

# 2021 Assessment resources

## A-level Philosophy

### Epistemology

#### Answers and commentaries

The question numbers in this resource reflect the question numbers from the original papers and match the question numbers in the corresponding 2021 assessment materials.

#### Question 01

**0 1** Define (a) acquaintance knowledge, (b) ability knowledge, and (c) propositional knowledge.

[3 marks]

#### Student A

Acquaintance knowledge is  
Ability knowledge is knowing how, for  
example how to ride a big bicycle.  
Propositional knowledge is knowing  
what.

#### Commentary

This is a question where the marks break down easily, with 1 mark available for each of the three types of knowledge that are defined, so long as each one is explained clearly. In this case, only the first type of knowledge (ability) is explained clearly. The illustration is unnecessary but it does not compromise the answer in any way.

**1 mark**

## Student B

Acquaintance knowledge is 'knowledge of' someone or something, for example 'I know Anna'. Whereas ability knowledge is knowing 'how' to do something, for example, 'I know how to ride a bike'. On the other hand, propositional knowledge is factual knowledge (knowing 'that'), for example, 'I know that  $2+3=5$ '.

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## Commentary

This student has clearly explained all three types of knowledge, and so they can safely be awarded maximum marks. Again, the illustrations are not necessary, but they only serve to emphasise the student's understanding, and they certainly should not be penalised for redundancy.

**3 marks**

## Student C

Acquaintance knowledge is knowing of someone - such as claiming "I knew Smith"

Ability knowledge is know how to do a certain procedure, such as driving a car.

Propositional knowledge is knowing about something such as "I knew it is raining".

## Commentary

This student has clearly explained two of the three types of knowledge (acquittance and ability), but there is imprecision on propositional knowledge. 'Knowledge about', even with the example, does not quite do enough to distinguish it from acquittance knowledge in the way that 'knowing that' would.

**2 marks**

## Question 03

0 3 Explain the view that belief is **not** a necessary condition for knowledge.

[5 marks]

### Student A

The JTB account <sup>for</sup> of knowledge argues that belief is a necessary condition for knowledge but this has been questioned. Some philosophers, such as Plato, have argued that knowledge and belief are distinct. Plato took an infallibilist approach; he argued that knowledge ~~is~~ is certain whereas belief is uncertain. So they must be two distinct kinds of things. According to Plato, knowledge goes beyond mere belief, knowledge does not entail belief this can be backed up with the ~~idea that~~ fact that ~~people~~ it is a common phrase that people say 'I don't believe it, I know it' suggesting ~~they~~ through language that belief and knowledge are two different things. It is also possible to some people have argued that knowledge is different to belief in the sense that knowledge is more extra space like answering questions correctly. Someone can ~~claim not to know something~~ <sup>a proposition</sup> <sup>for</sup> in their history test on the evil war but ~~still~~ still get the answer correct, suggesting assent is not necessary for knowledge.

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## Commentary

This is a clear, correct and sufficiently full answer for maximum marks. Plato is, of course, associated with the development of the justified true belief (JTB) account of knowledge, but the student here draws from Plato's distinction between belief and knowledge to answer the question effectively. This is then supplemented by a Radford-style example at the end.

**5 marks**

## Student B

usually when an individual states they know something they believe it. However this can be questioned as you use an example of ~~this~~ <sup>an</sup> individual in a test. They may come to a question where they get the answer correct and they had revised it

~~and were~~ but the nerves brought ~~a~~ <sup>on</sup> ~~poor~~ them from the exam conditions caused them to doubt themselves; they didn't truly believe it was the right answer. ~~The fact~~ Another example would be if an individual had driven to a shop many times but when asked they didn't believe they knew the way. When driving there this individual got there  
Extra space Successfully as they began to remember the way as they drove.

These examples show that an individual may have knowledge but it is locked away in their brain so they do not realise until they really need ~~for~~ the information.

## Commentary

Initially clear and correct, with use of relevant examples, but the point of the second example loses focus by the end. The response is correct in substance, but lacking precision.

3 marks

## Student C

The tripartite definition for knowledge states that knowledge is comprised of truth + belief + justification. However, it can be argued that it is possible to know something without believing it. For instance, you could have some justification for

the Earth being round but not believe that it is. This would mean that you know that the Earth is round because it is true and you have some justification for it

~~Descartes three waves of doubt:~~

- ~~• Can I trust my sensory experiences? Hallucinations/dreams~~
  - ~~• Can I trust that anything exists? Demon~~
- Cogito ergo sum*
- PI - Infallibility  
P2 - Waves of  
P3

~~Reliabilism responds:~~

## Commentary

Two relevant points are made, placing the question within the context of the disputed JTB theory, and giving an example of knowledge without belief, although the latter is not well developed.

2 marks

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## Question 05

0	5
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 Do we have innate knowledge?

[25 marks]

### Student A

This essay argues we don't have innate knowledge. I will be taking the side of empiricists like Hume and Locke proposing that all knowledge comes from experience, but in addition there are 'trivial' analytic true statements which we can know a priori (as crucially shown in Hume's folk). Arguments by Plato, Descartes and Leibniz will be discussed but all rejected. Hume's argument is the most crucial because it offers good explanations of the two kinds of truth we can know, and neither of them requires innate knowledge.

Innate knowledge is knowledge we are born with, as if it were hardwired in our minds. It is propositional knowledge or knowledge 'that'. One example would be innate mathematical knowledge which Plato uses. A strong point in Plato's philosophy is the paradox of knowledge in the Meno because it seems to show that trying to gain knowledge by looking for evidence (through experience) is pointless. It seems obvious that if you do know the answer to a question, then you don't need to do anything to find out, whereas if you don't know then you should try and find out. But the problem is even if you don't know the answer to a question, you still can't find out as you'd never know when you'd found the answer as you don't know what you're looking for! Plato tries to solve this paradox by showing how we really come to have knowledge.

Plato gave the example of geometry in his slave boy argument. In Meno Socrates is taking to a slave boy who has had no real education. Socrates starts asking him questions about squares, their definition and size. And the slave boy is able to answer these questions correctly about how a square increases in size, despite not studying geometry before (and therefore having no experience of this). Socrates therefore concludes that the slave boy has this knowledge within his mind all the time from birth, since this is the only available option once we dismiss experience. But how? The reason for this according to Plato is that knowing is really a process of remembering not searching through experience. Our souls have contact with truths in the world of the forms before we are born, and when we live we just need people like Socrates who could help us recollect what we already knew.

One objection to this argument is that it is too complicated. It assumes a whole world of metaphysical forms which is very difficult to prove. It also assumes the immortality of the soul and transmigration, both of which would require proof we don't have, and modern science (not available for Plato) could be used against these ideas. There are other alternative explanations for the slave boy example which are simpler. Some have accused Socrates of asking leading questions, where he is actually teaching the slave boy through experience, as questions and answers are themselves a form of experience, and the slave boy is just using innate logic and reason which is not the same as innate knowledge. John Locke was a strong empiricist and he would agree with this criticism. He thought we were born *tabula rasa*, with a blank slate for a mind

that we filled with experience. The slave boy might have been able to be taught mathematic truths very quickly by Socrates. But if geometry was really innate then it would be universal. This would mean that babies and 'idiots' (people with learning difficulties) would be born with this knowledge, and we have no evidence of this. So if we just take Plato's arguments, we have certainly not proved there is innate knowledge.



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A stronger version of innatism is Leibniz's, as it recognises that new experience is needed (like Locke says), but this experience reveals knowledge which is innate (and not recollecting from previous lives like Plato says). For Leibniz the mind has a 'special affinity' for necessary truths, which we do have, which experience alone could never provide for it to be shown as universal. Knowledge from experience is arrived at through induction so it can never give us necessity only probability. Leibniz uses the analogy of a piece of marble which has veins which show shapes that a skilful sculptor (like a man having experiences) can discover and carve out, so his idea is that experience brings out the underlying knowledge built into the mind.

But these 'veins' are like knowledge which is unconscious until we experience things which trigger it, and Locke has shown that this is not possible. If we are not conscious of knowledge it is not really knowledge. We might forget knowledge at some point and be reminded of it, but the reason we had it in the first place was some form of experience. The reason we know all bachelors are unmarried (a necessary truth) is because someone once told us what bachelors meant or we read about them. Leibniz overcomplicates this by adding something which experience alone is sufficient for. Hume would add crucial weight to this criticism with his famous fork that distinguishes relations of ideas from matters of fact. The truth 'it is not raining' is a matter of fact we need experience to establish. It is a synthetic truth (if it is or isn't raining). The truth 'all bachelors are unmarried' is a relation of ideas. We don't need to experience all the bachelors in the world to know they are unmarried and we don't need innate knowledge either. We just need someone to teach us (through experience) what the world 'bachelor' means by definition and then we know this is always a true relation of ideas. It is an analytic truth not a synthetic.

One final argument against innate knowledge is the idea that in order to have innate knowledge you really need innate ideas as well as propositional knowledge is made up of concepts. There are aren't any innate concepts so there is isn't any innate knowledge.

Descartes tries to show how we have innate knowledge because we know of the concept of God and therefore we can reason and know that God exist because he must cause this idea in our minds.

P1. I have a concept of God (a supremely perfect infinite being)

P2. I cannot experience a supremely perfect or infinite being

P3. The causal adequacy principle says that any cause must have at least as much reality as the effect it brings about.

P4. It is impossible for there to be an infinite regress of causes which have this reality.

C. The cause must be an infinite being who I can know exists since it must have been the adequate cause of my idea of a supreme and infinite being. This is the idea that God stamped the idea of himself on our minds like a trademark.

A strength of this argument is that many people do claim to have a concept of God, which includes ideas like 'infinity', and it seems obvious concepts like 'infinity' can't be experienced. So it could be that we are born with this idea. Some would disagree with P3 as there are counter examples e.g.

the ingredients which cause a sponge cake are not spongy. And maybe there is another explanation for how we get our concept of 'perfection' or 'infinity', i.e. 'negation'.

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While Descartes is right that we don't experience things that are infinite going on forever with no beginning or end, we do experience things with a beginning and ending, so perhaps with infinity, all we have to do is imagine these things just not beginning or ending. One objection to this is that we don't really experience things beginning and ending, we just experience things change in form (like a candle going out or waxing melting). But there is a beginning and ending to the various changes even if we can't always say exactly where they happen. All we need is the general idea of them happening and then think of the opposite where there is no beginning and ending at all and that is enough to have the concept of the 'infinite', meaning the idea isn't innate and we don't have knowledge of God. And how clear is our idea of 'infinity' anyway? We could challenge P1 as saying that we may know the basic meaning of the idea, but we can't really imagine the concept. Locke suggests we just 'augment' various qualities as far as we can imagine, and when we can't imagine anymore we just say they are 'infinite' (God).

To conclude this essay I can confirm after this discussion that we do not have innate knowledge. Plato's arguments are far too elaborate and knowledge can be explained through simpler means. Descartes seems stronger as he does not use a story which can be interpreted differently (e.g. about the slave boy) but starts with a very common idea people have (e.g. about a supremely perfect and infinite God), but there are problems with his causal adequacy theory, and empiricists are able to show how these ideas can be arrived at through other means. Leibniz is the strongest, as he combines experience and the human mind to bring out knowledge of necessary truths from within the mind, and this doesn't involve controversial claims like reincarnation (like Plato). But Hume shows how all knowledge is either a matter of fact or relations of ideas, and truths like 'all bachelors are unmarried', necessary truths, are just relations of ideas not matters of fact, and are 'trivial' rather than real 'propositional' knowledge.

## Commentary

This student argues with intent, and the logic of the argument is sustained. There is detailed evaluation throughout, with some examples of robust defence; the balance of arguments clearly supports the conclusion, and the rationale for identifying some arguments as 'stronger' or 'weaker' is likewise clear. Relevant philosophical language is used correctly. There are obviously other possible replies the student could have made (ie on behalf of Plato, Leibniz and Descartes), and the discussion of Descartes was less consistently focused on propositional knowledge than the rest. The quality of written communication was not always precise but it is a solid top-band answer, and responses do not have to be perfect to be awarded full marks.

The student begins with a clear statement of intent: they will be offering a defence of a Humean and Lockean empiricism against the notion of innate knowledge. There is also an indication of what the 'crucial' argument is: they will be drawing on 'Hume's folk'.

The student opens the main body of their discussion with a clear and correct definition of innate knowledge (blurring with innate ideas/concepts was a pervasive feature of students' responses to this question). This student introduces innatism via Plato, outlining the paradox of knowledge to show the apparent plausibility of the innatist option. This is an example of positive evaluation, something that few students offer when dealing with arguments they don't support.

The student then sets out Plato's 'slave boy argument'. Once experience is eliminated as an explanation for the slave boy's apparent knowledge, then the theory of recollection is introduced. This is a clear and correct discussion. The objections raised concerning the plausibility of the forms and the immortality of the soul are not especially detailed, but they are all reasonable philosophical doubts one might raise. Socrates's method is critiqued (as a form of teaching through experience), and an important distinction is made between innate intellectual abilities and innate knowledge. In

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passing to Leibniz, the student not only states that this is a 'stronger' argument but gives some reasons why: it acknowledges the need for some experience, and it is not as metaphysically elaborate as Plato. There are obvious affinities between Leibniz and Plato that this student overlooks, but they clearly want to bring out the differences. The objections that the student raises are broadly Lockean, especially the criticism of any notion that we could possess knowledge that we were not (and had never been) conscious of.

The student uses 'Hume's folk' to offer a different account of the status of knowledge claims which is presented as undermining the innatist position. The student could have offered replies from a Leibnizian perspective here, but clearly they think they have done enough to refute this argument. The final argument that the student considers is the connection between innate ideas and knowledge. There is the potential here to get lost in a tangential discussion about innate ideas, but the student does a really good job of keeping the focus on innate knowledge. There was room for even more integration (eg explicitly connecting the idea of God to propositional knowledge) but evaluation is still precise and integrated, being directed at specific (relevant) premises.

The conclusion restates the hierarchy in the relative strength of arguments for innate knowledge, and summarises why none of them succeed.

**25 marks**

## Student B

The claim that we have innate knowledge is the claim ~~the~~ the rationalist claim that some of our knowledge is within us without being derived from experience. Rationalists argue that some knowledge can be gained through reason alone (a priori) without experience. Some rationalists argue that one form of knowledge that can be gained from reason alone is innate knowledge. The contrasting theory to innatism is the <sup>empiricist</sup> theory that we are born as a blank slate (the tabula rasa view). ~~the~~ ~~this question~~ The question of whether we have innate knowledge is important because if we do, ~~the~~ empiricism (the view that all knowledge can be derived from experience) is undermined. In this essay I will ~~argue~~ evaluate and weigh the strength of Plato's arguments for innatism, Leibniz's ~~the~~ argument from innatism and Locke's empiricist responses to innatism. I will conclude that although Plato's argument fails, Leibniz's argument for innatism is strong and withstands Locke's objections so we do have innate knowledge.

Plato's first argument is the argument ~~of~~ of the 'slave boy'. Plato argues that this slave boy has no prior knowledge of squares. Socrates (the person in dialogue with the slave boy) only asks him questions; he does not tell ~~him~~ the slave boy anything about squares. The slave boy is able to grasp ~~an~~ eternal truth about squares by the end of the questioning. This eternal truth did not derive from his experience or from Socrates so this eternal truth must have been innate in the slave boy so we do have innate knowledge. Plato argued that this eternal truth existed in the slave boy as a form of forgotten memory ~~of~~. Plato argued ~~that~~ <sup>our</sup> soul existed before we became alive ~~so~~ and our soul has been in the realm of the forms where we apprehend perfect universal concepts. Thus, Plato argued the slave boy example shows we have innate knowledge in ~~our~~ in the form of a forgotten memory.

However, I would argue that Plato's slave boy ~~is~~

argument is weak because the slave boy simply shows reason in action. We do not need to explain the slave boy's ability to grasp an eternal truth about squares as ~~something~~ forgotten memory that is in the slave boy innately. Instead the slave boy is simply using his knowledge of lines and shapes which he has gained from experience to gain an understanding of squares. The slave boy simply uses reasoning to deduce what must be the case about squares given his prior knowledge of lines and shapes. Thus, ~~the~~ Plato's slave boy argument fails to show we have innate knowledge.

Plato may respond by developing his argument without requiring the slave boy example. Plato argues that the senses can only reveal particular instances. Our minds can know perfect universal concepts. Particular instances could not reveal a perfect universal concept. For example, we have the perfect universal concept of a circle and yet we have never had sense experience of a perfect circle. This argument is stronger than Plato's slave boy argument because it does not rely on the slave boy example which I have shown is weak. Thus, Plato would argue we do have innate knowledge because if universal concepts do derive from the senses, they

must ~~come from~~ be innate.

However, although this argument is stronger than Plato's slave boy argument it also fails on other grounds. Plato argues that we have universal concepts of abstract concepts such as justice and beauty. ~~as well as having universal concepts of less abstract concepts~~

It is not clear, however, that we do have such universal perfect concepts. For example to think of the concept of justice I can only think of examples of just and ~~the~~ unjust acts. I ~~cannot~~ do not seem to have a universal concept. Thus, Plato's argument that we have perfect universal concepts that are innate is not strong because it is not clear that we do have such universal concepts of abstract concepts. One may argue we should only accept Plato's argument for concepts that are not abstract.

However, this is no longer Plato's theory of innatism. Thus, Plato's theory of innatism fails to show we have innate knowledge.

Leibniz presents ~~an~~ a different theory of innatism.

Leibniz argues that the senses can only reveal particular instances. Our minds can grasp necessary truths. A collection of instances can never ~~can~~ provide knowledge of a necessary truth. For example, if I see a ball fall to the ground when it is dropped, I cannot

grasp a necessary truth from this. I think a ball would fall to the ground but I cannot know this for certain because I am generalising based on past experience. Necessary truths such as a triangle's interior angles add up to 180 degrees are certain and the senses cannot give us this kind of certainty. Thus, Leibniz argues that necessary truths must be innate in us as they cannot be derived from the senses. This argument is much stronger than Plato's arguments because firstly it does not suppose ~~that~~ universal concepts such as justice are innate and secondly it does not rely on a counter-intuitive realm of the forms and the existence of the soul before life. Leibniz argues that ~~there is~~ innate knowledge exists not as fully formed knowledge but as inclinations ~~that when~~ ~~when we have~~ sense experiences which will form knowledge. ~~Therefore~~ This fits with our intuitions as it doesn't seem correct to claim a baby would have ~~knowledge~~ innate knowledge of necessary truths fully formed but rather as that baby develops, it will grasp necessary truths because it has ~~innate~~ innate knowledge in the form of inclinations.

Locke, an empiricist, argues that we do not have innate knowledge as all our knowledge is derived from experience. Locke would respond to Leibniz's



argument for innatism with his argument from universal consent. Locke argues that if an innate idea,  $x$ , exists everyone would have idea  $x$ . However, children do not have idea  $x$  so this shows that innate ideas do not exist. Locke ~~then~~ ~~thereby~~ argues the two most likely candidates for a universally held idea is 'whatever is, is' (the law of identity) and something cannot both be and not be at the same time (~~law~~ the law of contradiction). Locke argues that children have no concept of either of these ideas; if you ~~tried to~~ ~~ask~~ asked a child about this they would be very confused. As children do not even have the two most likely universally held ideas, there ~~can~~ can't be any idea that is universally held. Thus Locke argues Leibniz

is wrong to argue we have innate knowledge because if we did this innate knowledge would be universally held but there is no universally held knowledge.

~~The~~ An innatist can respond to Locke, however, by arguing that a child can have innate knowledge without being ~~able~~ aware of this knowledge. Children frequently employ both the law of identity and the law of contradiction. For example, a child would ~~know~~ know that her teddy could not both be on her bed and be in the loft at the same time. Thus, there

Extra space are universally held ideas, just children are not aware of them yet. Thus, <sup>based on this response</sup> innate knowledge does exist as ~~there can be universally~~ as Locke's argument from universal consent is weak.

However, Locke can respond to this by arguing that it is absurd to argue someone can have knowledge of something and yet be unaware of it. To have knowledge of something you must ~~be~~ be aware of it or at least have been aware of it at some point. This is known as Locke's argument from transparency of ideas. ~~However,~~ <sup>However,</sup> ~~this~~ <sup>this</sup> ~~the~~ argument does not successfully defend Locke's argument from universal consent because we can be subconsciously aware of an idea or item of knowledge. For example, ~~we~~ ~~know~~ I may not know that I know a song because ~~the~~ because I knew it subconsciously. When the song comes on and I know the words to it, I do ~~know~~ did know the song, even though I was unaware that I knew it. Thus, both of Locke's arguments from universal consent and transparency of ideas fail to defeat Leibniz account of innatism.

In conclusion, although Plato's arguments ~~for~~ <sup>for</sup> innate knowledge fail, Leibniz' do succeed. Plato's

Slave boy argument is the weakest argument for innatism I have discussed as ~~it fails~~ the slave boy simply shows reasoning in action. Plato's second argument is stronger but also fails as ~~it~~ Plato cannot give an account of abstract universal concepts. ~~Like~~ Leibniz's argument from necessary truths succeeds as there is no other way of explaining necessary truths other than through us having innate knowledge. As Locke's arguments do not successfully show that innatism is incoherent, Leibniz's argument that we have innate knowledge stands. That we do, therefore, have innate knowledge although this knowledge as Leibniz describes is not fully formed from birth and instead is knowledge in the form of inclinations.

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## Commentary

This student argues with sustained intent, with detailed knowledge and understanding of relevant arguments which support the conclusion. Relevant philosophical language is used correctly, and there is integrated argument and counter argument. However, the argument is certainly not robustly defended with consistently precise and detailed knowledge and understanding, and falls short of the top band.

The essay begins by locating knowledge innatism within the broader philosophical position of rationalism, which is contrasted with empiricism and the 'blank slate'. The student clearly explains what they see as a stake in the debate, with good analysis and evaluation, and clearly indicate their intention to defend Leibnizian innatism.

The first argument considered is Plato's 'slave boy' argument, which is outlined and critiqued. Neither the argument nor the objection is especially precise and detailed, but there is clearly credit worthy knowledge, understanding and evaluation here. The student also considers a Platonist reply concerning universal concepts not derived from experience (eg a circle), but the subsequent evaluation misunderstands Plato. It is not the case that we have these pristine universal concepts of justice and beauty; rather, that there are metaphysical ideas/forms which exist independently of human minds, and from which we derive our imperfect concepts, recognising them in particular cases, but never reaching a secure general definition. This misrepresentation of Plato's arguments reoccurs elsewhere in the weighing of Plato against Leibniz.

Leibniz's argument from necessary truths of reason is introduced, and its merits are noted in the evaluative remarks. Locke's argument from universal agreement is well stated. The student does not target this at knowledge until the end of the argument (focussing instead on ideas) but it was rare for even the best students to maintain laser-like focus on knowledge, and they did at least bring it back in the end.

The student responds on behalf of Leibniz, defending innate knowledge in children who are not aware of their knowledge (eg the 'law of non-contradiction'). The counter, Locke's argument against unconscious knowledge, and the so called 'transparency' thesis, is never really responded to: the words of a song were surely present to the mind once. Still, it does further the argument in favour of the possibility of unconscious knowledge which Locke is said to deny.

The logic of the argument is mostly sustained, and a range of arguments have been offered, summarised in the conclusion.

**19 marks**

## Student C

Innatism is a form of rationalism, which states that we are born with certain pieces of knowledge. It is commonly also argued (and an argument for which I will use for my essay) that through experience and intuition, and reasoning, we can provoke ~~these~~ these innate concepts to become clear and present within our minds. Plato and Leibniz are strong supporters of innatism. Although the theories seems highly plausible, empiricists (people who believe all of our knowledge is gained from experience) give some very strong objections. However, the argument for innatism are stronger, therefore we do have some innate knowledge.

Plato starts off his argument by explaining his theory of forms. Plato believes that in we all have the theory of some complex concepts such as beauty or love. This is exemplified in how a baby acts towards ~~his~~ <sup>their</sup> mother<sup>\*</sup>; they are immediately loving towards <sup>their mothers</sup> ~~and~~, such as always wanting to be near. <sup>There is a</sup> stronger example,


which holds less of a possibility of being explained by science (empiricists could just say a baby ~~loves~~ it appears to love its mother simply for a physical need for her milk).

This is if you hold up a ~~real~~ live flower (~~beauti~~ (commonly understood as beautiful) and a dead flower (commonly understood as ugly), the baby will chose the live flower. This is because the baby innately has a concept of beautiful.

Plato accepts ~~that we have never seen a~~ <sup>complex concepts like</sup> perfect example of "beauty or love in the world, we have only experienced them

imperfectly. Plato describes ~~how we~~ that in a prior existence, we ~~gained~~ <sup>per</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>concept</sup> ~~of~~ experienced the perfect 'forms' of these

concepts. Through experiences of imperfect example of them in our current existence (such as a ~~beauti~~ flower), we ~~are~~ <sup>are</sup> reminded <sup>(formed before birth)</sup> ~~of~~ our prior "understanding" and ~~that~~ these innate idea become present in the mind.

Therefore, ~~this proves that~~ the example of the ~~child~~ baby understanding these concepts and Plato's ~~the~~ ~~ex~~ the explanation of Plato's theory of forms, shows that innate knowledge does exist. 

An empiricist objection is that ~~at least~~ we cannot have ideas which we are unaware of, which Innatists say ~~are~~ <sup>are</sup> innate and are then provoked by experience or reasoning. ~~They~~ Empiricists believe in a 'transparency of the mind', which means that we have to be aware of an idea for it to be real:

Empiricists would say that the baby forms its concepts of beauty and love through lots of experiences of it and it is only a real idea, once the child is aware of it. ~~It cannot be an idea~~ This would show that we do not have innate knowledge, because at birth we are unaware of all of our ideas (if we have any, which Innatists say we do). However this is a weak argument.



It is commonly understood that we can have ~~subconscious~~ ideas, subconsciously. An example being that I can subconsciously know (and therefore prove that we aren't aware of all of our ideas) ~~bring way back to my friend's~~ that something is a bad idea. A better example is 'Plato's Slave Boy' which he writes about in his Meno. Plato gives his slave a question concerned with maths and geometry. Prior to this, the slave boy has never had any experience ~~of~~ or teaching of geometry or mathematics. Plato asks a series of prompting questions, which eventually results in the slave boy getting the right answer. This proves that through no experience, and ~~the~~ <sup>despite</sup> ~~being~~ being completely unaware of his ideas (the slave boy had no idea that he ~~could~~ ~~had~~ ~~the~~ knowledge to answer the question), <sup>and just</sup> through reasoning, he was able to <sup>answer the question and therefore</sup> "uncover his innate ideas in order to answer the question. The slave boy only could have held the ideas, which enabled ~~his~~ him to answer the

question, ~~the~~ innately, because he had never experiences maths or geometry before. Therefore the empiricists 'transparency of the mind' argument is false and we do have some innate knowledge, of ~~the~~ some logical<sup>and complex</sup> concepts.

Locke, an empiricist believes that we are born with a 'tabula rasa' which means a blank slate. This would mean that we are born with absolutely no knowledge so no innate ideas. However, this theory can be rebutted in two ways. Firstly it relies upon Ockham's Razor, which although sometimes serves to strengthen an argument. ~~the~~ here it serves to weaken it. Ockham's Razor is the theoretical theory that states that an argument, which includes the least amount of assumptions is the best. ~~the~~ the tabula rasa theory, unlike innatism, doesn't assume the existence of innate ideas, so is deemed to be a better theory. However, with an argument as complex as the origin of our ideas, it seems incoherent and unlikely<sup>ly</sup> that the ~~a~~ simplest argument is the best. Secondly, Innatists can argue that without

Some innate ideas, we wouldn't be able to form ~~much more~~ any ideas. Innate concepts, knowledge, provide a framework, which means we are able to form knowledge of other things. An example is that, ~~\*~~ ~~can~~ many innatists believe that we are born with the knowledge of 'sameness', without which we wouldn't be able to form concepts, like colours. I can portray this to you in a persuasive thought experiment: if humans had no innate ideas then they would be comparable to a statue, who ~~is~~ is just constantly bombarded with sense experience, ~~the~~ such as birds chirping, the warmth of the sun, seeing the colour red in ~~eyes~~ people clothes, who walk past him. ~~He could~~ The statue could not understand that these things were the same, so he couldn't form a concept of 'red' or 'birds', they would just be multiple different experiences to him. However, a human can ~~cause exper~~ form concepts of 'red' and 'birds' ~~be~~ from their experiences. This is because they innately hold the concept of ~~the~~ 'sameness'. Therefore, despite needing

experience to form certain ideas, such as specific colours, the ability to form them into concepts and knowledge is due to having innate knowledge.

Empiricists offer other objects, which are much weaker, such as 'how do we tell the difference between innate ideas and non-innate ideas?', which can simply be explained by an intuitive understanding through inference and reason & shows which ideas are and aren't innate. They also provide the terrible argument that if ideas were innate then we would all have them but we do not. This is simply untrue - everyone, although they possibly don't have the

Extra space words for it, has an understanding on ~~these~~ things such as the law of non-contradiction (you cannot have something while also not having it). Therefore I have shown that we do have some innate knowledge, such as that of logic, and that empiricism is false.

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## Commentary

This is a clear answer in the form of an argument. There is intent, and relevant material is used to support the conclusion. There is a lack of integration in some of the evaluation, however, and arguments are not stated in their strongest form with the most relevant (and correctly used) philosophical language.

The student locates the question within the rationalist vs empiricist debate, and indicates their intent to argue for innatism. From the very outset, however, there is blurring between knowledge and ideas/concepts.

The first argument discussed is Plato's theory of forms, which is not explained in detail or with precision, but contains some relevant knowledge and understanding. The empiricist criticism concerning the 'transparency of the mind' is applied reasonably enough. The initial rebuttal is stipulative and not well illustrated, but the slave boy argument is better suited to refuting the transparency of the mind argument, and this is a credit worthy response, although the evaluation blurs knowledge and concepts again. No response is offered to the slave boy argument.


The discussion now shifts to the 'blank slate' theory of Lockean empiricism, although the student gets the logical relationship between ideas/concepts and knowledge the wrong way round: the standard argument is that without innate concepts/ideas there can be no innate knowledge. The claim that this argument relies on Ockham's razor does not engage Locke on his own (and strongest terms); moreover, Ockham's razor is not a 'theory' but one valuable principle among others when we formulate our theories. The response to this argument (about the 'complexity' of the origins of ideas) is question begging, and the focus is again on ideas/concepts rather than knowledge. The evaluation improves when the discussion shifts to how we are able to classify experiences, and differentiate them, although what seems to be a rendition of Condillac's statue analogy could have been explained with greater precision.

The penultimate paragraph raises brief 'weak' empiricist criticisms: the first (on distinguishing innate ideas from other ideas) is responded to using relevant concepts, but it is not a well-developed response; the second (the argument from universal agreement) is responded to by way of a counter example (the law of non-contradiction). No rejoinders are considered, and the essay concludes that they have shown 'empiricism is false'.

**12 marks**

## Student D

Innate knowledge is knowledge that ~~is~~ is not acquired through experience, but is known a priori. In this essay, I am going to argue ~~that~~ how I believe that we do not have innate knowledge, and that knowledge can only be acquired through experience of the empirical world.

Firstly, Plato developed an argument in favour of innatism, which outlined a story about Meno and a slave boy. This said that Meno had a slave boy who had had no education, and did not have any knowledge whatsoever of geometry. Meno one day asked the boy to work out the area of a square. ~~He~~ The boy at first answered incorrectly, saying that  $3^2$  equals 8, however after further thinking, he realised that 9 must be the correct answer. This makes it seem as though innate knowledge does exist, as the slave boy hadn't had any  experience of geometry or mathematics, but was still able to come to the

correct answer.

However, ~~there~~ Plato's argument can be ~~criticised~~ criticised as although the boy may have come to the correct answer eventually, it was not because he had innate knowledge of geometry. Instead it was just due to the process of elimination. This is not innate knowledge therefore because the slave boy is using his experience of what is incorrect to eliminate those answers until he comes to the correct one. So, Plato's argument seems unconvincing.

Leibniz is a rationalist who also believes that we have innate knowledge and he argues that ~~we are born with some~~ ~~we are born with some~~ we are born with some prior knowledge, for example knowing how to breathe. This idea however is criticised by Locke, who instead claims that we are born with a mind which is like a blank slate of marble. He argues that all knowledge is propositions, and for something to be a proposition it must be universal to

everyone. However if we have innate knowledge, it is not universal, so it cannot exist.

Descartes cogito argument is an argument which uses a priori reasoning. It supports the idea of innate knowledge because Descartes does not support the argument with any evidence from the empirical world. He says that he can be certain of the existence of his mind because of the fact that he is able to think. 'I think therefore I am' proves that he knows at least of the existence of his own mind.



All arguments for innate knowledge can be criticised by Hume's Fork. Hume is an empiricist and argued that for something to be considered knowledge it must be a matter of fact or relation of an idea. Matters of fact are objective propositions which cannot be proved to be false, for example  $2+2=4$ . Relations of ideas rely on ~~the~~ evidence from the external world, for example I know that the sun will rise tomorrow because it rises every day. Hume's Fork disputes all forms of arguments for innate knowledge because innate knowledge is neither a matter of fact or a relation of an idea.

Furthermore, Ayer's Verification Principle similarly argues against innate knowledge using cognitivist reasoning. Ayer believed that a statement was only meaningful and could be classed as knowledge if it was true by definition or it was tautology. Again, innate knowledge would ~~so~~ not satisfy any of these conditions, so we cannot have it.

Overall, I do not believe that we have innate knowledge. I believe instead that knowledge can be required only through empirical evidence, and not known a priori.

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## Commentary

The student answers in the form of an argument. Some of the material is relevant and correct, but there are significant gaps in what would be the most relevant content from the specification, with arguments and counter arguments misrepresented.

The student begins by conflating innate knowledge with a priori knowledge, before indicating they will be answering the question in the negative. The first argument (Plato's 'slave boy' argument) is outlined clearly enough (the precise details of the story do not matter as much as the underlying logic), and briefly countered, but the latter lacks development.

Leibniz is correctly identified with rationalism and innatism, but the latter is illustrated with a physical function/ability rather than propositional knowledge. Locke's 'blank slate' is introduced, appropriately enough, but the evaluation makes little sense.

Descartes can be discussed within the context of this debate, but the student fails to make the necessary connections between the cogito and innate knowledge. Hume's folk, also relevant, is introduced, but the student does not show clear understanding of the distinction Hume is making. The student then tries to apply Ayer's (related) verification principle to the question, but again, they do not understand the relevant conceptual distinctions, and so the points raised do not help them to answer the question effectively.

The conclusion is clear and reasonable enough, but it is not well supported by the previous arguments, and once again blurs innate with a priori.

**6 marks**