are therefore not equivalent. Analysis benefits from specifying which sense is involved, rather than immediately declaring someone free or unfree.

Freedom of action concerns the possibility of doing something; freedom of choice concerns how a decision forms. In some conceptions, free will means a capacity to choose that is not entirely determined by preceding causes. Autonomy means a capacity to give oneself, or recognise, a rule whose justification one understands. These definitions open different questions. Being able to follow a desire does not prove that the desire was freely formed; following a rule does not prove that the rule is an alien constraint.

Our problem is this: does freedom require depending on nothing, or understanding and organising certain dependencies? Absolute independence seems hard to conceive for a being who learns a language, receives an education and lives with others. Yet recognising these conditions must not lead us to treat every action as an automatic response. Between imaginary omnipotence and the subject's disappearance, we must examine several levels of power, reflection and responsibility.

2. Determinism, fatalism and explanation

Determinism asserts that events depend on conditions and laws. In a general version, every event has sufficient causes. Fatalism asserts that an outcome will occur whatever we do. These ideas are not identical: if my work contributes to success, that work can be a determining cause; determinism does not make it useless. Fatalism, in contrast, presents the outcome as independent of my efforts. Confusing them turns an explanation of action into an unjustified invitation to stop acting.

A fictional situation clarifies the issue. A student prepares for an examination and sleeps more before it. Her results depend partly on preparation, tiredness and the questions set. Saying these conditions influence the result does not imply it would have been identical without preparation. Her effort belongs to the causal situation; it is not outside the world. An action can have conditions and remain effective.

We must also distinguish explaining conduct from justifying it. Group pressure may help explain a regrettable decision; it does not necessarily make it acceptable. Yet examining conditions may alter an assessment of responsibility by revealing an unknown threat or incapacity. This move requires an additional moral or legal argument. The mere presence of a cause does not automatically acquit someone, just as ignorance of causes does not prove total freedom.

Finally, difficulty predicting does not refute every determinism. A system may be hard to predict because its conditions are numerous or poorly known. Conversely, an unpredictable event is not automatically a free decision: a random draw is not a reflective will. Freedom therefore cannot be equated without examination with the impossibility of calculation.

3. Freedom compatible with motives?

One conception requires that I could genuinely have acted otherwise in an identical situation. It emphasises the power to initiate an action without being entirely fixed by earlier causes. This conception strongly expresses the experience of choice and the difference between decision and automatic behaviour. Yet it faces a question: if the action entirely escapes my reasons, habits and character, what still allows it to be recognised as my action rather than an arbitrary event?

Another approach holds that conduct can be free when it proceeds from my reasons and intentions, without decisive coercion, even if those reasons themselves have a history. Compatibilism generally refers to thinking freedom compatible with causal determination. The issue then shifts: rather than demanding a total absence of causes, we distinguish causes operating through reflection from causes preventing or bypassing it.

Compare two original cases. In the first, a student accepts work because he understands the conditions and judges that it fits a project. In the second, a serious threat forces him to accept the same contract. The visible actions may resemble each other, but their organisation differs. The first involves making motives one's own; the second severely reduces the possibility of refusal. This does not resolve the entire question of free will, but provides a concrete criterion for analysing action.

A serious objection remains: manipulated preferences may be experienced as personal. Simply saying 'I wanted to' is therefore not always enough. We must examine information quality, access to alternatives, the possibility of revising a choice and influences beyond control. Freedom then becomes a capacity to strengthen through educational and social conditions, rather than a property attributed once and for all.

4. Understanding necessity: a reference in Spinoza

In the definitions of Part One of the Ethics, Spinoza distinguishes what acts through the necessity of its own nature from what is externally determined to act in a particular way. This reference encourages us not immediately to identify freedom with absence of necessity. We do not summarise his system: we retain this distinction to ask whether understanding our conduct's causes can increase our power to act.

An original example makes this shift intelligible. Someone responds irritably to every interruption while working. Initially, they think each response simply expresses their choice. Observing their habits, they understand the role of tiredness, organisation and implicit expectations. They can then schedule breaks and clarify their availability. This knowledge does not free them from needing sleep, but enables more conscious organisation of some conditions of action.

It would nevertheless be excessive to infer that every personal difficulty can be resolved through rational explanation. Economic constraints, violence or health problems do not disappear because we understand them. The philosophical example concerns a limited possibility of change, rather than a therapeutic method or promise of control. Knowing causes may also reveal why help or collective action is necessary.

5. Obligation, constraint and duty

Constraint prevents or imposes conduct through force or a situation reducing possibilities. Obligation involves a rule presenting itself as something to be respected. Moral duty concerns what we believe we ought to do for reasons sometimes extending beyond immediate interests. Obligation can accompany constraint, but the notions are not identical. A promise may oblige me without a physical force pushing me to keep it.

The distinction illuminates a difficulty: if I can fail to do my duty, why say I ought to do it? Duty does not merely announce inevitable behaviour. It expresses a demand my conduct can meet or fail to meet. This possibility of failure gives it normative force. Saying someone ought to be honest does not predict that they will be; it provides a criterion for judging certain conduct.

Yet not every rule felt as obligatory is necessarily justified. A family habit, collective order or tradition may exercise strong psychological authority without constituting a valid moral duty. We must therefore examine the rule's source, scope and those it concerns. Philosophical questioning consists neither in obeying without examination nor in rejecting every obligation because it limits a desire.

A fictional situation contrasts two students responsible for a shared project. One thinks he can withdraw because no one can force him; the other recalls the commitment and consequences for the team. Absence of sanctions does not remove the moral problem. Conversely, if a serious reason makes the commitment impossible to keep, respecting others may require explaining the difficulty and seeking a new agreement rather than repeating an unfulfillable promise.

6. Autonomy and a universalisable rule

In Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, Kant connects autonomy of the will with rational legislation and examines whether a maxim can be willed as a universal law. Here, a maxim is a subjective principle of action. This reference does not mean everyone can declare whatever pleases them moral: examination seeks a justification that personal preference alone cannot supply.

Our original example concerns a collective booking. Someone wants to promise attendance while secretly deciding to come only if no more enjoyable option appears. If everyone uses promises this way, the assurance offered to others loses its function. Analysis concerns the coherence of the adopted principle and how others are treated. It is not reducible to calculating a probable sanction.

An objection concerns conflict situations: several demands may appear to compete, or a maxim's description may be arranged to obtain a desired outcome. Examining universalisation therefore requires honestly formulating the situation and motive. It does not work like an automatic button removing the need to reflect on people, consequences and available information.

The difference between autonomy and mere independence now emerges. An autonomous subject does not necessarily refuse every rule; they may recognise a rule because they understand its reason. Conversely, breaking a rule may follow an impulse or group pressure. Opposing obedience to freedom is therefore premature. The decisive question concerns the rule's justification and how the subject relates to it.

7. Social conditions of effective choice

A legally permitted choice may remain practically inaccessible. Someone may have the right to undertake training but lack time, transport or information. Distinguishing permission from capacity prevents abstract freedom becoming a misleading description of actual possibilities. This does not mean every material obstacle is a prohibition, but exercising a right sometimes requires additional conditions.

In an original example, two students can theoretically participate in an after-school activity. One lives nearby; the other must take the last available transport before the activity ends. An identical rule produces different possibilities. We can discuss adjustment without denying a common rule's value. The problem concerns equitable conditions, explored further in the chapter on justice.

We must also avoid the reverse argument: since conditions are unequal, no personal initiative matters. Constraints may reduce options without eliminating every difference between actions. Precise analysis describes what is prevented, what remains possible and which collective changes are conceivable. It makes neither the individual responsible for everything nor society an explanation rendering every decision immaterial.

8. Progressive exercises with worked answers

Exercise 1. Classify the following as material capacity, permission, autonomy or coercion. Someone understands and accepts a common rule; another has permission to go out but no transport; a third acts under threat; a fourth has a usable vehicle.

Answer. Understanding and recognising a justified rule can involve autonomy, although acceptance alone does not prove its justification. Being allowed out concerns permission; lacking transport limits effective capacity. A threat involves coercion. A

vehicle provides a material possibility, but does not alone determine freedom of decision. Several dimensions can therefore coexist in one situation.

Exercise 2. Correct this reasoning: my efforts have causes, so they make no difference to the result.

Answer. The conclusion does not follow from the premise. Caused efforts can themselves produce effects. We would need to show that the result is independent of those efforts, which the premise does not establish. The argument confuses determinism and fatalism. An educational counterexample is learning in which exercises contribute to progress, even though deciding to work has motives and conditions.

Exercise 3. Develop an objection to the proposition: I am free whenever I do what I want.

Answer. We can want something under the influence of misleading information, dependence or unrecognised pressure. A desire experienced as personal therefore does not guarantee reflection and revision. The objection does not prove every desire prevents freedom; it merely requires additional criteria, such as information and access to alternatives.

Exercise 4. Formulate a problem for the essay topic: does duty limit freedom?

Answer. Duty seems to limit actions allowed by my desires, but a rationally recognised rule can also express autonomy. We can ask whether limiting a desire necessarily means losing freedom, or whether certain obligations enable action according to a justification the subject can recognise. An essay must then distinguish imposed rules, justified obligation and effective capacities; repeating 'it all depends' would not suffice.

9. Common mistakes and revision sheet

Do not confuse absence of cause, absence of constraint and absence of rules. Do not present the unpredictable as automatically free. Do not use explanation as justification without an additional argument. Make autonomy neither a mere whim nor duty necessarily something passively endured. Finally, do not reduce choice to legal possibilities while forgetting the conditions enabling their exercise.

To revise, define freedom of action, free will, autonomy, determinism, fatalism, constraint and obligation. Explain in two sentences why caused effort can be effective. Construct a case where a rule supports freedom and another where it constitutes domination. Finally distinguish an action's motive, cause and justification: these questions intersect, but call for different answers.

10. Primary sources and further enquiry

Spinoza, Ethics, Part One, definitions, English translation by R. H. M. Elwes: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3800/3800-h/3800-h.htm Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, sections on autonomy and universalisable maxims, English translation: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5682/5682-h/5682-h.htm Official general Terminale philosophy curriculum, notions of freedom and duty: https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/19/Special8/MENE1921238A.htm References consulted for the French manuscript on 11 October 2026. Author references are limited to the indicated passages; situations, exercises and educational formulations are original, without literal quotation.

CHAPTER 7 - JUSTICE, LAW AND THE STATE: EQUALITY, LEGALITY, LEGITIMACY AND CONFLICTS

1. A question is more than a complaint

A feeling of injustice draws attention to different treatment or harm. It can be a starting point, but does not establish a conclusion valid for everyone. We may feel frustrated because we did not obtain an advantage to which we were not entitled; we may also overlook an injustice from which we benefit. Reflection therefore requires turning a reaction into a question about criteria of judgement.

Justice can mean a virtue, a quality of institutions, a way of distributing or making reparation, or the judicial institution. These uses are connected but not identical. A court may apply a rule whose justification is disputed; someone can act equitably outside a trial. State which meaning you are examining, rather than making an institution's operation answer every moral question about what is just.

Our problem is twofold: how can a common rule justly treat different situations, and how does law acquire authority beyond force? Justice, law and the state intersect in these questions. This chapter provides philosophical analysis and fictional cases; it offers no individual legal advice or procedure applicable to a real dispute.

2. Identical equality, proportional equality and equity

Arithmetical equality gives everyone the same quantity. Proportional equality allocates quantities according to a ratio and criterion. Equity involves, among other things, examining a situation's particular features to prevent mechanical application of a general rule producing injustice. These distinctions do not decide in advance which treatment is just. They allow us to ask about the appropriate criterion.

In an original example, an institution has twelve workshop time slots for two groups. Dividing them six and six produces numerical equality. If one group contains three times as many students, allocating nine and three produces a proportion based on group size. Yet if the smaller group has a project requiring a longer continuous session, membership numbers alone do not resolve the question. We must specify the purpose: access for each person, project needs or another justified rule.

A calculation can check a proportion without proving its justice. With group sizes in a three-to-one ratio, allocating nine slots and three respects the ratio; allocating eight and four does not. This arithmetical operation establishes only conformity to a chosen criterion. That criterion still requires justification and its consequences examination. Confusing computational coherence with a rule's moral validity would confuse levels of analysis.

Equity does not mean arbitrarily giving an advantage to someone we prefer. It requires a relevant difference and a justification open to examination. Adjustment for a real obstacle can enable equitable access; a privilege based on friendship does not follow the same principle. The difficulty is to address certain differences without introducing an unjustifiable preference.

3. Distributing and correcting: an Aristotelian reference

In Book V of the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle distinguishes, among other things, distributive and corrective justice. We retain this limited distinction: distributing a common good and correcting an imbalance between people are different operations. The reference supplies no ready-made contemporary rule; it encourages us first to identify the problem's nature.

A fictional situation contrasts two decisions by an association. The first allocates hours in a shared room. The second involves repairing equipment damaged by a member. Seeking the same equal division in both cases would be inappropriate: the first concerns access; the second examines responsibility and reparation for harm. The relevant information differs.

Reparation itself raises several questions. Restoring a material situation cannot always erase every effect of an act. An apology and reparation may address different dimensions; punishment and prevention may have distinct purposes. We must avoid believing that repair guarantees a perfect return to an earlier state. In an essay, showing this limit deepens the problem rather than stopping at a definition.

4. Positive law and the demand for legitimacy

Positive law is the set of legally established rules within a particular society. Legality means conformity to those rules. Legitimacy concerns their justification or the right to exercise authority. A decision may conform to an existing rule and nevertheless face moral or political criticism. Conversely, simply feeling that a cause is just does not remove the need to examine the means used and other people's rights.

A rule offers several advantages: it makes conduct more predictable, limits certain arbitrary decisions and enables

disagreements to be resolved through common procedures. If everyone decides solely from immediate self-interest, conflicts may become contests of force. Yet this value of rules does not prove every rule good. A procedure may be used to stabilise discrimination or privilege.

An original example takes place in a fictional library. A registration rule excludes a category of people without a demonstrated connection to the service's operation. Staff applying it may respect its internal rules; the problem of justification remains. Ask what purpose it pursues, why the distinction would be relevant and what opportunities for challenge exist. This examination is philosophical; it is not a legal determination concerning a real case.

We do not resolve the tension by abolishing all law or declaring every law unquestionable. We must think about institutions capable of establishing, applying and revising rules, with protections for people. Public criticism, justification and avenues of appeal help distinguish authority from mere domination, although no procedure guarantees absolute perfection.

5. The state, authority and the use of force

As an initial approach, the state can be defined as an institutional political organisation exercising authority over a territory and population. It is neither a particular government nor the whole of society. A government may change while institutions remain. Society includes relationships, groups and activities not reducible to public administration.

Political authority generally has means of coercion. Their existence does not automatically justify them. Force can impose conduct; legitimate political obligation requires explaining more than the capacity to punish. The problem is to connect coercion to a

justified rule, limits and procedures preventing arbitrariness as far as possible.

One argument emphasises that common authority can protect against some private violence and coordinate actions that isolated individuals would find difficult. An objection points out that this same power can become threatening when it escapes oversight. The question is therefore not merely choosing between the presence and absence of a state, but examining its power's organisation, limits and responsibilities.

In an original example, a fictional community must organise access to a limited common resource. A uniform decision can prevent the strongest taking first, but may also overlook certain groups' needs. A just institution must be able to gather relevant information, justify its decision and allow challenges. An order's effectiveness does not establish the justice of its content.

6. The common good and the sum of preferences

In Book II of The Social Contract, Rousseau distinguishes the general will, directed towards the common interest, from the will of all understood as the sum of particular wills. He also distinguishes orientation towards the common good from the possibility of error in deliberation. This reference prevents us automatically attributing infallibility to a majority. We retain the problem it opens, without restating his entire political theory.

Our original example concerns a workroom shared by six people. Five want a noisy activity there; the sixth needs it for a task for which the common rules had reserved silence. Counting preferences produces a majority. Yet if we seek a rule valid for all future uses, the question must include the shared commitment and the minority's access. The number of votes and the rule's justification are distinct elements.

We must not conclude that every individual disagreement invalidates a collective decision. Shared life sometimes requires deciding despite persistent disagreement. The difficulty is to build procedures recognising people, making arguments visible and limiting unjustified exclusions. A vote can have procedural value without independently proving that everyone is treated justly.

We can then distinguish private interest, group interest and common interest. An advantage for my group need not harm others, but does not become common merely by being called so. Justification must examine everyone affected and the rule's effects. This effort to generalise connects with the examination of duty, while raising questions specific to institutions and power.

7. Challenging without abandoning justice

A challenge can demand that an existing rule be applied or that it be revised. Distinguish these objectives. The first claims that actual operation fails to respect a recognised principle. The second questions the principle itself. The required arguments differ: showing inconsistency in application does not always prove a rule bad, and denouncing a rule does not automatically show how to replace it.

Reflection on disobedience raises difficult questions: which demands can justify departing from a legal obligation, which consequences for others must be considered, and what responsibility accompanies that choice? This chapter gives no general permission to transgress. It offers a method for distinguishing public justification from mere personal interest disguised as a principle.

Serious reasoning must examine the opposing objection. If I request an exception, what would become of the rule if the same exception were available to everyone in comparable

circumstances? If I defend a common rule, does it actually protect the people it claims to protect? These questions test positions' coherence without assuming conflict will always disappear after discussion.

8. Progressive exercises with worked answers

Exercise 1. Distinguish equal quantities from proportional equality when dividing twenty sessions between groups of fifteen and five members. Calculate both allocations and explain what still needs justification.

Answer. Identical allocation gives ten sessions to each group. Allocation proportional to membership gives fifteen and five, since membership numbers are in a three-to-one ratio. The calculations are simple, but the purpose remains to be established: the aim may be time for each group or comparable opportunity for each person. The criterion's justice does not follow from calculation alone.

Exercise 2. Correct this sentence: a rule is just because it legally exists.

Answer. Legality indicates belonging to a legal order or conformity to its rules; justice requires additional justification. A rule can be challenged on moral or political grounds. This correction does not mean legal existence has no value: stability and common procedures are important reasons, but do not exhaust the question.

Exercise 3. A majority wants permanently to reserve a common service for its members. Propose two questions examining the decision's legitimacy.

Answer. Ask whether the rule respects the service's common purpose and whether the distinction rests on a relevant criterion

applicable to comparable situations. We must also examine rights or commitments already recognised for others. Voting reveals a majority preference; it does not independently answer these questions. Criticism must offer reasons rather than merely invoke dissatisfaction.

Exercise 4. Develop the beginning of an essay on: should everyone be treated in the same way?

Answer. An initial reason defends identical treatment against arbitrary privilege. An objection shows that different needs or obstacles may make this formal identity unjust. The progression then distinguishes relevant differences from personal preferences and seeks a common rule justifying some adjustments. The essay must retain the demand for equality while clarifying its meaning.

9. Common mistakes and revision sheet

Do not confuse the judicial institution with all questions of justice. Do not mistake proportional calculation for justification of the criterion. Do not reduce equity to a favour. Do not derive legitimacy solely from force's effectiveness. Finally, present neither a majority as automatically infallible nor every challenge as automatically just.

To revise, define distributive justice, reparation, equality, equity, positive law, legality, legitimacy, state and government. Construct a situation in which the same quantity does not provide the same effective opportunity. Explain why a rule can be useful yet open to criticism. Finally formulate an objection to your own position: this capacity shows you are examining a problem rather than merely defending a preference.

10. Primary sources and further enquiry

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book V, distinctions between forms of justice, English translation by D. P. Chase: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/8438/8438-h/8438-h.htm Rousseau, The Social Contract, Book II, Chapters I and III, the work's text distinguished from the translator's introduction: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/46333/46333-h/46333-h.htm Official curriculum, notions of justice and the state: https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/19/Special8/MENE1921238A.htm Sources checked for the French manuscript on 11 October 2026. Situations and allocations are fictional and original. No literal quotation or legal-advice procedure is provided.

CHAPTER 8 - HAPPINESS AND DESIRE: PLEASURE, DURATION, CONTROL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

1. Happiness is more than a pleasant moment

Pleasure means a pleasant experience; satisfaction can mean obtaining something sought; happiness often concerns a more overall assessment of life. These notions intersect, but we can experience pleasure in a situation we do not judge happy as a whole, or find an activity important without its being pleasant at every moment. Analysis of happiness must therefore specify its scale and criteria.

When asking whether someone is happy, we may enquire into their present feeling, their judgement of their life or how that life enables capacities to develop. These questions do not always call for the same answer. A passing mood does not sum up an existence; an overall judgement does not necessarily describe every experience. Avoid moving between them without acknowledging the change.

Our problem is this: does happiness consist in satisfying every desire, transforming desires, or constructing a life whose value is not reducible to satisfaction? This chapter examines concepts and arguments, rather than a psychological programme guaranteeing well-being. Examples are fictional. Personal difficulty or suffering must never be treated as a philosophical fault or lack of will that this guide claims to correct.

2. Need, desire and project

A need concerns a condition necessary for life or a given form of functioning. Desire is a movement towards an object or situation represented as desirable; it can extend beyond immediate need and take cultural forms. A project organises actions towards an end, sometimes accepting present effort or sacrifice. These definitions imply neither that every need is simple nor that every desire is superfluous.

In an original example, a student wants to learn an instrument. She seeks more than an object to own: she desires a capacity, an activity and perhaps relationships with other musicians. Buying the instrument therefore does not fulfil the entire project. Time, opportunities and learning are needed. The example shows why a logic of acquisition cannot describe every desire.

A desire may also change after fulfilment. Discovering an activity opens new expectations; the imagined object may not match the experience obtained. This change does not necessarily prove every desire bad. It shows that a desire contains a representation open to revision. Understanding what we seek sometimes distinguishes a means from an end, or a personal expectation from comparison with others.

The philosophical difficulty appears when every satisfaction immediately creates a new demand. If happiness depends on a possession still to come, it risks continual postponement. Yet eliminating every desire would also eliminate projects, attachments and some forms of initiative. We must therefore examine desires' quality and organisation, rather than their number alone.

3. Choosing pleasures: a reference in Epicurus

In the Letter to Menoeceus, Epicurus distinguishes forms of desire and refuses to identify seeking pleasure with unlimited successive consumption. He also examines a choice's consequences: not every pleasure should necessarily be chosen in every situation. We retain this limited reference to enquire into immediate pleasure and a satisfying life, without turning an ancient text into a contemporary health prescription.

Our original example concerns an evening before an important activity. Further entertainment offers genuine pleasure, but may compromise rest and the following day's commitment. Choosing does not mean denying pleasure; it means examining its place across time and among other ends. The problem remains open: priorities also depend on circumstances and commitments, rather than a universal rule of renunciation.

One objection emphasises that consequences are not fully known. Trying to calculate every pleasure and pain as comparable numbers may create an illusion of control. Prudence then recognises information's limits, distinguishes probable consequences from invented scenarios and does not reduce all value to a quantity of pleasure.

A second objection concerns people in difficult material circumstances. Simply telling them to limit desires can conceal unmet needs or injustices. Philosophical examination must not become a way of holding people responsible for deprivation they did not choose. Changing expectations and changing conditions are distinct questions that must remain so.

4. An activity with lasting value

In Book I of the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle examines happiness as an activity, rather than mere possession or instantaneous emotion. He also considers external conditions. This reference asks what a life actually does with its capacities. It provides no obligatory modern list of happy activities and does not suffice to reproduce his entire system.

An original example distinguishes three students in a fictional workshop. The first enjoys receiving a finished result; the second enjoys learning to solve a problem; the third chiefly appreciates the shared activity. The same object can therefore contribute to different experiences. Assessing only final possession overlooks learning and relationships that have value during the activity.

An activity can nevertheless become exhausting or imposed. Saying happiness involves activity does not glorify every occupation or demand permanent performance. Rest, limits and opportunities to choose also matter. A life assessed solely through measurable productivity would confuse happiness with output. We discuss this confusion in the chapter on work.

We can thus distinguish being occupied from engaging in an activity recognised as worthwhile. The latter requires a reflective relationship with the pursued end, but also conditions enabling its pursuit. Happiness therefore intersects with effective freedom without being entirely reducible to it.

5. What depends on us and what does not entirely depend on us

At the beginning of the Enchiridion associated with Epictetus's teaching, a distinction is proposed between what is in our power and what is not. We retain this invitation to examine the domain of action. It must not become an assertion that every personal response is instantly controllable or that serious events have no importance.

In an original scenario, a candidate prepares a presentation. She can organise her work, check arguments and practise; she cannot entirely determine the audience's response or eliminate every unexpected event. Recognising this difference can prevent demanding of preparation something it cannot guarantee. Yet it does not prove that the audience or presentation conditions have no value. External influences remain real.

The major objection concerns resignation. Classifying an injustice too quickly as beyond our power may lead us to abandon collective action that could nevertheless have effects. What escapes one individual's control does not necessarily escape every organisation's. We must therefore specify the scale: direct control, partial influence or opportunities for collective change.

A reflective attitude announces neither that we control everything nor that nothing depends on us. It examines room for action and necessary help. This philosophical analysis replaces no professional support when circumstances require it. It clarifies a question, rather than denying suffering or promising to erase it.

6. Comparison, recognition and relationships

A desire may be directed towards a thing because it pleases us, but also because it signifies a position or recognition. In an original example, two people want the same object: one for its use, the other mainly for recognition by a group. Material satisfaction may then fail to answer the desire for recognition. The problem is not merely the object, but the relationship in which it acquires meaning.

Comparison can inform or stimulate; it can also make every satisfaction fragile if another person's new advantage suffices to destroy it. We must distinguish useful assessment of a capacity from a hierarchy of people's worth. Being less advanced in learning does not mean being worth less as a person. A measure of local success is not a complete measure of an existence.

Relationships offer sharing, attachment and recognition, but are not instruments we can use to produce happiness automatically. Other people have their own projects and freedom. Happiness based on totally controlling them would contradict that recognition. The question becomes relationships whose value does not depend solely on personal advantage obtained.

7. Individual happiness and common conditions

Security, access to education, available time and opportunities for relationships can support a satisfying life. Their presence does not guarantee everyone will feel happy; their absence can nevertheless severely limit possibilities. Avoid two excessive conclusions: institutions wholly produce happiness, or institutions have no effect because people differ.

A society can seek to improve conditions without imposing a single conception of a happy life. A policy claiming to determine every personal end would risk reducing freedom. Yet neutrality that

ignores real obstacles may preserve inequalities. The tension is enabling several ways of life without abandoning people to resources they already possess.

An original example compares a library with varied opening hours to one accessible only during a group's working hours. The books may be identical; opportunities to read differ. Improving hours promises no one's happiness, but changes a condition of access. A modest analysis of this effect is more precise than claiming the service automatically makes users happy.

8. Progressive exercises with worked answers

Exercise 1. Distinguish pleasure, satisfaction and happiness for someone who completes a difficult task, appreciates the result, yet judges their way of life unsuitable.

Answer. The result can produce satisfaction associated with achieving an objective; pleasure may accompany it. Judging an entire life concerns a broader scale. Appreciating a moment while wanting to change the whole is not contradictory. The answer must specify these levels rather than conclude that one experience is false.

Exercise 2. Present an objection to the proposition: satisfying every desire is enough to be happy.

Answer. Desires can be incompatible, renew themselves or seek means that do not realise the imagined end. Present satisfaction may compromise another value. This does not prove every desire an obstacle; it shows that their coherence and scope require examination. An original counterexample might contrast the desire for rest with wanting to undertake every offered activity.

Exercise 3. Someone concludes that any result they do not directly control is unimportant. Correct the inference.

Answer. Absence of direct control removes neither an event's value nor every possibility of influence. A relationship, institution or collective action can change some conditions. Distinguish importance, control and influence. A philosophical school's distinction must be examined; it cannot declare every external difficulty irrelevant.

Exercise 4. Develop a progression for the essay topic: does happiness depend on us?

Answer. Begin by examining how expectations form and activities are chosen. An objection reveals dependence on conditions and events outside individual control. The progression distinguishes total dependence from partial contribution, then integrates room for action and common conditions. A reasonable conclusion specifies what it has established; it promises no universal recipe.

9. Common mistakes and revision sheet

Do not confuse happiness with mood. Do not present Epicurus as defending unlimited consumption. Do not turn activity into an obligation to perform. Do not make distinguishing powers a reason to deny the value of relationships or institutions. Finally, do not attribute suffering to a personal reasoning fault: studying a concept permits no diagnosis.

To revise, define need, desire, pleasure, satisfaction and happiness. Explain why possessing a means does not necessarily fulfil an end. Construct two opposing objections to the idea that happiness depends solely on us. Then connect freedom, justice and happiness while preserving their differences: a just condition can improve opportunities for life without imposing a happy experience on every individual.

10. Primary sources and further enquiry

Epicurus, Letter to Menoeceus, distinctions between desires and examination of choosing pleasures, translation by Robert Drew Hicks: https://classics.mit.edu/Epicurus/menoec.html Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book I, activity and conditions of happiness: https://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.1.i.html Epictetus, Enchiridion, Section I, text translated by Thomas W. Higginson, distinguished from the edition's introduction: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/45109/45109-h/45109-h.htm Official curriculum, notion of happiness: https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/19/Special8/MENE1921238A.htm Sources checked for the French manuscript on 11 October 2026. References are limited to the indicated passages. No literal quotation, guarantee of well-being or clinical intervention is provided.

CHAPTER 9 - Work, nature and culture: transformations and limits

1. Three words whose meanings change with the question

Work can mean activity organised towards a result, paid employment or an effort to learn. These meanings overlap without being identical. Someone voluntarily preparing meals for an association performs useful activity without thereby holding a salaried job. A student revising works, but does not necessarily sell what they produce. Reducing all work to wages makes certain activities invisible.

Nature sometimes means all physical and living processes, sometimes what humans have not produced, sometimes a being's distinctive characteristics. A question about human nature therefore does not concern exactly the same thing as protecting a forest. Establish the meaning from the essay topic. Saying an aptitude is natural may mean it has a biological basis; this does not prove it develops without learning.

Culture also has several meanings. Broadly, it includes socially transmitted practices, techniques, rules, languages and meanings. Individually, it refers to knowledge and the cultivation of judgement. A society's culture is not limited to its museums; personal culture is not an accumulation of famous names. Agriculture also recalls a material meaning: cultivating involves transforming and maintaining.

The problem emerges in this tension: we transform nature to live, but are ourselves part of the natural world; we inherit a culture that shapes us, but can also criticise it. How can transformation increase our autonomy without producing blind dependence or destroying its own conditions?

2. Work: transforming an object and developing a capacity

Imagine Lina learning to repair a chair. On her first attempt, she does not understand why the joint remains unstable. She observes forces, adjusts her action and tries again. At the end, both the chair and her capacity have changed. She has acquired coordination, knowledge and a criterion of success. Work is therefore not defined solely by an external result: it can change the person acting.

In Volume I of Capital, Marx examines labour as a transformation of nature directed towards an anticipated result. His contrast between the architect and the bee emphasises the project's role in human activity. This passage helps us reflect on intention, means and result. It does not require denying every animal capacity or supposing that each professional action results from a detailed conscious decision.

A project meets resistance. A piece of wood does not obey mere will; its material, constraints and available tools impose conditions. This resistance can educate judgement: the agent learns to check rather than confuse wishes with possibilities. Yet it can also become burdensome, particularly when means are lacking or organisation imposes contradictory demands.

We must therefore distinguish two theses. 'Work can educate' states a possibility. 'Every kind of work necessarily improves us' claims a much stronger universality. Repetitive, dangerous or meaningless tasks may reduce possibilities instead of developing them. To discuss work, examine its content, duration, organisation and the rights of those performing it.

3. Cooperation, division of tasks and dependence

Division of labour distributes tasks between several people. It can increase efficiency, enable specialisation and make possible a result no individual could obtain alone. A bridge-building team combines different skills. Yet cooperation requires more than placing actions alongside one another: it needs communication, rules and responsibility for the common result.

In a fictional situation, four students prepare an exhibition. One researches information, another checks sources, a third prepares the presentation and a fourth reviews captions. This allocation saves time. It becomes fragile if each ignores the others' work: a source error may pass through the entire chain. Excessively rigid coordination would also prevent everyone understanding the whole.

Specialisation thus creates a tension. It develops some capacities and may reduce others; it makes each person effective but also dependent on others. Dependence is not necessarily servitude. It can be reciprocal and equitably regulated. It becomes domination when some control activity's conditions while others have neither information, avenues of appeal nor a genuine capacity to negotiate.

In Marx's analysis of wage labour in the passage studied, control over the process and ownership of the product belong to the holder of the means of production. This distinction separates useful activity from its social form. It does not independently describe every contemporary job completely. An essay must turn this reference into a question: who decides what is produced, how and with which consequences?

4. Work, freedom and recognition: examining conditions

Work can support material independence. Obtaining resources and developing competence sometimes enables greater choice over one's life. Yet needing to earn a living can also constrain. Employment is voluntary in the sense that someone signs a contract, without every alternative being materially accessible. Distinguish legal freedom from effective possibilities.

Here, recognition means being considered an agent whose activity, rights and contribution matter. It is not merely receiving a compliment. Useful work may receive poor recognition; high pay does not guarantee that its recipient considers the activity meaningful. Essential tasks are also performed without payment. These contrasts prevent equating social value, price and personal dignity.

A coherent argument can follow three stages. First, an activity contributes to autonomy if it provides usable capacities and resources. Second, those effects depend on conditions: health, time, participation, rights and understanding the result. Third, work's educational value does not justify every organisation. This reasoning avoids both abstract praise of effort and condemnation of every constrained activity.

Leisure also needs definition. It can mean simple rest, but also time available for chosen activities: learning, creating, participating in collective life. Removing an arduous task does not automatically improve freedom if it removes resources needed to live. Conversely, multiplying occupied hours proves no self-realisation. The question concerns conditions of a life whose activities can be understood and discussed.

5. Nature and culture: useful opposition, impossible separation?

Opposing nature and culture helps distinguish a biological constraint from a learned rule. Needing food imposes neither a universal menu, mealtime nor single way of sharing a table. The same necessity can take varied social forms. These forms are related to environments and resources, but not reducible to them.

Learning makes this variation possible. A child acquires language through bodily capacities and social interaction. Choosing nature or culture exclusively to explain this process would be artificial. The capacity to learn belongs to a living being; what they learn depends on collective history. This connection does not erase difficulties: some differences are hard to attribute precisely, and explanation requires evidence.

In the Discourse on Inequality, Rousseau uses perfectibility to think about the human capacity to change. It enables discoveries and progress, but also errors and dependencies. He presents his reconstruction of the state of nature as hypothetical reasoning, rather than verified historical narrative. His contrast with animals belongs to his philosophical framework: it does not replace current biological research.

Culture is therefore not necessarily moral improvement. A society can transmit both knowledge and injustice. Education develops capacities, but can also reproduce prejudice. Criticising a cultural practice does not require denying its history; understanding its history does not justify it. A living culture is transmitted while also allowing its rules to be examined.

6. Is what is natural always good?

'It is natural, so it is good' moves from a finding to a judgement without sufficient reason. A phenomenon may occur spontaneously and be dangerous. Conversely, a manufactured object may help protect or educate. Being natural or artificial therefore does not, in isolation, provide a universal criterion of value.

This does not mean nature is morally irrelevant to every decision. Living beings, environments and their interdependencies can be objects of responsibility. We must then explain the principle adopted: preserving life's conditions, avoiding unjustified harm, respecting certain beings or distributing consequences equitably. Judgement has reasons, rather than merely a label.

Imagine a municipality choosing between repairing a footbridge and building a new road through a wetland. 'Every transformation is bad' or 'every facility is progress' does not resolve the philosophical question. Examine needs, alternatives, lasting effects and affected people's participation. Ecological or technical data establish some consequences; they do not alone determine the ordering of ends.

Distinguishing fact from value therefore does not prohibit their relationship. Serious moral judgement must consider relevant facts. Yet two informed people may still debate priorities among competing interests. Philosophy clarifies principles and tensions, while sciences help establish conditions and effects.

7. Responsibility towards what we transform

Transforming does not necessarily mean destroying; preserving does not necessarily mean leaving untouched. Maintaining a forest, restoring a building or protecting soil often involves intervention. Responsibility concerns manner, scale and consequences. An action may meet an immediate need while shifting harm to others or a less visible future.

Uncertainty complicates judgement without making it impossible. When an important consequence is unknown, we can seek more information, limit intervention's scale or choose a more reversible option. Here, reversible means being able to undo some effects at reasonable cost; it does not guarantee no harm will occur. Irreversibility requires particularly strong reasons, but does not suffice to prohibit every action.

Work's problem thus connects with technology and justice. A process increases production; who benefits and who bears risks? A task is automated; which capacities should be preserved and which opportunities offered to affected people? A culture values consumption; can it examine that valuation's limits? The notions respond to one another without becoming identical.

8. Progressive exercises with worked answers

Exercise A - Classify these activities: voluntarily preparing a lesson, receiving wages, breathing, learning a language, making a tool. Answer: preparing, learning and making can constitute work depending on the adopted meaning; receiving wages describes an economic relationship, rather than the activity itself. Breathing is a vital process not generally regarded as intentional work. A good answer explains its criterion and recognises particular cases.

Exercise B - Refute 'observed differences between two groups prove they are natural'. Answer: finding a difference does not

identify its cause. Material conditions, learning, rules and history may contribute. Distinguish observation, causal hypothesis and justification. Do not replace this reasoning with the opposite assertion that no difference could ever have a biological basis.

Exercise C - An association divides all its tasks, but only one member understands the whole operation. What risks emerge? Answer: dependence on one person, difficulty checking decisions, lack of transmission and fragility if that person is unavailable. Specialisation can remain alongside coordination, training and oversight. The example does not condemn every division of labour.

Exercise D - Construct an argument for, and an objection to, 'working makes us free'. Proposal: acquiring competence and resources increases some possibilities. Objection: an organisation exhausting people or depriving them of decisions can reduce those possibilities. Possible conclusion: work contributes to freedom under material, legal and social conditions requiring examination.

Exercise E - Formulate a problem for 'should we respect nature?'. Proposal: if respect means never intervening, our life seems incompatible with the demand; if nature is merely a store of means, its limits and living beings' value risk being ignored. Can we define a respect organising transformation, rather than simply opposing abandonment to exploitation?

Exercise F - Explain why Rousseau's reference is not archaeological proof. Answer: a philosophical hypothesis isolates characteristics to question society. Rousseau specifies his reasoning's conjectural status. Establishing real history requires other methods and evidence. We can discuss the hypothesis's fruitfulness without treating it as an observed fact.

9. Common mistakes and revision sheet

Do not define work through suffering alone: some arduous activities are not work, and some work is enjoyed. Do not reduce culture to an artistic elite or nature to external scenery. Avoid presenting every job as free or every learning process as moral progress. An author helps examine a problem; their name does not turn an idea into certainty.

Revision sheet: work transforms an object and can develop an agent; its value depends on conditions. Division of tasks combines efficiency, cooperation and dependence. Nature and culture can be distinguished without total separation. Natural does not automatically mean just; artificial does not automatically mean bad. Transformations require examination of ends, alternatives and consequences.

10. Primary references checked

Karl Marx, Capital, Volume I, Chapter VII, section on the labour process; English translation consulted in the primary archive: https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch07.htm . References concerning projects, transformation and social form; no verbatim quotation.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men, introduction and first part; translated text, digitised edition: https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/11136/pg11136.html . Hypothetical status and perfectibility checked in Rousseau's text, without using the record's automatically generated summary. Consulted for the French manuscript on 11 October 2026. Original situations, objections and exercises.

CHAPTER 10 - Art, language and interpretation: expression, representation and judgement

1. Defining art without excluding too quickly

Art can mean a skill, as in the art of navigation, or practices recognised as having an aesthetic dimension: painting, music, literature, dance and many others. These meanings have a history. An essay does not resolve the problem by claiming every skilful activity is an artwork, or that beauty immediately identifies a work.

A work results from choices of form, material, organisation or presentation. It can represent something, express an experience, explore a possibility or change a way of perceiving. These functions need not all be present. Instrumental music does not necessarily represent an identifiable object; a narrative can depict imaginary events and nevertheless prompt reflection on a human situation.

Distinguish creation, making and invention without treating them as absolute boundaries. Making often follows a project and operating rules; creating can invent an organisation not entirely deducible from a prior model. Yet art also uses techniques, and making can involve invention. The question concerns criteria and ends, rather than the presence or absence of all material effort.

Must art copy reality to have value? If it only reproduces what exists, its interest seems limited; if it breaks every connection with experience, how can it still concern us? This tension leads us to examine representation, expression and interpretation. It is not resolved by one definition imposed on every practice.

2. Representing is not merely reproducing

A representation makes something present through a form or sign that is not the object itself. A map represents a territory without containing its roads. A photograph selects a frame and moment. A portrait may emphasise an expression. Representation relates to its object, but that relationship involves selection and organisation.

Imitation can mean resemblance or giving form to an action. In the Poetics, Aristotle examines different means and modes of representation; he connects imitation with learning and the pleasure of recognition. He also distinguishes recounting what happened from exploring what might happen. This reference explains why fiction is more than an imperfect copy of a fact.

Imagine an original scene: two people await a letter; one wants to read it immediately, the other fears its contents. The author chooses silences, gestures and the order of information. No particular historical event is reproduced. Yet the author constructs a situation making expectation, trust and fear visible. We can discuss this construction without asking whether the characters actually lived.

A limit emerges: form can also deceive. Framing removes a decisive element; dramatic music makes someone appear threatening without evidence; a narrative turns a rumour into the appearance of experience. A representation's power therefore guarantees neither factual truth nor moral value. Examine the status of what is presented and the audience's expectations.

3. Fiction and truth: a relationship needing clarification

Fiction invents characters or events. It need not present itself as a historical assertion. A novel may be factually invented while illuminating a relationship, conflict or way of life. This does not mean every fiction has equal scope or that strong emotion constitutes proof.

We can distinguish several uses of truth. Factual truth concerns what occurred. Internal coherence concerns relationships among a work's elements. Understanding a human experience concerns what representation makes intelligible. These criteria are not interchangeable. A coherent story may convey an unjust view; truthful testimony may be awkwardly constructed.

The argument for art as knowledge follows this progression: an individual experience is difficult to observe completely; a work organises situations revealing relationships; this organisation can enrich judgement. The objection then points out that organisation may select what confirms an idea. We must therefore retain opportunities for comparison and challenge, and distinguish understanding from demonstration.

Art need not become a scientific treatise to contribute to reflection. Conversely, its autonomy does not permit presenting invented material as a verified document. Genre boundaries and information given to the audience matter. A fictional educational image and a news photograph call for different factual trust.

4. Judging a work: preference, reasons and discussion

'I like this song' expresses a preference. 'This song skilfully organises a tension between rhythm and lyrics' offers an assessment that can be supported. They are compatible, but perform different tasks. An argued judgement identifies properties and shows their effects; it does not automatically prove everyone must feel the same pleasure.

Taste depends on sensibility and history. Habit, education and context can change what we perceive. This does not mean every preference is an error needing correction. It means experience can become richer. Someone may discover a detail through explanation while retaining an assessment different from the commentator's.

Avoid two extremes. The first makes aesthetic judgement a mechanical measure: counting notes or hours worked would establish value. The second forbids discussion: since everyone has their tastes, no reason would matter. Instead, we can explain a judgement, test it against observations and recognise a plurality of experiences.

In a fictional example, a drawing uses large empty areas. One viewer finds them impoverished; another sees a way of emphasising the character's isolation. To progress, they observe position, contrast and relationships with the subject. They need not reach total agreement. Yet discussion becomes more precise than an exchange of approvals or insults.

5. Language: communicating and forming distinctions

Language is a capacity and a set of means of signification. A particular language is a shared system of signs and rules; speech is a concrete use of that system. A signal can trigger a response without developing the same organisation as an argued discourse. These distinctions do not assume that all human communication reduces to words: gestures, images and contexts also contribute.

A sign refers to something other than itself. A word can designate an absent object, general category or relationship. The connection between sound and meaning is not generally physical resemblance. Different languages employ different forms. This conventional character does not allow everyone to change meanings at every moment without warning: understanding requires sufficiently shared usage.

In Book III of his Essay, Locke analyses words as signs of their users' ideas. He shows that two people can use the same word without associating exactly the same content with it. This reference explains why definitions and examination of uses matter. It is not an exhaustive theory of every social or grammatical dimension of language.

Consider success. For one student it means an excellent grade; for another, understanding an argument; for a third, being able to choose an educational pathway. Their disagreement may concern the value attached to these ends, but also the term's definition. Clarifying meanings does not erase every difference: it reveals what genuinely remains to be discussed.

6. Do we think only through words?

Some experiences seem to precede expression: pain, a musical impression, an intuition of movement. We can therefore argue that not all thought reduces to a verbal statement. Yet general thinking or complex reasoning requires distinctions language helps stabilise. Formulating an idea can change its precision, reveal a contradiction or show a new relationship.

The opposition between a fully completed inner thought and words transporting it unchanged is too simple. Imagine Samira believing she understands a demonstration. Explaining it, she discovers she cannot justify a stage. Language has done more than communicate already complete knowledge; it has revealed a difficulty. Explanation here contributes to forming judgement.

Conversely, well-organised words can hide vague content. A student writes 'society influences humanity in its existential dimension' without explaining which influence or dimension. The sentence seems learned, but provides no precise idea. Replacing vocabulary with examples and checkable relationships tests understanding.

We can thus defend a connection: perceptions, images and affects contribute to experience; language organises some distinctions and makes reasoning shareable. This position leaves questions about non-verbal thought open. It avoids confusing absence of formulation with absence of every mental experience.

7. Saying something can also do something

A sentence does not always describe a fact. Promising, asking, thanking or warning are acts performed in context. When someone undertakes to return a book, they do more than report an intention: they create an expectation and responsibility towards another person. This commitment presupposes a context where the words are understood as a promise. Sincerity concerns the promiser's honesty: an insincere promise may nevertheless commit its author. Lacking an intention to keep it therefore does not automatically erase responsibility towards others.

The same words can have different effects according to relationships between people. A friend's request has a different force from an instruction within an institutional setting. Language's power therefore also depends on rules and social positions. No word has magical power independent of use.

This dimension leads us to examine persuasion and manipulation. Persuasion can draw on reasons and emotions; manipulation seeks, among other things, to direct someone by concealing elements or reducing their capacity for judgement. Emotion need not deceive. It becomes problematic when replacing examination of an assertion or preventing a relevant objection.

Responsible public discourse specifies facts, uncertainties and intentions. It avoids replacing an answer with a disparaging label. The issue is not prohibiting every strong expression; it is maintaining conditions of discussion in which people can understand, check and challenge.

8. Interpreting: proposing meaning within constraints

Interpreting makes meaning intelligible from elements. Interpreting a work or text is more than listing words; it explains their relationships and functions. Nor is it unlimited invention. Text, form, context and coherence impose constraints that must be demonstrable.

An initial reading may privilege a detail, then be corrected later. If a scene seems joyful but several clues indicate irony, revise the hypothesis. This approach connects whole and parts: context illuminates a passage, while a passage may change our reading of the whole. Repeating that everyone understands whatever they want is not enough.

An author's intention can provide information without exhausting every meaning of a work. A work may produce effects its author had not explicitly formulated. Yet attributing a precise intention without evidence is fragile. Distinguish what form supports, what context documents and what you propose as a hypothesis.

In analysing a philosophical text, the priority is reconstructing reasoning. A difficult word does not justify digressing over everything it evokes. Seek the thesis, question, distinctions and transitions. A relevant interpretation explains why the author moves from one proposition to another, then examines the presuppositions of that move.

9. Progressive exercises with worked answers

Exercise A - A photograph faithfully resembles a scene. Can we conclude it gives the whole truth? Answer: no. Examine framing, moment, context and documentary status. Resemblance can be real without the representation being complete. The objection does not prove every photograph dishonest.

Exercise B - Distinguish preference from argued judgement. Proposal: 'this music pleases me' expresses a lived relationship; 'its final return transforms the initial motif's meaning' offers an observation requiring explanation. The latter judgement can be discussed using elements of the work; it does not impose the same emotion on everyone.

Exercise C - Two people discuss freedom, one thinking of absence of constraint and the other of self-government. What should they do before concluding? Answer: identify definitions, examine connections and limits, then rephrase the disagreement. Clarifying the word may remove misunderstanding without eliminating the philosophical problem.

Exercise D - A character claims to be happy, while gestures and context suggest anxiety. Propose two readings and a criterion. Answer: the character may be concealing their state or using happy in a particular sense. Other passages, the scene's coherence and explicit clues must support either hypothesis. No reading becomes certain merely through originality.

Exercise E - Develop a problem for 'does art distance us from reality?'. Proposal: a work selects or invents, potentially diverting us from facts; yet this distance may reveal relationships habit conceals. Under what conditions does artistic transformation illuminate experience rather than distort it?

Exercise F - Rewrite 'language expresses everything perfectly'. Proposal: language communicates and clarifies many experiences, but ambiguity, context and some sensory dimensions limit expression. Formulation can improve understanding without claiming to convey every experience completely.

10. Common mistakes, revision and references

Do not reduce art to a copy, decoration or single moral message. Do not confuse fiction with lying: their statuses differ. Avoid turning interpretation into unverifiable intuition. A shared word does not guarantee shared meaning, but language's conventional character does not eliminate every rule of understanding.

Revision sheet: representing involves selection; fiction can illuminate without establishing a fact; judging a work combines experience and reasons; language expresses and organises distinctions; some statements perform acts; interpretation requires clues and coherence. Art, language, truth and consciousness intersect without becoming synonyms.

Aristotle, Poetics, Parts I, IV and IX, translation by S. H. Butcher: https://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.1.1.html . John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Book III, Chapters II and III: https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/10616/pg10616.html.utf8 . Primary texts consulted for the French manuscript on 11 October 2026, without using records' automatically generated summaries. No verbatim quotation; original examples and exercises.

Additional reference: J. L. Austin, How To Do Things With Words, Lecture IV, Oxford University Press's chapter description: https://academic.oup.com/book/5162/chapter-abstract/147780771 . The publisher's description distinguishes insincerity from a void act; it does not replace reading the full chapter. No third-party passage reproduced.

CHAPTER 11 - Religion and time: belief, reason, finitude and meaning

1. Studying religion without conversion or caricature

Religion can combine beliefs, practices, rites, texts, institutions and forms of community. It often concerns a relationship with what is considered sacred, along with questions of meaning and conduct. Traditions vary: a definition restricted to one personal god does not automatically fit them all. Philosophy here seeks understanding and examination, without imposing a confession or reducing believers to one portrait.

The sacred means what has a particular status within a given framework and cannot be treated like any available object. It may concern a place, time, text or practice. Describing it does not prove everyone must recognise the same value. It helps us understand an organisation of experience before discussing reasons and effects.

Depending on context, belief is a proposition held true or trust granted. Religious faith can involve commitment not reducible to a provisional hypothesis. Knowledge requires justifications and checking criteria within the relevant domain. Yet simply opposing belief to knowledge as error to truth misses a difficulty: we also trust testimony or methods without personally reproducing them at every moment.

The problem is therefore more precise: which reasons can support a belief, what certainty does it claim, and how should it relate to contradictory evidence? Respecting someone does not prohibit examining an assertion. Examining an assertion does not permit humiliating its believer. Together these demands make philosophical discussion possible.

2. Reason and faith: conflict, separation or dialogue?

One position holds that every true assertion should be justifiable through reasons open to examination. It challenges beliefs demanding unquestioning adherence. A second distinguishes questions: sciences would explain certain mechanisms, while faith would offer meaning or orientation. A third seeks rational arguments for religious convictions.

These positions are not equivalent. Separating domains can limit some conflicts, but does not remove them all. If a belief makes a factual assertion about an event or mechanism, it encounters the criteria of that domain. If it proposes a value or meaning, it requires another form of examination. Analyse statements rather than classify an entire discourse under one label.

Imagine someone asserting that their commitment gives them confidence to act. This testimony describes an experience and may be sincere. It does not, by itself, demonstrate every proposition they accept. Conversely, showing a particular argument inadequate does not prove every religious experience meaningless. A conclusion's scope must remain proportionate to what has been established.

Reason is more than an instrument contradicting belief. It can also clarify concepts, examine an interpretation's coherence and distinguish argument, tradition and authority. Faith does not have one identical universal form either. An essay becomes more precise by identifying the particular relationship studied, rather than announcing a timeless conflict between two homogeneous blocs.

3. Examining an argument by analogy

An argument by analogy compares two situations to support a conclusion. If an organised object results from intention, can we infer that the universe's organisation also results from intention? The argument relies on resemblance; its strength depends on that resemblance's relevance and differences between the cases.

In Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, Hume stages exchanges involving, among others, Cleanthes and Philo. They examine comparisons between a human artefact and the universe, and the limits of inferring the nature of its cause. The dialogue must not be flattened into a slogan simplistically attributed to its author. One character may defend a proposition, another challenge its scope, and the form invites us to follow their reasons.

To reconstruct the argument, distinguish three stages: some organised objects we know have a maker; the universe exhibits organisation; therefore the universe would have an analogous cause. The objection concerns moving from some objects to a whole whose production we have not observed. Analogy may suggest a hypothesis without demonstrating every quality subsequently assigned to it.

A second check asks whether the conclusion exceeds the premises. Even if an argument supported an organising cause, we would still need to examine what it permits us to say about unity, perfection or relationships with humans. Adding those properties without justification would be an undemonstrated extension. Criticising such an inference does not automatically refute every religious position.

This exercise teaches a transferable method. In philosophy, do not merely ask whether a conclusion suits you; examine the route leading to it. A strong objection targets a precise stage. A belief

may have other foundations, but they must be presented as such, rather than making one argument say more than it permits.

4. Religion, morality and collective life

Some religious traditions propose norms, examples and practices of solidarity. Yet norms' existence does not establish their justice. Examine their content and reasons for following them. Religious origin does not automatically make a rule just; non-religious origin does not automatically make it superior.

Can morality be grounded without religion? We can argue that a demand such as not treating others merely as means should be justified through relationships between people and the possibility of a common rule. A believer may recognise this reason while incorporating it into faith. A non-believer may also accept it. Justifications can differ without preventing every practical agreement.

Difficulty arises when several convictions seek to impose incompatible rules within a common space. Tolerance allows plural convictions under conditions compatible with rights and discussion. It does not mean approving every proposition or accepting any harm. Disagreement can be recognised without turning people into enemies.

In a fictional example, a group organising a shared activity must choose a time. Some participants have religious obligations, others work constraints. Examining requests, seeking alternatives and applying explicable criteria enables a fairer decision than automatic privilege or rejection on principle. This philosophical reasoning does not replace studying legal rules applicable to a real situation.

5. Time: order, measurement and experience

Time enables us to order events, measure durations and think about change. Before, after and simultaneous do not designate the same relationships as long and short. Duration measures an interval between reference points; chronology organises succession. The philosophical question also asks what it means to live through that succession.

Two activities can last ten minutes by a clock and be experienced very differently. Waiting for a result sometimes seems long; a fascinating conversation seems brief. This difference does not prove the clock wrong. It shows measured and lived duration concern different aspects of experience. Explain their relationship without denying either in favour of the other.

Change and time also relate in several ways. We recognise time passing through transformations, but also use temporal measurement to compare their speed. A plant grows, a shadow moves, someone learns: these changes have different regularities and meanings. Time cannot be defined solely through one particular transformation.

In an essay, avoid ambitious physical claims you do not understand. Saying time is an illusion or a scientific theory has resolved every experience of duration often exceeds available arguments. Better to distinguish what measurement explains from what analysis of consciousness seeks to understand. These approaches can complement each other without becoming identical.

6. Does the present contain memory and expectation?

The past is no longer experienced as a current event; the future has not yet occurred. Yet we remember and expect. How do these dimensions contribute to present experience? The difficulty is more than arranging three words along a line: it concerns how consciousness connects what changes.

In Book XI of the Confessions, Augustine analyses the presence of memory, attention and expectation. He examines how action unfolds, particularly when a known text is recited. His reflection has a religious framework, but also raises a problem about temporal experience. It is neither a complete physical theory nor proof that past events never existed.

Consider an original melody of four notes. When the third sounds, the first is no longer audible, but its trace contributes to understanding. We also expect a continuation. If every instant were wholly separate, we would hear sounds without recognising the melody. Lived continuity therefore involves a relationship between presence, memory and anticipation.

This relationship can err. Memory reconstructs, expectation assumes and attention selects. They provide no perfect knowledge of past or future. Their present character explains their role in experience, rather than infallibility. Lived time thus connects with consciousness, truth and identity studied in earlier chapters.

7. Finitude, project and irreversibility

Here, finitude means limits: we possess neither infinite time, total knowledge nor opportunities to realise every alternative. A choice commits some possibilities and excludes others. Recognising this limit can give a decision weight, without requiring every minute to become a race or performance.

Irreversibility means an accomplished event cannot simply be made unaccomplished. We can repair some consequences, apologise or change an organisation; this does not remove the previous fact. Responsibility must therefore include what can be corrected and what remains. This distinction prevents confusing repair with erasure.

A project connects the present with an envisaged future. It lacks an observation's certainty; it organises means and direction. Imagine Noah wanting to learn a language. He chooses a pace, encounters difficulties and changes his programme. The project gives successive actions coherence, but remains open to circumstances. It is neither a guaranteed prediction nor a mere fantasy without commitment.

Seeking meaning can take several forms: relationships, creation, knowledge, solidarity, religious commitment or another reflective orientation. Philosophy examines their reasons and limits without imposing one personal answer. It is neither a diagnosis of distress nor treatment. Lived difficulty may require appropriate interlocutors and assistance beyond a conceptual exercise.

8. Connecting the notions without confusing them

Religion and time intersect when rites organise a year, a tradition transmits memory or a belief envisages eternity. Eternity need not mean duration simply extended endlessly; some conceptions understand it as different from succession. Specify the thesis studied before discussing it.

Repeated practice can give succession meaning, but repetition need not be religious. Collective commemoration or a family habit also organises memory. Conversely, not every religious question concerns time. Connecting notions means explaining a common problem, rather than reducing one to the other.

The method remains constant: establish meanings, reconstruct a position, formulate a relevant objection and adjust the conclusion. We can understand a belief's role in a life without asserting its truth; we can discuss its evidence without denying all meaning in advance. We can measure duration without claiming to exhaust its experience.

9. Progressive exercises with worked answers

Exercise A - Distinguish 'I trust this testimony', 'this proposition is demonstrated' and 'I commit myself to this faith'. Answer: trust, proof and commitment are different relationships. They can intersect, but have different criteria. A relevant answer asks which reasons and limits accompany each.

Exercise B - An argument compares the universe with a manufactured machine. What check is needed? Answer: examine relevant resemblances, differences and the move to the conclusion. Makers' existence for known machines does not automatically transfer all their properties to a supposed cause of the universe. Criticising that move does not independently establish the truth of every opposing thesis.

Exercise C - Waiting seems endless, but the clock shows five minutes. Must we choose between the descriptions? Answer: no. Measurement and lived experience concern different aspects. We can explain their difference through attention and expectation without claiming physical duration actually changed for that reason.

Exercise D - How does a melody help us reflect on the present? Answer: the current sound is understood through retained sounds and an expected continuation. Experience exceeds juxtaposed, wholly isolated instants. This example does not demonstrate a universal theory of all temporal reality.

Exercise E - Formulate a problem for 'can we avoid believing?'. Proposal: if believing means accepting without sufficient evidence, rational examination invites suspending some beliefs; if it means granting trust necessary for action or relationships, total elimination seems difficult. Which criteria distinguish reasonable trust from blind acceptance?

Exercise F - Write an objection to 'everything can always be started again'. Answer: we can repeat an action, but cannot cancel its past existence or every consequence. This limit does not remove opportunities for reparation. It distinguishes a fresh start, correction and erasure.

10. Revision, common mistakes and references

Do not present religion, believers or non-believers as uniform groups. Do not confuse criticising an argument with contempt for a person. Avoid treating conviction as proof or clock measurement as a complete description of lived time. Reflection on human limits requires neither pessimism nor imposed personal advice.

Revision sheet: religion combines varied dimensions; faith, trust and knowledge must be distinguished; analogy requires checking scope; time involves order, measurement and experience; memory and expectation contribute to the present; finitude and irreversibility illuminate projects and responsibility. Religion and time connect with reason, consciousness, duty and freedom.

David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, Part II: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4583/4583-h/4583-h.htm . Augustine, Confessions, Book XI, digitised older translation: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3296/3296-h/3296-h.htm . Primary texts consulted for the French manuscript on 11 October 2026, without using automatic summaries as evidence. No verbatim quotation; original examples and exercises.

CHAPTER 12 - Philosophical essays and text analysis: constructing and checking an argument

1. Writing to resolve a problem

A philosophical essay examines a question by bringing out the reasons why it does not immediately receive a sufficient answer. Its aim is neither to recount everything we know about a theme nor to place opinions side by side. It builds a progression whose steps the reader can check. Text analysis has a different task: to understand precisely what an author maintains, how the claim is supported and what difficulty the argument encounters.

Both exercises require concepts, reasons, analysed examples and clear language. The French official guidance note of 11 September 2026, applicable to the 2027 examination session, includes the requirement « argumenter sur la base de raisons explicites »: in English, “argue using explicit reasons”. These seven French words provide a useful working rule: do not leave the reader to invent the connection between your assertion and its justification. This reference does not turn the guide's examples into official model answers or an automatic marking scheme.

The curriculum combines philosophical culture with the exercise of judgement. Knowing a distinction, an argument or an author provides a tool; we must also know why it is appropriate to the question. A misused reference weakens the reasoning. An original example that is properly analysed can be more useful than a prestigious name added without explanation. Consult the current official requirements for your examination session: a lasting guide cannot guarantee that no later changes will occur.

A thesis is a definite answer to a question. An argument gives a reason to support it. An objection reveals a relevant difficulty. A reply to the objection must modify, clarify or defend the thesis with additional reasons. It does not consist in repeating the original assertion with a few words changed. A conclusion establishes what the examination finally allows us to retain, together with its conditions and limits.

2. Analysing a question before choosing a plan

Consider an original question: “Must we know in order to act?” Knowing may mean possessing accurate information, understanding a situation or having a practical skill. Acting may mean producing an effect, pursuing a goal or deciding on conduct for which we are answerable. “Must we” asks about a necessity or a requirement: it is not enough to observe that knowledge sometimes helps.

The difficulty emerges when we distinguish these meanings. Some knowledge seems necessary to bring about an intended effect. Yet nobody knows all the consequences of an action. Waiting for complete knowledge might prevent any initiative. Finally, a decision may depend on values and responsibilities that factual information alone does not determine. The question therefore cannot be reduced either to “knowledge is useful” or to “we can act without thinking”.

In your draft, formulate several possible answers and their difficulties. First answer: acting reasonably requires knowledge of the means and circumstances. Objection: uncertainty remains, and experience sometimes requires making a start. Second answer: practice produces knowledge that we do not fully possess before acting. Objection: this possibility does not justify every experiment, whatever its effects on others. Third approach: we need knowledge

proportionate to the action and a method of correction, rather than impossible omniscience.

These approaches form a progression because each responds to an identified shortcoming. They are not a universal recipe for three parts. Another question may require a different organisation. The number of parts never replaces the need for each of them. Check that every stage answers the whole question rather than an isolated word. A discussion devoted exclusively to science would miss the practical decisions and questions of responsibility involved here.

3. An original condensed philosophical essay

The following text illustrates one possible progression. It is deliberately shorter than a developed essay and should not be learned as an answer adaptable to every question.

We often act to transform a situation: learning a piece of music, organising a meeting, building an object. If we do not know how to obtain the result, our activity may remain an attempt without direction. Knowledge therefore seems to be a condition of action. However, waiting to know a situation perfectly seems incompatible with changing circumstances and learning through practice. Must we possess knowledge before acting, or can action itself teach us what we did not know? We need to examine what action actually requires, then how it can produce knowledge, before determining the limits of reasonable conduct under uncertainty.

To act towards a goal, we must first distinguish the means capable of achieving it from movements that merely give the appearance of activity. A group prepares a school exhibition: knowing the room's size, access conditions and available equipment makes it possible to organise the work. This information is not a set of details added after the decision; it defines part of what is feasible.

A project that ignores it may be coherent in the imagination and impossible in practice.

Yet knowledge is not limited to a list of facts. It includes understanding their relationships. Knowing that a room exists does not mean knowing that it will be available on the chosen date. Information must be relevant, checked and related to the aim. Reasonable action therefore requires prior examination. This requirement also makes it possible to answer for our conduct: we cannot invoke deliberate ignorance when accessible checks would have revealed a significant difficulty.

But this first conclusion becomes excessive if it demands complete knowledge. A student learning an instrument knows a few rules without mastering every movement. If the final skill had to be possessed in advance, learning would never begin. Practice reveals difficulties that reading alone had not brought to light. It provides feedback on coordination, listening and rhythm. Action therefore does not always depend on finished knowledge; it can help to form it.

This acquisition is not automatic, however. Repeating the same mistake without listening to the result does not turn activity into knowledge. We must compare the goal with the effect, seek an explanation and then change the movement. Experience becomes instructive when it is examined. It does not refute the usefulness of prior knowledge: initial points of reference are precisely what allow us to recognise what needs correcting. The relationship between knowing and acting then becomes an exchange, rather than a rigid sequence in which everything would be known before any movement.

One limit remains: not all actions can serve as trials in the same way. In individual musical practice, some adjustments are easily reversible. In a project involving other people's rights, possessions

or opportunities, an error can impose consequences on people who did not choose the experiment. Uncertainty therefore does not remove the need to consider responsibilities. The more significant and difficult to correct the consequences are, the more seriously we must take checks, required skills and the possibility of deciding not to proceed.

Finally, knowing the means does not fully determine the ends. A group may know how to attract an audience without yet having decided what it wishes to present or whether the proposed means respect the participants. Facts inform the decision, but judgement must also examine values and rules. Technical knowledge does not automatically make its use just. Conversely, a defensible intention is insufficient if we refuse the information needed to carry it out.

We must therefore know in order to act reasonably, provided that knowledge does not mean total and permanently finished understanding. Action requires relevant points of reference and can enrich them through checked experience. Responsible conduct links these two dimensions: preparing, examining effects, correcting where possible and recognising the limits of what we can undertake. This answer does not authorise improvisation in every situation; it replaces the impossible demand for omniscience with the more precise requirement of proportionate knowledge and responsible judgement.

4. Reviewing this progression rather than memorising its form

The introduction brings out a tension between preparation and learning. It does more than announce three themes. The first discussion explains why relevant knowledge is a condition of directed action. The second shows why this condition cannot mean complete mastery in advance. The third distinguishes contexts and introduces responsibility. The conclusion retains the initial requirement while clarifying it.

The room example does not prove that all actions resemble an exhibition. It shows the difference between the existence of information and its relevance to a project. The musical example does not establish that every error is acceptable; it explains how reversible practice can contribute to learning. The change of context prevents generalisation without examining consequences. This explicit analysis gives the examples an argumentative function.

We might object that the text does not define collective responsibility sufficiently. A more developed version would need to distinguish roles, commitments and means of oversight. We might also ask whether knowledge already includes practical judgement: in that case, the distinction between knowing facts and choosing ends would need reformulating. A good review identifies these limits without declaring the entire argument useless.

5. Explaining a text without replacing it

Here is an original Lafayette Digital Products text, written for this exercise; it is not attributed to any philosopher:

“A common rule does not become just merely because it is common. It may distribute a constraint equally while some nevertheless bear very different effects. But recognising this

difference does not permit exempting each person according to preference: the rule would disappear along with the principle that allows us to discuss it together. We must therefore examine its purpose, the situations to which it applies and the reasons for any exception. Equality does not mean ignoring every difference; it requires stating which differences can justify distinct treatment. This justification must remain accessible to those concerned, so that the exception is not merely the privilege of those who know how to ask for it."

Begin by identifying the problem: is an identical rule sufficient to establish just equality? The thesis rejects this sufficiency, but also rejects a multiplication of exceptions based on preferences alone. The text proposes a public examination of relevant differences. The word "just" does not describe a rule that merely exists; it calls for justification of how the rule treats situations.

The first movement distinguishes a rule's common character from justice. The second presents a difficulty with uniformity: an identical constraint can have unequal effects. The third introduces an objection to the other extreme, private exemptions. The last determines a condition of legitimate exceptions: relevant, explicable and accessible reasons. The explanation follows these connections instead of presenting a general lesson on justice.

6. A developed analysis of this original text

The first sentence challenges an inference: from "everyone is subject to this rule", we cannot immediately conclude "this rule is just". Its common character indicates a form of application; justice also requires examining what is imposed and why. A rule may be universal in its wording and inadequate in its effects. This distinction does not assert that every common rule is unjust: it shows that universality is insufficient to justify it.

The second sentence clarifies this difficulty through the difference between a constraint as formulated and a constraint as actually borne. In a fictional example, a library requires all documents to be returned during a single opening hour. The rule names no particular user, but that hour may be inaccessible to some because of relevant constraints. The example does not decide the solution; it helps us understand why identical wording may call for an examination of situations.

The text then guards against an overhasty conclusion. If every personal preference were enough to obtain an exemption, the rule could no longer organise a common commitment. We would then need to explain why some comply while others choose their own exceptions. This objection has an essential role: differences between situations do not make every difference of treatment legitimate. They require further justification.

The expression “we must therefore” introduces the constructive proposal. Three elements are connected: the rule's purpose, the situations and the reasons for exceptions. A difference is relevant only in relation to what the rule legitimately seeks to organise. In the library example, offering several time slots or an accessible means of return can preserve the obligation while changing how it is fulfilled. A favour granted solely to someone close to the decision-maker would not follow the same reasoning.

Finally, making justification accessible prevents exceptions from depending solely on skill in negotiation. Public reasons give those concerned the opportunity to understand and challenge them. The text thus supports reasoned equality rather than blind uniformity or a collection of privileges. Its limit remains to be examined: it does not fully specify who decides which differences are relevant or how to resolve lasting disagreement. Identifying this question extends the analysis; attributing an absent answer to the text would distort it.

7. Writing, references and objections

A paragraph may begin with a precise assertion, explain its reason, analyse an example and then establish what follows. This organisation is a checking tool, not an obligation to repeat four identical sentences. A transition states what has been established and why it remains insufficient. “Let's move on” changes the theme; “this condition does not yet guarantee the justice of the end pursued” establishes a need within the argument.

Define words when their meaning matters. If you distinguish freedom of choice from autonomy, show why the problem requires that distinction. Avoid encyclopaedic definitions that serve no purpose. An exact quotation must be short, relevant and explained. If you do not know its wording, present an idea honestly with its reference instead of inventing quotation marks. Do not attribute a proposition to an author merely because it seems compatible with that author's reputation.

A serious objection attacks the strongest reason, not a caricature of it. If you defend the possibility of learning through action, the objection will not simply be “acting is sometimes useless”. It will examine situations in which consequences prevent a trial or feedback does not allow us to identify the error. A reply may acknowledge this limit and clarify the thesis's conditions. Such a reasoned concession makes it more rigorous.

8. Progressive exercises and worked answers

Exercise A - Distinguish the theme from the problem in “Must a work be understood to be appreciated?” Answer: art is the theme; the problem concerns the relationship between pleasure, perception and understanding. Immediate appreciation seems possible, but some meanings or forms become accessible only after interpretation. Clarify “appreciate”, “understand” and “must”, then examine what each meaning allows us to conclude.

Exercise B - Correct the inference “Many people accept this rule; it is therefore just.” Answer: acceptance can provide information about agreement, but not sufficient proof of justice. We still need to examine the reasons, the conditions of this acceptance and the rule's effects. A cautious formulation is: its acceptance is something to explain, which normative analysis must supplement.

Exercise C - Which sentence in the original text prevents us from defending all exceptions? Answer: the one that rejects exempting each person according to preference. It maintains the requirement of a common principle. The explanation must show its function as an objection, then connect the reply with relevant and accessible reasons. Isolating only the sentence about differences would give an incomplete thesis.

Exercise D - Improve “People know things and act, but sometimes not, so it's complicated.” Possible answer: “Some knowledge guides action, but does not determine conduct on its own; we must examine the information's relevance and the ends pursued.” The correction replaces vague terms with a relationship that can be checked. It does not artificially add unusual vocabulary.

Exercise E - A text analysis attributes an entire theory of the state to the passage without analysing its connectives. What needs correcting? Answer: return to the problem, the concepts used and the actual movements of the text. External knowledge can

illuminate a difficulty, but cannot replace textual evidence. For the current French general-track examination, the official note specifies that knowledge of the entire work or doctrine is not required.

Exercise F - Write an objection to the condensed essay, followed by a four-sentence reply. Indicative answer: experience can mislead when several causes vary together; observing a result is therefore not enough to know what produced it. Reply: This objection requires checking how feedback is interpreted. Situations must be compared to distinguish causes. The conclusion must remain limited to what the observations support. These requirements refine the method of learning without removing all value from experience.

9. Common errors and revision sheet

Do not replace the question with a neighbouring theme; do not confuse an example with universal proof; do not place authors and opinions side by side; do not turn text analysis into sentence-by-sentence paraphrase without a problem. A conclusion must not introduce an answer unrelated to the discussion. Correct syntax contributes to intelligibility: check agreement, what pronouns refer to, negatives and connectives.

Revision sheet: analyse the terms and question; build a tension; support every stage with a reason; address a relevant objection; explain examples; keep the conclusion proportionate. For a text: problem, thesis, movements, concepts, connectives, justification and limit. For both exercises: specify what you have established and what you have not demonstrated.

The seventeen notions in the French general-track curriculum have been encountered in this guide, some in several chapters. This does not replace your teacher's lessons or attentive study of texts.

Prepare a personal sheet linking each notion to a problem, a distinction, an argument and an example. Then check that you can use them for a new question: revision aims at a capacity for judgement, not the reproduction of a stock of paragraphs.

10. References and status of the examples

French Ministry of National Education, 2019 philosophy curriculum for the general track, official PDF: https://eduscol.education.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/document/spe238annexe11159159pdf-83640.pdf . Éduscol, philosophy curricula and resources: https://eduscol.education.gouv.fr/5826/programmes-et-ressources-en-philosophie-voie-gt .

French Ministry of National Education, guidance note of 11 September 2026, special Official Bulletin of 17 September 2026, applicable to the 2027 examination session: https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/2026/Special4/MENE2622661N . Primary sources consulted for the French manuscript on 11 October 2026. The official quotation contains seven French words; its English meaning is identified as a translation above. The condensed essay, the text analysed, its analysis and all the exercises are original Lafayette Digital Products educational creations. They are neither official examination questions nor model answers guaranteeing a mark.