



2010

Philosophy GA 3: Written examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

In the 2010 Philosophy examination, students' performances varied. Although some students demonstrated a detailed and precise knowledge of the arguments and viewpoints expressed in the set texts, many had only a generalised understanding of these arguments and viewpoints. Students' ability to evaluate was an area of concern. Many students struggled to provide justification for their assertions or supported their claims with personal opinions rather than arguments.

Strengths

- Many students demonstrated a good understanding of Murdoch and Nietzsche and were able to provide detailed accounts of the arguments and viewpoints of both philosophers.
- Most students attempted to answer all questions required on the examination.

Weaknesses

- Many students did not respond to the entire question asked. For example, a significant number of students outlined, but did not evaluate, philosophers' arguments in Section A of the examination.
- Many students did not read the questions carefully and provided answers that did not address the question directly. For example, in Section B, Question 1 a significant number of students outlined rather than evaluated how their chosen philosophers might respond to the advice given in the stimulus, and in Section B, Question 3 many students provided directives on how to live a good life rather than discussing the question of moral knowledge.
- Some students did not have a precise and detailed knowledge of the arguments and viewpoints expressed in the set texts and could only discuss these arguments and viewpoints in a generalised way. This was particularly the case with Nietzsche and Aristotle.
- Some students did not have an accurate understanding of the arguments, viewpoints, concepts and ideas expressed in the set texts. For example, many students described Armstrong as a Behaviourist or confused his views with those of Gilbert Ryle. Students also confused the arguments and viewpoints of Kuhn and Popper.
- Some students attributed views not expressed in the set texts to philosophers. It is important that students clearly distinguish between the actual viewpoints expressed by philosophers and what these viewpoints imply or suggest.
- A concerning number of students were unable to evaluate or justify their responses in a way appropriate to philosophy. Many students supported their arguments with personal opinion ('Socrates' case is convincing because I think a life of self-restraint is preferable to a life of pleasure') or used elements of the text itself to justify their claims ('Socrates' case is convincing because of the leaky jars analogy'). Some students wrote that an argument was convincing simply because it was 'well argued.' It is important that students are given explicit instruction in the process of evaluation and provided with many opportunities to practise evaluating arguments throughout the year.
- Some students' written expression was unclear. Students must remember that clear expression is always preferred to language that is 'showy' or superficially sophisticated.
- Some of the responses to Section A, Question 3 suggested that students might still be studying texts from the previous year's text list. It is vitally important that the text list is monitored carefully each year for changes and that students are studying the requisite editions and translations.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

Section A

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	11	31	31	22	2.6

- Socrates believes that a self-indulgent person will be unhappy because he or she will try to fulfil his or her desires perpetually. The individual who is self-disciplined will have fewer desires and will therefore not experience such suffering. Socrates illustrates this point with his analogy of the leaky jars.

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- The life of the self-indulgent person is one spent perpetually attempting to gratify desire. Socrates believes that such a life is far from 'good'. He illustrates this point with his analogies of itching and scratching, the gully bird and the catamite.
- The self-disciplined person is one who is capable of distinguishing between good and bad pleasures, which enables him to have a better life.
- Socrates claims that a self-disciplined mind is more conducive to happiness than a self-indulgent (disordered) mind, as a self-disciplined mind possesses the qualities necessary for happiness.
- The person who is self-disciplined (and who, therefore, possesses an organised mind) is more likely to have harmonious relations with others and his or her behaviour accords with, and reflects, the order of the universe itself.

Possible points for discussion include the following.

- One might agree with Socrates' conclusion – there is ample evidence to suggest that people are not made happy by shopping, eating, gambling and so on, and it is obvious that desiring some things can lead to great unhappiness; for example, desiring drugs and alcohol.
- Our capacity to live the life Callicles advocates is dependent on our capacity to fulfil our desires. As the culture of consumerism demonstrates, fulfilling every desire is not always possible and this can breed unhappiness.
- The analogy of the leaky jars suggests that a life of self-indulgence is difficult and distressing. But is self-indulgence more difficult than self-restraint? Many would argue the reverse. As to the latter conclusion, Socrates appears to miss Callicles' point that it is the desire itself ('keep as much pouring in as possible') that makes for an enjoyable life.
- Socrates appears to suggest there is a fault in the self-indulgent person's soul or mind. Must we accept this? And must we accept that a self-disciplined mind is necessarily happier?
- One might notice Callicles' claim that the life Socrates is advocating is more like the life of a stone or corpse.

Although many students did well on this question, a significant number of students simply outlined the analogy of the leaky jars without providing an explanation of the analogy in terms of the question. A number of students also misunderstood Socrates' position and claimed that he advocated the annihilation of desire rather than its proper management.

To receive full marks for this question a student needed to provide a developed response as to why Socrates thinks self-discipline makes for greater happiness than self-indulgence and provide a justified response as to whether or not his case is convincing. Students who simply stated that his case was convincing because 'I believe self-discipline makes for greater happiness than self-indulgence' could not be awarded full marks.

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

Socrates believes that self-indulgence is a never-ending cycle and as a consequence one will always be anxious that they will have to fulfil the next desire. He uses his jar analogy to demonstrate this, where the man with the leaky jars must always work hard to fill them while the man with the intact jars can rest easy once they are filled (he is content). This is not a particularly convincing case as, like Callicles argues, it appears as if the man with the intact jar can no longer feel pleasure at all since the act of pouring is the pleasure. It is also not likely to be achieved by many since Socrates is ignoring the inherently pleasure seeking nature of most people, who if denied their pleasures are likely to be unhappy.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	18	16	30	22	15	2.0

- For Aristotle, happiness (eudaemonia) is achieved through the exercise of our uniquely human function, reason. When the unique human function is exercised to a degree of excellence, we call that life happy. Thus, a life governed by rationally directed activity is a happy life.
- We may exercise our unique function in the field of virtue, which requires us to use our reason to find the mean between the vices of excess and deficiency.
- Happiness is therefore intimately connected to knowing the how to act appropriately according to circumstance (which the mean helps us to decide).
- A happy life is also one that does not experience any grave misfortunes.
- In his 'clearer account' of happiness, Aristotle also tells us that it is something that is sought for its own sake and not for the sake of anything else (this is why it is not wealth, pleasure or honour) and it is something that



can only be gauged in the context of a whole life. For Aristotle, happiness is not an emotion but ‘living well and faring well.’

Possible points for evaluation include the following.

- According to Aristotle, a happy life is one in which we exercise our unique function to a degree of excellence; however, one may question whether our unique function really is reason – various animals have demonstrated behaviour indicative of reason and there are many things other than reason that appear to be unique to humans. Further, does it follow that even if there was a unique function that it would be linked so strongly to the achievement of happiness?
- One may also question how Aristotle arrives at his conclusion that humans must have a unique function. For example, even if all of our parts have a function (which itself can be questioned) does this necessarily mean we must have a separate function? Surely, we are inseparable from our parts.
- Even if we accept that our unique function is reason, Aristotle still assumes that happiness will result from rational activity. Exercising our rationality doesn’t always ensure we will make the right decisions and, as Aristotle himself points out, we may still be plagued by misfortune.
- Aristotle also assumes that a virtuous life is necessarily a pleasant life. Is this always the case? One may argue that a life of excess can be enjoyable and that perhaps it is the ‘highs and lows’ of life that make life enjoyable.
- The requisites for a eudaemonic life are quite stringent. Can we really call a life that has experienced some misfortune unhappy or should we not describe a life, unless it is near its end, as happy?

Many students appeared to find this question challenging. A significant number of students cited the mean in their response; however, many did not adequately tie it to Aristotle’s ‘clearer account’ of happiness.

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to provide a developed outline of one or more elements in Aristotle’s account of happiness and evaluate one or more of the elements identified. Students who simply described the mean and did not contextualise it within Aristotle’s wider views regarding happiness could not be awarded full marks.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response. This response is particularly notable for its developed outline and evaluation.

Aristotle believes that happiness consists in two things, living well and faring well. To determine what ‘good living’ consists in, Aristotle considers man’s function, which he must have since individual men (e.g. sculptors, flute players) have functions and so to do parts of the body (leg, eye and foot). Since our function is unique to us it cannot be growth (as this is shared with plants) nor sentience (shared by animals) and thus must be reason. Thus happiness requires activity of the soul in accordance with reason. However, Aristotle’s justification for man having a function is insufficient; particular men and body parts may have functions while man has none, just as a circle mosaic may be made of square tiles. Further, Aristotle does not consider other things unique to man that could be our function, like chaotic creativity or gratuitous cruelty.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	11	15	31	25	19	2.3

- For Nietzsche, contemporary European morality is a ‘herd morality’. It glorifies ‘public spirit, benevolence, consideration, industriousness, moderation, modesty, forbearance, pity’ – all qualities designed to protect the herd.
- This stands in opposition to *laissez aller* or letting go and therefore, operates to circumscribe our freedom, narrow our perspective and render us subservient. In short, it operates to thwart or pervert the will to power.
- Contemporary European morality also fails to recognise other moralities – ‘that other moralities are possible’ – and in doing so, assumes possession of an objective morality.
- Such views find expression in the prevailing political system and in its commanders, which, hypocritically and self-deceitfully, pose as executioners of higher authorities (ancestors, God, the people and so on). However, other, higher moralities are possible, such as that of an unconditional commander such as Napoleon.

Possible points for evaluation include the following.

- Perhaps the values that Nietzsche has identified are ‘herd values’, but does this make them worthless? Many would champion public spiritedness and benevolence as significant values that have led to real advances in society.
- One may ask whether the kind of world that Nietzsche’s philosophy advocates really is preferable or even possible.

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- One may also question Nietzsche's consistency: he stresses the relativity of moralities, which are only a 'sign-language of the emotions' but then talks of some moralities being higher than others are.

Although a significant number of students were able to provide accurate and detailed answers to this question, many students offered superficial responses along the lines of 'God is dead.' Other students seemed to have grasped Nietzsche's philosophy generally but could not identify the arguments outlined in the set text.

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to outline one or more of the above criticisms and critically evaluate one or more of the criticisms identified.

The following is an example of a high-scoring answer. Although it contains some inaccuracies, it is still a very good response.

Nietzsche's main criticism is that moralities 'generalise where generalization is impermissible.' They dictate a way of life for everyone when what should really lead to the good life is will to power, something individual. Thus contemporary European morality is a type of 'herd' morality, which has led to protracted constraint and a kind of stupidity. Those who have become commanders feel the need to justify their leadership in the name of things like 'God' and the 'common good.' While these things may be so, they might not be as bad as Nietzsche implies. Such morality is designed to ensure the security and cohesion of our society. Also, as Nietzsche notes, this 'herd' morality has led to some good achievements (language, dance), however he also feels it has suppressed potential.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	11	14	22	54	2.2

- To develop a better view of life Murdoch recommends altering the consciousness in the direction of unselfishness. This 'unselfing' enables us to see things as they 'really are,' which is the locus for right action. She suggests several strategies we can use to unself:
 - contemplating natural beauty
 - engaging with, and practising, (good) art
 - practising *technae* (crafts and skills).
- Murdoch says religious ritual (in particular, prayer and the sacraments) also provides us with a means for unselfing.

Most students were able to answer this question accurately. To receive full marks for this question, students needed to identify at least two of the strategies Murdoch recommends and/or provide some discussion of the idea of unselfing as it links to these strategies.

Section B

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	3	7	18	27	25	12	8	3.3

- Callicles (at least at the outset) would approve of the idea of people helping themselves, as it is in accordance with nature. However, he would perhaps suggest we should not limit ourselves to such acts only when desperate. Such a view could be questioned on a number of grounds. On the first point, Callicles could be accused of falling prey to the naturalistic fallacy. As to the second point, this view invites the question of whether such behaviour is sustainable. What would happen if we all acted that way?
- Socrates would certainly disagree with Jones' advice because the thief is doing something unjust, and even if the poverty they are suffering is a result of injustice it is better to suffer an injustice than to perpetrate one. One could ask, however, whether stealing is worse than poverty, especially if that poverty is so extreme it could lead to one starving to death. Socrates has also failed to recognise the problem of conflicting duties. Surely it is more unjust to allow one's family to starve to death than it is to steal – indeed Socrates himself says (509B) that it is wrong (and contemptible) to fail to avert harm to oneself and one's family. Finally, we might question Socrates' claim on the grounds of the metaphysical beliefs on which it is based – if we have no soul and are only bodies then perhaps it is more contemptible to suffer wrong than to perpetrate it.
- Of course, Callicles would claim that it is more contemptible to suffer wrong and only social convention makes us think otherwise.



- Aristotle says (II.6) that theft is an action whose very name implies that it is wrong; there cannot be justifiable theft. However, we must ask whether 'theft' is necessarily a moral word. It could also be considered purely descriptive and thus Aristotle's justification for why theft is wrong can be brought into question.
- Nietzsche does not discuss theft but dismisses Christian-European morality and does not impose any restrictions on what the free spirit or commander may do (however, we may certainly question whether the desperate shoplifter really constitutes a free spirit or commander). As with Callicles, we may question whether the behaviour Nietzsche's philosophy appears to sanction is sustainable.
- Murdoch's philosophy implies that there is a right answer to such moral dilemmas and that the answer may be discovered through transcending the ego and seeing things as they really are. However, this response relies on a supposition that there is a way things really are and that we can be sure we can comprehend it. Murdoch may also be critical of stealing because it cultivates, or is a demonstration of, self-interest. Yet, in such circumstances, couldn't it be argued that it is in our best interests to act out of self-interest?

Many students misinterpreted this question. Most students outlined how their chosen philosophers would respond to Jones' advice or evaluated Jones' advice from the chosen philosophers' perspectives rather than evaluating the philosophers' responses to the advice. A significant number of students confused the directive to evaluate the question and instead provided a statement of agreement or disagreement with the views of the chosen philosophers. Although most students were able to accurately identify how the philosophers would respond to the advice, particularly if the philosophers selected were Socrates and Callicles, some students wrote that Aristotle would agree with the advice as it represented a 'mean' between excess and deficiency. Although such an error is understandable, it is a misreading of Aristotle's philosophy and meant the students could not be awarded more than minimum marks.

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to provide a fully developed evaluation (which may or may not include an exposition of the philosophers' responses) for each chosen philosophers' arguments or viewpoints.

The following is an example of a high-scoring answer. Although some of the criticisms are not targeted at the arguments as precisely as they could be, this is still a very good response.

Callicles would suggest that it is the natural right of the strong to dominate the weak and if they have the desire to steal they should fulfil this desire. However because Callicles fails to distinguish between good and bad pleasures, it seems that doing this could result in greater suffering, such as being caught and punished by the police as well as having a guilty conscious (sic). Murdoch would suggest that to steal is to act out of self-interest, which is opposed to morality, and that if one has the desire to steal they should 'unself' to see if it's the right thing to do – which is dictated by the good. However Murdoch makes the assumption that there is a transcendent good, a fallible point which requires a leap of faith. She also suggests that we can transcend our selfish egos, however perhaps she underestimates the amount of self-interest in humanity and it may not be possible for humans to achieve an objective view of morality.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	3	14	40	44	2.3

This question required students to discuss the nature of the relationship (or lack of relationship) between stealing and the good life and to justify their response. Students were under no obligation to refer to the set texts although many did.

Overall, student performance on this question was strong; however, a significant number of students referred to their own opinions ('I think there is no relationship between stealing and the good life because I think stealing is morally wrong') rather than providing arguments to support their claims. Some students simply repeated the response given in Question 1, Section B. Students who did this could not be awarded any marks for their response.

Following is an example of a high-scoring answer. This is a sophisticated response, notable in that it distinguishes between survival and the good life. The brevity and succinct nature of this response should be noted.

I believe that stealing can be part of the good life. If one were 'desperate' as Jones indicates, stealing could be the only way to stay alive. And while staying alive is certainly not the whole of the good life it is a pre-requisite for it, making stealing in some situations permissible.



Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	2	8	20	24	25	14	6	3.3

This question required students to discuss how we can know how we ought to behave given apparent differences of opinion and to then justify their response. Students were under no obligation to refer to the set texts although many did.

This was a complex question that many students appeared to struggle with. Rather than discussing the question of how can we know how we ought to behave, a significant number of students offered prescriptions for how we should behave. Many students evoked relativism in their response or contradicted themselves, asserting that we cannot know how we ought to behave and following this assertion with a list of unsupported prescriptions. A significant number of students included unjustified assumptions in their response. The most successful answers engaged with the issue of apparent differences of opinion concerning the good life and then provided a carefully argued discussion of how, given these differences, we can (or cannot) know how we ought to behave.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response. This response is notable for the way in which the student has thoughtfully engaged with the question.

We can never really know how we ought to behave. Even if there was one objective good and a way to behave in order to achieve it, it would be impossible to know if there was one or if we were behaving in the right way to find it. Opinions differ greatly on how to find the good life. It could be that, in adopting a relativist viewpoint, the good life is different for different people, so how we ought to behave is dependant on our own nature. If this were so it would appear that the best way to understanding how you should live is through understanding yourself and personal contemplation, as philosophers like Socrates and Aristotle suggest (although Socrates believed in objective good, Aristotle is a relativist). Alternatively we could compare different moralities over history and in different cultures to find common trends which might suggest to us a way we are supposed to behave. This would never be completely conclusive however since most moralities are constructed with a view to protecting society, so it may not be personally relevant to the way one should behave in seeking the good life.

Section C

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	6	16	34	26	19	2.4

'I think, therefore I am' (Cogito, ergo sum).

- Descartes reasons that although he cannot trust the testimony of his senses or the authorship of his thoughts (as he may be deceived by a malicious demon), he must at least be conscious in order to doubt or be deceived. As he is thinking, he must exist or, as he puts it elsewhere, *cogito, ergo sum*.

Possible points for evaluation of this argument included the following.

- If an evil demon can fool him on simple arithmetic such as $2 + 3$ (as he suggests in the *First Meditation*), then the logic of the *cogito* could be vulnerable too.
- Is Descartes entitled to say 'I' think? After all, all that Descartes has demonstrated is that there are thoughts, not that there is an 'I' having them.
- Descartes' famous quote is often accused of being a tautology – his existence is already presupposed in the statement 'I think'.
- As memory is not to be trusted, can Descartes be sure that the 'I' of which he is certain now is the same as the previous one? If not, how significant is this new knowledge?
- Descartes has already acknowledged that he cannot be certain of the authorship of his thoughts. How can he therefore be certain of his conclusion?

I am essentially a 'thinking thing.'

- Descartes cannot be certain that he has a body; however, he does know that he thinks and that thought cannot be separated from him. Strictly, he is only a 'thing that thinks.'

Possible points for evaluation of this argument included the following.

- Descartes moves from 'I know only that I am a thinking thing' to 'I know that I'm only a thinking thing'. This is problematic. I may know that I have a sister but does this follow that I have only a sister? Couldn't my essential nature (like my family) contain items of which I am unaware?
- One such item might be the central nervous system (including the brain). Perhaps the thinking self, whether we realise it or not, is identical to this physical thing.



- Descartes says that 'thinking alone is inseparable from me'. This implies that he thinks, or is conscious, for the whole time that he exists. Conversely, if he was to stop thinking he would cease to exist. Is this plausible?
- As with the first argument, Descartes could be accused of jumping to conclusions – is he really justified in saying 'I am a thinking thing when all that he has really demonstrated is that thought exists'?

The lessons of the piece of wax

- In this section of the text, Descartes asks whether he can know himself better than he knows bodily things and uses the wax analogy to demonstrate. All the sensible qualities of the wax change after heating, yet he knows the wax remains. He concludes that it must be by 'mental scrutiny' alone that he can know this. Thus, his knowledge of existence and the nature of his mind is reinforced.

Possible points of evaluation for this argument included the following.

- It could be argued that our knowledge of the wax in its changed state is the product of experience rather than 'mental scrutiny'. Consider an individual who had never seen wax melted. Would he or she believe the solid and liquid wax is the same thing?
- How would we commonly judge that the same wax remains? Perhaps it is because we observe spatio-temporal continuity – the wax appears to occupy at continuous series of places at a continuous series of times.
- Does the observation of the wax really give Descartes 'even more distinct' knowledge of his mind? It could be argued that what he is really getting is further experience of one of its operations.

Most students were able to accurately identify one of the conclusions that Descartes reaches in the *Second Meditation* and detail the argument(s) for this conclusion. Although a significant number of students were able to provide sound evaluations for arguments, many students had difficulty matching evaluations to the appropriate argument – evaluations usually associated with the argument for the *cogito* were used for other arguments.

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to provide a detailed outline and develop an evaluation of one of the above arguments.

Following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Descartes argues that as he is thinking he must exist to think, regardless of whether the 'evil one' is deceiving him about the truth of his thoughts. Descartes summarizes this elsewhere with 'cogito, ergo sum' (thought therefore existence). However Descartes has previously admitted in the First Meditation that the 'evil one' could be tricking him on matters of simple arithmetic (such as $2+3=5$), so the logic he has used to confirm his own existence could be false as well, however intuitive it may seem.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	25	17	22	17	13	6	2.0

- Armstrong accepts the materialist outlook of the Behaviourists, but rejects the view that mental states may be identified with outward behaviour.
- He considers Rylean Behaviourism, which identifies mental states with dispositions to behave, but rejects this because it ignores the first person experience of a mental state (that something is 'going on').
- However, he does think that the Behaviourists were right to see a logical connection between mental states and behaviour, hence his conclusion that 'a mental state is a state of a person apt for producing certain ranges of behaviour'.

Possible points of evaluation for this argument included the following.

- Does every mental state have a strong connection with a particular range of behaviour? What about an idle daydream or a decision to say the first thing that comes into your mind?

Most students appeared to find this question challenging. Many students identified Armstrong with Behaviourism or Rylean Behaviourism. A significant number of students evoked the analogy of brittleness only to use it inappropriately (for example, attributing to Armstrong the view of mental states that it is used to enunciate). Many students also struggled to evaluate the arguments and a significant number of students provided no evaluation at all.

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to detail how Armstrong arrives at his conclusion and provide a developed evaluation of his argument.



Following is an example of a high-scoring answer. Although it contains some inaccuracies and the exposition is a little convoluted, it is still a good response.

Armstrong believes that crude Behaviourism, which identifies the mind with nothing other than behaviour, is overlooking the fact that one may, for example, be 'angry' while exhibiting no outward behaviour. Amendments to Behaviourism that claim mental states are dispositions to behave to (sic) fail: in glass, for example, 'brittleness' is a disposition to break easily, but it is actually a physical state of the glass that causes the glass to break, and thus mental states are actually causal states of the brain. I agree with Armstrong that mental states are causal states, because this holds true to first person experience; when one is angry it does seem that one, however fleetingly, thinks and then acts as a result of this thinking. However, whether these states are purely physical is questionable. The existence of apparently non-spatial, first-person qualia changes this view

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	17	12	16	16	19	12	9	2.8

Armstrong's case

- Armstrong thinks that in the search for truth, only in science do we find that people eventually reach substantial intellectual consensus. In philosophy, religion, morality, literature and art, learned people have failed to achieve consensus about disputed questions.
- Armstrong argues that we should grant special authority to a discipline that can achieve a consensus.
- Armstrong also raises the point that recent advances in molecular biology and neurophysiology give us good reason to believe that a purely physical account of human beings is possible.

The dualist response

- There are non-scientific ways of knowing things. We know our own mental states by introspection and nobody else can know a person's mental states in the direct way that they do.
- Although advances in biological sciences can tell us a great deal about the workings of the brain, there is a great deal about the operations of the brain that science cannot tell us.
- The scientific view is only one account of the human mind. There are other explanations for what the mind is and many religions agree that it is spiritual. This, together with the point above, invites the question of whether or not science really is the best account of mind we have.

Possible points for discussion included the following.

- How important is consensus? A minority view may be based on sound reasons whereas the view of the majority may be in error.
- Also, consensus is no guarantee that the view posited is the best view. Consensus can often be influenced by discourses privileged at the time.
- Across cultures and throughout history there has also been a great deal of consensus in favour of dualism.
- As Armstrong himself admits, science may achieve consensus in its own sphere (the physically observable and measurable, i.e. empirical, part of reality) but does this give it any authority in other spheres? Hasn't Armstrong already pre-supposed that the mind is physical by concluding it is something that science is competent to pronounce on?
- Armstrong himself is advancing a philosophical view (about the authority of science) that may not achieve consensus but that he is sure is correct.
- Science has told us a great deal about the mind and there is a great deal of evidence to support the view that mind and brain are synonymous; for example, brain injuries, the effects of drugs and alcohol on personality and the reactions produced when certain parts of the brain are stimulated.
- Then again, there is much that science has not been able to explain, such as paranormal phenomena and qualia, and although we can observe what brains do, we cannot yet observe the contents of the mind (privileged access).



Many students were able to identify why Armstrong claims that science provides reasons for rejecting Cartesian dualism accurately, although a significant number of students simply stated it was because science ‘reaches consensus’. When responding to the second part of the question, many students did not address Armstrong’s argument for the authority of science and instead discussed how dualism might dispute the claims of Physicalism. This misunderstanding was also evident in student discussions of who has the stronger case; a significant number of students reflected on the Physicalism/dualism debate rather than Armstrong’s claims for the authority of science.

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to outline Armstrong’s argument for the authority of science and outline why a dualist might dispute Armstrong’s conclusion. Students also needed to provide a statement of response as to who has the stronger case and some justification for this response.

Section D

Question chosen	0	1	2	3
%	2	70	18	10

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	4	3	6	7	10	10	10	11	7	6	5	5	6	4	3	2	6.7

Question 1 was by far the most popular of the three essay questions offered on this year’s examination. Students who responded to this question were able to provide reasonably accurate expositions of Plato’s, Kuhn’s and Popper’s arguments; however, many students muddled the views of Kuhn and Popper. Some students appeared to struggle to contextualise the arguments outlined in terms of the question: although the views of the philosophers may have received detailed exposition, the question of whether science progresses towards truth was either ignored or simply implied via the exposition of the arguments. It is important that students remember the significance of analysis when outlining the arguments and viewpoints expressed in the set texts.

Most students who responded to Question 2 were able to provide accurate and detailed discussions of the problem of demarcation. However, many students struggled with their evaluation of Popper’s distinction. Most students used the examples provided to elaborate on this distinction rather than to evaluate it, and many students simply did not appear to have the depth of knowledge the task required.

Question 3 was the least popular of the three questions. Students who chose this question appeared to struggle to fit their knowledge of the texts to the question. A significant number of students discussed the relationship between knowledge and truth rather than the philosophers’ confidence in our intellectual powers and a number of students produced inaccurate expositions of the arguments in an attempt to accommodate the needs of the question.

The essay questions imply that all essays will engage at some level in analysis and critical discussion of the relevant texts and produce a reasoned judgment about the arguments and viewpoints they express. All essays should contain an exposition of arguments, viewpoints or concepts, provide evaluations of these arguments, viewpoints and concepts and use concrete counter-examples.

The assessment criteria and some possible solution pathways for each question are listed below.

Assessment criteria

Expression

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



Achievement level

- 0 The student did not reach level 1.
- 1 The student expressed some basic ideas but it was not always clear what the argument is trying to convey. The use of language was not appropriate to philosophy.
- 2 The student presented some ideas in an organised manner. There was some clarity of expression, but the argument could not always be followed. The use of language was not always appropriate to philosophy.
- 3 The student presented ideas in an organised way and the development of the argument could be followed easily. 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 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?

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Achievement level

- 0 The student did not reach 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

- His analogy of the cave suggests that he did think that we could, in principle, come to know the Forms, the 'things in themselves', but what he suggests elsewhere indicates that we do not know the Forms completely until death.
- Nevertheless, what he says suggests that we can progress towards 'absolute truth'. That is, that there is a timeless and unchanging truth about nature and the good, similar to the timeless and unchanging truth of mathematics.
- It is possible that, if one thinks that science only tells us about empirical and changing things, one would see Plato as holding that we can only have opinion and belief about science (at the second stage of the Line).

Possible points for discussion

- Plato's theory of knowledge is dependent on the truth of his metaphysics.
- It seems odd to privilege what Plato defines as knowledge over the findings of science, which can be tested and proved reliable when acted upon.
- Plato might say that empirical science can never progress towards truth but we seem to know much more about the world and ourselves than we did a century ago. Wouldn't this suggest science is progressing towards truth?

Popper

- He says that we can know that a given theory is false, because a given predicted result is absent, but we cannot know that a theory is true. Induction is not adequate, as confirming instances may be too easy to find.
- However, we can say that one theory is better than another. This is not a matter of how much it can explain (such as 'pseudo-science'), but of its making (and surviving?) 'risky' predictions. 'The more a theory forbids, the better it is.' This would seem to suggest that science is making some kind of progress.
- Thus, Einstein's theory of gravitation proved better than Newton's.
- Even the observations that, for Popper, seem to give us knowledge – that certain things have not happened, and therefore that a given theory is false – might be justifiably downplayed if the theory they contradict is established well enough.

Possible points for discussion

- Although it might appear that science is progressing with each surviving theory, there is always the possibility of the theory being disproved in the future. Thus, rather than moving towards truth, perhaps we are only learning more and more about what we don't know.

Kuhn

- He says that what we call modern scientific knowledge is 'a wonderfully adapted set of instruments' for understanding and manipulating the world. This set has evolved in accordance with the cycle of 'normal science': crisis, paradigm change, new normal science, crisis and so on. But it does not evolve towards any set goal or 'permanent fixed scientific truth'.

Possible points for discussion

- Is Kuhn's depiction of science accurate? Even Kuhn himself acknowledges that elements of the redundant theory are maintained in revolution and that we seem to know more about the world and ourselves than we did a century ago.
- Some scientists would assert that science is moving towards an end point (unification theory).



Question 2

Outline Popper's distinction between science and 'pseudo-science'

- The question he addresses is not that of when a theory is true or acceptable (science often errs, and pseudo-science may stumble on the truth), but of how science differs from pseudo-science.
- Is it a matter of science's empirical (inductive) method? This is not enough; a pseudo-science such as astrology may appeal to evidence based on observation (horoscopes and biographies).
- Some theories, popular in the early twentieth century, had very impressive explanatory power: whatever happened always confirmed them. But this apparent strength was in fact their weakness.
- To count as genuinely scientific, a theory must be falsifiable – that is, it must be 'incompatible with certain possible results of observation'. If no conceivable event would refute it, it is non-scientific.
- Some genuinely testable theories, when found to be false, may be 'rescued' by ad hoc changes. Such rescuing of a theory (the 'conventionalist twist') comes at the price of destroying, or at least lowering, its scientific status.
- 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.

Students are asked to discuss Popper in the light of at least two of five cases. The four discussions below are Popper's.

Einstein's relativity

- His theory of gravitation held that heavy bodies like the sun attract light. This means that a star near the sun would appear to have a different position in the sky from its actual placement. Eddington confirmed this by comparing photographs taken during an eclipse (when such stars are visible) with ones taken at night (when the sun is not there to 'bend' their light). The prediction was falsifiable, and also risky, as it conflicted with what people would have expected before Einstein.

Marx's Theory of History

- Popper does not say much here about Marx, referring us to a chapter of his other book *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. In that chapter, he says that according to Marx, the material means of production totally determine social relations, which in turn totally determine ideological beliefs. In post-revolution Russia, however, the ideology led to enormous efforts to modernise the means of production. Popper sees this as a 'striking refutation of Marx'.
- Popper says that some early Marxist accounts did make testable predictions, which were, in fact, falsified. However, instead of accepting that the theory had been refuted, they re-interpreted both the theory and the evidence to make them agree. The theory became irrefutable, but lost its scientific status.
- However, it could be argued that, like Marx's theory of history, many theories we consider scientific have been 'ad-hoc-ed' in a similar fashion.

Freud's psychoanalysis and Adler's 'Individual Psychology'

- Popper says that both theories are simply non-testable, irrefutable. Every conceivable case of human behaviour could be interpreted in the light of either theory.

Darwinian evolution

- Does this theory meet Popper's criterion of falsifiability? Can we set up experiments to test it? What would count as a falsification of it?
- One suggestion is that it is falsifiable in the following way: it 'predicts' that (if fossils exist at all) there should be fossils of simple and transitional life forms. Such fossils might have been absent, but they are in fact plentiful.
- Further, although Darwin did not know about genes, modern genetics (including experimentation with mutations) explores the mechanism by which evolution might occur.
- What about the challenge from 'creationists'? If their appeal is to religious authority (for example, the Bible), this does not mean that evolution is unscientific. Alternatively, they sometimes argue that evolution is scientifically implausible but again, this does not mean that it is unscientific.

Question 3

Plato

- Philosophers have knowledge rather than (mere) opinion or belief.
- These are 'different faculties', such as sight and hearing, and so must have 'different domains'. The domain of knowledge (i.e. reality) can't be accessible to opinion.



- 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 the dream's resemblance to reality for reality itself, as do the 'lovers of sounds and sights'.

Possible points for discussion

- 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 and so on. 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. In this way, they resemble the truths of mathematics and logic.
- But is knowledge of beauty, or goodness, really like knowledge of mathematics? (Are our aesthetic and moral beliefs somehow necessarily true?)
- Even if we accept the Forms, why accept that they're more real than the things that 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're 'permanent and unchanging', but any comfort this gives may be offset by some doubt as to their existence.
- How is the (true) philosopher to know when he or she has correctly grasped the 'heavenly model'? Does it help to say that ability to grasp it is the test of a true philosopher?
- Philosophers of the sort Plato admires may be lovers of knowledge, but does this guarantee that they have it?

Kuhn

- A paradigm is (roughly) a framework of concepts, beliefs, and procedures within which scientific work ('normal science') takes place. Paradigm change (for example, the Copernican, the Galilean, and the Newtonian) occurs in response to a **crisis**, usually one that has been long developing; 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.
- When the paradigm does change, some old problems may be banished, but the number of problems solved and the precision of the solutions will continue to grow, due to the nature of the scientific community.
- So scientific progress of a sort will inevitably occur. But there need not be progress of another sort: we may have to abandon the idea that changes of paradigm carry scientists closer and closer to the truth.
- The developmental process is one of evolution from primitive beginnings through stages with increasingly detailed and refined understandings of nature. But this does not make it a process of evolution **toward** anything. We may be used to seeing science as drawing constantly nearer to some goal set by nature, but must there be any such goal?
- Compare Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection. What bothered many people was not the notion of species change, nor our possible descent from apes, but the idea that evolution is not a process directed to any goal set by God or nature.
- Similarly, there is selection within the scientific community of the fittest way to practise future science. The sequence of such selections produces the highly adapted set of instruments we call modern scientific knowledge, and successive steps bring more articulation and specialisation. In each case, there may be no set goal.

Possible points for discussion

- Does Kuhn overlook our observational knowledge of many facts, which endure through paradigm changes, for example, astronomy?
- Aren't many theories so well confirmed that they count as knowledge? For example, the heliocentric theory of our solar system as opposed to the geocentric one.
- What about the science of mathematics? Is Kuhn overlooking the important and constant knowledge we possess here?



The following is an example of a high-scoring response to Question 1. Although at times, the essay becomes muddled and the student appears to have had some trouble addressing his or her knowledge of Popper to the needs of the question, the response is notable for its detailed exposition of the arguments and viewpoints of the philosophers and its consistent attempt to engage in sustained evaluation of these arguments and viewpoints. The student has also worked hard to bring the discussion back to the question.

Note: This essay is unusually long and students are not expected to produce work of this length.

Does science progress towards truth? Both Plato and Popper provide opposing views on this issue – Plato argues that science, due to its foundations in the empirical world, cannot provide us with any kind of truth, while Popper contends that science progresses toward provisional truth until falsified. In this essay I will critically compare the views of both philosophers, analyzing and evaluating their positions. I will argue that Popper essentially provides us with the most compelling way in which to conceive of truth, but his conception of science does not necessarily entail progression towards this.

Plato argues that truth or reality is the eternal, immutable Forms. The Forms are perfect concepts, be it of justice, beauty or something much more mundane, such as the form of a table. They are the perfect, essential idea of something. All particular objects we perceive with our senses are mere reflections of these forms, hence their characterisation as 'shadows' in the allegory of the cave. This brings us to consider that science, due to both its subject matter and its methodology, does not progress towards any kind of Platonic truth. Science is concerned with the world of the particulars – it categorises, draws conclusions and develops theories based on observations of the physical world. Even abstract theories, such as Einstein's relativity, have their basis in empirical observation. Thus, as science is not concerned with the Forms, it does not progress towards truth. Furthermore, it has its basis in a 'cognitive loop' between empiricism and rationalism, and is thus fundamentally reliant upon empirical methodology. This is contrary to Plato's view that truth is only attainable via dialectical rationality. Thus we can see that according to Plato science does not progress toward, nor can it provide us with, any kind of truth.

Should we accept Plato's conception of truth and its implications for scientific progression? For three main reasons his theory seems unconvincing (sic). First, his Theory of the Forms and thus conception of the truth is somewhat problematic as it suffers from an infinite regress, commonly known as the Third Man Argument. If I add a form to its particulars, I am required to postulate the existence of a new form to secure the identity of the group and the things it has in common. This process continues ad infinitum and it becomes impossible to secure the identity of anything, and hence we cannot entirely accept his conception of truth. Second, the problem of new inventions presents an issue for the forms. If something new is invented – for example a television – is a new form created or does one already exist? The Forms seem an insufficient metaphysical theory in a world subject to change and progress. Last, the implication that science cannot provide us with any kind of truth and is instead mere 'belief' seems contrary to common experience. Our faith in scientific research – through medical advances, treatments, etc – relies upon the assumption that science is able to give us some kind of truth. It seems counter-intuitive to claim that something that has such great pragmatic use in our every day lives cannot be afforded the status of being true or even of progressing toward truth.

Popper, unlike Plato, does not provide an argument for any sort of absolute truth. Instead, he claims that scientific truth is dependent upon what we conceive of as scientific truth. Science, to Popper, progresses through conjecture and refutation, with provisional truth lying in a theory yet to be falsified. He attempts to remove the problem of induction from scientific progress by claiming that science progresses through what is essentially a modus tollens deductive argument (if p then q, not p therefore not q). Scientific theories are thus developed and afforded provisional truth until falsified. It could be said that this process of falsification acts to remove all theories that are 'not true' and thus science progresses from provisional truth toward a more absolute conception through discarding false theories. However a theory's scientific status does not make it in any more true than a non-scientific theory, so science, although it does progress toward provisional truth, does not provide us with any greater conception of truth than a pseudo-scientific theory. Therefore, it seems that according to Popper science progresses toward provisional truth until falsified.

Can we accept Popper's notion of scientific progression and its relationship to provisional truth? For three main reasons his thesis seems problematic. First, it suffers from the problem of observation. Just as in seeking verification our observations are affected by our knowledge, beliefs and even our existence, so too are attempts to falsify affected. A scientist could select the wrong observational data and miss an instance where a theory could be falsified. Thus it seems that falsification is not as conclusive as Popper implies and perhaps science does not deserve to be described as progressing towards truth. Second, it seems that science, when moving through Popperian falsification, provides a deductive proof for what is not the case – not what is – and thus does not appear to progress toward the provisional truth Popper's theory suggests. Last, science does not seem to descriptively progress in the same manner Popper describes. For instance, Alfred Wegener, who postulated the theory of tectonic plates, observed that similarities in the coast lines of various continents were on different shifting 'plates.' However, this was deemed an irrelevant observation by the scientific world and was ignored. This case seems more in line with Kuhn's notion that what we select as scientific truth has nothing to do with the merit or truthfulness of the theory and everything to do with the willingness of the community to accept it. Thus science seems not to progress towards truth.

It seems that ultimately Popper provides us with a more adequate and pragmatically useful way in which to conceive of truth – and such that science is able to progress towards it. However Popper's account of the nature of scientific progression seems somewhat problematic.