All Past A-Level Philosophy Questions

The following document contains every AQA Philosophy past paper question from the following qualifications:
AQA 2175 (labelled "old" – stopped in 2019)
AQA 7171 (AS – stopped in 2021)
AQA 7172 (our qualification)

Please be aware that any question labelled "AS" or "old" is from a different qualification so may not be fully representative of the type of question that you may get, but they are similar so still useful. In particular the AS questions and old Paper 1 questions generally demand less content than questions on your paper.

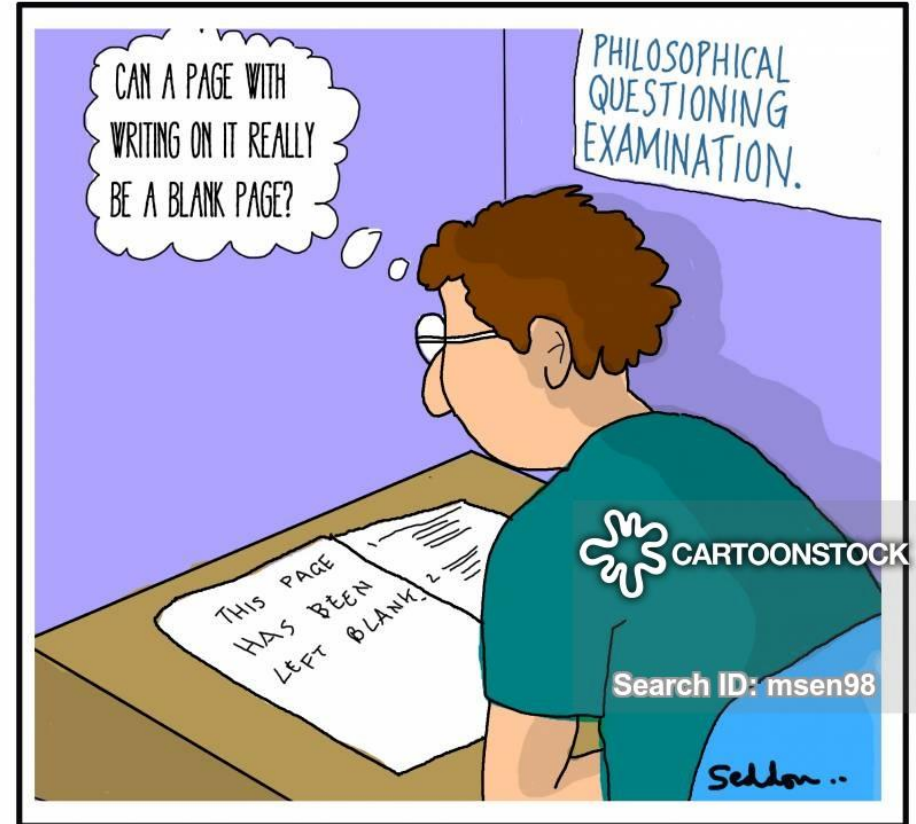Click on the link below to get to the questions you are looking for:

Paper 1

Epistemology

Moral Philosophy

Paper 2

Metaphysics of God

Metaphysics of Mind

Epistemology

Epistemology

5 Marks:

Explain why there might be a problem with the role played by God in Berkeley's idealism
(Paper 1, 2020)

Explain the view that belief is not a necessary condition for knowledge
(Paper 1, 2020)

Explain the view that the mind is a 'tabula rasa' at birth
(Paper 1, 2021)

Explain Descartes' third 'wave of doubt'.
(Paper 1, 2021)

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12 Marks: (^AS and Old Paper 1 questions were 9 marks)

Outline and explain the key differences between idealism and indirect realism.^
(Old Paper 1, Specimen)

Outline and explain the tripartite view of knowledge.^
(Old Paper 1, Specimen)

Explain Berkeley's attack on the primary/secondary property distinction.^
(Old Paper 1, 2015)

Explain Locke's argument against innatism.^
(Old Paper 1, 2015)

Outline Descartes' 'evil deceiver argument **and** explain what he then says about his knowledge of his own existence.^
(Old Paper 1, 2016)

Outline Berkeley's idealism **and** explain how it could lead to solipsism.^
(Old Paper 1, 2016)

Briefly outline the tripartite view of knowledge **and** explain how a case of a lucky true belief (a Gettier-style problem) can be used to argue against this view.^
(Old Paper 1, 2017)

12 Marks: (^AS and Old Paper 1 questions were 9 marks)

Briefly explain direct realism **and** explain how the 'argument from hallucination' can be used to argue against this view.^
(Old Paper 1, 2017)

Explain how the addition of a 'no false lemmas' condition responds to Gettier-style problems.^
(Old Paper 1, 2018)

Explain what 'innate knowledge' is and how Plato argues for it.^
(Old Paper 1, 2018)

Briefly outline the tripartite view of knowledge **and** explain how a case of a lucky true belief (a Gettier-style problem) can be used to argue against this view.^
(Old Paper 1, 2019)

Explain Locke's arguments against innatism^
(Old Paper 1, 2019)

Explain how **one** of Gettier's original counter examples attacks the tripartite view of knowledge.^
(AS, Specimen)

Explain Descartes' third wave of doubt (the 'evil demon' argument).^
(AS, Specimen)

Briefly explain innatism **and** explain one of Locke's arguments against this view.^
(AS, 2018)

Explain Descartes' first and second 'waves of doubt'.^
(AS, 2018)

Outline direct realism and explain how the time-lag argument challenges this view.^
(AS, 2019)

Explain Descartes' proof of the external world from the existence of God.^
(AS, 2019)

Outline direct realism **and** explain the issue of perceptual variation.^
(AS. 2020)

Epistemology

Outline innatism **and** explain how Plato's 'slave boy' argument supports it.^ — (AS. 2020)

Explain how Descartes argues that we can gain *a priori* knowledge through intuition and deduction. — (Paper 1, Specimen)

Outline how indirect realism leads to scepticism about the existence of mind-independent objects **and** explain Locke's response based on the involuntary nature of our experience. — (Paper 1, 2019)

Outline philosophical scepticism and explain how reliabilism might respond to it — (Paper 1, 2020)

Explain how an account of epistemic virtue can be used to show why Smith lacks knowledge in one of Gettier's original counter-examples. — (Paper 1, 2021)

Are there innate ideas?^ — (Old Paper 1, Specimen)

Is knowledge justified true belief?^ — (Old Paper 1, 2015)

Are direct realists right to claim that the immediate objects of perception are mind-independent?^ — (Old Paper 1, 2016)

Are concept empiricists right to claim that all concepts derive from experience?^ — (Old Paper 1, 2017)

How convincing is Berkeley's idealism?^ — (Old Paper 1, 2018)

Are direct realists right to claim that the immediate objects of perception are mind-independent?^ — (Old Paper 1, 2019)

How convincing is Berkeley's idealism?^ — (AS, Specimen)

How convincing is indirect realism?^ — (AS, 2018)

Is knowledge justified true belief?^ — (AS, 2019)

Is there a convincing response to philosophical scepticism?^ — (AS. 2020)

How should propositional knowledge be defined? — (Paper 1, Specimen)

Do we have innate knowledge? — (Paper 1, 2019)

How convincing is direct realism? — (Paper 1, 2020)

Is Berkeley's idealist account of perception convincing? — (Paper 1, 2021)

Moral Philosophy

3 Marks: (^AS questions were 2 marks)

What does it mean to say an ethical theory is deontological?	(Old Paper 2, Specimen)
What is moral realism?	(Old Paper 2, 2016)
What is the difference between ethical naturalism and ethical non-naturalism?	(Old Paper 2, 2017)
What is a hypothetical imperative?	(Old Paper 2, 2018)
What is ethical naturalism?	(Old Paper 2, 2019)
According to Hare's prescriptivism, what does 'x is morally right' mean?^	(AS, Specimen)
What is moral anti-realism?^	(AS, 2018)
What does Aristotle mean by a 'voluntary action'?^	(AS, 2019)
What is preference utilitarianism?^	(AS. 2020)
Briefly explain why Aristotle thinks that pleasure is **not** the only good.	(Paper 1, Specimen)
What is moral anti-realism?	(Paper 1, 2019)
Outline Ayer's verification principle	(Paper 1, 2020)
What is the difference between cognitivism and non-cognitivism about ethical language?	(Paper 1, 2021)

5 Marks:

Explain ethical naturalism	(Old Paper 2, Specimen)
Explain the difference between cognitivist and non-cognitivist theories of ethics	(Old Paper 2, Specimen)
Explain how an act utilitarian would make a moral decision.	(Old Paper 2, 2016)
Outline Aristotle's function argument.	(Old Paper 2, 2016)
Explain what error theory claims about the status of ethical language.	(Old Paper 2, 2017)
Explain the issue of circularity involved in Aristotle's definition of 'virtuous acts'.	(Old Paper 2, 2017)
Explain how a rule utilitarian would make a moral decision.	(Old Paper 2, 2018)
Explain the issue of clashing/competing duties facing Kantian deontological ethics.	(Old Paper 2, 2018)
Explain Kant's first formulation of the categorical imperative.	(Old Paper 2, 2019)
Explain the issue of circularity involved in Aristotle's definition of 'virtuous acts'.	(Old Paper 2, 2019)
Explain the criticism that utilitarianism could lead to the 'tyranny of the majority'.	(AS, Specimen)
Explain Aristotle's account of the role of education/habituation in the development of a moral character.	(AS, 2018)
Explain Aristotle's doctrine of the mean.	(AS, 2019)
Outline Aristotle's function argument.	(AS. 2020)

Moral Philosophy

5 Marks:

Explain why emotivism is a non-cognitivist theory of ethical language.	(Paper 1, Specimen)
Explain the analogy drawn between virtues and skills within Aristotelian ethics	(Paper 1, Specimen)
Explain Kant's distinction between acting in accordance with duty and acting out of duty	(Paper 1, 2019)
Explain why Hume thinks that moral judgements are not beliefs.	(Paper 1, 2019)
Explain Kant's first formulation of the categorical imperative	(Paper 1, 2020)
Explain Moore's Open Question Argument	(Paper 1, 2020)
Explain why utilitarianism has an issue with partiality.	(Paper 1, 2021)
Explain what Mackie's error theory claims.	(Paper 1, 2021)

12 Marks: (^AS questions were 9 marks)

How might a utilitarian attempt to justify preventative imprisonment? **(not on our specification)**	(Old Paper 2, Specimen)
Explain the similarities and differences between what emotivists and prescriptivists say about ethical language.	(Old Paper 2, 2016)
Explain Kant's view on the telling of lies, using his first and second formulations of the categorical imperative.	(Old Paper 2, 2017)
Outline moral realism **and** explain how Mackie's argument from queerness opposes this view.	(Old Paper 2, 2018)
Explain the similarities and differences between what emotivists and prescriptivists say about ethical language.	(Old Paper 2, 2019)
Explain Moore's open question argument.^	(AS, Specimen)
Explain what Aristotle meant by an 'involuntary action'.^	(AS, Specimen)
Explain how a utilitarian might approach the issue of eating animals.^	(AS, 2018)
Explain how Mackie's argument from relativity challenges moral realism.^	(AS, 2018)
Outline Kant's first formulation of the categorical imperative **and** explain the issue that not all non-universalisable maxims are immoral.^	(AS, 2019)
Outline rule utilitarianism and explain how rule utilitarians might oppose the telling of lies.^	(AS, 2019)

Moral Philosophy

12 Marks: (^AS questions were 9 marks)

Explain Bentham's utilitarianism and explain how it faces problems with calculation.^	(AS. 2020)
Outline moral anti-realism and explain the issue that it cannot account for moral progress.^	(AS. 2020)
Explain how Kant's deontological ethics can be applied to the question of whether we should ever tell lies.	(Paper 1, Specimen)
Explain how Aristotelian virtue ethics might be applied to the issue of simulated killing	(Paper 1, 2019)
Explain Bentham's utilitarianism and explain how Nozick's experience machine challenges this view	(Paper 1, 2020)
Explain Aristotle's view on how we develop moral character and how this is challenged by the issue of circularity in his definition of 'virtuous acts'.	(Paper 1, 2021)

25 Marks: (^AS questions were 15 marks)

Is Aristotle's doctrine of the mean useful for making moral decisions?	(Old Paper 2, Specimen)
Is Kant's deontological approach to ethics correct?	(Old Paper 2, 2016)
Is utilitarianism correct?	(Old Paper 2, 2017)
How convincing is Aristotelian virtue ethics?	(Old Paper 2, 2018)
Is utilitarianism correct?	(Old Paper 2, 2019)
Is it wrong to steal?^	(AS, Specimen)
How convincing is utilitarianism as an account of what makes an action morally right?^	(AS, 2018)
Can Kantian deontological ethics be successfully defended against objections?^	(AS, 2019)
Is moral realism the right approach to metaethics?^	(AS. 2020)
How convincing is Kant's view on telling lies?	(Paper 1, Specimen)
Are utilitarians correct when they say that it is morally right to maximise utility?	(Paper 1, 2019)
How convincing is Aristotelian Virtue Ethics?	(Paper 1, 2020)
To what extent can Kantian deontological ethics be defended?	(Paper 1, 2021)

Metaphysics of God

In his ontological argument, how does Anselm define God?^	(Old Paper 1, Specimen)
What does it mean to claim that God is everlasting?^	(Old Paper 1, 2015)
What does it mean to claim that God is eternal?^	(Old Paper 1, 2016)
What does Hare mean by the term 'blik'?^	(Old Paper 1, 2017)
What does it mean to say that religious statements are 'verifiable eschatologically'?^	(Old Paper 1, 2018)
In his ontological argument, how does Descartes define God?^	(Old Paper 1, 2019)
Explain the difference between the claims 'God is eternal' and 'God is everlasting'.	(Paper 2, Specimen)
What is the difference between moral and natural evil?	(Paper 2, 2019)
What does Hick mean by eschatological verification?	(Paper 2, 2020)
What does it mean to say that a person's religious claim is unfalsifiable?	(Paper 2, 2021)

5 Marks:

Outline the problem of evil	(Old Paper 1, Specimen)
Outline the paradox of the stone	(Old Paper 1, 2015)
Outline Descartes' version of the ontological argument.	(Old Paper 1, 2016)
Outline the Kalam cosmological argument.	(Old Paper 1, 2017)
Outline Aquinas' Second Way (his causal argument)	(Old Paper 1, 2018)
Explain how one of the options in the Euthyphro Dilemma is problematic.	(Old Paper 1, 2019)
Explain the evidential problem of evil.	(Paper 2, Specimen)
Outline Aquinas' Third Way.	(Paper 2, Specimen)
Explain the difference between cognitivism and non-cognitivism about religious language.	(Paper 2, 2019)
Outline the paradox of the stone.	(Paper 2, 2019)
Outline Leibniz's cosmological argument from the principle of sufficient reason.	(Paper 2, 2020)
Explain how inductive and deductive arguments for the existence of God differ.	(Paper 2, 2020)
Outline Aquinas' 1st Way (the argument from motion).	(Paper 2, 2021)
Explain the argument that the existence of an omniscient God is incompatible with free human beings.	(Paper 2, 2021)

Metaphysics of God

12 Marks: (^Old Paper 1 questions were 9 marks)

Outline the Euthyphro dilemma.^	(Old Paper 1, Specimen)
Outline Aquinas' First Way (the argument from motion).^	(Old Paper 1, Specimen)
Explain how the Free Will Defence responds to the problem of evil.^	(Old Paper 1, 2015)
Outline the verification principle **and** explain Hick's claim that religious statements are verifiable eschatologically.^	(Old Paper 1, 2015)
Explain Mitchell's view of religious language and how he uses his 'Partisan' story to illustrate this.^	(Old Paper 1, 2016)
Outline and explain Swinburne's version of the argument from design.^	(Old Paper 1, 2016)
Outline the problem of evil **and** explain Hick's soul-making response to it.^	(Old Paper 1, 2017)
Briefly define 'omniscience' **and** then explain the argument that human freedom is impossible if God is omniscient.^	(Old Paper 1, 2017)
Outline and explain the Euthyphro dilemma.^	(Old Paper 1, 2018)
Outline and explain Paley's argument from design.^	(Old Paper 1, 2018)
Outline Aquinas' First Way (the argument from motion).^	(Old Paper 1, 2019)
Outline the problem of evil **and** explain Hick's soul-making response to it.^	(Old Paper 1, 2019)
Compare and contrast Paley's and Swinburne's versions of the design argument.	(Paper 2, Specimen)

Outline Descartes' ontological argument and explain Kant's objection to it.	(Paper 2, 2019)
Outline St Anselm's ontological argument and explain Gaunilo's 'perfect island' objection.	(Paper 2, 2020)
Outline the logical problem of evil and explain the Free Will Defence.	(Paper 2, 2021)

25 Marks: (^Old Paper 1 questions were 15 marks)

Is religious language meaningless?^	(Old Paper 1, Specimen)
Does the cosmological argument prove that God exists?^	(Old Paper 1, 2015)
Does the existence of evil mean that an omnipotent, omniscient and supremely good God does not exist?^	(Old Paper 1, 2016)
Does the ontological argument prove the existence of God?^	(Old Paper 1, 2017)
Can the problem of evil be solved?^	(Old Paper 1, 2018)
Is religious language meaningless?^	(Old Paper 1, 2019)
Is religious language meaningful?	(Paper 2, Specimen)
How successful is the design argument for the existence of God?	(Paper 2, 2019)
Is the concept of 'God' incoherent?	(Paper 2, 2020)
Can God's existence be proved using an ontological argument?	(Paper 2, 2021)

Metaphysics of Mind

3 Marks:

What are qualia?	(Old Paper 2, Specimen)
What claim do logical/analytical behaviourists make regarding statements about mental states?	(Old Paper 2, 2016)
What is a philosophical zombie?	(Old Paper 2, 2017)
What is epiphenomenalist dualism?	(Old Paper 2, 2018)
What is interactionist dualism?	(Old Paper 2, 2019)
What do eliminative materialists claim about mental states?	(Paper 2, Specimen)
Define qualia.	(Paper 2, 2019)
What is 'hard' behaviourism?	(Paper 2, 2020)
What does functionalism claim about mental states?	(Paper 2, 2021)

5 Marks:

Briefly explain the philosophical zombie argument for (property) dualism.	(Old Paper 2, Specimen)
Briefly outline Descartes' indivisibility argument.	(Old Paper 2, Specimen)
Explain the argument that it would be self-refuting to articulate eliminative materialism as a theory.	(Old Paper 2, 2016)
Outline the 'knowledge'/Mary argument.	(Old Paper 2, 2016)
Explain how eliminative materialism differs from mind-brain type identity theory.	(Old Paper 2, 2017)
Explain how the asymmetry between self-knowledge and knowledge of other people's mental states might cause an issue for logical/analytic behaviourism.	(Old Paper 2, 2017)
Explain the issue of circularity that logical/analytical behaviourists face when defining mental states.	(Old Paper 2, 2018)
Explain what is meant by 'folk-psychology'.	(Old Paper 2, 2018)
Explain the argument that it would be self-refuting to articulate eliminative materialism as a theory.	(Old Paper 2, 2019)
Outline Descartes' conceivability argument for substance dualism.	(Old Paper 2, 2019)
Outline Descartes' conceivability argument for substance dualism.	(Paper 2, Specimen)
Explain how Block's China thought experiment can be used to argue against functionalism.	(Paper 2, Specimen)
Outline how the 'knowledge/Mary argument' can be applied to functional facts.	(Paper 2, 2019)

Metaphysics of Mind

5 Marks:

Explain Ryle's claim that substance dualism makes a 'category mistake'. (Paper 2, 2019)

Explain how the claims made by eliminative materialism and mind-brain identity theory differ. (Paper 2, 2020)

Outline Descartes' indivisibility argument for substance dualism. (Paper 2, 2020)

Explain the view that 'hard' behaviourists cannot satisfactorily define mental states due to the multiple realisability of mental states in behaviour. (Paper 2, 2021)

Explain how natural selection/evolution poses a challenge for epiphenomenalist dualism. (Paper 2, 2021)

12 Marks:

What are the similarities and differences between interactionist dualism and epiphenomenalist dualism? (Old Paper 2, Specimen)

Explain the similarities and differences between functionalism and mind-brain type identity theory (Old Paper 2, 2016)

Explain the conceptual causation issue and the empirical causation issue as problems facing interactionist dualism. (Old Paper 2, 2017)

Explain the problem of other minds facing dualism **and** how the argument from analogy responds to this. (Old Paper 2, 2018)

Explain the similarities and differences between functionalism and mind-brain type identity theory (Old Paper 2, 2019)

Outline mind-brain type identity theory and explain how the issue of multiple realisability challenges this view. (Paper 2, Specimen)

Explain the philosophical zombies argument **and** the response that what is conceivable may not be metaphysically possible. (Paper 2, 2019)

Outline epiphenomenalist dualism **and** explain the challenge posed by introspective self-knowledge. (Paper 2, 2020)

Outline eliminative materialism **and** explain the issue that our certainty about the existence of our mental states takes priority over other considerations. (Paper 2, 2021)

Metaphysics of Mind

25 Marks:

Are mental states ontologically reducible to brain states?	(Old Paper 2, Specimen)
Are dualists right to say that minds and/or their properties are non-physical?	(Old Paper 2, 2016)
Is the functionalist theory of mental states correct?	(Old Paper 2, 2017)
Are mental states identical to brain states?	(Old Paper 2, 2018)
Does logical/analytical behaviourism give the correct account of mental states?	(Old Paper 2, 2019)
Does philosophical behaviourism give the correct account of mental states?	(Paper 2, Specimen)
Is eliminative materialism convincing?	(Paper 2, 2019)
Does functionalism give a convincing account of mental states?	(Paper 2, 2020)
Can a dualist account of mental states be successfully defended?	(Paper 2, 2021)