



## GENERAL COMMENTS

Students who read the questions carefully and drew on a thorough knowledge of the texts did very well in this examination. In Section A, short, concise answers usually scored better than long, complex ones. In Section B, there was a fair spread of questions attempted. In this section of the examination, there should not be a presumption that all parts of a question relate back to the quotation that heads that question. However, it often makes the question more manageable if the student does refer back to the quotation. In Section C, there was a fair spread of questions attempted, although Question 2 was the most popular.

## Areas of strength and weakness

Common areas of strength were:

- **exam strategy:** a significant number of students made considered judgements about which parts of the examination to tackle first. This is not an area where there can be general rules. Students need to determine what works for them during their examination preparation
- **approach to short answer questions:** most students kept their short answers short, which is good, so long as the question is answered. When assessing Section A especially, but also for some parts of Section B, assessors look for key phrases that demonstrate the student's understanding. Once students believe that they have answered the question directly, they should move on
- **knowledge base in the philosophy of mind:** students who wrote about Descartes or other writing within the philosophy of mind (Unit 4) generally supported their views with a good knowledge of relevant background, such as research in animal language.

Common areas of weakness were:

- **poor knowledge of the texts:** it is a matter of concern that so many students sat the exam with only the most generalised knowledge of the prescribed material and very little real understanding. As they prepare for the exam, students need to become well acquainted with the texts and form mature opinions about the views and arguments expressed in them. Students should be challenged to go beyond the simplistic 'bumper sticker' understanding of authors' views
- **poor background knowledge:** in addition to a knowledge of the texts, students need to have some background knowledge. For Unit 3, this primarily means having a basic knowledge of the historical setting of the Greek texts. For Unit 4, it means some knowledge of the history of science, notably the Ptolemaic theory and the Copernican Revolution. It is worrying how many students claimed that Ptolemaic astronomy favoured a flat earth
- **simplistic evaluation:** a common consequence of a lack of understanding was that the student claimed that the author was inconsistent because he or she said things that were inconsistent with the student's extremely simplistic understanding. This happened especially with Murdoch and Nietzsche
- **imprecise focus on the question:** some students demonstrated a good knowledge of the text but did not directly answer the question. These students were given some credit for their knowledge, if it was at all relevant to the question, but they could not receive full marks for the question
- **answering last year's questions:** this relates to the previous issue and the same considerations applied when it came to assessment. Students either came in with a prepared answer and set it down with little regard for the actual question, or they read the word 'Aristotle' (for example) and wrote anything about Aristotle. Neither of these approaches is wise. Students need to read the question carefully and apply their knowledge when answering the question. This happened particularly in Section B and especially in Question 2 on Aristotle
- **self-contradiction:** many students gave a correct answer and then kept writing and in the process contradicted themselves. Assessors tended to be charitable and assume that the initial, correct answer was the one intended, however, this was not possible where the correct part of the answer was unclear and the assessor had to look further on in the answer to work out what was meant. One way to avoid this problem is for students to keep their answers as clear and succinct as possible, especially in Section A
- **recycling answers already given:** students should beware of simply paraphrasing the question or, in the case of Section B, the quotation that heads the question. Where a question has multiple parts, they must make sure that they do not simply repeat their answer in subsequent parts. It is unlikely that a repeated answer will respond directly to the question and therefore marks will be lost. However, where students repeated information that had already received marks in one section, they received no further credit for that knowledge in subsequent sections. Had there been new, relevant material in subsequent sections, they might have gained further marks even if the question was not fully answered



- **analysis of arguments:** there were still many students who confused the concept of an ‘argument’ with that of a ‘contention’ or ‘point of view’. For example, Aristotle’s **contention** is that happiness (or *eudaimonia*) is the Final Good. To identify his **argument** is to identify the chain of reasoning that he offers in support of that contention. In some cases, the chain of reasoning will be fairly long; in others, it will be fairly short. This is what assessors look for when students are asked to **outline** an argument. The analysis of arguments is an area that teachers and students need to address repeatedly throughout the course. There are many opportunities to do this early in Unit 3 when students are reading and discussing Plato’s *Gorgias* and Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* as both these texts present a number of fairly systematic arguments. It can be useful to analyse these using graphic organisers, such as flow charts, as well as the more traditional ‘standard form’. There are a number of software programs that facilitate this type of graphic analysis. Students are encouraged to present their analysis in either graphic or standard form in the examination. It is not necessary and is often unwise to attempt this sort of analysis in extended prose
- **evaluation of arguments, logical analysis:** many students wisely attempted to evaluate arguments with reference to their ‘soundness’ and ‘validity’ but often these concepts were invoked without understanding or explanation. It is not sufficient to say simply whether an argument is sound and valid or not; students must say how. Validity relates to the structure of an argument. A valid argument is one where the conclusion **must** be true if the premises are true. A sound argument is a valid one whose premises (and therefore conclusion) are true. Hence, it makes no sense to say that an argument is sound but not valid; validity is an essential condition for soundness. Considering the validity of the argument means asking whether the conclusion flows logically from the premises. Note that if an argument is valid, there is often not a lot more that can be said once the analysis is done; in such cases, the soundness of the argument becomes more of an issue. At this point, the student needs to address whether she or he believes that the premises are true. Many students make statements such as the following: ‘This argument is sound if you assume that the premises are true’. This is not an evaluation of the soundness of the argument, it is merely another way of saying that the argument is valid. To evaluate soundness is to say whether you believe that the premises are true. It could also be appropriate to identify possible areas for differences of opinion. Students should not turn ‘validity’ and ‘soundness’ into a fetish. If the author does not offer an explicit argument (in the sense noted at the end of the previous bullet point), referring to validity and soundness is not appropriate. Finally, when asked to evaluate an argument, students should beware of saying ‘yes, it is sound because...’ and then simply paraphrasing the views of the philosopher
- **evaluation of arguments and points of view:** a number of students seemed reluctant to offer evaluations of arguments or positions. An evaluation generally requires the student to take a stand. Consequently, in most questions that require an evaluation, a mark is reserved for any genuine attempt to evaluate. Note that the quality of an evaluation is not measured by whether the assessor agrees with it or not; it is measured by its relevance and understanding (is it genuinely an evaluation of this author’s argument?) and the quality of the reasons offered. Students should beware of trying to evaluate (or even analyse) points of view as if they were arguments
- **answering too many questions in Section B:** there was a small but significant number of students who attempted all five questions in Section B, where only three questions were required. This may have been an oversight or a deliberate strategy to maximise marks. To avoid the oversights, students should familiarise themselves with the structure of the exam by reading and working through past exam papers. Teachers should regard this as an important part of preparing for the examination. As a strategy for maximising marks, answering five questions rather than three is very unwise. All students who answered five questions in Section B performed very poorly in this section and deprived themselves of time that should have been spent on other sections, especially the essay for Section C. Their answers tended to be very sketchy and imprecise. Students should read the ‘suggested times’ on the front of the examination paper and try to stay fairly close to them. Section B should take approximately 55 minutes and assessors look for approximately 55 minutes worth of work on three questions
- **essay writing skills:** essays were often disjointed, moving from paragraph to paragraph with no obvious justification, and often not focused on the question. Students and teachers should note that when a question invites the student to refer to ‘at least one author read during the course’, it is perfectly acceptable for the student to limit him or herself to one author. In fact, this is often preferable. When a student tries to cover every author discussed in the relevant section of the course, the essay is often disjointed and poorly focused.

# 2004 Assessment Report



## Section A – Short answer questions

### Question 1a

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	34	36	21	9	1.1

- pleasure is (just) the absence of pain in the body and trouble in the soul
- plain fare gives just as much pleasure as costly fare
- it renders us fearless of fortune
- luxurious pleasure is hard to achieve
- luxurious pleasure is at the mercy of fate, therefore it is wisest to habituate oneself to a simple life
- luxurious pleasures may be among those that produce 'great tumults in the soul' but true pleasure involves the absence of tumults in the soul.

Note that students were asked to give three of **Epicurus'** reasons, not three reasons of their own.

### Question 1b

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	37	37	26	0.9

Different kinds of pleasure valued by Epicurus are:

- the pleasures derived from plain fare (food and drink)
- philosophical contemplation (wisdom)
- friendship
- conversation.

Students who provided two of these (or variants of them) received full marks. Answers in point form were accepted. Note that 'plain food and drink' is one kind of pleasure not two and that 'virtue' is not a form of pleasure.

Many students did not attempt to name different kinds of pleasure but answered in very generalised and abstract terms. Such answers did not receive any marks.

### Question 2a

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	46	10	44	1.0

- man is free, so he can choose between good and evil
- alternatively:
- when man misuses his freedom, he sins.

Many students seemed to have little knowledge of the Martin Luther King text but some were able to work out the relationship anyway. King does not say that we lose our freedom when we sin.

### Question 2b

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	58	22	11	9	0.7

Conflict arises between God and the sinner because our personality wants to pull in different directions. We know what we ought to do, that is, what God wants us to do, and yet we do not do it.

Students also received marks if they referred to Plato's charioteer or Augustine ('Give me chastity but not yet') or St Paul ('The good that I will that I do not; the evil that I would not, that I do'). Some students were able to quote King to the effect that our 'isness' is out of harmony with our 'oughtness'. Some students noted that our bad choices make us less human. Others referred to King's belief that America had sinned through racism. Students received full marks when they drew a link between these claims and the idea of conflict between God and man.

Many students who did not know the text well resorted to generalised and rather clichéd versions of Christianity in both Questions 2a and 2b. Christianity is not monolithic and many things that some Christians believe were not believed by Martin Luther King. He identifies some of these differences himself in the text.

# 2004 Assessment Report



## Question 3a

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	70	10	20	<b>0.5</b>

Moral philosophy should be realistic (that is, based on a realistic account of human nature) and it should recommend a worthy ideal.

Many students offered summaries of other claims by Murdoch. This is a case where a very precise knowledge of the text was called for. Since this is Murdoch's starting point, it should be given due attention.

## Questions 3bi. and bii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	68	15	10	7	<b>0.6</b>

### 3bi.

- Kantian man is essentially a free rational agent

Alternatively:

- our age assumes that the will is the source of value; that is, things have value only because human beings decide that they do.

### 3bii.

Murdoch's criticism is that:

- this denies that emotions are an essential aspect of human nature and that emotions are connected to morality
- this is based on an unrealistic conception of humans as free rational agents rather than as physical and emotional beings
- it also fails to acknowledge our failings, especially our selfishness.

Students who offered one of these critiques with some further development also received two marks for Question 3bii.

A significant number of students had little or no idea what is meant by 'Kantian man'. Again, this is a very central notion of Murdoch and an important diagnosis of the moral ills of the present day. It is one of the main reasons this text is read in this course. Many students said that Murdoch criticised Kant on the grounds that he is out of date, which is not true. Kant is not necessarily wrong or irrelevant simply because he lived a couple of hundred years ago.

The following is an actual student response to Question 3 that received full marks:

### Question 3a

*Realistic*

*Aim to make us better.*

### Question 3bi.

*That we are living in an age that exalts the solitary omnipotent will.*

### Question 3bii.

*The ego – the will – is much too deceptive and selfish to use as a moral compass. We need to use something pure, something refined; the will is not this thing. States of consciousness need to be emphasised.*

This response is not perfect – the response to Question 3bii is a little too telegraphic and lacking in unity – however, it is clear that the student had an understanding of the question and what Murdoch says about Kant. It is a nicely succinct answer. These qualities are what assessors look for in Section A.

## Question 4a

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	73	14	13	<b>0.4</b>

- its complexity was increasing far more rapidly than its accuracy
- it was far too cumbersome a theory and after centuries of refinement, there was little hope that further refinements would produce a workable theory
- correcting one problem with the theory would cause problems somewhere else.

Either of these answers (or variants of them) would have received full marks. Simply saying that 'there were anomalies' received one mark. This is true and on the right track, but a central part of Kuhn's thesis is that **every** theory faces anomalies. Ptolemy's theory was worse off than that.

# 2004 Assessment Report



## Question 4b

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	65	13	9	13	0.7

There is no direction to either science or evolution. This is controversial because he claims that science does not progress towards the truth.

Students received one mark for noting that Darwinian evolution doesn't proceed according to a plan, a further mark for noting that Kuhn claims that scientific 'progress' doesn't advance towards the truth and a further mark for a clear connection between these two points.

Many students radically misunderstood Kuhn and Darwin, suggesting that 'just as evolution progresses towards its goal – humanity – so too science progresses towards the truth.' This is not correct.

The following is an outstanding actual student response to this question:

*Kuhn proposes that like Darwin's evolution, scientific development is not goal oriented. Science, like any species of animal, evolves out of immediate necessity in order to adapt to changing circumstances, not because it is moving closer to the attainment of objective knowledge.*

## Question 5a

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	39	26	35	1.0

- another (rival) theory might be able to explain the observation or event equally well. For example, Newton's theory of gravitation can explain a falling apple but so can Einstein's. Hence, the ability to explain dropping apples does not help us to decide between their theories
- a theory may be so broad as to account for any observation. It is regarded as true whatever happens. For example, Marx's theory gives the same explanation whether the revolution happens or not
- looking for another white swan is not a test of the theory that 'all swans are white'. Black swans should be looked for. If no black swans are found, that supports the theory – for the time being.

These are rather different answers but all are in the spirit of Popper. Examples could be chosen from the text or not. Students received one mark for outlining the problem and one mark for an example. They did not need to separate the problem and the example nor were they asked to use that example, although the sample answers above do actually do that.

A number of students said things like 'Freud's theory is too holistic'. This use of the word 'holistic' is either vague and meaningless or wrong – 'holistic' does not mean 'can explain anything'.

The following is an excellent and very thorough student response:

*Popper proposes that the problem with explanatory power is that a theory may be made so broad as to account for or explain any given scenario or circumstance. This means that the theory is not scientific because the criteria for a scientific theory (as opposed to a pseudo-scientific theory) is that it is testable and has the capacity to be disproven. For example, Freud's psychoanalytic theory can be used to explain any type of human behaviour. It is neither testable nor refutable.*

## Question 5b

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	49	19	18	14	1.0

Confirmations should count only if they are the result of risky predictions (that is, if unenlightened by the theory in question, we should have expected an event which was incompatible with the theory), or if they are the result of a genuine test of the theory (that is, they were the result of a serious but unsuccessful attempt to falsify the theory).

For example, Einstein's General Theory of Relativity predicted that the light from stars would be bent around heavy objects like the sun. This was very risky as it went against Newton's theory and common sense. Eddington observed a solar eclipse and found that Einstein's prediction was accurate. This was a genuine test – if it had turned out differently the theory would have been abandoned.

Students received one mark for each point (riskiness and genuineness) and one mark for their use of the theory. In this case, students were explicitly asked to use the example so merely mentioning the example was insufficient for full marks.



## Section B – Extended text response short answer questions

This section required students to demonstrate more depth of understanding than Section A, but essay length responses were not required.

### Question 1ai.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	25	16	26	13	20	1.9

Students could select from two of the following objections:

- a life of unrestrained desire is like a person trying to keep a leaky jar full, or like a ‘gully bird’
- Callicles’ ideal life is like a man who is perpetually scratching an itch that won’t go away
- Callicles’ view commits him to the belief that the catamite is living well – like any ancient Athenian, Callicles is reluctant to agree with this claim
- Socrates’ ‘argument from opposites’ attempts to show that pleasure and the good are not the same
- Callicles’ position entails that, if anything, bad people are better than good people; for example, a coward experiences more pleasure than a brave person when the enemy retreats and therefore in Callicles’ view must be a better person.

There were two marks for each objection the student offered; one mark if the student simply identified the objection and a further mark if they offered some elaboration. The elaboration needed to explain how the argument or analogy constituted an objection to Callicles’ view. For instance, simply saying, ‘the argument for opposites’ would get one mark. To receive the further mark, students needed to point out that this is an argument that concludes that pleasure and good are not the same and they needed to outline the argument in some form. Again, a student would have gained one mark for writing the leaky jars metaphor, and a further mark for elaborating on that metaphor. A response that told what Socrates believed was not an adequate explanation of how Socrates refuted Callicles. Student needed to know what Socrates actually said **in response to Callicles**.

Note that Socrates does not criticise a life of self-indulgence on the grounds that it is selfish, because he is talking to a man who would not think that to be a criticism.

### Question 1aii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	34	13	15	15	10	8	5	2.0

Students could have chosen one of the following evaluations:

- on the metaphors – students could have conducted their own critique of the metaphor or reviewed Callicles’ own responses (*Gorgias* 494b). Students might also have offered some critique of the use of metaphor by both Socrates and Callicles: Socrates basically says ‘You are like a gully bird’; Callicles says ‘You are like a stone’. Where could the argument go from there? It had come down to name calling
- on the catamite – this argument only works for those who share ancient Greek prejudices against passive homosexuality and/or a life of sexual licence
- on the argument from opposites – there are a number of potential critiques of this argument: the aptness of analogy between hunger and thirst and other kinds of desire; whether all desires are necessarily forms of pain; does one really cease to take pleasure in a drink when the thirst has gone away?
- on the argument that bad people are better than good – students might have questioned whether Callicles was really committed to the notion that there is a direct correlation between the amount of pleasure one is experiencing and how good one is.

Marks were awarded as follows: one mark for attempting to evaluate, three marks for the quality of the evaluation, one mark for the persuasiveness of the evaluation and one mark for expression. Note that an evaluation of a Socratic objection is not always a matter of evaluating premises. An analogy has no premises. If a student had identified no premises, then it would be odd for that student then to say that the argument is sound because the premises are sound. Premises are not sound or unsound; they are true or false.

### Question 1b

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	10	9	20	27	20	14	2.8

There was any number of legitimate ways that a student might have addressed this question, so long as they actually offered an answer to the question and they were responding to Callicles’ views. In Section B, there is not always a



presumption that the last part of a question relates to the quote. Hence, a student might have chosen any aspect of Callicles' beliefs – not only his views about pleasure but also his views about politics. Students received one mark if they made some attempt to voice their own opinion, two marks for content (understanding and responding to Callicles' views) and two marks for clarity of expression and persuasiveness.

The following is an actual student response:

*Callicles' good life involves satisfying pleasures and dominating the weak and having more than them. With today's materialist society, his view on pleasure could be useful. However, I would feel that there is a need to discriminate between pleasures. Drugs can be pleasurable but they can ruin you. However, his idea of dominating the weak would not work in our democratic society. The 'weak' populace could easily vote the naturally gifted out of office. Therefore, I find the majority of Callicles' good life not to be useful in today's society.*

This student made it abundantly clear that he or she was offering his or her own views – 'I would feel...' and 'I find...' for which they received one mark. Further, the evaluation was an apt response to Callicles' views, therefore another two marks were awarded. The response is clear and fairly persuasive, although it is vague about how Callicles' views on pleasure are 'useful', and the point about democracy could have been fleshed out a little further; one mark was given for this area. This student therefore received a total of four marks out of five.

#### Question 2a

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	39	22	39	1.0

A life devoted to contemplating the truth.

Many students failed to note that this quotation was drawn from Book X of Aristotle's *Ethics*. Hence, the theme is contemplation or *theoria*. Since this was one question where students were explicitly directed to stay focused on the quotation, this caused considerable problems. In Section B, students should always think about the context of the quotation in relation to the whole text.

#### Question 2bi.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	41	10	17	9	9	5	9	1.8

Students needed to choose three of the following arguments from Book X:

- contemplation is the activity of the highest part of us, namely reason
- it is the most continuous activity
- philosophical wisdom is the pleasantest of virtuous activities; it is more pleasant to know than to enquire
- it is the most self-sufficient: for practical virtues, like justice and courage, you need other people; not so for contemplation
- contemplation alone is loved for its own sake; that is, it is a Final Good
- happiness depends upon leisure, which is the goal of being busy, but the practical virtues are unpleasurably
- that which is proper to each thing is what is best for it. Reason is proper to us. Therefore the use of the reason is the best for us
- it is the most divine activity.

Students received one mark for identifying each argument clearly and a further mark for some accurate elaboration.

Many students assumed that this was a repeat of the question from the 2003 examination about the role of function in Aristotle's account of the good life. This may have been a consequence of failing to note that this question was about Book X. Only one of the above arguments (the final one of the list) bears any similarity to the argument in Book I, hence a maximum of two marks were awarded for offering the argument about function. Some students offered the series of arguments from Book I against other candidates for the good life: a life of pleasure, of honour, of virtue or of wealth. They were given up to three marks for such an answer. Arguing that the good life is **not** a life of pleasure, honour, virtue or wealth does not constitute an argument that the good life **is** the life of the intellect. Nor does Aristotle represent it that way in Book I. He simply says that he is postponing the question about the life of contemplation until later, that is, Book X.



**Question 2bii.**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	44	10	11	10	12	5	5	3	1.8

The following is a selection of evaluations that students might have offered:

- to the claim that it is the activity of the highest part: does contemplation really involve the exercise of reason?; we do not get a very clear idea of what it involves – is it simply knowing or enquiring?
- to the claim that it is the most continuous: the truth of this claim can be questioned, perhaps using examples drawn for everyday life; how many of us are capable of this sort of sustained contemplation?
- to the claim that it is the most pleasant: is this claim true, or for whom is it true?
- to the claim that it is the most self-sufficient: is self-sufficiency really so essential? Aristotle himself argues that we are essentially social beings (Book I) and that friends play an important role in the good life (Books 8 and 9)
- to the claim that it alone is loved for its own sake: this seems like a very contentious claim. Students might have offered examples of other things loved for their own sake, or they might have questioned whether contemplation is actually loved for its own sake
- to the claim that it depends on leisure: it is not clear what is meant by ‘depends on leisure’. The context seems to suggest that it means ‘aims at’ but this contradicts the claim that it is loved for its own sake
- to the claim that it is the exercise of our proper function: there is a wide range of objections to the view that reason is our ‘proper function’ and indeed to any talk of humans having function
- to the claim that it is the most divine activity: this flies in the face of the previous argument. Why should the divinity of a way of life commend it to human beings?

Students received one mark for attempting to evaluate Aristotle’s argument(s), two marks for the content of each evaluation and two marks for the clarity and expression of their response, making a total of seven marks.

Students needed to adequately understand the question and the context of the quotation. Overall, this question was not well answered.

**Question 3a**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	19	18	30	20	13	1.9

A philosopher is often determined not to be deceived. Philosophy is therefore driven by ‘the will to truth’. Hence, philosophy involves offering an ideal against which to judge reality, for instance, the ideal that truth-seeking is always a good thing. That is to say that philosophy offers a mistrust of the way things are (both in a positive and negative sense).

Some students took Nietzsche to be making a positive judgement about philosophy in this quotation; others took the opposite line. In this quotation, Nietzsche’s attitude is unclear and a plausible response in either vein was accepted.

Assessors gave some credit for answers along the lines that philosophy involves doubting and mistrusting traditional ideas and institutions. Up to three marks were awarded for the accuracy of the response and one mark for clarity of expression.

**Questions 3bi. and bii.**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	12	9	19	22	20	12	6	2.8

Students could interpret this question in one of two ways. ‘Nietzsche’s view of the world’ could mean ‘what Nietzsche means by ‘the world’ in the above quotation’ or ‘Nietzsche’s overall world-view’. Given that students were not explicitly asked to relate this question to the quotation, either of these interpretations was legitimate, and there was a very wide variety of possible answers. Referring to the quotation does make the question more manageable. Here is a basic response using the first interpretation:

- explanation: Nietzsche thinks that the world is what it is. He believes that this world, including the world of human action and motivations, is amoral. Any philosophy that judges the world against any ideal is ‘life-hating’ or ‘world-denying’. Religions, political movements and philosophies all tend to be world-denying in this sense
- evaluation: there is some truth to the idea that philosophy can be world-denying. Philosophy can encourage us to devalue some aspects of human nature. It can also encourage us to have unrealistic ideals. However, it is implausible to suggest that we live without any ideals. Philosophy has a role in seeing how things are and





forming an idea of how things should be. As Iris Murdoch suggests, moral philosophy should be both realistic and idealistic. Even Nietzsche himself thinks that current human nature needs to be 'overcome'

- Martin Luther King's response: King would agree with Nietzsche that we are rational and free to choose. He would also agree that there are limits to our rationality. Our choices are often determined by something other than reason. He would even agree that religion can be life-hating. For instance, there has been a tendency among Christians to fear or even hate the body. However, he does not think that religion is necessarily life-hating. We should have ideals that help us to choose between good and evil.

Assessors awarded a maximum of two marks for the explanation, two marks for the evaluation and two marks for King's response. Obviously there was any number of possible evaluations that students could offer. Rather than refer to Murdoch and Nietzsche, a student taking this line might have offered a concrete example. This is to be encouraged. In discussing King, there are other points of agreement and disagreement. King also agrees with Nietzsche that there is something wrong with Western civilisation.

Many students failed to provide any evaluation at all, including a number of students who offered outstanding answers to the first and third parts of the question.

A range of other acceptable answers included:

- Nietzsche believes that there is no God – 'God is dead'. This means that we have to make our own values
- Nietzsche believes that faith in any belief system, religious or secular, is a sign of weakness of will. Humans ought to strive to live without 'certainty'
- in our world, people revere the holy man more than the sage. This is because the holy man acts as a kind of scapegoat, suffering on behalf of the people. People are afraid of taking responsibility for themselves.

Any of these might receive full marks with a small amount of elaboration and some relevant evaluation.

#### Questions 3ci. and 3cii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	22	11	19	20	17	11	2.3

#### 3ci.

There was also a wide range of possible answers to this question, including the following:

- the fact that 'God is dead' throws into doubt 'our entire European morality'. Western (Judaeo-Christian) morality is the expression of a slave morality. That is to say that this morality is basically a tool used by the weak and uncreative to suppress the strong and creative. Guilt is used as a means of social control. Hence we must question our morality
- Nietzsche believes that questioning our morality might lead to improvements in our value system – the transvaluation of values. This is a positive sense in which morality is a problem for Nietzsche
- morality has often been studied by passionless men who do not experience morality as a problem. Many of these men have assumed morality to be an entirely rational system rather than an expression of emotional, visceral needs. What is needed is a 'genealogy of morals' – a study of the social, psychological and historical sources of our moral responses and commitments
- Nietzsche claims that the European disguises himself behind morality in order to hide the naked beast beneath.

Students might well have combined elements of all of these responses. There were a total of three marks available for this section.

#### 3cii.

There was a great deal that could be said here. A selection of possible themes includes:

- at the heart of morality is the acceptance of reality, an affirmation of human nature
- a good life consists of living joyously with a lack of certainty
- a good life must be conceived individualistically. A morality must work for the individual
- there seems to be no room for compassion.

There were two marks available for this section. While there was room here for the student to respond personally to Nietzsche's views on morality, this must have been a response to what Nietzsche was actually saying rather than a caricature. Many students seemed to have demonised Nietzsche as a proto-Nazi or lionised him as a proto-hippy. Neither of these views bears much scrutiny.

# 2004 Assessment Report



## Question 4ai. and aii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	13	10	18	20	21	18	2.8

1. assume, for the sake of argument, that we have a nature
2. a nature implies a function
3. a function implies a purpose
4. a purpose implies an intention
5. therefore, for humans to have a nature, there would have to have been an artificer of humans, that is, a God
6. but there is no God
7. therefore there is no human nature.

In order to be sound, an argument must be valid and all the premises must be true. As set out above, the argument does seem valid but there are some problems with some of the premises. Clearly Aristotle would agree with premise 2, but does the idea of a nature really imply that of a function? There is also an ambiguity in the concept 'purpose'. It might simply mean 'function', which means that 'my heart has a purpose' means exactly the same thing as 'my heart has a function'. This makes premise 3 true, but threatens the plausibility of premise 4. Purpose/function does not always imply an intention – think of the heart. However if 'purpose' is read as 'intention', premise 3 looks false. Again, consider the human heart. It has a function – pumping blood – but does this imply that it was intended to pump blood? Not if you are an atheist like Sartre. Finally, there are also problems with premise 5. Being created by God is not the only way of having a 'fixed and given human nature'. That might have been achieved by evolution, for example. In fact, Sartre himself suggests that there is a common 'human condition'. It seems that this concept does not differ substantially from what is understood as 'human nature'. For all of these reasons, Sartre's argument does not seem to be sound.

Two marks were available for the outline and three marks for the evaluation of soundness.

Looking first at the outline of the argument, students might legitimately have run a few of these steps together. Even though the above format (or a flow chart) is recommended, this is one argument that could read quite well in prose form. Here is a very succinct prose answer:

*If there is no God, then our nature is not imposed from outside. Therefore humans must create themselves, i.e., our existence precedes our essence, which is to say that we have no 'fixed or given' nature.*

Turning to the evaluation, the evaluation above is rather thorough and students could have received full marks with only part of this answer. In particular, an answer could have focused entirely on premise 5. Many students opted for this. Of course, a student might also have objected to premise 6 – there is no God. After all, Sartre offers no argument for this claim.

## Questions 4bi. and bii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	39	10	16	16	12	7	1.7

- determinism is false
- even if there is no common human nature, we could be determined by our nature and/or nurture (evolution and conditioning) or simply by our circumstances.

There were obviously various ways of making these points.

Many students seemed unfamiliar with the concept of 'determinism'. This is a fundamental philosophical concept, especially for Sartre.

## Questions 4ci. and cii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	17	18	23	17	16	9	2.2

- Whenever we make a choice, thereby creating ourselves as we wish to be, we are creating an image of man as he believes he ought to be. To make a choice is to affirm the value of what is chosen. We always choose what is better and hence, by our choice, we are saying that the thing chosen is better. And 'nothing can be better for us unless it is better for all'.



- Sartre suggests that in choosing to marry, I am choosing for all. I am affirming the universal validity of this way of life. In making this choice, I am guided by nothing external, neither by God nor human nature. In this respect, I am like the military commander who must make a life or death decision with no certainty that I have chosen the better path. This is an anguished choice because I am committing men to their deaths. Similarly, by choosing marriage, I am ‘committing humanity as a whole to the practice of monogamy’. How can this analogy be evaluated? It seems rather melodramatic and silly. When I choose to marry, I am choosing for myself and for my chosen partner. That’s all. If my neighbour does not marry, that is o.k. with me. Why does my choice condemn her? This makes no sense to me.

The following is an acceptable alternative response to 4ci:

*Since there is such a thing as the human condition, all my attempts to cope with this condition are of interest to other humans. They are responses to a common set of problems about how to live.*

Marks were allocated as follows: part i. received up to two marks and part ii. up to three marks. Because students found part ii. especially challenging, students were awarded two marks if they were able to identify the analogy and one mark for evaluating it. Note that Sartre does **not** claim that we have to think about the impact of our actions on others.

#### Question 5a

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	18	8	12	22	23	17	2.6

According to Murdoch, humans are naturally selfish. This selfishness distorts our perception of reality (and is presumably a bad thing in itself). Hence we need some means of ‘unselfing’. The experience of natural beauty and the appreciation of (good) art are two means of ‘unselfing’. They give us a glimpse of the world undistorted by the ‘fat, relentless ego’. An intellectual discipline, such as learning a language, can perform the same function. It can ‘stretch the imagination, enlarge the vision and strengthen judgement’. Hence, both art and intellectual discipline can train us in virtue.

In order to achieve full marks, students needed to identify both the role and importance of art and intellectual discipline, although they did not need to separate these two things. Marks were awarded as follows: two marks each for ‘role’ and ‘importance’ and one further mark for clarity of expression. Many students did extremely well in this question, while many others seemed to have little acquaintance with Murdoch’s views.

#### Question 5b

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	25	12	17	17	16	13	2.1

According to Murdoch, the Good is not the product of our wills (or choices) as per the Kantian tradition. We do not choose what is and what is not good. Good is something that we discover and respond to. It is transcendent, rather like Plato’s Forms. This is a refreshing account of the Good. It does not seem plausible that murder is bad or that Mozart’s music is beautiful or that compassion is good simply because someone (who?) decided that they were. People **find** these things beautiful if they have the sensitivity, there is little choice in the matter.

Students needed to be very careful that they did not simply repeat or paraphrase what they had said in the previous question. Obviously they need not have a positive evaluation of Murdoch, but they needed to evaluate Murdoch’s actual views and not a caricature of those views. Also, it is beside the point to say that she never offers an argument for her claims. That is not the kind of philosophy that she is doing. A much better question to ask is, ‘do her claims ring true?’

#### Questions 5ci. and cii.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	27	10	12	16	15	20	2.3

Murdoch sees religion as potentially a training in virtue. Prayer and contemplation can put people in touch with the Good. Hence, Murdoch concedes that religious belief can be a focus of self-deception or ‘mere consolation’ (as she puts it); she sees the religious impulse as a positive thing. Nietzsche would disagree with this. For him, religion is always an expression of weakness of will. Furthermore, Nietzsche would have little time for Murdoch’s idea that ‘unselfing’ is a good thing – that would be a kind of life-hating. He might well agree with her that religious practice can help do this, but for him that would be a further criticism. He would also make no sense of the idea that any practice can bring people to see things as they really are.



This is a rather comprehensive reply. In order to achieve full marks, students need not have touched on all of these points. However, when comparing two thinkers it is always good to identify points of both agreement and disagreement. Note that Murdoch does **not** say that religion is a moral guide, helping people to decide right from wrong.

### Section C – Essay

Question Chosen	0	1	2	3
%	4	10	59	27

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	12	11	9	13	12	14	11	8	6	3	1	3.9

A philosophy essay is an essay and must be structured as such. It is highly unlikely that a satisfactory essay will consist of a series of one-sentence paragraphs. Nor should it consist of one long paragraph. All essays were assessed on the following criteria:

#### 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 was 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.  
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 were given.



- 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

This was a very open-ended question. Students could draw on any of the philosophers considered in Unit 4. They needed to explain the relationship between mind and knowledge in the thinking of their chosen philosopher and to consider the impact of their ideas on one or two contemporary issues.

The following is a list of a few of the wide range of possible approaches to this question:

- in Plato, questions about knowledge and the mind are central. Students could explore the theory of the forms and whether this theory has anything to say today
- Cartesian Dualism raises problems about our knowledge of the physical world. If mind and body are so distinct, how do they interact? This is the so-called problem of interactionism
- can a materialist (à la Armstrong), who believes that the mind is just an evolved natural system, be sure it is capable of knowing reality? This question might have led students to Kuhn's theory of science
- what are the implications of physicalism for free will and responsibility? Having explored the views of Armstrong or Turing, students might have considered the ethical consequences of seeing the mind as a biological machine
- can science provide us with knowledge? Such essays might explore the views of Popper, Kuhn, or even Plato
- can science provide knowledge of the mind? Such essays might explore the views of Armstrong or of Kuhn
- students might have explored Turing's view on machines and considered the ethical consequences of this view. If machines can think (and therefore know), should they be accorded moral rights?
- in relation to Descartes or Turing, students might have explored the question of whether we can know that animals (or machines) have minds or indeed whether we can know that anyone else has a mind.

With such an open-ended question, there is ample opportunity for strong students to shine but also many pitfalls for the less confident. A number of students wrote extremely well, but the most common problem with this question was the failure to produce a unified essay. It was up to the student to identify a link between knowledge and mind as discussed by one of the philosophers under study, and up to the student to provide an appropriate structure for their essay. A good strategy for such an open-ended question is for the student to identify a sub-question that she or he intends to tackle. This is modelled in some of the above solution pathways.



### Question 2

Descartes offers two basic arguments to distinguish animals from humans:

- humans have and animals lack language
- animals are not rational. That is, their actions are determined purely by 'the disposition of their organs'.

Possible evaluations of these arguments include:

- language: students could question the necessary link between language and reason. Language implies reason, but does the lack of language really imply the lack of reason? Surely there are other manifestations of reason than the use of language. Then again, it is far from clear that all animals are incapable of language. Many students wisely employed examples at this point, most commonly, Coco the gorilla
- lack of rationality: Descartes' arguments that animals lack reason assume that humans do not operate purely 'by the dispositions of their organs'. Certainly humans are more adaptive to circumstance than most other animals, but surely there are limits. Human reason is hardly able to cope with every possible contingency. This suggests that the difference between humans and animals is more a difference of degree than of kind.

Implications for the treatment of animals:

- some claim that Descartes' arguments imply that animals do not suffer because they lack reason and therefore consciousness, hence we may freely treat them as we wish
- reason gives humans superiority over the animals so that our interests outweigh theirs. Hence we are free to inflict suffering on them if we might benefit from their suffering; for example, through animal experimentation
- the difference in status has no moral implications; it is not reason that makes humans worthy of moral regard but the capacity for pain and suffering
- the inferiority of animals means that humans have a duty to look after them.

Many students wrote very well on this topic. In fact, even many whose work was poorly structured and lacking in fluency demonstrated a clear understanding of the requirements of the question. They made distinct attempts to set out one of Descartes' arguments, evaluate it and consider the consequences of Descartes' view for the treatment of animals. However there were a number of problems with the way students tackled this essay:

- some students, even many who wrote well, failed to address all aspects of the question. In particular, many did not consider the consequences for the treatment of animals
- many students wrote as though they believe that identifying Descartes as a dualist **explains** his views on mind and body: 'Because Descartes is a dualist, he thinks mind and body are separate'. Being a dualist is not a system of beliefs that one subscribes to, like Catholicism or Freemasonry. Rather, it is a shorthand description of a particular belief one has. Descartes is a dualist because he thinks mind and body are separate. Students needed to emphasise his reasons for being a dualist
- many other students claimed that Descartes' views depend on his religious beliefs. Christian belief does not necessarily imply dualism. Hence it cannot be claimed that his dualism springs straight from his Christianity. This is not his own account of his reasoning. Studying philosophy involves taking a thinker's arguments seriously and addressing them
- Descartes does not justify killing or maiming animals. He says nothing about this. Students must better distinguish the views of a philosopher and the alleged consequences of these views. Obviously they must also justify the claim that these are the consequences of the theory
- few students seemed willing to argue that even if Descartes is right about animals, humans should still treat animals with respect
- it is not very plausible, as many students suggested, that animal experimenters are urged on by Descartes. If there is a link between Descartes' views and animal experimentation, it needs to be explained and not merely asserted.

### Question 3

#### Popper

His theory:

- Popper rejects induction as 'the scientific method'. Students needed to give some account of induction
- science differs from pseudo-science and from metaphysics not by confirmability (since almost any theory has some confirmations) but by its falsifiability. Irrefutability is not a virtue, but a vice in scientific theories
- astrology does not make falsifiable predictions and so is non-scientific. This also applies to Marx's theory of history and the psychological theories of Adler and Freud
- being unscientific is not the same as being false. Freud, for example, may well be right, but his theory is not scientific. By the same token, being scientific is not the same as being true



- a theory may be saved from falsification by vagueness, reinterpretation or *ad hoc* additions, but only at the cost of its scientific status. Again, examples would help here.

Some critical questions:

- if a useful theory **appears** to be falsified by a counter-instance, should it simply be rejected? Doesn't the weight of confirming instances count in its favour?
- How do we arrive at theories in the first place? Doesn't induction have a role here?

Implications of this view for the possibility of scientific knowledge:

- since it is always possible that a falsification is just around the corner, can we ever say that it is true?
- Popper seems to be suggesting that it is possible to know that a particular claim is true but not that a universal claim or theory is true – we can only know when such a claim is false.

### Kuhn

His theory:

- ordinary or 'normal science' takes place within a 'paradigm', that is to say it is not merely a matter of theories but an interconnected set of assumptions, techniques, rules of conduct and institutions. This needed to be explained with reference to examples
- when the paradigm continually struggles to solve problems, this can provoke a crisis. A crisis is likely to lead to the replacement of the old paradigm with a new one; for example, Newtonian physics was replaced by Einsteinian relativity, Ptolemaic astronomy by Copernican. This is called a paradigm shift. Again examples would help to explain the point
- a consensus (about the current paradigm) is fundamental to the scientific community and is a product of the scientific education and the closed character of the scientific community
- this consensus also explains why science seems to make progress. During a period of normal science, scientists are taught to regard the current paradigm as superior to the old one. A paradigm tells the scientist what problems are worth solving and what counts as a good solution
- there are never any rationally compelling reasons to prefer one paradigm over another. The most we can say is that one theory is more successful than another in a given social environment.

Some critical questions:

- Does this theory do justice to the idea that science comes up with theories that might be true?

Implications of this view for the possibility of scientific knowledge:

- there seems to be little room for the idea of scientific knowledge. Theory change is not driven by the way the world is but by the character of the scientific community.

The following is an actual student's essay in response to Question 3:

*Modern science is thought by many to converge on the truth. Yet to what extent does science give us knowledge? In this essay I intend to elucidate and evaluate Thomas Kuhn's account of knowledge and will examine the implication this has for the possibility of absolute truth in science. While science may converge on the truth it seems we cannot be certain in this conviction.*

*Modern science propounds a purely Physicalist account of the universe. Many believe that one day science will provide us with absolute knowledge. This term 'knowledge' can be a slippery one. In Plato's formation, knowledge is 'justified true belief'. Yet can we ever be fully justified in believing that science provides us with knowledge?*

*Thomas Kuhn in his paper, 'The Structure of Scientific Revolution', rejects the notion that science carries us closer to the truth. While David Armstrong believes that consensus among scientific communities shows convergences on the truth, Kuhn claims that this consensus is a cause, not an effect of science. Rather, he believes that the apparent 'progress' that science shows is due to a shared 'paradigm'. As scientific communities all have similar training, they share the same convictions of how a problem should be tackled; the scientific method. As they do not have to continually establish 'first-principles', any new theory must comply with these. Also, the scientific community are insulated (in scholarly journals, etc) and are hence only internally judged.*

*Kuhn believes science is structured in a way such that a new theory will only be accepted if a 'crisis' is in progress. Once a theory becomes socially acceptable and there are no problems with it, a time of 'normal science' resumes. Kuhn refers to Lavoisier's phlogiston theory being surpassed by a new one – the theory of oxygen. Hence, Kuhn believes that science is not progressing towards some absolute truth. This progression simply involves the destruction and subsequent construction of new theories.*

*The descriptive account of science that Kuhn offers seems to be a true one, at least in terms of the reasons behind a shared paradigm. If we accept Kuhn's account of science, it seems that science merely changes internally. As scientific communities define what counts*



*as progress, we can appeal to sociological explanations. However, all of this is nothing but a sociological fact. In fact, Kuhn's view about the nature of science is unsound. Kuhn's claim that science will not provide us with a 'full objective account of the world' does not mean that there is no truth in science at all. The fact that science is successful in manipulating the world (such as building spaceships) and predicting major events (such as eclipses) shows that science is onto something. We do have more knowledge than we had before. After all, it would be ludicrous to claim that we do not understand the workings of the human body better than we did in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. Hence, Kuhn's central claim, that modern science does not tell us anything about the workings of the physical universe, seems to be a misrepresentation of science.*

*There are complications within Kuhn's account of science for the possibility of scientific knowledge as explained above. Although Kuhn does not explicitly discuss the nature of scientific induction, it is extremely pertinent to this examination of the nature of scientific knowledge. Perhaps science is limited by its inductive nature. British Empiricist David Hume warned of our notion of induction. Just because we have observed a phenomenon every time in the past, there is no logical necessity that it must happen again in the future. For example, acid has turned litmus paper red every time in the past. Although it is very, very likely that it will happen again, our knowledge claims must fall short of certainty. This problem is further highlighted by Karl Popper in his paper *Conjectures and Refutations*. Falsifiability is a virtue of scientific theories. So, it seems that our theories can never be proven, only continually sustained. Once again, scientific knowledge must fall short of certainty.*

This is by no means a perfect essay – there is at least one error of fact (Lavoisier was the champion of oxygen and not phlogiston) and some parts of the essay could have been fleshed out further (notably the account of Kuhn's theory). However, assessors were not looking for absolute perfection in an essay written under examination conditions. What they were looking for was a unified essay with a sustained focus on the question that demonstrated a secure grasp on the arguments under consideration. This essay has these qualities. The student summarises what is going to be said and is true to his/her word. He/she stayed focused on Kuhn. Note the way in which the student linked each paragraph with the one before and with the overall line of argument. This essay satisfied all the best descriptors in the criteria and hence achieved close to a perfect score.

Although Question 3 was often done well, a few problems did arise:

- 'paradigm' is a buzzword. Indeed it is something of a buzzword in Kuhn's own work. Hence if you are explaining Kuhn's view, it is not sufficient to throw the buzzword around. There needs to be some explanation. What is a paradigm? Examples can help here
- although many students unquestioningly represented Kuhn as a negative critic of science, this is not how he represents or sees himself. Students need to distinguish carefully between what an author is saying and the student's own response or interpretation of what she or he is saying
- a number of students who attempted this question demonstrated minimal or even erroneous knowledge of the history of science. It is very difficult to explain either theory without reference to examples. Hence, students must be in possession of some historical knowledge.