



**General Certificate of Education  
June 2011**

**Philosophy 1171**

**PHIL4      Philosophical Problems**

***Report on the Examination***

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# *PHIL4: Philosophical Problems*

## **General Comments**

Generally, there were some very promising responses showing an ability to engage relevant issues. The part one questions were answered well by those familiar with the text. There were, however, candidates who clearly had not read the text. This is a text-based examination and there is no substitute for textual reading. The longer questions showed a good grasp of the material though there were too many instances of evaluative points being merely stated rather than explored and/or developed.

## **Section A**

### **Hume: An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding**

In terms of specific questions, Question 01 was well done with most candidates knowing the distinction and able to illustrate it. There were some terminological confusion but these instances were few and far between.

Question 02 was competently done with candidates frequently drawing on knowledge from PHIL1. Candidates were familiar with the text and engaged in discussions of Hume's examples. Question 03 was also well done and candidates drew on knowledge from PHIL3 to broaden the discussion. There was a clear grasp of Hume's particular arguments though evaluation was not fully developed. Hume's general objection was often clearly stated and discussed.

## **Section B**

### **Plato: The Republic**

Question 04 caught out some candidates who were no familiar with the text and provided very general responses. Those familiar with the argument did well. Question 05 was generally well done with a sound grasp of Plato's position. Evaluation could have been more detailed and less counter-suggestive. There was a sound grasp of the Theory of Forms but evaluation could have been more philosophical. Question 06 again showed a good grasp of Plato and strong candidates related Plato's similes to a discussion of democracy. Some candidates focused too much on Plato's alternative system rather than on democracy.

## **Section C**

### **Mill: On Liberty**

Question 07 raised no particular problems with candidates able to provide a clear statement of the harm principle together with either Mill's applications or similar. These were generally well explained. Question 08 showed a sound knowledge of Mill on personal liberty. Evaluative discussions tended to lack philosophical precision and tend toward generality; they were competent rather than outstanding. There were too many general discussions on free speech without direct connection to the question. Question 09 was not done quite so well with Mill's historical remarks being somewhat neglected. Philosophical impact was not always a feature of the evaluation. Contrasts were frequently made with utilitarianism but often these were not fully exploited.

## **Section D**

### **Descartes: Meditations**

Question 10 was a little disappointing with too many candidates missing Descartes own objection to the argument. Weak candidates confused and conflated it with the trademark argument or provided evaluative comments which were not required. Question 11, however, was done well. There were some sophisticated discussions of the method of doubt and the 'cogito'. Many candidates were clearly aware of Descartes' purpose. There was a tendency to list points by some candidates, and these did less well. Question 12 was not popular but many showed a sound grasp of Descartes' arguments. Indivisibility requires a more sophisticated grasp that would be assisted by a more detailed study of the text. The pilot/ship issue was well handed.

## **Section E**

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

Question 13 was answered well by those candidates who had studied the text; those who had not were reduced to general and speculative comments. Question 14 was well done with some good critical discussions. Most candidates had a sound grasp of the distinction and were able to illustrate it. There was evidence of stronger critical responses though more depth was required. Question 15 again showed a sound and secure grasp of the text together with relevant examples. Many criticisms are available though most responses centred on issues regarding consistency and truth. This is perfectly acceptable, especially which counters are considered, but other criticisms are available.

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