



GENERAL COMMENTS

For those wishing to use this report in preparation for the future Philosophy examinations, it is important to note that the 2007 Philosophy exam was the last for this version of the study design. This means that the style of subsequent exams will be different to the one discussed here and students and teachers should consult the VCAA website for the current *Philosophy VCE Study Design* and sample examination materials. It should also be noted that the text list has changed in 2008 and some questions on past papers may no longer be relevant.

Overall students performed well on the 2007 exam, although some areas were found to be difficult. Many students had prepared well and demonstrated a thorough knowledge and understanding of the texts and philosophers studied, but a number of students once again squandered time answering more than three questions from Section B. More troubling was the fact that nearly one fifth of students failed to complete anything beyond a rudimentary essay.

Areas of strength and weakness

Strengths

- Many students recognised the need to provide a personal conclusion or opinion when asked to evaluate an argument.
- In general, students tended to provide the appropriate depth of analysis required in the different sections.
- There were far fewer instances of students ‘inventing’ their own question and answering this instead of responding directly to the question posed on the paper.

Weaknesses

- Essay skills are a persistent weakness with many students. It is important for students to make clear arguments, supported by examples, which demonstrate an understanding of the issues involved in the question they select. It is always preferable to provide a sustained and detailed analysis with examples rather than giving disjointed examples drawn from as many authors as possible. Essays are about demonstrating depth of thought and analysis, not simply showing how much a student can remember from each of the texts, nor an occasion to assemble a collection of disjointed feelings the student has about the topic. It could prove useful for students to write preparatory essays based on previous essay questions and obtain feedback from their teachers on how best to improve them. The vast majority of the better essays filled at least three quarters of the available space. It is very difficult for shorter essays to contain sufficient depth to warrant high marks. Lastly, teachers and students are encouraged to use the essay marking scheme included below as an aid in judging the strength of essays.
- As previously mentioned, many students wasted time by answering more than three questions from Section B. This will no longer be an issue in the Philosophy exam, with all questions being compulsory from 2008.
- Although there was an improvement in how students dealt with the instruction to ‘evaluate’, a large number still remained who did not understand that this meant that their answer had to be accompanied by a personal conclusion or opinion in order to obtain all available marks. Even more students misunderstood this to mean ‘describe’ or ‘outline’. An evaluation must include analysis, and a judgement is often merited (that is, validity or soundness) as well as a conclusion made in overall judgement. It may be important to describe or outline exactly what is being analysed, but such an outline by itself is not an evaluation.
- Some students confused a perspective, view, or contention with an argument. Neither perspectives, views, nor contentions are arguments – they are more like the conclusions of an argument. For instance, Popper may contend, or be of the view, that Freud’s theory of repression is pseudo-scientific, but his argument for this relates to the lack of falsifiability of the theory. He uses an argument (about falsification) to support his contention (about repression). It may be helpful for students to instead think of contentions as conclusions.
- For questions seeking comparisons between thinkers (such as Section B, Questions 2b. and 5c. and Section C, Questions 1, 2 and 3), full marks can only be obtained by referring to each of them, not just one.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section A – Short answer questions

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	16	10	15	58	2.1

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1ai.

Socrates' leaky jar metaphor equates full jars with happiness. One man's jars are sound; the other's jars leak and need constant laborious refilling.

1aii.

The first man is like the self-controlled person, who can 'rest easy' not having to pursue pleasures to refill his jar; the second is like the self-indulgent person who must work hard because of his insatiable desires.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	36	21	43	1.1

Any two of:

- a life spent itching and scratching
- the life of the catamite (male prostitute)
- the act of drinking, as it involves simultaneous distress
- foolish behaviour
- cowardly behaviour
- gully bird.

Any of Socrates' relevant examples were acceptable. Examples outside this did not address the specific question and did not receive any marks.

Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	34	18	47	1.1

- Because he has become a weak, sick/sickly, crippled animal with good reasons for being 'tame'.
- Morality serves to disguise the fact that we lack natural animal instincts; that is, we can pretend that morality is the reason we behave 'well' rather than our lack of will.
- It also makes the European appear nobler, more important, more respectable; 'divine'.

Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	26	13	24	36	1.7

Any three of:

- faith
- priests/pastors/philosophers
- scientists
- philosophy
- metaphysical systems
- patriotism
- naturalism
- positivism
- scientism
- any conviction
- truth
- religious belief
- nihilism
- demand for certainty
- martyrdom
- philosophy.

No elaboration was necessary in this response.

Question 3a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	29	23	49	1.2

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The sightseer loves beautiful things, but the philosopher also loves beauty itself; the sightseer lives in a dream-world, but the philosopher lives in the real world; the sightseer settles for beliefs/doxa, but the philosopher wants knowledge; the sightseer seeks entertainment, but the philosopher wants understanding/knowledge.

Question 3b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	50	35	12	4	0.7

- the sun = goodness/truth
- eye/sight/subject = intellect (or understanding or reason)/mind
- the things we see/object = the things we know/mental concepts/thoughts

No elaboration beyond equating the various parts of the metaphor was necessary.

Question 4a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	33	36	31	1.0

4ai.

Turing thought the question was too ambiguous or vague. We can't even be sure other humans think, so for Turing this is a prejudiced/value laden question.

4aai.

'If we set up a version of the Imitation Game with a machine and a person (that is, a Turing Test), could the machine make the interrogator (or judge) believe that it was the person?' Alternatively, and more simply, 'Could a machine mimic the behaviour of a thinking person?' 'Can a machine communicate like a human?'

Question 4b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	43	15	13	29	1.3

4bi.

If a computer passed the test, it could not be thinking because it could not appreciate a flower (or a sonnet or a sunset).

Other answers explicitly mentioning the inability of computers to be aware of, or experience, emotions, etc. were also acceptable.

4bii.

Either of:

- if we do not accept that a machine that behaved in relevant ways like a conscious/thinking thing was actually thinking, we would be driven to solipsism, for our reasons for ascribing consciousness to others are behavioural
- we would have to experience the thinking for ourselves to judge whether the computer is conscious, but we could then not expect somebody else to believe us.

Question 5a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	38	22	40	1.0

Either of:

- a self-scanning mechanism in the central nervous system (or brain or even mind)
- consciousness of our own mental state is the scanning of one part of our brain (or CNS) by another or physico-chemical mechanism monitoring other senses.

Question 5b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	40	14	14	32	1.4

It is consistent with his materialism/physicalism; that is, the view that 'man is nothing but a physico-chemical mechanism'.

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Section B – Extended text response short answer questions

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	14	16	17	18	20	14	2.6

Students needed to draw personal conclusions (that is, make a judgement on the validity and/or soundness of the argument and then make an overall judgement in conclusion), provide clear and relevant examples, and elaborate on points along the following lines.

- Every art, etc. may aim at some good or other, but must it be the **same** good in every case, as Aristotle implies? For example, the art of war and the art of diplomacy aim at different goods.
- People acting and inquiring, etc. may always be aiming at something they think good, but is it always **actually** good? For example, the aims of criminals.
- On the positive side, Aristotle goes on to say that the Good is happiness (or *eudaimonia*). Hence, what this argument is saying is that everything we do, we do in order to achieve happiness. When I go to work or school, or when a criminal robs a bank, we both act because we believe it will contribute to our overall happiness.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	27	16	19	19	19	1.8

1bi.

Our function is to be rational/contemplative. Plants live and animals have senses, but only we are rational. We are rational beings, therefore our function is to act rationally. Acting rationally means acting in accordance with virtue (or excellence).

1bii.

Any four of:

- (good) friends
- good luck
- wealth/riches
- political power
- good birth/family background
- good children
- beauty/not being ugly.

No elaboration was required for this question.

Question 1c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	26	17	13	15	10	8	2.3

1ci.

- Carpenters, tanners, flautists, etc. have functions, so man (as such) must have one too.
- Eyes, hands and other parts have functions, so man (the whole) must have one too.

No elaboration was required beyond giving two clear reasons.

1cii.

Following are examples of acceptable points that could be made in evaluation of the above points.

- The parallel is questionable since carpenters, etc. derive their functions from social needs and interests. It is unconvincing to suggest that this is how we acquire our human nature.
- This parallel is also questionable. The functions of the parts are to maintain or promote the operation of the whole. This would suggest that the whole organism must also serve the interests of something distinct from itself.

Students also needed to include a conclusion or personal opinion.

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Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	12	16	17	24	32	2.5

- Epicurus' hedonism means that all good and evil consists of the experience of pleasure and pain. When we are dead, we won't be in a position to experience pleasure or pain. Hence, death (as in being dead) cannot be a bad (or a good) thing. Hence, his views on death **derive from** his hedonism.
- Epicurus' hedonism means that good and bad consists of pleasure and pain. One role for philosophy is to minimise pain. A major source of pain in people's lives is the fear of death. If we accept Epicurus' argument, then a major source of pain has been eliminated from our lives. Hence his views on death **advance** his hedonism.

Full marks were awarded where one or more points were fully elaborated.

Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	3	10	12	16	22	37	3.5

- Epicurus agrees with Callicles' view that the good life is one of pleasure, but while Callicles thinks that the best life is one of 'sensual, self-indulgent freedom', Epicurus – like Socrates – rejects sensual indulgence. Not only does plain fare give as much pleasure as a costly diet, it is safer, as it renders us 'fearless of fortune.'
- Callicles holds (at least initially) that all pleasures are good (and all pain is bad). Socrates holds that some pleasures are bad. Epicurus agrees with Socrates. An apparent pleasure is bad if it leads to greater pain overall (or in the long run) and a pain is actually good if it leads to greater pleasure overall. Further, Epicurus says that sensual indulgence does not even produce a pleasant life at all. This is provided by wisdom, which teaches that we live pleasantly if, and only if, we live 'wisely, honourably, and justly.' This may be compared with Socrates' view that the self-controlled life is happier than the self-indulgent one, just as the man whose precious liquids are in sound jars has an easier life than the man who must keep refilling his leaky jars.
- Epicurus says that by pleasure 'we mean the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul'. Callicles scorns such a 'negative' view, saying that it would mean that there is nothing happier than a stone or a corpse. This is prompted by Socrates' statement that the man with his liquids safely in sound jars 'gives them no further thought'. Interestingly, Socrates does not explicitly repudiate Callicles' jibe about the stone or corpse, but attacks his hedonism on other grounds. It is arguable that Epicurus' view of pleasure as the absence of pain or trouble puts him closer to Socrates than to Callicles.

Full marks were awarded where students stated and supported a conclusion based on the above types of points. They also needed to refer to Epicurus, Socrates and Callicles.

Question 2c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	21	9	11	12	15	15	3.0

Good critical evaluations demonstrated an understanding of Epicurus' hedonism, but the question did not explicitly demand that Epicurus be used as the reference point from which to evaluate: a critical evaluation from a Nietzschean, Sartrean or other perspective was equally acceptable. The following points represent the kind of answers sought.

- For Epicurus, pleasure is the beginning and the end of a good life; without pleasure, the good life is not possible. At first glance this statement appears naïve – how many of us are constantly in what we would call a pleasurable state? However, Epicurus makes a relatively modest claim as to what constitutes pleasure: pleasure is simply the body free from pain and the mind from anxiety.
- Aristotle's version of *eudaimonia*, for example, is only available to those who have claims of good breeding, status and wealth, whereas Epicurus' view opens up the good life to more than just the lucky few. Even so, Epicurus' good life encourages prudence and gratitude: being thankful for what one has. In today's society, where our excesses of consumption may cost us our very lives, this seems to be a most timely philosophy.

Once again, full marks were awarded to answers containing a personal opinion/conclusion based on a sound argument.

Question 3a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	26	20	18	36	1.6

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'Will to truth' is something that even 'we' possess (free thinkers, philosophers). Nietzsche wonders about the basis of this 'will to truth'. Is it the will not to allow oneself to be deceived and/or the will not to deceive? It might be claimed that the 'will to truth' rests upon pragmatic grounds – deceit is harmful and so should be avoided. But this is hardly plausible: deception is not always harmful and untruth is often useful. Hence the 'will to truth' is a **moral** stance: 'I will not deceive, not even myself.' Nietzsche ties this to science being pious.

Question 3b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	27	12	9	9	12	12	2.7

3bi.

- The will to truth can lead us to nihilism; that is, to the denial of all values. And yet, this would be contradictory as it rests upon a judgment about value (see the previous question).
- It also leads us to believe in science and set scientists up as experts.
- It becomes life denying. It offers an ideal of truthfulness which is opposed to reality. Hence, it could be considered to be 'a concealed will to death'.

3bii.

- One alternative would be the life of the *polytropos*, a person who is happy to deceive as the occasion and his or her interests demand (for example, Ulysses).
- Another alternative would be to live a life that does not rest upon any form of faith, a life that is content with uncertainty, a life that dances even on the edge of an abyss.
- Living life like an art form; relying on yourself.

Question 3c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	17	11	12	12	14	18	3.1

- It is morality which holds us to truth, seen as the will to truth and as a means of protecting against deceit, hence casting science as being a moral stance.
- Morality is against 'life, nature and history' – it is a remnant of 'our most enduring lie'. It is a 'problem which is removed from the personal' and is that in which the European is 'dressed up' as a means of escaping or covering up the 'sick, sickly, crippled animal' he has become.

Once again, to receive full marks for this evaluation students needed to draw a conclusion/personal opinion from an argument and make clearly elaborated points. Evaluations need not have been premised on a Nietzschean perspective, but acceptable answers had to refer to Nietzsche's thoughts on morality.

Question 4a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	20	14	14	20	13	7	2.6

4ai.

- It is 'very distressing that God does not exist'.
- 'Even if God did exist, that would change nothing'.

Responses needed to capture Sartre's views, as outlined above. Variations on these themes were also acceptable; for example, man is the centre of the universe; man is condemned to be free; there is no god/*a priori* morality, existence precedes essence.

4aai.

Sartre says that God's non-existence is distressing because we then can't find values 'in a heaven of ideas', and with nothing to cling to we are 'forlorn'. On the other hand, God's existence would change nothing because there is no lawmaker other than man, and Existentialism is an optimistic 'doctrine of action'.

Answers to this question needed to follow from the responses given in part i. above.

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Question 4b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	39	7	8	9	13	24	2.2

4bi.

In choosing what I want to be, I create an image of all people as I think they ought to be; 'I am involving all humanity in monogamy and not merely myself'.

4bii.

Evaluations needed to include a conclusion/personal opinion based upon points such as: choosing what I want is not necessarily choosing what I think I **ought** to do; I may have a desire without any sense of obligation. But even if I think I ought to do X, this does not commit me to thinking that everyone else ought to do it too. Others may be in significantly different circumstances from mine.

Question 4c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	36	14	20	12	18	1.6

4ci.

The officer takes responsibility for an attack and sends a number of men to death. This warrants anguish, but we all have 'total and deep responsibility' for humanity in every choice we make, so we should all experience anguish.

4cii.

Answers needed to include a conclusion/personal opinion based upon a critique of Sartre; for example, even if I agree with Sartre and think others should do as I am doing, this does not mean that I am **coercing** or **obliging** them to do it. I may never even let them know what I think. Alternatively, Sartre's perspective makes too much of everyday choices, most of which do not have the serious consequences for others that the officer's choice has.

Question 5a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	34	17	15	13	9	12	1.8

5ai.

- Murdoch says that in such a view 'the sovereign moral concept is freedom...act, choice, decision, responsibility, independence are emphasised'. The implication is that morality is thereby made trivial and robbed of its ability and right to demand actions contrary to our own interests and desires.
- Murdoch regards this Kantian moral philosophy as resting on a fundamentally unrealistic concept of the human being because it regards humans as essentially rational agents, ignoring the central roles of love, emotions and desires in creating moral value.
- The philosophy neglects a central fact about humans: that we are selfish. This means that the biggest obstacle to our acting well is our own distorted perception of the world (the fat, relentless ego).

5aii.

- Murdoch embraces a metaphysical concept of 'the Good', which is apart from and external to the individual human mind; it is nevertheless our task to 'pierce the veil' and perceive the Good. She uses Plato's metaphor of the sun to explain the Good and although she rejects God, she thinks that religion can provide training in virtue. Prayer and contemplation can put people in touch with the Good.
- From Murdoch's perspective, it is misleading to speak of a creator of value. In the tradition of Plato, she speaks of a metaphysical conception of the Good. This Good is in some way 'objective'. Moral value is part of the fabric of the world. At the very least, it transcends the individual will. In practice, we experience morality as making demands upon us. We need to take steps to get in touch with the moral demands of a situation. This is the role of unselfing. There is no telos so man is the selfish creator of values.

For full marks, answers needed to clearly and accurately explain Murdoch's view, drawing on the information given above.

Question 5b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	35	18	23	12	6	7	1.5

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5bi.

Any two of:

- should a retarded child be kept at home or sent to an institution
- should an elderly relation who is a troublemaker be cared for or asked to go away
- should an unhappy marriage be continued for the sake of the children
- should I leave my family in order to do political work
- should I neglect my family in order to practise my art?

5bii.

Answers to this question needed to clearly and accurately explain Murdoch's notion of unselfing and the role of technae or art in this process.

Question 5c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	30	12	16	15	13	14	2.1

- Murdoch does not explain how the mysterious transcendent Good has authority as to what I should do. Nor does she explain how the Good is connected with relevant features of our moral problems.
- Murdoch's distinction between 'selfishness' and 'unselfishness', and the nature of her examples, may give the impression that one should always put other parties' interests ahead of one's own. But she does not distinguish 'selfishness' from self-interest; it is difficult to be selfless and help others if you do not first look after yourself to some extent.
- King also recognises a transcendent notion of the Good that is not a matter of human will or preference. This needs to 'override' the human will with higher power or authority; the will is prone to selfishness for Murdoch and prone to choosing sin for King.
- For King, this power is that of God, whom Murdoch rejects. Moral failings stem not from a conflict between the 'selfish psyche' and 'reality', but from one between man and God, to whom we must 'return' if we are to reach the Good.
- King's view, like Murdoch's, faces the problem of explaining how the transcendent Good can be the ultimate basis of morality. Are God's commands and prohibitions arbitrary? But, if not, is God basing them on some independent standard of goodness that will thus be the real basis of moral value?

The critical evaluations needed to include an argument drawing on the above types of points, and needed to reach a reasoned conclusion or personal opinion. For full marks, both Murdoch and King needed to be discussed.

Section C – Essay

Question chosen	None	1	2	3
%	6	29	34	30

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

Below are the criteria that were used to mark students' essay responses. Following that, for each of the three questions some key points from the texts are summarised, followed by some important points for discussion. Even good essays were not expected to raise or cover many of these points; however, they are included here as a resource for teachers and students.

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.
- 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 the 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

Plato

- 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) can not be accessible to opinion.
- What then is the domain of opinion? Since opinion falls between knowledge and ignorance or incomprehension, and the field of the former is reality while the field of the latter 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.

Some Discussion Points

- What is **beauty itself**, apart from beautiful sounds and sights? Plato is 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.
- Even if we accept the Forms, why accept that they’re **more real** than the things which participate in them, or indeed that the latter aren’t 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, for example, sense-perception (Do I know there’s a table here?), dreaming (Do I know I’m 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 that Plato admires) may be lovers of knowledge, but does this guarantee that they **have** knowledge? Plato seems to presume, rashly, that it does. A rather different way of seeing the philosophical life is in terms of the **quest** for knowledge or understanding – with maybe some humility as to whether one yet has it.

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 rejoin 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 who are 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.

Some 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 the ability to grasp it is the test of a true philosopher?



Popper

- The question Popper addresses is not that of when a theory is true or acceptable, but that of how science differs from pseudo-science (science often errs and pseudo-science may stumble on the truth).
- Is it a matter of science's empirical (inductive) method? This is not enough, as a pseudo-science such as astrology may appeal to evidence based on observation (horoscopes and biographies).
- In post-Imperial Austria there was much discussion of revolutionary ideas and theories, including Einstein's relativity, Marx's theory of history, Freud's psychoanalysis and Adler's 'individual psychology'. The first was excitingly confirmed by Eddington in 1919, but the other three bothered him, though not because of doubts about their truth or their exactness. Rather, it seemed that they resembled primitive myths rather than science.
- Many people were impressed by these theories' **explanatory power**: whatever happened always confirmed them, and unbelievers' resistance could be explained too. But this apparent strength was, in fact, their weakness.
- The Einsteinian prediction involved a **risk**: if observation shows that the predicted effect is definitely absent, the theory is simply refuted. The other three theories involved no such risk, for they were compatible with the most divergent human behaviour.
- These conclusions may be drawn.
 - Confirmations are easy to find.
 - They should count, however, only if they result from risky predictions.
 - Every 'good' scientific theory prohibits certain things; the more it forbids, the better the theory.
 - If a theory is irrefutable, it's non-scientific; irrefutability is not a virtue of a theory but a vice.
 - Every genuine test of a theory is an attempt to falsify it. Some theories, though, are more testable (take greater risks) than others.
 - Confirming evidence should count only when it results from a genuine test of the theory.
 - Some genuinely testable theories, when found to be false, may be 'rescued' by ad hoc changes. Such rescue of a theory (the conventionalist twist) comes at the price of destroying, or at least lowering, its scientific status.
- To sum up: the criterion of the scientific status of a theory is its falsifiability, or refutability, or testability.
- Einstein's theory of gravitation satisfied this criterion, even if measuring instruments at the time did not allow complete assurance. Astrology failed the test by overlooking unfavourable evidence, and by making predictions so vague as to be irrefutable. Early Marxism often made testable (and falsified) predictions; later Marxists gave the theory a conventionalist twist and made it unscientific. The two psychoanalytic theories were simply untestable: irrefutable. So they were non-scientific and therefore resemble myths. This is not to say that they are meaningless or unimportant; virtually all scientific theories originate from myths (for example, Empedocles' theory of evolution by trial and error).
- For Popper, knowledge is only partially discoverable through a process of showing that previous notions are false, but it, too, must be open to testing and eventual falsifiability. Therefore, knowledge is a flexible dynamic of growth and understanding based upon the testability of each idea and understanding.

Kuhn

- Paradigm change (for example, the Copernican, the Galilean and the Newtonian) occurs in response to a crisis, usually one that has been developing for a long time; the puzzles of normal science have failed to come out as they should. Ptolemy's predictions, for example, were admirably, but not completely, successful. To eliminate discrepancies, many adjustments to his system were made, but its complexity increased far more rapidly than its accuracy.
- The actual timing and other details of the breakdown may be affected by other factors (for example, the social pressure for calendar reform and medieval criticism of Aristotle), but technical breakdown would remain the core of the crisis.
- The new theory has often been anticipated before the crisis, but ignored because there was as yet no crisis. The most complete and most famous anticipation is that of Copernicus by Aristarchus in the third century BC.
- Philosophers of science have often shown that more than one theoretical construction can always be placed on a given collection of data. But it tends not to happen while a paradigm's tools are doing the job; retooling is costly. The significance of crises is that they indicate that it is time to retool.
- Why does science progress in ways that, for example, art, political theory and philosophy do not? This is partly a semantic matter, as we tend to reserve the term 'science' for fields that progress in obvious ways. But the issue can not be merely terminological, or it wouldn't involve so much energy and passion.
- Progress is an attribute of the field of technology as well as of science; this made it relevant to art when the latter was seen primarily in terms of the technology of representation, and it also obscures the profound differences between technology and science.



- Why is progress such a feature of an enterprise with the techniques and goals of science?
- Members of a mature scientific community usually work from a single paradigm or a closely related set of paradigms. Successes, like those of artists aiming at representation, are additions to the group's collective achievement. If there are no competing schools questioning each other's standards and aims, progress seems obvious and assured.
- This is facilitated by the relative insulation of mature scientific communities from the laity and from everyday life. This insulation also leaves scientists free to focus on the problems they think they can solve – unlike, for example, engineers, doctors and many theologians and social scientists who choose their problems in terms of their social importance and thus tend to solve them more rapidly.
- The effects of this insulation from the larger society are intensified by the common educational practice of giving science students (until their final stages) textbooks written specially for them, rather than (as happens more in other fields) exposing them to original works.

Some points for comparative discussion

- Plato was 'pre-science'. Do the two later writers have the benefit of historical hindsight in being able to see the way 'knowledge' has changed over time?
- Popper and Kuhn both consider the distinction between science and non-science. What does each of them say about this, and about its importance?
- How important is truth for each of the three writers?
- Popper sees a gradual growth of understanding, whereas Kuhn thinks of revolutionary waves. Which picture would be closer to Plato's?

Question 2

Descartes

- Descartes says that the body is a machine, though, being made by God, it is more wonderful and 'incomparably better ordered than any machine that can be devised by man'.
- He says that a machine that looks and behaves like a monkey, or any other animal 'lacking reason', might fool us, but artificial men would not, because:
 - while they might be programmed (as we would say) to utter words, they could not conceivably respond meaningfully to whatever we say to them, unlike 'the dullest of men'
 - while they might equal or surpass us in some tasks (for example, arithmetic), they would give themselves away by failing in others for want of enough 'particular organs' to do the job of human reason, our 'universal instrument'.
- Are people like Descartes simply prejudiced against machines as possible thinkers because of what they look like, and what they are made of? The prejudice in favour of 'wet living brains' has since been dubbed 'biochauvinism'.

Turing

- To counter such a prejudice, Turing proposes what he calls the 'imitation game', but which has come to be known as the 'Turing Test'. We communicate with a person and with a computer, both unseen, by way of terminals. The question is: could a computer perform so well that it can not be distinguished from a person?
- He says that by about 2000 they will be doing so well that people will be able to speak of machines thinking.
- He then considers a number of objections (good essays covered at least a couple of these).
- Against Turing's approach, John Searle has argued that there is more to mentality than performance. He uses the now famous parable of the Chinese Room: questions come in; I follow the manual to compose and send out good answers. I perform well, but without understanding.
- But couldn't a computer eventually perform well and have understanding too? Couldn't we have grounds for saying it does? Even if the Turing Test is not enough, what if not only the computer's behaviour but also its circuitry, etc. are comparable to a human brain?

Armstrong

- Armstrong's view of the mind seems to allow the possibility of machine mentality.
- His view is a version of what is now often called 'functionalism': the view that mental states are to be defined by their functions, or the causal relations they have (especially the causing of behaviour).
- This raises the question of what sorts of state could do such causing. States of Cartesian minds? Neural states or states of brains, which are preferred by Armstrong? Or what about electronic states of computers? Functionalists tend to be keen on this possibility, which brings us back to Turing. When, if ever, should we grant that a computer's states were doing the relevant job well enough to warrant being called mental states?



Or does functionalism leave out something important? Is there more to a mental state than its causal job and being made of whatever enables it to do that job?

Some general issues

- Turing concludes, 'We may hope that machines will eventually compete with men in all purely intellectual fields.' Do we really hope so? And what about other fields of the mind?
- If a computer does have mentality, how should we treat it? Would it have rights? Rights to what? Continued existence and power supply? Respect of some sort? Liberty? Liberty to do what? Turing speaks of using punishments and rewards in the teaching of 'child-machines'. Does this make sense?
- If there is doubt, should the computer get the benefit of it? Beware of biochauvinism again?

Question 3

Plato

- The soul is that which makes the body alive; when it possesses a body it 'brings living with it'.
- It cannot 'admit the opposite' of this, and so it is 'un-dying' (that is, immortal).
- Our souls survive our bodies and exist in the next world, where their education and conduct in this life determine whether they are accepted by others and happy in the next.

Suggested comparative and critical points and queries

- The soul may always 'bring life' when it possesses a body, but does it follow that it cannot itself die or cease to operate? Fire brings heat to a body while it is alight, but the fire may go out and the body go cold.
- The claims about the relevance of this life to the next are not argued for.

Descartes

- Reason is unique to humans. It cannot be shared by machines, for although a machine could utter words, and maybe give verbal responses to certain prompts, it could not conceivably give meaningful responses to whatever is said in its presence 'as the dullest of men can do'. It cannot be shared by beasts, for, if it were, they would be able to make themselves understood to us, either verbally or by signs; speech does not require much reason, and they have many organs corresponding to ours.
- The rational soul cannot be derived from matter, but must be specially created. It must be very intimately connected with the body to allow us to have not only movement but feelings and appetites, yet its nature is 'entirely independent of the body' and so it is not bound to die with the latter. Since we can not see any other causes which destroy it, we conclude that it is immortal.

Suggested comparative and critical points and queries

- Regarding machines: see Turing.
- Regarding animals: why should rationality require not only speech of some sort, but speech comprehensible to us? Could animal behaviour of other kinds be alternative indications of rationality?
- Regarding the rational soul: its non-derivability from matter needs to be shown, as Descartes recognises.
 - How can the soul have such an intimate relationship with the body, while having a nature so 'entirely independent' that it can survive it?
 - Does our ignorance of anything which might destroy the soul justify the conclusion that it is indestructible?

Turing

- Having a mind amounts to having certain capacities, which a machine could have (and probably will, he thinks, by the year 2000).
- An appropriate test for a machine's ability to think is its success in the 'imitation game', now known as the Turing Test, in which an 'interrogator' communicates with two unseen parties, a person and a computer, and tries to determine which is which.
- The current limitations on a computer's ability to succeed are merely practical (for example, the programming allowed by their storage capacity).
- Some human minds are 'supercritical' – an idea presented to them may give rise to many others. A supercritical machine is possible.
- The functions of the mind may be like the skins of an onion. Some may think that beneath these (mechanically explainable) functions there is the 'real' mind, but, as we peel away these functions, is there any such mind to be found underneath? If not, the whole mind is mechanical.



Suggested comparative and critical points and queries

- Turing rejects the dualism of Plato and Descartes. The mind is not a thing separate from the body.
- Turing's answers to any one or more of the nine objections could be critically discussed.
- John Searle, with his famous 'Chinese Room' example, argues that there is more to mentality than mere performance. He might be given such full instructions for answering questions in Chinese that he can produce answers indistinguishable from those of a native speaker – but without understanding any Chinese. Similarly, a computer's programmed success in the Turing Test does not mean that it understands anything; that it, that it has mentality. (A possible reply to this could be that the computer's construction, or God's choice, may allow it to have whatever else is required.)
- Even if Turing is wrong and a computer could never literally have thoughts and feelings, does it follow that the mind is a thing or substance as conceived by Plato and Descartes? Perhaps mentality is merely a function of a living brain, and can not survive it. Yet why couldn't a machine have this function too? Should we beware of 'biochauvinism'?

Armstrong

- 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.
- 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.
- Dispositions, in fact, should be understood as states having such causal powers – though the Behaviourists did not want their account of the mind to go behind outward behaviour to inner states.
- 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.

Suggested comparative and critical points and queries

- Like Turing, Armstrong rejects the dualism of Plato and Descartes. But just as Turing does not rule out the idea of God giving computers souls if he has given them to us, Aristotle accepts that dualism is compatible with his essential definition of a mental state.
- 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 on philosophical questions such as the nature of mind? Armstrong himself seems to be advancing a philosophical case here.
- He says that we cannot directly observe the minds of others, but we can directly observe our own minds and 'perceive' what is happening 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?

Sample essay

Below is an example of a better essay which obtained high, but not full, marks. It may be instructive for teachers and students to apply the above marking scheme to this essay to increase their understanding of what is important in writing a good Philosophy essay under examination conditions, and to explore how it might have been improved to obtain full marks.

Question 2

Whether computers could have minds and think for themselves is a heavily discussed philosophical theory. Many say the proof for thinking machines is there to be seen while others believe their lack of complexity in relation to ourselves as humans means they could never have our level of rational thinking. Descartes and Turing both discuss this topic, openly expressing their opinion on the matter. Armstrong on the other hand never openly dismisses the possibility of artificial intelligence (AI) however conclusions can be drawn from his theory of the mind.



Descartes believed that as humans we are above machines. We are able to think and reason and a machine is not. He believed that language was the mark of a mind and without it we are unable to determine whether something can think. Descartes thought that machines were unable to communicate meaningfully with us in conversation and it was this that proved they were unable to think for themselves.

While Descartes' idea was strong there were flaws in his arguments. His major point is that machines are unable to communicate but this is wrong. All computers use text or sounds to communicate with us when we make a mistake and some use sounds or words to indicate problems. This ability to communicate ideas is even further advanced that some humans who either have mental disabilities or lost their speech or hearing. Surely this ability to communicate would be proof enough for Descartes that computers can indeed think. His other idea that language is the maker of a mind is also flawed. When I see a person I have never met before they speak and I attribute a mind to them. We attribute minds to other humans because they look similar and act in similar ways to ourselves. If we saw a machine with similar physical characteristics to ourselves then we would attribute to it a mind. Language can be used to demonstrate the presence of a mind but it is not the determining factor.

Unlike Descartes, Turing believed the concept of a thinking machine was a perfectly valid one. He thought that if a machine was successfully able to pass itself off as a human then it proved the presence of a mind. Turing didn't argue to back up his claims with evidence, but to refute those who argued against him. He outlined nine claims against him then refuted each. He believed that as machines became more powerful they would be able to accomplish more, if it appears to think and we doubt it then we doubt other humans and that while a machine can't replicate the central nervous system (CNS) if it gets the right results there is no problem.

Turing raises some very valid responses to his critics. Machines have already proven their increasing capacities has resulted in more functions being performed. His major point though is that imitation of a human is enough to prove the presence of a mind. This is a valid point because it is the similarities we see in other humans that allows us to attribute to them a mind, not the presence of language. While it appears Turing uses a solipsistic argument saying if we doubt machines then we doubt humans it is a valid point because we can't see the thought processes of others and have to rely on trust. His other refutation about the CNS is also strong. In life different actions can achieve the same results so why worry about whether their process is the same as ours?

Armstrong never talks about the possibility of AI, but his strong belief in science and his picture of the mind suggests he believes it is possible. Armstrong attempts to create an image of the mind as a purely physico-chemical object. To do this Armstrong places his faith in science, saying science is the convergence of learned opinion and we should believe what the learned agree upon, so believe in science. This gives science the credibility Armstrong requires and allows him to describe a physicalist view of the mind.

The strongest aspects of Armstrong argument is its basis in science. In an age where science is being trusted more and more, Armstrong's reliance on sciences 'truth' is the structure on which his arguments lean. If our mind is a purely physico-chemical object then it follows that it can be recreated in this way. If this is possible, intelligence in computers is possible because we replicate the mind, only we use different materials. While Armstrong would admit the current level of technology is not advanced enough it is likely to the future could bring the required advancements to make thinking machines a reality.

In conclusion, I would agree with Armstrong and Turing and reject Descartes' view. I accept the argument that it will soon be possible to produce thinking machines, and that thought doesn't depend on what the underlying materials are, just on what those machines are capable of doing – and if they can act and communicate like a human, then we have no reason to doubt that they really are thinking, just as we take for granted that other humans are thinking as well.