

General Certificate of Education

Philosophy 5171/6171

PLY1 Theory of Knowledge

Mark Scheme

2008 examination – June series

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The following marking notes are not prescriptive and do not constitute 'model answers': they are intended as an 'aide-memoire' for Examiners. Marks should be awarded in accordance with the levels of response marking criteria.

1

Total for this question: 45 marks

| | |
|---|-----------|
| (a) Briefly explain two ways in which we have <i>a priori</i> knowledge. | (6 marks) |
|---|-----------|

Knowledge and Understanding (6 marks)

4 – 6 Demonstrates precise knowledge and understanding of **two** ways in which we have *a priori* knowledge. Candidates *may* associate *a priori* knowledge with rationalism and there *may* be references to Plato, Descartes and others. However, full marks can be obtained for any two of the following:

- intuition: rational insight, grasping the truth of a proposition, 'seeing' it to be true;
- deduction or demonstration: deriving further conclusions from intuited or necessarily true premises through valid argumentation;
- innate knowledge: knowledge not learned through either sense experience or intuition and deduction.

No marks are available for evaluation although knowledge and understanding of ways in which *a priori* knowledge is held may be present in evaluative answers. Answers at the bottom of this level either lack detail or blur two ways together or provide one clear and one sketchy explanation.

1 – 3 Demonstrates basic knowledge and understanding of ways in which we have *a priori* knowledge by offering a partial explanation, eg only one way is identified, or a confused explanation, eg innate knowledge is equated with instinct, syllogisms don't work, etc.

0 No relevant philosophical knowledge and understanding is presented.

| | |
|--|------------|
| (b) Explain and illustrate one strength of reliabilism. | (15 marks) |
|--|------------|

Knowledge and Understanding (6 marks)

4 – 6 Demonstrates precise knowledge and understanding of **one** strength of reliabilism. Candidates will possibly explain reliable knowledge in terms of being produced by a reliable method, a method that tends to generate true beliefs, or from a reliable source. Beyond this, reliabilism may be described as typically an externalist approach to justification. An understanding of reliabilism may be implicit in the strength identified which is likely to draw from: beliefs acquired through reliable methods may be said to be highly justified in terms of the reasonableness, probability, predictive or explanatory power associated with the source; reliabilism allows a claim to knowledge to be justly held even though the person holding it has no idea of how to justify it themselves; reliable beliefs track the truth and are reliably caused or reliably grounded; reliabilism provides a response to standard Gettier-type problems particularly, perhaps, through disallowing an internalist justification if it doesn't track the truth, etc. No marks are available for evaluation although knowledge and understanding of one strength of reliabilism may be present in evaluative answers. Answers should be placed in this level according to the depth and detail presented.

1–3 Demonstrates basic or partial knowledge and understanding of **one** strength of reliabilism by offering a partial explanation, eg a brief, accurate point with little or no elaboration, a confused explanation, eg it is difficult to identify the strength with reliabilism, or a tangential explanation focused on weaknesses.

0 No relevant philosophical knowledge and understanding is presented.

Selection and Application (9 marks)

Illustrations of **one** strength of reliabilism could offer a Gettier-type example (eg a stopped clock) to show that the belief doesn't track the truth; describe the reasonableness of beliefs acquired through sense data; discuss expertise, authority or appropriate processes in grounding beliefs; identify examples where we would want to ascribe knowledge where no internal justification is present, etc. Candidates attempting their own illustrations should be rewarded although examples from certain texts are likely to appear.

7 – 9 Selects at least one relevant example and applies this to provide a clear, detailed illustration in support of their explanation of one strength of reliabilism.

4 – 6 Selects at least one illustrative example to provide a partial illustration, lacking detail or precision, of one strength of reliabilism. Responses in this level may be characterised by detailed exposition and very brief but clear illustration.

1 – 3 Provides a basic, sketchy and vague account of one strength of reliabilism (eg it is not clear how the example provided is connected to reliabilism) **or** a relevant example is used but application to the question is tangential (eg the focus is on weaknesses) **or** the response consists of explanation only, no attempt is made to illustrate.

0 No relevant philosophical points are made.

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| <p>(c) Assess the view that some <i>concepts</i> that we have are not gained from sense experience.</p> | <p>(24 marks)</p> |
|---|-------------------|

Knowledge and Understanding (6 marks)

The view in question may be developed as the view that some of our *concepts* are innate and not gained from experience and/or as the view that certain *ideas* that we have are innate. This will also probably be identified as a rationalist view and/or as the view that certain concepts or ideas that we possess are part of our rational nature as human beings. It may be argued that *if* some truths can (or must) be known *a priori* then some of the concepts required for that knowledge are (or must be) innate. It may be suggested that certain concepts or ideas are imposed upon experience. While sense experience may initiate a process in which certain concepts are consciously acknowledged it does not 'reveal' concepts or completely structure the information they contain. On its own, sense experience is 'a blooming, buzzing confusion'. This will probably be contrasted with an alternative (empiricist) view that we have no source for the concepts we employ other than sense experience or that sense experience is our only source of ideas.

- 4 – 6** Demonstrates precise and detailed knowledge and understanding of the view that some concepts that we have are not gained from experience. Answers at the bottom of this level may be well-informed but may not maintain a specific focus on concepts.
- 1 – 3** Demonstrates basic and partial knowledge and understanding of the view that some concepts that we have are not gained from experience. Answers may lack depth, precision and/or detail *or* they may focus tangentially on knowledge and/or instinct.
- 0** No relevant philosophical knowledge and understanding is presented.

Selection and Application (9 marks)

In developing a discussion it is likely that some of the following, or equivalent, points are selected:

- certain texts (eg Descartes) may be employed to suggest some innate concepts or ideas including God, extended matter, substance, self, causation, the idea of a perfect triangle and other perfect geometric shapes, an understanding of their essential properties;
- an innate grasp of the properties of geometric shapes may also involve references to Plato or an innate grasp of deep grammar may lead to references to Chomsky;
- Plato's forms may also be referred to, as might the concept of a metaphysical reality, the form of the good and universals generally;
- it may be suggested that many concepts and ideas associated with folk-psychology are innate and extend beyond what experience provides, eg the concept of a person, the ability to employ unobservable concepts such as belief, desire, feeling, etc to explain behaviour.

An empiricist alternative is likely to feature (eg Locke, Hume):

- if, for example, having an innate concept entails conscious awareness of it then it is difficult to explain why, eg young children are not aware of certain concepts, eg God;
- some empiricists object that we have no need to appeal to innate concepts, we can explain how experience forms the basis of all of our ideas including those that rationalists suggest are innate, eg God, causation;
- the Lockean stance that there are no innate ideas, the notion of a tabula rasa;
- the Humean idea that the concepts we legitimately possess are derived from impressions *and* that the content of such concepts is similarly determined by experience.

Or other, similar points.

- 7 – 9** Selects relevant points and examples and applies these to provide a clear detailed analysis of the view that some *concepts* that we have are not gained from experience. Answers in this level develop a critical analysis of the points raised for discussion.
- 4 – 6** Selects relevant points and examples to provide a partial analysis of the view that some *concepts* that we have are not gained from experience, either narrowly focused on a couple of pertinent issues or listing a wide range of points which are not discussed in any detail and which may not be precisely stated.
- 1 – 3** Selects and applies at least one relevant point to provide a basic, sketchy and vague explanation of philosophical arguments about the view that some *concepts* that we have are not gained from experience **or** some relevant points feature among many irrelevant points in a confused or tangential approach to the question.
- 0** No relevant philosophical points are presented.

Interpretation and Evaluation (9 marks)

A range of argumentation is possible and note that evaluative points may feature in the treatment of various issues and points selected for discussion without any additional 'summing-up'.

- it could be argued that experience cannot provide an adequate account of how we acquire and/or use the conceptual framework we possess: innate ideas and/or rational intuitions are both indispensable and superior to experience as a source of important concepts;
- alternatively it could be argued that experience is clearly important to concept formation and, perhaps, both necessary and sufficient for concept formation;
- the Kantian position that, given that we are creatures *that* experience, we need to ask what must be *pre-supposed* to make sense of experience: there could be references to identity, sameness, difference, space, time, causation, etc as concepts/intuitions the mind imposes on experience in order to make sense of it. This might be suggested as a middle ground (concepts without experiential data are 'empty', experiential data without concepts is 'blind').

- 7 – 9** A critical appreciation of arguments concerning the view that some *concepts* that we have are not gained from experience is provided and a clear argument or position is advanced. This may be balanced, ie strengths and weaknesses are acknowledged.
- 4 – 6** Evaluation is present within an exposition of arguments concerning the view that some *concepts* that we have are not gained from experience but is either largely implicit in the selection of points for discussion (eg it is assumed that critical points are fatal) or asserted with limited support (either argumentation is limited or the supporting evidence is limited).
- 1 – 3** A simple and basic appreciation of arguments concerning the view that some *concepts* that we have are not gained from experience is present either in a largely descriptive response, in which points are listed or asserted without justification, or in a response in which the argument is tangential or confused.
- 0** No relevant philosophical insights are presented.

2

Total for this question: 45 marks

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----------|
| (a) | Briefly explain one reason why naïve realism is thought to be problematic. | (6 marks) |
|-----|---|-----------|

Knowledge and Understanding (6 marks)

- 4 – 6** Demonstrates precise knowledge and understanding of one reason why commonsense realism is thought to be naïve. Candidates will probably briefly describe naïve realism as the view that our senses provide accurate information about how the world really is; that we perceive reality directly; that objects have the properties we perceive them to have, etc. However, this may be implicit in an outline of one reason why this is thought to be naïve and problematic and full marks can be obtained without providing background material. The reason offered is likely to be selected from: it refuses to acknowledge genuine difficulties concerning perceptual knowledge (and several might be offered under this umbrella); it doesn't stand up to sceptical arguments (illusion, dreams, deception); it is incompatible with what we know about perspective, perceptual sets etc; it is incompatible with what science tells us about the properties of objects. Answers should be located in this band according to the level of clarity and precision presented. Answers at the bottom of this band will probably list more than one reason. No marks are available for evaluation although knowledge and understanding may be present in a more sophisticated direct realist response to the reason offered.
- 1 – 3** Demonstrates basic or partial knowledge and understanding of one reason why commonsense realism is thought to be naïve, eg the reason offered isn't clearly described. Answers at the bottom of this band may simply assert that it is a 'vulgar' position/the view of the man in the street without offering a reason why this is thought to be naïve and problematic.
- 0** No philosophical knowledge and understanding is demonstrated.

- | | | |
|-----|--|------------|
| (b) | Explain and illustrate two criticism of idealism. | (15 marks) |
|-----|--|------------|

Knowledge and Understanding (6 marks)

- 4 – 6** Demonstrates precise knowledge and understanding of **two** criticisms of idealism. Candidates will probably describe idealism, via Berkeley, as the view that we gain knowledge of reality directly; that what we directly perceive are ideas; that reality (all that exists) is comprised of ideas and perceivers. There may be references to key notions such as '*esse est percipi*'. However, this (or some of this) may be implicit in the criticisms selected for discussion and full marks are available for clear, precise statements of two criticisms. These will probably be drawn from: the difficulty of accounting for the continued existence of 'unperceived' objects and the role accorded to God; whether the continued and/or actual existence of objects is a better inference to make when accounting for the regularities in our perceptual experience; whether Berkeley is entitled to refer to God; whether Berkeley's position is in fact phenomenalist (*esse est percipi posse*); solipsism and the difficulty of knowing whether there are other perceivers; the ambiguity of statements like 'one cannot think of an object as existing outside of a perceiving mind' or any other relevant point. At the lower end of the mark-band explanations of criticisms are likely to be unbalanced, ie one good and one sketchy criticism, or blur two criticisms together or list criticisms.

1 – 3 Demonstrates basic or partial knowledge and understanding of **two** criticisms of idealism either by offering only one valid criticism or by providing a confused account in which the points selected are not clearly explained or are not clearly criticisms of idealism.

0 No relevant philosophical knowledge and understanding is presented.

Selection and Application (9 marks)

The criticisms may be illustrated through reference to any perceptual experience involving, for example, leaving and re-entering a room (baths filling-up, fires burning down); reference to the privacy of perceptual experiences; analogous examples of where God is employed as a 'God of the gaps' (even though this isn't particularly fair to Berkeley); Moore's hands; statements about perceptual experiences that are ambiguous, etc. Care should be taken to ensure that the illustrative examples provided are valid criticisms (eg Johnson's 'I refute it thus' isn't valid unless linked to something like an inference to the best explanation).

7 – 9 Selects at least one relevant example and applies this to provide a clear, detailed, illustration in support of their explanation of two criticisms of idealism. If only one illustrative example is present it must be clearly linked to two points to be placed in this band.

4 – 6 Selects at least one illustrative example and applies this to provide a partial illustration, *either* lacking detail or precision *or* relating to only one criticism of idealism. Responses in this band may be characterised by detailed exposition and at least one very brief but relevant illustration.

1 – 3 Provides a basic, sketchy and vague illustration of at least one criticism of idealism (eg it is not clear how the example provided relates to idealism) **or** the response consists of explanation only, no attempt is made to illustrate. Very clear explanations should be placed at the top of this band.

0 No relevant philosophical points are made.

| |
|---|
| <p>(c) Assess whether it is useful to refer to subjective items such as sense-data or ideas, in order to explain our perceptual knowledge. <i>(24 marks)</i></p> |
|---|

Knowledge and Understanding (6 marks)

An appropriate knowledge-base for this question could draw from a number of different theories, including representative realism, idealism and phenomenalism. The notion of a subjective item or intermediary between the perceiver and the external world might be explained in terms of that which is immediately given in experience; that which we are directly aware of; that which is the basis or foundation of empirical knowledge; that which is certain or incorrigible. Illustrative examples may be used to assist explanation. Locate answers in this band according to the depth and detail presented.

4 – 6 Demonstrates precise and detailed knowledge and understanding of the notion of a subjective item and at least one theory in which this is employed.

- 1 – 3** Demonstrates basic and partial knowledge and understanding of the notion of a subjective item or of a relevant theory. Answers lack depth, precision and/or detail. At the bottom of this band some relevant material may appear in an otherwise poorly focused or tangential response.
- 0** No relevant philosophical knowledge and understanding is presented.

Selection and Application (9 marks)

Candidates are likely to select and apply some of the following or equivalent points:

- an outline of sceptical arguments and the problems posed for commonsense approaches to perception/or the conclusion licensed by sceptical arguments concerning what it is that we are acquainted with in perception;
- there may be references to the distinction between qualities/properties and ideas; to the two aspects of Berkeley's thesis or to attempts to justify a technical language of perception;
- there may also be references to certain 'tricky' properties of subjective intermediaries such as privacy, transience, indeterminateness, etc and to associated problems such as solipsism, the status of unperceived 'objects', the vagueness or imprecision of sensory experience, the relation of one sensory experience to another, the identification or conceptualisation of sensory experience, etc;
- whether appearances 'exist'. Whether theories employing the notion of a subjective item can provide an adequate account of *what* is experienced. (Or of *why* our perceptual experience is coherent and regular);
- the difficulties of using a technical language of perception. Whether all statements about objects *can* be translated into statements about sense data: the difficulty of specifying conditions under which possible sense experiences would occur (without reference to physical objects or spatial location); the difficulty of translating statements which include references to the perceiver, place and/or time into precise sense data experiences; statements about sensory experiences underdetermine reality, etc;
- whether it is more profitable to construct a perceiver-independent technical language of perception referring to physical properties only (rather than the way things appear to us) in order to explain our knowledge of reality. Whether some form of externalism is a more adequate response to the difficulties posed by sceptical arguments;
- whether we need to presuppose a world of objects in order to explain similarities and differences in our experience and transcend sceptical problems.

- 7 – 9** Selects relevant points and examples and applies these to provide a clear detailed analysis of philosophical arguments about whether it is useful to employ subjective items in order to explain our perceptual knowledge. Answers in this band will develop a critical analysis of the points raised for discussion.
- 4 – 6** Selects relevant points and examples to provide a partial analysis of philosophical arguments about whether it is useful to employ subjective items in order to explain our perceptual knowledge, either narrowly focused on one theory or listing a wide range of points which are not discussed in any detail and which may not be precisely stated.
- 1 – 3** Selects and applies at least one relevant point or theory to provide a basic, sketchy and vague explanation of philosophical arguments about whether it is useful to employ subjective items in order to explain our perceptual knowledge **or** some relevant points feature among many irrelevant points in a confused or tangential approach to the question.
- 0** No relevant philosophical points are presented.

Interpretation and Evaluation (9 marks)

It might be argued that:

- sceptical problems concerning perception are such that we are required to employ subjective items in order to explain what is perceived (which is what we are aware of);
- this doesn't rule out objects – which are the causes of our perceptual experience (a representative realist response);
- reality is what we perceive and what we perceive are ideas. These aren't intermediaries (an idealist response);
- it is necessary to translate statements about objects into statements about sense data (percepts, ideas) in order to avoid sceptical problems (a phenomenalist response).
- We'd have no knowledge of reality at all and no meaningful experiences, unless we imposed some concepts on experience (transcendental idealism);
- we don't need subjective intermediaries – a sophisticated realism addresses the problems (a direct realist response);
- what's wrong with commonsense?

7 – 9 A critical appreciation of arguments concerning whether it is useful to employ subjective items in order to explain our perceptual knowledge is provided and a clear argument or position is advanced and supported. This may be balanced, ie strengths and weaknesses are acknowledged, or a positive or negative conclusion might be reached.

4 – 6 Evaluation is present within an exposition of arguments concerning whether it is useful to employ subjective items in order to explain our perceptual knowledge but is either largely implicit in the selection of points for discussion or asserted with limited support (either argumentation is limited or the supporting evidence is limited).

1 – 3 A simple and basic appreciation of arguments concerning whether it is useful to employ subjective items in order to explain our perceptual knowledge is present either in a largely descriptive response, in which points are listed or asserted without justification, or in a response in which the argument is confused.

0 No relevant philosophical insights are presented.