



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2012**

Philosophy

PHIL2

(Specification 2170)

Unit 2: An Introduction to Philosophy 2

Report on the Examination

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PHIL2, An Introduction to Philosophy 2

General Comments

This series saw a full range of responses. It was encouraging to see that relatively few students seemed completely underprepared. The majority of students appeared to be aware of the assessment requirements, with fewer failing to illustrate in 15 mark questions, or provide unnecessary evaluation. Knowledge of the External World was the most popular choice, as with previous years.

Question 01

The majority of students showed knowledge of primary and secondary qualities, and the differences. Sometimes the differences were blurred, but understanding was usually apparent. There were some inappropriate illustrations, whereby the primary qualities of an object were defined as what makes it what it is (the primary quality of a table is that you can put things on it), but this was not particularly common.

Question 02

The vast majority of students were able to discuss idealism on some level, with few completely tangential responses, although there was much variation in the level of knowledge shown. Most responses indicated the mind-dependent nature of objects, but a few stated that the 'real' world did not exist. Common analysis referred to the problem of unperceived objects, often illustrated with running baths or Russell's hungry cat. God was mentioned in the majority of responses, and sometimes this was developed into a good discussion, questioning the lack of empirical evidence or circularity involved. Other responses merely asserted that the use of God was preposterous without analysis. Some good responses discussed how idealism was introduced to solve certain problems with representative realism, and critically compared the theories. However, there was also a tendency to juxtapose theories in place of critical analysis.

Question 03

There was a good level of knowledge shown in many responses, although illustrations tended to be underdeveloped or missing. Often illustrations were brief and generalised (for example 'war'). Common responses included autonomy, fallibility, diversity and strife. There was some blurring of distinctions but generally students were able to make two distinct points, and this was often answered well.

Question 04

This question produced less well focused responses than other questions. There was a tendency with some students to give generalised answers on the value of tolerance, with little reference to the issue of offence. Some answers that did refer to offence concentrated on whether we should tolerate offence (such as pornography) rather than whether a tolerance itself can include offence. Some better answers analysed the distinction between harm and offence, whether offence can be easily defined, whether offence is the inevitable result of free discussion, and whether it is necessary for the progression of ideas.

Question 05

This question was relatively well answered, with many students explaining how representation was not necessary or sufficient to value art. A number of students handled Plato's criticisms well. Some responses gave one point with two illustrations instead of two distinct points, for example, two illustrations of non-representational art to show how representation is not necessary. Illustrations were often fairly generalised ('abstract art' or 'classical music') and specific illustrations with some detail achieved higher marks.

Question 06

There were some good responses to this question; very few students were not able to show some degree of understanding, and Collingwood, Tolstoy and Aristotle appeared frequently. As usually happens with this theme, there were some answers that juxtaposed formalism and representationalism without critical analysis. Reference to alternative theories can obviously be relevant, but this needs to be done with focus on the question. The best answers maintained sharp focus on the question, referring to the feelings of the artist, whereas some slipped into a more generalised discussion of expressivism, discussing the emotions of the audience without linking this back to the question. Some good responses made very effective use of illustrations.

Question 07

This question produced the most polarised set of responses. There were some very good answers referring to verification, falsification, language games and Wittgensteinian fideism, particularly in the form of Braithwaite. However, there were a number of unfocused responses. Some students gave accounts of the origin of the idea of God, for example, Freud and Marx. Others gave unphilosophical accounts of how people pick their religions to suit their pre-existing set of values. Of those students who did focus on the relevant issues, many used parables such as the Invisible Gardener, Lunatic Student and Celestial City to illustrate. Sometimes there was a lack of depth and precision in the presentation of these. Contrastingly, some students gave detailed illustrations, leaving the point of the illustration implicit.

Question 08

Almost all students were able to show knowledge of the issue of free will and evil on at least some level, but responses did vary from basic and unphilosophical to sophisticated and critical. Augustine's theodicy of the Fall was a common response, with a full range of quality and analysis across answers. Irenaeus and Hick also featured regarding soul-making, which is obviously relevant, but the focus on free will was not always explicit. Some responses were generalised accounts of various theodicies without focus on and analysis of the issue of free will. There was a tendency towards assertion in the analysis. Focused responses discussed the value of free will, and some looked at the possibility of whether free will could exist without evil. Many students looked at natural evil as not being satisfactorily explained.

Question 09

Most students showed some understanding of determinism, and the lack of free will involved, but there many were less precise on the issue of rationality. Some students showed a lack of sharp focus on the question, claiming that to deny free will was simply irrational. Some good responses explained rationality and how this is incompatible with a lack of free will. Some students referred to morality, but often this was not linked to rationality explicitly.

Question 10

This answer produced a full range in the level of responses. Most students began with an explanation of the incompatibilist position, nearly always hard determinism, and often also libertarianism. Some developed dualism as a position whereby we could be both determined (physically) and free (mentally) with critique of this position. Although, it was possible to answer the question by arguing that determinism is false because we have free will, this needed to be carefully directed to the question, for example, discussing the definition of free will and arguing that it must be defined in positive or metaphysical terms. Some students did not do this; they simply juxtaposed determinism with libertarianism, arguing that one or the other was true without focussed analysis. There were some good responses which looked at compatibilism or soft determinism, Hume and Frankfurt often featured. In some cases there was some good analysis of compatibilism, for example, discussing definitions of freedom, or the origin of second-order desires.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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