

Top 50 Tenets of Philosophy: *Discuss with the teacher.*

1. **Skepticism:** Doubt is the foundation of inquiry, with thinkers like Pyrrho and Sextus Empiricus asserting suspension of judgment regarding truth claims, challenging dogmatic beliefs and promoting critical thinking.
2. **Dualism:** Reality consists of two fundamental substances, typically mind and matter, as proposed by Descartes, who distinguished between the thinking mind (*res cogitans*) and extended body (*res extensa*).
3. **Monism:** Reality is ultimately unified, rejecting dualism's distinction between mind and matter, with variations like idealistic monism (e.g., Berkeley's immaterialism) and materialistic monism (e.g., Spinoza's substance monism).
4. **Pantheism:** God is identified with the universe, exemplified by Spinoza's philosophy, which equates God with nature and asserts that everything exists within the divine substance.
5. **Solipsism:** Only one's mind is sure to exist, denying the external world's independent reality, challenging foundational assumptions about knowledge and reality.
6. **Pragmatism:** Truth is determined by practical consequences, championed by Peirce, James, and Dewey, focusing on the utility and effectiveness of beliefs and theories in achieving desired outcomes.
7. **Agnosticism:** The existence of God is unknown or unknowable, with proponents like Huxley advocating skepticism towards metaphysical claims beyond empirical verification.
8. **Rationalism:** Reason is the primary source of knowledge, asserted by Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz, emphasizing innate ideas and deductive reasoning.
9. **Empiricism:** Knowledge originates from sensory experience, according to Locke, Hume, and Berkeley, who reject innate ideas in favor of observation and experimentation.
10. **Idealism:** Reality is fundamentally mental or immaterial, proposed by Plato, Kant, and Berkeley, asserting that the material world is dependent on the mind or abstract forms.
11. **Materialism:** Only physical matter exists, according to Democritus, Epicurus, and Marx, viewing the universe as material interactions devoid of spiritual elements.
12. **Existentialism:** Individuals create their own meaning in an absurd universe, as advocated by Kierkegaard, Sartre, and Camus, emphasizing freedom, choice, and authenticity.
13. **Nihilism:** Life lacks inherent meaning or value, Nietzsche and Turgenev contend, challenging traditional beliefs and advocating for individual creation of values.
14. **Utilitarianism:** Actions are morally right if they maximize happiness, promoted by Bentham and Mill, focusing on the greatest good for the greatest number.
15. **Deontology:** Duty and moral rules guide ethical behavior, according to Kant, who emphasizes universal moral principles and respect for human dignity.
16. **Virtue Ethics:** Moral character and virtues lead to ethical living, Aristotle argues, emphasizing the cultivation of virtues like courage and temperance.
17. **Stoicism:** Acceptance of what cannot be changed and cultivation of virtue for tranquility, as taught by Epictetus, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius.
18. **Phenomenology:** Study of consciousness and experience without preconceptions, initiated by Husserl and developed by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty.
19. **Structuralism:** Analysis of human culture through underlying structures, pioneered by Saussure and Lévi-Strauss, focusing on language and social systems.
20. **Post-Structuralism:** Critique of fixed structures and stable meanings, Derrida and Foucault deconstructed texts to reveal hidden biases and power dynamics.
21. **Realism:** External reality exists independently of perception, upheld by Aristotle and Moore, asserting an objective world beyond subjective experience.
22. **Constructivism:** Knowledge is actively constructed through social interactions and experiences, influenced by Piaget and Vygotsky.
23. **Liberalism:** Advocacy for individual freedoms, democracy, and equality, promoted by Locke, Mill, and Rawls, balancing personal liberty with social justice.
24. **Communitarianism:** Emphasis on community and social contexts in shaping values, advocated by MacIntyre and Taylor, critiquing excessive individualism.
25. **Romanticism:** Romanticism emphasizes emotion, individualism, and the glorification of nature, reacting against the industrial revolution and rationalism. Championed by poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge, and painters like Turner, it celebrates the beauty of the natural world, the depth of human emotion, and the imagination. Romanticism values the sublime, the

mysterious, and the heroic, often exploring themes of personal freedom, adventure, and the inner life. It highlights the importance of subjective experience and the individual's connection to the universe, advocating for a deep, personal engagement with the world and its wonders.

26. **Eastern Philosophies:** Traditions like Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism emphasize harmony, ethics, and enlightenment, offering profound insights into human nature and existence.
27. **Hedonism:** Pursuit of pleasure as the highest good, promoted by Aristippus and Epicurus, focusing on maximizing individual happiness.
28. **Absurdism:** Human existence in a purposeless universe, Camus contended, urging individuals to find meaning in spite of life's inherent absurdity.
29. **Phenomenalism:** Physical objects do not exist independently of perception, Berkeley and Kant suggested, questioning the nature of reality and perception, proposing that objects exist as they are perceived or as phenomena in the mind.
30. **Transcendentalism:** Emphasis on inherent goodness of people and nature, Emerson and Thoreau celebrated individualism and spiritual connection with nature, advocating for self-reliance and intuition.
31. **Dialectical Materialism:** Marxist approach to understanding society through dialectics and materialism, proposed by Marx and Engels, emphasizing historical materialism and class struggle.
32. **Positivism:** Knowledge derives from empirical sciences, advanced by Comte, advocating for the scientific method and empirical observation, rejecting metaphysical speculation.
33. **Postmodernism:** Critique of objective knowledge and universal truths, Lyotard, Foucault, and Derrida emphasized the multiplicity of interpretations and the instability of meaning.
34. **Humanism:** Emphasis on the value and agency of human beings, celebrated by Erasmus, Petrarch, and Rogers, advocating for human dignity and potential.
35. **Naturalism:** Understanding the world through scientific inquiry and natural laws, espoused by thinkers like Thales and Heraclitus, emphasizing empirical observation and reason.
36. **Secularism:** Separation of religion from public institutions and affairs, promoting freedom of religion and belief, and equality for all individuals regardless of religious affiliation.
37. **Determinism:** All events, including human actions, are determined by causes external to the will, as

proposed by Spinoza and Laplace, challenging notions of free will.

38. **Compatibilism:** Free will and determinism are compatible, argued by Hume and Hobbes, who suggested that freedom is not opposed to causality.
39. **Libertarianism:** Free will is incompatible with determinism, asserting that individuals have genuine moral responsibility for their actions, championed by Chisholm and Kane.
40. **Egoism:** Self-interest is the foundation of morality, advocated by Hobbes and Stirner, who emphasized individual autonomy and rational pursuit of one's own good.
41. **Altruism:** Selflessness and concern for others are moral virtues, promoted by thinkers like Bentham and Rousseau, prioritizing the well-being of others over personal interests.
42. **Objectivism:** Reality exists independent of consciousness, and reason is the primary means of knowledge, according to Ayn Rand, who emphasized rational self-interest and individualism.
43. **Aesthetics:** Study of beauty, art, and taste, exploring subjective experiences and cultural interpretations of aesthetic objects, with Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche contributing to aesthetic theory.
44. **Ethical Egoism:** Individuals ought to act in their own self-interest, maximizing their own happiness or well-being, as advocated by Rand and Nietzsche.
45. **Absolutism:** Moral principles are universally valid and binding, regardless of cultural or individual differences, asserting objective moral truths, as seen in Kant's categorical imperative.
46. **Relativism:** Moral values are culturally or individually determined, varying across societies or individuals, rejecting the existence of objective moral standards.
47. **Hedonistic Calculus:** Ethical decisions should be made based on the balance of pleasure over pain, quantifying utility to maximize overall happiness, as proposed by Bentham.
48. **Eudaimonism:** Happiness or flourishing is the highest good, with Aristotle and the Stoics advocating virtue as essential for eudaimonia, emphasizing character development and fulfillment.
49. **Teleology:** Nature or reality has inherent purposes or ends, as suggested by Aristotle's concept of final causality, influencing ethical and metaphysical theories.
50. **Aestheticism:** Art's primary purpose is to create beauty or provoke aesthetic experiences, as championed by Wilde and Pausanias.

Previous Year CAT Passages from Philosophy

Passage 1

In recent years, teachers of introductory courses in Asian American studies have been facing a dilemma non-existent a few decades ago, when hardly any texts in that field were available. Today, excellent anthologies and other introductory texts exist, and books on individual Asian American nationality groups and on general issues important for Asian Americans are published almost weekly. Even professors who are experts in the field find it difficult to decide which of these to assign to students; nonexperts who teach in related areas and are looking for writings for and by Asian American to include in survey courses are in an even worse position.

A complicating factor has been the continuing lack of specialized one-volume reference works on Asian Americans, such as biographical dictionaries or desktop encyclopedias. Such works would enable students taking Asian American studies courses to look up basic information on Asian American individuals, institutions, history, and culture without having to wade through mountains of primary source material. In addition, given such works, Asian American studies professors might feel more free to include more challenging Asian American material in their introductory reading lists, since good reference works allow students to acquire on their own the background information necessary to interpret difficult or unfamiliar material.

1. **Question:** The author of the passage is primarily concerned with doing which of the following?
 - A. Recommending a methodology
 - B. Describing a course of study
 - C. Discussing a problem
 - D. Evaluating a past course of action
 - E. Responding to a criticism
2. **Question:** The “dilemma” mentioned in line 2 can best be characterized as being caused by the necessity to make a choice when faced with a
 - A. lack of acceptable alternatives
 - B. lack of strict standards for evaluating alternatives
 - C. preponderance of bad alternatives as compared to good
 - D. multitude of different alternatives
 - E. large number of alternatives that are nearly identical in content
3. **Question:** The passage suggests that the factor mentioned in lines 14-17 complicates professors’ attempts to construct introductory reading lists for courses in Asian American studies in which of the following ways?
 - A. By making it difficult for professors to identify primary source material and to obtain standard information on Asian American history and culture
 - B. By preventing professors from identifying excellent anthologies and introductory texts in the field that are both recent and understandable to students
 - C. By preventing professors from adequately evaluating the quality of the numerous texts currently being published in the field
 - D. By making it more necessary for professors to select readings for their courses that are not too challenging for students unfamiliar with Asian American history and culture
 - E. By making it more likely that the readings professors assign to students in their courses will be drawn solely from primary sources
4. **Question:** The passage implies that which of the following was true of introductory courses in Asian American studies a few decades ago?
 - A. The range of different textbooks that could be assigned for such courses was extremely limited.
 - B. The texts assigned as readings in such courses were often not very challenging for students.
 - C. Students often complained about the texts assigned to them in such courses.
 - D. Such courses were offered only at schools whose libraries were rich in primary sources.
 - E. Such courses were the only means then available by which people in the United States could acquire knowledge of the field.
5. **Question:** According to the passage, the existence of good one-volume reference works about Asian Americans could result in
 - A. increased agreement among professors of Asian American studies regarding the quality of the sources available in their field
 - B. an increase in the number of students signing up for introductory courses in Asian American studies
 - C. increased accuracy in writings that concern Asian American history and culture
 - D. the use of introductory texts about Asian American history and culture in courses outside the field of Asian American studies
 - E. the inclusion of a wider range of Asian American material in introductory reading lists in Asian American studies

Passage 2

Schools expect textbooks to be a valuable source of information for students. My research suggests, however, that textbooks that address the place of Native Americans within the history of the United States distort history to suit a particular cultural value system. In some textbooks, for example, settlers are pictured as more humane, complex, skillful, and wise than Native American. In essence, textbooks stereotype and deprecate the numerous Native American cultures while reinforcing the attitude that the European conquest of the New World denotes the superiority of European cultures. Although textbooks evaluate Native American architecture, political systems, and homemaking, I contend that they do it from an ethnocentric, European perspective without recognizing that other perspectives are possible.

One argument against my contention asserts that, by nature, textbooks are culturally biased and that I am simply underestimating children's ability to see through these biases. Some researchers even claim that by the time students are in high school, they know they cannot take textbooks literally. Yet substantial evidence exists to the contrary. Two researchers, for example, have conducted studies that suggest that children's attitudes about particular culture are strongly influenced by the textbooks used in schools. Given this, an ongoing, careful review of how school textbooks depict Native American is certainly warranted.

6. **Question:** Which of the following would most logically be the topic of the paragraph immediately following the passage?
 - A. Specific ways to evaluate the biases of United States history textbooks
 - B. The centrality of the teacher's role in United States history courses
 - C. Nontraditional methods of teaching United States history
 - D. The contributions of European immigrants to the development of the United States
 - E. Ways in which parents influence children's political attitudes
7. **Question:** The primary purpose of the passage is to
 - A. describe in detail one research study regarding the impact of history textbooks on children's attitudes and beliefs about certain cultures
 - B. describe revisions that should be made to United States history textbooks
 - C. discuss the difficulty of presenting an accurate history of the United States
 - D. argue that textbooks used in schools stereotype Native Americans and influence children's attitudes
 - E. summarize ways in which some textbooks give distorted pictures of the political systems developed by various Native American groups
8. **Question:** The author mentions two researchers' studies most likely in order to
 - A. suggest that children's political attitudes are formed primarily through textbooks
 - B. counter the claim that children are able to see through stereotypes in textbooks
 - C. suggest that younger children tend to interpret the messages in textbooks more literally than do older children
 - D. demonstrate that textbooks carry political messages meant to influence their readers
 - E. prove that textbooks are not biased in terms of their political presentations
9. **Question:** The author's attitude toward the content of the history textbooks discussed in the passage is best described as one of
 - A. indifference
 - B. hesitation
 - C. neutrality
 - D. amusement
 - E. disapproval
10. **Question:** It can be inferred from the passage that the researchers mentioned in line 19 would be most likely to agree with which of the following statements?
 - A. Students form attitudes about cultures other than their own primarily inside the school environment.
 - B. For the most part, seniors in high school know that textbooks can be biased.
 - C. Textbooks play a crucial role in shaping the attitudes and beliefs of students.
 - D. Elementary school students are as likely to recognize biases in textbooks as are high school students.
 - E. Students are less likely to give credence to history textbooks than to mathematics textbooks.
11. **Question:** The author implies that which of the following will occur if textbooks are not carefully reviewed?
 - A. Children will remain ignorant of the European settlers' conquest of the New World.
 - B. Children will lose their ability to recognize biases in textbooks.
 - C. Children will form negative stereotypes of Native Americans.
 - D. Children will develop an understanding of ethnocentrism.
 - E. Children will stop taking textbooks seriously.

Passage 3 [CAT 2023- SLOT 3]

Understanding romantic aesthetics is not a simple undertaking for reasons that are internal to the nature of the subject. Distinguished scholars, such as Arthur Lovejoy, Northrop Frye and Isaiah Berlin, have remarked on the notorious challenges facing any attempt to define romanticism. Lovejoy, for example, claimed that romanticism is “the scandal of literary history and criticism” . . . The main difficulty in studying the romantics, according to him, is the lack of any “single real entity, or type of entity” that the concept “romanticism” designates. Lovejoy concluded, “the word ‘romantic’ has come to mean so many things that, by itself, it means nothing”

... The more specific task of characterizing romantic aesthetics adds to these difficulties an air of paradox. Conventionally, “aesthetics” refers to a theory concerning beauty and art or the branch of philosophy that studies these topics. However, many of the romantics rejected the identification of aesthetics with a circumscribed domain of human life that is separated from the practical and theoretical domains of life. The most characteristic romantic commitment is to the idea that the character of art and beauty and of our engagement with them should shape all aspects of human life. Being fundamental to human existence, beauty and art should be a central ingredient not only in a philosophical or artistic life, but also in the lives of ordinary men and women. Another challenge for any attempt to characterize romantic aesthetics lies in the fact that most of the romantics were poets and artists whose views of art and beauty are, for the most part, to be found not in developed theoretical accounts, but in fragments, aphorisms and poems, which are often more elusive and suggestive than conclusive.

Nevertheless, in spite of these challenges the task of characterizing romantic aesthetics is neither impossible nor undesirable, as numerous thinkers responding to Lovejoy’s radical skepticism have noted. While warning against a reductive definition of romanticism, Berlin, for example, still heralded the need for a general characterization: “[Although] one does have a certain sympathy with Lovejoy’s despair...[he is] in this instance mistaken. There was a romantic movement...and it is important to discover what it is” . . .

Recent attempts to characterize romanticism and to stress its contemporary relevance follow this path. Instead of overlooking the undeniable differences between the variety of romanticisms of different nations that Lovejoy had stressed, such studies attempt to characterize romanticism, not in terms of a single definition, a specific time, or a specific place, but in terms of “particular philosophical questions and concerns” . . .

While the German, British and French romantics are all considered, the central protagonists in the following are the German romantics. Two reasons explain this focus: first, because it has paved the way for the other romanticisms, German romanticism has a pride of place among the different national romanticisms . . . Second, the aesthetic outlook that was developed in Germany roughly between 1796 and 1801–02 — the period that corresponds to the heyday of what is known as “Early Romanticism” . . . — offers the most philosophical expression of romanticism since it is grounded primarily in the epistemological, metaphysical, ethical, and political concerns that the German romantics discerned in the aftermath of Kant’s philosophy.

12. Question: Which one of the following statements is NOT supported by the passage?

- A. Many romantics rejected the idea of aesthetics as a domain separate from other aspects of life.
- B. Romantic aesthetics are primarily expressed through fragments, aphorisms, and poems.
- C. Recent studies on romanticism seek to refute the differences between national romanticisms.
- D. Characterising romantic aesthetics is both possible and desirable, despite the challenges involved.

13. Question: The main difficulty in studying romanticism is the:

- A. elusive and suggestive nature of romantic aesthetics.
- B. controversial and scandalous history of romantic literature.
- C. lack of clear conceptual contours of the domain.
- D. absence of written accounts by romantic poets and artists.

14. Question: According to the romantics, aesthetics:

- A. should be confined to a specific domain separate from the practical and theoretical aspects of life.
- B. is primarily the concern of philosophers and artists, rather than of ordinary people.
- C. is widely considered to be irrelevant to human existence.
- D. permeates all aspects of human life, philosophical and mundane.

15. Question: According to the passage, recent studies on romanticism avoid “a single definition, a specific time, or a specific place” because they:

- A. prefer to highlight the paradox of romantic aesthetics as a concept.
- B. prefer to focus on the fundamental concerns of the romantics.
- C. seek to discredit Lovejoy’s scepticism regarding romanticism.
- D. understand that the variety of romanticisms renders a general analysis impossible.

Passage 4 [CAT 2023 SLOT 2]

Over the past four centuries liberalism has been so successful that it has driven all its opponents off the battlefield. Now it is disintegrating, destroyed by a mix of hubris and internal contradictions, according to Patrick Deneen, a professor of politics at the University of Notre Dame. . . . Equality of opportunity has produced a new meritocratic aristocracy that has all the aloofness of the old aristocracy with none of its sense of noblesse oblige. Democracy has degenerated into a theatre of the absurd. And technological advances are reducing ever more areas of work into meaningless drudgery. “The gap between liberalism’s claims about itself and the lived reality of the citizenry” is now so wide that “the lie can no longer be accepted,” Mr Deneen writes. What better proof of this than the vision of 1,000 private planes whisking their occupants to Davos to discuss the question of “creating a shared future in a fragmented world”? . . .

Deneen does an impressive job of capturing the current mood of disillusionment, echoing leftwing complaints about rampant commercialism, right-wing complaints about narcissistic and bullying students, and general worries about atomisation and selfishness. But when he concludes that all this adds up to a failure of liberalism, is his argument convincing? . . . He argues that the essence of liberalism lies in freeing individuals from constraints. In fact, liberalism contains a wide range of intellectual traditions which provide different answers to the question of how to trade off the relative claims of rights and responsibilities, individual expression and social ties. . . . liberals experimented with a range of ideas from devolving power from the centre to creating national education systems. Mr Deneen’s fixation on the essence of liberalism leads to the second big problem of his book: his failure to recognise liberalism’s ability to reform itself and address its internal problems.

The late 19th century saw America suffering from many of the problems that are reappearing today, including the creation of a business aristocracy, the rise of vast companies, the corruption of politics and the sense that society was dividing into winners and losers. But a wide variety of reformers, working within the liberal tradition, tackled these problems head on. Theodore Roosevelt took on the trusts. Progressives cleaned up government corruption. University reformers modernised academic syllabuses and built ladders of opportunity. Rather than dying, liberalism reformed itself. Mr Deneen is right to point out that the record of liberalism in recent years has been dismal. He is also right to assert that the world has much to learn from the premodern notions of liberty as self-mastery and self-denial. The biggest enemy of liberalism is not so much atomisation but old-fashioned greed, as members of the Davos elite pile their plates ever higher with perks and share options. But he is wrong to argue that the only way for people to liberate themselves from the contradictions of liberalism is “liberation from liberalism itself”. The best way to read “Why Liberalism Failed” is not as a funeral oration but as a call to action: up your game, or else.

16. Question: All of the following statements are evidence of the decline of liberalism today, EXCEPT:

- A. “‘The gap between liberalism’s claims about itself and the lived reality of the citizenry’ is now so wide that ‘the lie can no longer be accepted,’ . . .”
- B. “And technological advances are reducing ever more areas of work into meaningless drudgery.”
- C. “Democracy has degenerated into a theatre of the absurd.”
- D. “. . . the creation of a business aristocracy, the rise of vast companies . . .”

17. Question: The author of the passage faults Deneen’s conclusions for all of the following reasons, EXCEPT:

- A. its very narrow definition of liberalism limited to individual freedoms.
- B. its extreme pessimism about the future of liberalism today and predictions of an ultimate decline.
- C. its repeated harking back to premodern notions of liberty.
- D. its failure to note historical instances in which the process of declining liberalism has managed to reverse itself.

18. Question: The author of the passage refers to “the Davos elite” to illustrate his views on:

- A. the fact that the rise in liberalism had led to a greater interest in shared futures from unlikely social classes.
- B. the hypocrisy of the liberal rich, who profess to subscribe to liberal values while cornering most of the wealth.
- C. The way the debate around liberalism has been captured by the rich who have managed to insulate themselves from economic hardships.
- D. the unlikelihood of a return to the liberalism of the past as long as the rich continue to benefit from the decline in liberal values.

19. Question: The author of the passage is likely to disagree with all of the following statements, EXCEPT:

- A. the essence of liberalism lies in greater individual self-expression and freedoms.
- B. liberalism was the dominant ideal in the past century, but it had to reform itself to remain so.
- C. if we accept that liberalism is a dying ideal, we must work to find a viable substitute.
- D. claims about liberalism’s disintegration are exaggerated and misunderstand its core features.

Answer Key

1.C	2.D	3.D	4.A	5.E	6.A	7.D	8.B	9.E	10.B
11.C	12.C	13.C	14.D	15.B	16.B	17.C	18.B	19.B	