

Markscheme

May 2025

Philosophy

Higher level and standard level

Paper 1

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How to use the Diploma Programme Philosophy markscheme

The assessment markbands constitute the formal tool for marking examination scripts, and in these assessment markbands examiners can see the skills being assessed in the examinations. The markschemes are designed to assist examiners in possible routes taken by students in terms of the content of their answers when demonstrating their skills of doing philosophy through their responses. The points listed are not compulsory points, and not necessarily the best possible points. They are a framework to help examiners contextualize the requirements of the question, and to facilitate the application of marks according to the assessment markbands listed on page 4 for the core theme and page 7 for the optional themes.

It is important that examiners understand that the main idea of the course is to promote *doing* philosophy, and this involves activity and engagement throughout a two-year programme, as opposed to emphasizing the chance to display knowledge in a terminal set of examination papers. Even in the examinations, responses should not be assessed on how much students *know* as much as how they are able to use their knowledge in support of an argument, using the skills referred to in the various assessment markbands published in the subject guide, reflecting an engagement with philosophical activity throughout the course. As a tool intended to help examiners in assessing responses, the following points should be kept in mind when using a markscheme:

- The Diploma Programme Philosophy course is designed to encourage the skills of *doing* philosophy in the students. These skills can be accessed through reading the assessment markbands in the subject guide
- The markscheme does not intend to outline a model/correct answer
- The markscheme has an introductory paragraph which contextualizes the emphasis of the question being asked
- The bullet points below the paragraph are suggested possible points of development that should *not* be considered a prescriptive list but rather an indicative list where they might appear in the answer
- If there are names of philosophers and references to their work incorporated into the markscheme, this should help to give context for the examiners and does *not* reflect a requirement that such philosophers and references should appear in an answer: They are possible lines of development.
- Students can legitimately select from a wide range of ideas, arguments and concepts in service of the question they are answering, and it is possible that students will use material effectively that is *not* mentioned in the markscheme
- Examiners should be aware of the command terms for Philosophy as published in the Philosophy subject guide when assessing responses
- In Paper 1, examiners must be aware that a variety of types of answers and approaches, as well as a freedom to choose a variety of themes, is expected. Thus, examiners should not penalize different styles of answers or different selections of content when students develop their response to the questions. The markscheme should not imply that a uniform response is expected
- In markschemes for the core theme questions in Paper 1 (section A) the bullet points suggest possible routes of response to the stimulus, but it is critical for examiners to understand that the selection of the philosophical issue raised by the stimulus is *entirely at the choice of the student* so it is possible for material to gain credit from the examiner even if none of the material features in the markscheme.

Note to examiners

Students at both Higher Level and Standard Level answer **one** question on the core theme (Section A). Students at Higher Level answer **two** questions on the optional themes (Section B), each based on a different optional theme.

Students at Standard Level answer **one** question on the optional themes (Section B).

Paper 1 section A core theme markbands

This task presents students with an unseen stimulus in the form of either a short text extract or an image. Students are required to explore a philosophical issue related to what it is to be human, the focus of the core theme, that arises from this stimulus. Within their critical exploration of their chosen issue, students are required to make explicit reference both to the stimulus and to their wider knowledge from their study of the core theme.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A philosophical issue raised by the stimulus is implied but not explicitly identified. There is minimal explanation of how this issue relates to the stimulus. Few, if any, references to the stimulus are made in the response. • The response demonstrates little relevant knowledge of the core theme. Philosophical vocabulary is not used or is consistently used inappropriately. Points made are poorly organized and frequently unclear. • The response is mostly descriptive and any analysis present is superficial or incoherent. Examples are included but are irrelevant and ineffective. There is little or no discussion of different points of view. Where a conclusion is included, this is very superficial or is not consistent with the rest of the response.
6–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A philosophical issue raised by the stimulus is identified but is imprecisely or vaguely stated. There is some limited explanation of how this issue relates to the stimulus. Occasional references to the stimulus are made in the response. • The response demonstrates basic knowledge of the core theme, but this knowledge lacks accuracy and/or relevance. Philosophical vocabulary is used, but often inappropriately. There is some attempt to organize the points made, but it is often unclear what the response is trying to convey. • The response contains limited analysis and overall is more descriptive than analytical. Examples are included but are ineffective. There is awareness but limited discussion of different points of view. A simplistic conclusion is included.
11–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A philosophical issue raised by the stimulus is explicitly identified. There is a basic explanation of how this issue relates to the stimulus. Specific references to the stimulus are made during the response, although these are sometimes ineffective or unclear. • The response contains some relevant knowledge of the core theme. Philosophical vocabulary is used, sometimes appropriately. There is an attempt to organize the points made, although there is some repetition and a lack of clarity in places. • The response contains analysis, although this analysis lacks development. Relevant examples are used to support the discussion. There is some discussion of different points of view. A conclusion is included.
16–20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A philosophical issue raised by the stimulus is explicitly identified. There is good explanation of how this issue relates to the stimulus. Specific references to the stimulus are made regularly throughout the response. • The response contains relevant and accurate knowledge of the core theme. Philosophical vocabulary is used, mostly appropriately. Points are generally clear and organized, and the response can be easily followed. • The response contains critical analysis, although this analysis may lack development. Relevant examples are used to support the discussion. There is discussion of different points of view. The response argues to a conclusion that is consistent with the arguments presented.
21–25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A philosophical issue raised by the stimulus is clearly and explicitly identified. There is a well-developed explanation of how this issue relates to the stimulus. Clear, effective and specific references to the stimulus are made regularly throughout the response. • The response contains relevant, accurate and detailed knowledge of the core theme. Philosophical vocabulary is used accurately and precisely throughout. The points made are clear, coherent and effectively organized. • The response contains well-developed critical analysis. Relevant examples are used effectively to support the discussion. There is critical discussion of different points of view. The response argues to a reasoned and clearly stated conclusion that is consistent with the arguments presented.

Section A

Core theme: Being human

1. Excerpt from *13 dialogues between AI and humans*

With explicit reference to the stimulus and your own knowledge, explore a philosophical issue related to the question of what it is to be human.

[25]

The following paragraphs provide only a framework to help examiners in their assessment of responses to this question. Examiners should be responsive to a variety of philosophical perspectives and approaches. Examiners should be aware that students might respond to this passage in a variety of ways including ones not mentioned in the summary below.

The stimulus consists of an examination of the dynamic dialogue concerning the convergence of technology and humanity, with a particular emphasis on the societal implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI). It presents a Socratic-style dialogue that addresses fundamental inquiries regarding emotions and the capacities of AI. The stimulus may prompt discussions of issues related to human-machine interaction and the changing character of emotions within the realm of artificial intelligence. It raises inquiries concerning the core of human emotions, empathy, and the repercussions of technology on human identity and society. The stimulus may also prompt discussions of concerns surrounding human-machine interaction and the changing landscape of emotions within the realm of artificial intelligence. It encourages the exploration of fundamental inquiries regarding the genuineness of human emotions, the limits of empathy, and the transformative impact of technology on human existence. Noteworthy philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, who contemplated the essence of technology, along with Daniel Dennett and John Searle, delving into consciousness and AI, provide valuable insights into these matters. Furthermore, existentialist philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre contribute to the discourse on human authenticity in the digital age.

Students might explore:

- The role of consciousness in defining what it means to be human (e.g. René Descartes and Thomas Nagel on self-awareness and subjective experience)
- The depth and complexity of human emotions and how they distinguish us from machines
- The capacity for moral and ethical reasoning as a hallmark of humanity (e.g. Immanuel Kant’s categorical imperative and John Stuart Mill’s utilitarianism)
- Philosophical debate on free will and determinism (e.g. Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his ideas on the social contract)
- The significance of language and communication in human existence (e.g. Ludwig Wittgenstein’s language games)
- The role of culture and society in shaping human identity (Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s “noble savage” concept and the impact of social institutions)
- Highlight human creativity and artistic expression as unique aspects of humanity
- Implications of technological advancements like AI on human identity
- Issues related to the differences and similarities between AI and humans, such as those arising from the Turing test or Searle’s Chinese room experiment
- Capacity for empathy and compassion as integral to human nature
- The role of bodily experience in shaping human existence
- How humans deal with suffering and adversity, showcasing resilience as a defining human trait
- The significance of social bonds and relationships in human life
- The role of political engagement and citizenship in defining human identity
- Ethical dimensions of human interactions with the environment and non-human life and the human quest for spiritual and transcendent experiences.

2. Image

With explicit reference to the stimulus and your own knowledge, explore a philosophical issue related to the question of what it is to be human.

[25]

The following paragraphs provide only a framework to help examiners in their assessment of responses to this question. Examiners should be responsive to a variety of philosophical perspectives and approaches. Examiners should be aware that students might respond to this passage in a variety of ways including ones not mentioned in the summary below.

The stimulus consists of a photograph depicting a young boy sitting alone in a car, dressed in a business suit, sipping coffee, and working on a computer. This image serves as a thought-provoking starting point for a philosophical reflection on the concept of being human. The stimulus may prompt discussions of issues related to human identity and societal expectations, considering the complex interplay of freedom and determination in shaping one's identity. It invites exploration into the formation of human identity, the influence of societal norms, and the delicate balance between genuine personal development and the constraints of imitation. The stimulus may also prompt discussions of issues related to human identity and societal expectations, particularly focusing on the intricate dynamics between freedom and determination in the construction of one's identity. Philosophers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau have examined the concept of the "noble savage", pondering whether individuals are inherently free or shaped predominantly by external forces. Additionally, thinkers like John Stuart Mill and Jean-Paul Sartre delve into the notion of freedom, exploring how individuals navigate their existence amidst societal norms.

Students might explore:

- The concept of human freedom and its philosophical significance
- The influence of societal norms on human identity (e.g. Michel Foucault and his thoughts on power dynamics)
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau's idea of the "noble savage" and whether human nature is inherently free or shaped by external influences
- Immanuel Kant's philosophy of autonomy and its role in shaping human identity and moral agency
- Philosophical debates surrounding the formation of individual identity
- Nature *versus* nurture in shaping human beings
- Existentialist perspectives on the essence of human existence
- Philosophical dimensions of ethics and morality in defining human behaviour
- The relationship between emotions and rationality in human decision-making
- Philosophical inquiries into gender identity and the social construction of gender (e.g. Judith Butler's theory of performativity)
- De Beauvoir's challenge to traditional norms and stereotypes
- Philosophy of childhood and what it means to be a child (e.g. Gareth Matthews)
- How adultization through technology might influence cognitive and emotional development in children
- Aristotle's notion of *eudaimonia* (human flourishing) and its relevance in defining what it means to lead a good and meaningful life
- The concept of narrative identity, exploring how humans construct their life stories and derive meaning from them (e.g. Paul Ricoeur).

Paper 1 section B optional themes markbands

This task requires students to write a thematic essay on the optional theme they have studied (SL) or two optional themes they have studied (HL). Students are presented with a choice of two questions per theme, with each question relating to one of the points of “required content” specified for that theme. Students are required to undertake a critical and explicitly philosophical discussion of the question posed, selecting and using specific examples drawn from their study of the optional theme to support their points.

Mark	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is minimal focus on the question. Points made are poorly organized and frequently unclear. • The response demonstrates little relevant knowledge of the optional theme. Philosophical vocabulary is not used or is consistently used inappropriately. • The response is mostly descriptive and any analysis present is superficial or incoherent. Examples drawn from the study of the optional theme are included but are irrelevant and ineffective. There is little or no discussion of different points of view. Where a conclusion is included, this is very superficial or is not consistent with the rest of the response.
6–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is some focus on the question, although the specific demands of the question may only be partially addressed. There is some attempt to organize the points made, but it is often unclear what the response is trying to convey. • The response demonstrates basic knowledge of the optional theme, but this knowledge lacks accuracy and/or relevance. Philosophical vocabulary is used, but often inappropriately. • The response contains limited analysis and overall is more descriptive than analytical. Examples drawn from the study of the optional theme are included but are frequently ineffective. There is awareness but limited discussion of different points of view. A simplistic conclusion is included.
11–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response is focused on the question. There is an attempt to organize the points made, although there is some repetition and lack of clarity in places. • The response contains some relevant knowledge of the optional theme. Philosophical vocabulary is used, sometimes appropriately. • The response contains analysis, although this analysis lacks development. Relevant examples drawn from the study of the optional theme are included. There is some discussion of different points of view. A conclusion is included.
16–20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response is focused on the question, showing engagement with the specific demands of the question. Points are generally clear and organized, and the response can be easily followed. • The response contains relevant and accurate knowledge of the optional theme. Philosophical vocabulary is used, mostly appropriately. • The response contains critical analysis, although this analysis may lack development. Relevant examples drawn from the study of the optional theme are used to support the discussion. There is discussion of different points of view. The response argues to a conclusion that is consistent with the arguments presented.
21–25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a sustained focus on the question, showing clear engagement with the specific demands of the question. The points made are clear, coherent and effectively organized. • The response contains relevant, accurate and detailed knowledge of the optional theme. Philosophical vocabulary is used accurately and precisely throughout. • The response contains well-developed critical analysis. Relevant examples drawn from the study of the optional theme are used effectively to support the discussion. There is critical discussion of different points of view. The response argues to a reasoned and clearly stated conclusion that is consistent with the arguments presented.

Section B

Optional theme 1: Aesthetics

3. Evaluate the claim that the artist is the one who stands apart from social convention. [25]

The aim of this question is to allow students to evaluate the position of the artist in regard to a number of other possible issues like the production and function of art and issues of censorship and political expression. An ancient, but persistent view is of the artist being a “medium” for an external source or inspiration. The Romantic view of the artist is as a somewhat isolated or solitary figure, blessed with a special talent, and this talent often outdid reason (intellect in its highest form, grasping a totality). Here, the truth content lies with the perceptions of the subject. Along with this solitary muse/genius figure there was a belief in artistic license, a sort of extra toleration in regard to moral or social conventions and norms. One implicit inference in the question is that art and the artist have a social role to play: as commentator, chronicler, and critic. Presumably, this position as an outsider is necessary for some degree of objectivity in portraying a social or moral issue. Students might also cite Mill in reference to the benefits of social tolerance for unconventional lifestyles. The political role of an artist might be examined from a political view of art, e.g. Adorno. Unlike Kantian or Idealist Aesthetics, Adorno locates truth-content in the art object, rather than in the perception of the subject. Such content is, however, affected by art’s self-consciousness at the hands of its necessary distance from society. Students might approach the question from the perspective of AC Danto and his Institutional Theory of Art: it has a subject; projects an attitude about the subject (style); it does this by (metaphorical) ellipsis which engages the audience; the work and its interpretations take place within a historical context (the institution).

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- What is convention, and who defines it?
- The artist as an outsider: observer, moral conscience, prophet
- The artist as a change agent
- Why should we heed the “message” of someone removed from day-to-day concerns, conventions, and realities?
- The role of the artist as a commentator, critic, and chronicler
- Is the function of art to be critical? To be a medium of record? Does beauty have a role in this conception of art?
- The origin of the tacit license for non-conformity
- What, if any, are the limits of this tacit authority for non-conformity?
- How exactly does extra “freedom” enhance the artistic process?
- Censorship, pornography, and political expression
- Art as propaganda
- How does art convey its “message”?
- Art produced for public consumption and art produced for its own sake, without an audience in mind
- The artist as social barometer or social thermostat
- Other perspectives, e.g. Kant, Nietzsche, and Plato.

4. Evaluate the role of the market in the creation of art.

[25]

The aim of this question is to invite students to evaluate the concepts of what constitutes a market for art and subsequent and relevant questions of value and process: the necessary conditions for the production of art, social and private, the commodification of art and its consequences, are some possible areas for discussion and evaluation. The history of art and the role of patronage (the market) are intertwined and mutually dependent. Since the Enlightenment and early Romantic period, there has been a conventional view that money and markets corrupt the artistic process and the artist. Philosophically, these Romantic roots are found in Kant and then in the German Idealists, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. This tension between creator (originator) and producer is a major source of debate. Another possible issue is what constitutes a market for art, and the limits of incursion of this market into the production of art and the role of the artist. This also raises issues of power, ownership and control, and these relationships might be analysed from a Marxist perspective (Adorno, Habermas). Danto's Institutional theory of art is also a possible position from which to approach the question.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- What constitutes a market: royal/aristocratic patronage, state funding, private benefactors, self-funded, an abstract concept of a place of free (non-coercive) exchange?
- Is there such a thing as 'private art', divorced from markets?
- Ought the artist be aware of any potential audience for their work and tailor it to fit this group?
- The mass production of art: the effects of commercialization and the "corruption" of the artistic process, the market as what people want free from patronage, Benjamin's critique of how art's aura and authenticity evolve in a market-driven way
- How does the market place a value on art: demand alone, intrinsic value, or a combination of both?
- Is it possible to imagine art without a market of some form?
- The conventional dichotomy between art and money. Is autonomy affected by payment?
- Does art produce its own market, or does it satisfy a need in the market?
- Is there a difference between an artisan who produces goods for a market, say a table, and an artist who produces a painting or musical piece for a market?
- The tension between artistic freedom and the demands of the market: quality *versus* quantity/popularity?
- Adorno and his exploration of standardization of artistic expression, Ruskin's perspectives on the industrialization of art
- Indigenous art: e.g. historical, religious, spiritual purposes
- Does the artist have a duty and responsibility to produce popular or accessible art if they are publicly funded? Is it the same level of duty to the wishes of their sponsor if they were privately funded?

Optional theme 2: Epistemology

5. Evaluate the claim that knowledge is not possible.

[25]

This question focuses on arguments for or about scepticism and welcomes a discussion in favour of the possibility of knowledge. This is the view that either certain forms of knowledge are unattainable, or all knowledge is unattainable. For example, the scientific sceptic might hold that scientific theories can neither be proved true nor false, and so do not yield knowledge. On the other hand, a radical sceptic would claim that the prospect of reaching justified true beliefs is impossible. As such, they might refer to realism and anti-realism, exploring the relationship between these positions and scepticism. Students might discuss classical examples of scepticism such as Pyrrhonian scepticism, or the implications of Plato's Cave Analogy. They might refer to Cartesian doubt, and Descartes's subsequent attempts to dispel doubt as an example of an important discussion of scepticism. Students might also draw on more recent debates such as Chalmers's response to 'brain in the vat' thought experiments, or Moore's claim that scepticism is based on a misconception of the term "knowledge". Alternatively, some responses may centre on the term "knowledge" itself, highlighting debates about defining the term such as those brought up by Gettier cases. They might refer to the value of emotions, intuition, and perception in coming to know, or to alternative traditions such as Buddhism where knowledge is a less important concept. Students might also focus on how beliefs are justified, referring to coherentism and foundationalism with respect to scepticism.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- How to define "knowledge"
- Knowledge as justified, true belief
- Sources of knowledge such as perception, emotion, intuition
- Verification and falsification, e.g. Ayer and Popper
- James's pragmatism and critiques of radical scepticism
- Pyrrhonian scepticism
- Cartesian doubt
- Verificationism and falsificationism as approaches to establishing knowledge on the foundations of sense data
- The idea that sense data is theory-dependent (e.g. Kuhn's analysis of knowledge and paradigms)
- "Brain in the vat" thought experiments, or other analogous ideas
- The gap between perception and reality, e.g. as explained by McGinn
- Alternative conceptions of knowledge from other traditions, e.g. Buddhist accounts
- Arguments from illusion
- Foundationalism and coherentism
- Moore's counterarguments to radical scepticism.
- Nietzsche's view that there is no objective truth, but that knowledge is shaped by our experiences and interpretations

6. Discuss the role of logical reasoning as a source of knowledge.**[25]**

This question is focused on the sort of reasoning used to ensure justified, true beliefs are reached. Students might draw on their knowledge of inductive and deductive reasoning. They might discuss deductive reasoning in relation to other forms of logic including inductive reasoning. It is likely that they will draw on *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge as part of their discussions. They might refer to Aristotelian logic, including his rules for arguing from first principles. Alternatively, students might explain the differences and similarities between western conceptions of reasoning and Hindu grammarian philosophies. More contemporary uses for reasoning include its uses in philosophical arguments, its uses within the sciences and the relationship between reasoning and mathematics. Students might discuss the weaknesses of deductive reasoning such as its inability to create new knowledge, or the fact that it must come second to inductive reasoning in the sciences. They might refer to examples of reasoning which they have encountered elsewhere in their course, such as Descartes's *cogito* argument, or arguments for the existence of God. Students might consider Hume's distinction between synthetic and analytic knowledge in relation to deductive reasoning. They might also relate this to Quine's "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" paper, in which he undermined the distinction. Students might also question the importance of reasoning and point out that some areas of philosophy are more focused on providing authentic and detailed descriptions of the world, where deductive reasoning provides relatively closed and precise answers. There might be detailed discussion of rationalism, empiricism, and idealism as rival conceptions of how knowledge is reached. Similarly, there might be a discussion of other sources of knowledge such as sense perception.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- Sources of evidence
- Rationalism, empiricism, and idealism
- Aristotelian logic
- The relationship between deductive reasoning and *a priori* knowledge
- Inductive reasoning in comparison to deductive reasoning
- The place of inductive and deductive reasoning in science
- The relationship between reasoning and philosophical arguments
- Formal logic to establish a foundation for mathematical knowledge, e.g. Whitehead and Russell
- Critical thinking
- Reasoning and rationality
- Deductive reasoning and tautologies, e.g. Mathematics
- Other forms of reasoning such as abductive reasoning
- Validity and soundness of arguments
- Analysis of logical reasoning and knowledge in terms of the synthetic and analytic
- The problem of induction and the limitations of deductive reasoning.

Optional theme 3: Ethics

7. Evaluate whether people should be judged according to their character rather than their actions.

[25]

This explores a question that arises in normative ethical questions about how to judge or assess what might possibly constitute the good life and how that might be achieved. In classical philosophy the notion of the good life was discussed, especially by Plato and Aristotle, with virtues of character playing a prominent role. In more modern thinkers, the emphasis turned towards actions, independent of notions of religious duty, that could be assessed with reason to help the agent to discover the right or wrong action in a specific situation. For both the utilitarians and Kant, the conglomeration of actions would help constitute the good life for an individual, because the normative principle each were advocating was being pursued. In considering “the good life”, answers might develop a variety of possible responses including a debate about the way virtue was treated by Aristotle and more recent ethical thinking about virtue ethics. Students might explore the action-based systems of ethics that evolved in the Enlightenment and compare these with virtue ethics systems that concentrate on character, perhaps by using practical ethics examples.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- Normative approaches to ethics, e.g. utilitarianism, deontology, virtue ethics, and how these depict notions of the good life
- Ethical language and judgements as being in some sense “special” and not factual like other judgements
- The use of practical ethical examples to explore virtue ethical approaches in contrast with other normative systems
- The “good will” in deontology
- The greatest happiness principle: the best thing to do *versus* the right thing to do
- The relationship of happiness and pleasure in conceptions of the good life
- The concentration by virtue ethics on the character of the agent not her/his actions
- The relationship between action and character in virtue ethics
- The lack of guidance in virtue traditions
- *Eudaimonia* and the assumptions made about end/purpose by virtue ethics
- How virtue ethics might involve a circular argument, “What is living the good life? Acting according to a virtuous character. What is acting according to a virtuous character? Living the good life”
- The atomistic sense of ethics portrayed by act-based ethical systems
- The role of reason in ethical judgements
- The relationship between having a virtuous character may lead to doing good actions, and Aristotle's claim that doing good actions that become habit leads to developing a virtuous character

8. Evaluate the claim that questions of right and wrong depend on the perspective of the individual rather than any objective facts. [25]

This question enables an exploration of the issue of subjectivism *versus* objectivism in ethical questions or judgements. Students may explore, with examples, the sense that different individuals have differing ideas of what makes an action right or wrong, depending on cultural influences, meaning there is no universal truth to moral language. Some students may explore such apparent differences and conclude that moral values have remarkable symmetry across differing cultures, even if behaviours expressing those values differ. Students may explore a meta-ethical analysis of moral language and develop a response that checks whether ethical language can be based on a naturalistic or non-naturalistic assumption of where morality arises.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- Arguments for the universal application of moral language, e.g. normative ethical systems like utilitarianism, deontology, or virtue ethics
- Relativism and the argument from sentience, suggesting moral judgements only arise from the perspective of the agents in the situation
- Naturalistic claims for where morality arises and the counterargument based on the naturalistic fallacy, e.g. Moore
- Non-naturalistic claims, e.g. Plato, Moore
- Hume's psychological approach to the origin of moral language
- Verification and the ought-is divide, Verification Principle e.g. Ayer
- Nietzsche's view of the origins of moral language
- The recasting of ethical language in the early 20th century, e.g. emotivism, prescriptivism
- The combining of fact and value (description/prescription) in promises, e.g. Searle
- Values remaining universal despite different customs
- The role of reason in moral judgements
- The role of emotion in moral judgements.

Optional theme 4: Philosophy of religion

9. Evaluate the claim that faith means the will to avoid knowing what is true. [25]

This claim invites an exploration of faith and its possible relationships with knowledge. Students might focus on the nature of religious experiences as proof of knowledge and the existence of what is experienced. The role that religious language plays in knowing divine or supreme beings might be discussed. The question also invites an exploration of the nature of concepts that are involved in religion, such as belief and truth. Nietzsche states that “faith makes blessed: therefore, it is true”: students might evaluate whether the religious language is meaningless or not, by taking into account specific philosophical positions, e.g. Aquinas, Pascal, Kant, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, verificationism. Also, students might explore and evaluate the nature of the ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments that several philosophers have presented as possible routes to knowledge about God, e.g. Anselm, Descartes, or make reference to non-western traditions, e.g. *karma*. Students might consider the symbolic and metaphorical nature of religious language as a means to knowledge, e.g. Augustine, Aquinas, or the possibilities to attribute specific characteristics to a divine being. Students might also analyse whether faith can lead to knowledge of the divine being itself or it can also lead to knowledge of the surrounding world. Students might also explore the nature of mysticism in relation with knowledge. Students might link the question to multicultural and present-day issues: how to relate multiple faiths with multiple social behaviours and multiple interpretations of what is true? Finally, students might consider the pragmatic view of faith as contrary to knowledge, as a means to indoctrination and illusion and/or to social and political control by authorities, e.g. Montesquieu, Marx, Feuerbach, Dewey, or as the result of social conformism and habit.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- Faith as a means of knowledge or avoidance of knowledge
- Role of religious experiences and their knowledge, e.g. mysticism
- Role of religious language: is it meaningless or can it lead to true knowledge? e.g. Pascal's *esprit de finesse versus esprit de géométrie*, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, verificationism
- Use of symbols and metaphors in religion to get to knowledge, e.g. Tillich
- Arguments for the existence of God, e.g. ontological, cosmological, teleological arguments, *karma*
- Is faith connected to beliefs or truth? Do religious qualities, e.g. blessedness, render anything true?
- Fideism, dogmatism, nihilism
- Faith is traditionally regarded as one of the ‘theological’ virtues
- How to relate faith and knowledge in a multicultural world and in relation to multi-faith societies?
- Pragmatic view of faith as a means to indoctrinate for the purpose of social control by authorities or just as the result of social conformism and habit.

10. Evaluate the claim that whatever God/god wills is good and just because God/god wills it.

[25]

The question is about the nature of God/god and the relationship of God/god to concepts of the good. The claim stems from Leibniz’s argument as he has expressed it in his “Reflections on the Common Concept of Justice”. As it is known, this argument recalls a famous philosophical dispute: *the Euthyphro dilemma*. In Plato’s dialogue, while exploring the nature of piety, Socrates asks Euthyphro: “Are pious things loved by the gods because they are pious, or are pious things pious because they are loved by the gods?” Students might explore the role that religion plays at different levels: as personal experience, as a corpus of linguistic binding statements, as a source of social conformism, as a means to social control and power. Students might explore the connections between religion and power and make reference to philosophical positions on it, e.g. Marx, Feuerbach, Nietzsche. It is also possible to refer to other perspectives, which consider the concept of God/god as necessary, e.g. Descartes, Leibniz. Hence, the question also invites an analysis of the philosophical arguments in favour or against the existence of God/god, e.g. ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments. Kant states that it is necessary to postulate the ideas of God/god and immortality—the concept of soul—as essential conditions for happiness, though he also affirms that “each must conduct himself as if everything depended on him” (“Critique of Pure Reason”). Students might explore the relationship between religion and morals and whether values are grounded in religion or in conventional and historical agreement. Another possible argument is based upon Mackie’s “error theory”, which explains that morals and religion tend to invert the “causal nexus”; he wonders: “Do people approve of monogamy because they participate in a monogamous way of life rather than participate in a monogamous way of life because they approve of monogamy?” (“Ethics”). Students might analyse whether the concept of God/god is limited to a spiritual and/or personal aspect, or it can be subject to rational understanding. Students might consider the necessity of authority for social justice, moral values, and happiness, and whether religion works as Bentham’s panopticon, whose main function can be reduced to social control. Finally, students might evaluate how a view on religion as source of social control can coexist with multiple social orders and moral values in present-day multicultural societies.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- Relationship between religion and morals, e.g. Plato’s *Euthyphro*, Leibniz
- God/god and religion as sources of authority
- Attributes of God/god
- Religion as a means to social control, e.g. Marx, Feuerbach, Nietzsche
- Religion limited to personal experience and impossibility to communicate it; mysticism
- Possibility to know God/god; philosophical arguments, e.g. ontological, cosmological, teleological arguments
- Definitions of good and goodness
- Penetrating the mind and will of God/god
- Whether moral values are grounded in religion or in social agreement, e.g. Augustine, Aquinas, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Kierkegaard, Mackie, Searle
- Evil and the problem of suffering for arguments about God/god’s existence and nature, e.g. Swinburne, Plantinga
- Whether religion is necessary for happiness
- Religion as a source of social control and/or moral order in multicultural societies.

Optional theme 5: Philosophy of science

11. Evaluate the claim that if observation is a subjective experience, then science cannot lay claim to objectivity. [25]

The aim of this question is to invite an evaluation of the role observation plays in science. This phenomenological claim seeks to make scientific, and hence empirically based knowledge, problematic. Since Aristotle, reasoning from observations has been fundamental to scientific practice. Observation is a necessary condition of the scientific method. A common view was that there were two components to a scientific theory, observation, and experimentation. It was generally assumed that observation was limited to a direct sensory experience, and that experimentation was a carefully planned, isolated event. Reports and conclusions were then constructed on the observations of such experiments (Bacon). Currently, a phenomenalist view argues that experimental epistemic value lies in the truth and accuracy of observation reports, and as the only certainty is the subjective experience of the observer, there cannot be certainty beyond the observer's own experience (Hempel). Kuhn, Hanson, Feyerabend, and others cast suspicion on the objectivity of observational evidence in another way by arguing that one cannot use empirical evidence to test a theory without committing oneself to that very theory.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- The rejection of cultural or ethnic factors as criteria for assessing observational statements, e.g. the empirical positivists protest of the Nazi ban on the theories of Einstein
- What do observation reports describe?
- The differences between Kant's and Kuhn's perspectives about observations, repeatability, and consistency of results as pragmatic evidence for the objectivity of observational reports
- Repeatability and consistency as pragmatic evidence of making the same mistakes and observational omissions as the previous observational report
- Is observation an exclusively perceptual process? Is it correct to use the term "observation" when reporting on the results of experiments on sub-atomic particles?
- Quantum mechanics and the effect of the observer on the observed
- The superiority of technology (instruments for measurement) over human observation may offer a solution to the phenomenological claim
- How is observational bias recognized and is it possible to eliminate it, e.g. cultural, gender?
- Theory-ladenness of observation
- Does commitment to a scientific theory distort observation descriptions? (e.g. Kuhn)
- What constitutes observational evidence? Is it the case that I have to know (or assume) what to look for before I can perceive it? What about other phenomena I am not sensitive to or ignore?
- Scientific theories never claim total objectivity and certainty but offer a highly probable level of certainty in results.

12. Evaluate the claim that science is a unified system of knowledge.**[25]**

The aim of this question is for students to engage with the topic of scientific unity in regard to a number of possible contexts, but two main perspectives are epistemological and ontological. A common view on scientific unity is found in Kant. For Kant, the unity of science is not the reflection of a unity found in nature, or, even less, assumed in a real world behind the apparent phenomena. Rather, it has its foundations in the unifying *a priori* character or function of concepts, principles and of reason itself. Nature is precisely our experience of the world under the universal laws that include such concepts. And science, as a system of knowledge, is “a whole of cognition ordered according to principles”, and the principles on which proper science is grounded are *a priori* (*Preface to Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*). With epistemological interpretations, e.g. Ernst Nagel, and the Logical Empiricists, the issue of the unity of science relates to the concepts of reductionism and explanatory power. Associated with reductionism are requirements of connectability and derivability, and the most common motive for reductionism is to aid in the explanatory power of scientific propositions. For ontological perspectives, various types of taxonomic monism (one privileged set of kinds of things) are the topics for debate.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- In reductionism, one of its epistemic virtues claimed is simplicity
- Eliminativism is the most extreme form of reductionism
- For example, Churchland and the idea that common sense psychological concepts can be dropped in favour of neuroscientific concepts Reductionism is often aligned with explanatory powers of scientific propositions, whose unity is not an *a priori* ideal but is an empirical hypothesis, e.g. Putnam
- What is it that is being unified: laws, concepts, data?
- Is explanation modelled on unification of concepts and propositions, or are propositions and concepts unified for explanation?
- Connectability: requires meaning invariance between descriptions
- Derivability: requires a deductive relation between the propositions
- The “disunity” view emphasizes pluralism, e.g. Feyerabend’s view: incommensurability and methodological pluralism
- Kuhn’s paradigmatic model for scientific theories
- Foundation *versus* coherence approaches to knowledge as applied to science
- The epistemic roles for unity: descriptive, explanative, evidential, methodological, conceptual, collaborative unity, *etc.*
- Non-reductive models of unity such as inter-field theories. Fields have a focal problem, a set of facts related to the problem, explanatory goals, methods, and vocabulary
- If there is one fundamental type of thing, is it a property or entity?

Optional theme 6: Political philosophy

13. Evaluate the effectiveness of the social contract as a basis for the individual's obligations to the state.

[25]

This question explores one of modern political philosophy's most longstanding rationales for the basis on which an individual relates to a state and how that individual must be obligated to the state: the social contract. Various versions of a social contract have been offered, from Hobbes's famous notion that it was only in fulfilling the social contract that an individual could be secure from the threat of violence and demise to the 20th century work of Rawls. The social contract offers a rational basis for the acceptance of laws and civic duties involving the curtailment of freedom, as a price to pay for benefits received. But some philosophers, like Hume, have questioned the assumption that any individual has a choice meaningfully to accept or reject a contract that consciously they have never signed. Responses to this question might develop ideas about the relationship between government and the nation state, and how the notion of the nation state arises.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- The early social contract ideas of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau
- More recent ideas of social contracts of Rawls, Sen, Nussbaum
- Hume's critique of the inability of the individual to enter meaningfully into a social contract
- The role of law in the social contract
- Sources of authority for the social contract contrasted with coercion or duress by the State
- The notion of democratic participation as the individual's assent to a contract
- Supra-national issues and the individual's relation to the nation state, e.g. Globalism, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, religious duties to a non-nation state ideal, humanistic incentives to civic dissent
- The conception of the role of the state in a social contract model
- The role of the executive and its relationship to the individual
- The individual and criticisms of the notion of the state/society, e.g. Nozick
- What is protected by a social contract?
- Justifications for dissent from a social contract—possible platforms for revolution
- Different notions of the state's relationship with the individual.

14. Evaluate the claim that without responsibilities there are no rights.**[25]**

This question enables an exploration of the notion of rights. Rights may be conceived of as extending only as far as humans or beyond that to animals and/or the environment. Students may develop answers that ask from where rights emerge, and what, in so doing, accompanies rights, specifically in terms of accompanying responsibilities. A student might challenge the very existence of rights, but in so doing can engage in the relationship between rights and responsibilities by those who claim they do exist. Religious views about the sanctity of life may well be explored, with its manifestation in the American Constitution cited as a possible example. More recent humanistic conceptions, as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, might also be discussed. Rights might be tied to specific issues, such as the legal framework of employment or medical practice. Rights might also be discussed in relation to non-human life in the animal kingdom or the natural world. Responsibilities that accompany any claims of the existence of rights can be developed through worked examples or the conceptual basis on which rights and responsibilities are claimed. The notion of rights can be developed or tested through consideration of where/when rights might not apply—see Singer’s work on the justification of infanticide in certain circumstances. The notion of universal rights is tested throughout the world with different regimes exercising authority in different ways. A treatment of how justified one country might be in taking action to uphold the rights of citizens of another country might be considered. Fundamental is the concept of a right and how such a right might be said to exist and how responsibilities could be claimed to attach.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- Rights—from where might they be claimed to emerge?
- Are rights legal or conceptual frameworks?
- The argument that there can be no right that should not be the responsibility of another to grant, e.g. the right to work
- Whose responsibility is it to uphold the rights of animals?
- Debates about rights—on what basis can the rights of one person trump another’s, e.g. the rights of transgender people
- Legal rights and moral rights—are they different?
- The challenge to rights, “nonsense on stilts” (Jeremy Bentham)
- The basis of arguments about the right to life—who has responsibility here?
- The right to do something and the right to be free from something
- The applicability of rights—where or when might they not apply? e.g. Singer
- Defending the rights of people of another nation by intervention of a different nation—how manageable is then upholding of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?
- Practical examples might include the unborn child, animals, refugees, the dying *etc.*

Optional theme 7: Social philosophy

15. Evaluate the view that false claims about gender have contributed to justifying social oppression. [25]

The examination of false ontological claims about gender and their potential contribution to justifying social oppression constitutes a complex and multifaceted inquiry within the realm of social philosophy. This investigation has garnered significant interest in recent years, driven by evolving perspectives on gender, along with an increased understanding of its sociocultural construction. Throughout history, such false assertions have wielded a profound influence on societal structures and norms. These claims have not only shaped our perceptions of gender but have also provided a foundation for systemic discrimination. For example, gender-based stereotypes have often been employed to justify unequal treatment and limited opportunities for individuals, particularly women. To assess the impact of these claims, it is crucial to consider their historical context, examining how they have been intertwined with cultural expectations and behavioural norms. Such scrutiny necessitates an exploration of essentialism in gender categories, where biological determinism has been historically linked to the prescription of gender roles and behaviour.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- The historical context of gender ontology and origins of essentialist claims about gender differences
- Essentialist and constructivist views of gender, and how erroneous essentialist claims have perpetuated stereotypes and discrimination
- The interweaving of gender with cultural norms and traditions, influencing societal expectations of gender roles
- How gender ontological claims have shaped socialization processes
- How ontological claims about gender have historically prescribed specific roles and behaviours for individuals based on their gender, limiting freedom and self-expression
- Implications for political philosophy, particularly in terms of representation, rights, and justice for marginalized genders
- Hegemonic masculinity and how it relates to gender ontology, as it can serve as a tool for social oppression (e.g. De Beauvoir on gender and oppression)
- How language and discourse have reinforced gender ontological claims, influencing the way society talks about and understands gender
- How gender ontology has shaped various social institutions, such as family structures, educational systems, and the workplace
- The role of media and popular culture in perpetuating gender ontological claims, and the impact on public perception
- Normativity associated with gender ontology, considering how deviation from normative gender roles can lead to social stigmatization
- Intersection of gender ontology with biopolitics, particularly in discussions around reproductive rights and bodily autonomy
- The role of social justice movements, such as LGBTQIA+ and feminist movements, in challenging erroneous gender ontological claims and advocating for change
- Relationship between gender ontology and economic inequality, particularly in terms of the gender pay gap and occupational segregation
- How gender ontology varies across different cultures and societies.

16. Evaluate the claim that institutions can be seen as agents that also influence collective reasoning.

[25]

The assessment of whether institutions can be perceived as agents, and the implications of adopting this perspective for collective reasoning is a fundamental inquiry in social philosophy. This exploration delves into the intricate dynamics of how institutions function and exert influence within societies. In contemplating the agency of institutions, it becomes evident that they are not mere passive structures but active entities capable of shaping social reality. Institutions, whether governmental, educational, or economic, possess the power to establish rules, norms, and objectives that guide human behaviour and interactions. Their decisions and policies can have far-reaching consequences for individuals and communities, often transcending the intentions of individual actors within these institutions. One consequence of attributing agency to institutions is the recognition of their role in collective reasoning processes. Institutions, through their actions and policies, can significantly impact the collective beliefs, values, and attitudes of a society. They can mold public opinion, shape moral frameworks, and influence the ethical choices made by individuals within the social fabric. Moreover, the agency of institutions prompts a re-evaluation of their moral and ethical responsibilities. If institutions are considered agents, they bear a degree of moral accountability for their actions and the outcomes they produce. This perspective challenges us to scrutinize the ethical dimensions of institutional decisions, particularly in cases where they perpetuate inequality, discrimination, or social injustice.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- What it means for an institution to possess agency in the context of social philosophy and how they function within society
 - Institutions and decision-making, considering whether these processes exhibit agency-like characteristics
 - How institutions contribute to the construction of social reality and influence collective norms, values, and beliefs
 - Cases where institutional actions have consequences that surpass the intentions of individual actors within those institutions, referencing philosophical discussions on unintended consequences
 - How institutions engage in collective reasoning processes, considering how their decisions reflect broader societal values and goals
 - The impact of institutions on public opinion, citing examples where institutional actions have influenced the perceptions and attitudes of society (e.g. Jurgen Habermas)
 - The ethical and moral frameworks that institutions uphold and how these frameworks affect individual and collective ethical choices
 - The question of institutional accountability, examining whether institutions should be held morally responsible for their actions, drawing on theories of collective responsibility
 - Instances where institutions have perpetuated inequality and discrimination, considering how attributing agency to institutions may affect the assessment of responsibility
 - The role of institutions in promoting or hindering social justice (e.g. John Rawls)
 - The implications of institutional agency for calls for reform and change within societies, drawing on theories of political and social change
 - The power dynamics within institutions and their effects on collective reasoning and decision-making (e.g. Michel Foucault's insights on power)
 - How attributing agency to institutions intersects with democratic governance and the principles of representation and accountability
 - The role of institutional culture in shaping agency and influencing collective reasoning
 - The global dimension of institutional agency and its implications for global collective reasoning and governance structures, referencing cosmopolitanism and global ethics.
-