MARK SCHEME for the May/June 2012 question paper

for the guidance of teachers

9774 PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

9774/01   Paper 1 (Introduction to Philosophy and Theology),
maximum raw mark 75

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

Mark schemes must be read in conjunction with the question papers and the report on the examination.

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1   Critically examine Aristotle's theory of causation.   **[25]**

Aristotle's theory of causation integrates cause with the categories of substance, form and matter, and act and potential. Substance (things) are made up from permanent form and changing matter. Form is what the thing is (a human / tree / plant, etc.); matter is a thing's potential to change and become something else, e.g. wood becomes charcoal when burned by (actual) fire. An actual thing is needed to make a potential thing become an actual thing – fathers actualize their children. Making potential things actual is the process of cause, and according to Aristotle there are four causes which explain why the world works as it does and why everything is the way it is. These are:

- the material cause – matter itself;
- the efficient cause – the actual thing which causes potential things to become actual;
- the formal cause – e.g. the form of a human is what causes a human to be a human and not a dog;
- the final cause – the purpose for which something comes into existence.

The efficient and final causes correspond with the sense in which 'cause' is used in modern terminology. For natural objects (as opposed to manufactured ones), the efficient cause is the same as the formal and final causes, because plants and animals are normally caused by another individual of the same species.

Candidates are likely to give examples of how the four causes work (e.g. the causes of a statue or a human being) and perhaps to show the reasoning process by which Aristotle went on to postulate (in connection with his theory of motion) the existence of a first efficient cause – an unmoved mover – a non-material mind / God. Some might put the theory into its context of Aristotle's view that the only primary realities are physical things.

A critical approach to Aristotle's ideas can be adopted throughout Aristotle's account, for example:

- its reliance on his notions about the structure of the universe and the nature of motion;
- its assumption that matter cannot move itself;
- the reasoning to the first efficient cause / the unmoved mover;
- its ideas about purpose / final purpose
- the application of his ideas about cause to the nature of persons, e.g. in terms of biology / ideas about soul, etc.
- Hume's critique of causation.

2   Critically assess the claim that all knowledge is innate.   [25]

Rationalist claims about innate knowledge stem largely from the ideas of Plato and Descartes, who suggested that innate ideas / principles are placed in the mind by God. Several similar claims have been made in the fields of mathematics, cognitive psychology and linguistics, for example. Chomsky maintains that humans are born with a universal innate grammar. Leibniz held that mathematics is only empirical in terms of simplistic equations about identical physical things (e.g. that 1+1 = 2), whereas the truth that 1+1 will *always* equal 2 implies an innate knowledge about things that are not experienced. Candidates might make similar claims about morality, for example: that since concepts such as truth and justice are not empirically observable, then their truth is innate. Criticism of these concepts can come from many directions, e.g. Locke's claim that the mind is initially a *tabula rasa*, and that knowledge thought to be *a priori* is in fact merely forgotten empirical knowledge which presents itself to the mind as *a priori*.

Whatever critique is offered of the concept of innate ideas, candidates are likely to argue that empirical claims about knowledge rest on a number of different platforms, such as the success of science / induction, the explanatory simplicity of empiricism, the ability of the imagination to extrapolate and link sense experiences, and so on. Conversely, a rejection of empiricism might rest on the notorious difficulties in claiming an empirical basis for higher mathematics and logic. Further, empirical verification seems fraught with problems: if sense experience is supposed to tell us about reality, how can our experience of reality be verified to show that it is such an experience?

3   'There are no moral absolutes.' Discuss.   [25]

Most religious morality assumes the existence of moral absolutes expressed through divine commands. Candidates are likely to explain this approach through Natural Law, or biblical ethics. Some might push the discussion into meta-ethics, arguing for a non-natural approach such as that of G.E. Moore, where absolutes are acknowledged by some form of moral intuition. Some might consider Kant's approach to ethics through the synthetic *a priori*. Some might argue that there are a number of moral absolutes, e.g. prohibitions against sexual molestation of young children, against torture, and so on. The arguments against moral absolutes can come from meta-ethics, or from moral relativism. Absolutist claims face notorious difficulties in trying to reconcile moral differences between cultures, and in particular seem unable to show how there can be a solution to the problem of conflicting absolute rules. Relativist theories are equally problematic: to make cross-cultural comparisons, for example, implies the existence of a cross-cultural standard, the existence of which is implicitly denied by relativism. Moreover by comparison with previous moral standards in history, most would agree that humanity has made moral progress, yet relativism must deny that possibility.

Some might seek alternative solutions to the problem, for example by arguing that the solution to meta-ethics is to see moral judgements as being objective as opposed to absolute or relative, so that what is really going on when moral judgements are made is that there is some obvious objective standard by which all judgements are made, whether knowingly or not. In this respect, some claim that 'good' is that which improves the human condition, whereas 'bad' is that which does the reverse. Since the issue of whether any particular course of action does or does not improve the human condition requires a process of judgement, discussion and analysis, and since that process is not infallible, morality is the process by which humans seek to maintain and improve life.

4 **'The view that scripture is inspired by God is unreasonable.' Evaluate this claim.** **[25]**

The view that scripture is divinely inspired is derived from scripture itself. For example, in the Old Testament, the prophetic formulae 'Thus says the Yhwh' and 'Oracle of Yhwh' stand as guarantors of authenticity. In the New Testament, 2 Timothy 3:6 provides the classical 'inspiration text' that all scripture is 'God-breathed'.

On the face of it, the claim that scripture is inspired by God is therefore circular and unreasonable. The prophetic formulae were clearly used to distinguish true from false prophecy, yet that itself is an admission that those who heard the prophets could not distinguish true from false, otherwise, arguably, Israel would not have got itself so often into a mess. Logically, the claim is unreasonable, since no source can be its own authority. Moreover study of the biblical texts – literary, form and redaction criticism, for example, shows that the biblical books have undergone a comprehensive editing process over many centuries. Moreover they are full of errors – haplography, dittography, historical mistakes, and so on. The Greek version of the text of Jeremiah seems to be based on a shorter and more reliable version of the original Hebrew, which suggests that the Masoretic text of Jeremiah is unreliable, which in turns raises questions about the authenticity of any biblical book. The list of problems appears endless, so any concept of inspiration seems questionable.

Some might argue for a 'limited' view of inspiration – that the biblical writers were inspired by God to write, but what they wrote was still susceptible to human error; but that does not solve the problem of what is human error and what is not. Some might claim that the claim to inspiration is still 'reasonable', since the question merely asks about reasonableness, and not truth. It is a reasonable claim that if there is a God, then God would wish to communicate with humans, and that the bible might be reasonably taken as part of that communication. The claim that the life of Jesus shows humans a way out of sin and into goodness does not depend on the absolute truth of all the details recorded about Jesus in the Gospels.