**Epistemology Key Words**

These are the terms that are likely to be asked about in a 3 mark question.

**Ability knowledge**: this is knowledge about how to do something. It involves you being able to carry out a task using a skill you may or may not have learned. It is knowledge that you don’t need to explain and that doesn’t involve any facts.

**Acquaintance knowledge**: this is knowledge ‘of’ something. It is knowledge you acquire because you have become familiar with it through direct interaction. It is knowledge that you don’t need to explain and that doesn’t involve any facts.

**Analytic**: this refers to a statement where the predicate adds nothing to the subject. The statement is true based on the words used. You cannot deny them without there being a contradiction.

**A posteriori**: this means ‘after experience’. You can know something a posteriori because you have experienced it in some way.

**A priori**: this means ‘before experience’. Knowing something a priori means you cannot have experienced it.

**Belief**: is a thought about the world and the way it is.

**Clear and distinct ideas**: are ideas of truth that are self-evident. They are ideas that are both vivid and pure. They cannot be doubted. They are acquired in the mind through reasoning.

**Contingent**: refers to truths that could be otherwise. With respect to objects and people, they are contingent because they rely on other things for their existence and have a beginning and an end.

**Deduction/deductive arguments**: deductive arguments do not require experience for you to work them out. They present premises (propositional statements) that lead to a conclusion, and, if those premises are true, then the conclusion has to be true.

**Direct realism**: is an approach to perception that argues that we see the world directly, with no intermediary. The properties we perceive objects as having belong to those objects.

**Empiricism**: is an approach to knowledge that claims that all our knowledge is gained through experience.

**Epistemology**: this is a branch within philosophy. It is the philosophical study of knowledge. It is derived from the ancient Greek word ‘episteme’, which is a type of intellectual virtue that involves knowing as having a scientific understanding of things.

**Fact**: is a claim about the world that is the case.

**Fallibilism**: this is a position that allows for mistakes to be made.

**Hallucination**: this is when an object is perceived that does not exist.

**Hypothesis**: a proposed explanation of something.

**Idealism**: is an approach to perception that claims that perception consists of a perceiver and the sense data only. Objects are collections of ideas. Objects cease to exist if nobody is perceiving them because objects are in the mind of a perceiver.

**Illusion:** this is when an object appears differently from how it actually is.

**Induction/inductive arguments**: inductive arguments start with premises that are based on experience. You start with specific examples you have experienced and then you make a generalisation about all cases that are similar to your examples. The conclusions to inductive arguments are never 100% certain because you will never be able to experience absolutely everything for your conclusion to be certain. With your conclusion, you are just assuming that the same will be the case for all things based on what you have experienced.

**Indirect realism**: this is a realist theory that believes that there is a world external to our minds and that we perceive the world indirectly through an intermediary of sense data.

**Indubitable**: this means something cannot be doubted.

**Infallibilism**: this means something cannot be mistaken.

**Innatism**: this is the approach that claims that we are born with some ideas or knowledge.

**Intuition**: something mental, as opposed to a gut feeling. It is mental clarity that allows us to recognise truth. It is direct and non-referential knowledge.

**Justification**: evidence, testimony or observation for your belief.

**Lemma**: a step/premise in an argument.

**Metaphysics**: a branch of philosophy that studies the nature of reality and existence.

**Necessary:** describes a truth that will always be the case. It cannot be otherwise. Necessary truths are true in all possible worlds.

**Perceptual variation:** this is variation in perception, usually depending on the perceiver.

**Perspectival variation:** this is variation in perception, usually depending on the position the perceiver is taking.

**Possible worlds:** are all worlds, including worlds in addition to our world of everyday reality. This might include the dream world, the world if we lived on Mars, the world in a parallel universe and so on. It also includes all possible situations. This might be a situation in the past, a hundred years ago, a thousand years ago, the future and so on. Possible worlds refers to any possible scenario that is imaginable.

**Predicate**: this is the part of a statement that tells you something about the subject of the statement. For example, in the statement ‘John is married’, married is the predicate of the statement because it tells us something about John, the subject.

**Proposition**: is a factual statement. A statement that is truth-apt.

**Propositional knowledge**: this is knowledge that is factual. It is knowledge that can be true or false. It is knowledge ‘that’ something is the case.

**Rationalism**: is a school of thought that claims that reason is the most reliable source of knowledge.

**Realism**: the belief that there is a world external to the mind.

**Reliabilism**: a way of defining knowledge as true belief obtained through a reliable cognitive process.

**Scepticism**: in this course, it refers to philosophical scepticism, which is the position of doubting everything.

**Sense data**: this is the plural of sense datum. It is the information we receive through our five senses (sight, smell, sound, smell, taste and touch).

**Solipsism**: the idea that only your mind exists / the idea that you can only know your mind exists.

**Synthetic**: refers to statements that do not need to be shown to be true when we examine the terms used in the sentence. They need experience in order to be known.

**Tautology**: a proposition where the predicate does not add anything to the subject. It is saying the same thing in another way. Definitions tend to be tautological.

**Time lag:** a delay in perception due to light taking time to go from the object to the eye.

**Tripartite view**: this is the traditional way of defining knowledge according to what its components are. It is the view of Plato and defines knowledge as justified true belief (also known as JTB).

**Truth**: usually considered to be something that is the case in the world.

**Virtue epistemology**: an approach to defining knowledge that claims knowledge is true belief formed from an epistemic virtue being used. The focus is on the person and their application of their intellectual virtues.

1. **Definition of Knowledge**

**Explain the tripartite definition of knowledge. (5 marks)**

The tripartite definition of knowledge claims that knowledge is justified, true belief. It claims that you know some proposition, p, if and only if**:**

1. the proposition p is true;

2. you believe that p;

3. your belief that p is justified.

The three conditions, taken together, are intended to be the same thing as knowledge so, all the three conditions it lists are satisfied, then you know that p. You don’t need anything else for knowledge; the three conditions, together, are sufficient. Each of the three conditions is necessary. If p is false, or you don’t believe that p, or your belief that p is not justified, then you don’t know that p. The conditions are necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge that p. Therefore, knowledge and justified true belief are the same thing. Justified true belief is necessary for knowledge (you can’t have knowledge without it), but it is also sufficient for knowledge (you don’t need anything else).

**Explain why the justification condition of knowledge might not be necessary. (5 marks)**

The traditional tripartite definition of knowledge claims that knowledge is justified, true belief and that each of these conditions is necessary and together they are sufficient. We can object that sometimes we use the word ‘know’ just to mean ‘believe truly’, without worrying about justification. If I ask, ‘Do you know who wrote the *Meditations*?’, I’m only interested in whether you have the true belief that it was Descartes. We can understand this in terms of the practical purpose of knowledge. If you can reliably inform me in answer to my query, perhaps that’s enough for practical purposes to talk of knowledge.

Secondly, even if true belief is not sufficient for knowledge, that doesn’t mean that justification is a necessary condition. There may be some other condition that turns true belief into knowledge. For example, reliabilism claims that knowledge is a true belief arrived at through a reliable cognitive process. This replaces the justification condition and offers an alternative meaning that the justification condition is not necessary for knowledge.

**Explain why the belief condition of knowledge might not be necessary. (5 marks)**

The traditional tripartite definition of knowledge claims that knowledge is justified, true belief and that each of these conditions is necessary and together they are sufficient. One way we can question this is by challenging the claim that belief is necessary. For example, if a pupil is in an exam but is very nervous and has no confidence in his answers, and yet their recollection of the answers is correct despite their lack of confidence. In this scenario, we can say that he knows the answer without believing it. If this is true, then belief cannot be a necessary condition of knowledge.

Alternatively, Plato presents an argument for the claim that knowledge is never belief. What is a matter of belief is not known, and what is matter of knowledge is not believed. Instead, belief and knowledge involve different ‘faculties’. He appeals to the connection between knowledge, truth and reality to make the case. Firstly, knowledge is infallible, because you cannot know what is false. Beliefs, however, can be mistaken, so belief cannot be knowledge. If we accept Plato’s distinction, belief would not be a necessary condition of knowledge, in fact it would be the opposite: if you believe something, you necessarily cannot know it.

**Explain why the truth condition of knowledge might not be necessary. (5 marks)**

The traditional tripartite definition of knowledge claims that knowledge is justified, true belief and that each of these conditions is necessary and together they are sufficient. The difficulty with this definition is that we will never (or at least very rarely) know whether we know something because we could be mistaken about whether our belief is true. For example, in the past, it seemed very obvious to people that the Earth was flat, this would have been taken as certainly true. However, we have since discovered that that Earth is not flat. If such a basic ‘truth’, accepted by everyone could turn out to be false, then it seems we should never have sufficient confidence that our beliefs are true to call them knowledge. Instead perhaps, to allow for a definition where we can actually claim knowledge, we should remove the truth condition and speak about knowledge being simply ‘justified belief’, so long as our threshold for what constitutes justification is sufficiently high. Although this may lead to us discovering that some of our knowledge was actually false, as in the case of the Earth being flat, it will be a much more practical definition as we will be able to really claim knowledge without having to be absolutely certain that it is true. In this case, truth would not be a necessary condition.

**Explain what a Gettier case is. (5 marks)**

**or**

**Explain one of the original Gettier cases. (5 marks)**

The traditional tripartite definition of knowledge claims that knowledge is justified, true belief and that each of these conditions is necessary and together they are sufficient. A Gettier case is the name given to a scenario where all three of the conditions of the tripartite definition are fulfilled and yet this would not constitute knowledge because the belief is only true by chance. In a Gettier case, the belief is justified, and it is true, but for different reasons; the justification was based on faulty reasoning which accidently led to a true belief. These cases are intended to show that the conditions of the tripartite definition are therefore insufficient for knowledge.

One of the original Gettier cases put forward was the case of Smith and Jones. Smith and Jones are applying for the same job. Smith has excellent reason to believe that Jones will get the job, e.g. Smith has been told this by the employer. Smith also has excellent reason to believe that Jones has ten coins in his pocket, e.g. Smith has just counted them. Therefore, both of these beliefs are justified. Smith then puts the two beliefs together and through deduction, comes to the belief that: **“the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket”**. This belief is justified, because it is inferred deductively from justified beliefs. However, it turns out that Jones doesn’t get the job, Smith does. It also so happens that, unknown to him, Smith also has ten coins in his pocket. So Smith’s belief that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket happens to be true, and it is justified, but we shouldn’t say that Smith knows that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket. This is because the truth of his belief and his justification for his belief are unrelated, he actually came to his belief on the basis of false information.

**Explain an original Gettier case is and how adding a ‘no false lemmas’ condition might solve it. (12 marks)**

*[Use the 5 marker above to explain the Gettier case]*

The issue in the Gettier case of Smith and Jones is that Smith infers his belief from a false belief, in this case, that Jones will get the job. To attempt to resolve this issue, we can add an extra condition to the definition of knowledge. Our definition now is that you know that p if and only if:

1. p is true

2. you believe that p

3. your belief that p is justified

4. you did not infer that p from a false belief.

Each of these conditions are individually necessary meaning that you cannot have knowledge unless they are fulfilled, and together sufficient meaning that if you fulfil all four then you have knowledge. Condition 4 is called the ‘no false lemmas’ condition. A lemma is a claim part way through an argument. For example, Smith concluded that Jones will get the job from being told by the employer; and he then used that information to conclude that the man with ten coins in his pocket will get the job. So ‘Jones will get the job’ is a lemma. This solves the Gettier case because it allows us to explain why Jones does not have knowledge in this case. The fourth necessary condition has not been met since Jones did infer his belief from a false belief.

**Explain an original Gettier case is and how the infallibilist definition of knowledge might solve it. (12 marks)**

*[Use the 5 marker above to explain the Gettier case]*

Infallibilism rejects Gettier cases by saying that in these scenarios, the belief was not sufficiently justified to be considered knowledge. Infallibilism retains the tripartite definition of justified, true belief but argues that knowledge is *certain* and therefore justification requires certainty. If a belief is not certain, meaning that it does not guarantee the truth of that belief, then it is not justified, at least not sufficiently justified to count as knowledge.

According to infallibilism, the implication that we should draw from Gettier cases is not that knowledge is not justified true belief, but that our beliefs are rarely sufficiently justified to count as knowledge. Gettier cases are when a belief is justified, and it is true, but for different reasons; the justification is based on faulty reasoning which accidently led to a true belief. According to infallibilism, this is impossible because we cannot say that a belief is justified unless its truth is guaranteed because of that justification. In the cases of Smith and Jones therefore, the employer telling Smith that Jones would get the job was not enough to guarantee that Jones would get the job: the employer could change their mind. Therefore, since this belief was not justified, Smith’s deduction that therefore the person who gets the job has 10 coins in their pocket is not justified either. Therefore, infallibilism allows us to explain why Smith did not have knowledge in this case.

**Explain the reliabilist definition of knowledge. (5 marks)**

Reliabilism claims that you know that p if and only if:

1. p is true;
2. you believe that p;
3. your belief is produced by a reliable cognitive process.

The three conditions, taken together, are intended to be the same thing as knowledge so, all the three conditions it lists are satisfied, then you know that p. You don’t need anything else for knowledge; the three conditions, together, are sufficient. Each of the three conditions is necessary. If p is false, or you don’t believe that p, or your belief that p is was not produced by a reliable cognitive process, then you don’t know that p.

A reliable cognitive process is just one that produces a high percentage of true beliefs. Examples include perception, memory and testimony. True beliefs caused by such processes count as knowledge. Sometimes, of course, these processes cause a false belief e.g. if you misperceive or misremember or someone lies to you. In these cases however then your belief isn’t knowledge, but that’s because it does not fulfil the condition of ‘truth’.

**Explain the reliabilist definition of knowledge and how a Gettier case might challenge it. (12)**

*[Explain reliabilist definition 5 marker]*

However, reliabilism can be challenged by a Gettier case which is a scenario in which all the supposed necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge are met but still do not constitute knowledge. Alvin Goldman gives the example of ‘Barn County’. In this case, a man is driving through the countryside. He doesn’t know it, but in this part of the country there are lots of fake barns that have been built so that they look just like real barns when seen from the road. As he drives along, he often sees a fake barn and forms the belief, on the basis of his perception: ‘there’s a barn’. These beliefs don’t count as knowledge because they are false. However, further down the road forms the belief that: ‘there’s a barn’ because he sees what looks like a barn. On this occasion however, he is looking at the one and only real barn in the area. This belief is true. It is also produced by a very reliable process, namely vision. All the conditions of the definition offered by reliabilism have been met so, on this definition, we would have to say that he does know there’s a barn; his belief is true and produced by a reliable process. However, this should not be considered knowledge however because it is only a matter of luck that his belief is true in this one instance. Therefore, the reliabilist definition of knowledge is flawed.

**OR**

However, reliabilism can be challenged by a Gettier case which is a scenario in which all the supposed necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge are met but still do not constitute knowledge. Zagzebski provides the example of ‘Virus X’. Dr Jones has very good evidence that her patient, Smith, is suffering from virus X, e.g. the symptoms and the lab tests are all consistent with Smith having this virus and no other known virus produces these results. Diagnosing whether someone suffers from virus X by looking at their symptoms and the results of their lab tests is a reliable process (the diagnosis is correct in a high percentage of cases). Jones therefore believes that Smith has virus X, and this belief is produced by a reliable process. However, Smith’s symptoms and lab results are caused by Smith having the unknown virus Y. By chance, Smith has just caught virus X, so recently that it has not caused any symptoms nor does it show up in lab tests. Dr Jones’ belief that Smith has virus X is both true and produced by a reliable process. All the conditions of the definition offered by reliabilism have been met so, on this definition, we would have to say that she does know that Smith has virus X; his belief is true and produced by a reliable process. However, this should not be considered knowledge however because she does not know that Smith has virus X because it is only a matter of luck that her belief is true, all of the evidence she used to identify virus X was actually being caused by virus Y. Therefore, the reliabilist definition of knowledge is flawed.

**Explain the definition of knowledge which includes epistemic virtue. (5 marks)**

Zagzebski’s definition of propositional knowledge is "belief arising out of acts of intellectual virtue." In other words, you know that *p* if and only if:

1. You believe that *p*.
2. Your belief that *p* arises from an act (or acts) of intellectual virtue.

These two conditions together are intended to be equivalent to knowledge. If both are met, then you know *p*; nothing further is required. Each condition is necessary—if you do not believe *p*, or if your belief is not produced by

the application of intellectual virtue, then you do not know *p*.

A virtue is a character trait that helps a person achieve a good purpose or goal. Moral virtues, such as generosity or kindness, aim at moral goods like well-being. Intellectual virtues aim at intellectual goods, particularly truth. Beliefs formed irrationally, even if true, are not genuinely good. For example, open-mindedness is an intellectual virtue because it leads us to carefully consider opposing views, increasing our chances of forming true beliefs.

Since intellectual virtues are defined as traits that reliably lead to truth, there is no need to include truth as a separate condition. Virtues dispose us to succeed reliably, acts of virtue result in success, and we succeed because we act as a person with the relevant virtues would.

Explain the tripartite definition of knowledge **and** how a Gettier case shows the conditions to be insufficient. (12 marks)

Explain the tripartite definition of knowledge and how an **original** Gettier case shows the conditions to be insufficient. (12 marks)

Explain an **original** Gettier case is and how adding a ‘no false lemmas’ condition might solve it. (12 marks)

Explain an **original** Gettier case is and how a reliabilist definition of knowledge might solve it. (12 marks)

Explain an **original** Gettier case is and how an account of epistemic virtue might solve it. (12 marks)

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)

1. **Perception as a source of knowledge**

**Explain the direct realist view of perception. (5 marks)**

According to direct realism, what we perceive through our senses are just these very things, physical objects, together with their various properties. When I perceive my desk, for example, I perceive its size, shape, colour, smell and texture. Therefore, direct realism claims that what we perceive are mind-independent physical objects and their properties directly, meaning that we experience them the way they are in reality without any intermediary. Direct realists explain that we can gain knowledge through perception because perception is a form of ‘openness’ to the world. Our perception therefore is a reliable source of knowledge because it gives us is a direct awareness of mind-independent objects and their properties.

**Explain the argument from perceptual variation against direct realism. (5 marks)**

According to direct realism, we perceive mind-independent physical objects and their properties directly, meaning that we experience them the way they are in reality. However, changes in our perception indicates that what we perceive is not always the same as what is out in the mind independent world. Bertrand Russell gives an example of looking at a shiny, brown table. We say it is brown, but it doesn’t actually look an even brown colour all over: depending how the light falls, some parts are lighter than others, and some are even white from the shininess. The table can’t *be* both brown and white in the same spot at one time. The same is true of our perceptual experience for the properties of texture and shape: e.g. the table might be smooth to touch, but at a microscopic level, there are all kinds of bumps and dips. Direct realism claims that we directly perceive the object and its properties the way they are in reality and therefore an appearance-reality distinction is impossible. However, Russell’s examples demonstrate a distinction between appearance and reality. Therefore, direct realism is false.

**Explain the argument from perceptual variation against direct realism and how an appeal to relational properties may resolve the issue. (12)**

*[5 marker from above]*

Direct realism can respond however by arguing that what we perceive in the cases Russell raises are the object’s relational properties. A relational property is a property that something has only in relation to something else: for example, Leeds has the property of being north of London. This property only makes sense in relation to where London is but it is nonetheless a real property of Leeds. In perception, we can be aware of a range of properties, some of which the object has independent of our minds, and some of which it has in relation to being perceived. For instance, a rectangular table has the property of ‘looking obtuse’. The property of ‘looking obtuse’ is a distinct property from ‘being obtuse’, so a table can ***be***rectangular and ***look***obtuse. The property of ‘looking obtuse’ is a relationalproperty, in this case, a property the table has in relation to being *seen*. ‘Looking obtuse’ is a property *the table* has, claims direct realism. Therefore, Russell’s objection fails to show that there is an appearance-reality distinction because, in perceiving the table’s relational properties, we are still always perceiving the real properties of the object.

**Explain the argument from illusion against direct realism. (5 marks)**

According to direct realism, we perceive mind-independent physical objects and their properties directly, meaning that we experience them the way they are in reality. However, illusions demonstrate an appearance-reality distinction that direct realism cannot account for. An illusion is when we perceive and object to have a property that is does not in fact have. For example, If you look at an oar half-submerged in water, it looks crooked; but it isn’t. We see a crooked oar, but the oar isn’t crooked. However, *just* from what you experience, you can’t tell whether you are seeing an illusion or not. Illusions can be ‘subjectively indistinguishable’ from veridical perception meaning that we cannot tell the difference between a perceptual experience of an illusion and an accurate perception. This calls into question the reliability of all our perceptual experiences because we have no way of knowing which are illusions and which are veridical. Therefore, we should reject direct realism.

**Explain the argument from illusion against direct realism and how an appeal to relational properties may resolve the issue. (12)**

*[5 marker from above]*

Direct realism can respond however by arguing that what we perceive in illusions are the object’s relational properties. A relational property is a property that something has only in relation to something else: for example, Leeds has the property of being north of London. This property only makes sense in relation to where London is but it is nonetheless a real property of Leeds. In perception, we can be aware of a range of properties, some of which the object has independent of our minds, and some of which it has in relation to being perceived. When applied to illusions therefore, it is not the case that just because the oar ***looks*** crooked, that means that the oar ***is*** crooked. Instead, the oar has the relational property of ‘looking crooked’when half-submerged in water and has the property of ‘being straight’. ‘Looking crooked’ is still a real a property oarhas, claims direct realism. Therefore, the illusion objection fails to show that there is an appearance-reality distinction because, in perceiving the oar’s relational properties, we are still always perceiving the real properties of the object.

**Explain the argument from hallucination against direct realism. (5 marks)**

According to direct realism, we perceive mind-independent physical objects and their properties directly, meaning that we experience them the way they are in reality. However, hallucinations demonstrate an appearance-reality distinction that direct realism cannot account for. A hallucination is when we perceive an object to have property when there is in fact no object at all, for example in a dream. However, *just* from what you experience, you can’t tell whether you are seeing an hallucination or not; hallucinations can be ‘subjectively indistinguishable’ from veridical perception meaning that we cannot tell the difference between a perceptual experience of an hallucination and an accurate perception. This calls into question the reliability of all our perceptual experiences because we have no way of knowing which are hallucinations and which are veridical. Therefore we should reject direct realism.

**Explain the argument from hallucination against direct realism and how the disjunctive theory of perception may resolve the issue. (12 marks)**

*[5 marker from above]*

Direct realism can respond by claiming that the argument from hallucination makes a logical error. The argument claims that hallucinations can be ‘subjectively indistinguishable’ from veridical perception, but this does not prove that they are actually the same. According to the disjunctive theory of perception, hallucinations and veridical perception are two completely different kinds of mental state, because in hallucination, the person isn’t connected up to the world. They can *seem* exactly the same, but that doesn’t prove that they *are* the same. The fact that hallucinations are subjectively indistinguishable from veridical perception tells us nothing significant about what *perception* is. In hallucination, we don’t *perceive* anything, we *imagine* it. Perception is a relation of the subject to the world, a form of ‘cognitive contact’, hallucination is not. Therefore, hallucinations tell us nothing perception and so they do not undermine the direct realist theory of perception.

**Explain the time-lag argument against direct realism. (5 marks)**

According to direct realism, we perceive mind-independent physical objects and their properties directly, meaning that we experience them the way they are in reality. However, we now understand how our senses work: we see objects via the light that reflects off objects in to our eyes, hear things via the sound waves that are produced by objects etc. However, it takes time for light waves, or sound waves, or smells, to get from physical objects to our sense organs. For example, it takes 8 minutes for light from the sun to reach the earth. If you look at the sun, you are actually seeing it as it was 8 minutes ago. Therefore, since we are perceiving the objects via the light, the sound waves, we can argue that we are not perceiving the object directly. Therefore, direct realism is false.

**Explain the indirect realist view of perception. (5 marks)**

Indirect realism holds that we perceive mind-independent physical objects indirectly, through mind-dependent sense data which are mental representations caused by and resemble external objects. We experience sense data immediately, while our awareness of physical objects is mediated by this perception. For example, when looking at a table, I perceive its colour and shape as sense data. These are distinct from the table itself, which continues to exist independently of my perception. However, sense data depend on my mind: if I close my eyes, the appearance of the table (as seen by me) disappears, but the table itself remains. Sense data are private, only I can experience my own sense data, whereas physical objects are public and can be perceived by multiple people. Since sense data are produced by and represent external objects, our perception of an object's properties is not identical to its real properties. However, because sense data are caused by the external world, they still provide a reliable representation of it.

**Explain the argument from perceptual variation against direct realism and how indirect realism may resolve the issue. (12)**

*[Explain the argument from perceptual variation against direct realism 5 marker]*

Indirect realism explains perceptual variation by arguing that we do not perceive physical objects directly but rather through mind-dependent sense data, which are caused by and represent these objects. This helps account for the way objects can appear differently under different conditions while maintaining that perception still provides a generally reliable awareness of the external world. In many cases, what we experience does not match the actual properties of physical objects. For example, a table may appear oblong from one angle but rectangular from another. Since we perceive the table as oblong something in our experience must actually possess these properties. However, the physical objects themselves do not change in this way, so what we perceive must be mind-dependent sense data rather than the objects directly. None of our perceptions of the shape of the table seem any more real to us than any other and so it is a poor explanation to say that on some occasions our perceptions are correct and on others they are unreliable. However, indirect realism maintains that we are always perceiving sense data and so we can explain why they always feel equally real. Nevertheless, indirect realism maintains that physical objects still cause and correspond to our perceptions. Even though we only ever experience sense data, these representations are still produced by real, external object and tell us about their nature.

**Explain the argument from illusion against direct realism and how indirect realism may resolve the issue. (12)**

*[Explain the argument from perceptual variation against direct realism 5 marker]*

Indirect realism explains illusions by arguing that we do not perceive physical objects directly but rather through sense data, which represent these objects. This helps account for the way objects can appear differently under different conditions while maintaining that perception still provides a generally reliable awareness of the external world. In some cases, what we experience does not match the actual properties of physical objects. For example, an oar submerged in water may appear crooked even though it is straight. Since we perceive the oar as crooked, something in our experience must actually possess these properties. However, the physical objects themselves do not change in this way, so what we perceive must be sense data rather than the objects directly.

Illusion are subjectively indistinguishable from ordinary, accurate perception. That is, from experience alone, we cannot tell whether we are perceiving an object exactly as it is or whether our perception is distorted. Because both veridical and illusory perceptions appear the same to us, it follows that in all cases, we perceive sense data, not physical objects themselves. Nevertheless, indirect realism maintains that physical objects still cause and correspond to our perceptions. Even though we only ever experience sense data, these representations are still produced by real, external object and tell us about their nature.

**Explain Locke’s distinction between primary and secondary qualities. (5 marks)**

Locke is an indirect realist meaning that he believes that we do not perceive physical objects directly but rather through mind-dependent sense data, which are caused by and represent these objects. He introduces his idea of primary and secondary qualities to explain what our perception tells us about reality. He says that a ‘quality’ is a ‘power’ that a physical object has ‘to produce an idea in our mind’. Locke then argues that qualities are of two different kinds. Primary qualities are qualities that are ‘utterly inseparable’ from the object whatever changes it goes through. He gives examples of size, shape, motion, number and solidity.

Secondary qualities are qualities that physical objects have that are ‘nothing but powers to produce various sensations in us’. Locke gives examples such colours, tastes and sounds. The important phrase here is ‘nothing but’. Primary qualities, of course, also produce sensations in us but shape is a quality that the snowball has irrespective of whether we perceive it or not. Colour, by contrast, has to be understood in terms of how the object affects us. By definition, colour is something that is experienced in vision so it is a quality that an object can have only in relation to its being seen by some one. They are therefore mind-dependent. By contrast, primary qualities are those properties of an object that are not related by definition to perceivers and so are mind-independent.

This distinction is important in terms of establishing what our perception can tell us about reality. Since primary qualities of objects create corresponding ideas in our minds, our sense data of primary qualities at the very least resemble the properties of the object. Secondary qualities on the other hand, because they are mind-dependent, do not tell us anything about the properties of the object.

**Explain why indirect realism might lead to scepticism about the existence of mind-independent objects. (5 marks)**

Indirect realism holds that we perceive mind-independent physical objects indirectly, through mind-dependent sense data which are mental representations caused by and resemble external objects. Indirect realism claims that these sense data are caused by physical objects. However, to know that physical objects cause sense-data, we first have to know that physical objects exist. The only access we have to physical objects is through our sense-data and so we cannot justify the claim that physical objects cause our sense data. Scepticism is the position that if a claim can be doubted then it does not constitute knowledge. Indirect realism can lead to scepticism because if the only things we perceive directly are sense-data, then all we know about are sense-data; we do not have any knowledge of an external world.

**Explain Russell’s argument that the existence of mind-independent objects is the ‘best hypothesis’. (5 marks)**

Indirect realism holds that we perceive mind-independent physical objects indirectly, through mind-dependent sense data which are mental representations caused by and resemble external objects. However, given that we only experience sense data we cannot say with any certainty what is causing our sense data since we do not have knowledge of it. Russell accepts this argues that we therefore must treat the existence of mind independent objects as a hypothesis. What we do know is that we experience sense data, and these are either caused by mind independent objects or they are not, but we cannot prove either claim is true or false. He then argues that the hypothesis that physical objects exist and cause my sense-data is better than the alternative. His reason for this is that it is a good explanation for why my experience is the way it is whereas the alternative provides no explanation at all. He gives the example of a cat which I first see a corner of the room and then later on the sofa. if the cat is a physical object, it travelled from the corner to the sofa when I wasn’t looking. If there is no cat apart from what I see in my sense-data, then the cat does not exist when I don’t see it. It springs into existence first in the corner, and then later on the sofa. Nothing connects my two perceptions. The hypothesis that there is a physical object, the cat, that causes what I see is the best explanation of my sense-data as it has far greater explanatory power than the hypothesis that there is no cat at all.

**Explain Locke’s argument from the involuntary nature of our experience for the existence of mind-independent objects. (5 marks)**

Indirect realism holds that we perceive mind-independent physical objects indirectly, through mind-dependent sense data which are mental representations caused by and resemble external objects. However, given that we only experience sense data we cannot say with any certainty what is causing our sense data since we do not have knowledge of it. What we do know is that we experience sense data and there must be an explanation for their existence. Locke therefore considers what best explains out experience of sense data: physical objects external to my mind or my mind itself. He then argues that in perception, I cannot avoid having certain sense-data ‘produced’ in my mind, nor can I control the ideas that are produced. By contrast, if I turn from perception to memory or imagination, e.g. by shutting my eyes, I find that I can choose what I experience. Therefore, perceptual experiences cannot be produced by my mind since I cannot control them and must instead by caused by some external cause: physical object.

**Explain the argument from the coherence of various kinds of experience for the existence of mind-independent objects. (5 marks)**

Indirect realism holds that we perceive mind-independent physical objects indirectly, through mind-dependent sense data which are mental representations caused by and resemble external objects. However, given that we only experience sense data we cannot say with any certainty what is causing our sense data since we do not have knowledge of it. What we do know is that we experience sense data and there must be an explanation for their existence. Locke presents an argument from comparing perceptual experiences from different senses. He notes that our different senses ‘confirm’ the information that each supplies. Not only this, my perceptual experiences are also predictable. He gives an example of writing on a page. I know from experience that I can change how a piece of paper looks by writing on it. I can plan what to write, and I know in advance what the paper will look like. I cannot, however, bring about the sense-data of seeing the paper with words on it just by imagination; I have to actually write. And once I have written something, I can’t change the words I see. This shows that sense-data aren’t merely products of my imagination. Finally, if someone else reads those words aloud, what I hear corresponds to what I intended to write. These complementary experiences as well as the predictability of them is best explained by the existence of a mind independent piece of paper with words on.

**Explain Berkeley’s argument that we cannot know the nature of mind-independent objects because mind-dependent ideas cannot be like mind-independent objects. (5 marks)**

Indirect realism holds that we perceive mind-independent physical objects indirectly, through mind-dependent sense data which are mental representations caused by and resemble external objects. However, Berkeley questions whether this makes sense because our sense data are ‘perpetually fleeting and variable’ whereas realism claims that they physical object is ‘fixed and constant’. Given this, how can our sense data resemble physical objects, they are completely different.

Secondly, we do not experience physical objects, we only experience sense data and therefore we only have knowledge of physical objects via our sense data. It seems absurd therefore to claim that something we do experience resembles something we have never experienced, we could not possibly know.

These two challenges raise serious problems with indirect realism’s key claim that our sense data resembles physical objects.

**Explain Berkeley’s attack on the primary/secondary quality distinction. (5 marks)**

Locke argued that we perceive the primary and secondary qualities of an object. Primary qualities are qualities that are ‘utterly inseparable’ from the object whatever changes it goes through and therefore are mind independent. Examples include size, shape and texture. Secondary qualities of objects have to be understood in terms of how the object affects us. By definition, colour is something that is experienced in vision so it is a quality that an object can have only in relation to its being seen by some one. They are therefore mind-dependent. Berkeley accepts this claim about secondary qualities, pointing out that the colour of a cloud for instance will depend on where you are looking at it from and therefore colour is mind dependent. However, he says this is just as applicable to primary qualities too and therefore the distinction does not hold. For example, what looks small to me may look huge to a small animal. What looks smooth to the naked eye appears uneven under a microscope. This shows that the primary qualities of size and texture vary just as much as secondary qualities. Therefore the primary qualities of objects are just as mind-dependent as secondary qualities.

This is an issue for indirect realism as the identification of primary qualities was intended to explain what we could know about the external world: our sense data of primary qualities reliably informed us about the nature of the primary qualities of mind independent objects. Without this distinction, if primary qualities are also mind dependent, it seems that perception gives us no reason to believe that anything exists independent of our perceptual experiences.

**Explain Berkeley’s idealism. (5 marks)**

Berkeley’s idealism is the view that mind-independent physical objects do not exist; instead, reality consists only of minds and their ideas. He argues that we can only ever perceive sense data (ideas), not material objects themselves. Since it is impossible to conceive of an object existing unperceived, because the very act of thinking about it involves perceiving it. This leads to the claim that what we call physical objects are actually bundles of ideas. However, our perceptions do not come from mind-independent matter, as indirect realism suggests. Instead, Berkeley argues that since ideas are passive and cannot cause themselves, and since we do not control our own perceptions, they must come from an external mind. Given the order and complexity of our experiences, this external mind must be God, who directly causes and sustains all perceptions. Therefore, for Berkeley, reality exists as ideas within God’s mind rather than as a material world.

**Explain Berkeley’s Master argument. (5 marks)**

Berkeley’s Master Argument aims to show that it is impossible to conceive of mind-independent objects, thereby rejecting indirect realism and supporting idealism—the view that reality consists only of minds and their ideas.

The argument is based on the idea that to conceive of an unperceived object is self-contradictory. If someone claims they can imagine a tree existing unperceived, Berkeley argues that they are still thinking of it, meaning the tree is within their mind and not truly mind-independent. Every time we attempt to conceive of an object existing without being perceived, we are still perceiving it in thought. Therefore, it is impossible to conceive of an object that exists outside of all perception.

From this, Berkeley concludes that all objects must be mind-dependent. If objects cannot be conceived outside the mind, then they cannot exist independently of perception. This supports his idealist claim that "to be is to be perceived": everything that exists does so because it is being perceived by a mind.

**Explain the role played by God in Berkeley’s idealism. (5 marks)**

Berkeley’s idealism is the view that it makes no sense to think of physical objects as mind-independent, such things are inconceivable because to think of them would be to produce them in the mind, therefore making them mind-dependent. His arguments entail that what we think of as physical objects, are actually bundles of ideas, the perceptions we have of physical objects. Physical objects exist as mind-dependent things. However, this does not explain where these bundles of ideas come from.

Realist theories have claimed that these ideas are caused by mind-independent physical objects, but Berkeley has already ruled out this possibility. He considers three other possibilities of the cause of his ideas: other ideas, himself, or a mind external to his. He rejects ideas as the cause since they are passive and do not cause anything. He then argues that if he were the cause of his own ideas then he would be able to control his perceptions. Since he cannot and perception is involuntary, the cause must be external to him. His ideas that comprise physical objects therefore must be caused by another mind which wills him to perceive them.

Unlike mind-independent physical objects, a mind external to his is conceivable since he has experience of a mind: his own. Given the complexity and systematicity of his perceptions, he concludes that the mind that causes his ideas must be infinitely powerful and intelligent and therefore we call this mind: God.

God, according to Berkeley, is the ultimate perceiver who directly causes and sustains all ideas. Objects continue to exist even when we are not perceiving them because God perceives them at all times. This provides the foundation for objective reality within Berkeley’s idealist framework: the world exists not as mind-independent matter but as ideas within God’s mind.

**Explain the problems with the role played by God in Berkeley’s idealism. (5 marks)**

Berkeley argues that his perceptual ideas cannot be caused by mind-independent objects because they are inconceivable, they cannot be caused by ideas because ideas cannot cause other ideas, and he cannot be causing his perceptual ideas himself because they are involuntary. Therefore, they are caused by a mind external to his own and given the complexity and systematicity of his perceptions, he concludes that the mind that causes his ideas must be God. However, there are issues with this.

Firstly, my perceptions and sensations are part of my mind: what I perceive and feel is in my mind, not God’s mind.Secondly,God can’t have the sorts of perceptual experiences I have because God doesn’t perceive as I do. He also does undergo the kinds of sensations that I do, such as pain.Finally, the ordinary objects of my perception change and go out of existence, but God’s mind is said to be unchanging and eternal.Therefore, what I perceive and feel can’t be part of God’s mind.

**Explain the problems with the role played by God in Berkeley’s idealism and Berkeley’s response. (12 marks)**

*[5 marker above]*

However, Berkeley argues that this misunderstands his theory. Firstly, the fact that my perceptions and sensations are a part of my mind, does not undermine the fact that they are also part of God’s mind: what I perceive is a copy of the idea in God’s mind and I experience them when God wills me to.

Secondly, according to idealism, the ideas of physical objects exist in God’s mind not as perceptions, but as part of God’s understanding. The same is true of sensations. Therefore, while God doesn’t perceive the colour red or feel pain, he knows what it is for us to undergo these experiences.

Finally, what I perceive, which changes, is what God wills me to perceive. The whole of creation exists in God’s understanding, eternally. God, according to Berkeley, is the ultimate perceiver who directly causes and sustains all ideas. Objects continue to exist even when we are not perceiving them because God perceives them at all times. This provides the foundation for objective reality within Berkeley’s idealist framework: the world exists not as mind-independent matter but as ideas within God’s mind.

**Explain why illusions might cause a problem for Berkeley’s idealism. (5 marks)**

Berkeley’s idealism is the view that mind-independent physical objects do not exist; instead, reality consists only of minds and their ideas. However, illusions demonstrate an appearance-reality distinction that idealism cannot account for. An illusion is when we perceive and object to have a property that is does not in fact have, for example: an oar appears to the have the property of being crooked when in water but it is actually straight. According to idealism however, there cannot be an appearance-reality distinction because there is no reality beyond minds and their ideas. The oar simply is the bundle of ideas that we experience. There is no ‘real’ oar beyond our experience, our experience of it is its reality. Therefore, the appearance-reality distinction demonstrated by illusions causes a problem for idealism.

**Explain why illusions might cause a problem for Berkeley’s idealism and how he might respond. (12 marks)**

*[5 marker above]*

Berkeley’s response is that we aren’t misperceiving, what we perceive in the case of the half-submerged oar is crooked. However, what characterises an illusion is the mistake we would make in predicting what other experiences we would have of the oar. It is an illusion because it misleads us into inferring that the oar would feel crooked if we touched it or would look crooked when pulled out of the water. Therefore, illusions mislead us regarding the ideas we might associate with what we perceive, they are not misperceptions and do not demonstrate an appearance-reality distinction.

**Explain why hallucinations might cause a problem for Berkeley’s idealism. (5 marks)**

Berkeley’s idealism is the view that mind-independent physical objects do not exist; instead, reality consists only of minds and their ideas. However, hallucinations demonstrate an appearance-reality distinction that idealism cannot account for. A hallucination is when we perceive an object to have property when there is in fact no object at all, for example in a dream. According to idealism however, there cannot be an appearance-reality distinction because there is no reality beyond minds and their ideas. The hallucination is simply the bundle of ideas that we experience. There is no ‘real’ object beyond our experience, our experience of it is its reality. Therefore, the appearance-reality distinction demonstrated by hallucinations causes a problem for idealism.

**Explain why hallucinations might cause a problem for Berkeley’s idealism and how he might respond. (12 marks)**

*[5 marker above]*

Berkeley responds to this objection by arguing that hallucinations are products of imagination. Normally, imagination is voluntary, and perception is not, but hallucinations are involuntary, like perceptions, so Berkeley provides two other criteria that mark off hallucinations from perception. First, they are ‘dim, irregular, and confused’. Second, even if they were as ‘vivid and clear’ as perceptions, they are not coherently connected with the rest of our perceptual experience. Therefore, hallucinations do not demonstrate an appearance-perception distinction because they are not perceptions at all and therefore this does no provide an objection to idealism.

**Explain why idealism might lead to solipsism. (5 marks)**

Solipsism is the view that only oneself, one’s mind, exists. There are no mind-independent physical objects and there are no other minds either. Berkeley’s idealism is the view that mind-independent physical objects do not exist; instead, reality consists only of minds and their ideas. He argues that we can only ever perceive sense data (ideas), not material objects themselves. Since it is impossible to conceive of an object existing unperceived, because the very act of thinking about it involves perceiving it. This leads to the claim that what we call physical objects are actually bundles of ideas. This would therefore lead to solipsism because, given that our experience is only of our own mind and the ideas we experience, I have no reason to believe that anything apart from my experience exists.

**Explain why idealism might lead to solipsism and Berkeley’s response to this issue. (12 marks)**

[5 marker above]

However, Berkeley argues that because he is a mind, a thinking substance, he directly knows that he exists. Berkeley distinguishes between minds and ideas, arguing that the mind is active in perceiving, thinking, and willing, whereas ideas are passive. Since we are aware of ourselves as capable of this activity, it follows that we are not merely ideas but minds. Furthermore, because we are minds ourselves, we have a 'notion' of what a mind is, making it possible for other minds to exist. Berkeley also argues that our perceptions do not originate in our own minds because they ae involuntary, if he was producing his own perceptual experiences, he would be in control of them and, since he is not, they must originate from outside of him. Given that we cannot even have coherent conception of mind independent physical objects, these ideas must be caused by some other mind. The complexity, regularity, and order of our experiences suggest that this mind is God, who directly sustains our perceptions and ensures the consistency of reality. At the very least, therefore, it is not just his own minds and its ideas that exist, God exists too.

When it comes to other finite minds, such as other people, Berkeley suggests that there is evidence within our experience that indicates the existence of other minds, making their existence a matter of inference rather than direct perception. The evidence for this inference comes from our experience of communication and behaviour. When we interact with others, we observe patterns of speech, gestures, and actions that resemble our own voluntary, purposeful behaviour. Since we know from introspection that our own actions stem from a thinking, willing mind, we can infer that other beings who behave in a similar way also have minds. This inference allows us to reject solipsism.

How convincing is direct realism? (25 marks)

How convincing is indirect realism? (25 marks)

How convincing is idealism? (25 marks)

Is perception a good source of knowledge about the world? (25 marks)

1. Reason as a source of knowledge

**Explain Plato’s ‘slave boy’ argument for innatism. (5 marks)**

Innatism is the view that we are born with some ideas or knowledge. Plato attempts to demonstrate an example of innate knowledge in his writing by describing Socrates asking a slave boy a series of questions about a theorem in geometry, specifically, how to construct a square with twice the area of a given square. Through a series of guided questions, the boy is able to arrive at the correct solution, despite never having been taught geometry before. The importance of the boy being a slave is that he would have had no education about geometry and yet he correctly answers each stage of the proof or realises his mistake. Plato argues therefore that he didn’t gain the knowledge from experience, so he must have recovered the answers from within his mind, i.e. the knowledge must be innate. The argument for innate knowledge is that we have knowledge that we can’t have gained from experience. Plato’s example is supposed to show that all we need to recover our innate knowledge is the right ‘prompts’ from experience, in this case, Socrates’ questions.

**Explain Leibniz’s argument for innatism based on necessary truths. (5 marks)**

Innatism is the view that we are born with some ideas or knowledge. Necessary truths are truths that must be true, it is impossible for them to be false. Leibniz argues that knowledge of necessary truths cannot be derived from experience (a posteriori) because experience only teaches us how things are on any occasion; it cannot teach us how things must be. The world as we experience it could always have been a different way, so all propositions about the world could have been true or false, i.e. they are contingently true and so experience of the world is required to tell us what is in fact true. However, necessary truths cannot be established a posteriori. Leibniz points out that our sense experience only provides us with information about particular instances, for example that these two apples and these two apples make four apples. However, Leibniz points out that ‘however many instances confirm a general truth, they aren’t enough to establish its universal necessity’. Our experience tells us how things are, but not how things must be. In sum, all necessary truths tell us how things must be. Because experience doesn’t tell us how things must be, it seems that all knowledge of necessary truths must be a priori. Leibniz then argues that we should regard such a priori knowledge of necessary truths as innate. We discover their truth in a priori reasoning by ‘attending carefully and methodically to what is already in our minds’.

**Explain Descartes’ argument that the concept of physical objects must be innate. (5 marks)**

Descartes argues that he has a concept of physical objects that persist through time and undergo changes to their properties. He claims that this concept could not have been derived through sense experience and therefore must be innate. To make his argument, he focuses on the example of perceiving a piece of wax. He perceives a piece of wax to have certain properties of texture, smell, feel, shape etc. However, when he melts a piece of wax, it loses all of its original sensory qualities and takes on new ones. However, he intuitively believes that it is the same wax. Therefore, he must have some concept of the wax independent of its sensory qualities that remains throughout the changes it undergoes. This concept cannot have been derived through sense experience since his experience tells him that the wax after melting is completely different and yet he retains the belief that it is the same wax. Therefore, since it could not be learned through experience, his concept of physical substance must be innate.

**Explain Locke’s argument against innatism. (5 marks)**

Innatism is the view that we are born with some ideas or knowledge. Locke argues against innatism by claiming that all our knowledge comes from experience. He rejects the idea that there are innate principles or ideas universally present in all human minds. Locke argues that if there were innate knowledge, it would be universally recognised. He is responding to Leibniz’s proposed examples such as the law of non-contradiction. However, he observes that children and ‘idiots’ (the term Locke uses for people who have severe learning disabilities) do not have awareness of supposed innate principles, such as the law of non-contradiction. If such principles were truly innate, everyone would recognise them from birth, but this is not the case.

Locke also argues that to have innate knowledge requires that one has the concepts involved in the proposition one knows. If we first had to acquire the concepts, then the knowledge can’t be innate. Locke argues however that there are no innate concepts and therefore no innate knowledge. Locke believes that to say an idea is part of the mind, we must at some point have been conscious of it. Furthermore, if a concept is to be innate, it must also be universal. Therefore, an innate concept must be one that every human being is or has been conscious of. Locke denies that there is any such concept since we have no reason at all to think newborn babies have any concepts at all and certainly not advanced ones like identity and impossibility that would be needed for the type of knowledge innatists claim e.g. it is impossible for the same thing to exist and not exist. Therefore, we do not have innate knowledge.

Instead, Locke claims that the mind at birth is a *tabula rasa* (a blank slate), and all knowledge comes through sensory experience and reflection. Since we can explain the acquisition of knowledge without appealing to innate ideas, he concludes that innatism is unnecessary and false.

**Explain Locke’s argument against innatism and Leibniz’s reply. (12 marks)**

[5 marker above]

Leibniz accepts Locke’s claim that innate knowledge requires innate concepts. Therefore, if we want to say that ‘It is impossible for the same thing to be and not be’ is innate knowledge, we will have to say that concepts such as IDENTITY and IMPOSSIBILITY are innate. However, Leibniz claims that innate knowledge and concepts exist as dispositions in the mind. While innate concepts and knowledge do not exist ‘fully formed’ or explicitly in our minds, they are more than a mere capacity for certain concepts or knowledge. Thus, Leibniz says, ‘What is innate is what might be called the potential knowledge of them, as the veins of the marble outline a shape that is in the marble before they are uncovered by the sculptor’. It takes work to uncover what is within us, but what we uncover, we have not learned from sense experience. Sense experience is a necessary condition for awareness of them, but cannot not a sufficient condition for having such knowledge.

Leibniz argues that he these concepts can be demonstrated at being innate for two reasons. Firstly, that concepts like identity, impossibility and God, cannot be learned through experience. By definition we can have no experience of impossible things and we do not have direct experience of perfection. Therefore, these ideas must be in our minds from birth and we uncover them since sense experience cannot explain where they come from. Secondly, it is not true that young children and ‘idiots’ do not have these concepts. They may not be aware that they have these concepts but they nevertheless use them. They are essential to all thought, even though it takes time for us to make them explicit in our thinking. For example, a young child may not be able to explain the law of non-contradiction. However, if they can see me in front of them, they will know that I am not at home. They may not be able to explain how they know this using a sound argument, but the law of non-contradiction operates as an unspoken premise in their reasoning.

Therefore, Leibniz argues that we have innate knowledge because we use concepts and knowledge in our thinking, even if we are unaware of them, and because empiricism cannot explain the acquisition of certain knowledge that we do possess.

**Explain Locke’s concept of the mind as a ‘tabula rasa’ and how we acquire our concepts. (5 marks)**

Locke describes the mind at birth as a *tabula rasa* (a blank slate), meaning it has no innate ideas or knowledge. Instead, all concepts and knowledge come from experience. He argues that if we had innate ideas, they would be universally recognised, but since children and people from different cultures do not show awareness of supposed innate principles, this suggests that no ideas are present from birth.

According to Locke, we acquire our concepts through two sources of experience: sensation and reflection. Sensation comes from external experience: our senses provide us with ideas of colour, sound, texture, and so on. Reflection, or internal experience, involves the mind’s awareness of its own operations, such as thinking, remembering, and willing. Through these processes, we develop simple ideas, which can then be combined into more complex ones through comparison, combination, and abstraction. For example, we have gained the concept of pink through experience and the concept of elephant through experience. Now we have these concepts, we are able to create a ‘new’ concept of a pink elephant. However, since all of the concepts included in the concept of a pink elephant were gained through experience, we should say that the concept of a pink elephant is also known a posteriori.

By rejecting innate ideas, Locke’s concept of the mind as a *tabula rasa* supports empiricism: the view that all knowledge originates from experience.

**Explain Hume’s fork. (5 marks)**

Hume’s Fork is a distinction between two types of knowledge: relations of ideas and matters of fact. According to Hume, these are the only types of knowledge and therefore all knowledge must fall into one of these two categories.

Relations of ideas are propositions that are necessarily true and can be known a priori (independently of experience). They include mathematical truths (e.g., 2 + 2 = 4) and definitional truths (e.g., all bachelors are unmarried). These statements are true by definition and cannot be contradicted without logical inconsistency.

Matters of fact are propositions that are a posteriori (based on experience) and contingent. Examples include the sun will rise tomorrow or water boils at 100°C. These statements can be true or false depending on how the world actually is, and their negation does not lead to a contradiction.

Hume argues that if a statement does not fall into either of these categories, it is meaningless. This principle is central to his empiricism and leads to his rejection of metaphysical claims that cannot be verified through experience or logical reasoning.

**Explain Descartes’ notion of ‘clear and distinct ideas’. (5 marks)**

Descartes’ notion of **‘clear and distinct ideas’** is central to his philosophy, particularly in his method of doubt and the foundation of knowledge. For Descartes, clear and distinct ideas are those that are self-evident and cannot be doubted. A clear idea is one that is immediately present to the mind, like something we see clearly in our thoughts—there is no confusion or ambiguity. A distinct idea is one that is sharply separated from other ideas and cannot be confused with anything else; it is precise and separate in the mind.

Descartes holds that the clearness and distinctness of an idea are marks of its truth. He believes that anything perceived clearly and distinctly is certain and must be true. This principle underpins his famous argument: "I think, therefore I am," where his own existence is known clearly and distinctly through thought.

**Explain Descartes’ cogito [as an example of a priori intuition.] (5 marks)**

Descartes employs a sceptical approach to all knowledge by determining that he will not count as knowledge anything that he can rationally doubt. He therefore rules out all knowledge gained through sense experience because sense experience is fallible. He later describes himself as “drowning in doubt” as he cannot be certain that he is not being fooled in all his beliefs by an evil demon. He then asks whether he can doubt his own existence. Descartes argues that he cannot doubt that he exists: if he were to doubt that he exists, that would prove he does exist as something that thinks since doubting is a kind of thinking. He cannot be deceived that he thinks, therefore he knows that he exists as something that thinks.

[The cogito is a priori because it is not derived from sense experience but from pure reasoning. It is an intuition because it is immediately and directly apprehended by the mind, without needing any empirical evidence. Descartes claims that the certainty of "I think, therefore I am" is known by rational intuition, as it is self-evident to the mind when reflected upon. ]

**Explain Hume’s objection to Descartes’ cogito. (5)**

Descartes claims that ‘cogito ergo sum’ (I think therefore I am). He argues that he can know that he exists as thinking being because it is impossible to doubt the belief. The idea of the cogito cannot be doubted because the very act of doubting proves the existence of a doubter.

Hume objects firstly that we don’t experience a continuing mental substance over time, we only experience continually changing thoughts and feelings. Therefore, there is no basis for thinking that there is a thing that thinks. In coming up with the idea of a ‘thinking thing’, a mental substance, we confuse similarity for identity. Descartes has confused our experience of the similarity of our thoughts and feelings from one moment to the next with the idea that there is a ‘thing’ persisting through such thoughts and to which they belong. In other words, our experience of thoughts only prove that thoughts exists, not that a thinker is required.

Even if thoughts logically require a thinker, Hume denies that there is any reason to believe that this ‘thinker’ is a subject that persists from one thought to another. Hume argues that even if we experience thinking as active in this way, our experience does not enable us to move to the claim that I am one and the same active substance, persisting through time and different thoughts. Descartes says to that to be a thinker is to doubt, will, imagine, and so on. However, he simply assumes we can say these activities belong to the same subject, that he (the same thinker) does all this. This can be doubted, perhaps the evil demon is simply creating a series of false thoughts, among which is the thought that a thinker, a substance, exists. Therefore Descartes’ cogito fails to prove the existence of an ongoing thinker in the way Descartes claims.

**Explain Descartes’ Trademark argument [as an example of a priori deduction]. (5 marks)**

Descartes' Trademark Argument begins with his own existence, established through the cogito ("I think, therefore I am"). He finds within himself the idea of God, a supremely perfect being, and seeks to explain where this idea came from. Descartes argues that he could not have created this idea himself because he is finite and the concept of God is of something infinite. The idea of God, being a concept of something perfect and infinite, contains more reality than Descartes himself, who is imperfect and finite. To clarify his reasoning, Descartes distinguishes between different kinds of reality: substances (which have more reality than attributes or modes), and the reality of ideas. Ideas, as modes of thought, have intrinsic reality (the reality of thought itself) but also represent something external, giving them "representative reality."

Descartes argues that if he were the cause of the idea of God, then this idea would have to have as much reality as its cause. However, since his mind is finite and imperfect, it could not produce an idea of something infinite and perfect. Therefore, only an infinite and perfect being, God, could be the cause of the idea of God. Thus, the very fact that Descartes has the idea of a perfect being proves God's existence.

[This argument is an example of a priori deduction because it does not rely on sense experience but rather on the reasoning that flows from two premises: the fact of Descartes’ existence and the concept of God he has within his mind. From these premises, Descartes deduces the necessity of God's existence, employing only a priori reasoning.]

**Explain Descartes’ trademark argument and Hume’s response. (12 marks)**

*[5 marker above]*

Hume challenges two key premises of Descartes’ argument. Firstly, the Trademark argument rests on Descartes assumption that his idea of God requires a cause. Hume argues that this is not something we can know. The claims ‘everything has a cause’ and ‘something cannot come out of nothing’ are not analytically true. ‘Some things do not have a cause’ is a not a contradiction and thereforethe opposite is possible. Our experience gives us good reason to think that everything has a cause, but this is still only a contingent truth; it may be false. We cannot show that it holds without exception. Also, if we cannot know that it is impossible for something to come out of nothing, then we cannot know that a cause must contain at least as much ‘reality’ as its effect. What causes what is something we must discover from experience; we cannot know it by a priori reason. Without the assumption that Descartes’ idea of God must require a cause, his argument fails.

Secondly, even if our idea of God requires a cause, Hume rejects the claim that the concept of God cannot be created by our minds. Hume argues that we can form this concept by abstracting from ideas of finite things. We experience intelligence, wisdom, goodness etc., albeit in limited and varied ways. We can take these learned concepts and extending beyond all limits the qualities wisdom that we find in our own minds. In extending beyond all limits the ideas of finite goodness and wisdom we have from experience, we create an abstract negation of what is finite. In other words, we can create ideas of what is NOT-FINITE (INFINITE) and NOT-IMPERFECT (PERFECT) from our experience of things which are finite and imperfect by imagining the opposite. If we can create the idea of God, there is no need to believe the idea was caused by God himself and therefore the trademark argument would fail.

**Explain Descartes’ cosmological argument [as an example of a priori deduction]. (5 marks)**

Descartes' cosmological argument begins with his own existence, established through the cogito ("I think, therefore I am"). He then questions what the cause of his existence is. He rules out being the cause of his own existence because if he had caused his own existence, then he would have given himself all perfections. Therefore, since he does not have all perfections, he is not the cause of his own existence. Also, his current existence does not explain his continued existence because a lifespan is composed of independent parts, such that my existing at one time does not entail or cause my existing later. Since he does not have the power to cause his continued existence, he concludes that he depends on something else for his existence.

Descartes’ cogito concludes that he is a thinking thing and he later explain that he finds within himself the idea of God, a supremely perfect being. Descartes argues that something cannot come from nothing and this leads him to his principle that there must be at least as much reality in the cause as in the effect. Therefore, what causes his existence must be at least as real as him and therefore be a thinking thing and have the idea of God. This cause of him must either be the cause of its own existence or its existence is caused by another cause. If its existence is caused by another cause, then the point repeats: this second cause is in turn either the cause of its own existence or its existence is caused by another cause. There cannot, however, be an infinite number of these causes because there would never be a cause that contains the full reality needed to explain existence, making it impossible for anything to exist. Since things do exist, they must ultimately be caused by some cause which is the cause of its own existence. This thing would be an infinite being: God.

[Unlike most versions of cosmological argument, Descartes does not base his argument on his experience of the world. Instead, Descartes starts with what he claims as infallible knowledge (his own existence) and deduces from there using other premises that he believes are logically certain e.g. something cannot come from nothing, that God must exist to explain his existence. This is therefore an a priori argument for the existence of God.]

**Explain Descartes’ cosmological argument and Hume’s response. (12)**

*[5 marker above]*

Firstly, this argument rests on Descartes assumption that his idea of God requires a cause. Hume argues that this is not something we can know. The claims ‘everything has a cause’ and ‘something cannot come out of nothing’ are not analytically true. ‘Some things do not have a cause’ is a not a contradiction and thereforethe opposite is possible. Our experience gives us good reason to think that everything has a cause, but this is still only a contingent truth; it may be false. We cannot show that it holds without exception. Also, if we cannot know that it is impossible for something to come out of nothing, then we cannot know that a cause must contain at least as much ‘reality’ as its effect. What causes what is something we must discover from experience; we cannot know it by a priori reason. Without the assumption that Descartes must require a cause, his argument fails.

Hume also challenges Descartes’ claim that an infinite series of causes is impossible. Hume argues that the claim The claim ‘there cannot be an infinite series of causes’ is not an analytic truth, nor can we have experience of this matter. It is conceivable, therefore, that each thing has in turn caused the next and this goes on infinitely. Without this premise, there is no necessity for something that is its own cause: God.

**Explain Descartes’ ontological argument [as an example of a priori deduction]. (5 marks)**

Descartes' ontological argument begins with his own existence, established through the cogito ("I think, therefore I am"). He finds within himself the idea of God, a supremely perfect being. Descartes explains how we can explore our concepts in thought to gain knowledge. For example, you may think that there can be triangles whose internal angles don’t add up to 180 degrees, but reflection proves this impossible. Similarly with God, we may think that it is possible that God does not exist but once we reflect on this idea rationally, we discover that God must necessarily exist.

Descartes’ concept of God as a supremely perfect being logically entails that such a being would possess all perfections. Included in this would be perfect existence. Since existence is a perfection and God possesses all perfections, God must exist. Descartes explains that God’s existence is entailed by the other perfections of God. For example, a supremely perfect being is omnipotent, possessing all power it is logically possible to possess. An omnipotent being cannot depend on any other being for its existence, since then it would lack a power: the power to cause its own existence. An omnipotent being has this power and so depends on nothing else to exist. Such a being exists eternally, never coming into being or going out of being. As a supremely perfect being, God is omnipotent by definition, and so God must exist.

[This argument is a priori because it does not rely on experience but only on reasoning from the definition of God. It is also deductive, as the conclusion (that God exists) necessarily follows from the premises.]

**Explain Descartes’ ontological argument and how Hume’s fork can be used as a response. (12 marks)**

*[5 marker above]*

Hume’s fork separates what we can know a priori: ‘relations of ideas’, from claims about what exists: ‘matters of fact’. Matters of fact can’t be established by a priori reasoning, but require experience. Therefore anything that can be established by a priori reasoning must be a relation of ideas. Hume argues that nothing that is distinctly conceivable contains a contradiction, therefore whatever we can conceive as existing, we can also conceive as not existing. Therefore, there is no being whose non-existence implies a contradiction. We can put the argument another way: If ‘God does not exist’ is a contradiction, as Descartes claims it is, then ‘God exists’ is an analytic truth. However, it cannot be because claims about what exists are matters of fact, synthetic propositions, which are discovered a posteriori.

**Explain Descartes’ proof of the external world [as an example of a priori deduction]. (5 marks)**

Descartes employs a sceptical approach to all knowledge by determining that he will not count as knowledge anything that he can rationally doubt. He therefore rules out all knowledge gained through sense experience because sense experience is fallible. Having demonstrated his knowledge of his own existence as something that thinks, and the existence of God a priori, Descartes considers whether he can have knowledge of the external world.

Descartes first notes that he has sensory experiences but, for the reason that the senses are not infallible, accepts that he does not know the cause of these experiences. He proposes three possible causes of these experiences: physical objects which exist in the external world, his own mind, or God. He argues that ideas that are created by his own mind are voluntary and, since his perceptual experiences are involuntary, he knows that the cause of my perceptual experiences is not my own mind and must therefore be some substance outside of him. If the cause is God, then God has created me with a very strong tendency to have a false belief (that physical objects exist) that I cannot correct which would make God a deceiver. God, by definition, is supremely perfect and therefore is not a deceiver. Therefore, the only rational explanation of the cause of my perceptual experiences of physical objects is the existence of physical objects. Therefore, physical objects exist.

[This is an example of a priori deduction because although his argument is based on his experiences, he does not use these experiences as evidence for the existence of physical objects, he does not assume that his experiences are reliable. Instead, he uses a process of rational deduction to rule out other explanations and arrive at his conclusion a priori.]

**Explain Descartes’ proof of the external world and how an empiricist (Hume/Russell/Berkeley) might respond. (12 marks)**

*[5 marker above]*

**Look back at previous arguments and apply them to this question:**

Hume = we cannot know that Descartes’ perceptual experiences have a cause

Russell = the existence of physical objects is the best explanation but this is only known inductively/a posteriori, not a priori like Descartes argues

Berkeley = even the concept of a mind independent physical objects is incoherent. His master argument makes this point.

Do we have innate knowledge? (25 marks)

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

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

1. The limits of knowledge

**Explain the challenge of philosophical scepticism within epistemology. (5 marks)**

Traditionally in epistemology, knowledge is considered to be a justified, true belief. Each of the three conditions is necessary. If your belief is false, or your belief is not justified, then you do not know it. Justification is the reason you have for holding your belief. Philosophical scepticism in epistemology is a method in which we withhold belief unless our justification for our beliefs guarantees the truth of that belief. The challenge within epistemology is that the result of this process is that we cannot have knowledge about the world because our justifications are insufficient to guarantee that they are true. Thought experiments can explain this position. For example, it is possible that I am not a walking, talking human being, but simply a brain in a vat. Connected to my brain is a supercomputer that feeds in just the right impulses to generate the illusion of reality as it is. All of my sensory experiences are being produced in my brain by electrical signals from the supercomputer: I’m living in a virtual reality. Since I think that the reality I experience is one of physical objects and other people, I’m being deceived. I cannot know that I am not a brain in a vat. If I were, things would seem exactly the same as if I am a walking, talking person. If I were a brain in a vat, my experiences would be qualitatively indistinguishable from the experiences I have if I am not. So I can’t have any evidence that I am not a brain in a vat. Therefore, even if it is the case that I am not a brain in a vat and all my experiences are in fact true, I do not know this because my justification is still fallible and therefore one of the necessary conditions for knowledge has not been met.

**Explain Descartes’ three waves of doubt. (5 marks)**

Descartes starting point in his search for knowledge is that he will avoid believing things ‘that are not completely certain and indubitable’. To establish this certainty, he seeks to test his beliefs by doubting them. He adopts philosophical scepticism as his starting point. As he tries to call his beliefs into question, he repeatedly asks how he can know they are true. Therefore, he understands knowledge in terms of what is ‘completely certain and indubitable’. If we can doubt a belief, then it is not certain, and so it is not knowledge.

Descartes first wave begins by presenting an argument from illusion as many of his beliefs are based on his sense experience. He notes that he has, in the past, been deceived by his senses: things have looked a way that they are not. Things in the distance look small, for instance. Or, an oar half-submerged in water looks crooked. However, Descartes argues that such examples from unusual perceptual conditions give us no reason to doubt all perceptions, such as that I am looking at a piece of paper with writing on it. More generally, we might say that perceptual illusions are special cases, otherwise we wouldn’t be able to talk about them as illusions. Therefore, they don’t undermine perception generally.

In Descartes’ second wave of doubt, he questions whether he knows he is awake. When we dream, things feel real to us until we wake up. There is therefore no reliable way to tell whether I’m awake or asleep. This argument attacks all sense perception, even the most mundane and most certain. I cannot know that I see a piece of paper because I cannot know that I am not dreaming of seeing a piece of paper. It questions whether we can tell what reality is like from what we experience, since those experiences could be no more than a dream. Descartes then claims that even if he were dreaming, and may be imagining particular physical objects, dreams are constructed out of basic ideas and these must correspond to something real: ideas of body, extension, shape, quantity, size, motion and time. And so the truths of geometry seem secure, as do truths of arithmetic, such as ‘2 + 3 = 5’. Even if he is dreaming, this seems impossible to doubt.

But Descartes then casts doubt on even these claims could be mistaken. Suppose that all my experiences are produced in me by an evil demon who wants to deceive me. If this were true, I wouldn’t know, because my experiences would be exactly the same, they would not be true. However, I cannot know that I am not being deceived by an evil demon and therefore cannot be certain of anything. At this point he describes himself as “drowning in doubt” as he has no knowledge of anything.

**Explain Descartes’ response to the challenge of scepticism. (5 marks)**

[Use the 5 marker on the cogito]

**Explain how Berkeley responds to the challenge of scepticism. (5 marks)**

The challenge within epistemology is that the result of this process is that we cannot have knowledge about the world because our justifications are insufficient to guarantee that they are true. Berkeley’s idealism removes the challenge of scepticism by rejecting the distinction between appearance and reality. Berkeley’s idealism is the view that mind-independent physical objects do not exist; instead, reality consists only of minds and their ideas. He argues that we can only ever perceive sense data (ideas), not material objects themselves. Since it is impossible to conceive of an object existing unperceived, because the very act of thinking about it involves perceiving it. This leads to the claim that what we call physical objects are actually bundles of ideas. Scepticism relies on the view that our experiences may not accurately represent reality. However, idealism rejects this distinction between our experiences and reality, it does not face the challenge raised by scepticism.

**Explain how Locke responds to the challenge of scepticism. (5 marks)**

[Use the 5 marker: Explain Locke’s argument from the involuntary nature of our experience for the existence of mind-independent objects.]

**Explain how Russell responds to the challenge of scepticism. (5 marks)**

[Use the 5 marker: Explain Russell’s argument that the existence of mind-independent objects is the ‘best hypothesis’.]

**Explain how reliabilism responds to the challenge of scepticism. (5 marks)**

The challenge within epistemology is that the result of this process is that we cannot have knowledge about the world because our justifications are insufficient to guarantee that they are true. Reliabilism disputes the theory of knowledge that scepticism assumes and denies that we need the condition of justification. Reliabilism counters that our true beliefs do not need to be justified to count as knowledge, they only need to be produced by a reliable cognitive process, that is, a process that produces a high percentage of true beliefs.

If I am not a brain in a vat, then perception is a reliable process: most of the beliefs I form on the basis of sense experience are, in fact, true. That is enough to say that I gain knowledge from sense experience because my beliefs are true and produced by a reliable cognitive process. I do not need, in addition, to justify my beliefs, e.g. to have evidence that perception is reliable. In particular, I do not need to know that I am not a brain in a vat. If I am not a brain in a vat, then, because perception is a reliable process, I know that there are physical objects. Reliabilism can claim that we do not need to think that in order to know that p, I must also know that I know that p. It could be that the cognitive process that produces beliefs about p is reliable, but the cognitive process that produces beliefs about what I know is unreliable. In such a case, I can know that p without knowing that I know that p. For instance, animals can gain knowledge through perception, but they can’t even think about whether they are brains in vats, let alone having reliable thoughts about such matters. Reliabilists therefore reject the sceptical claim that we cannot know about physical objects through perception unless we know that we are not brains in vats.

Explain the challenge of philosophical scepticism within epistemology and how Descartes/Berkeley/Locke/Russell/ reliabilism can respond. (12 marks)

Are the claims of philosophical scepticism true? (25 marks)