



2013

Philosophy GA 3: Examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2013 Philosophy examination was accessible for all students, but did favour students who had practiced interpreting questions and had extensive knowledge of the views and arguments of philosophers they had studied and how these could be used to create a dialogue.

Areas of strength and weakness

Students must carefully read the questions on the paper before constructing their answer. Too often, answers discussed philosophers or ideas, but did not address the particular question asked.

The 'outline' and 'analysis' questions throughout the paper were largely handled well, but there were instances where students were confused about how arguments from the set texts should be expressed and, more importantly, how they fit into the wider philosophies.

Most students gave their opinion when it was requested, but often provided little justification for their opinions, offering sweeping claims or unsubstantiated statements about the world, rather than well-reasoned and explored support.

When answering questions requiring evaluation, students often outlined or reiterated statements from the question, rather than exploring the implications and limitations of these. Considering how important the process of evaluation is to any philosophical enquiry, it is problematic that so many students still fail to understand what it means. Evaluation can take many forms, but most basically it involves a discussion of the merits, limitations or implications of a viewpoint, or the well-reasoned criticism of one or more fundamental aspects of a philosopher's argument such as a premise or the reasoning used in the argument. Again, in order to criticise a position, students must offer more than their opinion – they must be prepared to support their claims rationally with justified reasoning.

Students must clearly indicate if their answer is continued elsewhere (either in an extra script booklet or in the extra space at the end of the examination booklet). This guarantees that responses are fully examined. An ellipsis (...) is not considered sufficient indication that the remainder of the response is elsewhere.

Several students chose to highlight or underline important aspects of the questions, and some even checked off each aspect to ensure that they had fully addressed the requirements. This was a very effective methodology for developing focused responses.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what the answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding errors resulting in a total less than 100 per cent.

Section A

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	29	18	17	36	1.6

Many students seemed unsure about the distinct differences between Socrates's conception of a knack (something that is done for the sake of pleasure) and an expertise (something that is done for the good).

A number of students failed to carefully read the question, which specifically asked for one of Socrates's examples (such as medicine or philosophy as an expertise, and cooking or poetry as a knack), instead listing seemingly random concepts that might be applied to Socrates's dichotomy.

Students who handled this question well were specific and focused in their responses. They spent little or no time detailing why Socrates generates the distinction, instead exploring what the distinction was and providing the necessary example.

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The following response is clearly expressed and demonstrates a systematic explanation of the requirements of the question.

Socrates describes expertises as studies that aim at and consider the long-term good of their subjects - such expertises tend to be ordered and based on reason, for example, medicine. In contrast, knacks are learnt not by well-ordered and disciplined study, but by habituation - they tend to result in short-term pleasure and do not consider the long-term good and wellbeing of their subjects - for example, cooking, as distinct from medicine, focuses on gratification (pleasure) rather than health (goodness) which is the focus of medicine.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	29	19	22	16	14	1.7

Question 2 required students to evaluate Aristotle's position that young people are not fit to study political science. Students who spent time rephrasing the question and explaining how Aristotle reached this position failed to satisfy the requirements of the question and were awarded few marks.

Students who attempted to evaluate the position often did so without any real understanding of what it means to evaluate an argument. Evaluation requires students to assess the quality of the statement in question. Instead, many students accused Aristotle of being an elitist and failed to provide support for this attack. Such responses received few marks.

Similarly, students appeared to ignore large portions of the quote from Aristotle, overlooking his clarification that those young in spirit should suffer the same restrictions as those young in age. In addition, the vast majority of students failed to discuss Aristotle's critique of passion, or merely stated that passion is often a good thing.

High-scoring responses addressed several aspects of the prompt, and included points such as

- Aristotle's restrictions regarding the study of political science could make it difficult for people with an undeveloped interest to gain access to the discipline
- it is often 'fresh' for those with passionate opinions to partake in reasoned debate for the betterment of the greater populace
- passions that rule unchecked suggest an undeveloped state of character; this is why Aristotle believes that those 'young in spirit' need more time to utilise their unique function to reason and to develop good habits
- youthful inexperience could be explained through Aristotle's suggestion that one must live a whole life, or a complete life, as 'one swallow doesn't make a summer', and without experiences one cannot hope to fully understand the world.

These points would require further focused discussion regarding the student's contention in order to be considered fully developed evaluations.

The following is an example of a strong response.

Aristotle's argument the young are not fit to study political science as they are inexperienced, follow passions and aim at action over knowledge is unsound. Those 'experienced' in life thereby also hold ingrained prejudice and bias that will inevitably affect objective judgement necessary to politics to come to reasoned decisions. As well of this, passion is arguably not a vice but a virtue; love and emotion lured into a subject inspires greater work. Action, also is not necessarily a 'bad' quality for politics, rather than pondering over knowledge action is required in order to provoke change in society (Aristotle himself advocates this.) For instance, merely discussing the issue of climate change at conventions is not as worthwhile as implementing direct reform.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	10	12	26	29	22	2.4

Answers that gave only a very basic outline of Nietzsche's analogy were still eligible to receive marks. Students were required to comment on the relationship between Nietzsche's 'Bird of Prey' and his 'Noble and Slave' conception of morality. Some exploration of the closer details and ideas that Nietzsche wanted to express through his metaphor was integral to a strong response.

Many students still seem to have a limited understanding not only of the details of Nietzsche's metaphor, but also of how the concept fits into and supports his greater philosophical position regarding the generation of morality for mankind. Comments that parallel Nietzsche's worldview with that of a sociopathic hedonist are entirely misled, and

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teachers and students should spend time distinguishing the subtleties of his perspective. Nietzsche's master/noble has no interest in oppression, even if he is often associated with the kind of person who oppresses. The important factor is not the powerful nature of the noble, it is the general indifference to, and disregard of, the whims and interests of those who seek to curtail the noble's natural disposition.

Students who performed well on this question clearly explained Nietzsche's metaphor and had spent time planning how best to detail the example without getting confused or contradicting themselves. The strongest responses also highlighted the role of blame within Nietzsche's analogy and how this relates to his conception of the noble and slave.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Nietzsche uses the metaphor of the lambs and birds of prey to illustrate the relationship between slaves and nobles. The lambs bear a grudge against the birds of prey, and they label them as 'evil', crafting themselves as 'good' in contrast. This reflects the creative deed of resentment which gives rise to slave morality by rejecting the nobles as evil. Furthermore, Nietzsche uses this metaphor to show that it is absurd to ask the birds of prey to be lambs, and so similarly it is absurd to ask strength to be anything other than strength, or such a quantum of force. Hence the way slaves judge the nobles for being the way they are is absurd and founded on a mendacious notion of free will, to become what you are not.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	39	23	19	12	6	1.2

Question 4 required students to evaluate Weil's conception of balance with regard to the notion of the antithetical needs of the soul. The majority of students either outlined whatever they knew of Weil's philosophy or questioned her views on the grounds of unrelated matters.

Students who discussed examples outside of Weil's own antithetical pairs demonstrated a distinct misunderstanding of her conception of balance. Similarly, when students did reference her needs of the soul they often ignored her distinct explanation of what each of the needs meant, instead opting for generic dictionary definitions of the labels. These were overly simplistic and rarely captured important elements of her philosophy.

Many students spent time discussing Aristotle and his conception of the mean without mentioning its relationship with Weil's own interpretation of the concept. Similarly, answers that lingered on Aristotle's philosophy and attempted to declare Weil's position bankrupt on the grounds that it was different generally failed to explain why difference necessitated a position of weakness.

Students who focused on the difficulty of finding a genuinely balanced state that satisfied antithetical needs were on the right track, and there were several strong answers that discussed the potential for uncertainty due to the somewhat vague explanations that Weil gave. Unfortunately, very few responses showed the necessary understanding of how the antithetical pairs worked together in order to effectively critique or support her position.

Although the following response confuses the antithetical pair of punishment, which is honour, with liberty, it does make an honest attempt to discuss Weil's conception of balance. Furthermore, this response highlights how a student could have set out to evaluate Weil's position.

Weil's view that needs (perhaps alluding to the spiritual needs of the soul she discusses) have to be in a 'genuinely balanced state' is somewhat supported in theory, but not in practice. When analysing Weil's premise that neither 'one or the other' of our needs should be satisfied at one point, but all together instead, this is an optimistic idea that has merit. If needs were able to be upheld in conjunction with each other, all together at any point, this would maximise the required duty and obligations we owe ourselves and others. However, in practise, Weil's assertions cannot be supported. Weil's focus on balancing needs together, just like the 'golden mean' tries to achieve, too absolute. For instance, the need of the soul 'Punishment' and how it must 'be an honour', surely would override the need of 'Liberty' if someone had to be imprisoned. Yet Weil contends that such 'contrary needs' are 'fully satisfied in turn'. It can be said that by achieving the need of the soul of Punishment in this imprisonment instance, the liberty of the individual would not be slightly limited, as Weil advocates, but non-existent and not 'satisfied' at all.

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Section B

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	14	24	62	1.5

Generally, this question was handled very well. Many students did well to explain the importance of balance in Aristotle's good life and how that would clash with the standpoint held by Citizen. Similarly, some students understood that Aristotle believed that the pursuit of pleasure for pleasure's sake was akin to the life of a beast, and again that this would contrast with the view that Citizen's letter suggested.

A combination of these ideas or some further explanation of these statements and why they differed from Citizen's position or why Aristotle felt they were important was necessary to receive the full two marks.

Many students were confused about the fundamental workings of Aristotle's conception of the 'mean', suggesting that he believed that people should find balance in all things. This is a highly misleading statement. Aristotle's 'mean' serves to assist people in the development of good habits regarding virtuous action. It is through the use of reason that a person lives virtuously, and reason is used to gauge where the individual's mean lies between excess and deficiency. This is not a comment about the 'mean' amount of money a person should have in order to live well. It means that, with regard to virtuous action, a person should balance their use of money in the best interest of conducting themselves virtuously.

The following is an example of an exemplary response.

Aristotle would say that wealth, political power, and pleasure do not equate a good life; he would advocate the exercise of reason and striving to achieve the mean in between various excesses and deficiencies as a better way of achieving eudaimonia. He would point out that power is too dependent on others giving it to you, wealth is not valued for its own sake, and pleasure is not the goal of all human action because beasts can feel it too.

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	7	22	41	30	2

Many students easily collected two of the three marks for this question by simply providing a personal position and a basic justification for that view. Responses that earned the last mark ranged from providing detail in the justification to a rational explanation of why their justification was worth considering. Many students offered generalised statements about the world as reasons for their viewpoints. Without an explanation of why these statements hold some kind of truth value, or why they are poignant to the requirements of the question, such comments were worth very little.

Students who failed to reference their response to Question 1a. were unable to receive full marks for this question.

The following example continues from the response given to Question 1a. and is an example of a strong response because it demonstrates a student's efforts to support their opinion with distinct reasons.

Although I find the views of both problematic, I agree with citizen's more because I find the doctrine of the mean to be too vague to be useful (ie. we do not have a way of determining if we have achieved the mean); Citizen's purely self-interested view, though it may sound selfish, is reasonable; if she said that she would vote for a government aimed at bettering everyone's lives (ie. a more egalitarian view) that would be more in line with my own opinions.

Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	15	23	62	1.5

Most students opted for a lightly explored version of Socrates's 'leaky jar' analogy for this question, which was a simple and effective way to receive both marks. Other comments that Socrates made throughout the *Gorgias* received marks provided their relevance to the question was clearly explained.

Some students still fail to understand the difference between an assertion and an argument. Without some exploration of how Socrates's arguments work, a student could not receive both marks.

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Following are some suggested arguments from Socrates that could have been used.

- Socrates suggests that a life focused on the pursuit of pleasure is akin to a leaky jar – the more pleasure that is obtained the faster liquid pours from the jar. This suggests that the man or woman who only seeks pleasure runs the risk of falling into a constant state of dissatisfaction.
- Citizen appears to suggest, like Callicles, that the stronger are more worthy of a greater share of the spoils of life. Socrates critiques Callicles's position on the grounds that Callicles is unable to account for the value of the strength of an individual when compared with the strength of the people en masse.
- Socrates relates the life of pleasure to that of scratching an itch, suggesting that those preoccupied with pleasure are merely feeding their dissatisfaction with their circumstances, just as when a person scratches an itch they find that the itch demands more scratching.
- Socrates suggests that good and bad are mutually exclusive while pleasure and pain can coexist, thus arguing that good and pleasure cannot be the same fundamental thing. As such, a life spent pursuing pleasure would not necessarily be good or bad, while a life pursuing the good will certainly not be bad, and may still include both pleasure and pain.

An example of a strong response follows.

Socrates may reject Citizen's pursuit of pleasure with his argument from opposites: good and bad are opposites, and opposites cannot co-exist. Pleasure and distress do co-exist (e.g. in quenching thirst), and therefore are not the good and bad, respectively. Hence a life lived in pursuit of pleasure is not necessarily the good life.

Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	14	22	37	27	1.8

Many students provided well-reasoned explanations for how Socrates's argument either supported or contrasted with their own burgeoning world view. Most students also explained why they agreed or disagreed with Socrates's position, even if they did little to support their claims.

Suggestions such as 'hedonism is good' or 'restraint is necessary' are mere assertions and cannot be accepted as justification for a position without some exploration into why such statements hold any real-world value. It was inappropriate for students to suppose that one of these positions was right while the other was wrong without providing further explanation.

A significant number of students misread the question. A number of responses discussed Aristotle, which suggests that students thought they were meant to be responding to Question 1a. rather than Question 2a.

The following response was written by the same student whose response was used for Question 2a.

Although I don't believe Socrates' argument is convincing, I agree to a great extent with its conclusion. Firstly, regarding his argument, perhaps pleasure and distress do not co-exist, but one supersedes the other (e.g. satisfaction of drinking overriding the distress of thirst). Secondly, perhaps good and bad are not opposites, but relative on a scale, like slow and fast. Hence they may be able to co-exist. Therefore Socrates' argument is not convincing. However given that some pleasures seem to be bad, such as taking drugs or excessive alcohol because they damage our health, I do believe that Socrates is right in stating that pleasure cannot be the same as the good.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	5	8	25	33	19	10	2.9

High-scoring responses were tightly focused on the requirements of the question. In order to achieve full marks, responses required a detailed understanding of one of the philosophers' views on the role of the 'less fortunate'.

In order to achieve full marks, students needed to provide an opinion and to justify that opinion in a reasoned philosophical manner, making distinct reference to at least one of Nietzsche or Weil.

There were some astute comments on Nietzsche's indifference to those less fortunate, but these were often contrasted with suggestions that Nietzsche believed only the strong deserved anything and that the less fortunate should be left to suffer. This is a gross reduction of his philosophy and fails to acknowledge the noble, whose natural will might be to help those in need for the sake of it, without any interest in what those in need think of him or want him to achieve.

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Similarly, several students used Weil's views to effectively highlight the importance of 'eternal obligations', but offered little explanation of why they felt Weil's position was essential. Some students made the mistake of suggesting that Weil was entirely selfless and that people should endeavour to care for others regardless of the self-harm that may occur. Weil certainly believed that caring for others was essential to humanity's 'eternal destiny', but she was also ruthless with regard to those who were products of a 'diseased collectivity'.

The following example is a strong response that would have benefited from a clearer focus on the wording of the question. Regardless, this student justifies their position effectively by utilising the circularity of Weil's vision as one of its points of strength.

To a very great extent! Whilst it is important that we ourselves are happy and love enjoyable lives, I agree with Weil in regards to her view that, as human beings, we have a fundamental obligations to care about everyone else, simply because they are human beings (although, I believe that criteria/definition should be extended to animals as well, "simply because" they are also sentient and capable of feeling pain). In fact, in Weil's ideal society, we would all be happy/live good lives because we took the time to fulfil others' needs, as just as we fulfil their needs, other people fulfil ours in turn. The process of caring for others – in Weil's eyes, and mine too – if undertaken by everyone, would ensure that everyone lived a good life, without having to resort to selfish hedonism.

Section C

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	11	22	31	22	14	2.1

In order to excel, students needed to provide a personal opinion and a well-reasoned justification. Too often, students' opinions were poorly supported or merely rephrased the question.

Students who agreed with Hume needed to provide detailed knowledge of the rationale behind his assertion and to relate Hume's position to their own answer. Similarly, students who disagreed with Hume had to highlight distinct problems within Hume's conception of inductive reasoning, which in turn required a well-versed explanation of Hume's position.

Responses that focused on the role of reason in any kind of inference about the world were generally of a higher quality than those that merely suggested Hume was wrong because of how his philosophy could limit human understanding.

The following is an example of a strong response.

I do not agree that they are based on no form of reasoning at all, but I do believe that there is an important distinction to be made between the types of reasoning that we base things on. Hume doesn't mean that our predictions based on experience are not based on any kind of reasoning at all, but rather that they are not based on a priori, deductive reasoning (like maths, for example), which is entirely based on logic, and infallible. Rather, our predictions are based on a posteriori, inductive reasoning, and whilst Hume does not discount its value in allowing us to interact with and understand the world around us, he does point out the ultimate flaw in inductive reasoning; that is, that it is based on extrapolation of past events, assuming that there is a "logical rule", per se, that dictates that things will always happen in the same way. Just because the sun has always risen every morning in the past, does not actually provide any a priori, deductive "rule" that it must rise tomorrow, and I agree with Hume's point; that we should take care not to view our inductive extrapolations as deductive, infallible logic.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	14	14	24	49	2.1

To gain full marks for this question, some explanation of the difference between 'genuine science' and 'pseudo-science' was necessary, but the word 'falsification' did not count as an explanation unto itself. Whenever students use philosopher-specific terms they should take the time to explain what the word or phrase means to the philosopher, as this highlights the student's understanding.

In addition, examples of both science and pseudo-science used by Popper in his text were essential for full marks. Popper discusses Einstein's theory of relativity to demonstrate science and Adler's individual psychology, Freud's psychoanalysis, Marx's theory of history, and astrology as examples of pseudo-sciences.

The following response clearly addresses both aspects of the question.

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Popper says the difference between science and pseudo-science occurs in the method. Genuine science is seen trying to falsify its Hypothesis and Theories using risky experiments. This science as seen by Popper will throw out their theory if an anomaly occurs. Einstein's theory of relativity is an example of this as it used risky tests and experiments in order to try and prove itself wrong. This attitude of going about science is called the critical attitude. Pseudo-science on the other hand tries to confirm its beliefs. Using such method, it sees confirming evidence everywhere. Theories such as Freud's Psychoanalysis, seemed to be able to solve almost every problem. Such an attitude is known as a dogmatic attitude whereby science is the authority that is regarded highly.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	24	20	31	25	1.6

Students generally had a reasonable understanding of Kuhn's conception of scientific progress through paradigm shift, but they were less certain about the 'Copernican Revolution'. Some explanation of the stages of paradigm shift was essential for full marks, as was some understanding of the way the geocentric conception of the solar system entered a stage of crisis, in turn enabling the heliocentric conception of the solar system to become the new accepted scientific theory.

Students who performed well understood that crisis for the Ptolemaic geocentric solar system was brought about not by Copernicus's suggestion that the solar system might be heliocentric, but because of the social and political requirements of the time. The paradigm shift did not occur while Copernicus was alive. It took nearly a hundred years, the desire for calendar reform, and scientific anomalies regarding measurements from the equinoxes that finally highlighted the unavoidable limitations of the Ptolemaic system to the scientific community.

The following is an example of a strong response.

Ptolemaic astronomy preceded Copernicus' theories. In this period of normal science Ptolemaic theories could explain most happenings. Over time, anomalies occurred. Firstly the theory tried to allow for them. In the end, the anomalies were growing faster than the ability for the theory to help answer questions and scientists lost confidence in the theory. In such a time, science enters Paradigmatic Crisis. New theories emerge and one is generally chosen that keeps what the old Paradigm did well, but accounts for the new anomalies. Copernicus' theory was chosen as it did the above, as well as its involvement in the want for calendar reform. Ptolemaic astronomy was rejected as Copernicus' theory was accepted and at that point, science returns to normal science.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	6	15	25	27	17	9	2.6

This was a question that benefited from a tightly controlled response. Strong answers retained a tight focus on the notion of what science 'should' aim for, rather than merely arguing that either philosopher had a better perspective than the other. Many students seemed unsure how to apply the two philosophers' comments to the question, and some highly detailed responses used neither philosopher and, as such, could not achieve high marks.

Strong responses discussed the limitations of the methodologies suggested by both philosophers and concluded their response by referring back to their original answer to the question.

Because the question encouraged a wide array of examples and points of discussion, answers that endeavoured to discuss the examples used by the philosophers were much stronger than those that merely gave an opinion and listed supporting comments from the philosophers. These more simplistic responses were common, suggesting that some students weren't quite sure how to develop a philosophical discussion of their opinion.

Some points of discussion:

- As Popper suggests, the critical methodology adopted by 'real science' has severe limitations for the pursuit of 'truth', because falsification attempts must be pursued infinitely.
- Because there is no way to prove scientific theories 'right', the pursuit of 'truth' is a meaningless endeavour and instead science should focus on 'progress' by making use of theories within the currently accepted paradigm of knowledge.
- Kuhn discredits the pursuit of 'truth' because he suggests that science is, in essence, a political machine and that the theories that are accepted are not necessarily the most rigorously scrutinised. Thus, if science operates in this way, the pursuit of 'progress' is all that is really available.



- Although it may be impossible for humans to be absolutely sure of the ‘truth value’ of any given scientific position, it is important to pursue ‘truth’, as it will promote critical thinking and, in turn, some kind of progression.
- Popper and Kuhn differ in their positions on the simple grounds that Popper believes that science can be made to pursue truth if it adopts a specific modus operandi, while Kuhn asserts that science may be able to do this but that there is, in fact, no reason for it to change in order to continue to collect answers to the questions we are capable of asking.

The following is an example of an exceptional response. Although this response does not explicitly state whether the student thinks that science should pursue progress or truth, the student’s position on the matter is clearly expressed throughout their answer.

Popper takes a hard line approach to the pursuits of science. He advocates the restructuring of science to ensure that it is filled with only theories that have the possibility of being disproved. He recognises the possibility of ‘pseudoscience’ to contribute to a human understanding of the world, but rejects them from the process of science as he believes that science should be a pure pursuit, dealing only in truth. Theories that are proved false, should be rejected out hand, with little regard for their contribution to the progress of science. He is willing, if necessary to reduce the current foundations of science to nothing if the theories that currently support them are proven to be wrong, all in the name of the pure and scientific pursuit of ‘truth’. I agree with his hard line conception of science in principle, but I reject the fact, as Kuhn does that science is a means to achieving this truth. Kuhn conceives of science as merely making ‘progress’ in that there is no kind of transcendental logic that science ascribes to, demonstrated by the fact that it is rhetoric that chooses a new paradigm. For Kuhn science is analogous to evolution; it progresses without direction but progresses nonetheless. I see this conception of science as pandering better to the realities of logic and the universe, Popper is trapped with the paradigm of trying to rearrange ‘normal science’ but he cannot understand the wider implications of what he is doing, and is therefore limited in his understanding of the nature of science.

Section D

Question chosen	none	1	2	3
%	3	45	9	43

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	7	5	7	8	11	13	10	10	9	5	5	4	2	2	1	1	5.7

Essay

Many students appeared to struggle to construct a philosophical essay and instead appeared to rely on rote-learned paragraphs that gave generic overviews of philosopher’s arguments, regardless of their appropriateness to the chosen topic. Students seem to believe that they should be writing ‘everything they know’ about the philosophers they have chosen to discuss. This is not the case. Students must interpret their chosen question and select the arguments that apply most effectively to the contention they have decided to present.

After outlining the arguments they plan to use, students are expected to evaluate and explore the value of the positions discussed regarding their contention. Very few students are doing this well. Instead, most essays provided straw-man assassinations of underdeveloped – and often incorrectly developed – views that students appear to believe the philosophers hold. At no point should a student feel that a philosopher’s views can be disregarded with a single phrase, nor with a single reference to a fallacy or concept of which the student has failed to define or demonstrate an understanding. Suggesting that a philosophical viewpoint is ‘wrong’ or ‘right’ simply because a student agrees or disagrees with it is not what this discipline is about, and underestimates the careful analysis and evaluation that the philosophers’ positions demand. Any suggestion that one view is better than another must be developed through reasoned argument that will generally resolve in a concluding statement highlighting why one view could/should be given more merit than another. These ‘soft’ terms are essential to philosophical enquiry. Too often, essays in particular are loaded with opinionated and unjustifiable language that undermines the quality of the discussion.

Use of ‘fallacies’ should be sparing and specific. If a student decides to reference material from outside the course – as should be encouraged through classroom learning – then they should also be prepared to briefly explain the idea that they want to use, drawing specific attention to its relevance. Too often, jargon phrases and memorised examples were used with little demonstration of any understanding of the actual ideas.

Descartes’s arguments were particularly poorly handled in response to Question 1, suggesting that more classroom time needs to be spent exploring what he was actually trying to achieve with the meditations. Not only did students misunderstand the role of the malicious deceiver, many suggested that Descartes himself was tormented by the mystical



creature. Students must remember that Descartes is generating an argument through reason alone. Elements such as the malicious deceiver should be considered in a similar light to that used for thought experiments and hypothetical discussions. Similarly, many comments regarding the Wax Argument were incorrect or largely underdeveloped, suggesting that Descartes' personal experiences of the wax undermine his argument for the doubtability of the senses. These comments were often made with little discussion of Descartes's intention to support the 'knowability' of the mind, suggesting that students were largely unaware of this central aspect of the second meditation.

Only a small number of students selected Question 2, but the highly focused nature of the question was beneficial to those who understood Armstrong's philosophy. Low-scoring responses opted for a general discussion of whole aspects of Armstrong's position that had little to do with the 'problem of consciousness' that the question was asking them to address. Some responses offered generic essays that described the troubles associated with thinking inwardly, rather than exploring how Armstrong himself handled the issue. Students who performed well on this question provided a detailed and insightful commentary on Armstrong's physicalist philosophy of the nature of man. They were able to reference various sections of Armstrong's paper and to use them efficiently with a specific focus in mind.

Although a large percentage of students selected Question 3, responses were generally unfocused. Students appeared unsure about what to discuss. Many students appeared to list everything they knew about the two philosophers, offering little explanation of the purpose of their points of discussion and little development of rational, philosophical exposition. Again, students' fundamental knowledge of the philosophers was lacking, but more importantly, their responses failed to focus on the required points of discussion.

It is important for students to understand that neither Descartes nor Armstrong actually denies the importance of either the mind or the body. While Descartes highlights that the mind is 'more knowable' and that any understanding of the doubtable body comes through the mind, this does not necessarily mean that the body has no importance within his philosophy, merely that the mind is required in order to make sense of whatever (if anything) the body is telling him.

Similarly, Armstrong does not deny the importance of the mind, he merely explains that the human conception of what the mind consists of is not the spiritual substance that is so often supplied to account for it. As such, the mind is still a thing, it is simply a thing that is a product of purely psychochemical mechanisms within the central nervous system. Thus, the mind is still fundamentally important to a physicalist explanation of what humans are.

Strong answers to Question 3 demonstrated a clear understanding of the core aspects of philosophical discussion and developed a well-reasoned argument that maintained a strong contention throughout. This clear philosophical style should be encouraged, as it teaches students to think through their responses in a clear and linear fashion and promotes adaptability in their ideas.

All essays should contain some kind of philosophical exploration of the ideas the selected prompt is concerned with. In turn, evaluations, carefully selected criticisms and fully explored viewpoints are essential to well-developed responses.

Below are the criteria with which all essays were assessed.

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 did not reach 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 followed easily. The use of language was appropriate to philosophy. |
| 4 | The student expressed 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 did not reach 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 that 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 did the student understand 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 did not reach level 1.
- 1–2 The student showed little awareness of the specific demands of the question and identified relevant material in 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 that 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 that 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 that 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 did not reach level 1.
- 1 The student developed ideas and arguments in a basic way but there was little or no evaluation.
- 2 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.
- 3 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.
- 4 The student developed ideas and arguments from a consistently held perspective. Evaluation of the ideas and arguments was thoughtful and convincing.
- 5 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.

Although the expression in the following response to Question 1 could have been clearer and less repetitive, this essay demonstrates the importance of generating a thorough discussion of the philosopher's views and arguments. Some greater detail could have been provided to fully explore the criticisms of Descartes's discussion of the wax, but this



student endeavoured to provide a philosophical exploration of Descartes's position regarding how knowable the mind actually is. It was this evaluative and self-reflective quality that placed this essay in the high-scoring category.

Do we possess better knowledge our minds, or our bodies? In his 'Meditations', Descartes concludes that the mind is easier to know than the body through his wax analogy. To reach this conclusion, he also concludes that provided he is thinking, he exists and that he is merely a thinking thing by employing his method of hyperbolic doubt. In this essay, I will outline Descartes arguments for these three conclusions and critically evaluate each of these, to reach a conclusion as to whether we do in fact know our minds better, although this is seemingly not the case.

Dismissing anything dubitable as if it were false in his method of hyperbolic doubt, Descartes finds that he cannot trust his sense of perception for they have previously misled him, such as when he perceives his vivid dreams as reality or when he observes a bent stick in water when it is in fact straight. Not only doubting his senses, he also doubts the origins of his thoughts for a malicious demon may be focusing all of his energies into deceiving him as God would not for He is omnibenevolent. However Descartes finds that he cannot doubt his thoughts, and the fact that the demon could be deceiving him further reinforces there are thoughts that exist as they must exist to be deceived and manipulated. Subsequently, Descartes concludes that as long as he thinks, he exists.

However is not Descartes claim 'I think therefore I am' a tautology? He later claims that he is his thoughts as they cannot be separated from, suggesting that 'I think therefore I am' essentially means 'my thoughts exist because my thoughts exist' or 'I exist because I exist'. Similarly, he posits an 'I' that thinks, yet he has only demonstrated that his thoughts exist, thus making an illogical leap to a conclusion.

Furthermore, the method he uses to reach this conclusion, radical doubt, is an unsound approach. If we are to dismiss anything dubitable, then isn't the logic of his doubt also dismissable? What if the demon he misled him to believe that his doubt process is logical? Moreover, what happens if we doubt, doubt? Does this mean we are in fact not doubting at all? In addition, in order to doubt, we need a basis for comparison. For instance, we only know a particular painting is fake if we know there is a real one in a museum. But if we doubt everything, how can we then compare what is real with what is not? Descartes also claims that we cannot know if we are vividly dreaming or in fact in reality, even thought dreams are often illogical and nonsensical. What if Descartes is performing doubt in his dreams – does that not further suggest his method of doubt may be vulnerable or illogical?

Descartes then proceeds to questions what consists of the 'I' which has these thoughts. Dismissing that the 'I' is just a man because it leads to too many pointless questions, as well as rejecting the possibility of the 'I' being a mere body or a soul, Descartes sees that thoughts cannot be separated from us and only knows that he has thoughts, thus concluding that he is only a thinking thing.

Descartes however seems to make a fallacious jump from 'I only know that I am a thinking thing' to 'I know that I am only a thinking thing'. However, just because I only know that I have a pet dog, does that necessarily entail that I only have a pet dog? Perhaps I have a pet cat too but am unaware of it. Furthermore, Descartes seems to say that he is his thoughts, yet posits elsewhere that he is something else which has these thoughts especially in 'I think therefore I am', making his idea of what exists unclear.

Moreover, questioning how we come to know that a solid piece of wax and its liquid state is the same substance, Descartes believes that we know our minds better and that mental scrutiny provides us with better knowledge than anything else. Because the solid wax and its molten state completely differ in physical features and yet we can recognise it is the same piece, our sensory perceptions do not give us knowledge. Furthermore, we cannot conceive of the infinite amount of forms that may be taken (eg the wax, thus our imagination is also not the source of this knowledge. However, Descartes believes it is through mental scrutiny that we are able to identify the molten wax as the same piece as its solid state, thus demonstrating that we have better knowledge of our minds rather than our bodies perceived through sensory perceptions.

However, how would Descartes respond to a scenario in which a person has never perceived molten wax before? Surely they would be unable to identify the liquid wax as the same piece as the solid piece, which is problematic for Descartes' claim that our minds allow us to have better knowledge as in this case it appears that physical experience is necessary for knowledge. Moreover, does perceiving the liquid wax as the same substance as the solid wax actually show us that we have better knowledge of our minds? Perhaps it merely furthers our experience of the wax rather than providing us knowledge regarding our minds.

Subsequently, Descartes' conclusions that he exists provided he thinks, that he is merely a thinking thing, and that it is easier to know the mind than the body, all encounter serious issues, particularly regarding the vulnerability of his logic, the method of radical doubt, and several fallacious jumps he makes from some premises to his conclusions. In turn, Descartes argument for that our minds are easier to know than our bodies is not a convincing case.



The following response to Question 2 provides a strong philosophical discussion of the problem of introspection. Although several claims are not fully qualified, given that it was written under exam conditions, this is a thorough and well-voiced response.

The problem of introspection or consciousness remains the main barrier for accepting a materialist account of the mind. In order to assess how adequately materialism deals with the 'problem of consciousness' it is first necessary to define consciousness and the two main schools of thought relating to the mind/body problem; materialism and dualism. I define consciousness or introspection as a certain self awareness related to qualia; the genuine experience lighting up the self. Whilst dualism holds the mind and body to be separate, materialism is monist (they are one entity) and as consciousness has not yet been located in the brain, this remains an explanatory gap in their theory.

Dualism holds the mind to be distinct from (possibly above) the existence of the body, allowing for spiritual notions of a 'soul' or higher being. In this sense, they have explained consciousness as it reasons the complexity and introspection of the mind is not mere matter, but another, non physical substance above matter.

However, the explanatory gaps within dualism possibly exceed that of the 'problem of consciousness' materialism holds. Materialism's verification makes an abundance of links between the brain and the existence of the mind. For instance, if the mind and body are separate, how do the two interact? (This is known as the 'ghost in the machine'.) There are also a multitude of links between effects on the brain and that of the mind, such as substances (drugs, alcohol) effecting both the brain and the mind, and the parallels of the evolution of the mind and that of the brain. As not all animals appear to hold a mind, the question also remains where the substance of the mind 'appeared' in a dualist account of the mind. Thereby, though able to explain introspection, contrary accounts of the mind to materialism do not hold sufficient grounding.

Materialists verify their theory through the authority of science. This gains them credibility in the above arguments. A materialist, Armstrong argued we should agree with claims of science as it provides an intellectual consensus unparalleled to other fields (such as philosophy or spiritual fields) and it is fast and efficient; it can establish a doctrine in its lifetime, a 'raft of truths on our disputatious ignorance.' From these premises, we should thereby accept the argument of science that the mind and the body are one entity. From here, Armstrong deals with the problem of consciousness through attempting to discern what it is, how it functions and where it is located. Armstrong alludes to consciousness through the example of self automated driving in order to demonstrate introspection at a base level as a self scanning mechanism. He then examples selective behaviour in animals through red and green pathways to show the manner in which consciousness holds inputs and outputs to deliberately select behaviour. Finally he locates consciousness as a self scanning mechanism in the central nervous system. He uses the example of the headless woman to illustrate that though we may be aware of ourselves (introspection) but not the nature of our brain this does not mean materialism is incorrect; we know what water is despite the science behind H₂O.

However, this supposed consensus of science remains to be, at this stage, hypothesis. The 'authority of science' remains in doubt before scientists can explicitly state where consciousness is located in the brain and provide concrete proof. Armstrongs argument lies upon the assumption science is correct, however his leap to locating and describing consciousness does not follow from this argument as he remains to be hypothesising; consciousness has not scientifically been located in the central nervous system. As materialism relies upon the validity of science, this gap in scientific knowledge prevents full consensus on the issue. The problem of introspection in regards to materialism can be illustrated through the Chinese Room Argument. A man being fed English, holding a Chinese dictionary and feeding back appropriate phrases does not thereby speak Chinese, though it may appear that way from outside the room. This thus proves computers do not have minds, as they are lacking a central awareness beyond mere inputs and outputs that is consciousness. Materialist, scientific accounts can explain inputs and outputs, but they cannot yet account for this genuine experience that is often placed 'above science'. We tend to gain a greater awareness or insight to the self and the human condition not through scientific theory, but more abstract, philosophical mediums; texts such as Hamlet that seem to speak to the human condition. However, does this thereby mean the mind must be a spiritual substance? Could not millions of years of evolutionary refinement account for our current state of the mind as an intricate, complex, self space aware entity that is intrinsically linked to the brain?

Though materialism has not yet scientifically located consciousness in the brain, and thereby cannot be an entirely accurate account of the mind, this does not mean the theory is false. Science may simply not yet have sufficiently developed to the extend that introspection can be accounted for. It is likely that we instead cling to consciousness through abstract unverifiable notions of dualism as we are unwilling to reason that we are mere physical matter including our conscious minds. Thereby, though a materialist account has not yet fully dealt with the problem of introspection this may be expected to be resolved in the future.

The following response to Question 3 clearly endeavours to maintain a clear focus on the central aspects of the prompt, regularly referring back to the contention and developing a discussion around the fundamental problems perceived in the philosopher's arguments. While the paper lacks a definitive conclusion it does 'round off' the discussion and is thus an example of a well-reasoned, philosophical response.

The proposition that 'the body is just as important as the mind in explaining who and what we are' is an extremely contentious one. If the mind is taken to mean the actions of the brain that we know as consciousness, then it supposes a purely materialist perspective. Descartes would reject this perspective for a number of reasons; we can doubt the body, the body is not essential to



our conception of self, and that we know our mind better than a body. He is not however, without criticisms and detractors. Armstrong would argue that the mind is merely a part of the body, and that even the act of introspection is merely an assessment of mental states, though he too does face his problems, problems such as qualia and the infinite scanner.

The foundations of Descartes's dualism is methodological scepticism, he claims that he can doubt the existence of the material world because he may be asleep, or there may be some great deceiver that tricks him and his perception of the universe. As a consequence of this, because knowledge of his body is derived through sensory perception, liable to doubt then he must doubt the existence of the body. He cannot doubt the existence of the mind, because every act of thinking confirms its existence. If the mind is indubitable and the body is not, there must be a fundamental difference between the two, and this is his dualist perspective. He then establishes that the key to understanding the mind is not in the examination of the body through proposing that we cannot imagine the body without a mind, but we can imagine a mind without a body, and thus the most crucial thing to us is the mind. He further contends that every action undertaken by the mind only confirms its existence and gives more insight into its nature. He suggest our perception as an example of this. We naturally perceive items, such as wax with our senses; it has colour, a smell and a feel. However, these basic qualities may change and yet we still know it is the same thing, wax melts and therefore has a different feel and form, yet we still know it is wax. We know therefore that the outside world is 'extendable, changeable and flexible'. We do not know of these features through our imagination; we do not imagine every single step in the process of wax melting, rather we know it through our rationale assessment of the wax, our judgement. An non rational animal such as a dog may conceive of the wax and its changed form and yet not understand it, thus essential to the human is the process of rationalisation and thought. Consequently he supposes that we know the mind better than we know the body, and thus it is the key to unlocking what makes the individual a human.

Despite the relative solidarity of Descartes' argument, it is susceptible to criticism. He supposes that the entire world, everything conveyed to him by his senses is susceptible to doubt, but he refuses to acknowledge the fact that logic is self is not indubitable. As a result, every conclusion that is a consequence of his simple assertion that his mind exists, must be doubted in the same manner as his senses. Consequently he can come to know conclusion about the dualistic divide between mind and body, not even the nature of his own mind. He also falls true to the trap of assuming in ignorance. He claims that because we cannot conceive of the body without a mind, it cannot exist. This is an unjustified assumption that cannot be recognised as verifiable logic, and so his argument for the existence of dualism, fundamental to the premise that the human is the mind, is flawed. Furthermore, he falls prey to his own high standard of logic. He claims that he knows the mind better than the body, yet he can only list the vaguest qualities of the mind, the same qualities 'extendable, changeable, and flexible' that he dismisses as having no insight and value into the nature of the real word. Consequently it would suppose a contradiction if he were to claim that he knew his mind better than his body, and that it was then the key to understanding the human.

Armstrong completely rejects Descartes' conception of the human, using the 'special' authority of science as the only discipline that can create a consensus to create a purely 'physico chemical' conception of the mind. He claims that the 'mind' as we know it is merely a result of mental states, physical aspects of the body that combine to create the illusion of a 'mind'. These mental states are physical aspects of the central nervous system that when exposed to certain stimuli respond in a certain way; behaviour. He contests that the mind is merely a result of the 'self-scanning mechanism of the brain' that an aspect of the brain, or a mental state 'scans' another part of the brain. We see that we have this faculty in that on occasion, such as driving we can awaken from a period of non-awareness in which we acted with basic but unconscious responses to the environment. Thus, having ascertained that the mind is merely an aspect of the body, he contends that the body is far more important in understanding the human. Furthermore, the act of introspection, the only other possible way of examining the human outside of a materialist inspection of the body merely the inspection of other mental states through a 'self-scanning' process, thus relegating the other option of knowing the human, invalid.

However, Armstrong's theory was not without its problems, the foremost of these being the problem of qualia. This problem is the distinction between the experiences felt by the individual, and the actual physical nature of the experiences. It is demonstrated by the Mary in the black and white room thought experiment. If an individual was brought up in a colourless environment, only exposed to black and whites, and was yet an expert in neuroscience, would not the experience of seeing red for the first time be an absolutely new thing to her? This argument can however be seen as coming from ignorance, because if we supposed in fact that Mary knew everything in the universe, then she might in fact know what the colour red was like, it is only the limitations of our current scientific knowledge that we supposed she would not know the colour red. This challenge suggests an intangible aspect of the human mind that cannot be found by assessing the physical makeup of the individual, suggesting that the key to the human experience is found in the mind, not the body. Furthermore Armstrong's theory is open to objections on a physical level. It is possible for the individual to conceive of themselves thinking, and to conceive of that action of thinking about themselves thinking ad infinitum. Armstrong's reliance on the fact that this self-assessment is done by a physical part of the brain means that he is faced with the problem of this experience continuing on far past any conceivable division of the brain. This once again challenges the feasibility of a materialist conception of the human and forces a consideration of the possibility of the human mind existing further than just the brain, relegating the exploration of the human through the body a second rate means of understanding who and what we are.

Both Armstrong and Descartes are subject to a number of issues and open to a variety of criticisms into their conceptions of the human. Descartes offers perhaps a more sophisticated understanding of what makes an individual a human; exploring the nuances of the mind, whereas Armstrong leaves the exploration to the body, limiting the opportunity to discuss the very part of us that we would instinctually conceive of as being the thing that makes us 'who and what we are'.