



General Certificate of Education

Philosophy 1171

PHIL2 An Introduction to Philosophy 2

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 © 2010 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

In general, the quality of work was impressive and many candidates showed an ability to think philosophically and construct relevant explanations and reasoned arguments. The new specification puts great stress on a candidate's capacity to analyse, interpret and reason in a directed and explicit manner and it was pleasing to see that many candidates had thought about and planned their response instead of merely regurgitating information. It is worth stressing that a very good answer need not be pages long: just focused and effective.

There was a significant minority of candidates who did not appear to understand the issues at all or have much of an idea what Philosophy is: it might be worth pointing out that AS Philosophy demands more specialism than, say, General Studies.

Theme 1: Knowledge of the external world

- 01** Most candidates were able to identify and illustrate some differences between sense-data and physical objects, but those who knew and understood the distinction in the context of representative realism and sense-data theory had a much firmer grasp of the details that mattered. Less certain candidates often blurred proposed differences with the primary/secondary qualities distinction or tried to work out what 'naïve realists' would have to say about the contrast – and so their answers were often muddled.
- 02** Overall, this was the least well answered of all the questions. Perhaps this is the most overtly theoretical option from PHIL2: many candidates were confused about terminology and what was at stake in the debate, including the notion of an 'external' world. The sharpest answers focused on the typical difficulties an empiricist theory of knowledge has in justifying inferences that go beyond the immediate objects of my acquaintance (ideas or sense-data) to the existence of an external world; and so discussed representative realism or sense-data theory accordingly. Many candidates spent time trying to explain the 'theory' behind naïve realism and why they would argue that the external world is a reasonable hypothesis: it's not obvious what candidates understand by 'naïve' in relation to so-called naïve realism. Still, credit was given for advancing a kind of common sense approach to our knowledge of the world around us. Idealism also featured and was often thoroughly misunderstood: as advancing scepticism, denying the existence of physical objects (rather than attacking the notion of material substance) and appealing to God for no better reason than Berkeley's personal eccentricity. It was also disappointing that many candidates cited representative realism only as an unproblematic solution to the sceptical difficulties emerging out of idealism [*sic*], rather than seeing 'a veil of perception' or intermediary 'appearances' as contributing to the problem of our knowledge of the external world.

Theme 2: Tolerance

- 03** Nearly all candidates identified at least one reason why tolerance should not rule out being offensive and illustrated their answers accordingly – many could exemplify two distinct considerations. Very occasionally candidates explained what tolerance involves and then lost sight of the question, but overall most responses were relevant and direct.

Perhaps the best advice emerging from responses to this part question is that candidates should make explicit which two reasons are being considered; sometimes full answers blurred a number of considerations together.

- 04** In general this was tackled well. Candidates were able to identify arguments for tolerance and also recognise potential costs. The better responses were able to distinguish between various considerations – which less precise responses blurred together – and, subsequently, the significance of particular examples or the target of critical comments was definite and credited accordingly. Occasionally, candidates used the essay merely as a vehicle for expressing their personal intolerance towards particular groups which, even if granted as ‘cost’, was bound to be a very narrow answer.

Theme 3: The value of art

- 05** This was mostly answered well. Candidates identified various reasons why being ‘emotionally moving’ was not a satisfactory characterisation of being art and illustrated their ideas effectively. Apart from the relevance of the point made earlier in relation to 2 (a) about blurring, it might be worth stressing that the examples need not focus on painting and sculpture and that other kinds of art work (eg literature, drama, film, music, architecture and so on) should also be considered.
- 06** Most candidates were able to contrast instances of informative art with valued art that did not inform. Less effective responses tended towards a very general referencing of different reasons for valuing art with a number of more or less related examples. Better responses analysed the different ways art might be supposed informative and then discussed specific issues related to the different options. Some of this critical discussion was sophisticated and pithy and showed a pleasing capacity to organise reasons into effective arguments.

Theme 4: God and the world

- 07** Again, most candidates were able to identify and illustrate their answers appropriately. Weaker responses tended to be too brief, blur arguments together or lack precision, but a few candidates failed to make it clear in what way a world containing pain and suffering might be ‘better than’ a world without (eg is a world in which famine and disease regulate population growth a better world than a superabundant world without famine and disease?).
- 08** Most responses focused on Aquinas’ and Paley’s presentations of the teleological argument, Hume’s criticisms and the implications of Darwin. Although frequently relevant, weaker responses tended to write everything down in no particular order: the stronger responses made the structure of the argument explicit and dealt with each element systematically. A number of candidates considered the status of the ‘hypothesis’, questioned whether you could or should look at the evidence ‘neutrally’, or contrasted the nature of faith with theoretical speculation. Overall, responses showed a sound grasp of the issues.

Theme 5: Free will and determinism

- 09** Some candidates had a clear conception of what determinism involves and a clear notion of fate, which they drew out in terms of omniscience and timeless truths. Most candidates had a reasonable grasp of determinism and were able to say something about fate, even if they appeared to be thinking on their feet. Examiners credited more general characterisations of fate as something ‘written in the stars’. Some candidates had no idea what determinism or fate might be and appeared to be guessing (so a number suggested that determinism was being ‘determined to succeed’ and fate amounted to ‘suffering from a fatal disease’). Rather like Question 1, if centres opt for topics requiring mastery of a technical vocabulary then it is important that candidates understand the terms accurately.
- 10** Most candidates were able to a lesser or greater degree to ‘explore’ (ie examine without prejudice) the claim, analysing various ways in which the notion of ‘nature’ might be understood and drawing out relevant implications regarding ‘choice’. Some candidates assumed nature meant, for instance, a person’s character or their genes: as long as it was clear that the candidate was exploring the issue ‘understood as...’ then examiners credited the response.

A few answers were very general overviews of the debate about free will and determinism that often became entangled in poorly understood distinctions between hard and soft determinism. Fortunately, most candidates tried to address the specific demands of the question rather than being side-tracked into offering unhelpful surveys of who said what, where, and when.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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