

# AS LEVEL PHILOSOPHY SYLLABUS

## [AQA EXAM BOARD, COURSE 5171]

### MODULE 1:

### Theory of Knowledge

*(1 hour exam, a third of the marks, one three-part question from a choice of two)*

Empiricism and Rationalism	Knowledge and Justification	Knowledge and Scepticism	Knowledge of the External World
<p><i>Our right to hold beliefs, how we acquire them, and whether they count as true knowledge</i></p> <p><b>Rationalism:</b> reason as the source of knowledge, as justification, and as the basis of thought. <i>A priori</i> knowledge.</p> <p><b>Empiricism:</b> experience as the source of concepts and propositions, and basis of justification. <i>A posteriori</i> knowledge.</p> <p><b>Limitations:</b> scepticism about reason and experience.</p>	<p><i>Comparing certainty of beliefs with usefulness, probability, reasonableness, coherence and explanatory power</i></p> <p><b>Believing- and Knowing-That:</b> evidence and degrees of justification.</p> <p><b>Grounds:</b> reliabilism, coherence and foundationalism, and the problem of an infinite regress.</p> <p><b>Definition:</b> 'true justified belief' as a definition, and its application</p>	<p><i>What is distinctive about philosophical doubt, and what is its role in our search for knowledge?</i></p> <p><b>Philosophical:</b> the distinction between ordinary and philosophical doubt.</p> <p><b>Extent:</b> whether 'global' scepticism about knowledge and belief is possible.</p> <p><b>Perception:</b> doubts about the senses, based on illusion, deception, and dreaming.</p>	<p><i>Do we experience the external world directly, or do other factors intervene?</i></p> <p><b>Realism:</b> direct (naïve) realism, or representative realism based on sense-data.</p> <p><b>Idealism:</b> that we can only perceive ideas, and so 'reality' exists in the mind.</p> <p><b>Phenomenalism:</b> analysing statements about physical objects entirely in terms of sense experiences.</p>

### MODULE 2:

### Moral Philosophy (or Philosophy of Religion)

*(1 hour exam, a third of the marks, one structured question from a choice of four)*

Theory: Normative Ethics	Practice: Practical Ethics	Metaphysics:	
		Meta-Ethics: Cognitivism	Meta-Ethics: Non-Cognitivism
<p><i>Can we establish 'first principles' about rights, duties, and how to live our lives?</i></p> <p><b>Deontology:</b> Acts are in themselves right or wrong, and we know this and our duty by divine command or reason.</p> <p><b>Utilitarianism:</b> Acts are right or wrong if they maximise pleasure or minimise suffering (variants: positive, negative, preference, ideal, hedonistic, act, rule).</p> <p><b>Virtue Theory:</b> Focus on how we should live, the cultivation of virtues, and flourishing.</p>	<p><i>When and why is it ever permissible to kill? The application of theories studied in Normative Ethics.</i></p> <p><b>Euthanasia:</b> can it be justified? Voluntary, involuntary and non-voluntary; active and passive.</p> <p><b>Abortion:</b> on what grounds could it be permissible? Moral status of a foetus. Demarcation of fertilised egg, foetus, infant and adult?</p> <p><b>Animal Rights:</b> on what grounds might non-human animals be part of moral thinking, and with what consequences?</p>	<p><i>Are there moral facts, objects or properties, which can be objectively true or false? If so, how are they known?</i></p> <p><b>Intuitionism:</b> good and right are not natural properties, but are metaphysically real, and known by intuition.</p> <p><b>Moral realism:</b> moral and other (e.g. aesthetic) claims correspond to and describe objective properties.</p> <p><b>Problems:</b> Bridging the is-ought gap. Linking external values to action. Resolving moral disputes with facts. Moral relativism.</p>	<p><i>Scepticism about moral facts, objects or properties, and moral absolutism. We are the source of all values.</i></p> <p><b>Emotivism:</b> moral judgements express emotions and preferences, and aim to affect the feelings of others.</p> <p><b>Prescriptivism:</b> moral judgements express rational and universalizable commendations, and guide actions.</p> <p><b>Problems:</b> is value in the form or content of a judgement? Can anything be valued? Normative implications of nihilism, tolerance and relativism. Moral progress?</p>

### MODULE 3:

### Set Text - Descartes' Meditations (or Plato's Republic)

*(1 hour exam, a third of the marks, one structured question, partly based on an extract)*

Set: All six Meditations, except IV. Extracts from the Penguin edition.

- Use of scepticism in the quest for certainty
- Application of the method, in waves of doubt
- Possibility of total deception
- Absolute certainty of the *Cogito*, and implication
- Distinguishing mind and body
- Nature of mind and body, and the wax example
- Role of imagination
- Proof of material things
- Rationalism, and clear and distinct ideas
- The Trademark Argument
- The Ontological Argument
- The role of God in Descartes' system
- Relation of mind and body - independence and intermingling