



General Certificate of Education

Philosophy 5171/6171

PLY3 Texts

Report on the Examination

2007 examination - June series

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Philosophy

AS Unit PLY3 Texts

General Comments

There was a general improvement in part (b) responses with many candidates showing evidence of textual study. This also had some impact on the part (c) responses. Weaker candidates were able to secure some marks on the part (c) responses through their textual knowledge. There were also fewer mini-essays in response to the first two parts of (a). This was a welcome development in the improvement of technique. Part (a)(iii), however, still elicited responses that went outside the extract. Regarding particular questions, Questions 1 and 2 were the most popular and Question 3 by far the least popular.

Question 1

Parts (a) and (b) were done well with good detail often incorporated in part (b). Part (c) was not as well answered. Far too many responses were tangential. This was not a question on the Philosopher Ruler or on politics in general. Many responses missed key ethical implications.

Question 2

Part (a)(iii) presented some difficulties with many candidates unable to say why the argument was probable rather than certain (or necessary). Part (b) was done well, though an appreciation of the links between the waves of doubt would have lifted many band two responses. Part (c) saw many candidates display an awareness of at least two of Descartes' arguments. There were some good critical discussions but more depth was needed in the discussion of the indivisibility thesis. Asserting a contrary view is not the same as a critical discussion.

Question 3

This was generally well answered. Part (a) did not present any major difficulties. Candidates should, however, remember that part (a)(iii) does not require support material from outside the extract. Part (b) was competently handled with appropriate examples frequently supplied. Part (c) produced some very encouraging responses displaying knowledge of scientific method, falsificationism and verification issues. Discussions of Popper were common and often successful.

Question 4

Part (a) was handled well. The only problem was with part (iii). Some candidates produced generalised responses and omitted relevant detail provided in the extract. There was also a tendency to generality in parts (b) and (c). Textual knowledge was in evidence but it was not always directed or fully exploited. This was particularly so in part (c). Too many candidates simply wrote all they knew about Sartre, hitting a few relevant issues along the way. There could have been more focused discussions on the concept of human nature. As a general point, candidates should distinguish our freedom to determine what we want from our ability to get what we want. It should also be pointed out that Sartre was aware of genetic theory.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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