



## **General Certificate of Education**

# **Philosophy 2171**

## *Specification*

**PHIL4**

# **Report on the Examination**

## *2010 examination – June series*

Further copies of this Report are available to download from the AQA Website: [www.aqa.org.uk](http://www.aqa.org.uk)

Copyright © 2010 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

#### 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.

---

# PHIL4

## General comments

Many candidates showed considerable promise. There were some very detailed responses, engaging with the text, utilising knowledge and argument from other areas of the specification and arguing in a balanced manner. Some responses covered a remarkable amount of material in the time available. Sometimes there was a tendency to do too much in the sense that depth of argument was sacrificed for brief references to a wide range of points. Textual knowledge was clearly demonstrated, but there were candidates who would have benefited from a detailed reading of the text itself rather than relying on notes about the text.

## Section A

### Hume: An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding

The Hume question was not that popular.

- 01** This question was competently done. Candidates knew the principles and were able to offer illustrations of their operation. The purpose was generally understood although not that detailed.
  
- 02** Responses tended towards generality. This is one question where textual knowledge could have been more detailed. Hume's definitions were not always clearly stated. Some good critical points were often present but could have been further developed.
  
- 03** Responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of what Hume actually said. Most candidates were aware of the purpose of compatibilism but the detail of Hume's position was frequently lacking. This hampers the ensuing critical discussion and tends to push it into a generalised discussion of the free-will issue.

## Section B

### Plato: The Republic

- 04** The simile was clearly understood and most candidates were able to provide two purposes. There was, however, some blurring of the purposes. A closer reading of the text would have benefited some candidates. They knew the simile but could not provide the relevant text detail required for the higher marks.
  
- 05** This was generally well answered in terms of textual awareness. The Theory of Forms was well explained and illustrated. Unfortunately, some candidates spent too much time on this aspect and the critical discussion appeared rushed. However, there were some good discussions which addressed Plato's actual arguments and considered versification criticisms. Weaker responses never really got out of the cave.

- 06** A popular question which produced some promising responses. A very sound grasp of Plato's position was in evidence and textual support was often detailed. The critical discussions sometimes blurred a critique of the rulers with that of democracy, but some good criticisms emerged. Strong candidates anticipated how Plato might respond to some criticisms.

### **Section C**

#### **Mill: On Liberty**

- 07** Questions on Mill were popular and this question was competently done. It was pleasing to see candidates aware of Mill's historical references. The text had clearly been read. Illustrations could have been more sophisticated.
- 08** Knowledge of Mill's arguments was detailed and they were frequently well illustrated. There was some blurring of freedom of expression with freedom of action and some candidates went off on tangents before returning to the central issues. Some thought provoking examples were used, though the discussion of philosophical implications could have been more developed or made more explicit.
- 09** There were some good critical discussions, especially relating to the issues of offence and self regarding actions. The actual statement of the Harm Principle and its purpose could have been more detailed. Some otherwise able candidates missed this opportunity to score marks. Many candidates did well on this question with interesting examples being used. There was a clear awareness of the issues but a more detailed grasp of what Mill actually said would have lifted responses into the top levels.

### **Section D**

#### **Descartes: Meditations**

- 10** Descartes was a very popular option. The method of doubt was often clearly described as was its purpose. The main problem was that too many candidates failed to provide the links between the stages of the method. A more detailed reading of the text would have remedied this. It should also be noted that marks for evaluation cannot be given on 15 mark questions.
- 11** It was pleasing to see that many candidates were aware of Descartes' main arguments, though his claim that things we know cannot depend on things we do not was somewhat neglected. Candidates referred to alternative accounts of the mind-body relation. Better responses anticipated likely replies that a dualist would make. Some responses merely juxtaposed alternatives.
- 12** There were a number of detailed responses. Thorough accounts of the Trademark Argument given, descriptions of the Ontological Argument were more general and not always distinguished from Anselm's. Kant's critique featured prominently though often lacking in detail and sophistication. Too many candidates were content to claim that both of Descartes' arguments failed due to the problem of the Cartesian Circle. It would have been more profitable to have considered whether the arguments could be formulated

without reference to clear and distinct ideas. There were some good critical discussions of the Trademark Argument.

## **Section E**

### **Nietzsche: Beyond Good and Evil**

- 13** This question was not that well done. Many candidates provided detail regarding the new philosopher but too many seemed unaware of what Nietzsche said regarding the sceptic and the critic. Some candidates fell back on ordinary language meanings of the terms. Certain parts of the texts had not been studied.
- 14** There were some good, clear responses to this question. Relevant parts of the text were applied to the requirements of the question. The religious aspects had clearly been studied in detail. Alternative approaches were discussed and stronger candidates engaged in critical comparison rather than juxtaposition.
- 15** Generally this question provided answers which displayed considerable textual awareness but the evaluative aspects were less well handled. More could have been made philosophically of the distinction between master/slave morality. It was frequently well described but not so well discussed. Some candidates were content to assert its lack of historical accuracy.

As a general point regarding Nietzsche the set text needs to be studied. It may be supplemented by other Nietzsche but not replaced by them. Critical discussion of Nietzsche requires more than counter assertion, counter suggestion and rhetorical questions.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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