

**MARK SCHEME for the May/June 2010 question paper
for the guidance of teachers**

9774 PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

9774/01

Paper 1 (Introduction to Philosophy and Theology),
maximum raw mark 75

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1 Critically examine the view that all knowledge starts with the senses. [25]

The empirical view of epistemology is generally associated with Aristotle's inductive approach to knowledge. Candidates might illustrate empirical philosophy through the work of philosophers such as Bacon, Locke, Berkeley and Hume, or else through a general statement of empirical philosophy, e.g. that all knowledge is *a posteriori*, so knowledge comes inductively, through linked sense-perceptions. We experience the effects of something and then reason out the causes. The opposing approach is the rationalist claim that knowledge is *a priori*, prior to sense experience and innate. We know innately that events have causes (denied of course by Hume), that objects have extension in space, that we exist in time, and so on. Rationalist approaches to knowledge might be illustrated by Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, *et al.* The view that all knowledge starts with the senses can be assessed in any way the candidate chooses, although in practice many will start with Locke's assertion that the mind is devoid of all knowledge or ideas at birth. The range of the discussion is within the discretion of the candidate, so long as what is given answers the question.

2 'It is obvious that morality is relative.' Critically assess this claim. [25]

The arguments for relativism might include descriptive/cultural relativism, i.e. the view that cultural diversity is 'obvious', which implies that morality is conceptually relative as the basis of what we observe. Some cultures practice infanticide, cannibalism, polygamy, child marriages, ritual slaughter and so on, whereas the condemnation of such practices in other cultures suggests that there is no absolute basis for these or any other form of moral judgement. In other words, the diversity thesis leads many to assume a dependency thesis, that right and wrong depend on the concepts and values of a society, and since these vary widely, then all moral judgements are obviously relative. The suggestion that morality is relative can also be argued on the basis of meta-ethics, where the conflicting claims of naturalism, non-naturalism and non-cognitivism imply that if it is impossible to agree about the meaning of moral language, and there is no objective way of justifying the meaning of 'good', 'bad', etc., then there can be no universal notion of good, and 'good' and 'bad' are relative terms. Moral relativism is also assumed by a variety of normative ethical theories such as utilitarianism, virtue ethics and situation ethics, where the variety of interpretation again suggests no objective basis for moral laws. The weakness of the relativist view is that it implies that there can be no real evaluation of objectionable practices such as cliterodectomy or burning witches, whereas such practices often stop when challenged. Relativism seems to slide into subjectivism, where there can be no good grounds for requiring moral behaviour, because only the individual can define what is good for himself/herself. Some might argue that it is obvious that absolutism is right, perhaps on Kantian or intuitionist grounds; or else that we can make a good case for moral objectivism as opposed to absolutism, e.g. neo-naturalism, where 'good' is what improves the human condition. Candidates are at liberty to include or emphasise any aspect of the debate, including, for example, the post-modern agenda.

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3 Critically assess the claim that without evidence, religious belief is worthless. [25]

This question invites candidates to consider on what basis belief in God might be considered properly basic. Candidates are likely to discuss the demarcation between rationalist and fideist approaches to belief. Evidentialism holds that beliefs must be supported by reasonable evidence. At one extreme of this, strong foundationalists hold that beliefs should be held only when they are self-evident or incorrigible. An obvious rejoinder to this is that if religious beliefs are self-evident, then there should be no atheists and no plurality of religious beliefs. The view that religious beliefs are incorrigible has no obvious answer to the counter that people are frequently mistaken in what they believe. Reformed epistemologists (such as Alvin Plantinga and W. Alston) take the fideistic stance that belief in God can be properly basic without evidence to support it beyond that of personal experience, generally on the grounds that if we are justified in accepting ordinary beliefs such as, 'I had eggs for breakfast', then we are equally justified in accepting extraordinary beliefs such as, 'God exists'. The debate can be illustrated by a wide range of material.

Critical assessment might suggest that evidentialism begs the question when it comes to belief in God, since by definition belief is not knowledge. Equally, fideist approaches to faith run the risk of justifying any kind of irrational thinking merely on the grounds of personal conviction. Some might suggest that critical rationalism follows a more acceptable middle path in requiring beliefs not to contradict scientific knowledge. Others might suggest that until our epistemology is complete then any form of belief in God is a matter of personal preference. To access the higher levels, candidates must address the suggestion that belief in God might be 'worthless'.

4 'Conscience cannot be defined.' Discuss. [25]

Candidates might define the conscience in religious terms – e.g. Augustine's view that conscience is the innate knowledge of God's moral laws, or Aquinas' view that what is innate is the God-given ability to reason. Some will use Kant's moral theory of the categorical imperative, which in effect identifies the conscience as a moral 'faculty', linked ultimately to God through Kant's over-arching justification of the *summum bonum*. Psychological views include those of Freud, that the conscience is the super-ego, the unconscious repository of childhood/parental influences, or of Bishop Butler, that the conscience is that part of the hierarchy of the self which arbitrates between contrasting principles of prudence and benevolence. Sociological views generally explain the conscience as the social conditioning the group brings to bear on the individual. In evolutionary terms, the conscience might be seen as a mechanism that makes the group stronger through individual loyalty to it. The main point of the question is for candidates to assess whether one or some of these definitions can be seen as accurate, and by what criteria they can be judged to be so, or whether the conscience is some intuitive faculty that is beyond definition. Some might consider the meta-ethical view that 'good' is cognitive but non-natural, so conscience might be seen as a faculty of the mind that gives factual information by some intuitive faculty. Judge by quality of argument.