



General Certificate of Education

Philosophy 1171

PHIL1 An Introduction to Philosophy 1

Report on the Examination

2009 examination - June series

This Report on the Examination uses the [new numbering system](#)

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 PHIL1 An Introduction to Philosophy 1

General Comments

All part (b) questions on the paper generated a range of responses from brief and relatively uninformed to lengthy and detailed answers. Responses to part (a) questions, however, tended to be middling.

All four of the optional themes were attempted. Answers to questions were generally of an appropriate length and there was less evidence of too much time and space being devoted to Theme 1 at the expense of the second theme chosen.

It was rare to find candidates devoting too much time and space to the 15 mark questions although many candidates continue to provide unnecessary background and/or evaluative comments. However, most candidates did attempt to illustrate points when required to do so.

Theme 1: Reason and experience

- 01** This question was rarely answered well, although most candidates could identify at least one way of having a priori knowledge. There was a tendency to equate a priori with innateness and a further tendency to focus on innate ideas, capacities or instincts rather than knowledge. Also, where innate knowledge constituted one way, many candidates blurred reason, deduction, necessity and analytic truths together when trying to identify a second point.
- 02** Many responses were similar. The tendency was to identify the claim as empiricist, provide an account of mind as tabula rasa, move to simple ideas and then (via an alleged rationalist critique) to complex ideas or concepts. In fact, despite the question, an empiricist account of knowledge was rarely mentioned at all. Critical points tended to focus on solipsism, a peculiar claim that empiricists wouldn't be able to communicate with each other and sceptical arguments (through which the notion of justification was at least implicit). Some then returned to part (a) to argue that some knowledge is innate – frequently this was the first mention of knowledge – before concluding with a plea for the synthesis of rationalism and empiricism. Some responses, where knowledge featured quite prominently, scored well but there were a large number of mid-band responses focused mainly on ideas.

Very few questioned whether the view stated was shared by all empiricists.

Theme 2: Why should I be governed?

- 02** There were few good responses to this question. Most understood what was meant by tacit consent but struggled to identify and illustrate two criticisms of this concept. Most contrasted tacit with explicit consent and argued that only the latter was genuine consent but couldn't develop this beyond one point.
- 04** Answers to this question were generally weak. Very few were focused on civil disobedience. Most were focused on social contracts, political obligations and grounds for dissent generally – so, typically, dissent was linked to revolution or the removal of

governing bodies. Many were very full, informed and tangential responses. A few good responses were able to define civil disobedience, outline examples of it and consider various theoretical attempts to justify it.

Theme 3: Why should I be moral?

- 05** Again, there were few good responses to this question. The tendency was to equate self-interest with selfishness and contrast this with altruism, claiming that it couldn't possibly be right. Illustrative examples tended to be mundane. The point was frequently repeated via a second, and equally mundane, illustration.

Occasionally, where philosophical material was used, it was difficult to identify where there was a conflict – for example, rational psychological egoists would be described as immoral but illustrations pictured them acting morally – and, occasionally, points made – eg concerning ethical egoism – were simply wrong. Also, where a prisoner's dilemma illustration was employed it was frequently difficult to see what point was being made.

Good responses tended to make points about duties conflicting with self-interest and free-riding – although illustrations were often less clear and sometimes dubious.

- 06** Responses to this question tended towards polarisation. The weakest responses didn't understand the question and read it as 'there is a price to pay for being moral'. Others, quite a large number, were devoid of any philosophical content. The best responses seemed to be well-rehearsed treatments of Hobbes, Aristotle and Kant, with most arguing that morality has nothing to do with self-interest. It wasn't always clear why not and there was little critical discussion of this view.

Some average responses focused largely on Aristotle but tended to provide a generalised discussion that touched on the question in places. Some narrow responses were Nietzschean in spirit, although rarely in detail.

Theme 4: The idea of God

- 07** This was a straightforward question but, surprisingly, there were relatively few good, clear, detailed answers. Many responses devoted more space to outlining the ontological argument than to a criticism of the argument and/or more space to a response to the criticism identified than to the criticism itself.

Gaunilo's island was the preferred criticism but this was rarely explored in any detail and, frequently, the point of the argument was left implicit. Occasionally it was blurred with a second criticism.

- 08** Answers to this question were generally informed and full. Most candidates began by identifying a range of attributes and proceeded to develop three or more difficulties in some depth. Analysis was present but generally one-sided. Most were content to conclude by claiming that the concept of God is incoherent – some preferred to argue that we're not in a position to make a judgement about God or that faith can over-ride this.

Average responses tended to be either narrowly based or lacking detail or precision. Weak responses were largely tangential and focused on the idea of God as a social or psychological construction. Such responses were frequently very full.

Theme 5: Persons

- 09** Most candidates were aware of what diminution might entail and generally linked this quite well to some characteristics of personhood. However, the majority struggled to explain and illustrate two ways that a person may be diminished.

Where two ways were clearly identified in responses they tended to involve dementia and amnesia. However, a large number of responses selected one of these, typically dementia or Alzheimer's, and then gave examples of brain death or being in a coma as the second illustration (effectively describing ex-persons). Also, it was frequently difficult to distinguish between explanation and illustration. Few provided specific examples although some made good use of film treatments of, eg amnesia.

- 10** This question produced a range of responses. Many started with a version of 'Brownson' – to introduce the importance of psychological continuity – but, having done so, some stayed with the difficulties of physical continuity so that evaluation consisted of: physical continuity won't work so it must be psychological continuity that secures our identity. Those that moved on to discuss psychological continuity tended to focus on Reid and Butler and argue, via Reid, for some notion of psychological connectedness rather than continuity.

Weaker responses didn't seem to be aware of this area of the specification and, again, some were devoid of philosophical content.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.