



GENERAL COMMENTS

Generally speaking, students in 2006 performed even better than those in 2005, a year which itself saw considerable improvements. Once again, many students approached the examination with a thorough knowledge and understanding of the texts studied, and students and teachers had clearly taken note of comments in previous Assessment Reports. However, despite this general improvement and some extremely impressive individual performances, many of the old problems resurfaced in 2006.

This is a second year that a question and answer booklet has been used for Philosophy, which has helped eliminate a lot of student errors. However there are some points worthy of note. Students should not be intimidated by the amount of space allocated for each answer; there is often far more space than many students need for a complete answer. For example, two lines were allocated to Question 1a. of Section A, yet a one word answer was sufficient. Consequently, students should not feel obliged to fill the available space. By the same token, students may occasionally feel the need to elaborate more than the space allows. In that case, it is perfectly acceptable to ask for a script book. Nevertheless, unless they have particularly large handwriting, students who require extra space for every question may need to aim for greater conciseness.

Areas of strength and weakness

Strengths

- Many students had a good knowledge of the texts and relevant background information.
- Focus on the questions: a significant number of students were careful to directly address the question asked.
- Precision: many students took considerable care to express exactly what they meant. This is an important philosophical skill.
- A good understanding of the demands of philosophical evaluation: strong students were not afraid to express their own views and offer arguments in support of these views.

Weaknesses

- Poor knowledge of the texts: there were still many students who had only a generalised knowledge and very little understanding of the prescribed material. Teachers must ensure that students acquire at least a basic knowledge of all texts.
- Poor knowledge of the arguments in the texts: many students who appeared to know a good deal about the doctrines and backgrounds of the texts nevertheless demonstrated little understanding of the texts' overall arguments.
- Lack of concrete examples: giving examples is often the best way to clarify what you mean (and to show that you know what you mean). Yet even some of the best performing students often failed to do this.
- Analysis of arguments: there were still many students who confused the concept of an 'argument' with that of a 'contention' or 'point of view'. Arguments make a claim supported by reasons and reasoning, whereas a viewpoint makes a claim without necessarily doing this.
- Evaluation: there were many students who did not seem to understand the instruction to 'evaluate' an argument or viewpoint. Such students often mistook this instruction for 'give an interpretation of' or 'elaborate on'. There are extensive discussions of this very important and basic notion in previous Assessment Reports.
- Begging the question 1: Argument or evaluation by force of conviction: every year there are students who simply confront the arguments and viewpoints considered in the course with their own prior convictions, whether these be religious or otherwise. Although faith of one kind or another is often a starting point for argument, philosophy challenges people to go beyond the bald assertion of their beliefs to engage in a discussion and give reasons for their viewpoint.
- Begging the question 2: In this connection, it is worth noting a potential ambiguity in the term 'criticism'. There is a form of criticism that simply begs the question against your opponent. For example, for Question 1c. of Section B, it is possible to criticise Callicles by saying that his position is 'selfish' or 'individualistic'. This is a fair comment but it is hardly a refutation of Callicles, who would happily embrace such descriptions. A second type of criticism, which is philosophically more interesting, refutes or undermines an opposing point of view. This second type is more likely to earn full marks in a Philosophy examination.
- Answering too many questions in Section B: a significant percentage of students attempted all questions in Section B. Many of these students were clearly under prepared for the examination and offered only fragmentary answers. Others offered relatively full answers to more than three questions and were clearly well-prepared. These students disadvantaged themselves by using time that could be better spent on other parts of the examination, particularly the essay.

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- Essay writing skills: this remains a major area of concern. Students and teachers are referred to comments on this matter in previous Assessment reports.

Section A – Short answer questions

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	48	15	11	27	1.2

One that is:

- chosen for its own sake
- never for the sake of something else.

Both parts were necessary for full marks. Simply saying ‘a good that is chosen for its own sake’ received two marks; sometimes goods that are generally instrumental may be chosen for their own sake. Many students seemed to be unacquainted with this key Aristotelian concept.

Following is an actual student’s answer which goes a little beyond what was necessary, but contains a perfect answer. That last sentence would be sufficient on its own.

For Aristotle, all things aim at an ultimate end or ‘final good’, which is their ‘telos’. A ‘telos’ is an end in itself and not a means to another end.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	34	5	62	1.3

Happiness, or eudaimonia (that is, living well, flourishing)

Any one of these terms was sufficient for full marks.

Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	48	4	48	1.0

Pleasure

Some students elaborated, but this was not strictly necessary.

Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	53	20	13	14	0.9

Either of:

- ‘the one holds out some faint hope that we may escape if we honour the gods, while the necessity of the naturalists is deaf to all entreaties’
- destiny or fate is inescapable, whereas the gods might be persuaded to help us.

Some students were unable to answer the question directly but came up with something along the lines of, ‘although the gods are real, they have nothing to do with humanity and should not be feared’. This does not really answer the question as it does not offer a reason to prefer the legends of the gods over natural philosophy. However, it did demonstrate some relevant knowledge of the text and consequently received partial credit.

Question 3a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	7	33	60	1.5

He means the feeling we get when we embrace our freedom and fully realise that we are ‘alone with no excuses’. God does not exist and we must face all the consequence of this, including the lack of any objective values.

Since Sartre’s own discussion lacks precision, the answer ‘God does not exist’ was accepted even though it does not seem to answer the question. Strictly speaking, ‘abandonment’, the state of being ‘forlorn’, is a state we are in as a result of the non-existence of God.

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Following are two student responses that received full marks.

Sartre argues that man is 'forlorn' in that he must define himself, but is alone in his choices and can expect no help, since there is no God to provide it.

The feeling when one realises that they are accountable for all moral decisions – there is no God or guide to help them – they are completely alone.

Question 3b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	25	33	14	29	1.5

3bi.

Possible examples included:

- the wartime student who had to choose between looking after his mother and going off to join the Free French
- the young man who became a Jesuit after many things had gone wrong in his life
- Abraham and the sacrifice of Isaac.

Any answer, however brief, that clearly identified the example was sufficient. Hence, simply writing 'Jesuit man' was sufficient to receive the mark.

3bii.

- Wartime student: Such things as Christian doctrine and Kantian ethics are too indeterminate to guide his choice; we must simply trust our own instincts (and then our values are revealed by our choice).
- Jesuit: He saw the hand of God in his worldly setbacks, but he alone chose this interpretation rather than some other possible one.
- Abraham: it was still up to Abraham to interpret the messages from God and from the angel who stopped him.

Strictly speaking, the last example is used by Sartre to illustrate the concept of 'anguish' rather than 'forlornness'; however, these two concepts are sufficiently closely related for such answers to receive full marks.

Following is a student response that clearly demonstrated knowledge of how Sartre uses the example.

In deciding what to do, the boy may seek counsel, however in approaching an institution/person for help he knows what they say and chooses (1) to seek advice and (2) to follow it. Therefore we are completely alone when we choose.

Students who made up their own example received marks according to how their example actually illustrated Sartre's concept of forlornness.

Question 4a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	22	20	58	1.4

Life

Students who answered 'innate ideas', 'knowledge', 'education' or 'immortality' received one mark out of two. Such students had obviously misunderstood the question but showed some understanding of Plato.

In our text, Socrates claims that we take our education with us when we die; what is not so clear is that we bring it with us when we are born. This is no explicit mention of *metempsychosis* (the transmigration of souls) and, in fact, this notion does not sit entirely comfortably with what Plato writes here in the *Phaedo* about the afterlife.

If there is **one** thing that the soul brings, it has to be 'life'.

Question 4b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	22	10	16	51	2.0

- When the soul takes possession of the body, it always brings life.
- A thing can not 'admit the opposite' of what always accompanies it.
- So the soul can not admit death.
- Therefore when death comes to the body, the soul must escape unharmed.



In general, this question was done well, even by students who could not answer part a. In some cases, students included a correct answer to part a. in their response to part b. even though they had not answered part a. correctly. Unfortunately, it is not possible for a student to receive the marks for one question on the basis of their answer to another question.

Question 5a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	60	30	11	0.5

- Animal bodies have many more parts and these parts are of many more kinds.
- Animal bodies are far better ordered and they have more wonderful movements.

These two points are more fully elaborated than was necessary. Answers that gave simply the first half of the two dot-points above were sufficient.

Many students answered as though the question was ‘How do animals differ from humans?’ Such responses received no marks as this question concerned distinctions between animals and automata.

Animals being ‘made by God’ was not on its own an answer as this is not a directly observable property of animals. Their being made by God is **why** they are more complex, better ordered, etc.

Question 5b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	21	22	29	28	1.6

- It may be able to utter words, but it could not converse meaningfully.
- It may equal or surpass humans in some tasks, but it would give itself away by failing in others for want of enough ‘particular organs’ to do the job of human reason, our ‘universal instrument’.

Section B – Extended text response short answer questions

This section required more depth of understanding than Section A, but full essay-length responses were not necessary.

Question 1ai.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	19	10	71	1.5

Conventional moral rules are created by the weak majority as a means to protect themselves from the strong few.

Question 1aii.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	21	13	66	1.5

Contrary to such rules, nature teaches that it is right for the better to dominate the worse.

Alternatively and even more simply, ‘they are opposed’.

Question 1bi.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	12	14	33	41	2.0

The views are, in order:

- those who should rule are the strongest
- those who should rule are the cleverest
- those who should rule have both cleverness and political courage.

Question 1bii.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	40	9	52	1.1

Socrates points out that the masses are collectively stronger than any individual and so, if Callicles holds that the strongest are the best and should rule, he will have to approve of rule by the masses.

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To put this conclusion another way, nature is not opposed to the normal morality of the masses (as Callicles had claimed). On the contrary, nature endorses 'conventional morality'.

These questions examined students' knowledge and understanding of the flow of argument. It was not sufficient to know these texts as a series of static viewpoints.

Question 1c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	19	10	12	19	17	10	13	2.8

Possible criticisms included:

- what actually happens does not show what **ought** to happen (to argue thus is to commit 'the naturalistic fallacy', to fail to grasp the 'is/ought gap')
- nature does not unequivocally teach that the strong dominate or exploit the weak. There are, for instance, cooperative animal species (in which weak individuals are helped by others) and much cooperative and altruistic human behaviour
- what Callicles recommends as 'natural' behaviour is in fact another kind of socially conditioned behaviour (individualism)
- in changing and clarifying his views, Callicles himself seems to lose interest in basing his recommendations on what actually happens.

A good way to clarify or elaborate upon an answer was to give examples. One criticism, however well elaborated, could not receive full marks. In such questions, students need to check that they really are offering two distinct criticisms and not, for example, two versions of the same criticism.

Some students did not read the question carefully ('Apart from Socrates' response') and offered more Socratic arguments or even further elaboration of the same argument.

Question 2ai.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	20	18	21	21	20	2.0

There were several possible arguments that could be explored for this question; students needed to select one of these and explain it in some way. It was not necessary for the argument to be reduced to standard form; however, it must clearly have been an argument.

Some marks were allocated for the clarity of the student's elaboration. Possible responses included the following.

- Some imagine that amusement is the good life because men in positions of power spend their time in such pursuits. This is not a good reason because being in a position of power is not an indicator of virtue and intelligence. Furthermore, we should not take any notice of the opinions of those who 'have not tasted pure and refined pleasure' and therefore 'resort to physical pleasures'. Children, too, believe that the things they prize are the most important; so it is natural that just as different things seem valuable to children and adults, so they should seem different also to good and bad men. Hence 'it is the things that seem valuable and pleasant to the good man that are really such'. Now the good man most desires 'virtuous activity'. Hence, 'it follows that happiness does not consist in amusement'.

This is a fairly elaborate argument and students need not have touched all bases to achieve full marks.

or

- '[A]musement is a form of relaxation.'
- 'People need relaxation because they cannot exert themselves continuously.'
- Therefore 'relaxation is not an end, because it is taken for the sake of the activity.'
- However, happiness is the final good (that is, an end in itself).
- Hence, amusement is not happiness.

or

- 'We chose practically everything for the sake of something else.'
- 'To spend effort and toil for the sake of amusement seems silly and childish.'

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- So it must be the other way around. We amuse ourselves so that we can work; which is to say that amusement is not our Final Good and therefore not happiness.

or

- ‘The happy life seems to be lived in accordance with goodness and [therefore] does not consist in amusing oneself.’

There needed to be some gloss on this statement before it counted as an argument. For example: Aristotle argues in Book I as follows: if we have a function then the good for us is fulfilling that function. Our distinctive function is the exercise of reason, therefore the good for us consists in the exercise of reason in accordance with the good. Amusement is not the exercise of reason but (presumably) of our lower faculties. Therefore amusement cannot be the good for us.

Students who elaborated this argument purely with reference to Aristotle’s rejection of the life of pleasure in Book I were able to receive full marks, since the relationship between the life of pleasure and amusement is not completely clear.

or

- ‘Anybody can enjoy bodily pleasures – a slave no less than the best of men – but nobody attributes a part in happiness to a slave, unless he also attributes to him a life of his own. Therefore happiness does not consist in occupations of this kind, but in activities in accordance with virtue.’

Question 2a.ii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	23	15	19	20	12	10	2.1

Following are some possible criticisms.

- To begin with, a great deal depends upon what is meant by ‘amusement’. Aristotle gives no examples and few clues. These amusements are ‘highly esteemed in the courts of tyrants’; they are ‘entertainments’ and they are ‘physical pleasures’. It is unlikely that he is referring to martial arts or sports. These are presumably okay because they have a serious real life application and were a source of honour in Greek society. Perhaps, then, Aristotle is referring to arts such as juggling, dancing, playing a musical instrument or painting. It seems very likely, since these could be mastered by a slave. If that is so, then Aristotle is doing no more than expressing the rather snobbish prejudices of his time and society. In the intervening centuries, many of these arts (for example, music and painting) have come to be recognised as noble pursuits.
- Aristotle’s main argument threatens to be circular. Who are the judges of value? Those who have ‘tasted pure and refined pleasure’. Who are they? They had better not just be people who agree that amusement is not the good life. We need some other means of identifying them than simply the fact that they agree with Aristotle.
- It seems that there have been many who have tasted ‘pure and refined pleasure’ who have also enjoyed ‘physical pleasures’. In fact, the ideal of the Renaissance Man (which actually owes a good deal to Aristotelian ideas) is the ideal of a scholar and a man of action who is skilled in serious arts (both theoretical – philosophy and theology – and practical – swordsmanship and strategy) as well as more frivolous, such as dancing or playing the lute.
- Aristotle seems to be implying that our leisure activities are undertaken in order that we can work rather than vice versa (and that when we are working we are truly happy). While there are many people who would agree, there are many who would not. Many people work so that they can pursue their leisure activities; for example, sports, listening to music, dancing or enjoying fine food and drink. These are the times when they are most happy, even in the Aristotelian sense of ‘flourishing’.

It was important that the response here was in some way an evaluation of the argument offered in part i. Indeed, students who did poorly in the first part could still receive credit for an effective evaluation of the argument that they gave; for example, a student might have given an Epicurean answer to part i. and then given an effective evaluation of that argument.

Some students focused on one point and offered a thorough elaboration of that point while others gave a more sketchy elaboration of two or more points. Either of these approaches was legitimate and could achieve full marks.

Depending upon the argument given in part i., students could focus on the validity of the argument or its soundness or both. When students focused on soundness, they needed to specify what they actually think about the assumptions and claims made in the argument.

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Some students focused on criticising Aristotle’s argument from human function. While this sometimes suggested these students were recycling answers from previous years, it was clearly legitimate if the student had offered such an argument in 2ai.

Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	2	7	17	22	22	15	15	3.6

This question invited students to state and justify their own point of view. In order to achieve full marks for this question, it was necessary for students to:

- offer their own response
- justify that response
- demonstrate an understanding of Aristotle’s position
- write clearly.

Clearly there were many ways in which students could answer this question. Following is an example of one instructive student response.

I believe that amusement plays a key role in living the good life. Amusing oneself provides a means of relaxation and education regarding social interaction which are essential to pursuing the greater things in life, e.g., knowledge, greatness, fulfilment, etc. For example, Aristotle wishes to be a great contemplator and philosopher. But if he never relaxed occasionally to allow his mind a rest, he would eventually be unable to pursue his goal of eudaimonia. Furthermore, if he didn’t operate as a regular member of society, interacting, etc, he would be likely to be jailed or sentenced to death (especially during his time) further impeding his pursuit. Thus amusement provides a means to future activity which consequently Aristotle endorses himself in ‘Nicomachean Ethics’.

This response scored well on some points. It is relatively fluent and the student offers a clear answer to the question – ‘amusement plays a key role’. Further, the answer is elaborated on and, arguably, some attempt is made to justify the answer. The student explains the role of amusement – it is a (necessary) means to eudaimonia. In addition, the student clearly attempts to justify the claim. However, this justification founders as the response does not explain the alleged connection between amusement and ‘social interaction’ or why failure to be amused sometimes might lead to jail or a death sentence. Furthermore, even given the final sentence, it is also not entirely clear how far the student is agreeing with Aristotle.

The following is a clearer answer, although it would have benefited from less repetition and an example or two.

Aristotle states that amusements contribute to the good life providing relaxation in anticipation of more serious, important activities like contemplation. I agree with the view. It is difficult to say amusements have no role in the Good Life, as when people are deprived of them very few people would be called happy or fulfilled. Yet most people would also agree that there is an inherent emptiness in spending one’s entire life merely pursuing amusements. More substantial activities are required. I believe that amusements are part of the good life – there is a strong inherent desire for pleasure in all humans – yet more is required, amusement alone does not provide eudaimonia.

Question 3a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	31	19	18	15	9	9	1.7

It is a mistake because it assumes that people adhere to a moral system because they have an abstract theory about morality or as the conclusion of a philosophical argument. This is nonsense. People adhere to a moral value because it helps them to live. In other words, it appeals to their needs and not to their ideas. In this way, it is like a medicine that does its work regardless of what one believes about it.

Alternatively, there is need for a more radical critique of morality that questions morality itself. (This position needed some elaboration to connect with the question.)

Some students focused not on what the mistake is but on why it is made: they make the mistake because they have failed to make morality their own personal problem. Since this is a very subtle point, such answers could still earn full marks.

Question 3b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	27	15	18	17	11	11	2.0



- We must engage passionately with the question of morality. (This would obviously require some elaboration; perhaps through a discussion of why the English moral historians got it wrong.)
- Nietzsche suggests that we must investigate the historical and psychological grounds of a moral system. We must identify the needs that a particular moral value has served and does currently serve. Only then will we be able to understand why it is valued and perhaps evaluate that value. (Elsewhere Nietzsche calls this process genealogy.)
- We might criticise the interests that are served by a morality or the consequences of adhering to that morality. A morality that stunts people and limits their ability to flourish can be criticised. For example, Nietzsche criticises the ‘slave morality’, which is the morality of humility and compassion imposed by the weak on the strong in order to serve their interests and has the effect of limiting the best human beings.

In this question, ‘Nietzschean’ could refer to a criticism that Nietzsche himself offered or to a criticism offered in a Nietzschean spirit (for example, a criticism that rests upon analysing the ‘genealogy of morals’). Some students offered an account of a Freudian critique of morality; this is definitely ‘Nietzschean’. Some students asserted simply that Nietzsche does not think it possible to criticise a morality – it is difficult to see how anyone who had read Nietzsche could believe this.

Once again, students could legitimately focus on one kind of critique or outline more than one.

Question 3c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	14	12	24	22	18	10	2.5

There was a wide range of possible responses to this question, including the following.

- A morality may be criticised on the grounds of inconsistency. If it professes one value (tolerance, for example), and yet professes another value inconsistent with that value (for instance, discrimination against a minority group), then it is inconsistent. It might preach compassion but exclude certain groups from that compassion for no legitimate reason. Of course, as Nietzsche would suggest, merely pointing out the inconsistency is unlikely to effect change. It would be necessary to understand the social, historical and psychological sources of that inconsistency.
- Nietzsche is right to suggest that criticism of morality must spring from an understanding of the needs that morality fulfils or the needs that it fulfilled in the past. From there, it is possible to assess whether those needs are valid. For example, much sexual morality arose in a society deeply concerned with questions of inheritance and legitimacy and before reliable means of contraception were widely available. In that context, any sexual act might lead to children and upset the social order. Hence there were strictures against a wide variety of sexual activity, especially for women. Nowadays, illegitimacy has few economic or social impacts and effective contraception is freely available. This means that many aspects of traditional sexual morality can be revised (although new ones may be needed in the current situation).
- It is possible to criticise a morality or set of value on the basis of whether it serves to promote or deny human life. For example, some traditional forms of Christianity taught peasants to suffer their torments in this life in order to be happy in the next. This version of the ‘slave morality’ served to stunt and restraint humanity. It reconciled people to their own oppression rather than liberating them and enabling them to live well.
- Morality characteristically serves the interests of particular political or social groups. In this way, many individuals become complicit in their own enslavement. For example, historically, many women have professed to prefer a code of gallantry that arguably contributes to their subordination. Philosophical criticism can help them to lay bare this complicity and so set people free. To some extent this has happened in the case of women.
- Certain conceptions of morality encourage a person to believe that living well consists in simply not infringing the moral code. This encourages people to see goodness in terms of what they do and do not do rather than as matter of what they make of their lives. For example, there are some religious people who live a dull, pinched life but see themselves as ‘good’ because they do not commit violent acts or cheat their neighbours. While such restraint is commendable, this is not living.
- Some students invoked a form of ethical relativism; however, such answers were no more than mere assertions of ethical relativism (for example, ‘it is not possible to criticise morality because everyone/every society has their own morality’). Such answers not only lacked philosophical sophistication, they also demonstrated a lack of knowledge of Nietzsche’s own views as expressed in the text. A more acceptable evaluation might be as follows. ‘Each morality springs from the social and geographic conditions in which a culture finds itself. For example, in their harsh environment, Eskimos practiced euthanasia. We find this morally repugnant but it is a perfectly understandable and even necessary response to the conditions in which they found themselves. As

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Nietzsche reminds us, this is going to be the case with any moral value and therefore we are not in a situation to criticise it.'

Following are a few other possibilities (without the necessary examples).

- Sartrean notions of 'authenticity' and 'bad faith' (or even Kantian ethics). Some moralities encourage us to do as we are told rather than to make our own moral judgements. That is, they encourage 'bad faith' (or in Kantian terms, heteronomy). Since morality is concerned with the development of a free will, these so-called 'moralities' undermine the very notion of morality.
- At the heart of morality is the notion of the sacredness of human life. Hence it is possible to criticise a morality according to the degree to which it upholds or fails to uphold this principle.
- Morality is concerned with bringing about the greatest happiness for the greatest number (the principle of utility). Any morality that does not do this is open to criticism.

As can be noted from some of these sample answers, it was quite acceptable for the student to be controversial. It was also acceptable for students to appeal to their own ethical convictions (Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Sartrean, Kantian, Natural Law, Aristotelian, Thomist, Utilitarian, etc.) so long as those convictions received some justification and/or elaboration.

If students agreed with their Nietzschean argument in part b., they needed to elaborate further in answering this question.

Question 4ai.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	11	15	74	1.6

Man defines himself only after his existence comes into being; that is, there is no fixed and given human nature as there is no God to conceive of it. Human nature is thus formed by what man wills himself to be; that is, by his choices.

The following student response received full marks.

Essence implies a nature which implies a function which implies a creator. There is no creator to predetermine our essence. Therefore we exist first and create our own essence by living.

Question 4aii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	19	5	24	12	41	2.5

Possible responses included:

- there are no *a priori* or objective moral values
- man creates his own value, rather than it being handed down by God (abandonment)
- man is responsible for what he is; there is no determinism
- we have to act without hope (despair), that is to say, without assurances from above or from human nature
- embedded within this sense of responsibility for oneself is a sense of responsibility for all men, which leads to anguish
- when we choose, we are creating an ideal for others; when I choose, I choose for all.

Once again, students could give two well-elaborated consequences, or more than two clear, but less fully elaborated, consequences. It was very easy for students to miss out on marks by offering essentially the same answer twice.

Following are a couple of rather different student responses that cover a number of the above points very well. Although both responses are structured to make clear that the student has offered at least two points, in fact, each offers more than two points and the connections between those offered are well elaborated. Both of these answers earned full marks even though each contains something that the other does not.

This brings about anguish. Anguish is the result of man being given the difficult responsibility of not only having to make choices for himself without reference to any pre-defined morality but also in doing this, affirm his choices as suitable for all men. Man is condemned to be free and invent man. This also brings about despair, which is the result of the knowledge that, because no human being is bound to a set moral standard, a man has nothing but himself and cannot rely on the loyalty of others or the grace of God to do anything to assist him.

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1. *There are no a priori values. We must make them ourselves by choosing. When I choose, I assert the value of something. Nothing is good for me unless it is good for everyone. Therefore when I choose, I choose for man, I fashion an image of man as I think he ought to be. I am therefore responsible for my actions and those who choose the same as me.* 2. *When I choose I assert values. Therefore freedom (to choose) is the highest value as it makes others possible. When I choose freedom for myself, I must choose it for others (from 1). Therefore we must all be committed to the freedom of others.*

Question 4b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	20	19	20	42	1.8

What we read in any book of ethics would still have to be interpreted by us. For any moral rule, we would have to decide whether and how it applied to our situation. For instance, when Abraham hears the voice of God telling him to sacrifice Isaac, he must decide whether it really is the voice of God that he is hearing. He faces the same decision when the angel tells him not to sacrifice. Such a decision is always made alone. It cannot but be subjective.

This point was not well understood by a large number of students, including many who otherwise did very well. Students could have chosen any of the examples offered in Question 3bii. of Section A, or an example of their own.

Question 4c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	9	7	10	14	19	18	22	3.7

Following are some possible responses to this question (of course, this is not an exhaustive list).

Negative points

- Can Sartre consistently claim both that we choose because we think something to be good (and good for all) and that our choosing it makes it good?
- If, as seems plausible, morality is about enabling humans to live together, then a good moral philosophy should help us to achieve harmony. Yet Sartre offers no obvious way to achieve this. There is no guarantee that there would not be conflict and clashes of values.
- True, Sartre offers one guiding principle – ‘really one should always ask himself, “What would happen if everybody looked at things that way?”’ – but is this enough to guide an individual or a community?
- According to Sartre, even this guiding principle needs interpretation and application to particular situations. So we are thrown back upon subjective feelings and instincts.
- Leaving us with feelings and instincts is unhelpful. What if we do not know what to feel or if we have conflicted feelings – as seems typical in the case of moral dilemmas?
- If I choose monogamy or celibacy, does it really make sense to say that I choose it for all? Are monks really committed to thinking that everyone should be a monk? Are gays committed to thinking that everyone should be gay?
- Sartre believes that we are radically free. This flies in the face of much philosophical and scientific thought that tends towards determinism. (Students opting for this argument needed to beware; determinism hardly constitutes a ‘guide to the good life’ and is far more likely to lead us into ‘the quietism of despair’.)
- We can say sensible things about human nature and these might form the basis of a conception of the good life. Indeed Sartre seems to be heading in this direction when he introduces the idea of a ‘universality of condition’.

Positive points

- Sartre forces us to face the fact that values are subjective. Whatever moral guide we are offered, he is right to say that we have to choose whether to accept it and how to interpret it. Perhaps we have to accept that we are left with feelings and instincts.
- Sartre emphasises freedom; he exhorts us to take responsibility for our actions. This is a good thing. We cannot but think ourselves to be free.
- Although they rest upon some rather technical philosophy, Sartre’s views are egalitarian. We can all aspire to this way of life.

Note that it is not a criticism of a moral theory to say simply that it is difficult or demanding or that very few could live this way.

In general, students were rewarded for a well-reasoned argument and a coherent and philosophically sound attempt to criticise specific elements of Sartre’s conception of the good life. This criticism could include both positive and negative points about the philosophy.

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Question 5ai.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	36	13	51	1.1

- Moral philosophy should be realistic.
- An ethical system should commend a 'worthy' ideal.

Question 5aii.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	34	22	44	1.1

- Murdoch means realistic in the sense of connected to what is real. She believes that there is a human nature with 'certain discoverable attributes' and that these should be suitably considered in any discussion of morality (the Kantian man did not have a realistic view of human nature).
- Murdoch asserts that it is the role of moral philosophers not to merely analyse ordinary conduct, but to recommend a hypothesis about good conduct and how this can be achieved.

Students who received no marks for part i. could still gain full marks for part ii. if they gave Murdoch's reasons for their response to part i.; for example, art and beauty.

Question 5b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	15	8	10	18	19	29	3.0

- Murdoch's views rest on the crucial assumptions that humans are naturally selfish and that human life has no external point, or *telos*.
- Our selfish desires distort our view of the world.
- In order to get a clear vision of reality, we need to overcome the selfish ego.
- This overcoming is a condition for virtue, for we cannot act well unless we attend to the world and to other people as they are rather than as we might wish them to be.
- Hence we need to train ourselves in transcending the 'fat relentless ego'.
- There are several means to this, including the appreciation of beauty in nature and in art, and submitting to some discipline, such as learning a language.

Other important points might be that:

- modern Western discussions of value since Kant have focused unduly on the will as the source of value
- these rest upon an unrealistic conception of human beings as essentially rational agents
- in fact we are as much emotional beings as rational ones.

Of course, students were not expected to cover all of these points, and students were free to choose where they placed the emphasis. However, for example, students who jumped straight to Murdoch's discussion of art and beauty without explaining why these are important had missed the point and had not outlined 'the essential elements of [her] conception of the good life'.

In general, Murdoch remains the least well-understood thinker studied in Unit 3. She is the philosopher most often reduced to a simplistic tag – 'she is the art lady'.

Question 5c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	19	7	9	11	16	19	17	3.1

As ever with such a question, there were many possible approaches to the answer. 'Criticism' could include both positive and negative points about the philosophy. Students were able to approach the evaluation through a comparison with another core text author, so long as the student's own viewpoint emerged clearly. Students often forget Murdoch's own point raised in Questions 5ai. and ii.

Many responses suffered from a lack of sophistication. Nowhere does Murdoch say that going to symphony concerts or attending art galleries is a necessary condition for living well. Hence, students who merely criticised or ridiculed such a claim did not criticise Murdoch.



Another odd claim often made was to say that Murdoch did not prove that beauty draws people out of themselves. This is to misunderstand the limited role of ‘proof’ in philosophy. At times, especially in ethics, a merely plausible claim suffices. This is the point of Aristotle’s claim ‘for it is a mark of the trained mind never to expect more precision in the treatment of any subject than the nature of that subject permits’ (*Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I). Many students claimed that there are people who are not susceptible to beauty. This does not sound especially plausible but, even if it were true, it does not necessarily undermine Murdoch’s case. What would undermine Murdoch’s case is a morally good or virtuous person with no appreciation of beauty.

Evaluating an argument or a viewpoint is not a matter of contradicting points piecemeal. The counters have to be plausible and they must actually bear upon the argument.

Section C – Essay

Question chosen	0	1	2	3
%	3	47	19	32

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	5	4	3	5	7	9	10	10	9	7	6	6	5	4	5	4	7.3

A philosophy essay is still an essay and must be structured as such. Satisfactory essays rarely consist of a series of one-sentence paragraphs, nor should they be one long paragraph. It is entirely a matter of personal style whether or not students choose to set out their arguments in standard form.

What follows is a series of possible solution pathways for each of the essays. It is not possible to anticipate all possible acceptable responses to these questions. All essays were assessed on the same basic criteria as follows.

Expression

- Did the student present the argument in an organised way?
- How clear and precise was the language used by the student?
- To what extent was the language appropriate to philosophy?

Achievement Level

- 0 The student had not reached level 1.
- 1 The student expressed some basic ideas but it was not always clear what the argument is trying to convey. The use of language was not appropriate to philosophy.
- 2 The student presented some ideas in an organised manner. There was some clarity of expression, but the argument could not always be followed. The use of language was not always appropriate to philosophy.
- 3 The student presented ideas in an organised way and the development of the argument could be easily followed. The use of language was appropriate to philosophy.
- 4 The student presented ideas in a clear and coherent way and insights were clearly articulated. The use of language was effective and appropriate to philosophy.
- 5 The student presented ideas in a coherent and incisive way, insights were clearly articulated and the argument was focused and sustained. The use of language was precise and fully appropriate to philosophy.

Knowledge and understanding

- To what extent did the student demonstrate knowledge of philosophical issues?
- How well had the student understood philosophical arguments and concepts?

Achievement Level

- 0 The student had not reached level 1.
- 1 The student demonstrated a superficial knowledge of philosophical issues but there was only limited understanding of the concepts used.
- 2 The student demonstrated some knowledge of philosophical issues and there was a basic understanding of the concepts used.
- 3 The student demonstrated a secure knowledge of philosophical issues, and concepts were generally understood.
- 4 The student demonstrated a wide-ranging knowledge of philosophical issues, which were used effectively to support arguments. Philosophical arguments and concepts were largely understood.
- 5 The student demonstrated knowledge which was comprehensive and in-depth, and was used incisively to support arguments. Philosophical arguments and concepts were fully understood.



Identification and analysis of relevant material

- How well had the student understood the specific demands of the question?
- To what extent did the student provide relevant supporting material?
- To what extent did the student provide appropriate examples?
- How effectively did the student analyse the supporting material?

Achievement Level

- 0 The student had not reached level 1.
- 1–2 The student showed little awareness of the specific demands of the question and identified relevant material in only a limited way. There was little analysis and few or no examples.
- 3–4 The student showed some awareness of the specific demands of the question and identified and analysed some relevant material. Some appropriate examples were used.
- 5–6 The student showed a good understanding of the specific demands of the question and identified material which was nearly always relevant. There was a sound analysis of this material. Examples were appropriate and gave support to the argument.
- 7–8 The student showed a clear understanding of the specific demands of the question and identified relevant material which was analysed in a thoughtful way. Examples directly supported the overall argument in a persuasive manner. Some counter-arguments were presented.
- 9–10 The student showed a full understanding of the specific demands of the question and identified material which was always relevant. The implications of this material were drawn out in a detailed analysis. Examples were well-chosen and compelling in their support of the argument. Counter-arguments were presented in a convincing way.

Development and evaluation

- Did the student develop the argument in a coherent way?
- How well did the student test ideas and arguments?
- To what extent did the student express a relevant, personal response?

Achievement Level

- 0 The student had not reached level 1.
- 1–2 The student developed ideas and arguments in a basic way but there was little or no evaluation.
- 3–4 The student developed some ideas and arguments but the development was simple, or was asserted without support or reference. There may have been some basic evaluation of the ideas and arguments.
- 5–6 The student developed ideas and arguments in a sound way and there was a consistent attempt to evaluate them, even if this was not fully developed.
- 7–8 The student developed ideas and arguments from a consistently held perspective. Evaluation of the ideas and arguments was thoughtful and convincing.
- 9–10 The student developed ideas and arguments from a consistently held and well-justified perspective. Evaluation of the ideas and arguments was compelling or subtle with strong evidence of personal reflection.

Question 1

Students who argued that a computer could/would never pass a Turing Test (TT) did not answer the question, though they may have gained some marks for demonstrating knowledge of the general subject area. The question asked whether, if it passed, is that enough to say that it is thinking?

Another popular response that missed the point was to argue that animals can think and they could not pass the Turing Test. This question concerned whether passing the test is **sufficient** to attribute thought, not whether it is necessary. Turing himself explicitly rejects the idea that passing a Turing Test is a necessary condition for thought. A number of thinking things might fail (people who can't work a computer keyboard, chimps, dolphins, cats or dogs – even people up against a smart computer). The question asked whether passing a Turing Test is enough.

What is the Turing Test?

It was perfectly acceptable for students to assume that the reader knew what is involved in the Turing Test. In fact, there was a danger of students wasting too much time describing the TT. Some students used a diagram; this was quite acceptable as long as the diagram was explained in the text.

Why might passing a Turing Test be sufficient?

- Our basis for attributing thought to other human beings is their behaviour.
- If a computer passes a TT, then it is behaving in a way that the judge cannot distinguish it from the behaviour of a (thinking) human being.



- If this behavioural evidence is sufficient to attribute thought to another human being, then it is sufficient to attribute thought to any being, including a computer.
- Therefore if a computer passed a TT, then that would be sufficient evidence that it was thinking.

Alternatively: Turing's basic argument comes in response to an objection. Some people object that this behaviour is not sufficient because there is room to doubt that this behaviour arises from thought processes. It is true that there is room to doubt that thought underlies the behaviour. However to admit this doubt in the case of computers also means that we must admit it in the case of our fellow humans. You would not want to do that, and we don't, generally speaking (that way lies solipsism). In order to be consistent, therefore, we should dismiss this doubt in the case of computers.

Why might passing a Turing Test not be sufficient?

- Turing's argument assumes a very rationalistic account of why we attribute mentality to other humans. It is highly unlikely in the first place that our attribution of mentality rests upon any kind of argument at all.
- It is very likely that our sense of being in communication with another mind depends on a whole range of paralinguistic clues (facial gestures, body language). These are the very things that Turing deems irrelevant.
- This previous point is supported by our readiness to attribute thought to our fellow animals. We see beings rather like us behaving in ways rather like us. In fact, the less like us the creature, the less likely we are to attribute mentality.
- A TT is a rather artificial set up. A computer (or its programmer) is setting out to 'fool' the judge. This encourages the use of tricks based on the psychology of the judge rather than a genuine attempt to produce Artificial Intelligence.
- In fact, it is too easy for certain kinds of programs to pass a Turing Test (for example, ELIZA, which is a very basic program that either gives stock responses – Human: 'I'm feeling sad.' Computer: 'Now why is that?' – or simply takes some phrase of the human and reflects it back – Human: 'My mother is ill.' Computer: 'Your mother is ill?'). Such responses are not a sign of thought and yet such a program might well pass a Turing Test.

There were a number of responses open to students who wished to defend Turing; however, good essays also should have considered some objections, even if it was simply the solipsism objection considered above.

Student might also have suggested a modified Turing Test in order to address one or more objections; for instance, that we need to have more interaction with the machine.

Conclusion

Students needed to reach some conclusion, even if it was somewhat qualified or cautious.

Question 2

Armstrong's views and arguments

- A person is 'nothing but a physico-chemical mechanism'. This is the view favoured by modern science, which has more authority than philosophy or religion because it achieves a much greater consensus.
- One version of this view is Behaviourism, which defines the mind or mental states in terms of outward physical behaviour. A crude version of Behaviourism says that a mental state (for example, anger) is just the outward behaviour, but an obvious objection is that one may be angry without giving any outward sign of it.
- A more sophisticated version says that mental states are dispositions to behave in certain ways, just as the brittleness of glass is its disposition or tendency to break easily, even if a given piece never actually breaks. But there is still the objection that, when I am in a certain mental state, I am not merely liable to behave in a certain way; there is something actually going on in me now.
- Behaviourists were right to look to science to explain the mind but they did not go far enough because science does not usually content itself with asserting the existence of dispositions; it seeks the underlying physical basis of those dispositions.
- In fact, our own (first person) experience tells us that mental states are more than merely behaviours or even dispositions to behave.
- Mental states should rather be defined as inner states which are apt to cause (depending on the circumstances) certain behaviour.
- What is the nature of these inner causes? Dualists such as Descartes will say that they are states of a spiritual substance, but modern science favours the view that they are purely physical states of the central nervous system.



- How can the physicalist account for self-consciousness? (When in a given mental state we are usually aware of it; an exception is the case of the ‘automatic’ driver.) Self-consciousness is a kind of perception of the state of one’s own mind, and can be understood as the scanning of one part of the central nervous system by another.

Critical points and queries

- Might not the consensus achieved by science be explained in Kuhnian fashion?
- Science may have achieved more consensus on **scientific** questions than philosophy or religion have on theirs. Does this mean that we should respect the consensus of science (scientists) on **philosophical** questions such as the nature of mind? Armstrong himself seems to be advancing a philosophical case here.
- Armstrong says that we cannot directly observe the minds of others, but we can directly observe our own minds and ‘perceive’ what is going on there. But if mental states were purely physical (as he believes), wouldn’t it be possible, at least in principle, to directly observe other people’s as well as our own? That is, to observe a physical manifestation of the hurtfulness of pain, for example, not just the excitement of particular neurons that may be present when pain occurs. At this point, some students introduced Frank Jackson’s arguments about ‘qualia’.
- Even if we accept Armstrong’s ‘inner cause’ argument, can physicalism adequately account for the nature of an inner cause – something that ‘kick starts’ a process? Note that non-materialists have an equal difficulty – how could something non-physical cause something physical?
- Does Armstrong’s account allow us to distinguish adequately between biological psychological systems and non-biological ones?

The following are some points regarding conception of ourselves and our place in nature (this list is not exhaustive).

- An account of ourselves as being superior/special would have to appeal to something else other than a soul or spiritual substance.
- There is nothing to indicate that an after-life is possible.
- This view may ultimately imply a kind of determinism.
- It may indicate that drugs would be a key to controlling both mental and physical illnesses.

Question 3

Plato’s views

- Many people love beautiful sounds and sights, but philosophers love **beauty itself**, in its ‘permanent and unchanging nature’, as well as ‘the things that participate in it’.
- Philosophers live not in a dream world, but in the real world. In the former, one mistakes resemblance to reality for reality itself, as do the ‘lovers of sounds and sights’.
- Philosophers have knowledge rather than (mere) opinion or belief.
- These are ‘different faculties’, like sight and hearing, and so must have ‘different domains’. The domain of knowledge (that is, reality) cannot be accessible to opinion.
- What then is the domain of opinion? Since opinion falls between knowledge and ignorance or incomprehension, and the field of knowledge is reality while the field of ignorance is unreality, the field of opinion will be anything which ‘partakes of both reality and unreality’.
- Such intermediate things exist: beautiful things become ugly, doubles are also halves, etc.
- In summary: the masses are content with such things, live in a dream world, and are ‘lovers of opinion’; philosophers see, for example, beauty ‘in itself’, live in the real world, and are lovers of knowledge.
- Consequently, the philosopher will also be truthful, temperate, not petty-minded, and quick to learn; he or she will also have a good memory and a mind ‘endowed with measure and grace’.

Discussion Points

- What is **beauty itself**, apart from beautiful sounds and sights? Plato is here appealing to his distinctive *Theory of Forms* (or *Types* or *Ideas*). Beautiful things have their beauty by somehow participating in the eternal and unchanging Form of Beauty. The same applies to round things, beds, etc. These Forms, of which the paramount one is the Form of the Good, exist in a realm accessible to the intellect but not to the senses.
- But even if we accept the Forms, why accept that they are ‘more real’ than the things which participate in them, or indeed that the latter are not real at all and occupy only a ‘dream world’? Plato likes the Forms because they are ‘permanent and unchanging’, but any comfort this gives may be offset by some doubt as to their existence.
- Knowledge and belief (opinion) certainly differ but are they different **faculties**, like sight and hearing, with different ‘fields’? A different view is that knowledge is a particular **kind** of belief. What kind?



- A common definition of knowledge is that it is 'justified true belief'. What counts as justification? This is a matter of great controversy, with respect to sense-perception (do I know there is a table here?), dreaming (do I know I am awake?), memory (do I know what I had for breakfast today?), others' testimony (do I know my birth date?) and induction (do I know that the sun will rise tomorrow, or that the laws of nature will continue to hold?).
- Philosophers (of the sort Plato admires) may be lovers of knowledge, but does this guarantee that they **have** it? Plato seems to presume that it does. A rather different way of seeing the philosophical life is in terms of the **quest** for knowledge or understanding, perhaps with some humility as to whether one yet has it.
- Does a love of knowledge really guarantee all those other virtues?

Sun, Line and Cave

- Rather than attempting to define goodness, Socrates offers illumination by way of these three famous images.
- Goodness (or its Form) is compared with the Sun; the latter is the source of light and growth, the former is the source of reality and knowledge.
- A line divided into four segments represents the visible and the intelligible worlds; within each of these there is the 'starting-point' of our knowledge, and the more fundamental reality which is inferred from it.
- The prisoners in the cave see only shadows, which they take to be reality. If one of them were to go out into the sunlight, he would find it hard to adjust to, but once he had, he would pity those below. If he were to rejoice them, he would have lost his ability to discriminate among the shadows, and the other prisoners would pity **him** and try to kill anyone who tried to make them 'see the light'.
- Similarly, those capable, and properly educated, can achieve knowledge of the Form of the Good. They should then return (reluctantly) to the 'cave' (that is, the everyday world) and share their knowledge with others, who may not want to have it.
- Paradoxically, then, ruling should be done by those who are not keen to do it.

Discussion Points

- How much light do these images cast on the actual nature of the 'heavenly model' which philosophers are supposed to grasp and use?
- How is the (true) philosopher to know when he or she has correctly grasped it? Does it help to say that ability to grasp it is the test of a true philosopher?

Compared to the other two essay questions, this was a very open ended question, and many students wandered around the subject without a clear contention or a clear argument. In order to avoid this, it was necessary for students to spend some time identifying a contention and planning a clear structure. This plan needed to be kept in view throughout the writing process.