



General Certificate of Education

Philosophy 1171

PHIL2 An Introduction to Philosophy 2

Report on the Examination

2009 examination - January series

Further copies of this Report are available to download from the AQA Website: www.aqa.org.uk

COPYRIGHT

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

Copyright © 2009 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723) and a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334). Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

Dr Michael Cresswell, Director General.

Philosophy

AS Unit PHIL2 An Introduction to Philosophy 2

General Comments

This was the first time that both AS units for the new Philosophy specification were available and it is therefore unsurprising that the number of candidates taking Unit 2 was low and drawn from a very small number of centres. Therefore, any general conclusions about the accessibility of questions should be treated carefully. No individual question was attempted by more than three centres and so the extent to which there were 'typical' answers or whether the variety of quality of response reflects on the exam rather than differences amongst individual institutions is ambiguous. Nevertheless, the candidates produced a full range of responses, even from a relatively limited sample.

As this was also the first time a unit in Philosophy has been examined in January, the preparedness of students was a matter of concern. As expected, some candidates had attained a depth of philosophical knowledge and had the maturity to express it in a clear and focused analysis. Other candidates showed clear signs of ability but less capacity to express their ideas precisely; or they had yet to learn how to develop an idea or argument beyond a bald assertion; or they had focused on one point that was not as relevant as others that they had left out or merely mentioned. These kinds of weaknesses are often overcome with experience: it is to be hoped that a student with evident potential, whose performance would be improved by greater maturity and knowledge of the subject, would not be discouraged by a disappointing result in this examination. There were some students who struggled to make coherent points or otherwise displayed little or no evidence of studying any Philosophy at all.

Most candidates provided full answers that responded to all parts of the question and there was not much evidence of time-management problems, although sometimes a candidate appeared to have a much firmer understanding of one of the topics chosen, rather than both.

Theme: Knowledge of the external world

Question 1 (a)

Most candidates attempting this question were able to provide some account of the purported distinction between primary and secondary qualities in terms of perceiver independence/dependence, alongside a more or less illustrative example. Candidates were less clear on why such a distinction might be made. It is worth pointing out that the exact nature of the distinction and what prompts it is open to interpretation. Candidates who criticised the distinction were credited to the extent that their discussion shed light on the question.

Question 1 (b)

Most candidates had some knowledge of the characteristic claims of idealism (eg 'to be is to be perceived', God sustaining what there is, coherence amongst experience as the mark of veracity, and so on). Fewer candidates were clear on why anyone would want to advance idealism. Weaker candidates, therefore, were characteristically less clear about whether idealism had succeeded in overcoming the problems it set out to address, since they were not aware of them. This might have impacted on the way candidates organised their answer. Many responses contained elaborate lists of more or less relevant and accurate critical points, after a brief statement of idealism. The better responses were able to explicate idealism in such a way

that the attempt to overcome the difficulties of representative realism was presented as idealism's strengths.

Theme: Tolerance

Question 2 (a)

Most candidates provided a general account of the kind of characteristics a tolerant individual might possess, but it was not always clear which two were being offered in response to the question or how the example provided illustrated any particular characteristic. A few candidates failed to answer the question and just listed the purported advantages of tolerance in general.

Question 2 (b)

Most candidates identified a more or less extensive range of arguments for tolerance, but the better responses understood that the assumptions supporting those arguments might not be shared by some religious believers, and so these candidates were able to develop counter considerations and formulate a critical discussion. Some answers made effective use of evidence to illustrate, draw out and support points, usefully referring to the strife in the Balkans or Northern Ireland, or the economic and social success supposedly enjoyed by a tolerant society. Occasionally the discussion appeared to be devoid of any philosophical input and was instead a series of platitudes asserting the appropriateness of liberal attitudes 'in society today'.

Theme: The value of art

Question 3 (a)

Either candidates knew what 'form' was and could explain why it was significant, and achieved good marks, or else candidates had little idea and their guesses clearly reflected this. Because understanding 'form' is central to making sense of 'The value of art' option it was disappointing that many candidates did not appear to have any understanding of it. Those that did comprehend what 'form' meant often provided very effective examples.

Question 3 (b)

Again, many candidates had a clear idea of the sorts of philosophical considerations that make the status of the artist's feelings in our evaluation of a work of art problematic. These candidates provided more or less clear formulations and analysis of the issues. Some candidates, nevertheless, demonstrated little awareness of any arguments and instead became preoccupied with the examples and lost sight of the question. For instance, some responses were no more than articulate accounts of how a particular piece of music or painting emerged from an artist's emotionally charged experience.

Theme: God and the world

Question 4 (a)

The best responses to this question demonstrated a clear idea about what the notion of 'design' implies and how you might determine whether something is designed. Often the illustration (the 'eye' was a popular choice) of something evidencing design was also used to exemplify the

undermining account since most candidates identified evolution as an alternative. Some responses gave clear accounts as to why it was difficult to determine what was probable or improbable.

Question 4 (b)

Most candidates were able to provide some critical material but some found it harder to address the specific issues being questioned. Occasionally, this appeared to be a result of having a pre-set response; providing sound juxtapositions of Augustine's theodicy with an Irenaean account, but failing to focus on natural evil and instead discussing examples of moral evil throughout. Although some understanding was shown, candidates could easily have achieved higher marks if they had considered the specific requirements of the question and applied their understanding accordingly.

Theme: Free will and determinism

This question was not attempted by any candidates in January 2009.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](http://www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html) page of the AQA Website. <http://www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html>