



MARKSCHEME

May 2010

PHILOSOPHY

Higher Level and Standard Level

Paper 2

27 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 prescribed texts.

Bhagavad Gita

1. Explain and discuss the issues of attachment to and detachment from the external world in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

At the core of the work lies an encouragement to detachment as the correct ethical response and duty to one's birth, and answers might focus on the metaphysical implications of this issue but need not be restricted to this.

Key Points

- The central philosophy of the *Bhagavad Gita* emphasizes the importance of detachment and dispassion in the performance of duty and the expression of devotion which is symbolically portrayed in the character and story of Arjuna
- Detachment as the correct ethical response and duty to one's birth
- This contrasts with the self-centredness that can lead to a union with inappropriate desires; attachment is the bond of desire formed with things in and of the external world
- The *gunas* are responsible for attachment to the external world and those who are deluded are attached to these modes and actions; *tamas* is the darkness in man and binds the soul through delusion
- The senses play a major part in developing attachment to objects by the individual who develops desires for sense objects; desires arise out of attachment; anger and delusion arise out of desire, and from this comes memory loss and loss of intelligence which affects life itself
- Attachment to happiness and knowledge is achieved through *sattva*
- Man does not have a right to the fruit of his actions, only to the work that produces that fruit, and this represents abandoning attachment; man must offer actions to God giving up attachment
- The ignorant act with attachment and the wise without it
- The external world lacks reality because of its impermanence and thus it cannot be relied upon or depended upon; this should encourage the correct attitude of detachment

Discussion

- There is a seeming paradox in the encouragement even to detach oneself from the idea of God; is this confusing given the encouragement to become attached to God elsewhere?
- Is the issue of what constitutes the external world clear? Is there a clear distinction between the external world of the senses and the soul?
- Does the relationship between the inner and external selves reflect the difference between the external world and the inner world of the individual?
- The relation between the mind (the inner self) and the senses (the physical self)
- Doing duty for the sake of doing duty *vs.* doing duty for other ends
- Producing the fruits of one's actions *vs.* receiving the fruits of one's actions

2. **Explain and discuss the role that duty plays in the ethical teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita*.**

This question invites a treatment of one of the first primary teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita*. It is covered especially in chapters 2, 3, 4, 5 and 18.

Key Points

- The individual is required to do his/her duty according to his/her nature; this is *dharma*, which is also harmony
- *Dharma* is “that which holds”, and is the duties prescribed to those in society, both generally and specifically; *dharma* can be viewed as the law or religion and is described as that which puts an end to conflict and promotes unity and tolerance
- Everyone has to perform his/her duty designated as *svadharma* to please God, to serve the world and to repay one’s debt to the society; *svadharma* implies ambition equal to one’s capacity and the necessary inclination and drive to achieve it; well being lies in performing *svadharma*; *paradharma*, which is performing a duty suitable for others but not for us, will positively harm us
- Doing duty self-sacrificially is illustrated in Krishna’s arguments with Arjuna over the coming battles in chapter 2 – fighting is Arjuna’s *dharma* and stands as an example of a prescribed duty by virtue of Arjuna’s being a *kshatriya*; Arjuna must be disinterested in both the action and the reward
- Right performance of action expresses true devotion and leads to the Supreme; so the ethical emphasis is theocentric
- Duty must be performed without attachment to the result; duty should simply be performed

Discussion

- Is the emphasis on performing duty without regard to result echoed in Western deontological systems or even in Existential ethics?
- Does the setting of Krishna’s imprecation to Arjuna to do his duty contradict the pacifism of Ghandi? Can pacifism be justified?
- *Dharma* is also harmony; is there an echo here with the natural ethics of Aristotle?
- Is the emphasis on releasing the ego through proper performance of duty a convincing one?
- Why is it delusional to attach oneself to the objects of sense and matter?
- Is the acceptance and assumption of the caste system a problem for assessing the ethical message of the *Bhagavad-Gita*?
- The political conservatism that arises in the application of teachings on duty

Confucius: *The Analects*

3. Explain and discuss the ways of achieving harmony both in the individual and society.

This question gives an opportunity to explore the Confucian model of how to reach harmony for the self and for society through virtuous leadership.

Key Points

- *Li* as one route to achieving harmony; this is the application of propriety, reverence, courtesy, ritual and ideal standards of behaviour
- *Jen* as another route to reaching harmony; this is concern for others resting on goodness and benevolence
- By living *li* and practising *jen* and humans becoming *Chun Tzu* (the true gentleman), harmony can be achieved both in the self and in society
- Harmony is the preferred condition as it allows for justice, care and concern for others whatever their rank and status
- The need to produce both “inner” harmony and “outer” harmony
- The “silver rule” (15:23); only do to others that which you would have done to yourself
- The parallel to relationships in the family with *Chun Tzu* being a good son, a faithful husband, and a just and kind father, along with being a loyal and tactful friend
- The need for education for all to create a climate to achieve a framework where people will seek harmony

Discussion

- The possible universality of the qualities that create *Chun Tzu* and the related society
- The idea that man is inherently good, and naturally strives for harmony through a good conscience, might be questioned with reference to traditions that do not see “man as basically good”
- Is the route to a harmonious society a critical inner reflection without reference to metaphysics and a supreme being?
- Can the self realization of the “silver rule” be transferred to all members of society? Will all achieve this sense of self-understanding at the same time?
- To what extent are specific activities like archery and writing a means of actualising inner harmony? Do they, as other activities, produce an inner discipline which might be essential for harmony to be achieved?
- If education aids the process, who are the educators and what role do they take?
- There seems to be an absence of a spiritual base for harmony in society; is this its major weakness as humans have no metaphysical support?

4. Critically evaluate the claim that a ruler should govern and not kill.

This question encourages an assessment of the nature, role and methods to be employed by a ruler in Confucian philosophy.

Key Points

- The idea that the ruler is like a father in the family setting; one who sets a moral example for all; *de*, which is rule by example of virtue
- The benevolent caring role with an absence of force and violence
- The proposal that government through *de* and *li* (good manners, reverence and ritual) would create more self-discipline in citizens
- The practice of reciprocity by all is the route of good government
- The relationship of this form of rule with economic development; the contrast between seeking wealth and status (4:5)
- The avoidance of paternalism, by the ruler standing back and “not doing” (*wu wei*) and therefore not becoming authoritarian
- The perfect ruler being *Chun Tzu* and eventually all citizens being *Chun Tzu* (the ideal gentleman with qualities *li* and *ren*)

Discussion

- Is Confucius’ ruler unrealistic and resting upon an assumption that humans and society naturally strive for goodness?
- Is self-control on the part of the ruler and society as a whole achievable? Might it produce inactivity and possible apathy and resignation to “fate”?
- Is the ruler’s *wu wei* stance going to create an absence of leadership and direction?
- How far are these methods of government contrary to a market driven society?
- Is there some contradiction between “Confucian government” approaches to economics and the actual practice of many Chinese? Many Chinese are self-motivated achievers and are highly successful in the commercial world
- Has Confucius expressed the essence of modern “liberal” government?
- How far does Confucius merely address the ills of the government he directly observed?
- Is it too simplistic to label a ruler as a failure when they have to resort to force? Can internal revolt be eliminated? Can an external threat be ignored? Can the use of force by a ruler be justified?

Lao Tzu: *Tao Te Ching*

5. Critically evaluate the idea that the sage should follow the highest excellence of water, because the excellence of water, which benefits all things and occupies without striving, is near to the *Tao*.

The question gives an opportunity to explore the characterization of the sage, the idea of the *Tao* and how the sage might follow or approach the *Tao*.

Key Points

- There is nothing in the world more soft and weak than water, yet nothing more firm and strong for attacking things
- *Tao* means a road, and is often translated as “the Way”. *Tao* is the process of reality itself, the way things come together, while still transforming; this reflects the deep belief that change is the most basic character of things
- Those who *wu wei* might become one with the *Tao*. *Wu wei*: traditionally rendered as “non-action” or “no action”. However, those who *wu wei* do act; *wu wei* might mean something like “act naturally”, “effortless action”, or “non-intentional action”. There is no need for human tampering with the flow of reality
- The ideal person is the sage (*sheng ren*). Sages act naturally (*wu wei*) (2:63). In this respect, they are like newborn infants, who move naturally, without planning and reliance on the structures given to them by others (ch 15); sages empty themselves, becoming void of pretence. Sages concentrate their internal energies (*qi*); they clean their vision (ch 10); they manifest plainness and become like uncarved wood (*pu*) (ch 19); they live naturally and free from desires given by men (ch 37); they settle themselves and know how to be content (ch 46)
- Sages know the value of emptiness as illustrated by how emptiness is used in a bowl, door, window, valley or canyon (ch 11); they preserve the female (*yin*), meaning that they know how to be receptive and are not unbalanced favouring assertion and action (*yang*) (ch 28); they shoulder *yin* and embrace *yang*, blend internal energies (*qi*) and thereby attain harmony (*he*) (ch 42); those following the *Tao* do not strive, tamper, or seek control (ch 64)
- They who preserve this method of the *Tao* do not wish to be full of themselves; it is through their not being full of themselves that they can afford to seem worn and not appear new and complete.

Discussion

- Can the *Tao* be compared with a principle of nature? In this case, how far can the comparison between the water and human life be followed?
- Is following the *Tao* the way to satisfy the desires, or merely to give in to them?
- Tendencies in the interpretation of the *Tao*; speculative mysticism (*Tao* as an unmanifest absolute being, underlying but pervading the phenomenal world of beings), naturalistic (*Tao* as something immanent in the world, or as something like “natural law”), self-cultivation (the *Tao Te Ching* imagines a primordial level of human conscious being that is inactive, unaroused, undifferentiated, and not involved in conceptual thought)

6. Lao Tzu says, “Governing a great state is like cooking small fish”. Explain and discuss the social and political significance of the *Tao Te Ching* teachings.

The quote taken from chapter 60 might create an opportunity to develop both, (a) explanations with regards to the social and political views expressed in the *Tao Te Ching*, and (b) interpretations of the diverse teachings projected onto and applied to social and political life.

Key Points

- If the kingdom is governed according to the *Tao*, the souls of the departed will not manifest their spiritual energy (ch 60)
- What makes a great state is its being like a low-lying, down-flowing stream; it becomes the centre to which all the small states tend towards under heaven; this might be illustrated by the case of all females: the female always overcomes the male by her stillness (ch 61)
- The great state only wishes to unite men together and nourish them; a small state only wishes to be received by, and to serve, the other (ch 61)
- A state might be ruled by measures of correction; weapons of war might be used with crafty dexterity; but the kingdom is made one’s own only by freedom from action and purpose (ch 57)
- In the kingdom the multiplication of prohibitive enactments increases the poverty of the people; the more implements to add to their profit that the people have, the greater disorder there is in the state and clan; the more acts of crafty dexterity that men possess, the more do strange contrivances appear; the more display there is of legislation, the more thieves and robbers there are (ch 57)
- When the *Tao* is disregarded in the world, the war-horses breed in the border lands (ch 46)

Discussion

- The sage, in the exercise of his government, empties the minds of the people, fills their bellies, weakens their wills, and strengthens their bones (ch 3); to what extent is this a desirable goal of political life?
- The philosopher and legalist political theorist named Han Feizi used the *Tao Te Ching* as a guide for the unification of China. Han Feizi was the counsellor of the first emperor of China, Qin Shihuangdi (c. 221–206 BCE). The emperor used the admonitions to “fill the bellies and empty the minds” to justify his programme of destroying all books not related to medicine, astronomy or agriculture
- Is moderation (ch 59), a central precept in general and in political life, a realistic expectation considering the passions and interests involved in the political life?
- The *Tao Te Ching* expresses opposition to several contemporary “progressive” movements, such as the encouragement of personal ambition or rational-utilitarian thought among the peasantry, as a means of increasing material production and political strength; this causes discontent and contention and upsets social harmony, making it difficult for rulers to maintain a healthy (*i.e.* simple traditional agrarian) social order
- Would governing according to these precepts work in an industrialised setting?

Plato: *The Republic*, Books IV – IX

7. Explain and discuss the role of education in Plato’s Ideal State.

The aim of this question is to explain Plato’s programme of education in relation to its function within the state. In this context, Plato’s programme leading to the dialectic could be examined, or the overall effectiveness of his programme could be discussed.

Key Points

- There are two types of perception: those that stimulate thought and those that do not. Abstract pursuits such as mathematics are examples of the former; empirical sciences such as astronomy and harmonics are of a lower order. They may stimulate thought, but they are empirical activities
- Plato’s scheme of education emphasizes three aspects: moral, intellectual, and the physical. With each aspect, particularly the intellectual, patience is needed initially so that each student progresses at his/her own pace
- What are also of central concern are the qualities of the student that are commensurate with studying philosophy: they must have a love of learning, be honest and brave, morally and intellectually
- At eighteen years of age, Plato believes the student is intellectually mature enough to begin studying the dialectic, an exclusive focus on understanding universals. It is akin to the prisoner leaving the Cave. This is the last and most important step in the training of a philosopher
- For those not fit to be Philosopher rulers, their education is still necessary as all must be able to contribute in some way to the State; women are also to be educated to be of value to the State, and they are not precluded from becoming philosophers

Discussion

- To what extent should the education of the individual be determined by the needs of the State? Should I not be allowed to learn purely out of interest?
- How can mathematics be a suitable framework for understanding or finding the truth on moral questions?
- Does Plato’s general approach *i.e.* an emphasis on physical activity in the early years, and the freedom to learn, make for a sound education for a philosopher? As a general programme for education?
- Are the virtues and education described by Plato all that are necessary for a successful leader? *c.f.* Machiavelli: that a leader must be like a lion (courageous and terrifying) and like a fox (cunning and prepared wilfully to deceive)
- How can you properly assess the effectiveness of such a regime?
- Is Plato too simplistic in classifying only two types of perception?
- Positive aspects of Plato’s education: its inclusiveness, and that the pace of the programme is based on the intellectual and psychological maturity of the individual
- Negative aspects: emphasis on elitism; individual needs are subordinated to those of the State

8. Explain and discuss the relationship between knowledge and the Good.

This question invites an explanation of the two themes that run through Plato's argument in the first half of the dialogue. Discussions of the epistemological and ethical strands of Plato's argument might be made using one or more of the similes.

Key Points

- Plato's distinction between ignorance, opinion/belief and knowledge is based on a concept of understanding abstract general principles, the Forms; the categories of awareness are described in the Line
- Understanding the Forms, and above all the Form of the Good, is the essential goal for all philosophers. As the highest principle for both ethics and epistemology – the best and most real thing in the world – the Form of the Good justifies rule by philosophers
- The paradigm for Forms is the universal abstract truths of mathematics; this paradigm serves as the key to understanding all general principles
- The philosopher is compelled to act by virtue of his training, character and knowledge
- Understanding of the Good necessarily removes illusions; the analogy of the Cave depicts ordinary humanity as chained by ignorance and illusions removed from the truth; the journey through the Cave is symbolic of the liberating power of knowledge
- All Forms must participate in the Form of the Good; the Good illuminates all knowledge

Discussion

- Plato often comments on the difficulties of establishing a society ruled by philosopher-kings. Is his vision of justice a practical blueprint for implementation?
- How should we interpret what Plato means when he says that knowledge is of "what is" and belief of "what is and what is not"?
- Why does knowledge of abstract principles guarantee a just society? How far should and can we go in understanding the Forms? Is Plato correct when he sees the difficulties in convincing society that these abstract principles will ensure a just State?
- Why should my knowledge impel me to do good? What does Plato say about those who know but do not act, or act in opposition to the Good?
- If I have beliefs or opinions on an issue, does it make sense to say that I am partially ethical on this issue?
- Why is a moral term used to describe the apex of an epistemological hierarchy? Or is this question irrelevant for Plato, as there was no distinction between ethics and epistemology in the ancient world?

René Descartes: *Meditations*

9. Explain and discuss the sources and nature of ideas.

This question invites an exploration of how Descartes addresses (principally in the first three Meditations) the origin and composition of ideas.

Key Points

- Descartes classifies thoughts into two kinds (a) “ideas” and (b) those “with additional forms”; so ideas are a major part of what Descartes means by “thoughts”
- It is the idea of something that leads to us having other thoughts directed towards them – like volition or judgments about them
- Ideas deal in “the image of things” (as opposed to feelings or desires or judgments)
- Ideas generally picture (*i.e.* form a mental copy of) sense experiences, but Descartes also describes angels and God as examples of ideas which are beyond sensory perception
- Ideas are modifications of the mind, properties of the mental substance which are revealed through clear and distinct perception
- Ideas have three sources; they are innate, adventitious or made up
- Only adventitious ideas are connected to sense impressions or experience; adventitious means ideas “from things which are located outside me”; they might come from some external source (rather than the will) like in the case of dreams that are not willed into the mind by the individual thinker
- Descartes’ most important ideas – the ones that are clear and distinct – are innate; these are present in the mind from the beginning of existence; *e.g.* the truths of mathematics and truths that are self-evident
- Sensory ideas, though mental, are caused by physical, external objects; thus ideas are brought about by a different substance, namely matter
- Material and formal falsity: it is possible to have ideas of things that do not in reality exist; this is a material falsity so long as the idea depicts what could exist in reality; however, if I make an error about what is in front of me in reality, then that would be a formal falsity

Discussion

- How significant is Descartes’ theory of innate ideas to his whole account of knowledge?
- How might an empiricist respond to Descartes’ theory of the origin of ideas?
- How much could the mind be the author of its own ideas?
- How can a material substance cause a mental idea?
- The idea of God represents a particular individual – like the idea you might have of a table – and the idea represents him as having particular properties, which is why God can be described as being an idea
- Descartes’ dismissal of the power of adventitious ideas is shown in the illustration of the two ideas he has of the sun; one is that it is a coin-sized planet and this is an adventitious idea; the other is that it is vast and this idea is reasoned using mathematics

10. Explain and discuss the relationship between mind and body.

This question invites a discussion of a key theme in the *Meditations*, where Descartes advances an argument concerning the different substances of mind and body, and goes on to consider the implications by discussing the two substances' relations.

Key Points

- Descartes makes his argument depend on what can be clearly and distinctly perceived
- We can achieve a clear and distinct perception of our essence in just the way we can form clear and distinct perceptions of mathematical truths and God
- For Descartes, one's essence is thinking; the mind cannot be divided on itself or into smaller parts
- Descartes says that in thinking he can imagine himself to be distinct from his body
- Descartes admits that he is not present in his body as a sailor is present in a ship but instead his mind and body are intermingled
- The body as substance is more open to the possibility of doubt than the mind

Discussion

- Just because Descartes has a clear perception that he could exist without a body, does not mean that he actually could do so – does he need a body to exist?
- Is it so clear that the mind cannot be divided into parts?
- Is the mind so transparent to itself? Are there not hidden reaches of the mind, *e.g.* suppressed consciousness or indeed the subconscious?
- The relationship between mind and body has caused the greatest problems for Descartes; the pineal gland does not solve the problem of interaction
- The importance of the physical necessity of the brain to a proper understanding of the mind
- Eastern philosophical traditions emphasize the non-physical essence of the person
- Implications of Descartes's pulling mind and body apart
- Criticism of dualism

John Locke: *Second Treatise on Government*

11. Critically evaluate the claim that executive power should be limited.

This question invites an assessment of the arguments supporting Locke's idea of separating powers in government and the perceived need to restrict the power and influence of the executive branch.

Key Points

- The three divisions of government in the ideal authority; legislative, executive and federative (foreign policy) attempting to limit concentration of power in any one area
- The need to have a government that can be trusted and the possible mistrust of the executive because of the concentration of power in the executive
- Methods to limit executive powers; legislature, the supreme source of authority, operating only within the law; an enforcer not a creator of law, obedience only operative within the law
- The role of the people in establishing the legislature
- The problem of executive power in dismissing the legislature and the associated consequences of the dominance of the executive
- The prerogative rights of the executive in times of need and when the public good requires it

Discussion

- Given the ideal nature of the political system advocated, could restrictions ever be achieved in reality?
- The contrast between the British system and the American extension of Locke's divisions
- Can the executive always be trusted, even in times of crisis?
- Is the appeal to law a reliable check to executive power? Locke in this context does not discuss the role of the judiciary
- How can the public good be defined with any degree of consistency and general acceptance? If the public good is defined by the executive, could abuses arise?
- With power invested in the executive how can the people effectively remove it?
- Can Locke's supposed checks on the executive really be applied to groups taking the executive role? It might work with an individual but does it work with oligarchies?
- Is Locke's theory of human nature justified in terms of his contemporary experience or future human actions, and therefore could his faith in the people be questioned?
- How does the executive create itself and perpetuate itself?
- In a system of politics can the perceived executive ever be checked when they control power? Is Locke naive in his belief in the rationality of the people to effect change?
- Critiques of Locke's views, e.g. Marxist

12. Critically evaluate the claim that property is more important than life.

This question allows for an evaluation of the importance of property in the social system that Locke advocates, and whether it is possibly the case that transferability of property allows it to supersede life and that life could be given up for the protection of property.

Key Points

- Two ideas of property exist for Locke: The ownership of one's labour as property, and the individual ownership of goods and land
- The best means of protecting both types of property; man should give up some of his natural rights and come together as a body politic and agree to a social contract setting down standards
- Ownership of property is absolute as it arises out of natural law and reason
- The role of government in protecting ownership, and non-government intervention
- Locke's idea of unlimited ownership of property balanced with ideas of common ownership and rules of subsistence because of limited acquisition and ideas of waste
- Life and property are central but property cannot be given up as it could be owned by someone else
- The relationship of life and property within Locke's matrix of civil society

Discussion

- Is property so central to Locke that it becomes a duty to protect it with one's life?
- Is property ownership the key to the advancement of human kind and therefore above individual life?
- To what degree can the government take property away if the common good is threatened?
- Does the interaction of personal labour and land create a special status for that land as nature has been enhanced by man?
- Does Locke really address the issues of waste and abuse of resources through excessive ownership and a lack of sharing for the common good? In practice, does the individual appreciate the necessary duty to improve the human lot?
- Is private ownership more beneficial than common ownership?
- Are humans naturally more comfortable in a market, capitalistic oriented society where property ownership by individuals could theoretically increase exponentially?
- Is Locke's approach flawed in that he is only concerned with the sections of society that have property? Would he be accepting of a redistribution of property ownership with a view to creating greater equality?

John Stuart Mill: *On Liberty*

13. Critically evaluate Mill's claim that over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.

Located in chapter 1, the claim is based in the “one very simple principle” stated by Mill: To govern the use of coercion in society – we might only coerce others in self-defence either to defend ourselves, or to defend others from harm. Therefore answers might discuss the claim as such and the principle as well.

Key Points

- Self-protection is the only end for which mankind is warranted, individually or collectively in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number. The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others
- Any member of a civilized community cannot rightfully be compelled to do or refrain because it will be better for him to do so, for the reason that, in the opinions of others, to do so, it will make him happier, or would be wise
- Coercion refers to both legal penalties and the operation of public opinion
- This doctrine is meant to apply only to human beings in the maturity of their faculties
- Mill regards utility as the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions, but it must be utility in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being
- Those interests authorize the subjection of individual spontaneity to external control, only in respect to those actions of each, which concern the interest of other people
- A person might cause suffering to others not only by his actions but by his inaction, and in either case he is justly accountable to them for the injury; the latter case, it is true, requires a much more cautious exercise of compulsion than the former

Discussion

- Critics have sometimes thought that Mill was frightened by the prospect of a mass democracy in which working-class opinion would be oppressive and perhaps violent; Mill was frightened by middle-class conformism much more than by anything to be looked for from an enfranchised working class
- Mill feared that a prosperous middle-class society would care nothing for individual liberty
- Mill's “simple principle” rules out paternalistic interventions to save people from themselves, and ideal interventions to make people behave “better”
- Implications of the principle:
 - (a) it requires liberty of tastes and pursuits; of framing the plan of our life to suit our own character; of doing as we like, subject to such consequences as might follow; without impediment so long as that we do not harm others, even though they should think our conduct foolish, perverse, or wrong
 - (b) from this, liberty of each individual follows the liberty, within the same limits, of combination among individuals; freedom to unite, for any purpose not involving harm to others
- How can a utilitarian subscribe to such a principle of self-restraint?
- Since an individual's existence is based on interaction, how can he/she claim to be sovereign?

14. Mill states, “If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind”. Discuss and critically evaluate.

The question opens a discussion on the issue of liberty of thought and expression.

Key points

- Exerting any power of coercion is illegitimate except in self-defence and in the defence of others
- Silencing the expression of an opinion causes the substantial damage of depriving posterity as well as the existing generation of it
- When the opinion is right, people are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth. If wrong, people lose the perception of truth, produced by its clash with error
- Those who desire to suppress an opinion are not infallible; they have no authority to decide the question for all mankind, and exclude every other person from the means of judging. All silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility
- Complete liberty of contradicting and disproving our opinion, is the very condition which justifies us in assuming its truth for purposes of action; and on no other terms can a being with human faculties have any rational assurance of being right
- A quality of the human mind: it is capable of rectifying its mistakes by discussion and experience but not necessarily by experience alone; there must be discussion to show how experience is to be interpreted
- The steady habit of correcting and completing our own opinion by collating it with those of others is the only stable foundation for a just reliance on it
- The case of Socrates; a memorable collision between his teachings and the legal authorities and public opinion of his time

Discussion

- There ought to exist the fullest liberty of professing and discussing, as a matter of ethical conviction, any doctrine, however immoral it might be considered
- Liberty of the press as defence against corrupt or tyrannical government
- To what extent does unrestricted freedom of opinion and freedom of expression really contribute to the mental well-being of mankind (on which all their other well-being depends)? What about lying for humanity’s sake?
- An implication: when an opinion is true, it might be extinguished once, twice, or many times, but in the course of ages there will generally be found persons to rediscover it
- No political or social principle, except the very basic human rights, has to be held as absolute

Friedrich Nietzsche: *The Genealogy of Morals*

15. Explain and discuss the concept of the ascetic ideal and its relationship with truth.

The aim of this question is to discuss and assess the culmination of Nietzsche's argument in Essay 3, where he identifies a counter to the will to power; the ascetic ideal. Although this curtails humanity from expressing itself and seeking out conditions that enhance life, without an ascetic ideal, civilization and communal living would be impossible.

Key Points

- Nietzsche views the ascetic ideal as a preserver of life as well as a denier to life; how the restricted condition for life (morality) literally protects and preserves life, and sets up a clear distinction and appreciation of the values that make life bearable and dangerous
- Objective truth is the claim and promise of the ascetic ideal and this is the motive and source for the attenuation of the will to power. It is the claim of every ideology from Christianity to Science
- The form of the ascetic ideal comes in types or guises; in ancient cultures, this was the priest, and in contemporary cultures it is the philosopher. Characteristic of both types is their denial or rejection of the sensual aspects of life, and the creation of an ideal impossible for humanity to achieve
- The will to power is an amoral drive that seeks out the best conditions to enhance life; what distinguishes humanity is its ability to exploit advantage; it is not to be understood as a drive driven by pleasure or hedonism, as it has no specific goal except to express itself, and it might often place the organism at risk

Discussion

- Does Nietzsche's perspectivism necessarily deny the individual the concept of some authentic set of moral values?
- Nietzsche's psychological view of humanity implies an irrational and violent element to our lives; do we need protection from ourselves?
- Even if Nietzsche's analysis is true, is it better to live in this way, in a society without the exercising of naked power and where pity and compassion are valued, than the alternative?
- Are priests and philosophers against sensual life? How can this be important when concerned with the life of the mind, or is this the whole problem?
- Is Nietzsche wrong when he claims that even science is without an objective position for truth?

16. Explain and discuss the role of *ressentiment* in morality.

The aim of this question is to invite an explanation of *ressentiment*, the Nietzschean concept that stands in opposition to the will to power as a means of moral evaluation. Approaches to the question might involve, but not be limited to, a discussion of slave and aristocratic types, the will to power, or the historical veracity of such a claim.

Key Points

- *Ressentiment* is the name Nietzsche gives to the act of opposition of one group to the ruling elites, and stems from the real suffering experienced in their life
- The moral character of the 19th Century European man is the result of a long historical development of a psychologically repressive culture reflected in the “ideal” man
- The creative act of *ressentiment* was to attach to itself the value of “good”, and to the values in opposition, the value of “bad”
- *Ressentiment* was the weapon of the priestly class not only to overturn the values of the aristocrats, but also to wound the slaves, so as to bind them to others in the group
- Nietzsche identifies positive values to the aristocratic class; those who exercise their power in self-affirming acts, take risks, and exploit advantage; this type of man celebrates and self-affirms his humanness, and this includes his war-like characteristics

Discussion

- Are moral questions fundamentally questions about control of social and intellectual power?
- Is Nietzsche’s psychological description of a self determined by drives accurate? Are there other factors that he has ignored?
- Does a historical analysis of ethical questions illuminate or confuse the problem? Is Nietzsche correct when claiming that our ethical concepts cannot be divorced from historical contexts?
- Is Nietzsche being unnecessarily reductionist or simple in classifying humanity into either slaves or aristocrats? Is his historical analysis more convenient myth than fact?
- Do drives actively construct strategies to thwart opposition? How do drives recognize opposing forces? How do drives perform creative acts?
- Perspectivism and genealogy as philosophical methodologies

Bertrand Russell: *The Problems of Philosophy*

17. Explain and discuss the theory of sense-data.

This question invites an exploration of Russell's account on sense-data, found primarily in chapter 1 but also in chapter 3.

Key Points

- Russell advances his theory of sense-data in the tradition of British empiricism, where previously they had been termed “impressions”
- Russell is advancing a theory about perception which states that in perceiving objects we are not directly or immediately aware of the objects we are perceiving
- Sense-data are dependent for their existence on being perceived and for Russell sense-data are immediate and incorrigible
- Russell advances three arguments in support of his theory: (a) the argument from perceptual variability; (b) the argument from secondary qualities; (c) the argument from time lag
- (a) perceptual variability argument: the same object can look differently to the same person at different times depending on factors like light conditions or the angle of observation. It appears that there is a difference between what things look like and what they actually are; Russell advances two versions of (a) – one concerning colour and one concerning shape (both qualities that things don't actually possess according to Russell)
- (b) the distinction between primary and secondary qualities comes via Locke from Epicurus; primary qualities are inherent in bodies, secondary qualities are produced in the perceptual system of the observer. Russell maintains we can change secondary qualities by altering the conditions of primary qualities and Russell concludes secondary qualities are not therefore part of the real world
- (c) if we look at the sun the actual light we see takes 8 minutes to reach us, which implies we are not looking directly at the sun as it actually is; Russell concludes that it is sense-data of which we are really conscious

Discussion

- See objections to Russell's arguments: (a) perceptual variability – Russell seems to make an invalid move going from an acknowledgement of, say, the difficulty of accessing the true colour of an object to saying it has no colour at all; is it possible that the different appearance of colour under different light conditions is merely what appearances are in certain conditions? Appearances are not things – see the problem of reification; just so with the shape of an object, it doesn't change when it appears to; it is merely the same thing (one thing) appearing differently
- Objections to (b) primary and secondary qualities distinction – Russell drives too large a wedge between primary and secondary qualities; Russell maintains that secondary qualities are not part of the real world as they are wholly dependent for their nature on the more basic primary qualities. Is this enough to justify his conclusions? Is Russell explaining away important physical features of objects like colour or shape?
- Objections to (c) the time lag argument – Russell can be countered by saying that when we look at the sun we are seeing the past, not sense-data that are not really connected to the sun
- If we are only aware of sense-data privately then we must try to account for things like the eye or the ear; maybe a causal theory of perception can be explained by the nature of things themselves and the humans who possess sense organs to understand and negotiate them

18. Explain and discuss why the principle of induction cannot be proved by experience.

This question invites an exploration of an important element of Russell’s theory of knowledge which built on the work done by Hume. Material from chapter 6, which deals with the matter specifically, might be discussed but candidates might draw also on other material that relates to induction and arguments for truth.

Key Points

- After discussing his account of knowledge (by acquaintance and description) Russell goes on, in chapter 6, to deal with the general problems of knowledge that arise; he does this under the heading “On Induction” and he raises the question of how possible it is to go beyond the evidence of our senses and memories
- Just as Hume does, Russell invokes a general principle which operates to enable us to make sense and meaning from our various sense experiences
- The principle of induction enables knowledge to be extended beyond what occurs to the individual as a merely personal event to make conclusions about what is happening in the world
- Russell examines the origin of our belief that the future will be like the past; he uses Hume’s example of the sun rising in the East and the example of seeing footprints and assuming someone had walked in the sand to cause them – all this because of the consistency of past experience
- Russell says we have more justification to trust the consistency between the past and future than to reject it; but it is not a logical necessity that the future should hold like the past
- The justification for believing in future consistency with the past is formed through habit, not reason; it is more psychological than rational
- We trust in the uniformity of nature and believe it to be exceptionless; but this is questionable and cannot be rationally justified according to Russell

Discussion

- The principle of induction cannot be proved empirically; as Russell states “we can never use experience to prove the inductive principle without begging the question”
- Is Russell’s mitigated scepticism convincing? Or is it a sign of a defeat for empiricism?
- Experience neither confirms nor refutes induction, so why is it so firmly rooted in us?
- Russell goes on in chapter 7 to talk about our knowledge of general principles, acknowledging that the unhesitating belief by everyone in it is what the principle of induction shares with other general principles; but Russell draws a stark contrast between the certainty of deduction and the lack of certainty of inductive arguments
- Russell later offers a contrast to the principle of induction with his Laws of Thought which are necessarily and logically true; they must be true in a way inductive truths are not

Hannah Arendt: *The Human Condition*

19. Critically evaluate the justification for the division of human activities into labour, work and action.

This question invites an assessment of Arendt's division of human activities into labour, work and action and whether there is a hierarchy of importance within the three parts.

Key Points

- The definition of labour, work and action; biological processes of the body (life itself), the activities of humans that create the artificial world of things, the political life of men in dialogue with each other
- The role of speech in the interaction between human beings; the interaction and mutuality that humans might or should seek; men as animals socialise; the search for “who we are”
- The possible separation of private and public realms; labour becoming more dominant and moving from the private realm to the public realm has created a lonely man that seeks to reveal himself without consideration of the other, and in so doing tries to enhance himself without the other
- The case for action being, in fact, superior but losing its status; the loss of status due to stress on productivity and property (modernism) and the lack of desire to be political in behaviour
- The problem of a possible decline in the awareness of the other because of the decline in action; the waste economy of modern times emphasises things more than the other

Discussion

- To what extent is the analysis purely theoretical and not reflective of sound empirical evidence confirming that in reality humans can and wish to be political?
- Can the Aristotelian basis for Arendt's argument be relevant to today's society?
- The degree to which self doubt has increasingly appeared and produced a decline in commitment to the other
- The importance of speech to political/public activity
- Does the rise of labour and/or work really create a decline in action?
- Is political life and activity virtuous?
- The degree to which Arendt's fear of the decline of action is reflective of both her life experience and her times
- Does the consumer-driven society turn people into a means to an end?
- Is Arendt's analysis both time and culturally loaded; conditions in post industrial societies and the emerging economies might make her perspective irrelevant?
- Is the possible sceptical view of political action making such action redundant, to be replaced by new ways of improving the human condition?

20. Explain and discuss the role of *vita activa* in improving humanity.

This question gives an opportunity to discuss the view that the development of “action” is a possible means to improve the human condition.

Key Points

- The definition of *vita activa*
- The nature of labour, work and action
- The need to stop the erosion of the public realm (human dialogue) by the private realm (consumerism and production)
- The notion of improvement from Arendt’s perspective
- The need to create the harmonious balance between labour, work and action so as to allow improvement of the human condition; that we are known by others, are unique individuals and reach beyond ourselves to others
- The need to preserve the *polis*, the place where action occurs, but accepting the realization that the *polis* cannot be maintained without labour and work
- The idea of improvement of the human condition being a direct consequence of action; the progress towards more mutuality, more self disclosure and more understanding that humans are ends in themselves and that the essence of the *polis* is collective improving action

Discussion

- Is a consumer-orientated society at the expense of meaningful and beneficial human interactions?
- Is the “good life” goods-orientated or relationships-orientated?
- Can humans remain *zoon politikon* in a post-industrialised society?
- Is improvement of the human condition reliant both upon dialogue and mutuality, and materialistic progress?
- Are Arendt’s divisions, components of a whole or can they be mutually exclusive and still address human needs?
- Might Arendt be wrong in assuming that humans seek mutuality as much as the acquisition of goods?
- Is it not self-evident that consumer societies rely upon complex communications systems between humans?
- Does the modern trend to present goods to a society through the medium of values and emotions produce an effective and meaningful interaction of the private and public which Arendt could not have been aware of?
- Might globalization be the vehicle whereby humans interact more with each other rather than the death-knell of action and mutuality?
- Is there a resilience in the human spirit that will always strive for harmony to improve the human condition?
- Is the realm of education the new *polis* that Arendt did not envision?

Simone de Beauvoir: *The Ethics of Ambiguity*

21. Explain and discuss de Beauvoir's idea that existentialism defines itself as a philosophy of ambiguity.

The question is an opportunity to analyse how existentialism can be identified as a philosophy of ambiguity, and to examine de Beauvoir's whole idea of the ethics of ambiguity.

Key Points

- Our fundamental ambiguity: It is in the knowledge of the genuine conditions of our life that we must draw our strength to live and our reason for acting
- In order for us to live ethically we must assume the ambiguity of human existence, which mixes the internal freedom to transcend the given conditions of the world with the weight of the world which imposes itself on us
- It was by affirming the irreducible character of ambiguity that Kierkegaard opposed Hegel
- It is by ambiguity that Sartre fundamentally defined man, that being whose being is not to be, that subjectivity which realizes itself only as a presence in the world, that engaged freedom, that surging of the for-oneself which is immediately given for others
- Even the most optimistic ethics have all begun by emphasizing the element of failure involved in the condition of man; without failure, no ethics; for a being who, from the very start, would be an exact coincidence with himself, the notion of having-to-be would have no meaning
- The failure described by Sartre is definitive, but it is also ambiguous. Man is "a being who makes himself a lack of being in order that there might be being"; that means that his passion is not inflicted upon him from elsewhere, he chooses it
- The genuine man will not agree to recognize any foreign absolute

Discussion

- Existentialism is a philosophy of the absurd and of despair; it encloses man in a sterile anguish, in an empty subjectivity. It is incapable of furnishing him with any principle for making choices
- De Beauvoir states one does not offer ethics to a God. It is impossible to propose any to man if one defines him as nature, as something given. Does it mean that it is impossible to believe in God while being able to propose an ethic?
- Is there a place for happiness in the ethics of ambiguity? For hope?
- If man is free to define for himself the conditions of a life which is valid in his own eyes, can he not choose whatever he likes and act however he likes? Dostoevsky asserted, "If God does not exist, everything is permitted"
- Does the ethic of ambiguity offer an objective content to the moral act, or at least a moral guideline?

22. Critically evaluate de Beauvoir's claim that to act alone, or without concern for others, is not to be free.

The question asks for an explanation and evaluation of the extent of the social dimension in the ethics of ambiguity, and of the relation between individual and collective decision and action.

Key Points

- Intersubjectivity is a key influence on the development of the individual
- No project can be defined except by its interference with other projects; if my project intersects with others who are enslaved – either literally or through mystification – I too am not truly free. Human freedom requires the freedom of others for it to be realized
- If I do not actively seek to help those who are not free, I am implicated in their oppression
- Existentialism simultaneously enables plurality and individuality; though the context of individual lives involves interaction with a community
- Individuals and societies can never impose on or reveal meaning in the world but they are linked together in possessing spontaneous consciousness
- Context of nationalistic movements like Nazism, which claim external absolutes to demand the sacrifice of individuals. The influence of occupied France on de Beauvoir, specifically the problem of the intellectual's social and political engagement with his or her own time

Discussion

- It is said that this philosophy is subjective, even solipsistic; if he is once enclosed within himself, how can man get out?
- Does the ethics of ambiguity create a coherent intellectual framework in which the individuality and sociality are brought together?
- Utopias – either religious or secular – encourage sacrifice for the collective
- Philosophical systems that suppress the needs of the individual, in favour of a historical destiny, are unethical
- In a secular age the challenge is to discover the extent to which the individual is bound to another, and to ask if laws can be framed which apply to all
- Individual freedoms necessarily collide
- Are we able to recognize the importance of preserving the distinctness of others and the ethical imperative of not submitting another individual to one's will?

Charles Taylor: *The Ethics of Authenticity*

- 23. Taylor states, “The agent seeking significance in life, trying to define him – or herself – meaningfully, has to exist in a horizon of important questions”. Discuss and critically evaluate.**

This question invites an explanation and assessment of a fundamental principle in Taylor’s analysis of authenticity, that of the horizon of significance. It is the necessary, but not exclusive, element that prevents a search of authenticity from becoming an exercise in self-fulfilment and narcissism.

Key Points

- Taylor’s argument is that without a horizon of significance, all moral choice becomes a shallow exercise and leads to moral relativism and narcissism; if authenticity is to have a moral value worthy of pursuit, it must be more than an exercise based on pleasure or short term interests – it must be connected to others and the outside world
- Horizons of significance refers to our fundamental principles; those concepts, values and ideas which are responsible for making situations intelligible for us, *e.g.* religious faith, humanism, *etc.* This means that some ideas and actions are more important than others
- For Taylor, choice is the basis of freedom, but it cannot become the standard by which to judge the worth of ideas and actions. Choice in itself is not enough; this is the slide that relativism makes in confusing an exercise in choice with authenticity
- Authenticity requires social dialogue, and withdrawal into subjectivism and narcissism; it ignores our responsibilities and ties with others and institutions beyond the self, particularly political ones

Discussion

- Although Taylor defends the search for authenticity as a noble tradition, is it a search only possible for those in modern democratic and technological societies with the means to do so?
- Is Taylor being disingenuous when he at once acknowledges and celebrates the plurality of the modern world, but argues against even a soft version of relativism?
- Is choice the sufficient and necessary condition for freedom? What are some other possible signifiers of freedom?
- Does Taylor’s description of horizons of significance mean that so long as some ideas are used as a guide, then my search for authenticity is justified? What if my horizons of significance are morally suspect?

24. Explain and discuss the parallels between art, the concept of the self, and subjectivism in Taylor's argument on authenticity.

Taylor draws a parallel between the shift in concepts of the self and individualism and the movement in art from mimesis to creation. Art also serves as an example of how the subjectivation of the self does not mean that this subjectivation leads to narcissism and egoism.

Key Points

- The language of poets and the images of artists had previously drawn on common understandings and mythologies; art was a mimesis of the world in its content and its manner, and was accessible to most of the public
- The shift in emphasis in the definition of the individual, divorced from the medieval Chain of Being was contemporary with the Romantic Movement that changed the view of art and beauty from the mimetic to the actions and original idea the artist; the move was essentially from external definitions to an internal one based on feeling
- Like art, the idea of the self changed from one that was defined by external moral obligations, to an internal one built upon notions of originality, imagination, and inspiration
- The result of the change in reference for art resulted in a subjectivation of meaning; previously, the external references for art meant that all had access to its symbolism and meaning. Now, the meaning must be mediated through the language of the particular artist; this makes meaning more difficult to access. Art became less public and more personal in interpreting its meaning
- Similarly, the shift in the definition of the individual cut the individual free from long held definitions, and the need for a replacement definition saw the birth of the modern concept of authenticity
- Modern art highlights the criticisms and solution to the charge of narcissism made against the search for authenticity; the personal language now found in art and the manner in which it is conveyed collapses art into a subjective exercise without an external reference point – similarly for the self
- Taylor makes a distinction between the manner in which art express itself (personal) and its content (public); the search for authenticity also matches this view. Great art still engages with common and universal human experiences; with the self, though the personal is now of primary importance, it can only avoid narcissism if it seeks external, common reference points for its definition; a new chain of being for meaning

Discussion

- If the concept of art is a parallel to the concept of the self, then what does this mean about non-Western cultures that have different artistic ideologies and practices? Do they have a need for authenticity?
- In the context of a parallel to the concept of the individual, how can anyone understand my art if I use my own private symbols? Furthermore, Taylor assumes an easy separation between the content and manner of art. Is it as clear as he implies?
- Does Taylor successfully answer the criticism of those who maintain that the collapse of external points of self-reference must necessarily lead to a false search for authenticity?
- Can self-fulfilment ever be authentic according to Taylor?
- Can the tension between the individual and the public be resolved?