Teacher Resource Bank

A Level Philosophy

PHIL3: Key Themes in Philosophy

Exemplar Responses to the June 2010 Examination

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A2 Philosophy: PHIL3

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Section A: Philosophy of mind

01 Assess eliminative materialism.

(50 marks)

Eliminative materialism is the view that mental states do not exist and that there are only physical brain states. It rejects so called 'folk psychology' which describes us as happy, sad, angry etc. and claims we should replace with wholly scientific language instead. For example, instead of saying Bob is sad, we should say that Bob has low levels of serotonin.

By completely eliminating mental states, we first of all get rid of what is known as the problem of interaction, which is created by a dualist view of body and mind. Substance dualism claims that the mind and body are made from two different substances, immaterial and material respectively. Descartes' argued they must be made of different substances because of the many differences between them. The mind is private, subjective and crucial to who Descartes is, whereas the body is public, objectively observable and unessential to who Descartes is.

Aside from the overwhelming evidence from modern science contradicting this last claim such as the strong correlation between brain states and 'mental states', claiming the body and the mind are two different substances raises the question as to how an immaterial mind and a physical body interact. Modern science suggests that the world is causally closed and only the physical can affect the physical. Gilbert Ryle referred to substance dualism as 'the dogma of the ghost in the machine', as an immaterial mind interacting with a physical body is about as likely as an immaterial ghost operating a physical machine. Eliminative materialism dissolves this problem altogether by eliminating mental states, and so removing any problem of interaction.

But isn't eliminating mental states altogether sort of like opening a nut with a sledgehammer? Just because we can't explain mental states very easily, surely doesn't mean we should just throw them away completely. This view on mind and brain is counter intuitive to how we see our minds as working. The so-called 'folk psychology' that eliminative materialism criticises is the very language that has done us so well for millennia. Describing Bob as angry will help us to adjust our behaviour around him, but referring to some sort of brain state won't. Using a brain state to describe Bob misses out a lot of what we really mean when we say Bob is angry.

The eliminative materialist might reply that if there is ever going to be any hope of a unified science, it is of no use to us to refer to Bob as angry only a brain state would be of any use to us. In terms of the everyday though, the point still stands that the word 'angry' would be of more use to most people; we're not all concerned about a unified science, we just want to communicate comfortably with each other.

Any form of materialism takes its influence from modern science which seems to suggest a purely physical world. But a problem for any eliminative or even reductive form of physicalism, such as behaviourism, is the idea of consciousness that most people hold. Eliminative materialisms complete rejection of mental states is also a complete rejection of consciousness, which would basically seem to

say that we as human beings do not think, something so counter intuitive and obviously wrong that it leaves little hope for eliminativism.

To suggest that we are purely physical beings is to also ignore what is called *qualia, the subjective 'feel* of an experience for the individual. For example, the sensation of seeing something red, the taste of coffee, the sound of music. The fact that these last two examples provoke different responses in different people, some people love the taste of coffee, some people hate it, seems to prove that our experiences are subjective and processed through our own unique minds. To say we don't have mental states is to ignore this pressing problem of qualia, which cannot simply be thrown away with mental states, it is clearly there.

So although eliminativism solves the problem of mind-body interaction, by claiming there is no problem at all: there is only the physical brain, it does this at the expense of what we really believe ourselves to be: beings with subjective minds.

One materialist theory of mind that accepts the physical brain as part of it, but doesn't attempt to reduce mental states down to anything, such as behaviour in behaviourism, or eliminate them althogether as with eliminative materialism, is Biological Naturalism, as proposed by John Searle.

This theory of mind tells us that the mind supervenes on the physical brain, being reliant on it without actually being reduced to it. The mind supervenes on the brain as a painting's beauty supervenes on its brush-strokes. Eliminativism is equivalent to saying that there are only brush strokes there, and no picture!

Ultimately, eliminative materialism fails as it rejects the existence of a mind that so obviously exists, it is confusing as to how the eliminative materialist engages in philosophy at all, as without consciousness or a mind, it's a mystery as to how one would think at all.

An accurate, albeit rather brief, outline of eliminativism in the introduction followed by some pertinent critical points. First point: the problem of interaction explained, lacking some details (e.g. of why is the physical world considered causally closed). Second point: the rejection of folk-psychology is counter-intuitive and hasty (it has worked for millennia, misses out something important, is useful and unavoidable for everyday purposes). Third point: eliminativism implies consciousness is an illusion, that we don't think, which is counterintuitive. Fourth: It implies qualia are not real which they evidently are. It denies subjectivity which is absurd. All points lack some development and don't explore eliminativists' attempt to deal with these objections. Advances biological naturalism as preferred view with very limited support.

AO1: 11: Reasonably clear and not inaccurate. However, more depth possible.
AO2: 11: Relevant points, but rather narrow and not developed in depth and detail. Also rather one sided.
AO3: 13: Critical points tend to appeal to absurdity of eliminativism without development or any apparent awareness of possible defences. So argument rather one sided. Weak support for biological naturalism. Nonetheless explicit evaluation present throughout and a reasoned judgement advanced.

Evaluation lacked detail. Qualia referred to but specific arguments and a discussion of those arguments would help.

34/35

02 Is any account of how the mind affects the body, and the body affects the mind, convincing? ***(50 marks)***

The question of the relationship between mind and body is relevant to all theories of mind. The nature of the problem is that, if the mind is a non-physical entity which is distinct from the physical body it is problematic to describe the relationship between the two.

The problem of interaction is one that occurs as a result of substance dualism. Originally observed by Descartes' substance dualism holds that the mind and body are two different entities. The mind is responsible for the consciousness and is a key element to what makes human beings what we are. The body is the physical side to humans and acts as 'the seat of intelligence' for the mind, meaning that the mind interprets the world through the body. Descartes uses several strands of reasoning to reach this conclusion. Firstly, the body is extendable whereas the mind is not; while we can conceive of half a body. We cannot conceive of half a mind This implies that they are two entities. Secondly, we can conceive of the mind as separate from the body. Conscious thought does not require physical stimulus. Finally, there is a difference in the nature of the mind and body meaning that while the body can be deceived, the mind cannot. For these reasons it can be concluded that the mind and body are different to each other. This raises the question of how they interact. Descartes maintains that the body affects the mind the mind also affects the body. Evidence of the body affecting the mind is the feeling of pain, for example if something is wrong with the body, pain is a signal that alerts the mind. This shows that there must be some link between the two. This is strengthened by the fact the mind also affects the body. Evidence of this is that the workings of the mind influence what the body does, we act based on our desires and reasoning. Descartes explains this with the analogy of the pilot and the ship. A pilot controls a ship, like a mind controls a body. He observes his surroundings from within the ship and manoeuvres accordingly. However, Descartes also uses the analogy to highlight a significant difference between the two. If there is a problem with the ship, the pilot must get out and explore the ship to identify the problem. The body, on the other hand, can inform the mind. Furthermore, the mind cannot leave the body.

The question is whether or not this offers a coherent account for the relationship between mind and body. Mind brain identity theory (MBIT) offers a criticism of substance dualism stating that it commits the masked man fallacy. MBIT says that just because the body and mind appear different does not mean that they are numerically different. When we talk of the mind, or mental states, we are essentially describing an element to physical brain states. MBIT maintains that dualism incorrectly applies Leibniz' Law while dualism says that the mind and body are qualitatively, and thus numerically, different, MBIT says that the appearance of mind is simply a feature of the body. Consequently, it is a reductive materialist theory. Although this solves the problem of interaction, if mental states are brain states then they are physical and there is no problem in explaining interaction between physical entities, it can be criticised by the dualist position.

By removing the distinction of body and mind and reducing mental states to brain states, MBIT fails to account for two elements of our conscious thought that are undeniably present, *qualia* and intentionality. While we can understand the physical qualities of an experience, for example the wavelength and frequency of light that causes us to see different colours, this is not all there is to the experience. *Qualia* is essentially the feeling of the experience, what it is like to experience the colour, and this holds a depth that goes beyond the physical qualities of the experience. An analogy for this is that a colourblind person can learn and understand all there is to know about the physical qualities of colours, but can still never know what it is like to experience them. This is because they lack the *qualia* needed to do so, thus there is a non-physical element to experiences. Secondly, there is the issue of intentionality. A thought is not just a collection of physical properties, it holds a relevance to other things. We have a concept of blue, for example, but we can then have preferences and feelings regarding the colour blue that go beyond our physical experiences of it. It is for these reasons that reductive theories like MBIT fail to describe the relationship between mind and body.

A third theory that aims to solve this problem is biological naturalism. This theory seeks to offer a materialist account for consciousness, thus overcoming the problem of interaction whilst avoiding the problems that face reductive theories. Biological naturalism (BN) states that there are two ways to assess the brain and what it does. On a micro level there are brain processes, synopses firing signals that allow us to experience the world. Then there is a macro level, thus being the collection of all brain activity, that manifests as consciousness and allows for the interpretation of our micro processes as a whole. While maintaining that there is a conscious element to humans that is different to a simple physical element, BN attributes this to physical causes. From here we can also see that both affect each other, as our micro processes allow for our macro processes and our macro processes influence how we react. While it could be argued that these in fact two features of the same thing, the MBIT criticism, this can be denied through analogy. On a micro level water is H20 molecules in arrangement together, but this is not enough to reason to the macro properties demonstrated by water. If the two were the same then we would be able to reason from one and the other. The BN account for mindedness is the same, we empirically know the mind and the body are distinct because we cannot reason one from the other.

While substance dualism fails to explain interaction between body and mind, and MBIT fails to account for mind but unsuccessfully offers an alternative. BN is able to do both. By offering a non-reductive materialist solution, BN convincingly explains how body and mind affect one another.

Approaches question by outlining the problem of interaction for the substance dualist approach and offers very brief outlines of Cartesian arguments for dualism. Some useful examples given as evidence of mind-body interaction and illustrates the picture using Descartes' pilot and ship analogy. First critical point is clear enough in outline (just because the mind appears different to the brain, doesn't mean it must be, and if it is the same, there is no problem of interaction), but doesn't explain the terms mentioned ('masked man fallacy', 'Leibniz's law', 'numerical and qualitative identity'). Defends dualism against the reductive view on the grounds that qualia are irreducible (discussed with some helpful illustration) but gets a bit lost trying to articulate the intentionality point. Biological naturalism advanced as an improvement on identity theory (while also solving the problem of interaction) but not too clearly (how well does the candidate understand B.N.?) but OK on a difficult topic.

AO1: 13 Precise knowledge of most of the positions discussed and in reasonable detail.
AO2: 12 Clear treatment of most points. Some a little vague and general. Relies to some degree on using technical terms without making clear how well they are grasped. So more precision needed for top band.
AO3: 16 Clear efforts to develop a critical argument throughout and within a clear structure. A clear position advanced with some support, but not fully convincing when advancing biological naturalism as a solution to the problems of irreducibility and interaction.

Section B: Political Philosophy

03 'In order to protect the liberty of individuals, the role of the state should be minimal.' Discuss this view. ***(50 marks)***

This view is essentially expressing a liberal outlook on the role of the state. Liberals such as Mill argued that the state should act as a 'neutral umpire' and as such this view intrinsically rejects other ideological views such as conservatism and furthermore also expresses a positive outlook on the nature of humanity and our autonomous nature. While this theory claims to have the liberty of the individuals at heart it also acknowledges what it means as the necessity of some restriction and restraint on them in service of increasing this liberty.

It is important to consider what actually constitutes liberty. In this case from a liberal point of view this liberty exists in the form of attempting to increase as much as possible the freedom they have. Especially the liberals focus on negative freedom as a key issue, arguing that freedom from restriction or restraint (as detailed by Berlin) was the most important form of liberty to promote. Furthermore that this freedom was not only essential for liberty, but also to promote their view of an ideal society.

They argued that this freedom, this liberty to allow individuals to do as much as possible without restraint was fundamentally necessary to highlight poor theories within that society through argument. Also that this liberty was essential when considering the potential rise of geniuses. Liberalism promotes competition, and by virtue of this competition the emergence of superior theories/ideas.

A key criticism of liberal ideological views on the role of the state in regards to liberty would be the application of any restriction. Indeed, Anarchism takes this further to argue that a fully ungoverned autonomous, state-less sovereignty as promoted by Anarchism would not protect the liberty of the individual, but rather that the state should at as 'neutral umpire', only intervening to stop restrictions on liberty. Mill crucially established his method of determining whether it is or not appropriate for the state to intervene by way of the harm principle. He argued that the state should not intervene unless it is acting upon the intent to stop a citizen abusing their liberty to cause harm to themselves or others. For example they argue they would be justified in imposing a murder law to their killings as if an individual killed another they would be removing their liberty and causing harm. A key criticism of the principle is establishing where to draw the line in regards to what constitutes harm and furthermore how much the individual should be restrained in relation to that. For example, sado-masochism constitutes harm, but would the state be satisfied by way of the harm principle in intervening? Some may argue yes, but the weakness remains that it remains essentially unquantisable to establish set parameters for harm. Harm to one is not pleasurable to another but does pleasure come into it? The thedonic Calculus of Bentham may be argued to aid this (intensity, duration, certainty, etc) but the immeasurable relative nature of harm remains a weakness.

Furthermore, classic liberalism intrinsically encourages a competitive fee market capitalist economy. By way of its lack of intervention into society it essentially allows for exploitation. (Bentham) 'Freedom for the pike is death for the minnows'. The rich/strong get richer and stronger and the weak get weaker with no way of changing their life (and with no state intervention). This is a criticism raised by Marx.

He argued that the liberal view of the role of the state was not conducive to protecting the liberty of individuals but rather it was part of a system of exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. He argued that this encouraging of a capitalist free market was alienating the individual from themselves, their fellow worker and the products of their labour and thus preventing their true liberty. He argued that to achieve this liberty of the individual it would be necessary to remove the state altogether and instead

implement a communist society (other than the transition period where the dictatorship of the proletariat would be implemented). Marx critically rejects the liberal idea of the 'social contract theory' arguing that we were not born into a system of obedience as it would suggest and that this to was further evidence of exploitation and far from protecting the liberty of individuals. Marx takes a positive view on the nature of human autonomy, arguing that after the necessary revolution where we would move 'from each according to his abilities to each according to his needs' we would all co-exist harmoniously, completely free from capitalism and the economic shackles that go with it. He argued this was true liberty and that the state only served to hinder in the achieving of it.

Weaknesses in Marx's theory are highlighted by Hume. Hume argued from a conservative ideological stance and critically rejected both Marxism and liberalism. He argued that both placed too high a value on the autonomy of man and that to protect the liberty of individuals the state should in fact take a much more active role then liberalism would suggest. He argued that people read guidelines in order to develop properly and thrive. The Conservative analogy of the state as a body can be used here. It argues the state is of an organic nature and that each individual works as a tiny part of an integrated whole. He argued that liberty of the individual could only be achieved through restriction as humans do not know what is for their benefit and that to be truly free one needs knowledge of this. His position is criticised for its seemingly intellectual nature. Who decides these rules? Who decides what we are working towards? Questions such as these move raised by Marx in a critique of conservatism. He indeed, raises a convincing point in the obedience the system requires demands, crucially identifying a possible cause of exploitation. However, conservative thinkers respond to this by arguing that without a state humanity would devolve into a 'state of nature'. While some theories have a positive outlook on this (Marxism/Anarchism) Conservatism does not.

Hume argued that in a state of nature the liberty of the individual is greatly reduced. With no laws/state/regulations individuals are free to oppress any other they have the power to. Indeed Bentham's criticism of liberalism applies have too 'Freedom for the pike is death for the minnows.' Hume argues that though a system of state controls can the greatest level of individual liberty be maximised. (Just as the liberals acknowledge the need for some restraint and seek to maximise negative freedom as opposed to having a fully autonomous state).

Many of the theories present convincing arguments, while the liberal view that to protect the liberty of individuals the role of the state should be minimal is fairly convincing, it fails to address several of the criticisms raised by Marx. Indeed minimal intervention and the encouraging of competition does perpetuate a system of inequality, however is it beyond the realms of reason that liberty does not constitute equality? But rather an equal playing field where individuals are free to compete and earn what they are due? Is that true liberty? With this in mind, no theory presents a truly equal playing field, even Marxism with its emphasis on positive freedom (freedom to) has been seen throughout history to be implemented in such a way that it became highly repressive (e.g. Stalin). While the problems are not intrinsic to the theory, they are intrinsic to humanity. Indeed Mackie argues that 'humans are intrinsically selfish'. Thus with humanities nature in mind perhaps at least to some degree a state should be in effect to restrict its citizens. Though I agree the role should be minimal to offer some of its citizens the opportunity to transcend the weakness and laws we are all subject to. The state is unfortunate, but it is necessary, and to minimise its roles is to truly afford individuals the opportunity to obtain true liberty - liberty from the majority of society.

Identifies the position with liberalism and the view that negative liberty should be maximised. Reasons given for this are rather vague versions of Mill's arguments on free speech. Discussion of anarchism is confused but gets to the harm principle (imprecisely stated) and illustration not great. The problem of how to delineate harm is mentioned but muddled with the issue of the subjectivity of sources of pleasure and not in the end very convincing. Critical point about exploitation not being prevented by a minimal government leads into an account of Marx on exploitation which is OK, if rather descriptive and not particularly well focused. Descriptive account of a conservative and paternalistic argument against liberalism attributed to Hume, returns to the exploitation point, and raises conservative worry about the descent into the state of nature where liberty would be greatly reduced. Bentham's pike and minnows,

so more state intervention promotes liberty. However, concluding with the thought that while exploitative, allowing competition may be needed for true freedom. Marxist attempts to promote positive freedoms apparently dismissed on grounds of impracticality (humans are selfish by nature). So some minimal state intervention necessary to restrain human nature and also allow (some?) to maximise their freedoms.

13 A reasonable grasp of the issues. Points not always precise or clearly developed.
12 Reasonable range of points, well directed at the question, but not always clear. Some imprecision at points and the development somewhat random.
12 Critical appreciation shown and a genuine attempt to argue a case. But the argument, although clear in its general direction, lacks focus and precision in the detail. The concluding paragraph is particularly confusing. For although the claim that the minimal state is a necessary evil is clear enough, there's no real explanation as to why Marxist or Benthamite worries about exploitation have been dismissed. So requires better support from the essay.

37

04 Assess the claim that there are no such things as natural rights. ***(50 marks)***

There is a huge philosophical debate over the origin of rights as some people believe rights are natural and existed prior to the state where as others believe that rights did not exist prior to the state and that they are consequences of the state. It makes sense that rights do arise from the state as by definition a right is something you are provided with by a legitimate authority through legislation making it logically impossible that rights could have exited prior to the state.

Some believe that rights are natural because they believe there exists a natural moral law which is universal and absolute meaning that it exists independently of human beings or the mid and is the same for everyone. They believe that rights arise from this moral law because most people for example would agree that we have a right to life or to be free from torture and they claim that these are just known by us to be our rights because of the existence of the natural moral law. However, many natural rights supporters use God as a foundation for the existence of the natural moral law and therefore also as a foundation for natural rights. This is a problem for natural rights supporters because this leads us to ask 'does God exist?' which cannot be proven so the whole concept of natural rights is flawed by using the insecure foundation of God; suggesting that the claim 'there are no such things as natural rights' to be true.

Kant, who believed in natural rights, attempted to overcome this problem by using reason as a foundation instead of God. For example he claimed that we have a right to be free from torture because if we universalised torture, even if it benefited us to torture someone to get information out of them, we would not want to be tortured ourselves, so universalising torture results is a contradiction. Because through reason and rational thought alone we have realised it would be wrong to torture because we would not want to be tortured ourselves. So therefore he claims natural rights exist because moral principles can exist independently of human beings.

However, although it can seem as if we do have natural rights as most people do agree on main things that should be rights such as being free from torture, couldn't our desire for a right to be free from torture simply be an emotive response because we don't like torture and not actually be a moral truth that exists independently from our minds? Also Kant's whole theory is flawed by the cultural relativist critique because Kant claims natural rights are universal but there exists different rights in different cultures. For example in some cultures a man has a right to marry as many women as he wants where as in Western culture a man can only marry one women suggesting that rights are not universal and absolute and are affected by the culture, therefore suggesting that natural rights do not exist.

Bentham criticises natural rights by claiming they are ‘nonsense’ on Stilts’ because he believe they are logically contradictory and believes the argument for them is built upon unstable foundation. Bentham claimed that just because we want something to be a right such as the right to be from torture does not just mean it is a right like the saying ‘hunger is not bread’. He also claimed simply the term natural right did not make sense because the definition of a right is that it arises from the law so rights could not have logically existed prior to the state and therefore cannot be natural.

For Bentham and others who dismissed natural rights, for them, for something to be a right it has to arise from a legitimate authority and can be shown to be a right through legislation. For example the human rights act provides us with the right to be free from torture and people in support of positive and legal rights would claim that without the human rights act, or an act that provided us with the same rights, then we would not have the right to be free from torture and it would just simply be a desire to be free from torture and nothing more.

Legal rights theory has been criticised because it can appear to give the state too much power as if they control our rights, they could give and take rights as they please if they do arise directly from the state. However, it seems this could be solved if a right were created that stated certain rights once given were no allowed to be retracted by the state. For example there could be a right that says that I have a right not to have my right to be free from torture taken from me. Therefore, if such rights exist the power of the state would be limited and we would be protected against radical change to our rights.

In conclusion, the claim that there are no such things as natural rights appears to be true as the defence of natural rights is weak and by definition of a right it is logically impossible that rights could have existed prior to the state. So rights in fact arise from the law but perhaps to stop that state from gaining too much power the rights made by the state should only be created when based on common beliefs such the belief we should not be tortured.

Introduction shows understanding of the central concern. Then, despite apparently rejecting the possibility of natural rights on logical grounds, goes on to discuss the possibility of a natural moral law that all agree on and that might be God given. This approach rejected on the grounds that God’s existence is not provable. Kantian rational grounding is then considered but lacks precision and detail. Kant’s approach rejected (duties could be expression of our desires rather than rational, cultural relativism) but not fully convincingly. Return to the points that rights may be expression of our desire for rights and the logical incoherence point, somewhat descriptive. View that rights must arise from law asserted and developed through example of Human Rights Act, without this legal guarantee, rights claims are empty. Defence of natural rights on grounds that without them the state has too much power to control our rights then considered, but suggests this problem can be resolved by constitutional guarantees. Then concludes that there are no such things as natural rights, although positive rights need to conform to common morality.

12 Reasonable range of knowledge shown, although not comprehensive.
12 Clear discussion of relevant issues. Pithy, although points lack some depth with a tendency to assertion rather than full development.
14 Clear critical line developed throughout. Position advanced with some support. More sophistication possible: the arguments are not detailed enough to be really convincing.

37/8 Misses the point that grounding rights in law makes their possession purely conventional.

Section C: Epistemology and metaphysics

05 'The fact that our beliefs are subject to error shows that knowledge is impossible.' Evaluate this claim. ***(50 marks)***

'The fact that our beliefs are subject to error shows that knowledge is impossible' is a claim that very much depends on your definition of knowledge.

Beliefs are propositions that 'aim' at truth, however our reasons for believing something, our justifications can often be mistaken and are almost always subject to error. This is because any beliefs about the external world are open to scepticism. For example I could observe that a twig in water looks bent, so is bent. However objectively, the stick is in fact straight, and what I am experiencing is an illusion something we come across every day. Another sceptical argument comes from dreaming, Descartes said that we often have dreams about mundane, ordinary things, so how do we know that the reality we are experiencing empirically is not, in fact, a dream? Of course there are multiple counters to this, such as dreams are less vivid than reality, and you wake up from a dream. However the argument still stands, perhaps this reality is a dream that we haven't woken up from. Further proving that our justifications for believing something is always subject to error, because we can't get out of our subjective first personal view to 'check'. A third sceptical argument is that we could all just be brains in vats, being programmed by a super computer to think we are empirically experiencing the world through our five senses. All these three sceptical arguments show that beliefs are almost always subject to error because the justification for having those belief are. However there are, of course, exceptions. Such as knowledge of analytic truths e.g. 'all bachelors are unmarried' this is true by definition. If this belief were subject to error then the very word would be contradictory. Therefore this knowledge is not impossible because it is necessary.

The tripartite definition of knowledge, that knowledge is having a 'justified, true, belief' us relevant to propositional knowledge only, such as 'eagles are birds'. However the Gettier cases suggest that I can have all three of these necessary conditions, yet still not have knowledge because my justification was only accidentally correct. For example I could be looking at a clock in a station for the time, it says 12.00 p.m. therefore my belief that it is 12.00 p.m. is justified because it says so on the clock. Also it just so happens that at the moment I look at the broken clock it happens to be 12.00 so the justified belief is true. Therefore I have all three conditions but I don't have knowledge because the clock I was looking at was broken. This suggests that there needs to be a forth condition to the tripartite definition of knowledge. That being indefeasibility, this forth condition would make sure that the method I have for checking it is true cannot be mistaken, and in most cases is reliable. However this too leaves room for error because leads to scepticism. This suggests that 'absolute' knowledge of propositional knowledge is impossible but perhaps knowledge doesn't have to be certain to be used, only highly probable. If we went on the belief that 'the fact that our beliefs are subject to error shows that knowledge is impossible; then we would not be able to function in the world, because a lot of our knowledge is contingent, and therefore subject to change. Beliefs are mere dispositions to behave rather than something that always causes behaviour. A condition to knowledge isn't necessarily certainty, because if it was we would have no knowledge because our beliefs are always subject to error due to scepticism. We function in everyday life on knowledge that is just highly probable otherwise we would not be able to function. For example the 'knowledge' that there is a desk in front of me could be false, I could be being deceived by an evil demon, however because I can't know whether I am or not means that I just have to presume that there is because it will enable me to function in the 'external world' and I am not going to get anywhere if I only act on certain knowledge.

In conclusion the claim that our beliefs are subject to error shows that knowledge is impossible is true to an extent, in that, the claim that our beliefs are subject to error shows that having certain knowledge is impossible. Also this claim does not apply to knowledge of analytic truths such as things that are true by definition because otherwise the words would contradict themselves. Also, as a weakness of the 'brain in the vat' argument you could say that if you were you wouldn't be able to have the concept of 'brain' and 'vat', because that is what you would 'be' in a sense, so wouldn't be able to conceive of those concepts.

An apparent judgement offered at the outset: the answer will depend on how we define knowledge. Then the candidate quickly focuses on scepticism about knowledge of the external world. Three sceptical scenarios are outlined (from illusions, dreaming and brain in a vat) and possible ways of resisting such scepticism are alluded to but quickly dismissed. The general conclusion drawn is that justification for beliefs is subject to error and so (almost) all beliefs are subject to error, apparently endorsing (or perhaps just explaining) the claim in the essay title. A brief mention then made of an exception, viz. knowledge of analytic truths. Then turns to Gettier cases which show that justified, true belief is not sufficient for knowledge because the justification is 'accidentally correct'. Illustration offered to show that a fourth condition is necessary: indefeasibility. Asserted that this view leads to scepticism, and so knowledge freed from any possibility of error is not possible. However, we may be able to settle for highly probable knowledge. Certainty is also not necessary because it would make knowledge impossible. Point developed through an illustration. Conclusion underscores the initial explanation of the claim in the title that 'certain' knowledge is not possible, and makes further mention of the exception of analytic truths. Then offers as an apparent after thought a confused solution to brain in the vat scepticism.

AO1: 12 Reasonable knowledge shown. Focus could be broader.
AO2: 12 Relevant points are made and are clear enough, but not always well focused or in good detail.
AO3: 15 Some imprecision. The Gettier discussion skirts the issue somewhat. Critical line not fully sustained, but broadly clear. Conclusion has some support bar the unhelpful last sentence. The real conclusion (alluded to at the end) comes in the previous paragraph where it's claimed that we can have knowledge despite beliefs being subject to error.

38/9 Should have been more on what is meant by 'contingency'.

06 Evaluate the claim that universals exist only in the mind. ***(50 marks)***

The claim that universals exist only in the mind would be a commitment that they exist as a mental construct and therefore serve only to make sense of the world around us and arbitrary categorisation and classification. A response and direct contradiction to the claim would be to say that universals exist in reality or outside of the mind, however, there are implications to the stand point which beg the question, what are they if not mental constructs and the answers to which may be unsatisfactory to the degree that the claim stated or more preferable option of explanation.

The theory that universals only exist in the mind known as nominalism which is a position held by such philosophers as Berkeley, Hume and William of Occam. It claims that we experience an apparent, 'universal property such as a 'whale' being a whale, it is not any property of the what we have identified, but a resemblance between certain particulars or similarities which our minds have identified and placed under a general term or classification according to this similarity.

This could be cited as problematic as if the general term 'blue' is not referring to some quality or real property, then it is effectively referring to nothing at all. Berkely responds that the general term means 'all things blue' however this again seems inadequate as there are general terms such as honest, where in the proposition: 'honesty is the best policy' it seems impossible to substitute the nominalist definition 'all honest people'. The statement is referring to a quality, not the things that have it. It also seems

flawed the members under a general term may change and if it occurred whole scale, then the entire population which defined the word, no longer do, however the concept ‘blue’ would still remain the same.

It also seems to problematic to say as Hume does that we extract such ideas from our experience according to resemblance as general terms as ‘witch’ are not specific to any certain experience. However, the nominalist first responds that the universal will exist in the mind and therefore its correspondence to reality is not important, seeing as none of the concepts or universals exist in any real sense. Perhaps the biggest problem for nominalism is that the very categorisation according to ‘resemblance or similarity’ involves a universal itself. Bertrand Russell highlighted that resemblance is a relation which is a universal. Things will always have relations independent of any minds and thus the theory that they exist entirely in minds is not only problematic but self defeating.

Such a theory which states universals exist independently of minds would be classed realists. Plato was such a realist who argued that such universals as ‘beauty’ exist in reality who argued that such universals as ‘beauty’ exist in reality and as even if all beautiful things ceased to exist, then the concept of beauty would remain consistent and real. He said that perfect ‘forms’ or universals exist independently of such particulars and that they are reflected in them or what particulars have in common is the universal.

This seems to be a valid theory as it would explain the nature of our classification as nominalism fails to account for the relation that such categorisation depends on in the first place and would remove the ambiguity as to what we mean by general terms. There are however problems with realism in particular, Plato’s. Plato says that universals exist separately in a world of forms which the particulars participate in perfect universals of themselves. Aristotle raised an objection that such a theory would depend on a relationship involving the instantiation. That is that the particular is involved in a relation with the universal it is displacing. Thus an infinite regress is set up as the universal’s existence as separate from the particular instantiated in seem implausible. Thus Aristotle concluded that all universals exist as only in the particulars that display them.

Thus the nature of the universals existence becomes problematic as even Aristotle’s compromise of revision of Plato’s originals theory seems to be rather odd. For example if universals existed entirely in the particulars that displayed them, then a red box, placed ten metres away from another red box would necessitate that ‘red’ is ten metres away from itself, raising an identity problem. To say that universals come in and out of existence seems to entail a host of implausibilities which question the nature of it as universal as if it could not exist, then it is surely only a particular, existing thing.

Noam Chomsky also presents a theory of conceptualism which gives the examples of universal grammar. The examples are dual components, the first being that humans display a common ability to learn language across a broad range of mental and intellectual capabilities, which may display a universal capacity for language. The second would be that the nature of all language is the same, no matter which marginal part of the world they have originated from and are developed in. Thus there would seem to be further evidence of a universal grammar as all forms of communication (between humans) has been modelled on a concept which is arguably universal.

The issues which this development raises is that realism argues universals exist independent of our minds and nominalists argue that because they exist as mental constructs, they don’t really exist. Chomsky’s example never shows an almost composite universal which exists and is displayed through the intricacies of our grammar (uniform, universal) yet it exists as an a priori concept in the mind. Thus the positions seemed forced together as the ultimate failings of apparent existing universals is the problems associated with the nature of that existence. Whereas the limitations of saying they are mental constructs are that you can not refill the existence of apparent universals.

The only conclusion is to claim an inability to know as the answer is not empirically verifiable or analytically deducible, and is therefore metaphysical. Certain philosophers would from this argue the

meaninglessness of the question as A.J. Ayer would, whose verification principle would make it meaningless on account of it not being analytically nice or empirically verifiable. However even this seems to be unsubstantiated as the principle itself is unverifiable according to empirical observation, or analytic evidence. Therefore as Russell said the existence of universals is both certain and yet unknowable.

The view in question is briefly elucidated (universals are mental constructs and so arbitrary categorisations) contrasted with realism, and identified with nominalism. Nominalism identified with resemblance nominalism: the view that universals are resemblances between particulars recognised by minds (some imprecision). A problem for this view is then raised: if general terms don't refer to a property they refer to nothing. Response: general terms refer to the whole class of particulars with that quality. This view rejected with appeal to the idea that general terms refer to that which sets of particulars have in common, which is not dependent on the existence of particulars. The objection that nominalism cannot account for universals not grounded in experience (e.g. 'witch'), and the counter that it can exist in the mind, both seem beside the point. The 'biggest problem' for (resemblance) nominalism is that resemblance is itself a universal, is not developed. Also asserted that relations are mind-independent without argument. Platonic realism now outlined. Despite the advantages of Platonism (not clearly stated, but presumably that it explains where the universal comes from) it leads to infinite regress (unclear version of the third man argument). Aristotle concludes universals exist only in particulars. A couple of brief difficulties with this view outlined: how can universals be differentiable and subject to coming in and out of existence? Chomsky identified as a conceptualist, but attempts to make the discussion of universal grammar relevant not clear or particularly convincing. Concludes that the question is meaningless on verificationist grounds with brief critique of verificationism. Russell's conclusion not clear in relation to the question.

AO1: 11 Range of points showing some knowledge of the issues. Imprecise and unclear in parts.
AO2: 11 Relevant points not fully exploited. Some confusion with points appearing to be half-remembered/understood.
AO3: 13 Genuine efforts to develop critical angle on the issue, but development of the argument not always clear.

Section D: Moral Philosophy

07 'Cultures make different judgements about what is right and what is wrong and so there can be no moral truth.' Discuss ***(50 marks)***

This statement is claiming that because different cultures have different opinions on morality. There can be no moral truth, purely because they are conflicting. This is not a strong claim because moral truth can still exist even within conflict for a number of reasons. That some of them are wrong or that they are in fact complimenting one another are just two possible options.

Firstly let us look at the claim and its likelihood. It seems perfectly reasonable to say that if one culture believes that slavery is right and another believes it is wrong and that both cultures have well sustained arguments in their favour then moral truth surely cannot exist because morality can only accept one option. It must be that one culture is incorrect or that moral truth is false. Yet both arguments are valid. However, let us look at another example and see how both points of view are acceptable (especially when looking at it from within the culture). The death penalty is a prime example. In the UK (at present time) we do not recognise the death penalty, if someone has committed murder they are given a life sentence (minimum) which is considered as a just punishment. Death of the murderer is not seen as acceptable and it is far better for them to learn of their mistake through time in prison. We believe it to be hypocritical to murder the murderer, which also in effect makes another murderer out of the person employed by the government to fulfil the task. But in America, generally for extreme cases the death penalty is seen as an acceptable form of punishment, and according to their laws there is perfect reason behind this decision. Not only does it mean that justice is served but that the country is not expected to provide for this person and also the consequences of a murderer's actions are far more serious and so intend (although probably don't) evoke fear of the implications into a potential criminal.

Having now gone through an example of the differences between cultures we can already see a criticism rising up, and that is of moral progress and moral mistakes. In the example just used we can see that it is not that both are right and so moral truth does not exist but that perhaps there is room for progress. In the UK, we used to use corporeal punishment and see it as justice, just like America and we saw no wrong in this as it was a rational moral choice to say that the death of a murderer would maximise happiness (utilitarian perspective) as it would prevent further crimes by the same person. This was morally acceptable and 'right' at the time, since then however we have learnt that it was a moral mistake and that taking a life for a reason such as this is not the moral thing to do. One can say then, that we have made moral progression. This therefore says that cultures, just because they differ in opinions does not mean that there is no moral truth but that it had not yet been fully discovered. The UK has realised its mistake and America holds this event in the future (although it is no where near as bad as it used to be anywhere), this isn't saying that America is/was wrong but that it is still progressing.

This review can be said to be true of all differences between cultures and that some (in not all) of them still have room for progression to reach moral truths. This concept links in with Plato's idea of the realm of forms and that 'we already know everything and that all things have a form but when introduced to this world we forgot them. Through experience we will remember these things and therefore reach knowledge of morality and moral truth'.

In defence of the initial statement we should consider Wittgenstein's concept of language games. Wittgenstein says that different cultures, societies, religions etc are all playing their own games with their own sets of rules and you have to be in that game in roles to understand it. For example, Christians play the game 'I believe in God' and by being part of that game they understand religious language and other implications of it, but an atheist who is not playing the game, cannot understand it. Just because they don't understand it or believe it, it doesn't mean that it is wrong. The same is true of cultures, you have to be a part of it to understand and make sense of it. You cannot apply one set of

rules to another culture. Although this defends why their opinions differ it does not explain whether or not there is moral truth. Aristotle's virtue theory though, does offer us an explanation. He says that morals are flexible because we should try and live the most virtuous life and thus morals are virtues and we should try to 'live well' and the best possible life. This means finding a balance with our virtues (and vices). You must be courageous, but not too courageous else you will become fool hardy, and so on. This means that according to your situation/circumstances you must vary your morals to suit the conditions. Thus emphasising Wittgenstein's notion that you can't apply the same set of rules to two language games. This then suggests that cultures can make different judgements about what is right and wrong and moral truths can co-exist within world. The basic principles may be the same but they must be altered in order for the community to live well and for the individual to be the most virtuous person they can.

A.J Ayer uses the verification principle to say that something is meaningful if it can be verified (and also if it can be falsified to show how it would be meaningless), this principle can be applied to the opinions of different cultures and conclude not that they are right or wrong but they are meaningful and thus hold a sense of morality. Also if no moral truth existed then we would have to tolerate all that people did because we would have no ground to correct them/say that they were doing something wrong or immoral. This would therefore lead to the opinion that 'anything goes'. This is completely absurd and actually sends the principle in circles because if anything goes then why would are even have to tolerate other people's behaviour no one could tell us that we had to tolerate it.

Therefore we can conclude by saying that the initial statement is not satisfactory because conflicting views do no necessarily have to lead to no moral truth, but as we have just discussed we can see that it is not a case of who is right or who is wrong but a search for moral truth and the progress to it. Different opinions can actually compliment each other by both striving for a virtuous life within the culture and thus maximising happiness for the greatest number possible.

Some attempt to unpack the question, and shows awareness of a difficulty for the inference, viz. that conflict of views doesn't imply non-cognitivism. Example (death penalty) elaborated to show cultural differences (descriptive). However, the possibility of moral mistakes and moral progress imply there is a moral truth (largely asserted with little attempt to demonstrate mistakes or progress occur). Plato's forms briefly mentioned as a form of realism. Language games apparently used to defend normative relativism (somewhat descriptive). Virtue theory outlined as an explanation for how cultures can vary in their moral views because of differing circumstance. Suggestion that differences may be local expressions of the same basic principles. The verification principle is said to make competing moral claims meaningful (not clear why). Problem that normative relativism suggests we should be tolerant with attendant paradox, or worse leads to moral anarchy. Concludes by rejecting the quotation on grounds that the inference is unsound, we can pursue the virtuous life (or greatest happiness) in different ways.

AO1: 12 A range of relevant points, although the detail is often hazy. Shows some awareness of the problems with the claim made in the quotation.
AO2: 11 Reasonably clear, although again the detail of the points could have been brought into sharper focus. Some important arguments dealt with too briefly, e.g. the tolerance point, Plato's forms, language games. Some apparent imprecision, e.g. over verificationism. Virtue theory discussion could have been more detailed. Some points tend to description rather than clear argument.
AO3: 14/15 A reasoned judgement is advanced and there is a clear line throughout. The argument could have been more convincing. Lacking rigour.

37 Many philosophical opportunities missed.

08 Assess the view that what makes an action moral is that it is motivated by a sense of duty. ***(50 marks)***

The most prominent thinker in the realm of duty motivated ethics is undoubtedly Emmanuel Kant. Kant's dentology looks to find a rational basis for the moral code laid out in Christian scripture. For Kant the only moral reason for an action is that it is motivated by pure duty.

Kant believes that moral judgements are a priori, they can be deduced using reason, and reason alone. Because moral judgements are a priori they apply to everyone, there can be no circumstances under which we should act immorally thinks Kant. It is important to understand why Kant believes reason to be the only source of morality: according to Kant the only reason we act morally is because we are motivated to do so, and there are only two things which can motivate us: reason and happiness. However, according to Kant happiness can not be the basis of morality for two key reasons: firstly, happiness is subjective, as we are all made happy be different things, but morality is universal according to Kant; secondly happiness isn't necessarily moral, some people are made happy by hurting others for example, but this cannot made the act of hurting others moral. As such our motivations for acting morally must be reason.

For Kant the only significant and objectively moral concept is a good will, a good will is good regardless of the ends it seeks and importantly is free. As free a good will alone decides how to act, the end which the will seek cannot be the basis for morality because all wills seek different ends yet morality is universal. It is important to make the distinction between hypothetical and categorical imperatives at this point, only the categorical imperative can be the basis for moral theory thinks Kant. The hypothetical imperative states if you want 'x do y' – this cannot be the bases of morality because if it was then moral appraisal would be dependent on the end which you sought which cannot be the case because morality according to Kant is universal. So it is the categorical imperative which forms the foundation of Kant's moral theory. It states: 'act only on that which you can at the same time will to be universal law'. This means that before we choose an action Kant wants us to think about whether we can rationally will for everyone to act in the same way if they are making the same choice as us. There are two ways in which a maxim (the guiding principle which we set ourselves when making an action) can fail to pass the categorical imperative, these are contradiction in conception and contradiction in Will. The former dictates that in universalising my maxim I, in some way, eliminates a concept from existence e.g. if my maxim is to 'steal things when I don't have the money' then the concept of private property comes under threat as if everyone just takes what they want, no one can own anything and as a result I destroy the concept of stealing itself for you have to be able to steal something for it to be able to stolen. A contradiction in will takes place when through my maxim I will to live in a world which it logically impossible to will to live. I cannot for example will be to live in a world when my maxim is not to help others in need' because a will must seek the necessary means to its ends by definition and it may be the case that I will need help from others to meet those ends. I cannot logically wish to live in a world where I cannot meet my ends as it is a contradiction in the very concept of willing. If my maxim passes both these tests however then, according to Kant, my action is a moral one.

Kant makes an important distinction between two different types of duty, the perfect and imperfect duties. A perfect duty is absolute, one must abide by them: do not kill yourself for example. An imperfect duty, however, gives a little more leeway in how it can be applied an example being nurture your talents. According to Kant once we have come to know what our duty is through reason, we are compelled to act upon it by reason. However there are some key issues with this account of duty motivated morality given by Kant, most significantly with his crucial concept of categorical imperative.

An extremely important point to make is that it appears that there are cases where a maxim is not 'univsersalisable' by Kant's reasoning and yet the maxim seems in no way immoral for example a shopkeeper also has just won the lottery vows 'never to sell and only to buy' from hence forth - this does not seem like an immoral decision and yet it fails the categorical imperative on the grounds of contradiction in conception.

Secondly it appears that if your maxim is worded cleverly enough we can justify practically any action, for example were my maxim 'to steal on the 14th June if my name contains six letters this case would happen so rarely that these would be no contradiction in conception and yet the point remains: the person would still be stealing – an immoral act by Kant's account.

Thirdly it is important to note that universality doesn't necessarily lead to impartiality: while it may be immoral, it is not irrational to not want to help others yet hope they will help me - why should I consider others' needs or wants on a par with my own, when I make a moral judgement. It seems that contradiction in will also has its loopholes.

Another objection to Kant's categorical imperative is that Kant's contradiction in conception only works if the concept in question is somehow necessary. Take lying for example, there is nothing inherently illogical about there not being the concept of lying - Kant appears to be making a moral claim beyond that of just universalisation. Bearing these arguments in mind it seems that Kant's categorical imperative is deeply flawed and as such so is his entire theory of morality as being motivated by duty.

Identifies Kant as a proponent of the view and shows detailed knowledge of his position: morality should be considered universal, rationally discoverable and not concerned with happiness; moral action is motivated by categorical imperatives; how to determine whether a maxim is moral; contradiction in will and conception; imperfect and perfect duties. Then raises some brief objections (1) some maxims that cannot be universalised, are not immoral; (2) immoral maxims can be worded to avoid contradiction when universalised; (3) it may be rational to act in self interest; (4) contradiction in conception is not a logical contradiction. Concludes that the theory is flawed.

AO1: 13 Full range of marks can be accessed by discussion of one deontological approach and the candidate offers a pretty detailed explanation of Kant's theory.
AO2: 12 Clear and precise analytical points. Well focused on the question. But while pithy rather narrow. Candidate might have expanded on the critical points and considered how Kant might be defended.
AO3: 12 Conclusion has some support from the critical points made, but narrow in relation to the question. Alternative positions not considered. Critical points not developed.

Section E: Philosophy of religion

09 'From a scientific point of view, we can make no distinction between the man who eats little and sees heaven and the man who drinks much and sees snakes.' Assess the argument from religious experience of God in the light of this remark. ***(50 marks)***

The argument for the existence of God from religious experience relies on two things. Firstly, we have to ask if religious experience is an infallible proof of God, or is evidence in which we can infer his existence. Secondly, if the distinction between normal experience and religious experience is subjective, because that is the difference between someone being instructed by an angel in a dream, or having a dream of an angel. It can be shown that religious experience if valid is only evidence, and that interpreting a normal experience as religious is possible, and thus the evidence is in the eye of the beholder.

There are two types of religious experience, direct and indirect. Direct being an empirical event, such as seeing the Virgin Mary, and an indirect is more of an inward feeling, usually triggered by something in the public world like the night sky.

Religious experiences can normally be distinguished from a normal experience because it is a subjective and private experience such as 'seeing heaven' or 'seeing a snake'. A normal experience on the other hand might be something objective and observable like writing an essay or swimming.

William James defined four categories of religious experience: noetic, passivity, ineffability and transient. Noetic meaning an experience that you gain knowledge from; passivity meaning an experience in which you have no active role in; ineffability meaning cannot be described using the language used to refer to normal experience; and transient meaning the experience lasts a short amount of time.

A J Ayer defines a problem with religious experiences being ineffective. If someone has a religious experience and claims from that there is an existence of God in the world then this is a statement about the world. If they cannot describe anything about the world relating to this, then it can't be said that anything exists that is being inferred. He suggested that claiming that the experience is ineffable is a way of avoiding talking about it because it could be revealed to be nonsense and rejected.

Relating to the remark that 'we can make no distinction between the man who eats little and sees heaven and the man who drinks much and see snakes,' in a scientific point of view, in order for a statement about the world to be true it needs to empirically verified. Because religious experiences are usually limited to religious people, and the objects of their perceptions are private, then it cannot be verified; The man who 'drinks much and see snakes', could also be having a private subjective experience if he is hallucinating and seeing snakes, because the object of perception is not public and observable. So both experiences are the same, because its starts with an observable behaviour, and both claim to have perceived something that cannot be publicly verified because of the nature of the experience.

The difference between a public experience and normal experience is verifiability of the object of perception. If I claim I have seen a ball, and then show you the ball, then it is accepted that the object of my perception existed. But if I claim to have seen the Virgin Mary but can't show you it, then it cannot be publicly verified. If I claim that you can't prove I didn't see her, then I am committing a fallacy. If I make the claim the burden of proof is on me to show that it is true, not for someone else to prove I am wrong.

Swinburne argues the principle of credibility, and states that if a person experiences something, then the object of experience is probably there. But Davis turned this round and stated if you have not experienced something vie the principle of credibility then something is not there. Since more people have not had religious experiences, then we can infer that the divine origin of the experiences don't exist.

There is also a problem of cultured violation. Whilst one person claims an experience of God, another might claim on experience of Ganesha. Since the experiences are private and subjective then there is no way of verifying one over the other. But others may claim that they might all be experiencing a higher power subject to their cultures. Like three blind men touching different parts of an elephant and reporting different features, such as 'long and tube like' or 'big and round'. The object of their perception is the same, but they experience it in different ways. So there could be some kind of higher God, but different cultures experience them differently.

Hicks claimed that religious experiences do claim that God exists, but only certain people use their cognitive freedom to see religious significances in experiences. It is like a group of people going through a forest and hearing as assortment of bird calls. One person might be able to pick out a certain type of bird and identify it. In the same way we all have experiences of the world, and it takes the cognitive freedom of some people to see the divine origin in something. But if it takes interpretations of experiences in the world to see a divine origin then this makes the truth of God being the subject of religious experiences relative to the person having the experience.

So this means that as religious experience is only evidence of God's existence, if the perceiver integrates the experience of being of a divine origin. If someone does not have a religious experience then they can't verify someone else because it is a private experience and they have not experienced themselves then it is not evidence. From a scientific point of view, there is no difference between the person who has a religious experience, and the person who has inner mental experience and does not interpret it as God, because they are both subjective experiences that cannot be verified, so cannot be evidence.

Some efforts to unpack the question in opening paragraph, not altogether clear (is religious experience a direct proof or mere evidence of God? Is it merely subjective?), and then some analysis and categorisation of religious experience: direct and indirect experience; unlike regular experiences it is private; James: noetic, passive, ineffable and transient. Ayer criticism – ineffable experiences have no empirical content - not clearly stated. Private experiences not publicly observed and so cannot be verified so the existence of the object is not established. Principle of credulity suggests we should believe such experiences are veridical. Response that the evidence of the majority who haven't had such experiences count against a divine origin (brief). Cultural variation of religious experience suggests there is no objective basis for such experiences, countered by the analogy of the blind and the elephant. Hick and cognitive freedom to interpret experiences as of divine origin, briefly countered as subjective. Concludes on basis of arguments offered that there is no difference: religious experience is unverifiable and subjective and so cannot establish the existence of God.

AO1: 13 Full and in reasonable detail. Some efforts to address the nuances of the question by recognising the significance of the scientific point of view and the implied criticism that religious experiences are merely private and hallucinatory.
AO2: 11 Clear, pithy and well focused. But lacking some depth and detail. Should have considered differences between hallucinations and religious experiences, e.g. effects on peoples' lives, cognitive content etc.
AO3: 14 Judgement is advanced and given some support by the arguments, but somewhat narrow, and lacking depth.

10 Assess the possibility of miracles. ***(50 marks)***

When talking about miracles it is crucial that we understand exactly what we mean by 'miracle', for different definitions can lead us to startlingly different conclusions about the nature and plausibility of miracles. There are three definitions which appear most relevant to this question as those most commonly encountered by philosophy: 1 a miracle is an event of religious significance, 2 an event cause by God, 3 an event which violates the laws of nature.

This first definition: a miracle as an event of religious significance is far too subjective to be used as an effective description of miracles, for by its nature almost anything can be considered miraculous e.g. the setting of the sun can have religious significance to some, yet it is hardly miraculous. The second definition: 'a miracle as an act of God' suffers from a similar problem. Many theorists argue that anything that happens is an act of God, the continued existence of the universe by this account is a miracle, but this cannot be so, it contradicts the very idea of a miracle being something special. And so we move to the third definition: an event which violates the laws of nature, this is the definition taken to be the most accurate by most philosophers as it allows for a certain amount of objectivity.

However this definition has one key issue: it risks defining miracles out of existence by making them logically impossible (something we know not to be the case as we can all conceive of water being turned into wine etc even if it seems practically impossible). A law by definition must be contingent (as we can conceive of it not being so), general and true. So to have an event which breaks those laws would make them either not general or not true; what we should say is a miracle violates the law of known nature, but again this definition does not hold: laws of nature cannot be dependent on what we know because then they would not be 'true', an event being miraculous cannot depend on our knowledge, so perhaps we should say a miracle is a violation of what we believe to be the laws of nature. Also this definition encounters the same problem, if dependent on what we believe then as one circumstance once an event could be considered miraculous, but if what we believed to be the laws of nature we different we would not consider it miraculous. This definition also makes laws of nature sound as if they are not laws. As such it has been suggest by some that we consider a six definition: a miracle is 'an event outside the laws of nature', this definition seems to solve part of the problem monitoring the laws of nature as laws, but Swinburne points out that miracles cannot be outside the laws of nature as they place with nature and upon natural objects. As such he proposes his own definition.

Swinburne argues that we misunderstand the concept of laws. He says that a law is about generality and predictability, it predicts what happens most of the time. As such he concludes that if we can be certain that the same miracles will not happen again the concept of the laws of nature as laws are still intact, for science relies upon repeat testing as are anomaly is not enough to warrant a complete overhaul of the laws of nature. However, many have been only too keen to point out that there are many examples of miracles being repeated, for example, could we not consider the many testaments of miraculous healing repeated miracles. Others simply deny Swinburne's account of laws of nature and laws themselves.

Arguably the most important philosopher to have written in the subject of miracles is David Hume. Hume defines a miracle as 'a violation of the laws of nature by the particular Deity' and as such can come under the same attack as the third definition of miracles given; he risks making miracles logically impossible.

Hume's account of miracles focuses on testimony rather than actually having experienced a miracle himself. This is because at the time of Hume's writing on the subject there was a fascination with attempting to prove or disprove the miracles given in the New Testament of the Bible. He is above all sceptical of miracles to say the least. Hume says that belief in miracles as acts of God goes against all

of our extensive experience of how the world works and as such we should always seek a natural explanation for the event we are witnessing. Even if no natural solution can be found we should still not believe we have witnessed an act of God thinks Hume, we have two choices: 1. deny the event ever took place and assume our senses are wrong. 2. Keep on looking for a natural explanation.

Hume's account of miracles from testimony reaches a similar conclusion. According to Hume a man has sufficient reason for believing the testimony of those claiming to have witnessed miracles for 4 important reasons. Firstly miracles are never witnessed by educated or trustworthy people (basically those who easily fooled). Secondly, humans enjoy amazement and wonder and as such can be lead to believing a miracle has occurred without sufficient justification. Thirdly, miracle stories are abound in uncivilised societies and don't happen in civilised ones on finally each religion appeals to miracles as evidence for the truth of its message. In Hume's eyes these competing truth claims cancel each other out.

Even if I see a man die on the operating table and got up and walked away I should believe a miracle had occurred thinks Hume. Even if all his criteria for testimony are met Hume still thinks we should look for a natural explanation. However if none could be found he may accept something miraculous has occurred. But Hume maintains that no such circumstances has ever existed, so while there is the tiniest possibility a miracle could occur (we should sooner doubt our sense than believe it) none ever actually has and there is no evidence we ever will.

Hume's account of miracles is fairly damning, his danger in proving them logically impossible is of little consequence to him given his conclusion. Although one cannot rule out the possibility of miracles, it seems almost impossible to rule them in. Leaving aside the issue with actually defining what a miracle actually is, proving are to have taken place is impossible, the best we could conclude is that we have yet to find the natural cause for it. The only way to prove one would be if God himself admitted his role in the event, then not being a natural explanation simply is not enough.

Approaches the question by examining possible definitions of 'miracle' and rejects the first two, (that it is an event of religious significance, or an act of God) as being too broad. Opts for 'an event that violates a law of nature' and explores the problem that this definition appears to make the idea of miracles incoherent. So the definition is modified as a violation of known laws, or better, what are believed to be the laws of nature. However this is also inadequate, as it makes a miracle dependent on our beliefs. Arrives at and explores Swinburne's definition as an unrepeatable exception to the laws of nature. Turns finally to Hume's definition, which also risks making them logically impossible. But problem passed over to give Hume's argument that miracles go against the weight of past experience. Hume's further arguments against the reliability of testimony outlined accurately. Some helpful development of Hume's position and concludes by endorsing Hume – a miracle is possible, but a natural cause will always be more likely, bar God admitting his involvement.

AO1: 13 Precise understanding. Could be broader, but some points are in good detail.
AO2: 13 Clear and directed treatment of the question. Good analysis of the concept of miracle and difficulties with it and precise discussion of Hume. Some more development possible, e.g. of the further arguments which are little more than listed. How might these be attacked?
AO3: 15 A clear critical line. Arguments have some sophistication and the essay reads as a coherent whole. However, a little more development of the points or additional material for higher in the top band for each Assessment Objective.

41 Hume's argument presented but no detailed critique. Misses Hume's point regarding too few witnesses and the obvious rejoinder; how many are needed?