

What you need to know:

Reason as a source of knowledge

Possible Exam Questions

Innatism

Arguments from Plato (i.e. the 'slave boy' argument) and Gottfried Leibniz (i.e. his argument based on necessary truths).

Empiricist responses including:

Locke's arguments against innatism

the mind as a 'tabula rasa' (the nature of impressions and ideas, simple and complex concepts)

and issues with these responses.

The intuition and deduction thesis

The meaning of 'intuition' and 'deduction' and the distinction between them.

René Descartes' notion of 'clear and distinct ideas'.

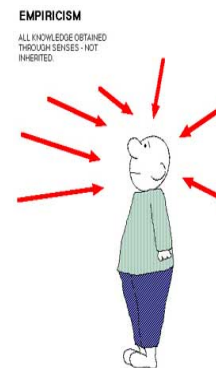
His cogito as an example of an a priori intuition.

His arguments for the existence of God and his proof of the external world as examples of a priori deductions.

Empiricist responses including:

Responses to Descartes' cogito

Responses to Descartes' arguments for the existence of God and his proof of the external world (including how Hume's Fork might be applied to these arguments) and issues with these responses.



What is tabula rasa? 3 marks
 What is a synthetic proposition? 3 marks
 what is an analytic proposition? 3 marks
 What is a priori? 3 marks
 What is a posteriori? 3 marks
 What is rationalism 3 marks
 What is innatism? 3 marks
 What is solipsism? 3 marks

Explain the empiricist distinction between simple and complex concepts. 5 marks
 Briefly explain Locke's argument against innatism 5 marks.
 Explain Hume's fork. 5 marks
 Explain Locke's argument against innatism. 5 marks
 Explain Descartes trademark argument

Explain how Descartes argues that we can gain a priori knowledge through intuition and deduction 12 marks.

Is knowledge known a priori? 25 marks
 Is innate knowledge known a priori? 25 marks

Types of knowledge and key terms

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Analytic proposition	A proposition is true because the meanings of the words are true.
Synthetic proposition	A proposition that is true or false depending on how the world is.
A priori knowledge	Knowledge of propositions that do not require sense experiences to be true
A posteriori knowledge	Knowledge of propositions that can only be known to be true or false through sense experience
Necessary truth	A proposition that must be true if it is true, or false if it is false. The 'necessity' of a truth cannot be revealed by the senses, but only reason.
Contingent truth	A proposition that could be either true or false, depending on how the world actually is
External world	All that exists outside of or independently of the mind; the physical world.
Innate ideas	Ideas that exist in the mind which are not acquired from experience. We are all born with innate knowledge which enable us to recognise individual concepts that we possess without experience. Plato, Leibniz and Descartes.
Scepticism	Philosophical scepticism is raising doubt about our claims to know. Global scepticism is doubt of all knowledge claims and argues that we can know nothing. It can also be applied to some subset of knowledge claims for example religion, this would be classed as local scepticism. The purpose of sceptic is to test our knowledge claims and if they survive the attack then it can be classed as knowledge.
Empiricism	That our beliefs and knowledge must be based sole on experience and not reason.
Induction	An argument where the truth of the conclusion is not fully guaranteed by the truth of the premises, e.g. all the ravens I have seen are black, therefore all ravens must be black, this is a generalisation moving from experience to a prediction about the future.

Deductive argument	An argument where the truth of the conclusion is guaranteed by the truth of the premises. An argument in which the premises entail the conclusion. If the premises are true, then the conclusion must be true. P1: Socrates is a man P2: All men are mortal C: Socrates is mortal
Rationalism	Reason as opposed to sense experiences is the primary source of the important knowledge we are capable of. Using mathematics as the ideal of how knowledge should be, rationalist use this to extend this type of knowledge into other areas such as knowledge of the external world.
Clear and distinct ideas	Self-justifying beliefs that Descartes uses for his foundation for knowledge. They are ones that can be intuited by the mind via reason alone. This intuition leaves no room for doubt or error, there is no further evidence needed to justify such knowledge.
Intuition	A mental seeing by which rational truths can be recognised. For Descartes, the mind deploys the faculty of intuition through reason, e.g. $2+2=4$