



MARKSCHEME

May 2010

PHILOSOPHY

Higher Level and Standard Level

Paper 1

21 pages

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Note to examiners

This markscheme outlines what members of the paper setting team had in mind when they devised the questions. The topics listed in the bullet points indicate possible areas candidates might cover in their answers. They are not compulsory points and not necessarily the best possible points. They are only a framework to help examiners in their assessment. Examiners should be responsive to any other valid points or any other valid approaches.

Using the assessment criteria

Candidates at both Higher Level and Standard Level answer **one** question on the Core Theme (Section A).

Candidates at Higher Level answer **two** questions on the Optional Themes (Section B), each based on a different Optional Theme.

Candidates at Standard Level answer **one** question on the Optional Themes (Section B).

Answers on the Core Theme and the Optional Themes are assessed according to the assessment criteria set out in the Subject guide.

SECTION A

Core Theme: What is a human being?

1. Adapted quote from Robert Penn Warren

The adapted quote articulates a concept of self in relation to others. The type of relationship, and the concept of the individual that allows or needs a type of dependency, might be areas for identification and discussion.

Key Points

- Approaches that make the self, individual or subject, primary, and those that make relationality, interdependence, intersubjectivity or “community” primary
- Existential concept of self (existence precedes essence)
- Substance (and other) dualisms
- Marxist/other political definitions of self
- Identity and gender
- Behaviourist explanations of self
- Psycho-analytic concepts of self
- Relations with others: symmetrical and asymmetrical
- Society and relationships with institutions
- Non-Western views of the “I”
- Post-modern linguistic definitions of the self
- I-Thou relationships as self-defining
- Concepts of self based on religious views
- Identity through public actions

Discussion

- If it is the case that my identity is made meaningful by others, then what are my responsibilities towards others? Towards myself? Which has priority, and when?
- Is there an “identity” or “person” outside a web of human relations?
- Is it possible to arrive at concepts of self through introspection?
- Is it the case that if I find my identity via others, I must already have a concept of self in order to recognize the otherness of others? Is it more correct to say that my identity is completed by others?
- What is it about myself that I learn from others? Is it something essentially universal, or is it all a matter of identity being culturally defined? Would I be the same person in another culture?
- What are the factors that shape gender identity? Is the feminine constructed by patriarchal language, and so trapped by the constructions of another? Is there space for identity outside of language?
- What is the nature of my relationships with others that allow me to form a self image? Does every relationship, from the trivial to familial, allow the formation of a self image?
- Are there any types of relationships that are important for forming self-identity?

2. Painting by John Brack

The painting by Brack raises a number of philosophical issues on the social nature of the human condition and the issues of alienation and inclusion.

Key Points

- The essential human condition as alienation from others
- Solipsism, dualism, and the impossibility of knowing others
- Identity and meaning through behavioural conformity
- The self defined through work
- Non-Western views of the nature of society
- Cognitive approaches to self-identity
- Nihilism as an approach to the human condition
- Culture, power, and the place of the individual
- Freedom and determinism
- Relationships with others
- Responsibilities to others
- Uniqueness of self and individuality
- Existential conditions of human life, meaning and meaningless
- “Depersonalisation”, impersonal conditions of modernity

Discussion

- Can we have meaning without others? Is it the case that we can only know ourselves because of others? Or is it only that others save us from the despair of living alone?
- Is human nature constant, universal and enduring, or are we mainly shaped by membership of different communities within society *e.g.* our race, sex or class?
- From where does my sense of individuality stem? Is it different from my self-awareness? How important is conformity to identity?
- What is the root cause of alienation from others? Some psychoanalysts claim a basic human drive and experience of life is one of a profound “lack”, a desire never fulfilled
- Is the self a set of masks that we use in different situations? Are we really ciphers, or a *tabula rasa* which can be constantly overwritten?
- Are other people hell?
- Other cultural views that support/deny this view of self-identity, *i.e.* notions of extended families in Asian and African cultures

SECTION B

Optional Theme 1: Grounds of epistemology

3. Critically evaluate the extent to which justified, true belief is knowledge.

This question invites a discussion of a fundamental definition of knowledge. It allows for an exploration of whether there are some beliefs which are true and justified yet do not seem to be knowledge.

Key Points

- The idea of knowledge existing when three conditions are met; belief, truth and justification
- The idea of three conditions being necessary and jointly sufficient, that is, the absence of one would negate the existence of knowledge
- Knowledge in relation to culture and ideology
- Knowledge and belief in different cultural settings
- The distinction between factual knowledge, knowledge by acquaintance, and practical knowledge
- Belief might be incompatible with knowledge as belief could suggest degrees of uncertainty while knowledge should involve certainty
- The possibility of knowledge claims being falsehoods, as if belief does not correspond to reality it is not true and cannot be knowledge
- The need for adequate evidence; the need to substantiate the claim
- The role of conviction; being sure that a claim is knowledge

Discussion

- Is the traditional analytical view valid in that justified, true belief might not be a sufficient condition for knowledge?
- The difference between types of certainty in what people claim and the certainty of the proportions they use
- Does absolute certainty remove the need for justification? Could there be cases where no error is possible and so no evidence is necessary?
- Is it necessary for the belief to be objectively true? What is the status of subjective certainty, my own internal belief?
- Are internal mental states special and allow exceptions *e.g.* my headache, which I know I have, can/cannot be verified against external public available evidence?
- Can I know without knowing I know? Examples of knowledge states without justification
- Can people have true belief and justify their claim and yet not have knowledge? The problem of unknown false evidence being used as evidence
- Can proper justification ever be absolutely defined?
- For knowledge to be knowledge does it have to be grounded in unchallengeable true belief?
- Is the relationship between knowledge and belief to remain inconsistent?

4. Critically evaluate the claim that there is nothing in the mind that has not first been in the senses.

This question invites a critical assessment of the position that all knowledge is based on experience.

Key Points

- The nature of knowledge from experience, the empiricist stance
- The associated problems of sense-data; illusions, unreliability and errors in interpretation
- The nature of *a priori* knowledge and the rationalist position on the application of reason
- Innate ideas and their role; Platonic Forms, universal grammar, mathematics, deduction
- The construction of complex concepts not experienced that are not based on any sense information but are constructs of simple elements
- The nature of universal claims and how they might only come from innate ideas of rational intuition; not all necessary truths of the world could arise from experience
- A Kantian view weaves together empiricism and rationalism

Discussion

- Are our senses a reliable basis for knowledge of the world?
- How far is knowledge of the world in fact a combination of both reasoning and the interpretation of sense-data?
- How far can personal, private experiences be shared to become public knowledge?
- If our minds are empty, how do we know how to piece together individual items of sense-data to produce concepts?
- Is our knowledge of sense-data incorrigible because of direct acquaintance?
- Can imaginations and dreams be explained as merely constructions of previous knowledge?
- Can concepts arise without experience? Is the connection of unrelated concepts a reasonable explanation of non-experientially based concepts, *e.g.* the “unicorn”?
- If a concept cannot be founded originally in experience, is it meaningless?
- How is the concept of “cause” arrived at? Does our mind have an automatic ability to link patterns; hence the process itself is not based on our senses?

Optional Theme 2: Theories and problems of ethics

5. Critically evaluate the view that ethics should be more concerned with who you are than what you do.

This question enables an exploration of the contrasting emphasis of action and being in different ethical systems. Answers might draw on specific examples, *e.g.* Virtue Ethics, Natural Law, deontological systems. Answers might develop very different ways of framing the question and interpreting it.

Key Points

- Teleological ethical systems promote an emphasis on the realization of potential rather than the meeting of rules or duties, as the proper emphasis of a moral system
- Sometimes referred to as an *aretaic* system, Aristotle places the realization of “excellences” as the defining attribute of moral living and he promotes the fulfilling of human potential as one that leads to *eudaimonia* (“happiness”, “flourishing”)
- Morality is tied up with what is good for the individual but reference to the community is made as well
- Natural Law systems build on Aristotle’s method of observing the way humans (and other species and objects) flourish
- The emphasis on non-action in Taoism
- Cultural diversity on the role of action in ethics; diverse traditions on the formation of who you are
- Teleological systems deny the importance of fulfilling rules as a significant component of leading a moral life; examples might include the person who refrains from doing wrong simply because of awareness of rules or duties, as opposed to someone who is never – by habit or nature – even tempted to do wrong
- Teleological systems like Virtue Ethics observe empirically the human condition and draw conclusions from the way we actually live, as opposed to seeking a final rational principle to govern all actions

Discussion

- Is there a danger of circular argument in Virtue Ethics *e.g.* the question of what is virtuous is answered by “doing actions that are virtuous”?
- The danger of ethical elitism; it is easy to flourish given a good education or good fortune in life
- How can teleological ethics solve moral dilemmas?
- Do systems like Virtue Ethics suffer from the danger of relativism and too much consideration of an individual’s circumstances?
- Are the assumptions behind teleological systems acceptable? *E.g.* Natural Law
- Are normative principles vital for settling moral judgments? Would we prefer to draw upon and apply a moral principle to discover what is right rather than simply be left with a vague notion of flourishing?
- Is the de-emphasis on the role of actions in morality acceptable?
- Applied ethical examples
- Contemporary examples that challenge the view in the question, *e.g.* technology, globalization, environmental concerns, war on terror

6. “You cannot derive an ought from an is.” Discuss and critically evaluate this claim.

This question invites an exploration of the fact/value distinction as portrayed in empirical investigations into moral language and meaning. Answers might deal with Hume and his heirs specifically, or deal in more general terms with the problems of meaning in moral language, or analyse the nature of morality or moral life which is based on the idea of duty.

Key Points

- Some seek to clarify moral language and what exactly moral terms mean
- For Hume, all useful concepts are related to original sense experiences and matters of fact; moral expressions are not traceable to or testable by experience, but instead are traced to the emotional sense impression (sensation) of the observer
- Emotivism and Prescriptivism extend Hume’s analysis and attempt to give grounds for the meaning of language using the Verification Principle; once again moral statements are more about the psychological state of the speaker than about any intrinsic moral reality in an action, as in Logical Positivism
- Other attempts to ground moral reality in natural observations; *e.g.* hedonism, egoism, teleological ethics
- The concept of duty as a grounding for morality; “ought implies can”, Kant and Confucius
- Natural Law as a means of deriving moral law from factual observation
- Utilitarianism and the Greatest Happiness Principle as providing a psychological, but objective, basis for what is moral
- Moral language as more than statements of taste
- Moral intuitionism
- Moral judgments and rational principles *e.g.* deontology

Discussion

- Possible foundations for moral judgments: Belief in a Higher Being, rationality, emotion, Natural Law, gender, environment
- Intuitionism and the seemingly inherent capacity to recognise right and wrong, devoid of natural explanations; innate moral sense
- Can Hume’s insistence that meaning only concerns “matters of fact” be challenged?
- The failure of the Verification Principle to meet the demands of its own criteria, in that it is neither analytically true, nor provable by empirical testing
- The principle of *Karma* emphasises the experience of actions and events as opposed to a separate moral reality; there is no “ought” only an “is”
- Is Taoism’s sense of “ought” predicated on what “is”?
- Is linguistic philosophy helpful in describing the real world?
- How can moral progress or change be explained if moral language merely describes a state of mind?
- On what grounds could moral language be argued to be objective rather than subjective?
- Moral intuitionism’s attempt to give a non-natural grounding to moral language
- The issue of relativism in forming moral judgments

Optional Theme 3: Philosophy of religion

7. Explain and discuss the concept of a higher being.

This question asks for an exploration of the core idea of the divine. Given its scope, the diversity of interpretations of the divine, it allows for many different approaches.

Key Points

- Defining “divine” or “higher being”, or even its absence within different frameworks. “God” as one version of divinity
- God’s relation to the universe from the perspective of philosophical analysis or arguments, *e.g.* first-cause theology or the idea that God is a perfect being
- The perfect-being conception is grounded in the conviction that to be perfect is perfectly to be; this includes: being complete, being all-inclusive, and being personal
- The idea that God created the universe *ex nihilo* and conserves the universe in being moment by moment
- Views of God taken from diverse sources, *e.g.* religious experience, revealed texts. Their contrast with views originated in rational reflection
- Non-Western conceptions of the divine: African traditions (*e.g.* Kongo, Vodun), Australasian traditions (*e.g.* Aboriginal, Maori), Chinese traditions (*e.g.* Confucianism, Taoism), Indian traditions (*e.g.* Buddhism, Hinduism), Japanese traditions (*e.g.* Shinto, Tenrikyo), Native North, South and Central American traditions (*e.g.* Aztec, Hopi, Inuit, Mayan)

Discussion

- Views of God’s relation to the universe vary greatly. Pantheists: God is the universe; Panentheists: God includes the universe, or is related to it as soul to body. Others assert that God is wholly different from the universe
- Criticisms of perfect-being theology have focused both on the possibility that the set of candidate divine perfections might not be consistent or unique, and doubts as to whether human judgment can be adequate for forming concepts of God
- Different accounts of perfection will yield different accounts of God; some have held that God would be the more perfect for lacking some knowledge, while others hold that perfection requires omniscience
- Significant differences within Christianity on the nature of God: God as all-controlling, as self-limiting, or as incapable of unilaterally controlling any aspect of reality. Also with regards to the reach of God’s infallible knowledge: for some only of all that has occurred or is occurring, others sustain that God might know of all that would occur
- Psychological and sociological approaches to the idea of God; *e.g.* as a wish-fulfilling projection of a perfect, comforting father-figure
- Different ways of coming to knowledge of the higher being, either through use of reason, revelation or mystical faith – or a combination

8. Critically evaluate the claim that just one religious perspective is correct in a world with diverse religious beliefs.

Discussions of religious diversity might involve many different aspects, issues, and arguments. The question invites a reflection on some of them.

Key Points

- Diversity of opinion is evident in the area of religious thought; honest, knowledgeable people hold significantly diverse, often incompatible, beliefs
- Religions specify in greater or less detail the required manners and forms of behaviour to be adopted by their believers towards others
- Religious convictions that exclude others have motivated impassioned behaviour in the past and continue today. Religious intolerance: the practice of keeping others from acting in accordance with their religious beliefs. The worldwide concern over the increasing amount and violent nature of religious intolerance
- The issue of diversity of religious belief has a great impact on how we treat others, both personally and corporately

Discussion

- There might be a legitimate and justifiable multicultural approach to religious diversity; however it is damned because it is identified with cultural relativism
- How could we come to an awareness of religious diversity? Sincere, knowledgeable individuals differ on issues of religious significance. Does it respond to the reality of such diversity?
- Does assessment of belief in the face of religious diversity resolve the debate over conflicting religious perspectives in an objective manner?
- Our understanding of, and our truth claims about divine reality will necessarily be conditioned by the ways in which our culture and environment shapes our categories of thought
- Should it be taken for granted that any of the contending perspectives in its present form are correct?
- If there exists no divine reality, *i.e.* the referent in all religious truth claims related to the divine is nonexistent, all such claims are false
- Is it morally justifiable to attempt to convert others to a different perspective? Can it justifiably be claimed that only one religion offers a path into the eternal presence of God?
- How pervasive is religious diversity? Does the reality of this diversity require a response?
- The relationship between religious diversity and religious tolerance. Does the acknowledgement of, and subsequent reflection on, religious diversity lead to greater religious tolerance?
- To what extent does reflection on the reality of religious diversity weaken an individual's justification for believing that one's religious perspective is superior to the perspectives of others?
- Are the attempts to unify religious language using existentialist terminology like "being", "transcendence" *etc.* an acceptable approach to religious pluralism or diversity?

Optional Theme 4: Philosophy of art

9. Critically evaluate the claim that what is called great art expresses both a personal response to experience and a universal human condition.

Responses might focus on the topic of aesthetic judgments and the bases for making them. Other relevant issues such as the differences between “high” and “low” art, and the role and function of art might be discussed.

Key Points

- Different models of aesthetic judgment based on universal principles: *e.g.* on feelings evoked, on disinterestedness, on significant form, on beauty and harmony
- The subjective source of art often constructs the artist as an original creator, or inspired genius; a gifted individual who necessarily transcends most moral and social duties imposed on others
- The universal human condition as a construction or fact; the types of experience that qualify as the human condition
- The distinctions, if any, between high art and popular culture; the tension, if any, between great art and popular acceptance
- Aesthetic judgment based on utility *e.g.* art as a political agent for change; art as a mimetic and passive representation of the world contrasted with art as a subversive and revolutionary act. Its success in fostering change is a measure of its greatness
- The role of audience and reception in art

Discussion

- Mass culture has blurred the difference between art and other human activities; an analysis of the meaning, development and purposes of these recent artistic movements
- What aspects of the human condition are articulated by art? Is the idea of a human condition predicated upon a post-Enlightenment view of individuality, and might there be nothing universal about our condition?
- If the claim in the question is true, then what is the status of folk or indigenous art that could have meaning within a very limited context?
- Folk or indigenous art – who has the right to label this as such?
- Is the idea of a universal human condition connected to art just another way of speaking about great art as being atemporal?
- Is there any point in discussing aesthetic judgments of art if the production of art, and the experiencing of it, is fundamentally subjective?
- The claim says nothing about beauty; is it important in identifying great art?
- If it is impossible to say what makes art great, can we say what makes art bad?
- If we assume a subjectivist position, and we consider that art is in the eye of the beholder, then everything could be considered as a work of art

10. **“The artist is the one who has the ability to understand, with empathy, contradictory and opposing points of view or ways of being without taking sides.” Discuss and critically evaluate this claim.**

This is an early 19th Century view (Keats) of the artist and the artistic process. The question offers a chance to discuss the meanings and definitions of what an artist is, defined from the perspective of the artistic process. Responses might critique differing views on the artist, the role of experience in the artistic process, the broader question of making aesthetic judgements and the concept of aesthetic empathy.

Key Points

- The view implicit in the quote reflects a certain view of the artist; this could be contrasted with other views; *e.g.* artist as skilled craftsman; as keeper and perpetuator of traditional stories, images, and histories
- The role of imagination in the artistic process, and in the artist; the artist as creator and originator
- The concept of art as a synthesis of oppositions or as a process that is inclusive
- Disinterestedness as an element of the artistic process
- The concept of art as an objective record of experience, or a concept of the personal made public; the place of evaluation and judgment of experience within art and the artistic process
- Emotions and empathy as necessary elements in the artist and in the artistic process

Discussion

- Are opposing sentiments or attitudes necessary to produce great art? Does this mean that beauty is created out of opposition?
- If the claim is correct, then are artists apolitical? How does art maintain its social relevance if artists cannot take sides?
- Does the claim imply that there is no purpose to art apart from its own sake?
- Is there no place for strong passion or moral outrage in art? Does this make art a purely escapist activity offering easy pleasures and comfort?
- What is involved in aesthetic empathy? How is this manifested? What is the proper relationship between the artist and his or her subject?
- Does this view of art mean that artists must necessarily practise self-censorship?

Optional Theme 5: Political philosophy

11. Critically evaluate the claim that benevolent dictatorship is the best form of government.

This question allows for an evaluation of what is the best form of government, along with the possible investigation of the compatibility of benevolence and dictatorship.

Key Points

- Indicators of “best government” might be the protection of life, property, the creation of happiness, an increased redistribution of wealth, the common good
- The reluctance of people to be fully involved in politics could lead to a dominance of one group and not the betterment of all; people’s cynical perceptions of the degree of power they really have to influence decision making might result in a withdrawal of participation
- The abuses of power and influence in some, if not all, forms of collective elected government
- The nature of dictatorship in theory and practice and the perception that dictatorship in any form is not the best
- The potential for strong government to achieve significant change on the grounds that it knows what is best for the people

Discussion

- Is this benevolent dictatorship close to a Platonic ruler, and therefore not achievable because of the assumption that the drives and motives of the dictator are fundamentally different from other people and possibly better?
- To what extent is benevolent dictatorship dependent upon a view of human nature, *e.g.* in Hobbesian theories?
- Is dissent a healthy aspect of society and can it be compatible with benevolent dictatorship?
- Is the best form of government one that humans can tolerate; the faults of humans are manifest in their governments?
- Is the participation of the most people possible in government necessarily the best for society? Democracy has significant shortcomings
- Is benevolent dictatorship the only way to overcome the inherent nature of the individual and the crowd?
- Is Rousseau’s “general will” a form of the dictatorship of the majority?
- Examples from contemporary situations or historic periods might be used to illustrate strong government without popular participation being the best in given circumstances; *e.g.* war, the need to make significant economic advances or to prevent a collapse of societal values

12. Evaluate philosophically the relationship between power and the state.

This question gives an opportunity to investigate the nature and function of the state in relation to power.

Key Points

- Definitions of power; getting people to do certain desired activities by either persuasion or coercion; willing acts or those resulting from threats or actual use of force
- Definition and nature of the state; conceptions that might reflect different cultures and tradition
- State power; the need for compliance to bring about basic and complex needs of citizens/subjects of the state
- A failed state; one that cannot offer protection of life and property nor promotion of happiness and well being
- The authority, power, force matrix; power is “the truth of authority” but bare force might only produce temporary compliance, therefore the need to develop consensual authority without the overt exercise of power through force
- The degree to which the state should/must direct/control people’s activities *e.g.* Hobbes, Locke contrasted with more libertarian positions
- Issues of legitimacy and how this is achieved and maintained in the use of power by the state; the relationship to law or consent/contract; positive reasons to obey the directives of the state
- The collapsed state that cannot produce compliance to laws, procedures and practices because it has no power; without enough force, consensual authority is questioned
- Theories of society without a state; ideological differences of how power should be exercised by the state *e.g.* Marx, Mao and socialism, conservative positions, and pure communism and anarchism. The reliance on the positive nature of humans
- The need to direct people to create infrastructures to maintain order
- Possibilities of societies functioning without the exercising of power by the state; rural, agrarian societies are possibilities

Discussion

- Is it possible that a non-centralized state might function without power?
- Can authority of government be established and maintained without power?
- Examples of collapses in state power resulting in a lessening of the human condition because of the absence of supportive infrastructures
- If the coercive means of power, *e.g.* police, armies, courts of law, are removed or are dysfunctional, does a societal collapse happen?
- Can authority be power only through persuasion?
- Is the absence of state power incomprehensible given the complexity of industrialised and post-industrialised societies? Might it be comprehensible in societies which are subsistent in nature?
- Is the absence of state power possible in non-hierarchical societies?
- How far does the theory of communism maintain that the state can lose power and disappear, “wither away”, for the betterment of the human condition?
- Is cooperation among people an indicator of the state functioning without power?

Optional Theme 6: Non-Western traditions and perspectives

13. Evaluate philosophically the nature and importance of community in at least one of the non-Western traditions you have studied.

This question invites an exploration of community in different cultural settings that might be interpreted in diverse ways.

Key Points

- In many traditions there might be a myth that relates to the founding of the community; *e.g.* the story of the founding of the Hopis by the Spider Woman. Such myths might express certain core values and attitudes that survive in the community today
- The place of the divine in the community *e.g.* *mana* in Melanesian and Polynesian communities
- The relation of the community with other communities. Is it exclusive or welcoming of contact with others *i.e.* the mixing of tradition in New World traditions like *Vodun* in Haiti
- The relation of the community to non-human beings or the natural world and what this says about the ethical and political values of the tradition
- The issue of hierarchy in society; *e.g.* the *caste* system; the role of women; patriarchal or matriarchal tribal traditions
- Social organization in Eastern cultures and traditions
- The role of the individual in the tradition (the individual *vs.* the collective)
- The influence of the cultural heritage of the tradition on the acquisition and maintaining of knowledge, both as a group and individual activity
- The role of ritual in the community *e.g.* *Shamans*; sharing the pipe; purification ceremonies
- The role of authority in the community *e.g.* scriptures or word of mouth in traditional teachings; Dreaming in Aboriginal belief
- The role of rules in the community and the interpretation of fate or bad luck; social prohibition as a means of ordering and structuring communities

Discussion

- What are the challenges inherent in studying a community from a different cultural or community perspective?
- Globalization and modern mass communication as a threat to community traditions, or as a basis for advancement
- Secular *vs.* divine authority in the community
- Modern notions of the community *e.g.* human rights, equality of the sexes, the emphasis on the needs of the individual
- Attempts to link diverse traditions and find basic similarities *vs.* attempts to maintain the distinctness of community traditions
- Feminist critiques of “community”

14. Evaluate philosophically the attitude towards the environment with reference to at least one non-Western tradition that you have studied.

This question invites an exploration of the significance of the environment in non-Western traditions. Among issues that might be discussed are the ethical and metaphysical dimensions.

Key Points

- The difference between living and non-living things; the demarcation between animate and non-animate beings
- Sacred places and spaces *e.g.* rocks or trees in Aboriginal traditions
- The unifying force of nature in different traditions *e.g. mana* which is present in all things, or the animism of North American indigenous traditions
- The belief that the everyday world is part of a larger spirit world; *e.g.* South American tribes like the Yanomani who believe they have the same relationship with the spirit world as they do with each other
- The belief in the appearance in nature of the spirit world *e.g. shamans* in the Arctic regions who transform themselves into birds and animals
- The impact of the spirit world on the tradition's stewardship of the land; *e.g.* Inuit belief in the success or failure of fishing coming from the will of Sedna who is influenced by *shamans*
- The teaching about change and impermanence in the physical world as a feature of Eastern religions like Hinduism and Buddhism encouraging a separation between the world of the soul and the world of matter
- The principle of natural balance and *yin yang*
- African *shaman* traditions which claim they might help prevent natural disasters
- The ethical implications of the tradition's attitude to the environment

Discussion

- Different traditions show different relations to the environment and the natural world *e.g.* non-action in Eastern religion *vs.* committed environmentalism of animist traditions
- Dualistic tendencies dominate some traditions and encourage an ownership of the physical environment by adherents. Other traditions emphasise the holistic nature of life in a natural environment
- Some African commentators describe a traditional rural ethic of care for the environment which has been supplanted by greater exploitation with the advance of high-level poverty and population growth
- Is environmental concern a Western liberal "luxury"?
- To what extent do religious attitudes actually affect the behaviour of the adherents of traditions?
- Is there a human motive to environmental ecology as opposed to a divine one?

Optional Theme 7: Contemporary social issues

15. To what extent should sex, gender, race, class, or belonging to different kinds of groups, be acknowledged as constitutive of our identity?

The question invites an exploration of a range of issues that relate to the emergence of large scale political movements and pressure groups, such as second phase feminism, civil rights in the USA, gay and lesbian liberation and indigenous movements that claim to address injustices to particular social groupings.

Key Points

- Some social groups are oppressed or vulnerable to cultural imperialism, *e.g.* the identity as a woman or as a Native American might result in suffering exploitation, marginalization, or violence
- The demand is not for inclusion within the fold of “universal humankind” on the basis of shared human attributes; nor is it for respect “in spite of” one’s differences. Rather, what is demanded is respect for oneself *as* different. They demand recognition on the basis of the very grounds on which recognition has previously been denied: it is *qua* women, *qua* ethnic groups, *qua* lesbians, that these groups demand recognition
- The experience of oppression and the possibility of a shared and more authentic or self-determined alternative as being crucial to identity; a shared experience of oppression might cause diverse groups to find a common identity
- Identity might mean that a person achieves the fullest sense of humanity within an accepted context of traditional symbols, judgments, values, behaviour and relationships with specific others who self-consciously think of themselves as a community
- Geographical regions might generate cultural identity between different groups and give meaning to selfhood within the group

Discussion

- Are identities contingent products of particular genealogies, or enduring or essential natural kinds?
- The justification of political mobilization and the demand for recognition also relies on notions of sameness
- The risk of depriving the considered marginal groups of critical political life by thinking that only people who are like oneself would be able to understand claims to justice
- Cases in which cultural and social identity have tended to be voiced, *e.g.* some groups have insisted on the inevitable alienation their members experience when left as non-assimilated, unhappy, unfulfilled, though nominal citizens of modern states
- What constitutes, generally, personhood? Is there such thing as a “self”? Is this a meaningful concept?
- It is generally sexual behavior – not an abstract “identity” – that is the object of moral disapprobation; the questioning of categories such as “gay”, “lesbian”, and “heterosexual”
- Interpretations of biological differences; gender as socially constructed
- Senses and form of discrimination
- Racism; debates about the notion of race. The contingent and historical nature of “race” as a category of identity
- Modern identity is characterized by an emphasis on its inner voice and capacity for authenticity. The politics of difference has appropriated the language of authenticity to describe ways of living that are true to the identities of marginalized social groups

16. To what extent does social organization in the present world allow for the development and realization of human beings?

The question, deliberately open to the development of many different lines of argument, asks for an evaluation of the role of present society in the development of human life.

Key Points

- Institutions and structures which might serve as instances of social organization, *e.g.* family, educational institutions, political institutions
- “Self-realization” is the development and expression of characteristic attributes and potentials in a fashion which comprehensively discloses their subject’s real nature. Usually, the “self” in question is the individual person, but the concept has also been applied to corporate bodies held to possess a unitary identity
- Two broad types of “self-realization”: (a) the collectivist, in which the self-realizing lifestyle, being either the same for all or specific to a person or subgroup of people, is ultimately definable only in the context, and perhaps with reference to the common purposes, of a collective social body; (b) the individualist, in which a person’s self-realization has no necessary connection with the ends of a particular community
- Aspects of, and criticism to, present society; *e.g.* the power of economic structures
- Social organization and its possible interrelationship with work, nature, technology, and media culture
- Ideas of human nature and ideals of human life
- Equality of opportunity, inequality, poverty

Discussion

- Common structures which arise routinely, *e.g.* transportation, within the lives of people, contribute to or make more difficult the pursuit of self-realization?
- Capitalist society, some claim, seems to its participants to be a collection of fragments; while individuals might adopt the instrumentally rational means to achieve their particular ends, they lack any well-founded understanding of the social whole
- The attainment of abundance leads not to human realization but to the generation of “false needs”, whose satisfaction leads to “euphoria in happiness” and prevents individuals from making their decisions autonomously
- Ways in which individuals, groups and societies look for realization or happiness: pleasure, power, realization of values (ethical, aesthetic, religious) *e.g.* the definition of beauty as “the promise of happiness”
- Criteria for the use of time in different societies
- Even if it is not intrinsically bad, self-realization creates a culture of narcissism, encouraging those forms of selfhood which, while perhaps harmless enough in themselves, nevertheless fail to show respect for others and threaten to weaken social life itself

Optional Theme 8: People, nations and cultures

17. Critically evaluate the view that internationalism is a fine ideal, but that its problem is that nobody can agree upon a set of principles which will always over-ride cultural interests.

This question invites an analysis on a fundamental problem of internationalism; universal principles that override national self-interest. Also implicit in the claim is a model of cooperative internationalism, and this might stimulate discussion on alternative models, or the issue of cultural superiority.

Key points

- Models of internationalism: voluntary/democratic models; Marxist and other models of “one world” government; international institutions
- Values of internationalism: Enlightenment view of the individual; environmental stewardship; respect for diversity; privileging of the innocent and children
- Tensions between religion and internationalism
- Goals of internationalism: peace, healthcare, education, environmental protection, protection of the innocent and oppressed minorities
- The tensions between local culture and internationalism: challenges to traditional cultural practices and gender roles; citizens alienated and marginalized from the institutions of power

Discussion

- Are there any universal sets of rights or values that all people share, regardless of their cultural context?
- Is it the case that only issues that have an economic or trade dimension have any hope of success?
- Is there a fundamental contradiction in internationalism when it says that it respects diversity of culture, yet seeks to deny some expressions it deems illegal? This is not necessarily restricted to issues of violence *e.g.* EU food regulations have barred certain products on health grounds
- Examples of international treaties: Kyoto, Geneva Convention, UN Declaration on Human Rights, Whaling Conventions; their effectiveness
- How should an international agreement be decided and by whom? When should international institutions, laws, conventions, treaties *etc.* take precedence?
- Should traditional practices of ritual surgery, scarring or tattooing be banned if they contravene a certain international convention, even if this practice is important in cultural identity? What of child work conventions and the conflict with the survival of families and economies?

18. Evaluate philosophically the impact globalization might have on cultural identity.

The critical areas addressed by this question are concepts or definitions of culture and their resilience, or otherwise, to globalization, and the concept of globalization as an opposition to local cultures.

Key points

- The sources of cultural identity: language, ethnicity, geography, shared histories, religion
- The need to preserve cultural differences as a source of identity, collective historical memories, and social stability
- An understanding of globalization: as an economically-based event; as a convergence of cultures; as a product of technology
- The effects of globalization on local and national cultures; economic, linguistic, gender roles, human rights, environmental awareness
- The differences, if any, between globalization and cultural imperialism
- Globalization as a new source of cultural self-definition

Discussion

- Is the threat of globalization overstated because it operates at only a superficial level of pop culture and media images, and not at the fundamental levels of cultural identity?
 - What are the benefits of ensuring cultural differences? Are these differences the sources of political problems?
 - Is globalization of benefit to those in oppressive cultures, cultures with strict taboos and age/gender roles?
 - Globalization's benefit to local communities by ensuring a stronger sense of local identity
 - Is it commerce or the media that is primarily responsible for globalization?
 - Is the stereotype of a monoculture really a myth? Are there major differences and many subcultures within monocultures?
 - Is globalization only limited to industrialised and post-industrialised?
 - Cultures and civilizations have grown and declined before globalization. Is the fear of globalization misplaced?
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