**Definition of Knowledge Essay Plan**

The essay question could be phrased in a number of different ways so you would need to amend the plan to make sure you directly answer the question. Some examples of how the question could be asked:

*How should propositional knowledge be defined? (25 marks)*

*To what extent is the tripartite definition of knowledge the correct one? (25 marks)*

*To what extent is reliabilism the correct definition of knowledge? (25 marks)*

*To what extent does virtue epistemology give the correct definition of knowledge? (25 marks)*

Intro: the best definition is infallibilism, the others (make sure you focus on whichever is asked about in the question) face too many problems of including as knowledge, things that shouldn’t be.

1: Tripartite definition

2: Gettier case

3: Add a no false lemmas – how it solves the Gettier case

4: Another Gettier case – Virus X or Barns

5: Infallibilism – how it solves Gettier cases

6: Too restrictive

7: Another possible definition (reliabilism or virtue epistemology, whichever you prefer/the question is about.)

8: Problem with reliabilism/virtue epistemology

9: Other definitions face too many problems, better to be too exclusive than inclusive so conclude with infallibilism.

**Perception Essay Plan**

Some examples of how the question could be asked:

*How convincing is direct realism? (25 marks)*

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Intro: Although not without its own problems, indirect realism provides a convincing understanding of our perception because

1: Explain direct realism

2: Objection: argument from perceptual variation

3: Direct realist response: relational properties

4: Objection: argument from illusion

5: Direct realist reply: relational properties again

6: Objection: hallucination

7: Direct realist reply: disjunctive theory of perception

8: Indirect realism: the reply above is unconvincing and indirect realism can provide a better account of the issues explained so far. Explain indirect realism and how it solves the problems above.

9: Objection to indirect realism: leads to scepticism of existence of objects

10: True but indirect realism is best hypothesis (e.g. Russell’s cat, Locke’s handwriting)

How convincing is indirect realism? (25 marks)

Intro: Indirect realism ultimately fails because it assumes the existence of mind independent physical objects that are inconceivable.

1: Define realism: Direct realism is common sense position

2: Problem of illusion

3: Reply: relational properties

4: Problem of Hallucination, can’t use relational properties because there’s no object

5: Disjunctive theory of perception

6: Indirect realism is better because it has a better explanation of the problems above

7: Objection: Indirect realism leads to scepticism

8: But IR is the best explanation (cat/train/handwriting)

9: Master argument – mind independent objects are inconceivable, not a good explanation

10: Explain idealism and how it respond to problems of illusion and hallucination (God)

11: Conclusion – although idealism may face difficulties, indirect realism fails because the concept of mind independent physical objects is hugely problematic and, even if they do exist, they cannot tell us anything about the external world because our sense data cannot be like physical objects (fleeting and changing vs staying the same, how can we say one thing (SD) is like something else (physical objects) if we have no knowledge of the physical objects.

How convincing is idealism?

Intro: Idealism is the most convincing understanding of what our perception tells us about the world as it does not face the problem of positing mind independent physical objects which are inconceivable.

1. Define direct realism as a common sense way of seeing the world
2. Explain perceptual variation problem and how indirect realism solves it using sense data
3. Indirect realism can lead to scepticism about the external world
4. However, best hypothesis
5. Berkeley: sense data cannot be like mind independent objects. Sense data is variable and fleeting, objects fixed. How can something we don’t experience (object) resemble something we do (sense data)?
6. Even bigger problem – Master argument. Realism is inconceivable. Material substratum is without properties is a vacuous concept
7. Explain idealism – all that exists are ideas and minds
8. Objection: hallucination – how are they different if there is no objective world?
9. Solution – since we have ruled out physical objects, our ideas must be caused by a) ideas (can’t be as ideas are passive) b) our minds (can’t be because they are involuntary) or c) a mind external to us. This is conceivable as we have experience of a mind: our own. A mind capable of giving us such complex and systematic ideas must be God. Therefore, a veridical perception is a copy of an idea from God’s mind, a hallucination is dim, irregular and confused and therefore not.
10. God can’t have perceptual experiences like pain therefore what I perceive can’t be part of God’s mind
11. Reply: God does not experience these perceptions but he understands them. We do not perceive what is in God’s mind, what I perceive in my mind is a copy of the idea in God’s mind.

**‘Reason as a Source of Knowledge’ Essay Plan**

Can we have a priori knowledge of the world? (25 marks)

Can intuition and deduction tell us anything about the world? (25 marks)

Intro: Intuition and deduction cannot give us any knowledge about the world because, for the best examples given to us by rationalist philosophers, this knowledge is either better explained by empiricism or are claims of knowledge that we do not have.

1: Explanation of the dispute between empiricists and rationalists and what is meant by gaining knowledge through intuition and deduction.

2: The cogito as an example of intuition and deduction

3: Response to the cogito from Hume. Conclude this paragraph by conceding that maybe he does know he exists but that he knows this through experience of his own mind.

4: After thinking that he has knowledge of his own existence, Descartes tries to use intuition and deduction to prove the existence of God through his cosmological argument.

5: Hume’s response. Descartes assumes causal principle, impossibility of infinity, and that God must be the cause. None of these can be known a priori

6: Descartes has another a priori argument for the existence of God: the ontological argument.

7: Kant’s objection to ontological argument: existence is not a predicate.

8: Reply: necessary existence is a predicate

9: This only works if God exists. Not depending on anything characterises the nature of God’s existence, if God exists. But existence doesn’t characterise God. (See metaphysics of God flash cards for this argument)

10: None of these arguments provide a good reason for accepting a priori knowledge. The empiricist position convincing. (Explain Hume’s fork and tabula rasa)

Do we have innate knowledge?

Intro: Empiricism is inadequate to account for our knowledge of necessary truths and therefore we do have innate knowledge.

1. Define innate knowledge and empiricism as opposing views on knowledge.
2. Innatism claim: Plato – slave boy argument inc. Plato’s claim that ‘learning’ must therefore be remembering from life before birth
3. Although this a strong candidate for an example of a priori knowledge, Plato is unpersuasive in proving that is must be innate. It is a least a possibility that he in fact discovers truths about the world through his application of reason, rather than remembers it.
4. Locke rejects all innate knowledge as it is not universal nor can we be said to know something we have never be conscious of. Instead, we are born as tabula rasa and all knowledge is learned through experience.
5. Leibniz – it is true that awareness of this knowledge is not universal but it is more than just the capacity, it has to be discovered within our own minds – veins of marble analogy/torch in a cave
6. Locke – experience is necessary therefore and so the knowledge is a posteriori, not a priori.
7. Leibniz – experience is necessary but not sufficient. Knowledge of necessary truths is not possible a posteriori since experience only tells us how the world is, not how it must be. Also, certain necessary truths are essential to all thought and so are implicitly known.
8. Empiricists would have to deny that we know necessary truths and that we learn general principles through experience rather than know necessary truths.
9. There is another flaw in the empiricist view of the world. Explain copy principle (Hume) and the missing shade of blue objection that Hume himself raises. Hume dismisses this but it is important as it shows empiricism to be inadequate.
10. Since there are principles that we require for thought which therefore can’t be learned because they underpin out understanding of the world, we have innate knowledge.