



PHILOSOPHY AND ETHICS

ATAR course examination 2018

Marking Key

Marking keys are an explicit statement about what the examining panel expect of candidates when they respond to particular examination items. They help ensure a consistent interpretation of the criteria that guide the awarding of marks.

Section One: Critical reasoning

30% (30 Marks)

Question 1

(3 marks)

Helping people in trouble is a matter of basic justice and definitely the right thing to do. People in trouble really need help, so if you don't help people in trouble, you haven't done the right thing.

For the above argument:

- (a) Underline the conclusion. (1 mark)

Description	Marks
The conclusion is underlined exactly as shown above.	1
Total	1

- (b) Evaluate the cogency of the argument. Circle the correct answer. (1 mark)

Description	Marks
The words 'Not Cogent' are circled. Nothing else is circled.	1
Total	1

- (c) Give **one** reason that justifies your evaluation of the cogency. (1 mark)

Description	Marks
The argument is not cogent because it begs the question/is circular/assumes the truth of the conclusion in the premises.	1
Total	1

Question 2

(3 marks)

If euthanasia is legal, then terminally-ill people will be able to die with dignity. Euthanasia is not yet legal, hence terminally-ill people are not able to die with dignity.

For the above argument:

- (a) Circle the inference indicator. (1 mark)

Description	Marks
The word 'hence' is circled. Nothing else is circled.	1
Total	1

- (b) Evaluate the cogency of the argument. Circle the correct answer. (1 mark)

Description	Marks
The words 'Not Cogent' are circled. Nothing else is circled.	1
Total	1

- (c) Give **one** reason that justifies your evaluation of the cogency. (1 mark)

Description	Marks
The argument is not cogent because it is a non-sequitur/a logical non-sequitur/the conclusion does not follow from the premises/it is denying the antecedent. One or other of the premises is not acceptable, but a reason must be given. That the first premise presents a false dichotomy is an acceptable reason.	1
Total	1

Question 3

(1 mark)

If you are reading this, then you are in a Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course examination.

Underline the sentence that means the same as the above sentence.

- (i) If you are not reading this, then you are not in a Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course examination.
- (ii) If you are in a Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course examination, then you are reading this.
- (iii) If you are not in a Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course examination, then you are not reading this.
- (iv) You are in a Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course examination only if you are reading this.

Description	Marks
Sentence (iii) is underlined as shown above (or otherwise marked in a distinctive and unambiguous way).	1
Total	1

Question 4

(3 marks)

- (a) Name the fallacy committed in the following argument. (1 mark)

The use of birth control methods such as condoms and IUDs is not considered to be morally problematic by most people, so religious institutions should not continue to be opposed to the use of those birth control methods.

Description	Marks
<i>Ad populum</i> or fallacious appeal to popularity.	1
Total	1

- (b) Name the fallacy committed in the following argument. (1 mark)

Telecommunication companies that are unable to make a decent profit can't provide efficient, progressive and reliable telecommunication services to the community. This is because no community can be serviced by unprofitable telecommunication companies, which are bound to give inefficient, unprogressive and unreliable services.

Description	Marks
Begging the question or circular argument.	1
Total	1

- (c) Name the fallacy committed in the following argument. (1 mark)

My aging mother had a really badly infected ulcer on the sole of her foot. In church last Sunday, the whole congregation prayed together for my mother to be healed. This week the ulcer has almost cleared up, so the prayers to heal my mother's foot must have worked.

Description	Marks
<i>Post hoc</i> fallacy or <i>Post hoc ergo propter hoc</i> .	1
Total	1

Question 5

(5 marks)

If knowledge is not derived entirely from experience, then it must be derived entirely from the innate rational faculties of the mind. It can't be derived entirely from the innate rational faculties, so it must be derived entirely from experience.

For the above argument:

- (a) Number and write **in full** the separable statements in their order of occurrence. (2 marks)

Description		Marks
(1)	If knowledge is not derived entirely from experience, then it must be derived entirely from the innate rational faculties of the mind.	1
or		
(1)	If knowledge is not derived entirely from experience, then [knowledge] must be derived entirely from the innate rational faculties of the mind.	
and		
(2)	[Knowledge] can't be derived entirely from the innate rational faculties.	1
or		
(2)	[Knowledge] can't be derived entirely from the innate rational faculties [of the mind].	
(3)	[Knowledge] must be derived entirely from experience.	1
Total		2
Note: The square brackets are not required but the phrases inside them are.		

- (b) Circle the word that **best** describes the strength of the inference. (1 mark)

Description	Marks
The word 'Strong' is circled. Nothing else is circled.	1
Total	1

- (c) Evaluate the cogency of the argument. Circle the correct answer. (1 mark)

Description	Marks
The words 'Not cogent' are circled. Nothing else is circled.	1
Total	1

- (d) Give **one** reason that justifies your evaluation of the cogency. (1 mark)

Description	Marks
The argument is not cogent because the first premise is unacceptable due to being a fallacy of false alternatives/false dichotomy.	1
Total	1

Question 6

(4 marks)

(1) {Studies have shown that speakers of languages without a future tense (such as Finnish or German) are more likely to engage in environmentally-responsible behaviour than speakers of languages with a future tense (such as English or Greek).} It follows that (2) {languages without a future tense make people more willing to be environmentally responsible}, and (3) {languages with a future tense make people less likely to be environmentally responsible.}

For the above argument:

- (a) Bracket and number the separable statements. (1 mark)

Description	Marks
Brackets and numbers are placed in the exact locations as shown above.	1
Total	1

- (b) Evaluate the cogency of the argument. Circle the correct answer. (1 mark)

Description	Marks
The words 'Not cogent' are circled. Nothing else is circled.	1
Total	1

- (c) Give **one** reason that justifies your evaluation of the cogency. (1 mark)

Description	Marks
The argument is not cogent because it commits the <i>cum hoc ergo propter hoc</i> fallacy, or is a confusion of correlation and causation, or the first premise is not acceptable on the grounds that the phrase 'studies have shown' is a case of weasel words.	1
Total	1

- (d) Using the numbers given in part (a) above, draw a diagram of the argument. (1 mark)

Description	Marks
<p>If the candidate bracketed and numbered the statements correctly in (a) then a diagram exactly like this one must be produced:</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <pre> graph TD 1((1)) --> 2((2)) 1 --> 3((3)) </pre> </div> <p>If the candidate bracketed and numbered the statements incorrectly in (a) so that the first sentence was (1) and the whole of the second sentence was (2) then a diagram exactly like this one must be produced:</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <pre> graph TD 1((1)) --> 2((2)) </pre> </div>	1
Total	1
<p>Note: The conventions that need to be formally observed and applied correctly are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the arrow to represent a relationship of inference • the placement of the arrow exactly between the premise (or linked premises) and the conclusion that are in the inferential relationship. 	

Question 7

(5 marks)

(1) {School leavers should not celebrate finishing exams by going to leavers' celebrations in Bali, Rottneest or down South.} First, (2) {leavers' celebrations are invariably unsupervised} and (3) {school leavers are too young to act responsibly without supervision.} The second reason is that (4) {instead of wreaking havoc on local communities, school leavers should spend a couple of weeks looking after their long-suffering parents or volunteering in a homeless shelter where they might have the opportunity to learn about real hardship.}

For the above argument:

- (a) Underline the conclusion. (1 mark)

Description	Marks
The conclusion is underlined exactly as shown above.	1
Total	1

- (b) Circle the inference indicators. (1 mark)

Description	Marks
The words 'first' and 'the second reason is that' are circled. Nothing else is circled.	1
Total	1

- (c) Bracket and number the separable statements. (1 mark)

Description	Marks
Brackets and numbers are placed in the exact locations as shown above.	1
Total	1

(d) Using the numbers given in part (c) above, draw a diagram of the argument. (2 marks)

Description	Marks
<p>If the candidate bracketed and numbered the statements correctly in (c) then a diagram exactly like this one must be produced:</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <pre> (2) + (3) (4) \ / \ / \ / \ / \ / \ / (1) </pre> </div> <p>If the candidate bracketed and numbered the statements incorrectly in (c) so that (2) and (3) were treated as a single premise, then a diagram exactly like this one must be produced:</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <pre> (2) (3) \ / \ / \ / \ / \ / (1) </pre> </div> <p>1 mark for showing (2) + (3) [OR(2)] linked to support the conclusion (1) 1 mark for showing (4) [OR (3)] providing convergent support for the conclusion (1)</p>	2
Total	2
<p>Note: The conventions that need to be formally observed and applied correctly are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the arrow to represent a relationship of inference • the placement of the arrow exactly between the premise (or linked premises) and the conclusion that are in the inferential relationship. 	

Question 8

(2 marks)

Are the following statements analytic or synthetic?

(a) Mothers are older than their biological children. (1 mark)

Description	Marks
The statement is analytic.	1
Total	1

(b) It is very difficult to get 100% on a philosophy examination. (1 mark)

Description	Marks
The statement is synthetic.	1
Total	1

Question 9

(4 marks)

Use a diagram to represent the strongest possible argument that can be constructed using all the following statements only **once**.

- (1) My neurological activity occupies physical space.
- (2) My thoughts and my neurological activity have different properties.
- (3) My thoughts cannot be identical to my neurological activity.
- (4) My thoughts are private and only accessible to me.
- (5) If two things have different properties, then they cannot be identical.
- (6) My thoughts do not occupy physical space.
- (7) My neurological activity is public and can be seen by a neuroscientist.

Description	Marks
<div style="text-align: center;"> <p>(1) + (6) (4) + (7)</p> <p> ↘ ↙</p> <p> (2) + (5)</p> <p> ↓</p> <p> (3)</p> </div> <p>1 mark for showing (1) and (6) linked to support (2) 1 mark for showing (4) and (7) linked to support (2) 1 mark for showing (2) and (5) linked to support (3) 1 mark for showing (3) as the main conclusion. *If statements (1) and (6), and/or (4) and (7) are shown as giving convergent support to (2) then candidates should receive 1 mark. *If statements (1) and (6) and (4) and (7) are shown together as giving linked support to (2) then candidates should receive 1 mark.</p>	<p>1–4</p>
Total	4
<p>Note: The conventions that need to be formally observed and applied correctly are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the arrow to represent a relationship of inference • the placement of the arrow exactly between the premise (or linked premises) and the conclusion that are in the inferential relationship. 	

Section Two: Philosophical analysis and evaluation

40% (40 Marks)

Question 10

(20 marks)

The following dialogue is an excerpt from a community of inquiry.

You are required to:

- summarise (2 marks)
- clarify (6 marks)
- critically evaluate the contributions of each participant. (12 marks)

Description	Marks
Criterion 1: Summary (2 marks)	
Identifies the main position of the first participant.	1
Identifies the main position of the second participant.	1
Subtotal	2
Criterion 2: Clarification (6 marks)	
Concepts	
States clearly and engages critically with philosophical concepts in the dialogue.	2
Refers to some philosophical concepts in the dialogue.	1
Subtotal	2
Arguments	
For each of two participants (2 x 2):	
Explains the arguments (e.g. by using relevant examples).	2
Describes the arguments.	1
Subtotal	4
Criterion 3: Evaluation (12 marks)	
Examples	
Explains and engages critically with examples/counter examples in the dialogue.	2
Refers to examples/counter examples in the dialogue.	1
Subtotal	2
Premises	
For each of two participants (2 x 2):	
Provides relevant reasons to justify their stated acceptability of the premises.	2
States the acceptability of the premises.	1
Subtotal	4
Inferences	
For each of two participants (2 x 2):	
Provides relevant reasons to justify their stated strength of the inferential moves.	2
States the strength of the inferential moves.	1
Subtotal	4
Cogency	
Provides a detailed and accurate assessment of the cogency of the arguments, pointing out any fallacies.	2
Makes assertions about cogency.	1
Subtotal	2
Total	20

Question 10 (continued)

DAVID: I just returned from a nine-day meditation retreat. I feel so calm and centred. Everyone else there felt the same way. If you don't meditate, then you're wasting your life.

JO: You claim that one should meditate because it gives you access to a higher reality. That's nonsense. Next thing you'll be signing up for Parrot Astrology or Crystal Chakra Therapy. There's nothing scientific about meditation or other religious practices. Meditation is a pointless waste of time.

DAVID: That's not fair! Meditation harnesses genuine spirituality whereas the new-age mumbo-jumbo you mention just trades on popular spiritual trends. That's what I call 'pseudo-spirituality'. You wouldn't dismiss science because of pseudo-science, so you shouldn't dismiss spirituality because of pseudo-spirituality.

JO: Your analogy fails. You can't compare science with spirituality in any way. Science deals with what is real – cold hard facts; while spirituality peddles in what is not real – ethereal new-age nonsense.

DAVID: Science isn't the only way of knowing about reality. Spiritual and religious practices also aim at knowing reality but, unlike science, you can't access the reality by using your five senses, or by rational thinking. You access reality via meditative, thought-free awareness. How could I feel so peaceful if I wasn't accessing a deeper reality?

JO: To say that feeling peaceful proves access to a deeper reality is like arguing that feeling agitated proves that aliens are watching you. It doesn't follow. You only felt peaceful because you heard ahead of time all that mumbo-jumbo about meditating being calming. It's your expectation, not your meditation, which made you feel peaceful.

Note: The following notes for Question 10 are not exhaustive and are to be used as a guide for judgement according to the marking key. Candidates are not required to make all of the following points to achieve full marks.

Analysis and evaluation

The main position argued by David is that meditation and (genuine) spirituality are highly worthwhile insofar as they are calming and they allow access to (higher) reality. The main position argued by Jo is that meditation and spirituality are nonsense, a waste of time, with no access to reality. What follows is a synopsis and analysis of the main argumentative moves and fallacies committed by David and Jo. The numbers correspond to the parts of the dialogue.

1. David's first claim is uncontroversial, since he is just reporting facts about the retreat. He then commits the fallacy of false alternatives (also known as false dichotomy) by implying that there are only two options: either one meditates (regularly) or one wastes their life. Of course there are other options. One might neither meditate nor waste one's life – or one might do both.
2. Jo first commits the 'strawman fallacy'. He misrepresents David's argument as trying to establish the claim that one should meditate because it gives one access to higher reality, rather than because (as David claimed) it makes one peaceful. Jo then engages in a slippery slope fallacy with the claim that it will lead to engagement in extremely flaky new-age practices, e.g. 'next thing you'll be signing up for Parrot Astrology or Crystal Chakra Therapy'. This is followed by a further unsupported claim: that there is nothing scientific about meditation practices. There's also guilt-by-association in associating meditation with 'other religious practices' (meditation practice need not be religiously oriented). By branding meditation as 'religious', when religion is often contrasted with science, Jo makes meditation sound less scientific, thus supporting his favoured conclusion by use of this spurious 'slanting' tactic.

3. David's response to Jo in this passage has an overall weak or moderate, but not strong, degree of support. It is reasonable insofar as it provides a diagnosis of what is wrong with Jo's reasoning: that of dismissing what may be a worthwhile practice because of a worry that it will lead to engagement in 'new-age' activities at the extreme end of the slippery slope. Lurking behind Jo's reasoning is an unsupported assumption that they are all in the same flaky basket, and David is right to challenge Jo on this point. Still, David makes a bold claim that, were it to be cogent, would have to have a much stronger degree of support than he gives it. For the claim that spirituality should not be dismissed because of pseudo-spirituality, just as science should not be dismissed because of pseudo-science, requires that the analogy hold up. But he gives no specific reason as to how or why the analogy should hold up. We are to presume that the reason for preferring science over pseudo-science is that (for example) science has rigorous methodology that pseudo-science does not have, or that its methods more reliably access the structure of reality than those of pseudo-science. But we are not told of the analogous reason for preferring spirituality over pseudo-spirituality, or what the analogous difference between spirituality and pseudo-spirituality is supposed to be. Does spirituality (unlike pseudo-spirituality) also have rigorous methodology – for example meditation – and if so, how does meditative methodology fit the bill of being rigorous? How might spirituality via meditative methods more reliably access the structure of reality than the methods of pseudo-spirituality? In the absence of such reasons, David's claim additionally begs the question against Jo's sceptical stance by presupposing that spirituality and its methods of meditation are just as respectable as those of science.
4. In response to David's analogy, Jo in turn begs the question in favour of his sceptical stance that meditation is 'new-age nonsense' that has nothing to do with reality. There is unwarranted emotive or loaded language here too. He should be asking David to provide reasons that support his analogy, rather than just assuming the truth of the sceptical stance that he is in favour of.
5. David now provides a reply to Jo's charge that spirituality and its meditative methods don't access reality. He asserts that spiritual practices access reality via thought-free meditative awareness, rather than by rational thinking or the five senses. If the premises were acceptable, the support for the conclusion (that spiritual practices such as meditation access reality) would be strong; however the premises as they stand are not acceptable, so the overall argument here is only moderate or weak. David's claim about thought-free awareness requires a lot more explanation and argumentation to be convincing, especially to a sceptic like Jo. David then makes an unsupported causal claim that feeling peaceful is a sign that one has accessed this deeper reality. He doesn't consider or attempt to rule out other viable causes for the feeling of peace. Had the causal argument been cogent, he would have provided a further explanatory reason for supposing it to be the most viable cause, which would include ruling out the other causes as equally viable.
6. Jo responds with a counter-argument. It takes the form of an analogous argument (a parody involving aliens) that mirrors the structure of David's bad reasoning while more clearly showing it up as spurious. This move is a cogent one. (The correct name for the tactic is 'refutation by logical analogy' but the students are not expected to know this). He then asserts what he thinks is the correct causal diagnosis of David's peaceful state – that it is caused not by meditation but by his expectation that meditation will be calming, like the placebo effect. In doing this, Jo makes a similar argumentative blunder that he accused David of making. He spuriously rules out, without argumentation, the alternative (and viable) hypothesis that David's calm state is caused by meditation, or perhaps by accessing a higher reality – a possibility that wasn't ruled out just because the argument for it was bad. By additional emotive use of the term 'mumbo-jumbo' to describe David's claim about meditation being calming, Jo's argumentative move here can also again be seen as a form of begging the question in favour of his sceptical stance.

Question 11

(20 marks)

Choose **one** of the following passages and:

- summarise (2 marks)
- clarify (8 marks)
- critically evaluate it. (10 marks)

Description	Marks
Criterion 1: Summary (2 marks)	
Identifies the topic.	1
Identifies the main conclusions.	1
Subtotal	2
Criterion 2: Clarification (8 marks)	
Concepts	
Explains and critically engages with core concepts.	3
Describes core concepts.	2
States core concepts.	1
Subtotal	3
Arguments	
Identifies the arguments in the text and clarifies the premises and inferences.	5
Identifies the arguments in the text and clarifies some of the premises and inferences.	4
Identifies the arguments in the text and refers to some of the premises and inferences.	3
Identifies the arguments in the text.	2
Identifies an argument in the text.	1
Subtotal	5
Criterion 3: Evaluation (10 marks)	
Premises	
Identifies the major premises and accurately critically evaluates their acceptability, giving relevant reasons.	4
Identifies the major premises and evaluates their acceptability.	3
Identifies the major premises and states their acceptability.	2
Identifies some of the major premises.	1
Subtotal	4
Inferences	
Identifies the inferential moves and accurately critically evaluates inferential strength, giving relevant reasons.	4
Identifies the inferential moves and evaluates inferential strength.	3
Identifies some inferential moves and makes some assertions about inferential strength.	2
Identifies some inferential moves.	1
Subtotal	4
Cogency	
Assesses the cogency of the argument based on their evaluation of premise acceptability and inferential strength.	2
Makes assertions about cogency.	1
Subtotal	2
Total	20

Note: The following notes for Question 11 are not exhaustive and are to be used as a guide for judgement according to the marking key. Candidates are not required to identify all of the premises listed in order to achieve full marks.

Text 1

We might mistakenly think, as the naturalists and materialists do, that we are just a physical object in a physical world. But this is not so. This is because, if we take ourselves to be mere physical creatures, then we cannot act authentically. But, if we think of ourselves as having two crucial aspects, an *'in itself'* and a *'for itself'*, then we can act authentically. My recognising the *'in itself'* involves me grasping my 'givenness': that I have concrete, given characteristics (a past, a body, a social situation) that constrain my actions. This, the materialists and naturalists recognise. But our being also has a *'for itself'*. Recognising this crucial aspect involves me apprehending, through my capacity for reflection and self-awareness, that I can to some extent transcend my 'givenness' – through affirming my ability to act freely and, thus, authentically. As *'for itself'*, I am always more than I am as *'in itself'* because I stand in front of an open range of future possibilities for how I define myself. So, it is clear that we are much more than mere physical objects in a physical world.

Summary: Text 1 is about the nature of human beings. The text provides an argument to the conclusion that human beings are more than just a physical object in a physical world.

Clarification:

The conclusion of the argument is that, contra the claims of naturalists and materialists, human beings are more than just physical objects in a physical world.

The argument might be formalised as follows:

- (P1) If we think of ourselves as nothing more than physical creatures, then we cannot act authentically.
- (P2) If we think of ourselves as having both an *'in itself'* and a *'for itself'*, then we can act authentically.
- (P3) The *'in itself'* aspect of human being is the physical, concrete aspect.
- (P4) The *'for itself'* aspect of human being is something over and above the physical aspect (the *'in itself'*).
- (P5) The *'for itself'* aspect of human being is what allows a person to act freely (i.e. as more than a physical object in a physical world).
- (SC1) We can act authentically. (from P2, P3, P4 and P5)
- (C) We are more than a physical object in a physical world. (from SC1 and P1).

Evaluation:

Evaluation of the argument should focus on the:

- (1) support the premises give to the conclusion and the sub-conclusion, and
- (2) acceptability of the premises.

One aspect of the argument that should be discussed is the illegitimate move from P1 and SC1 to the conclusion. This looks like a valid *modus tollens*, but the premise concerns how we think of ourselves, and the conclusion concerns how we actually are. So there is a problematic slip between a conceptual premise and an ontological conclusion.

The acceptability of P5 may also be questioned. Naturalists or materialists who think that we are nothing but physical objects often also hold that our purely physical nature prevents us from having genuine freedom of action – we only think we do. To assert that we have genuine freedom of action in the service of a conclusion that we are not mere physical beings can thus be seen as begging the question against the materialist/naturalist.

Question 11 (continued)

Text 2

Thought-experiments should not be used in moral theorising. This is because there is something fundamentally question-begging about the process of designing a thought-experiment to argue for a moral claim. Usually the person coming up with the thought-experiment wishes to demonstrate the intuitive appeal of their favoured claim. In conceiving their thought-experiment, they abstract away from the particular details of the case that make it morally controversial to begin with. They do this so that their thought-experiment can produce intuitions that are more clear-cut than the intuitions one might have had about the original case. However, in this process of abstraction, which requires decision about which aspects of the situation are morally salient and which are not, the person will tend to preselect those very features of the case that are especially relevant to, and which, in turn, favour, their moral theory.

Summary

Text 2 is an argument to the conclusion that thought-experiments should not be used in moral theorising.

Clarification

A formalisation of the argument might look something like this.

- (P1) Thought-experiments are used to demonstrate intuitive appeal of a favoured claim.
- (P2) Thought-experiments are intended to produce clear-cut moral intuitions.
- (P3) Thought-experiments abstract away from the particular details of specific cases.
- (P4) This process of abstraction requires decision about which aspects of the situation are morally salient and which are not.
- (P5) In using a thought-experiment to argue for a moral claim the arguer tends to preselect as salient those very features of the case that favour their moral theory.

So,

- (SC1) There is something fundamentally question-begging about the process of designing a thought-experiment to argue for a moral claim.

So,

- (C) Thought-experiments should not be used in moral theorising.

Evaluation

Evaluation of the argument should focus on the:

- (1) support the premises give to the conclusion and the sub-conclusion, and
- (2) acceptability of the premises.

Here's one way someone could address (1). If the premises are true, then the argument offers moderate support for sub-conclusion SC1 and weak to moderate support from SC1 to conclusion. How one construes the strength of inference from premises to SC1 may depend upon how one understands P5 (whose acceptability may be questioned). First, 'tends' is a vague term in this context. Perhaps it means just over half of the time, or perhaps it means most of the time, and this would affect the strength of support from premises to SC1. SC1 also oversteps the mark by claiming that there is something *fundamentally* question-begging about the process of designing a thought-experiment, which suggests something stronger than a tendency – that there is no escaping it. For the inference to be stronger, SC1 should be weakened to say that there is a *tendency* for question-begging to occur in the process of designing a thought-experiment for a moral claim.

As stated, the strength of support between SC1 and C is strong, since we can safely assume that question-begging should be avoided within a philosophical argument. However, if SC1 were to be plausibly weakened, as suggested above, to 'there is a *tendency* for question-begging to occur in the process of designing a thought-experiment', (which strengthens the inference from premises to SC1) then the inference from SC1 to C would be a lot weaker. For one could agree that while there is a tendency to preselect those favoured features, it is also true that becoming aware of the tendency can help inoculate one against making that mistake when constructing thought-experiments. On this reasoning, SC1 is not a reason NOT to use thought-experiments in moral reasoning, but a reason as to why we should be careful in designing them. (Analogy – a sign saying 'slippery when wet' is not a reason not to walk on the surface, but a good reason to be cautious if doing so).

Text 3

Utilitarianism is an absurd moral theory, because of its very demanding notion of impartiality and its implausible account of human motivation. The theory requires that the utilitarian decision-maker can occupy, perhaps only temporarily and imperfectly, the 'point of view of the universe', where everything is seen impartially, from the outside. They must adopt this point of view even towards their own dispositions, affections or projects, so that these can be impartially assigned a value. But because these are the very things that provide the basis of life's meaning, and therefore rightly ought to have the most value to that person, it is psychologically impossible, and frankly undesirable, to do this. The kind of factors that give life meaning are so different from the kind of factors that utilitarianism is structurally obliged to prize, that we have every reason to hope that people will not strive to think in the utilitarian way. No ethical theory should oblige someone to act in a way that is psychologically impossible or unpalatable. In other words it will, absurdly, be best even from the utilitarian point of view if no one actually is a utilitarian.

Summary

This is an argument to the conclusion that utilitarianism is absurd because, according to its own theory, it would be best if no one were a utilitarian.

Clarification

Candidates should begin by explaining what utilitarianism is and what its locus of value is, that is, states of affairs or consequences which maximise aggregated welfare.

The argument might be formalised as follows:

- (P1) Utilitarianism requires that the utilitarian decision-maker can occupy, perhaps only temporarily and imperfectly, the 'point of view of the universe', where everything is seen impartially, from the outside, even their own dispositions, affections or projects.
- (P2) A person's own dispositions, affections or projects provide the basis of life's meaning.
So,
- (SC1) A person's own dispositions, affections or projects should have the most value to them.
So,
- (SC2) Utilitarianism has a demanding notion of impartiality and an implausible account of human motivation.
So,
- (SC3) It is psychologically impossible, and undesirable, to be radically impartial about those things that are the basis of meaning and value.
- (P3) The things that give life meaning and value and states of affairs that maximise overall wellbeing/welfare are radically different.
- (P4) An ethical theory should not oblige someone to act in a way that is psychologically impossible or unpalatable.
So,
- (SC4) It is best, even from the utilitarian point of view, if no one actually is a utilitarian.
So,
- (C) Utilitarianism is absurd.

Question 11 (continued)**Evaluation**

Evaluation of the argument should focus on the:

- (1) support the premises give to the conclusion and the sub-conclusion, and
- (2) acceptability of the premises.

The argument is reasonably strong, but it can be challenged. Here's one way that a utilitarian could respond. They could question the strength of inference from P2 to SC1. Indeed, that inferential move might even be viewed as begging the question against the utilitarian. For a utilitarian is likely to agree that a person's own dispositions, affections or projects (which we can call 'interests') will as a matter of fact provide the basis for their life's meaning – and indeed be of most value *to them*. It is a corollary of the fact that we value our selves more than anything else. But they will disagree that this tendency shows that it is psychologically impossible to avoid assigning the most importance to one's own interests when engaging in moral decision making, and hence that one OUGHT to give precedence to their own interests in moral decision-making. Indeed, we often praise someone as 'unselfish' or a 'hero' when taking a course of action through which their own interests are outweighed in favour of the greater good: evidence that impartial thinking is both psychologically possible and morally commendable.

Here, the arguer can also question the move from SC2 to SC3. The whole point of ethics, the opponent may argue, is to go against our powerful tendencies to favour our own interests above those of everyone else, and to strive towards seeing ourselves on an impartial footing with others. It is the essence of being unselfish. Of course it is demanding and few people may fully achieve it. But this strong human tendency to favour oneself shows neither that it is impossible, nor morally unpalatable, nor a reason not to strive for such impartiality. To the contrary, the utilitarian may claim, it is the essence of morality to put aside self-interest and aim for impartiality. So utilitarianism is not absurd.

Section Three: Construction of argument

30% (30 Marks)

Use the marking key below for Questions 12–16.

Marks will be awarded for demonstration of:

- philosophical understandings (10 marks)
- philosophical argument (15 marks)
- clarity and structure. (5 marks)

Description	Marks
Criterion 1: Philosophical understandings (10 marks)	
Demonstrates a critical understanding of philosophical topics relevant to the question and uses sophisticated philosophical language and concepts.	9–10
Demonstrates understanding of philosophical topics relevant to the question and uses appropriate language and concepts.	7–8
Demonstrates an understanding of philosophical topics relevant to the question and uses some appropriate philosophical language and concepts.	5–6
Demonstrates some understanding of philosophical topics relevant to the question and uses some appropriate philosophical language and concepts.	3–4
Demonstrates a limited understanding of philosophical topics relevant to the question and uses limited appropriate philosophical language and concepts.	1–2
Fails to demonstrate an understanding of philosophical topics relevant to the question.	0
Subtotal	10
Criterion 2: Philosophical arguments (15 marks)	
Constructs a relevant, cogent argument, which demonstrates originality, and a deep understanding of philosophical method (e.g. relies on plausible assumptions, demonstrates logical insight, effectively uses examples and counter-examples where appropriate).	14–15
Constructs a relevant, cogent argument, which demonstrates a sound understanding of philosophical method.	12–13
Constructs a relevant, moderately cogent argument, which demonstrates some understanding of philosophical method.	10–11
Constructs a relevant, moderately cogent argument (e.g. may contain some errors in reasoning or fails to consider possible objections where appropriate).	8–9
Constructs a relevant, weak argument (e.g. may make controversial assumptions, beg the question and/or commit some other serious errors of reasoning such as informal or formal fallacies).	6–7
Constructs a weak argument that makes few relevant claims (e.g. commits several serious errors of reasoning, has tenuous/occasional links with the question).	4–5
Makes some claims relevant to the question but fails to construct any argument (e.g. merely makes assertions, merely discusses the thoughts of others).	2–3
No relevant argument (e.g. fails to address the question).	0–1
Subtotal	15
Criterion 3: Clarity and structure (5 marks)	
Writes with structure and clarity (e.g. clarifies key terms, sign-post key steps of the argument, logical ordering of topics).	4–5
Writes with some structure and some clarity.	2–3
Writing is poorly structured and lacks clarity (e.g. fails to clarify key terms, unclear argument structure).	0–1
Subtotal	5
Total	30

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Question 6

Introductory text information from: Mavisakalyan, A., Weber, C., & Tarverdi, Y. (2018). Future tense: How the language you speak influences your willingness to take climate action. *The Conversation*. Retrieved September, 2018, from <https://theconversation.com/future-tense-how-the-language-you-speak-influences-your-willingness-to-take-climate-action-92587>

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