



MARKSCHEME

November 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 Krishna's yogic attitude.

This question gives an opportunity to explain and discuss Krishna's teachings on the yogic attitude.

Key Points

- It seems that Arjuna is persuaded to fight because Krishna has inspired him to believe that there is an attitude that can be taken by a person towards his or her activities which maximizes the creative benefit of those activities
- Krishna calls this attitude *yoga*, and explains that it is a general attitude, applicable to all activities, not just war, and available to all people, not just Arjuna
- This attitude is particularly conducive to social harmony and cultural continuity within a diverse, organized and potentially enormous community. The person successfully applying Krishna's yogic attitude is described as behaving traditionally, participating in existing institutions and helping to sustain the community. The process of individual salvation is private and compatible with all walks of life even in their apparently more unpleasant moments
- Krishna's yogic method is a powerful tool for personal transformation, since it is based on the truth that *dehin* is a quality or substance – neither word really fits – fundamentally set apart from *prakriti*, the natural world of physical, mental and emotional process, the coming to be and passing away of causally linked items, forces and phenomena
- Krishna's presentation of the yogic method is built upon his revelation of certain truths concerning the composition of the universe as a whole and of the individuals within it

Discussion

- Is the yogic attitude a kind of ethical code?
- To what extent does the yogic attitude transmit a message of peace, when Arjuna is persuaded to fight because Krishna has inspired him by means of it?
- Krishna's attitude is particularly conducive to social harmony and cultural continuity within a diverse, organized and potentially enormous community. Is this only for a group, or should it be projected to humanity as a whole?
- Krishna's teachings were interpreted in different ways. Some stressed its rejection of quietism and its justification of violent action against tyrants, and used it to encourage revolutionary activity
- Gandhi, on the other hand, read the text daily and saw the *Mahabharata* war as an allegorical representation of the internal struggle between the human soul and worldly temptations. For him, there was nothing in the text which contradicted his principles of non-violence and his politics of passive resistance. On the contrary, he saw his principles and politics as derived from the text
- Modern examples of *yoga* practice for profit, for modern ambitions like weight loss

2. Explain and discuss the notion of *Brahman*.

This question invites an explanation and discussion of this central notion within the context of the text, but also beyond it, since its interpretations precede and succeed it.

Key Points

- The Sanskrit word *Brahman* emerged in late Vedic literature and Upanishads as the name of the divine reality pervading the universe
- The *Bhagavad-Gita* develops the understanding of *Brahman* as God, the creator and sustainer of the universe as both its stuff and a will that fundamentally shapes things
- *Brahman*, God, is infinite and both transcendent to and immanent in this world
- The *Bhagavad-Gita* uses a Vedic motif, developed by later theists, to explain the process of emanation: sacrifice. *Brahman* sacrifices its infinity in becoming finite, and thereby creates the world. Through sacrifice, *Brahman* emanates the world as its body
- The *Bhagavad-Gita* teaches that through a reverse sacrifice of offering of the finite, a soul finds *Brahman* transcendent, the supreme good
- The *Bhagavad-Gita* upholds mystical awareness of *Brahman* as the solution to ethical and political crises

Discussion

- *Brahman*, the absolute, the supremely real, became the focus of Indian spirituality and the centre of metaphysics for almost three thousand years, down to the present day, opening diverse interpretations
- Theistic philosophers tend to stress God's love for the soul, teaching, in accord with the *Bhagavad-Gita*, that the best way to mystical knowledge of *Brahman* is not meditation or asceticism (associated with *Advaita*, *Yoga* and Buddhism), but rather a corresponding *bhakti*, or love of God
- To what extent is the individual soul distinct from *Brahman*? To some, *Brahman* bears souls as accidental qualities, and is the necessary support of their appearance
- Others use other metaphors; *Brahman*: the ocean and waves (souls)
- In contrast to Upanishadic ideas about *Brahman* as beyond good and evil, in the Vedantic theism of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, *Brahman* upholds *dharma*, right conduct, and in special manifestations is born into the world to keep the social order on track
- Heaven and the concept of *Brahman*; the relationship between *Brahman* and the wheel of existence

Confucius: *The Analects*

3. “The relationship between *jen* (goodness, humaneness, benevolence) and *li* (rites) is central to understanding the ethical perspectives of *The Analects*.” Discuss and critically evaluate.

This question asks for a discussion and critical evaluation of ways of approaching the relationship between two of the central ideas of Confucius’s text. It allows for a definition of the terms, an explanation of their centrality in Confucius’s arguments, and invites a critical evaluation of the ways in which these notions account for the ethical perspectives encountered throughout the text.

Key Points:

- *Jen*: an all-embracing ideal of goodness, humaneness and benevolence
- *Li*: the proper execution of elaborate practices, rites and rules governing ritual behaviour
- *Jen* establishes the ethical life and ethical character
- *Li* plays the critical role in shaping the ethical life and character denoted by *jen* and in expressing the states of mind and dispositions which constitute *jen*
- *Jen* and *li* are separate but the observance of *li* practices are the instrumental means of achieving *jen*
- *Jen* is also defined by and identified with the ritual observances practiced by the community
- *Jen* is the criterion for the acceptance, revision and/or adaptation of all *li* rituals
- However, once established, *li* provides the ultimate value for the possession of *jen*
- There exists a delicate balance between *jen* and *li* establishing a relationship amongst thought, character and action
- *Jen* and *li* together define and denote the ethical state of mind, character and behaviour

Discussion

- How is *jen* related both ideally and practically to *li*?
- Is *jen* the comprehensively defining quality of ethical character or is it just one of several qualities? What might some of these other qualities be?
- Can *jen* and *li* be understood as separate qualities or can they only be understood in conjunction with one another?
- In what senses can one of the qualities have priority over the other?
- Is the observance of *li* practices the only way of achieving *jen*? What other ways might be identified?
- Does *jen* exhaustively define the ethical life?
- How do ritual practices contribute to ethical character?
- Is it possible to clearly define what the text means by ethical behaviour or by an ethical life and character?
- Do *jen* and *li* have contemporary significance in Western moral/ethical systems? How?
- How convincing is the ethical view expressed by the *jen/li* perspective?

4. Explain and discuss why *hsiao* (filial piety), while linked to other virtues, has priority in the order of human relationships.

This question asks for an explanation and discussion of one of the central virtues of Confucius's views. It invites a consideration of how and why filial piety takes on central importance in establishing correct human relationships. It also allows for a discussion of the relationship of filial piety to other Confucian virtues.

Key Points

- *Hsiao* as filial piety, incorporating duty and respect, is the starting point for all future relationships
- *Hsiao* denotes the supreme expression of *jen* (goodness, humaneness, benevolence)
- *Hsiao* constitutes the ethical basis for *jen*
- *Hsiao* as a fundamental virtue of home life, is learned in childhood and contributes to the notion of faithful, respectful service
- *Hsiao* as the correct father-son relationship is the paradigm for future superior-inferior relationships
- *Hsiao* marks the beginnings of the development of ethical behaviour, especially when it is linked to *jen*, *ren* (supreme virtue) and *yi* (righteousness)
- However, *hsiao* is linked to *jang* (deference, renunciation, abdication) and indicates the paradigm of courteous deference of the superior to the inferior as graceful, exemplary behaviour
- *Hsiao* and *jang* are principles of political order
- Individualism is a threat to proper human relationships

Discussion

- How sensible or convincing is it to establish filial piety as the paradigm for all forms of human relationships?
- If *hsiao* is learned in the home, does this not make it somewhat relative to the positive or negative quality of an individual's home life?
- In what ways is it possible to approach superior-inferior relationships outside of the home on the basis of the father-son relationship in the home? Is it possible at all?
- Is it more convincing to see the notion of *hsiao* in conjunction with and in relationship to other central Confucian virtues?
- What can be learned from the association of *hsiao* with the notion of *jang* in terms of effective political organization?
- How can the state, the community, the family, and the private individual be placed into a meaningful relationship if *hsiao* takes priority as the paradigm for all relationships?
- Does *hsiao* suggest that the proper form of government is one in which the political leader serves rather than rules?
- What significance does the Confucian notion of *hsiao* and the related virtues have with regard to our contemporary understanding of familial and political relationships?
- Is there a similarity of the Confucian view of *hsiao*, as the paradigm for all human relationships, with any contemporary, Western interpretations of human relationships?
- Can any virtue possess priority in terms of defining authentic human relationships?
- Does filial piety play a role in contemporary societies? How?

Lao Tzu: *Tao Te Ching*

5. To what extent can the *Tao* be applied to the “art of government”?

This question allows for an analysis of how the *Tao* might guide the status, role and function of government and the ruler.

Key Points

- The nature of the talents and qualities needed to govern (II. 57); *wu wei* (non-action), caring yet not interfering, not ambitious or self seeking (II. 58), calm, upright, honest, seeking the highest good, not being too directive, stillness, humility and service (II. 61)
- The role of government might be limited to providing circumstances whereby people have basic needs; food and shelter (II. 60)
- Being free of busy-ness could be seen as preventing the distractions of worldly desire and applying the principle of *wu wei* to government. An idea of non-interference and allowing natural development
- The results of *wu wei* encourages the people to take more responsibility to become “rich” and yet seek the simple life
- The idea that the people and the state, as a whole, reflect the approach and attitude of the ruler
- A metaphysical aspect might be raised by reference to legacies of the past (past spirits), and how the ruler can blend the present and future with the past, allowing the “Life-Force” to be more effective in benefiting the state and the people
- The metaphysical aspect might also be interpreted as an individual governing their self – taking control of their self – and seeking greater self-harmony with nature, just as government is advised to do.
- The positive female image of the state might be developed; the maternal, non-aggressive, caring character of the state. A state that desires nothing but “service” (II. 61)
- A ruler who practises *wu wei* ultimately turns opposites around – a common feature of the *Tao*

Discussion

- Does the guidance of *wu wei* produce effective government in a complex non-agrarian society?
- Does the approach of government advocate a view of human nature too positively, or will such an approach actually change human behaviour?
- Are a “female state” and *wu wei* compatible? The “materialism” might produce interference, and not allow the individual to take responsibility
- To what extent does the respect of “past spirits” produce maintenance of the *status quo*, without change and no progress? Is this rejection of progress really what Lao Tzu wants of government?
- Reference might be drawn to parallels with Plato’s Philosopher-Ruler and how a Ruler with no ambition, yet responsibilities, could guide a society to betterment
- Might *wu wei* in government be a *laissez-faire* approach and therefore not be the fairest or most efficient form of government?

6. Explain and discuss the idea of *sheng ren* (the man of calling).

This question seeks an explanation and discussion of the nature and importance of *sheng ren* as a model human who can be the *Tao*.

Key Points

It should be noted that in some translations the phrase the “man of calling” is used, while in others the reference is “He” or “Ruler”.

- The idea that *sheng ren* is the ideal man and is a personification of the *Tao*. The correspondence of a “saintly” figure to Life itself
- *Sheng ren* is spontaneous and, in being so is Life, the *Tao*
- The characteristics of *sheng ren*: not self-centred; above worldly desires and not materialistic; able to shape the world; able to see unity in a confused world; able to practice *wu wei* (non-action) completely; able to know the needs of the ordinary human; driven by duty
- The role of *sheng ren* in society as a model individual and a carer of others as well a voice of the metaphysical
- A model for others who strive to reach *Tao*
- The development of *sheng ren* qualities in all humans if they live a certain lifestyle; that is, they try and let the *Tao* live through them and are non-active, *wu wei*

Discussion

- How far can the *Tao* be embodied? Does this suggest an inherent contradiction in the nature of the *Tao*?
- If *wu wei* is practised completely, how can *sheng ren* activate anything?
- If he practises *wu wei* how can he ever control himself?
- Does spontaneity, a fundamental aspect of the *Tao*, mean that *sheng ren* might be inconsistent in behaviour and his interpretation of what duty should be?
- How can *sheng ren* let go of social links, be more spontaneous, and yet still understand the worldliness of people? This aloofness and separation might limit effective communication and understanding
- Is *sheng ren* similar to Plato’s Philosopher-Ruler or even a messianic figure?
- Is *sheng ren* a realistic aim or a necessary abstract model for us to strive towards?

Plato: *The Republic*, Books IV–IX

7. Explain and discuss Plato’s simile of the divided line.

This question invites an explanation and discussion of one of Plato’s major similes in *The Republic*. This simile invites a consideration of Plato’s account of knowledge and its relationship to reality.

Key Points

- The context of the simile in Plato’s discussion about the role of knowledge in achieving justice in the state
- The account of knowledge in the simile; the account of the external world in the simile and the relationship between the world and knowledge established by the simile
- Plato’s hierarchy of the different cognitive faculties and his hierarchy of different objects of those faculties
- The dualism and idealism reflected in the simile
- Plato’s rejection of the world of the senses for giving true knowledge
- Plato’s treatment of illusion, opinion and belief
- The relation of opinion/belief to the world of the senses
- The distinction in knowledge between *dianoia* (reasoning) and *noesis* (intelligence)
- The relation of knowledge to the world of the forms
- The relation of knowledge, especially *dianoia*, to mathematics
- The relationship of philosophy – especially dialectic – to the world; the applicability of the simile of the divided line to Plato’s political programme

Discussion

- The metaphysical assumptions of Plato’s view of the world of forms
- The certainty of ideas and the rejection of the certainty of knowledge presumably gained through the senses
- Are different states of knowledge so distinct?
- The problems of acquiring knowledge of the Forms (directly or indirectly through another form?)
- Problems of analogy
- The relation of this account of knowledge to ethical and political matters
- How Plato’s ethical and epistemological position stands in the post-Enlightenment world
- How does the divided line simile follow the preceding simile of the sun and anticipate the proceeding simile of the cave?

8. Critically evaluate the qualities of the philosopher and what qualifies the philosopher to rule in the state.

This question seeks a critical evaluation of the argument Plato makes for philosophers having rule in the state because of the abilities and training they possess.

Key Points

- The just state is only possible with rule by philosophers
- The philosopher who will govern the state combines philosophizing and ruling in a single individual
- The philosopher has a set of natural qualities that qualify him/her to become a guardian in the state; these qualities enable the philosopher to sustain the difficult training for, and responsibility of, rule
- These natural qualities begin with knowledge of the world of the Forms so that justice can be recognised (known) and applied in the city – in 518c knowledge of the truth is essential for proper governance
- The ultimate knowledge is knowledge of the Good
- Philosophers love every kind of learning which produces virtue and expertise in ruling
- Philosophers love truth and the whole of wisdom as opposed to the love of sights and sounds of non-philosophers
- Philosophers lack interest in physical pleasures or material gain
- Philosophers have personal qualities like fearlessness, self-control, easiness to deal with, intellectual agility, an absence of meanness or pettiness (as listed in 485–7)
- The analogy of the ship
- Philosophers and their relation to the will of the people

Discussion

- Why should educated people rule justly?
- Is there a difference between a philosopher and a Philosopher-Ruler?
- Plato's criticisms of democracy
- The case against philosophers' rule as stated by Adeimantus
- Plato's own case against the effectiveness of rule by philosophy because of the deficiencies of society
- Philosophy as a vocation and way of life
- Does knowledge lead to virtue?
- Objections to elitism in governing
- The importance of practical experience to effective rule
- The tension between expertise and populism in political life
- Must rulers be like the people they rule?
- Is Plato's account of justice – consisting of each person doing what he/she is born naturally to do – convincing?

René Descartes: *Meditations*

9. Explain and discuss the idea that we cannot conceive of the body except as being divisible; while we cannot conceive of the mind except as being indivisible.

Starting from the main difference between body as divisible and mind as indivisible, this question offers an opportunity to explain and discuss Descartes' distinction between mind and body. Answers might develop arguments considering diverse positions with regards to the mind-body relation.

Key Points

- We are not able to conceive the half of a mind, as we can of any body, however small, so that the nature of these two substances is diverse
- Since the clear and distinct ideas of mind and body are entirely separate, God can create them apart from one another. Therefore, they are distinct substances
- The mind is a substance whose essence is thought alone, and hence exists entirely outside physical categories, including place
- A thinking thing is a thing that doubts, understands, conceives, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, imagines and perceives
- Body is a substance whose essence is extension; it is all that can be terminated by a certain figure, certain space and, therefore, excludes every other body
- We know that bodies exist as the causes of sensation. We have the propensity to believe that our sensations come to us from external bodies
- Mind and body are related to one another too; sensation and other feelings, such as hunger and pain, arise from this union
- The mind is enabled to distinguish what pertains to itself, that is, to the intellectual nature, from what is to be referred to the body

Discussion

- The idea of the immortality of the soul and the Cartesian dualism
- The place and importance of the distinction between mind and body in Descartes' metaphysics
- Versions of dualism, *e.g.* weaker: human beings are physical substances but have mental properties, and those properties are not physical
- Other views regarding the relation of mind and body
- The idea of perfection coming in the mind from God innately, and God as the guarantor of the reliability of the senses
- The difficulty of Descartes' individualization of minds in the *cogito* – how does he justify the indivisible mind being only “one”?

10. Critically evaluate the idea that all which we clearly and distinctly perceive (apprehend) is true.

This question seeks a critical evaluation of a central issue in Descartes' reflection, which concerns his epistemology and also his metaphysics. Different lines of approach might be followed because of the interrelated character of Descartes' meditations.

Key Points

- Descartes' account of knowledge and its issues
- We acquire many prejudices which interfere with the proper use of our reason. Therefore, we must reject everything we believe and start anew
- The *Meditations* presents a series of arguments intended to cast doubt upon everything formerly believed, and culminating in the hypothesis of an all-deceiving evil genius, a device to keep former beliefs from returning
- The nature of clear and distinct ideas
- The rebuilding of the world begins with the discovery of the self through the *cogito*, a self knows only as a thinking thing, and it does so independently of the senses
- Within this thinking self, Descartes discovers an idea of God, an idea of something so perfect that it could not have been caused in us by anything with less perfection than God Himself. From this he concluded that God must exist, which, in turn, guarantees that reason can be trusted
- God also guarantees the reliability of the senses, but the notion of God is clearly and distinctly perceived thanks to its implantation by God
- Since we are made in such a way that we cannot help holding certain beliefs – the so-called “clear and distinct” perceptions – God would be a deceiver, and thus imperfect, if such beliefs were wrong
- Any mistakes must be due to our own misuse of reason and will

Discussion

- Does Descartes provide rational criteria to know when an idea is clear and distinct, or is this principle a general comparison or metaphor?
- Descartes takes for granted that he has a faculty, intuition, by which he is capable of grasping truth in some immediate way, and what he knows by intuition is worthy of trust. But why should we trust intuition?
- Why should we attend only to those objects of which our minds seem capable of having certain and indubitable cognition?
- Different conceptions of truth and ways of apprehending it
- This central argument in Descartes' philosophy is threatened with circularity; since the arguments that establish the trustworthiness of reason – the *cogito* argument and the argument for the existence of God – themselves seem to depend on the trustworthiness of reason
- Can clear and distinct ideas stand as truths and as bases of knowledge without appeal to God as the guarantor of their truth?

John Locke: *Second Treatise on Government*

11. Explain and discuss the distinction between conjugal society (family) and political society (state).

This question asks for an explanation and discussion of the essential distinguishing characteristics of two fundamental forms of society in which humans find themselves. In this context, the question allows for an examination of the state of nature and the state of society. Lastly, it might also invite an exploration of the reasons for, and justification of, the move from family to state.

Key Points

- State of nature as state of freedom, but a state which included a clear and natural inclination to sociability and conjugal society and, eventually, political society
- Conjugal society is established by a voluntary contract between a man and a woman; political society is established by a voluntary contract amongst citizens
- Origins of society can be located within the conjugal society
- Conjugal society is differentiated from political society by comparison of ends: conjugal society exists for procreation and the rearing of dependent children; political society exists for the protection and preservation of private property, protection of individuals from one another, and preservation of natural freedoms
- Conjugal society provides children with guidance prior to the exercise of reason where paternal power is temporary; does not include the right over life and death; does not require the intervention of external authority to settle conflicts; is natural; and is jurisdictionally limited to a private association
- Political society is contractual and public where political power includes the right of life and death over those who have been guided to the use of reason; the right to resolve conflicts by law; the power to guarantee the right to private property; the obligation to protect natural freedoms
- Conjugal society as a private arena for the acquisition and exchange of property that political society will eventually guarantee, and as a physical arena in which private individuals can exercise freedoms that political society will be designed to protect

Discussion

- Does the state of nature provide a credible hypothesis for the emergence of all future forms of society and the source of all human freedoms?
- How effective and convincing is the reduction of conjugal society to procreation and the rearing of offspring?
- Is Locke's description of political society sufficiently comprehensive?
- How do political power and paternal power interrelate?
- Could conjugal society effectively serve as a constructive paradigm for political society?
- How does the notion of contract help distinguish between the two forms of society?
- Is there a difference between the resolution of the contract in conjugal society and the resolution of the contract in political society? What are the differences, if any?
- What are the contemporary influences of Locke's views of the two societies on our contemporary understandings of conjugal and political societies?
- How do Locke's views fit into non-Western perspectives?
- Is consent direct in the case of conjugal society but tacit in terms of political society, given the absence of historical recollection of the state of nature?
- Citizenship is gendered and sexualized and in Locke's framework this is unacknowledged or naturalized

12. Critically evaluate Locke’s view of the formation of government.

This question asks for a critical evaluation of Locke’s argument which accounts for the movement of individuals from the state of nature towards the formation of government or civil society. It also allows for a consideration of the nature of the social contract and of “tacit consent”.

Key Points

- People can be in one of two stable conditions: state of nature or civil society
- The state of nature is the original state: people are free, equal, independent and bound by the laws of nature
- In the state of nature people enjoy “the executive power of the law of nature”, namely, the right to use force and punish violations of their natural rights
- The move to civil society and formation of government occurs in two stages:
First stage: each individual makes a contract to surrender the individual exercise of “the executive power of the law of nature” to the collectivity where each has joint control over this power. This is a community with a common will and independent existence as a mid-point between the state of nature and civil society with a form of government
Second stage: the community calls for the establishment of civil society and tacitly consents to place – on trust – the collective exercise of “the executive power of the law of nature” into the hands of a constitutional form of government; this formally constituted body will be able to legislate and enforce laws on the community
- The movement to government and civil society is legitimate but can be rebelled against since the government is established on trust. This reverts to the state of the original contract which remains in force
- The original contract contains the implicit agreement (tacit consent) to be bound by the majority decision about the type of government in which the collective exercise of “the executive power of the law of nature” will be entrusted
- The right to dissolve the government

Discussion

- Does Locke present us with a credible explanation of the formation of government?
- Is it acceptable or questionable to argue for the movement of individuals from a hypothetically existing state of nature to a concrete form of government?
- Is it not the case that the formation of government is a secondary event where the primary event is the creation of a community or civil society?
- Is it possible to imagine a group of individuals giving up private and personal rights and freedoms into the hands of a collective body? What reasons might count against or count in support of this view?
- What are some contemporary philosophical views of the social contract *e.g.* Rawls, Nozick?
- Does revolt, rebellion or revolution ever nullify the original contract?
- Is Locke too narrow in his identification of the motives for the formation of government?
- How does Locke’s view take into account the differing views of political minorities?
- Does Locke’s view of the formation of government have any relevance to non-Western or non-representative forms of government?
- Why does Locke feel that the consensus will choose to establish a constitutional form of government?

John Stuart Mill: *On Liberty***13. To what extent should there be a balance between the liberty of the individual and the state?**

This question seeks an exploration of the limits that Mill puts on individual liberty, and how he sees the power of the individual interacting with the power of the state in society.

Key Points

- Mill's synergy between society and the individual because of the increasing dominance of the state over the individual
- The need for the individual to demonstrate their social side and have liberty
- The "Harm Principle" as the only factor that should limit the action of the individual in a social setting
- The right of the individual to act freely in isolation of a social context; what he/she does to himself should not be subject to societal laws
- The role of the state in protecting the liberties of the individual within society
- The nature of a constitution to describe the interactions of the individual and the state
- The state's power as the will of individuals and so limited by the individuals themselves
- The ability of the individual to think anything, but be restricted when action is overt
- Freedom of the individual is the driving force of vibrant society
- Social cohesion is produced by harmony between free individuals and the power of the state

Discussion

- Should harm to one's self be beyond state interference?
- Does the liberty of the individual extend to their property and so private property might be beyond state interference?
- Are my individual interests beyond interference of the state? Can anyone foresee long-term consequences of my interests?
- Can the moral positions of individuals be crystallized and realized through the state?
- Is a Bill of Rights a necessary instrument to protect the individual from the state?
- Should the state apply higher values to protect the individual from themselves?
- If the state claims high moral values should the state overrule the liberty of the individual?
- Is the state superior to the individual?
- Does the complex matrix of human actions mean that only actions of the state can produce harmony?
- Does the complexity of individual interests and rights mean the state might become powerless and ineffective?
- Does a *laissez faire* approach of the state prevent social improvement as individuals acting alone might produce a lowering of human activity? General social improvement might only take place if some higher authority sets the tone
- Is a positive interpretation of human behaviour optimistic?

14. Critically evaluate the claim that the expression of a contrary opinion is a vital component of a democratic society.

This question invites a critical evaluation of the right to express an opinion even when it is not in accord with the views of the majority.

Key Points

- The nature of democratic society is having a balanced relationship between the majority and minority
- The lack of suppression of minority opinions, as rational discussion, is seen as the route to truth
- Denying opposing opinions to one's own is seen as a false assumption that one's own opinion is infallible. Complete liberty of contradiction is being disapproving of another's opinion
- The ability to entertain contrary opinions limits the effect of prejudice which is seen as harmful. Analysing counter-positions can produce clarity and understanding
- Democracies need rational individuals who can reflect and evaluate differing perspectives about an issue
- Opposing opinions might well contain parts of truth and by recognizing this the rights of a minority can be protected
- Trying to eliminate contrary opinions might well suppress individual initiatives and responsible members of society
- An acceptance of differing opinions creates a sense of security for individuals from the powers of the majority and the state

Discussion

- Can Mill's view be reconciled with "hate speech" and expressions of opinions that incite violence against another?
- Does Mill seem to contradict himself by being sceptical about majority opinions?
- Can there always be a compromise and resolution between opposing opinions so as to move an argument forward toward a clear truth?
- Is it a concession that the majority will tolerate a minority or is it right that the minority be tolerated?
- Is it naive to assume that all counter-positions contain an element of truth? How can opinions that are clearly evil in intent have truths that might progress an argument?
- Does Mill's position of debate and open discussion enhance a democracy or hold back necessary decision making?
- Democracy might not be able to accept the expression of radical or extreme positions when the very essence of the democracy is under attack, such as a time of war, or civil unrest
- Expressing contrasting opinions might cause harm emotionally and psychologically to other individuals and might counter Mill's basic idea of the "Harm Principle". How could Mill resolve this dilemma?

Friedrich Nietzsche: *The Genealogy of Morals*

15. “Guilt and bad conscience were not originally concerned with our wrongdoing, but modern society has changed their meanings.” Discuss and critically evaluate.

This question invites a discussion and critical evaluation of the main theme of the second essay, which deals with Nietzsche’s analysis of the use of moral language and how it has changed over time due to the emergence of new ways of organizing society.

Key Points

- The analysis of morality having developed over time into two codes: slave and master
- The implications of this analysis for the moral concepts of guilt and bad conscience
- The original context of guilt and bad conscience as attached to securing debt with any attendant punishment
- With the rise of more internalized states of mind, guilt and bad conscience get their modern meanings
- Transgression of laws rather than debt to individuals means that laws and principles, not individuals, must be repaid in the modern concept of justice
- The modern emphasis of sin and people as sinners; guilt implies responsibility
- The inhibition of natural instincts by the herd
- The hindrance to proper and future development represented by the modern use of moral concepts of “good” and “bad”
- The difference between “origin” and “genealogy”
- The rejection of the biblical account of the origin of “good” and “evil”
- The notion of the “sovereign individual” and the responsibility of that individual is his or her “conscience”
- The analysis of the linguistic similarity between guilt and bad debt
- Punishment and suffering as a celebration in ancient cultures as opposed to more modern negative connotations

Discussion

- The role of the will to power
- Nietzsche does not offer an academic analysis; is his account of the value of moral concepts persuasive?
- The reliance on a Darwinian explanation of morality as opposed to a detached morality coming from “behind the world” as offered by religion
- The scrutiny of moral terms should come from within, not via the traditional detached view of looking objectively into history; is this persuasive or open to the charge of subjectivity?
- Modern man enables guilt to stay around us at all times; God is the all-seeing judge
- The lack of evidence for Nietzsche’s claims: acceptance of his analysis requires an acceptance of the development of society as he poses it, but little is offered to commend or confirm his account
- Alternative moral accounts from ancient writings, giving weight to sympathy and compassion, may appear more persuasive

16. Explain and discuss the meaning of the ascetic ideal.

This question invites an explanation and discussion of the subject of the third essay in which Nietzsche sets about the task of exploring why people have pursued an ascetic life of self-denial.

Key Points

- Asceticism is the denial of material pleasures in favour of a simpler life
- Asceticism offers a sense of power to the individual in taking control of him or herself; thus denial can become affirming of the self *e.g.* philosophers not marrying in order to affirm only their existence
- Different applications of the ideal in different contexts *e.g.* the example of philosophical asceticism where philosophers claim a form of detachment in a world of illusion
- Artists lean too heavily on the prior thinking of others for their ascetic ideals to teach us anything original
- The ascetic ideal and the will – the attempt to extinguish the ego through asceticism; yet asceticism offers some of its proponents power (*e.g.* the philosophers), but for the majority it is the refuge from their sick state
- The difference between “to will nothingness” and “not to will”
- The ascetic ideal as the will to stop willing, resulting in a denial of reality
- The ascetic priest who sees life as a “wrong road” and turns the *ressentiment* of the masses towards themselves
- People turn to priests and this has the effect of dampening the true will
- Asceticism as a reaction to a form of sickness in which the individual responds to challenge or disappointment by turning against life, avoiding responsibility, and blaming the wrong cause of their malaise
- Pity for suffering as a weakness or sickness

Discussion

- Is Nietzsche’s account persuasive?
- On what grounds is Nietzsche’s account of the ascetic ideal based?
- Science and its relation to the ascetic ideal; science as an alternative and opposing will
- The idea that true peace only results from the extinction of the will, as Schopenhauer claimed, influenced by branches of Indian philosophy
- The contradiction of the will to power and the ascetic ideal – is Nietzsche able to reconcile these impulses?
- The relationship between the weak and the strong in relation to Nietzsche’s ascetic ideal
- Nietzsche’s “perspectivism” – looking at the notion of the ascetic ideal from as many viewpoints as possible; perspectivism of many thinkers of the 21st Century
- How does the ascetic ideal function in philosophy, science, religion and art?

Bertrand Russell: *The Problems of Philosophy*

17. All our knowledge, both knowledge of things and knowledge of truths, rests upon acquaintance as its foundation. Discuss and critically evaluate.

This question asks for a discussion and critical evaluation of (a) the central distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description, and, (b) the predominant role played by acquaintance, as stated by Russell.

Key Points

- It would be rash to assume that human beings ever have acquaintance with things without at the same time knowing some truth about them
- Knowledge by description always involves some knowledge of truths as its source and ground
- We say that we have acquaintance with anything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths
- We have acquaintance in sensation with the data of the outer senses, and in introspection with the data of what may be called the inner sense – thoughts, feelings, desires *etc.*; we have acquaintance in memory with things which have been data either of the outer senses or of the inner sense
- In addition to our acquaintance with particular existing things, we also have acquaintance with what we call universals, general ideas such as whiteness, diversity, brotherhood, *etc.*
- The sense-data which make up the appearance of my table are things with which I have acquaintance, things immediately known to me just as they are. My knowledge of the table as a physical object, on the contrary, is not direct knowledge; my knowledge of the table is of the kind we call “knowledge by description”
- The fundamental principle in the analysis of propositions containing descriptions is this: every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted
- It is scarcely conceivable that we can make a judgment or entertain a supposition without knowing what it is that we are judging or supposing about. We attach some meaning to the words we use, if we are to speak significantly and not utter mere noise; and the meaning we attach to our words must be something with which we are acquainted
- The chief importance of knowledge by description is that it enables us to pass beyond the limits of our experience

Discussion

- The problem of a possible acquaintance with self, as that which is aware of things or has desires towards things
- If acquaintance grounds all knowledge, what is the real importance of the distinction?
- The distinction is crucial to one way of trying to develop a plausible foundationalist theory of justification and knowledge
- How is one to know whether or not one is acquainted with something?
- Either knowledge by acquaintance does not involve the application of concepts and cannot therefore furnish premises for inference, or it involves the application of concepts and cannot be distinguished from knowledge by description

18. Explain and discuss what the value of philosophy is and why it ought to be studied.

This question gives an opportunity to explain and discuss the last chapter of the book. Making references to other doctrines or issues discussed in the other chapters might also be a legitimate approach.

Key Points

- To determine the value of philosophy, we must first free our minds from the prejudices of the “practical” man who recognizes only material needs
- It is exclusively among the goods of the mind that the value of philosophy is to be found; and only those who are not indifferent to these goods can be persuaded that the study of philosophy is not a waste of time
- Philosophy, like all other studies, aims primarily at knowledge
- Philosophy has not had any very great measure of success in its attempts to provide definite answers to its questions
- There are many questions which, so far as we can see, must remain insoluble to the human intellect unless its powers become of quite a different order from what they are now
- The value of philosophy is, in fact, to be sought largely in its very uncertainty
- Philosophy is able to suggest many possibilities which enlarge our thoughts and free them from the tyranny of custom
- Philosophy has a value, perhaps its chief value, through the greatness of the objects which it contemplates, and the freedom from narrow and personal aims resulting from this contemplation

Discussion

- Russell’s view on philosophy is too focused on the theoretical level, contemplation and knowledge, without a parallel emphasis on ethical, political or social guidance
- Does stating a main content thesis on what philosophy is and what it should be eventually result in an authoritarian position?
- Should not the common man’s views deserve more credit?
- One can see the value of philosophy only if you are already convinced of it. Would this be a way to show rationality?
- Russell as ushering in the “analytic” approach to solving philosophical problems. The emphasis on the importance of the meaning of language

Hannah Arendt: *The Human Condition*

19. Critically evaluate the claim that authentic political action is performed by a plurality of actors in a defined public space.

This question asks for a critical evaluation of the nature of political action, the necessity of a community of actors and a public arena in which that action can take place.

Key Points

- Public space is marked by the presence of innumerable perspectives
- Public space is void of coercion, violence and any authoritarian hierarchy
- The need of a wide range of individual citizens able to articulate a variety of opinions
- The free and active exchange of opinions
- Political action as persuasive speech amongst the actors
- Political action requires civic equality
- Political action is marked by “frailty”
- Political speech as open-ended debate and deliberation amongst citizens
- Political speech is about the structure of laws and institutions that constitute a public, political world
- Political speech takes place in a constitutionally articulated public realm and concerns this “space of freedom”
- Authentic political action generates unlimited consequences and uncertain outcomes and is characterized by “boundlessness”
- The “frailty”, “boundlessness” and uncertainty of authentic political action in the public space makes it the most “vulnerable” of all human activities

Discussion

- Is Arendt’s characterization of authentic political activity realistic? Is it convincing? Is it simplistic?
- Is it possible to imagine political activity without elements of coercion, force or violence?
- How would a political consensus be achieved if a plurality of opinions had to be guaranteed?
- What notion, if any, of moral responsibility would be generated by a pluralistic political community?
- What limits might be placed on plurality in order to avoid political chaos or anarchy?
- How would Arendt’s perspective take into account political apathy on the part of some citizens?
- What criteria would distinguish significant political discussion from irrelevancies? Who would establish the criteria?
- How could civic equality be established? How could it be protected or enforced?
- How would notions of civil disobedience, protest and revolution fit into Arendt’s perspectives?
- How do Arendt’s views of classical and modern notions of public life differ?
- Does Arendt’s view of authentic political action have relevance to non-Western or non-democratic forms of political systems?

20. Critically evaluate the claim that man is a political animal and not simply a private or social animal.

This question asks for a critical evaluation of the arguments which lend support to the view that the essential characteristic of the human being is that he/she is a political being. It also allows for an exploration of the reasons why strictly private or social lives are not conducive to authentic existence.

Key Points

- *Vita activa*, or human life, is always actively engaged in doing something
- Human life is always rooted in a world of humans and man-made things
- The human environment for human activity is formed by humans and things
- All proper human activity is conditioned by the fact that we live together
- No human life is possible without a world of humans and man-made things
- A person engaged in labour in solitude would only be an *animal laborans*, not a *homo faber*
- Action is the proper prerogative of humans and is entirely dependent on the presence of others
- The Greek *zoon politikon* and the Latin *animal socialis* indicate the intimate relationship between action and being together in human activities in a public, political arena
- The contrast between political life and organization (*bios politikos*) and home/family life
- A strictly private or social life is not a specifically human characteristic but something humans have in common with animal life
- Merely social companionship of the species is a limitation imposed upon us by the needs of biological life
- Political life stands in direct contrast to family and home life; historically, the emergence of the *polis* was preceded by the destruction of all relationships resting on kinship
- The two activities found in human communities that are specifically political are action and speech out of which arises the realm of human affairs
- In the home, rule is by uncontested power; in the political realm, rule is decided through words and persuasion, not force and violence
- Man enjoys freedom, equality, co-operation and contribution in the political realm
- A person living a private life, not entering or not wishing to enter the political realm, is not fully human

Discussion

- To what extent is Arendt's perspective influenced by Aristotle's and Plato's views of politics?
- Is it possible to exclude the familial and social realms of life from the political realm?
- How realistic and convincing is Arendt's view that speech and action are the two essential characteristics that define the political nature of the person?
- How do Arendt's views leave room for an appreciation of private life or of life in the home?
- Is political involvement and action necessary for an appreciation of authenticity?
- What impact have Arendt's views had on a contemporary appreciation of political activity?
- How does the classical Greek view of politics incorporate a convincing ethical perspective?
- Is it possible to reduce familial and social relationships to biological needs?
- How does Arendt's distinction between labour and work function in the activities of a person in the political, private and social spheres?
- Does Arendt rediscover a more convincing view of the possibilities of meaningful political involvement?

Simone De Beauvoir: *The Ethics of Ambiguity*

21. Critically evaluate the claim that freedom with responsibility is the source of morality.

This question seeks a critical evaluation of how De Beauvoir sees the seeking of freedom and the taking of responsibility for one's actions as a means of developing a morality. It might also invite an exploration of the role of responsibility and its relationship to freedom. Alternative sources of morality might be presented as a critique.

Key Points

- To become authentic, humans need to seek and define their own freedom
- Freedom is an ability to establish one's own set of morals and values, but this freedom must be linked to responsibility
- The values that are established need to recognize a duty and responsibility individuals have to themselves and others
- The newly established moral agents should understand the consequences of being responsible for themselves, therefore the choices in behaviour should reflect a sense of good will
- The possibility to be able to construct values that do not correspond to good will and this failure is not contrary to freedom, but part of it
- Authentic choices increase the freedom of the individual and the freedom of others

Discussion

- What happens if the enactment of freedom does not produce actions of good will? Is an over-optimistic view of human behaviour being developed?
- Will individual definitions of freedom and values result in a relativistic world with no fixed common absolutes?
- Do authentic choices always result in care and concern for others, or are humans more self-interested?
- If each individual is different, would it mean that there would be no harmony in values, no universals, or is the notion of seeking good will the one universal?
- Are the gender issues concerning traditional sources of morality, and related values about gender hierarchies, too influential on reinvestigating a source of morality?
- How does this view of the source of morality relate to religious perspectives?

22. Critically evaluate the claim, “Men of today seem to feel more acutely than ever the paradox of their condition. They know themselves to be the supreme end to which all action should be subordinated, but the exigencies of action force them to treat one another as instruments or obstacles, as means.”

This question gives an opportunity to critically evaluate the essence of the human predicament; his/her being is ambiguous, knowing what right moral action is, yet seemingly unable to put theory into practice when treating others.

Key Points

- The condition of the human being is ambiguous; being an individual yet also being able to be an object
- The consequences for ethics if humans are treated as instruments, objects and as means to an end
- If authenticity is established, this ambiguity can be reduced or removed, yet humans are free to choose not to be authentic
- With choice comes responsibility. Humans need to understand that this responsibility does make them supreme to act. The paradox of their condition is that they are sovereign and hence have the ability to control and decide not to do so; this is their freedom
- The existentialist position that humans should define themselves only has validity if associated with responsibility
- Humans can be defined in many ways; action, context of situation
- Individuals by definition might be seen to be sovereign; their own masters, the consequence of this should be control of actions

Discussion

- To what extent is it essentially wrong to treat others as a means to an end?
- Does the existentialist position give too much credit to the good nature of humans?
- Can humans escape a natural market mentality of self-seeking, self-preservation and self-interest?
- If action forces humans to behave in an opposing way to what they know to be correct, can the inherent ambiguity of humans ever be removed?
- To what extent does the media and globalization accentuate the drive of humans to use others as means?
- If humans are their own masters why can they not fundamentally change their actions?
- How far is the argument a disguised attack on male domination because as much as men make statements about gender equality, their action rarely demonstrates commitment to these statements?

Charles Taylor: *The Ethics of Authenticity*

23. Explain and discuss the place of dialogue in the quest for authenticity.

This question invites an explanation and discussion of one of the central themes of the text and answers may engage in the issues of relativism and relation to others in the account of authenticity that is given.

Key Points

- We are fundamentally creatures of dialogue
- We develop into individuals through contact and interaction with others, raising the question of the nature of that interaction
- Beliefs and values are constructed through the incidences of contact with others that we have
- Dialogue enables the individual to challenge his or her own beliefs in order to own them more authentically, as in the Socratic example
- Some lives are more worthy – or better – than others, dependent on the authenticity by which they are lived
- The case against relativism; relativism encourages a soft attitude excluding authentic judgments about the information we pick up through dialogue with others
- The antithesis to dialogue and authenticity is self-absorption which causes a loss of meaning *e.g.* Oedipus
- Seeking individuality results in authenticity
- Developing the individual’s own “languages of personal resonance”
- Modern expression of rights and expression are positive assertions of the individual against a background of external rules
- Dialogue *vs.* monologue

Discussion

- How persuasive is the basis of Taylor’s argument?
- Is Taylor consistent with his criticism of soft relativism?
- Why does Taylor argue that reason and dialogue will make a difference in the quest for authenticity?
- Is Taylor persuasive about modernity being a malaise?
- The rejection of the divine in favour of reason
- The rejection of the public realm in favour of the private realm
- The diminishing scope of language in the modern era from grand universal themes to small personal concerns
- The move away from objective truth
- Taylor’s rejection of the modern claim that it is a victory for the individual to be free from the imprisonment of religion or other external forces
- The importance of Taylor’s “horizons of significance” in the quest for authenticity
- Is Taylor over-optimistic about the possibility of meaning?
- Is Taylor justified in suggesting a universal source of, or reference for, meaning?
- Other accounts of authenticity that do not require a backdrop of meaning

24. Explain and discuss the challenges for the individual in modern society.

This question invites an explanation and discussion of a central concern of the text, which can draw on different aspects of Taylor’s critique, including political, ethical or individual approaches to the challenge to the individual in contemporary society.

Key Points

- Taylor’s central concern is about the diminishing and compromise of the individual in contemporary life
- Individualism and its modern existential uncertainty
- Specifically he cites instrumental reason, “soft despotism”, and flattened individualism
- Instrumental reason springs from an over-reliance on technology and results in an individual becoming a pawn or an economic unit of “material”
- Soft despotism is the notion of a diminishing divide between the individual and the state; the individual retreats into him or herself, resulting in a public sphere which has been reduced by bureaucracy and commerce, into being concerned only with single issues
- Soft relativism is the way that the individual fears to ground judgments in anything other than the current beliefs of fellow citizens, eschewing an objective ground of meaning and value
- The modern malaise results in a widespread loss of meaning, the belief that there can be no reasoned argument about values, and the problems for maintaining healthy self-government in an age of special-interest politics
- Taylor’s account of the strengths of modern society; its ethical allure and creative possibilities
- Greater freedom for individuals *vs.* weakening of the sense of citizenship

Discussion

- For Taylor, modernity is a malaise and some commentators attribute this stance to his Catholicism, his being divorced from the harsher world of capitalism and commerce in his work as a philosopher, and his cultural tradition as a Canadian citizen
- Soft relativism, and a loss of authenticity in individual life in both the political and personal spheres, causing flattened individualism
- The modern contrast with ancient public life and ethical standard setting
- The importance of reasoned argument in combating modernity’s malaise
- Does Taylor sit on the fence? *E.g.* his treatment of multiculturalism in which he finds strengths and weaknesses
- Taylor assumes the existence of binding ultimate sources of value which must impinge on his account of the freedom of the individual and the extent of the choice of the individual
- Is there middle ground between individual choice and objective meaning?
- The relationship between the political sphere and the personal sphere in Taylor’s account
- The relationship of the individual with other individuals through dialogue