PH1101E/GEM1004M Practice Questions
Eleven Questions On Just About Everybody

When I write these questions, I make a point of not looking at the one's I've already written. This first question, as a result, is almost identical to one you've met before, if you've worked through the practice questions. Ah, well. I warned you. . .

Passage 1, from Plato's *Euthyphro*:

> S: Try to fill me in more completely concerning that thing I was asking about a moment ago. Because, my friend, you did not teach me adequately when I inquired as to what holiness is. You told me what you are doing now – namely, prosecuting your father for murder – is holy.
>
> E: And I spoke truth, Socrates.
>
> S: That may be. You do concede, however, that there are many other holy actions.
>
> E: There are.
>
> S: Keep in mind, then, that I didn't ask for a couple examples of holy actions. I asked what form all holy actions exhibit, making them holy. For you did agree all unholy actions are unholy and all holy actions holy in virtue of some shared form.

1. Which of the following is the <u>best</u> statement of Socrates' objection to Euthyphro's proposed account, in passage 1?

a) Euthyhro says holiness is doing things like prosecuting your own father for murder.
b) Euthyphro has only given examples of holiness.
c) What Euthyphro has said about holiness is not true.
d) It is not necessary to prosecute your own father, because 'there are many other holy actions' one might choose to do. So Euthyphro is wrong to think he <u>must</u> do this, to be holy.
e) Euthyphro has defined 'holiness' in such a way that some actions may turn out to be both holy and unholy.

Passage 2, from Descartes "Second Meditation"

> What then did I believe I was before? A man. But what is a man? Shall I say 'a rational animal'? No, for then I should have to investigate what an animal is, what rationality is, and so one from one question I would slide down the slope to harder ones; and I do not have time to waste now on subtleties of this sort.

2. In passage 2, the form of Descartes' objection to defining 'man' as 'rational animal' is <u>most similar</u> to which objection to a proposed definition (raised by Socrates and others, in various Plato dialogues?)

a) Meno: It's silly that you say shape always accompanies color. Because what if someone says he doesn't know what color is? He's just as confused about color as he is about shape. Now what do you say about your definition?
b) Euthyphro: What makes no sense, Socrates, is for you to think it makes a difference whether the victim is a stranger or a relative. One should only consider whether the killer acted justly or not; if he acted justly, let him go; if not, prosecute even a killer who shares your hearth and home.
c) Socrates: If you want to put this sort of question to one of us, everyone will have a good laugh and say to you: 'Good stranger, you must think I am a lucky man, to know whether virtue can be taught or not, or where it comes from. Me, I'm so far from knowing whether virtue can be taught or not that I don't even know what it is.'
d) Socrates: But maybe you haven't noticed how our argument has revolved and come right back where it started. You surely remember how, a little while ago, holiness and god-belovedness were said to be not one thing but distinct things. Or don't you remember? Euthyphro: I do. S: Don't you see that now you are saying that what is dear to the gods is what is holy? Is this the same as what is loved by the gods, or isn't it? E: It certainly is. S: Either we were wrong about what we agreed to before, or – if we were right then – we're wrong now.
e) Socrates: but concerning this thing you have been talking about – namely, justice – what is it? Just: speak truth and pay one's debts? Isn't there more to it? And isn't doing those things sometimes just, and at other times unjust? Suppose, for example, I have a friend who leaves weapons in my car, when he is of sound mind, and then asks for them back after he has gone insane. Should I give this madman his weapons? No one would say that was the right thing to do, or that someone who did give them back was a just man, any than they would say you should always speak the truth to someone in such a seriously disturbed frame of mind. Polemarchus: You're absolutely right, he replied. S: But then, I said, 'speaking truth and paying one's debts' is not a correct definition of justice.

Passage 3, from David Chalmers, “Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness”:

Throughout the higher-level sciences, reductive explanation works in just this way [by way of explanation of functions]. To explain the gene, for instance, we needed to specify the mechanism that stores and transmits hereditary information from one generation to the next. It turns out that DNA performs this function; once we explain how the function is performed, we have explained the gene. To explain life, we ultimately need to explain how a system can reproduce, adapt to its environment, metabolize, and so on. All of these are questions about the performance of functions, and so are well-suited to reductive explanation. The same holds for most problems in cognitive science. To explain learning, we need to explain the way in which a system's behavioral capacities are modified in light of environmental information, and the way in which new information can be brought to bear in adapting a system's actions to its environment. If we show how a neural or computational mechanism does the job, we have explained learning. We can say the same for other cognitive phenomena, such as perception, memory, and language. Sometimes the relevant functions need to be characterized quite subtly, but it is clear that insofar as cognitive science explains these phenomena at all, it does so by explaining the performance of functions.

When it comes to conscious experience, this sort of explanation fails. What makes the hard problem hard and almost unique is that it goes *beyond* problems about the performance of functions. To see this, note that even when we have explained the performance of all the cognitive and behavioral functions in the vicinity of experience - perceptual discrimination, categorization, internal access, verbal report - there may still remain a further unanswered question: *Why is the performance of these functions accompanied by experience?* A simple explanation of the functions leaves this question open.

3. Which of the following best describes the obstacle Chalmers’ sees standing in the way of any successful, reductive explanation of experience?

a) Experience is ineffable and vague, therefore difficult to treat clearly and precisely.
b) Experience is not obviously suitable for treatment by the methods of cognitive science.
c) Experience is not necessarily conscious, therefore a functional theory of consciousness may fail to encompass it.
d) Experience has no clear function, though it accompanies the performance of other functions.
e) It is difficult to provide reductive explanations of neural or computational mechanisms, because they are already informationally basic.

Passage 4, from John Barrow, *Pi in the Sky*

> The vagueness of the Platonic position boils down to its fudging of the issue of how we gain access to this world of mathematical ideas – what is the source of mathematical intuition? It is one thing to maintain that there exists another eternal Platonic world of mathematical forms but quite another to maintain that we can dip into it through some special mental effort. But without the possibility of such contact, mathematical truths must be regarded as essentially unknowable and our theories of sets and numbers cannot really be about the mathematical entities themselves. (p. 274)

4. Which of the following passages from Lakoff and Nuñez (*Where Mathematics Comes From)* comes the closest to saying what Barrow says, in passage 4?

a) Is there, as Platonists have suggested, a disembodied mathematics transcending all bodies and mind and structuring the universe – this universe and every possible universe?. . . . Our answer is straightforward. Theorems that human beings prove are within a human mathematical conceptual system. All the mathematical knowledge that we have or can have is knowledge within human mathematics. There is no way to know whether theorems proved by human mathematicians have any objective truth, external to human beings or any other beings. (p. 2.)

b) Mathematics as we know it has been created and used by human beings: mathematicians, physicists, computer scientists, and economists – all members of the species *Homo sapiens*. This may be an obvious fact, but it has an important consequence. Mathematics as we know it is limited and structured by the human brain and human mental capacities. (p. 1)

c) What accounts for what the physicist Eugene Wigner has referred to as the “unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics in the natural sciences”? . . . It is sometimes assumed that the effectiveness of mathematics as a scientific tool shows that mathematics itself exists *in the structure of the physical universe*. This, of course, is not a scientific argument with any empirical basis. (p. 3)

d) Mathematics is one of the most profound and beautiful endeavors of the imagination that human beings have ever engaged in. Yet many of its beauties and profundities have been inaccessible to nonmathematicians, because most of the cognitive structure of mathematics has gone undescribed. (p. 5)

e) People’s conscious beliefs about time, causation, morality, and politics are typically inconsistent with their unconscious conceptual systems. It is also not unusual for people to get angry when told that their unconscious conceptual systems contradict their fondly held conscious beliefs, especially in sensitive areas like morality, religion, and politics. What we have found is that mathematics is one such sensitive area. Those who understand and use advanced mathematics tend to hold string views about what mathematics is. (p. 339)

Passage 5

How far is a man entitled to say that what he means by the word *ame* [French for soul] or *anima* [Latin for soul] is quite independent of the image of breathing, and that he means just the same (and just as much) whether he happens to know that 'derivation' or not? We can only answer that it depends on a variety of things. I will enumerate all the formal possibilities for the sake of clearness: one of them, of course, is too grotesque to appear for any other purpose.

1. The metaphor may originally have been magistral. Primitive men, we are to suppose, were clearly aware, on the one hand, of an entity called *soul*; and, on the other hand, of a process or object called *breath*. And the used the second figuratively to suggest the first – presumably when revealing their wisdom to primitive women and primitive children. And we may suppose, further, that this magistral relation to the metaphor has never been lost: that all generations from the probably arboreal to the man saying 'Blast your soul' in a pub this evening, have kept clearly before them these two separate entities, and used the one metaphorically to denote the other, while at the same time being well able to conceive the soul unmetaphorically, and using the metaphor merely as a colour or trope which adorned but did not influence their thought. Now if all this were true, it would unquestionably follow that when a man says *anima* his meaning is not affected by the old image of breath; and also, it does not matter in the least whether he knows that the word once suggested that image or not. But of course all this is not true.

2. The metaphor may originally have been pupillary. So far from being a voluntary ornament or paedagogic device, the ideas of *breath* or *something like breath* may have been the only possible inkling that our parents could gain of the soul. But if this was so, how does the modern user of the word stand? Clearly, if he has ceased to be aware of the metaphorical element in *anima*, without replacing the metaphorical apprehension by some new knowledge of the soul, borrowed from other sources, then he will mean nothing by it; we must not, on that account, suppose that he will cease to use it, or even to use it (as we say) intelligibly- i.e. to use it in sentences constructed according to the laws of grammar, and to insert these sentences into those conversational and literary contexts where usage demands their insertion. If, on the other hand, he has some independent knowledge of the entity which our ancestors indicated by their metaphor of breath, then indeed he may mean something.

I take it that it is this last situation in which we commonly suppose ourselves to be.

This is a hopeless question, really. Different answers are wholly defensible. Which one would you defend? (Don't be mad at me. It is actually a useful question to answer, for purposes of understanding Lewis. Bloody awful exam question. Good practice question.)

5. In passage 5, C. S. Lewis surveys the range of possible answers to his question (underlined, above). How many possible answers does Lewis think there are?

a) 1
b) 2
c) 3
d) 4
e) 5

Despite the badness of question 5, questions 6 and 7 are quite alright, it seems to me.

6. In passage 5, C. S. Lewis says one of the 'formal possibilities' he examines is 'too grotesque' to appear for any purposes other than completeness of survey. What does Lewis seem to mean by 'grotesque'?

a) Obviously untrue.
b) So damaging to our human self-conception that we cannot believe it, while maintaining our self-respect.
c) Logically incoherent.
d) A one-in-a-million long-shot (compared to the other possibilities, which are all quite probable.)
e) So complicated as to be unworkable (since what Lewis is seeking is simplicity, for the sake of clarity.)

7. Which of the following is a description of the 'grotesque' possibility Lewis alludes to in passage 5?

a) Human beings – primitive and modern - have always had a clear conception of the soul, which they opted from the beginning to label (figuratively) with a word previously reserved to designate breath. Therefore, the pure concept of soul has always been distinct from the image of breath and has never been affected by it.
b) Primitive humans, who at least knew the word they were using for the soul literally meant breath, may have had a clearer conception of soul than many modern humans, who have lost that linguistic knowledge without gaining anything to take its place.
c) Modern humans who are unaware that their word, 'soul', has an etymological link to ancient words for breath, cannot possibly have any conception of the soul.
d) Modern humans who are unaware that their word, 'soul', has an etymological link to ancient words for breath, may have knowledge of the nature of soul that has been arrived at by a route independent of any images of breath.
e) Primitive humans had a less adequate conception of soul than modern humans, for the primitive conception was dictated by an image of breath, whereas the modern is not; and the soul, of course, is not literally a breath.

The following is a quite ridiculous question. But it works as an exercise, I think.

Passage 6, from Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty”:

> Coercion is not, however, a term that covers every form of inability. If I say that I am unable to jump more than ten feet in the air, or cannot read because I am blind. . . it would be eccentric to say that I am to that degree enslaved or coerced. Coercion implies the deliberate interference of other human beings within the area in which I could otherwise act. You lack political liberty or freedom only if you are prevented from attaining a goal by human beings. Mere incapacity to attain a goal is not lack of political freedom. (p. 169)

8. Which of the following statements concerning/emendations to Berlin’s proposed account of coercion, in passage 6, are plausible?

a) If intelligent, non-human aliens came to earth and enslaved humans, forcing them to do their bidding, we would call their behavior ‘coercive’. Therefore Berlin’s definition of ‘coercion’ should be generalized to read: ‘deliberate interference of other intelligent life-forms within the area in which I could otherwise act.’

b) Parents of small children often make them go to bed when they would like to stay up and play. This qualifies as ‘coercion’, under Berlin’s definition. But we do not ordinarily call this sort of restriction ‘coercive’, because it is wise, well-intentioned, and the affected subjects are acknowledged to be incompetent to decide such matters for themselves. Therefore, Berlin’s definition should be modified to read: ‘deliberate, ill-intentioned and/or unwise interference of other humans within the area in which I could otherwise act competently.’

c) Believers in an intelligent Creator of the universe, who accept a), are plausibly committed to regarding the laws of nature as devices of coercion. For if the laws were quite different, I could act in ways I cannot now act.

d) Believers in an intelligent Creator of the universe, who accept a) but wish to resist c) might point out that, if the universe were substantially different than it is, we could not exist. Therefore, it is not in fact true that, if the laws of nature were quite different, we could act otherwise. Alternatively, subscribers to a), wishing to resist c), might do so by accepting b), then comparing themselves to the children of a benevolent parent, i.e. the Creator. The constraints on our human behavior, imposed by the laws of nature, are well-intentioned and wise. And we are incompetent to determine for ourselves what the laws of nature should be.

e) All of a)-d) are plausible.

Passage 7, from Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty":

> 'Freedom for the pike is death for the minnows'. Freedom for an Oxford don, others have been known to add, is a very different thing from freedom for an Egyptian peasant.
>
> This proposition derives its force from something that is both true and important, but the phrase itself remains a piece of political claptrap. It is true that to offer political rights, or safeguard against intervention by the State, to men who are half-naked, illiterate, underfed and diseased is to mock their condition; they need medical help or education before they can understand, or make use of, an increase in their freedom. What is freedom to those who cannot make use of it? Without adequate conditions for the use of freedom what is the value of freedom? First things come first: there are situations in which -–to use a saying satirically attributed to the nihilists by Dostoyevsky – boots are superior to Pushkin; individual freedom is not everyone's primary need. For freedom is not the mere absence of frustration of whatever kind; this would inflate the meaning of the word until it meant too much or too little. The Egyptian peasant needs clothes or medicine before, and more than, personal liberty, but the minimum freedom that he needs today, and the greater degree of freedom that he may need tomorrow, is not some species of freedom peculiar to him, but identical with that of professors, artists and millionaires. (p. 171-2)

9. Berlin's critical assessment of the underlined sentence in passage X is best encapsulated by which of the following?

a) This proposition is both true and important, but the phrase that expresses the proposition is just political claptrap.
b) This proposition says, in effect, that the Egyptian peasant needs food, clothes and medicine more than freedom (since freedom without clothes and medicine is worthless.)
c) The different sorts of freedom that Egyptian peasants and Oxford dons enjoy are due to the differences in their needs. The peasants still need food, clothes and medicine, whereas the professors have all these, and have moved on to acquire other things.
d) It is true and important to realize that freedom isn't and shouldn't always be one's top priority. But it does not follow that there are different species of freedom – one for peasants and one for professors.
e) This proposition is true and important because it inspires questions like: 'What is freedom to those who cannot make use of it? Without adequate conditions for the use of freedom what is the value of freedom?'

Passsage 8, from Douglas Rushkoff, *Coercion*:

> It's not always easy to determine when we have surrendered our judgment to someone else. The better and more sophisticated the manipulation, the less aware of it we are. For example, have you ever attended a sporting event, rock concert, or political convention in one frame of mind, but found yourself inexplicably swept away by the emotion of the crowd? How many times have you walked into a mall to buy a single pair of shoes, only to find yourself purchasing an entire outfit, several books, and a few CDs before you made your way back to the parking lot? . . . If we stop to think about this invisible hand working on our perceptions and behavior, we can easily become paranoid. Although we cannot always point to the evidence, when we become aware that our actions are being influenced by forces beyond our control – we shop in malls that have been designed by psychologists, and experience the effects of their architecture and color schemes on our purchasing behaviors – we can't help but feel a little edgy. No matter how discreetly camouflaged the coercion, we sense that it's leading us to move and act ever so slightly against our wills. We may not want to admit consciously to ourselves that the floor plan of the shopping center has made us lose our bearings, but we are disoriented all the same. We don't know exactly how to get back to the car, and we will have to walk past twenty more stores before we find an exit.

10. On the basis of passage 8, one can infer that Rushkoff believes all of the following <u>but one</u>. (Which <u>one</u> might Rushkoff <u>not</u> believe, if he means what he says in passage 8?)

a) If we enter a building that has been designed to disorient us, and we are disoriented, then this is a case of actually having been <u>coerced</u> onto whatever path our disorientation takes us.
b) If a psychologically-calculated color-scheme tips the balance, and we buy something in a store, we are in fact being <u>made</u> to buy somewhat against our wills.
c) It should be illegal for stores to hire color-consultants to influence our consumer-behavior.
d) It is reasonable to suspect you have fallen victim to coercion-techniques if you undergo inexplicable (to you) shifts in mood, frame of mind, and intended behavior when you visit malls, organized events, or similar occasions.
e) People find it hard to admit to themselves consciously that the floor plans of shopping centers have been designed to disorient them, even when they vaguely sense that their free will has indeed been slightly subverted.

This is sort of a dubious item. I think it has an answer, but – well, you tell me what you think the answer is.

11. All of the following <u>but one</u> has the form of an explanation of some of the 'inexplicable' shifts in mood, frame of mind, and behavior Rushkoff attributes to coercion, in passage 11? (Which one <u>does not</u> have the form of an alternative explanation.)

a) Some people are happy to get lost in malls. Sometimes they <u>intend</u> to get lost in a shopper's paradise, voluntarily submitting to the effects of floorplans and color-schemes, without even being aware of which things, exactly, are effecting them. But they will eventually find their cars again. So this isn't necessarily a bad arrangement.
b) Human moods and minds are constantly changing, for reasons that are internal to the organism but unknown to it: shifts in body chemistry, half-remembered dreams, unconscious problem-solving activity that spurs sudden inspiration. Much of the time, we simply don't know why we ourselves are causing ourselves to have the thoughts and feelings we do.
c) Very frequently natural phenomena – sky and clouds, trees and rocks – have a profound effect on human thought and mood. And the effects can be difficult to explain. (Why is blue a nice color for the sky?) But we are not 'coerced' by such things. Similar shifts may be induced by man-made artifacts designed with no coercive intent, or by groups of people (natural phenomena of a different order) with no coercive designs on our thoughts and moods.
d) Shoppers often find new things they like in stores. And often people are unable to explain <u>why</u> they like what they do – certain flavors or colors or scents more than others, one kind of music more than others. So shoppers find themselves inexplicably buying on impulse things they did not intend to buy. But they are not coerced. The shoppers get what they really want most.
e) Neither c or d has the form of an explanation of these shifts.