

2022 VCE Philosophy external assessment report

General comments

The 2022 Philosophy Examination was accessible to students of all abilities with a range of question styles that encouraged clear and precise insights as well as some creative application of the philosophers prescribed in the study design.

Many students handled Section A exceptionally well, answering all questions with short, accurate responses. It is worth noting that most of the short-answer questions in the examination provided little scope for error and this meant that a precise and well-articulated knowledge of the content was rewarded. Students clearly struggled with questions that required active consideration of concepts on their own merit and their application to examples of their own making, such as Questions 2b. and 3b.

Similarly, Section B created some problems for students who struggled to accurately read and understand previously unseen philosophical ideas. While the questions in Section B were quite specific, the instructional notes required students to genuinely consider and apply the concepts from the included extracts, and this was rarely done well.

Finally, in Section C, students were given even greater scope for developing their own thoughts and criticisms in light of the included extracts and the philosophers studied. While many used this opportunity to present information about the philosophical viewpoints they were most comfortable with, high-scoring responses made insightful use of the ideas and concerns raised by the extracts to inform a discussion of the way the philosophers studied might provide perspective on our changing world.

Specific information

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

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what 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 resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

Section A

Question 1a.

Mark	0	1	2	Average
%	6	13	81	1.7

Most students understood enough about Callicles' philosophical thinking to recognise that his interest in pleasure and the unrestrained pursuit of it would necessitate an aversion to self-discipline. There were many

ways to illustrate this point and high-scoring responses tended to explain how the conventions that encourage self-discipline are the same conventions that seek to limit one's pursuit of desire. Moreover, many responses discussed Callicles' rebuff that a life of self-discipline would be akin to that of a stone or a corpse, detailing that a life without pleasure would be the equivalent of being dead. Responses that did not score well failed to fully explain Callicles' reasoning, merely stating that he prefers pleasure or that self-discipline is like death.

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

Callicles' claim that self-discipline is incompatible with the good life stems from his conception of the good life as the maximisation of pleasures. To Callicles, self-discipline would inhibit our desire to experience hedonistic pleasure and leave us with 'the life of a stone', whereby to not experience pleasure is like not living at all.

Question 1b.

Mark	0	1	2	Average
%	16	21	63	1.5

Like the previous question, most students clearly understood Socrates' interest in self-discipline. A variety of examples were used to support Socrates' position, ranging from his comments about the order of the universe and thus the necessity for self-discipline so as to align one with that order and ultimately live a good life, to detailed explanations of the leaky jar analogy with a focus on illustrating how the analogy is a critique of a life of indulgence, drawing out the importance of self-discipline for a sense of personal fulfilment.

Students who did not score well in this question often either failed to fully explain the ideas they were referring to, or confused Socrates' views with those of another philosopher, most commonly Aristotle.

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

Socrates states that it's worse to do wrong, than to have wrong done to you, because that ultimately leads to a corrupt soul if the wrong is unpunished. In order to not do wrong, you must exercise self-discipline. If you do commit wrongdoings, or your friends/family, it's essential to make sure they are punished so their soul does not become corrupt. A corrupt soul means you have an internal discord and not leading to a good life.

Question 1c.

Mark	0	1	2	Average
%	12	27	61	1.5

Here students were required to offer a justified opinion on which of the two viewpoints on self-discipline they preferred in the pursuit of a good life. While there were many great responses to this question it is worth noting that students who merely stated that they agreed with one philosopher because their viewpoint was 'better' or 'more convincing' than the other failed to fully engage with what was being asked of them.

A viewpoint is preferable or meritorious on the grounds of something it can achieve that another view cannot, or because of some problem it might avoid that other positions fall into. Students who kept this in mind consistently developed insightful answers.

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

I find Socrates' view to be more preferable over Callicles. This is because, contrary to Callicles' claim, nature prefers and benefits those organisms who can limit themselves and submit to self-discipline. For

instance, an organism - humans, per se - that are unable to discipline their desire for more resources, soon outstrip what is available and replenishable, as seen in ecological collapse.

Question 2a.

Mark	0	1	2	Average
%	43	14	43	1.0

Aristotle argues that the pursuit of honour is not the good life for only one strict reason: that it can be given or taken by others, which means that it is not the final end of action. Students who were able to explain the idea even if they did not use Aristotle's specific language around it scored highly. Many students who didn't score well made the mistake of applying Aristotle's 'mean' to the concept of honour or arguing that honour was not virtuous, neither of which are reasons why Aristotle argues that the pursuit of honour is not the good life.

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

Aristotle rejects the possibility that honour is the ultimate human good because it is something which is conferred by others; he believes that the ultimate good must be good in and of itself, rather than depending on the perception of other people, so honour cannot be the ultimate human good.

Question 2b.

Mark	0	1	2	3	Average
%	29	25	28	19	1.4

The question about whether honour has a place in the 21st century has three distinct elements. Students were not required to use the Aristotelean conception of honour, but they were required to demonstrate a full and consistent understanding of what they considered honour to be (prestige, respect, acknowledgement). Moreover, students had to provide a legitimate comment about 21st-century living, something that linked their discussion explicitly to life today. Finally, they needed to justify their assertion that honour did or didn't have value in the 21st century.

Because most students did not explain what they understood honour to mean they could not be awarded full marks. Moreover, it was quite common for students to vaguely gesture towards modern living without explicitly connecting the idea of honour in the context of being an influencer, a celebrity or someone targeted by the media. As such, many responses to this question missed one or two aspects required of a good response and either or both of these often led to students not clearly justifying their comment about whether or not honour remained relevant today.

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

The idea of honour does have a place in the 21st Century conception of the good life, are our technological interconnectiveness makes our reputations all the more significant and widespread. In an age of digital technology, the honour which we receive can be communicated to billions of people who can as such determine the way they interact with us in a way previously impossible. For instance, your honour and reputation can be accessed online by potential employers, altering one's material well-being.

Question 3a.

Mark	0	1	2	Average
%	13	23	64	1.5

In order to answer this question fully students were required to demonstrate that a meaningful life for Wolf was one where subjective interest met objective worth. Students should also have demonstrated a clear understanding of these two concepts: that subjective interest means the individual is drawn to the action by more than just pleasure, and it is something they deem worthy of their interest and love; and that objective worth is something more than others merely recognising the subjective interest as valuable to the individual but instead recognising its worth when viewed from nowhere.

Many students clearly lacked a detailed understanding of Wolf's conception of meaning and conflated her subjective interest with something more hedonistic, while also distorting her objective worth to mean something that is merely seen by others to have value.

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

Wolf's conception of meaningfulness is comprised of two aspects. She states that in order to achieve it one must do something they love that is worthy of love. In other words, spend their time doing an action that has subjective attractiveness and objective attraction (contributing to something other than yourself). She calls this the fitting fulfilment view.

Question 3b.

Mark	0	1	2	Average
%	14	22	64	1.5

Here students were asked to provide their own example of Wolf's meaningful life in practice. Many students clearly understood how malleable Wolf's theory of meaning could be and developed simple and effective examples such as being a doctor or working in a soup kitchen. However, there was a significant number of students who misread the question and offered one of Wolf's examples, which, despite being factually correct, was not what was being asked and could not be awarded marks.

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

One who cleans up beaches and finds satisfaction in it both does something they love, and is celebrated by their community, making it larger than themselves and worth loving.

Question 4a.

Mark	0	1	2	3	Average
%	9	12	28	51	2.2

Given the two claims 'Alex feels happy' and 'Alex is two metres tall', students were asked to explain which of the claims Nagel would recognise as 'more' subjective and why. Most students rightly noted that Alex's happiness was not objectively measurable and therefore was necessarily more subjective than Alex being two metres tall. Moreover, they explained how feelings relate, according to Nagel, specifically to the 'what-it-is-likeness' of being Alex, thus further obscuring it from any kind of objective observation.

Unfortunately, there were a number of responses that argued that being two metres tall was subjective because it involved a similar lived experience element and while the lived experience is certainly unique, the

statement was not that Alex feels two metres tall, but rather that he/she 'is' two metres tall, indicating observationally verifiable measurement.

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

According to Nagel, the claim that 'Alex feels happy' is more subjective. This is because his happiness is something that arises from his subjective experience as a human, his phenomenal consciousness and is part of 'what it is like' to be Alex. Nagel posits that the subjective experience of consciousness, such as happiness, cannot be explained in the same objective scientific terms as an objective fact like Alex's height which can be observed and understood.

Question 4b.

Mark	0	1	2	Average
%	24	28	48	1.2

This question asked students to explore which claim, according to Nagel, a physicalist must reject. The language of the question was not only explicit, but also telling of where the focus of the answer should be. It was not asking for a detailed description of how physicalists would deal with both claims, but rather why Nagel thinks one of these claims must be rejected. This meant that the scope of a high-scoring response here was quite narrow.

Students who recognised that physicalism relies on objective observations, which necessarily ignore subjective qualities, also generally realised that Alex feeling happy must be rejected because Alex's internal feelings are not required for a physicalist understanding of mind.

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

According to Nagel, the subjective claim that Alex feels happy must be rejected by a physicalist as the subjective element of experience, the phenomenal consciousness, cannot be explained merely through physical terms. It is the what-it-is-likeness of something that is subjective and individual, and it is not attainable through empirical (observational and sensory) experience.

Question 4c.

Mark	0	1	2	3	Average
%	17	19	40	24	1.7

The final part of Question 4 asked students to consider how Smart might respond to Nagel's position on the problem of subjectivity for physicalists. Students who rightly explored how Smart might reject subjective value as either a nomological dangler outside of scientific measurement or explained the semantic/ontological divide that he uses to explain why Alex's subjective feeling of happiness is really nothing over and above a brain process, handled this question well. However, many students who understood these ideas expressed them poorly or in an incomplete fashion.

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

Smart may respond to Nagel's views about the two claims by criticising that Nagel is confusing mere semantic differences between Alex reporting on sensation (happiness) that is a brain process and the language to describe his height. Differences in perceived logic of both statements do not entail ontological differences - just as 'lightning' and 'electrical discharge' are strictly identical despite the differences in how we talk about them.

Question 5a.

Mark	0	1	2	Average
%	26	24	50	1.2

In order to answer this question fully students needed to demonstrate how Hume's analogy of the theatre aligns with his vision of a self in perpetual flux. Thus, students who stated that the self was in flux and therefore it was like a theatre missed the point of the question, which was to explain how the theatre could be understood similarly to a self. Hume, for his part, merely argues that the constant shift of actors and movements throughout a performance, never coalescing into a singular thing without an observer's effort to link these diverse ideas into the semblance of a singular idea, is exactly how the self is formulated. Students who went the extra step and detailed how Hume warns against taking the idea too literally and arguing that the theatre itself is singular even if the performance is in flux demonstrated a deft understanding of Hume's thinking, but this was not required for a high-scoring response.

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

According to Hume the self is like a theatre because of the constantly changing impression, perception and ideas present in our mind from moment to moment, which is analogous with actors on a stage, entering, leaving, and moving about.

Question 5b.

Mark	0	1	2	3	Average
%	32	23	24	22	1.4

For a student to illustrate philosophical understanding they are required to do more than simply agree with a philosopher because of what the philosopher has said. In this question, students were asked to offer an opinion on Hume's view of personal identity, so merely stating that they agreed with Hume because of Hume's arguments was not sufficient for marks. Students who wanted to support a positive evaluation would have had to explain how Hume's views explain the self in a meaningful and convincing way, perhaps with an example of their own making. Similarly, students who chose to disagree with Hume's view could not simply disagree because they didn't like what Hume had to say. Unfortunately, many students answered this question by either supporting or disagreeing with Hume without any additional thinking.

High-scoring responses drew attention to the system of understanding seemingly required by Hume's view of personal understanding. In forming a continuous self, even falsely, there must be something that does the forming, and this implies a continuous identity of some kind. Moreover, many students used excellent examples to support this line of critical thinking about Hume's bundle of perceptions.

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

No, I do not agree. Hume bases his conclusion that there is no substantial enduring self on the premise that he cannot locate a continuous impression of such. Consider a camera taking a photo; although the camera's existence isn't evident within the photo, there must be one present in order to produce the photo. Similarly, although Hume cannot locate [a continuous self] one as such, there has to be a perceiver in order to produce perceptions.

Question 6

Mark	0	1	2	Average
%	27	29	45	1.2

Question 6 required students to understand the assumption being made by Locke in the example of Schwanda – that, because he values memory as the source of personal identity, whoever’s memories Schwanda has defines their personal identity (in this case Wanda’s memories).

Michaels has two distinct criticisms of Locke’s thinking around the Schwanda thought experiment – the Lockean circle. Firstly, that the claim Schwanda’s memories are Wanda’s requires the presumption that Schwanda is already Wanda in order to possess said memories, thus memories cannot be the sole support of identity if identity is required in order to possess memories, and secondly, the bodily identity implied by the muscle memory needed to ride a bike, that memories alone would not give Schwanda the ability to ride, some experiential element for their body would play an integral role.

Students could also have developed a longer response that used Michaels’ Dr Nefarious thought experiment to highlight the importance of the body, but this had to be then linked back to the problem raised around memories and Schwanda.

Many students seemed to misread the question and offered incomplete rehashes of the Schwanda thought experiment without linking the experiment to the problems it raises about memory and identity. Others did not connect the dots between the ideas outlined in the question and the ideas they developed in their answer.

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

Through Michaels Schwanda thought experiment she highlights that Locke's memory theory is circular. In that, for one to be conscious they must have memories and for one to have memories they must be conscious.

Section B

Section B, in general, gave students a wide scope to apply the philosophy they had studied to a nuanced and insightful set of ideas detailed by the extracts. Students who had read the extracts carefully and then used those ideas to inform a discussion of the central concerns of each question scored highly. However, a lot of students struggled with new material and misread or missed essential parts of the extract in forming their responses.

Additionally, a number of responses made little to no reference to the extract material at all, instead opting to explain one philosopher’s views and then the other’s before offering their own opinion. It is also worth stating that students should always frame their opinions in the form of arguments with support – merely stating that they ‘believe’ that things should be one way or another lacks philosophical merit.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	4	4	9	12	14	16	14	13	8	5	1	4.9

The key takeaway from the Parnia extract was the suggestion that there is no plausible biological mechanism to account for the mind or consciousness, but that it could be an ‘as-yet-undiscovered scientific entity’. Students who understood that this meant that Parnia was still offering a physicalist explanation of mind, just one that didn’t align with Smart’s, generally handled this question quite well. There were some interesting responses that, when discussing Parnia, aligned their ideas with Nagel’s suggestion that a new

language of science might be necessary to satisfactorily answer the problem of subjectivity, although this link to Nagel was not necessary for a high-scoring answer.

Students who were able to extrapolate that Smart would challenge Parnia's dismissal of synaptic brain activity because it was unnecessarily complex were on the right track. Moreover, a high-scoring response would recognise that Descartes could not accept Parnia's entire position because of its basis in the physical. He would agree that the mind cannot be synaptic brain activity but challenge the idea of it being an undiscovered scientific entity because the mind is non-extended and thus not measurable in a scientific manner.

Finally, a complete answer needed to offer some personal commentary on the question that was well thought out and developed. Students who handled this well made use of the ideas they'd developed regarding the philosophers' arguments about the question and then layered in their own position in light of those other ideas.

Many students misread Parnia and ignored the reference to 'scientific' in his suggestion that the mind might be an 'as-yet-undiscovered scientific entity', thus they suggested that Descartes would agree with Parnia while Smart would disagree. More students ignored Parnia altogether and simply discussed Smart and Descartes in isolation of why Parnia posed the idea that the mind was not synaptic brain activity.

Finally, a significant number of students struggled to express their views as anything more nuanced than simply agreeing with one philosopher or another. It is important that students recognise that agreeing with a philosopher means reckoning with the limitations of their perspective. More often than not, students did not reasonably manage such limitations (like Smart's dependence on reductive thinking or Descartes' inability to reconcile his metaphysics with the measurements available through science). The response below reasonably explains why 'undiscovered scientific entities' are unacceptable to Smart because they would produce 'nomological danglers'. This statement alone connects a deep understanding of how Smart thinks about the mind/body problem with the concerns raised in Parnia's extract and explains why the student accepts the use of Occam's Razor as a means to connect modern developments in brain scanning and drug administration to understanding of the mind through the scientific method.

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

Parnia seems to support that consciousness could possibly be an undiscovered scientific entity which may not be produced by synaptic brain activity.

*Smart would disagree with Parnia, instead suggesting that consciousness **is** brain activity. Smart reduces consciousness to a physical basis and activity – suggesting that mental states of pain for example **are** brain processes. His reason for refuting undiscovered scientific entities are due to reasons of parsimony and simplicity, and although we may not currently have a complete understanding of consciousness, like Parnia suggests, if there was to be some other explanation, it would lie outside of the laws of physics – producing nomological danglers. Smart therefore uses Occam's Razor arguing for consciousness as synaptic brain activity.*

Descartes would argue that consciousness is something other than synaptic brain activity, yet stresses that it is discovered currently through introspection. Through recognising that his consciousness is a thinking thing separated from the material world that the wax lies in, Descartes displays his dualistic model as one where physical activity does not produce consciousness but rather an immaterial substance. Therefore, for Descartes, consciousness is not a scientific entity nor synaptic brain activity.

I disagree with Descartes that consciousness is separate from synaptic brain activity. With the recent advancements in modern neuroscience, thinking does seem to reside in the brain. Like Smart, I believe that although current scientific understanding may not know the specifics around consciousness, it is evident that through brain scans and administrations of drugs to treat mental illness, consciousness does lie in the brain and is partially discovered through modern science.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	4	3	7	11	14	15	16	13	8	6	2	5.1

Responses to Question 2 required a firm understanding of the extract by Fuchs, as well as an adaptive knowledge of how both Locke and Michaels would respond to the question about whether too much emphasis is placed on memory as the criterion for personal identity considering the case of dementia patients.

Students generally wrote well about Locke and Michaels and their expressive knowledge was often well supported. There were significant repetitions between students' answers to Question 6 of Section A and this response, and while this was often fine, there were students who made mistakes in Question 6 that were then repeated in this question. Moreover, while a relevant critique of Locke's view that memory is essential to personal identity could be useful in this extended response, often this directed students' attention away from the central question being asked.

High-scoring responses made good use of Fuchs' discussion of 'intercorporeality' and 'interaffectivity' in order to legitimise their discussion of the problems raised by Fuchs about identity based entirely on memory. Furthermore, by grounding their response in the extract provided from Fuchs, students were almost guaranteed to address the question in a meaningful and insightful manner.

Many responses fell into a generic recitation of Locke's views, followed by Michaels' views, followed by an opinion that was often poorly or barely justified. Such responses, which ignored the extract, often struggled to insightfully explore the implications of the question.

Finally, when asked to give 'your own justified response', students should be mindful of repeating any philosopher's views uncritically. The purpose of this aspect of an extended response is to provide opportunity for a student to demonstrate how they have come to view the material they have learnt in an applied scenario, and how they reason and support their thinking. Unfortunately, numerous responses to this question offered little or no commentary of the students' own making.

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

Fuchs explains how individuals with dementia exemplify how personhood does not come from simple factual memory, but built-in experiences, environments and processes absorbed by the body, which remain despite their loss of declarative memory. Locke would likely state that individuals with dementia do not have personhood, for he dismisses the body as a condition of personal identity, stating that bodily continuity is simply consistent with being the same 'human'. Memory, however, facilitate the continuity of consciousness over time needed to connect past and present iteration of a person, and is therefore necessary and sufficient for personal identity. As dementia-affected people have memories decreased, they do not meet Locke's condition for personhood, despite having bodily continuity which is irrelevant to personal identity for Locke.

In contrast, Michaels states that overly psychological theories of self like Locke's ignore the important role our bodies clearly play in our self-identification. Furthermore, her statement that 'brains do not learn to ride bicycles, people do' illustrates her stance that Locke ignores the extent to which we are unconsciously contained within the body's physical system. The knowledge of riding bikes is thought to be something residing within the body, for it is a bodily activity, thus this is linked to the 'body memory' referred to by Fuchs. Michaels would take the case of dementia as demonstrative of the limitations of the memory as a condition of personal identity, for procedures and experiences are clearly built up by our body, not just our psyche, therefore may be able to provide the connection between versions of self throughout time without the aid of declarative memory.

I believe that memory is a fallible measure of personhood. There are many existing problems with this, tied to Locke's theory. For example, it seems counter-intuitive that not to remember an everyday act like

brushing my teeth renders me a different person to the one who performed it. The case of dementia presents a further problem with this theory, for it provides an example of how factual memory may not be the only way of connecting an individual with their past, and that this process may be partly reliant on the body. I therefore believe the body at least forms part of identity, and that more work must be done to determine the degree of this.

Section C

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	3	1	2	4	5	5	7	8	9	10	8	7	7	6	6	5	3	2	1	1	1	9.2

The 2022 VCE Philosophy examination gave students the choice between two accessible and broadly relatable extracts that encouraged quick thinking and deft use of their philosophical knowledge. The scope of the two extracts was broad enough to give students an array of choices about how they might focus their essay, but also provided enough direction to suggest a structure.

Students who scored highly in the essay component of the exam made specific and well-developed use of the extracts in the construction and delivery of their response. Moreover, they kept their focus tightly managed to avoid bringing in superfluous material that would distract from their argumentative contention. Having a well-informed understanding of the philosopher necessary for their essay, and any additional philosophers they chose to bring into the discussion, was a must, as well as using the mandated philosopher meaningfully in terms of the ideas and arguments presented in the extracts.

However, many students were clearly unsure about the depth of discussion expected of them. Moreover, their ability to weave the concepts articulated in the extracts into a meaningful exploration of what it means to live well was often lacking. As such, many essays took the form of a systematic information dump about the philosopher or philosophers the student felt comfortable writing about, with some vague allusions to ill-defined technological influences.

Work with Nietzsche, in particular, was rarely more than generalities about his views on the master and slave, and these discussion points regularly lacked any critical commentary or the nuance evident in Nietzsche's philosophy. Similarly, Aristotle was often poorly handled, and students often discussed technology as though it was a kind of 'mean' that should be handled neither in the pursuit of excess nor deficiency. Aristotle is very clear that the mean only applies to virtues, thus technology itself is not a virtue but rather how and why we use it may fall under the mantle of one's general virtuous pursuits. Finally, it was clear that students were most comfortable with applying Wolf's fitting-fulfilment theory to the discussion of how technology has threatened the way we manage and use our attention, but even this often lacked specificity and depth.

Students who sought to detail all the things they had learnt this year rarely had a clear through-line for their thinking that could turn their essay from an expression of information into an exploration of philosophical ideas and implications. Having a clear and focused goal for the essay was consistently a mark of good thinking and regularly amounted to high-scoring responses. Whereas imprecise, incorrect and vague or general assertions without reason or support were the hallmarks of responses that were unable to satisfy much of the essay criteria.

The following example is by no means perfect, but it illustrates the kind of philosophical writing and targeted thinking that high-scoring responses often encompassed. The nuanced use of Nietzschean thinking informs a wider consideration of the implications of Anderson's extract and the student used this to make a commentary on the risks associated with present technology use. While there was certainly room for greater use of, and more specificity with, Nietzsche's thinking, the way it was applied demonstrated a sincere effort to grapple with the question.

The following is an example of high-scoring response to Question 1.

*What is the role of technological development in the good life, especially as it pertains to AI and digital technology? Anderson suggests that necessary to the good life is a degree of **freedom**, being our agency to act on our own volition unimpeded or unswayed by the increasing presence of AI algorithms in our lives. Such technology is thus presented as harmful to us, in that their interconnectivity with other technologies means that the user must surrender to what is demanded of them in that sphere. Moreover, Anderson contends that in our current age, we have lost the independence to live without technologies' interference, making us **dependent** on them for success. In this, I will find that both Anderson and Nietzsche's likely response to technology's place in the good life are compelling.*

For Nietzsche, the digital space as illustrated by Anderson denies our full human nature – and thus potential for the good life – in restricting our choice. According to Nietzsche, within every individual is a dual nature of both creature and creator. The former is that which is only moulded by circumstance and fate, whilst the latter is that within us that empowers us to harness the multiplicity of our drives and revalue old values. By doing so, we are allowed the potential to enact all that we have within ourselves, essential to building the confidence of ourselves in the good life. As such, he would in all likelihood be dismayed over the relinquishing of one's agency to the volitions of technology, as our full nature to create and act individually is denied. Further, the loss of privacy ensuing from this stands against Nietzsche's claim that 'dark glasses' – a privacy and remove, is necessary to protect oneself from the damaging universal morality of the herd. He would condemn digital technologies' making people act in one certain way by acceding to what they are required to do by it also. This is as he claims that there is a natural order and hierarchy between people, and thus these should also flourish different standards by which each person acts and behaves. This natural expression of oneself is denied by Anderson's detailing of digital technology. Nietzsche therefore would caution against its place in the good life.

Ultimately, I find that Nietzsche's position on digital technology's development compelling in how it restricts our freedom and independence. This is the case because digital technology, as informed by AI-enhanced algorithms, harness our attentions in damaging ways. Such technology, for instance social media, diminishes our capacity to see through our volitions and ambitions by making our attentions malleable. Our goals that we typically ascribe to the life, such as learning a language, socialising, etc..., are human-oriented, unlike technology's goals that have replaced our own, such as to spend more time online, spend more on advertised products, and so forth. With a suite of sensory-stimulation, and a comprehensive understanding of psychology, technology such as social media uses LED displays, sounds, notifications, etc..., to capture our attentions. This is what philosopher of technology James Williams terms the 'Attention Economy', in that technology today commodifies and exploits our attentions for profit, with the result that we lose sight of what is good for us. It is for this reason that Netflix CEO – a company that employs AI-enhanced algorithms – Reed Hastings listed sleep as amongst one of his viral competitors. Whilst some might argue that this development allows for greater connectivity and interaction, this is mistaken in that technology undermines one's natural sense of self, as Nietzsche too contends. This is due to the digital environment being decontextualized – stripped of social, historical, cultural, or physical contexts that inform us of who we are. Instead, the digital sphere is one in which all is homogenised into one coalescence. A Harvard University study has found that 150 social connection is ideal for the good life, in contrast with the 2 billion made online. As such, technological acumen becomes the sole way we can distinguish ourselves. This is what philosopher of technology Byung Chul-Han describes as our being turned into 'projects' of technological advancement, rather than being 'subjects' of a heritage, culture, and environment. Thus, our natural sense of self is in addition compromised.

Therefore, insofar as digital technology, such as AIs and social media, undermines first our abilities to act on our own goods and attentions, and secondly prevents a more holistic notion of identity and self, Nietzsche's likely critique of technological development is compelling and cogent. From this, in order to preserve our independence and pursue the good life, technology such as described must be limited.

Essay assessment criteria

Knowledge and understanding of philosophical concepts, viewpoints, arguments and debates relevant to the topic

- To what extent did the student demonstrate knowledge of philosophical viewpoints and debates?
- How well did the student understand and explain philosophical arguments and concepts?

10–9	The student demonstrated knowledge that was comprehensive and in- depth and was used incisively to support arguments. Philosophical arguments and concepts were fully understood.
8–7	The student demonstrated a secure knowledge of this material. Philosophical arguments and concepts were largely understood.
6–5	The student demonstrated knowledge of philosophical issues, and concepts were generally understood.
4–3	The student displayed some knowledge of philosophical issues and there was a basic understanding of the concepts used.
2–1	The student demonstrated a superficial knowledge of philosophical issues but the student displayed only limited understanding of the concepts used.

Critical evaluation of ideas and arguments relevant to the topic

- Did the student evaluate the merits and limitations of selected arguments?
- How relevant was the evaluation?
- To what extent did the student express a relevant, personal response?

10–9	The student developed focused and critical ideas and arguments from a consistently held and well justified perspective relevant to the topic. Evaluation of the ideas and arguments was compelling or subtle, with strong evidence of personal reflection.
8–7	The student developed ideas and arguments from a consistently held perspective. Evaluation of the ideas and arguments was appropriate, thoughtful and convincing.
6–5	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.
4–3	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 that were relevant to the selected topic.
2–1	The student developed ideas and arguments in a basic way but there was little or no evaluation.

Selection and use of relevant material and appropriate examples to support the response

- To what extent did the student provide relevant supporting material?
- To what extent did the student provide appropriate examples?

5	The student made astute selections of philosophical material and examples.
4	The student selected philosophical material and examples that were mostly relevant.
3	The student made some use of relevant supporting material and examples.
2	The student made use of some supporting material and examples that were not always relevant or appropriate.
1	The students included little, if any, philosophical support material.

Development of a coherent and well-reasoned response that addresses the specific demands of the topic

- How well did the student understand the specific demands of the question?
- How relevant was the argument or discussion to the demands of the question?
- Was the argument or discussion coherent and was it developed in a meaningful way?
- To what extent did the student provide appropriate examples to support their line of reasoning?

10–9	The student showed a full understanding of the specific demands of the question by identifying material that was always relevant. The implications of this material were drawn out in a detailed analysis that provided coherent and meaningful development of the response. Examples were well chosen and compelling in their support of the argument. Counter-arguments were presented in a convincing way.
8–7	The student showed a clear understanding of the specific demands of the question by identifying relevant material and analysing it in a thoughtful way. Arguments linked together and were largely coherently developed in support of the student's contention. Examples directly supported the overall argument in a persuasive manner. Some counter-arguments were presented.
6–5	The student showed understanding of the specific demands of the question and identified material that was nearly always relevant but it was not always clear how it was being used to support the student's contention in a meaningful way. There was a sound analysis of this material. Examples were appropriate and gave support to the argument.
4–3	The student showed some awareness of the specific demands of the question and identified and analysed some relevant material. There was some development of arguments but they were not always focused or coherently expressed. Some appropriate examples were used.
2–1	The student showed little awareness of the specific demands of the question and identified relevant material in a limited way. The discussion was generally undeveloped and often irrelevant to the line of argument. There was little analysis and few or no examples were given.

Use of clear and precise language appropriate to philosophy

- 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?

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.
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.
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.
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.
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.