

Philosophy – Key Term Transition Work

Dear students,

Below is a list of key terms from the AQA specification that are essential for understanding the content covered in the course. If you're aiming to master the material and express yourself like a philosopher, you'll need to become confident in both understanding and using these concepts. With that in mind, please ensure you come to your first lesson having mastered these terms — both their definitions and your ability to provide examples.

There will be a test. However, please don't simply memorise the definitions and examples by rote. The test is designed to check your understanding, so you'll be expected to use these concepts and to generate or recognise original examples beyond those included in this handout. To help you get to grips with the ideas, you may also want to read the short story Mr P and the Puzzle of Truth, which uses all of the terms in context. It's a playful way to reinforce the meanings and see how they work in action.

Looking forward to exploring these ideas with you.

Best wishes,

The Theology and Philosophy Department

Key Term	Definition	Example
proposition	A statement or assertion that expresses a judgment or opinion. In philosophy, a proposition is the bearer of truth or falsity.	"The Earth orbits the Sun" is a proposition.
analytic/ synthetic	Analytic statements are true by definition; synthetic statements are true by how their meaning relates to the world.	Analytic: "All bachelors are unmarried." Synthetic: "Water boils at 100°C at sea level."
a priori/ a posteriori	A priori knowledge is independent of experience; a posteriori knowledge is dependent on experience.	A priori: " $2 + 2 = 4$." A posteriori: "The sky is cloudy today."
necessary/ contingent	Necessary truths could not be otherwise; contingent truths could have been false.	Necessary: "All squares have four sides." Contingent: "It is raining in London."
justification	The support or reason offered for a belief or claim being true or acceptable.	"I saw the car crash happen" can serve as a justification for believing there was a crash.
assertion/claim	An assertion or claim is a statement that something is the case.	"Climate change is caused by human activity" is a claim.
antecedent/ consequent	In logic, the antecedent is the first part of a conditional statement (if-portion), and the consequent is the result (then-portion).	"If it rains (antecedent), then the ground will be wet (consequent)."
consistent/ inconsistent	A set of statements is consistent if they can all be true at the same time; inconsistent if not.	Consistent: "All mammals are animals" and "Dogs are mammals." Inconsistent: "It is raining" and "It is not raining."
objective/ subjective	Objective: A standpoint that aims to represent the world as it is, independent of any particular perspective. Subjective: A standpoint rooted in individual experience or consciousness.	Objective: "Water is H ₂ O." Subjective: "Chocolate is the best flavour."
tautology	A tautology is a logical statement that is true in all possible interpretations.	"It will either rain tomorrow or it won't."
dilemma	A dilemma is a situation in which a difficult choice has to be made between two or more alternatives, often equally undesirable.	"Either I lie to protect my friend or tell the truth and hurt them."
paradox	A paradox is a statement that appears self-contradictory or logically unacceptable but may nonetheless be true.	"This statement is false."
prove/ proof	To prove is to demonstrate the truth of a statement by logical argument; a proof is the evidence or argument establishing it.	A geometric proof that the angles in a triangle sum to 180°.
true/false	Truth and falsity are the truth-values assigned to propositions, indicating whether they correspond with reality or not.	"Snow is white" is true; "Cats can fly" is false.

Mr. P and the Puzzle of Truth

Once upon a time in a land called Thinktopia, there lived an evil little demon named Mr. P — short for Perplexity. Mr. P loved confusing people, especially children who asked big questions. His favourite trick? Twisting ideas until nobody could tell what was true or false.



One sunny morning, three friends — Lila, Zayn, and Mei — decided they'd had enough.

"We must defeat Mr. P," said Lila, "with the power of philosophy!"

They packed their proof bag, where they stored every justification for what they believed. Zayn whispered, "Remember, not every assertion is a fact. A claim must be tested."

As they entered the Forest of Fog, Mr. P appeared in a swirl of smoke. "Did you know," he hissed, "that the moon is made of cheese?"

"That's just a proposition," said Mei firmly. "It can be true or false, but we'll need evidence to decide."

Mr. P snarled. "Bah! Words are magic! If I say it, it must be real!"

Lila stepped forward. "That might work for an analytic statement, like 'All triangles have three sides.' That's true by definition. But your moon-cheese idea is synthetic — we'd need to check the world to know if it's true."

Mr. P rolled his eyes. "You children think you're clever! What about this: ' $2 + 2 = 4$ ' — did you learn that from experience?"

Zayn grinned. "Nope! That's a priori — we know it without needing to count apples. But when I say, 'This apple is red,' that's a posteriori — we learn that from seeing it."

Mr. P growled. "Fine. But here's a puzzle: 'If you step on a crack, the sky will fall.'"

Mei laughed. "That's a conditional! The first part — 'stepping on a crack' — is the antecedent. The second — 'sky falling' — is the consequent. But they're not connected unless you can show how!"

Mr. P stomped. "You kids are so consistent with your thinking. I'll break your minds with this: 'This sentence is false.' Ha!"

The children paused.

"A paradox!" gasped Lila. "It seems impossible, but it teaches us something about logic."

Mr. P scratched his horns. "Okay, okay... what if you had to choose: either lose your voice forever or never eat chocolate again?"

Zayn frowned. "That's a dilemma. Both choices are tough. But we'd still think carefully — no trick questions, Mr. P."

Mr. P smirked. "But what if I say, 'It will either rain tomorrow or it won't'? You can't argue with that!"

Mei nodded. "That's a tautology — always true, but it tells us nothing new."

Finally, Mr. P shrieked, "Bah! But who decides what's real? Maybe it's all just how you feel!"

Lila calmly replied, "That's subjective — from a personal view. But we try to be objective, to see the world as it really is."

And with that, Mr. P screamed and vanished in a puff of confusion. The children had used their knowledge, their reason, and their courage to beat him.

From that day on, the people of Thinktopia lived wisely — thinking, questioning, and never falling for Mr. P's puzzles again.