Study Guide #3:
Personal Identity, Mind/Body & Free Will

Chapter 7 - Self Identity, Mind and Body

1. Why does Descartes maintain that self identity must rest with self consciousness?
2. Why does Descartes think that he could exist without a body?
3. In the film "Regarding Henry," ["Total Recall"] would Locke say that Henry [Quaid] was the same person both before and after the accident [implant] which caused him to lose [change] all his memory? Why or why not?
4. In the film, "Switch" ["All of Me"] what would Locke say about the character's identity after the switch? Why?
5. Why does Locke maintain that "Consciousness alone unites actions into the same person" and, that this is the link to personal identity?
6. What is it about memory that is key to identity for Locke?
7. Is Locke's notion of identity providing us with a continuous self?
8. What is the difference between Locke's notion of identity and Descartes' notion of identity; given that both think consciousness is key?
9. Explain the following quote from Hume, "It must be some one impression that gives rise to every real idea. But self or person is not any one impression....when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I can never catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception." (Text p366)
10. Explain Kant's "transcendental unity of apperception" as it pertains to the self - or the mind/body question. What is the "transcendental ego?" How does it differ from the empirical ego?
11. Why doesn't Kant think we need the soul to posit identity?
12. Is Kant a substance dualist?
13. Sartre argues that we evince "Bad Faith" when we refuse to accept ourselves. Explain what self we are accepting. Does this mean that, for Sartre, we have some fixed identity which cannot be changed?
14. What is it about the Dr. Nefarious and Dr. Hagendaas examples Meredith Michaels talks about which leads us to believe that our bodies might be a crucial element of identity despite Descartes', Locke's and Hume's arguments to the contrary?
15. Why does Descartes argue that we must be composed of two distinct and separate substances? (3 arguments)
16. Explain the problem of "causal interaction" that is inherent to dualism. (see Descartes)
17. What is the "mind-body" problem? Include in your explanation, a discussion of how privileged access and incorrigibility complicate this problem.

18. Why does Ryle believe that Descartes' concept of the mind is like believing in the "Ghost in the Machine?" What does he mean when he said that Descartes' concept of the mind was a "category mistake?"

19. What is the "Identity Theory" and how does it resolve the problem of causal interaction with substance dualism? Why is the Identity Theory often referred to as compatibilism, property dualism or the dual-aspect theory?

20. Is Smart claiming that mental descriptions are identical to neural descriptions? If not then how does the word, "Identity" come into the theory?

21. Explain classical functionalism as a reductive strategy. How does functionalism preserve the causal feature of mental states?

22. Functionalists like Fodor argue that the mind/body problem can be resolved if we just expand our notion of the computer to include the workings of the brain (mind = software, brain = hardware). Explain the metaphor. What are the key advantages of adopting this reductive strategy?

23. What is it about Functionalism and Computationalism that has Searle in such an uproar? Explain his statement, "Syntax is not semantics." Explain his “Chinese room” counterexample to functionalism whereby he shows that one might pass the “Turing Test” and yet still understand nothing.

24. Explain Fodor’s rebuttal to Searle. Include an explanation of Fodor’s claim that there can be “no computation without representation.”

25. Churchland recommends discarding "folk psychology" in favor of a completed neuroscience. What is "folk psychology" and what is Churchland’s argument against it. Why can’t we claim that mental states and brain states cause conscious behavior? In other words, why are these two perspectives not compatible according to Churchland? Why must we reject folk psychology given its obvious real successes?

Chapter 8 - Freedom

26. Explain the role of fate in the Oedipus legend.

27. Explain the basic difference between Fatalism and Predestination given that both theories agree that what ever we do, the end is inevitable.

28. Explain Keiji Nishitani’s notion of fate. What is karma for the Buddhists?

29. Explain why evil is a problem to explain for people who believe in a god who is omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent.

30. How is the "problem of evil" resolved by St. Augustine in light of the problem of freedom?

31. Explain why Sir Mohammad Iqbal argues that we do have freedom and that this freedom is consistent with a belief in an omnipotent and omniscient god.
32. In the Yoruba tribe, Ajala plays an important role in determining our future but we too, have a role to play in the choosing of our heads. If one were to regard this as a metaphor for a modern philosophic theory of freedom, would this be an argument for fatalism, predestination or determinism and why?

33. Jonathan Edwards argues that we do not have freedom - that we are absolutely predestined to make the decisions that we make. Why does he regard this as a necessary truth?

34. Explain the difference between hard- and soft-determinism.

35. What does Sir Isaac Newton's theory of particles in motion have to do with determinism in human decision making?

36. Given the modern theories of indeterminate particles, relativity and Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty, does this notion of Henri d'Holbach still hold water? If indeterminism is true in physics, does it follow that we have free will?

37. Explain why Mill thought we were free so long as we continued to act consistently with who our character. What does Mill mean by “character?”

38. Explain Hospers' attack on soft determinism as seen in the following quote, "We cannot with justification blame them for their inability any more than we can congratulate ourselves for our ability....We did not give ourselves this ability; and if we lack it we cannot be blamed for not having it."

39. Anthony Burgess (A Clockwork Orange) and B.F. Skinner (Walden II & Freedom and the Control of Men) both accept the basic concept of determinism yet they react very differently to the potential consequences of this theory. Why do they so radically disagree?

40. Explain the point of Catherine MacKinnon's quote from a coerced pornography model, "You do it, you do it, and you do it; then you become it."

41. Why must we be absolutely free according to Jean Paul Sartre?

42. Why are there no accidents in life according to Sartre?

43. What is the one thing that we have no choice over according to Sartre?

44. Why does Sartre maintain that we “choose” to be born?

45. How could the mind be seen to be like a television? What does this tell us about our freedom?

46. How might our freedom affected by the media? Compare the possible responses of d’Holbach, Mill and Sartre.