Prof. Reid notes:

-In the beginning was the word. So let’s start there. There was a singularity. There was an explosion, irregularities, and the universe expanded for 14 billion years. What is time? Why is there time? What was there before time? On an infinity timeline, we can see the first humanoid appears 4 million years ago and western philosophy is born 2,500 years ago.

-The BIG QUESTIONS are: Why something rather than nothing? Is there a god? What determines our behavior? Is the soul immortal? What is love? What is truth? What is justice? (you could have a society that punishes the weak and handicapped, that is just to them. Would there be “injustices” in such a society? “Even the most totalitarian regime does what they do in view of what they think is the good.” Following the good should not mean living in fear.)

-In 5 billion years, our sun will expand (no atmosphere here at this point) and then die. Plus 100 billion years and the Andromeda Galaxy will amalgamate with our Milky Way Galaxy but there will be nothing beyond that since it will expand away out of range of our most powerful telescopes. No information will come to us from those galaxies. Humans may not even know that they exist.

-Every point in the universe is centre if the universe is really infinite.

-In 100 trillion years, there will be no suns. There will be dark matter and the odd black hole. The universe begins to die.

-Philosophy is reflecting on ourselves and our place in the grand scheme of things, of all things unlike geography, psychology, and theology which are specific.

-Determinism: If you are absolutely of this world, you are not free, you are determined by genetics; no possibility of law or morals. Sartre said that we have no soul. We are those beings who punctuate that run-on sentence that is the world. Immanuel Kant, however, said that we are free if we can reason.

-The body is made up of many things and so can decompose. That which is just one thing can’t decompose (perhaps the soul therefore, can’t decompose).

-St. Anselm in 1140 tried to prove God by teaching that if you can imagine the idea of God, then you’ve already proven God. And this, according to Prof. Jeff Reid of the University of Ottawa is the best ontological “proof” of God. Another ontological example would be the word “perfection” if we never observed perfection, the concept must have been put in us by a perfect being.

-Hagel said: “Nature is meaningless.”

-What is time if time is based on our sun, 1 of billions of stars? Do animals experience time like we do? Time is a human concept/historical/related to who/when we are. How can there be time if the universe expands infinitely? Is death necessary in our concept of time?

-60,000 years ago= homo sapiens

-65 million years ago= dinosaurs (no mammals)

-Earth is 4 billion years old

-Plato: “The best thing a philosopher can do is learn how to die.”

-What is the point of bettering the world if it must die? Or your self for that matter…

-existentialism: how we exist determines meaning that we assign to the world. We seek meaning. Eg. Religion or philosophy (instill sense of wonder)…

-When a 3 year old says “That’s not fair.” S/he is being a philosopher. Trying to make sense of the world. It tends to become “uncool at around age 12.

-All humans, no matter what they think “matters” in life, will be confronted with questions of meaning.

Q & A:

1. Do you believe in alternate universes?

A: Yes.

2. Can you prove that God exists?

A: If you could prove God exists, you could define God, then you would disprove God, because God would be an object.

3. If a tree falls in the forest, and nobody is around, does it make a sound?

A: Who cares?

4. What can you do with a philosophy degree?

A: Anything

[*jreid@uottawa.ca*](mailto:jreid@uottawa.ca)