



**General Certificate of Education
January 2012**

Philosophy

PHIL2 An Introduction to Philosophy

Report on the Examination

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PHIL2**General Comments**

On the whole responses were of a relatively high standard, as would be expected with a high percentage of re-sits. Most students attempted the correct number of questions and were able to apply at least some relevant material. Knowledge of the External World and God and the World were popular choices, as in previous years.

Theme 1: Knowledge of the External World

- 01** Most students were able to identify at least one criticism of idealism relatively well but answers were often unbalanced, with a second point being less precise or not illustrated. A common response was the problem of unperceived objects, illustrated with burning fires or hungry cats, and these varied in precision. References to God as a criticism also varied in sophistication, and those students who simply claimed using God in a theory of perception was 'a cop-out' were obviously not rewarded as highly as those who referred to a lack of empirical evidence or circular arguments regarding God's existence. There were very few misinterpretations of the question, but some lack of precise understanding of idealism.
- 02** Most students were able to identify the subject matter as representative realism. Stronger responses paid attention to the nuances of the question with focus on sense data and/or the existence of a material world which they represent. The latter was less common but did feature when students gave an idealist critique. Some students did seem to produce more 'pre-prepared' representative realism essays in which there were lengthy discussions of primary and secondary qualities, without an attempt to link this to the specific question. Most students referred to the scepticism about the material world that results from the introduction of sense data. Some of this was precise, other responses less so, with undeveloped references to brains-in-vats.

Theme 2: Tolerance

- 03** This question was answered relatively well, with most students selecting two conceptions which they could explain. There didn't seem to be any pattern in choice, with all points being selected seemingly equally. There were some students however who didn't focus on Forst's conceptions of tolerance, and instead tried to write something about the term that may be linked to tolerance (for example, *respect is important because how can we be tolerant unless we have respect for others...*). These answers tended to be vague.
- 04** Again this was answered well, with some strong answers explaining a conservative critique of tolerance, and often featured Devlin. Some students referred to repressive desublimation, with varying degrees of precision. There was a tendency for some students to launch straight into the arguments for tolerance (autonomy, strife, value of diversity). In some cases this was used to develop a sustained evaluation of these arguments was focussed on the question and rewarded highly. However, in some cases, arguments for why tolerance may *not* be a good thing were very brief, leaving the response unbalanced or unfocussed.

Theme 3: The value of art

- 05** Almost all students showed some level of understanding regarding what ‘form’ entails. Misunderstandings such as references to Plato’s Forms were rare. Most students were able to identify at least one criticism, and common responses included claims that form wasn’t necessary or that it wasn’t sufficient. The majority did present two points, although sometimes these were blurred, and occasionally the same point made twice with different illustrations. Illustrations were sometimes generalised (*abstract art, classical music*) and the better responses were illustrated with specific works. Very good responses showed detailed knowledge of art works that were used well to make the point.
- 06** Answers were generally full, and some very good responses analysed the nature of ‘truth’ with discussions of imitation and representation and/or whether these are necessary or sufficient criteria for valuing art. There were some sophisticated uses of examples. However some students were not focusing on the question, and there was a tendency to produce responses that juxtaposed the value of truth with the value of form or expressionism. These are relevant points, and were rewarded highly when they were used to show how truth may not be a necessary or sufficient point of art. But often an essay that began referring to truth developed into a discussion of the failings of the other theories and focus on the question was lost. Students should be discouraged from a ‘one size fits all’ essay on this theme, and use material appropriately for the question being asked.

Theme 4: God and the world

- 07** Most students were able to give two problems, and Hume featured prominently. Common responses included the claim that the analogy being made was a weak one, the limits of what can be inferred regarding the traditional God of theism and the Epicurean hypothesis. The main reason for losing marks was a lack of illustration, or very brief illustrations that weren’t fully exploited.
- 08** On average this was reasonably answered, but although there were few very poor answers there weren’t many exceptional responses either. Students focussed predominantly on Irenaeus and Augustine, usually with accuracy if not depth. Analysis was usually relevant but again not always well developed. There were some good responses that discussed the value of free will and whether this was justification for the evidential problem of evil.

Theme 5: Free will and determinism

- 09** Although the majority of students did show understanding of determinism and predestination, many did not present two distinctions and blurred points together. Some of the responses that did give distinct and precise points did not develop an illustration. Some responses equated predestination with fatalism in general and did not make any reference to the religious element of predestination. Although there is obvious overlap, these students tended to struggle to provide two relevant distinctions.

- 10** There were a number of rather unfocussed responses, with a trawl through determinism, libertarianism and compatibilism, and varying levels of relevance to the question. In some cases the issues of 'ought implies can' was forgotten until the last paragraph, in others there were references to moral responsibility that made the responses more relevant. Reasoning was sometimes not sharp. The best responses stayed focused on the words of the question, and were clear that in the case of hard determinism, 'ought' does indeed imply 'can' but both are redundant; we cannot do otherwise so it is meaningless to say we 'ought'. However a large proportion of students were claiming that hard determinists do not believe that 'ought implies can' and leaving it there. Strawson and Frankfurt were often undeveloped or imprecise if mentioned.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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