



MARKSCHEME

November 2004

PHILOSOPHY

Higher Level and Standard Level

Paper Two

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*The bullet points given under **Key Points** and **Discussion** are not prescriptive; they are suggestions and it is not expected that candidates would include them all.*

1. Lao Tzu: *Tao Te Ching*

Explain and discuss Lao-Tzu's contention that doctrines and ideas about virtue always come after the loss of the *Tao*.

Candidates should explain the differences between a right understanding of *Tao* and things like 'virtue' or 'knowledge of virtue'; these differences allow us to talk about a 'loss' of *Tao* when we concentrate on lower things, like knowledge or virtue. The difficulty of defining *Tao* may be overcome by comparing it with clear alternatives.

Key points

- Virtue is not exactly positive in the *Tao Te Ching*.
- Having ideas or doctrines about concepts (like virtue, in this case) implies having a knowledge of something outside ourselves. In contrast, the *Tao* is a kind of ignorance because it is only the recognition of something present in oneself.
- The search for virtue implies a kind of self-consciousness called 'inferior virtue', as long as it contains a personal dimension and runs after external ends. On the other hand, *Tao* precedes all concrete ends and personalities, not requiring any concrete knowledge, and can do without any self-consciousness. Virtue usually implies complacency in us when we regard ourselves as 'virtuous'. *Tao* avoids all auto-complacency.
- Virtue implies a sort of activity: virtue is proved through 'virtuous' actions, through obedience to a certain set of 'duties'. *Tao*, instead, is based on non-action (*wu wei*). It does not require personal force or violence upon oneself to follow the requirements of a set of duties or recommended virtuous deeds.
- 'Loss of the *Tao*', implies that the thing that always comes first (and later may be lost) is this very *Tao*. In all real origin there is not the absence, but the presence of *Tao*. Hence, the great importance that Lao-Tzu assigns to ancient times. There is little to say about losing the original *Tao*: the *Tao Te Ching* offers no details on how and why it happens, or how to avoid it. In fact, intentionally trying to avoid this loss would be a contradiction, as long as this very intentional control (*wei*) would be a loss of the *Tao* itself (*wu wei*).

Discussion

- In what sense is love, justice or rites a degradation of *Tao*? Are we prone to also consider these as 'lower' actions?
- Is there an apparent difficulty in avoiding the loss of the *Tao*, as long as any intention would already be an intentional action (*wei*), and therefore a kind of inferior virtue? Is the possibility of overcoming this loss alleviated by the universal longing for the *Tao*?
- What kind of politics and ethics might be furthered according to this line of thought?
- Is Lao-Tzu's idea of 'virtue' plausible for us? Are there not some situations in which a fostering of social virtues is a desirable thing? Is Lao-Tzu right when he despises the kind of forcing upon ourselves that is implied by every virtue or duty?

2. **Confucius: *The Analects***

Explain what Confucius meant when he said: “Educate them, there will not be any class distinctions”, then critically analyse the statement.

The aim of this question is to bring candidates to reflect on a broader goal of education aside from the acquisition of specific skills. Looking reflectively at their own education system may offer a way to engage in critical discussion with the author.

Key Points

- This view is predicated on Confucius’s belief that people are born equal in the sense that everyone can become a sage. Everyone who is willing and capable of learning should therefore have access to education.
- Confucius believed that what set people apart were their different life experiences; environmental factors such as economic conditions and education play a critical role.
- Confucius can be one of the first proponents of a universal education. The concept of *lei* can be interpreted to mean no class distinction, or no category.

Discussion

- Has the advent of universal free education yielded an unexpected problem of lowering the standard to the lowest common denominator. How might Confucius deal with this? Can this lowering of standards be avoided?
- Is the aspiration to a classless society a worthwhile goal? Why?
- Is it really education that creates a society with no class distinctions? Is it not the reverse: education breeds classes? After all, the higher your level of education, the higher the average income!

3. **Plato: *The Republic***

Plato argues effectively for the construction of an ideal state. Is it necessary that anyone other than the philosopher understand the reasons for the structure of the republic?

Candidates will explore the relevant theme of *The Republic* as it appears at various points in the text and at various stages of the overall argument. Plato suggests methods used in contexts where there is a power imbalance, combined with a judgment that the more powerful member of the relationship is justified in using any means to achieve what he/she deems to be in the best interests of the weaker member.

Key Points

- The myth of metals suggests mythologizing (lying) is acceptable when the community is incapable of acting on principles.
- The levels of knowledge and opinion
- The responsibility of philosophers towards those ‘still in the cave’ suggests that philosophers have an obligation to disregard their safety (as those in the cave will be hostile) and inclinations (as going back into the cave will be the last thing a philosopher wants to do) in order to free the minds of those less fortunate.
- The responsibility of philosophers who have been educated according to Plato’s plan which includes many years of service to the community in the form of political leadership – even when this is not something philosophers desire.
- Plato states that the best method for achieving the proper relationship between the tripartite aspects of the person/community is for the person himself to be ruled by his intellect, but where this fails, the second best method is for the person to be subject to the rule of someone who is ruled by their intellect.
- The law is to people what parents are to children; guidance in place of knowledge.
- Plato’s steps to implementing his ideal community begin with wiping a community and people’s characters clean, and proceeds by constantly checking reality against the paradigm in order to ‘produce a composite human likeness’ by ‘rubbing bits out and painting them in again’.
- Overall, Plato’s attitude seems to suggest a great deal of obligation and responsibility on the part of philosophers, but also empowers them to use useful falsehood and force when they deem it to be in the best interest of the community.

Discussion

- Does knowledge create responsibility? Does it grant legitimate authority?
- Does understanding the principle behind a rule provide sufficient motivation to comply with it?
- Is compliance more important than understanding?
- Is paternalism ever justified? What are the relevant differences which could justify a paternalistic attitude towards another person?
- Are laws a form of paternalism?

**4. Aristotle: *The Nicomachean Ethics*
Evaluate Aristotle's assessment of pleasure.**

Candidates could explain Aristotle's analyses of previous doctrines on the nature of pleasure, and the arguments he opposes against both those who think that pleasure is always a good thing and those who think that it is always a bad thing. Candidates could outline Aristotle's opinion about pleasure as an activity which reaches its own perfection and its importance in the most virtuous and happy life, intellectual life.

Key points

- Regarding this view that pleasure is always bad, Aristotle rejects the following reasoning:
 - ♦ Let us moderate our desire for pleasure through our doctrine that pleasure is always wrong
 - ♦ Only because the majority holds that pleasure is something right, it must certainly be something wrong
 - ♦ The 'search for the golden mean' would oblige us to reject pleasure
 - ♦ Pleasure is imperfect because it admits of gradation and movement
- Aristotle rejects the opposite view, that claims that pleasure is the only good. There are good things we do even if they do not give us any pleasure. And, as long as we prefer pleasure plus wisdom to pleasure alone, it is clear that pleasure is not the only possible good thing.
- The nature of pleasure is this: when an activity (like feeling, or thinking) is directed towards a perfect object, and the activity itself is exercised in a perfect way, there would be pleasure in this very activity.
- Hence, there will be as many pleasures as there are activities. Only pleasures felt by a virtuous and happy individual during a good activity (righteous pleasures) are true and perfect pleasures. The rest of them will be called so by way of analogy with perfect and true pleasures.

Discussion

- Are Aristotle's contentions about pleasure plausible in today's way of life?
- Is Aristotle's view elitist?
- Is Aristotle's method of determining real pleasures applicable in a pluralistic environment?

5. Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae*

Do you agree with Aquinas's conception of the relationship between human soul and body?

Candidates are expected to analyse Aquinas's conception of the soul, his conception of the body and his explanation of the particular link between both of them. They should also underline which is the specificity of souls and bodies that are human. Questions 75 and 76 of *Summa Theologiae* may play a special role in this sense.

Key points

- The relationship between a soul and a body is the same as the relationship between a form and its matter. Another way of putting this is to say that souls are the act of something (the matter or bodies) that have a certain potency. Aristotelian dichotomies like 'form/matter' or 'act/potency' might be included with reference to this relationship.
- The form of something is the cause of the acts that it develops by itself. As human soul is the form of rational animals (humans), it must exercise the acts that are specific to the bodies that belong to this species. These acts are living, feeling and knowing or thinking (this rationality belongs exclusively to human souls, and that is the reason why the definition of humans qualify them as 'rational' animals).
- Aquinas argumentatively rejects some possible alternative descriptions of the relation of the soul with the body: we have one soul, not three, the soul is a part of me, not something that joins me in order to collaborate in knowing things, each human body has a different soul and each human soul corresponds to a single body.
- The human soul is the only form that is able to have an independent existence by itself: the only form that has a subsistence apart from its matter (the body). This special relation between its form (soul) and its matter (body) makes the human being a very particular being in comparison with all other beings.

Discussion

- What is the purpose of Aquinas's view that the human soul is the only form or act of a given matter that is subsistent apart from any matter at all? Is it the result of a religious bias?
- Is Aquinas's explanation of the relationship between soul and body acceptable nowadays, according to our scientific knowledge? Could we explain all the activities of human beings without any reference to their souls *i.e.* considering them only as material bodies?
- How can we explain the difference between human beings and animals or plants today?

6. **Descartes: *Meditations***

From Descartes’s perspective could an atheist know anything for certain? Justify your position.

The intention of this question is to invite candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of Descartes’s arguments for certainty, and invite them to discuss and evaluate the connection Descartes draws in the *Meditations* between the existence of God and knowledge. The focus of this question is Meditation 3, in which Descartes discusses the necessity of God’s existence in order to escape skepticism, as well as one of his proofs for God’s existence.

There is no expectation that candidates will identify a specific section of the text which answers the question.

Key Points

- Descartes’s reliance on God’s existence to make clear and distinct perceptions indubitable.
- Descartes’s attempt to prove God’s existence by claiming it as a clear and distinct perception.
- The Cartesian Circle.
- The role of the Evil Demon.
- The need for the existence of a benevolent God (a non-deceiver).

Discussion

- Which is more fundamental to Descartes’s foundationalism: the existence of God or the certainty of clear and distinct perceptions?
- Is Descartes guilty of circular reasoning?
- Could there be different sorts of clear and distinct perceptions – those which involve a judgment and those which do not?
- Can God’s existence be plausibly denied? What are the consequences of doing so with respect to knowledge?
- Is Descartes successful in demonstrating God’s existence?
- How does the atheist position fit in, given the certainty of Descartes’s argument for the existence of God?

7. **Locke: *Second Treatise on Government***

“All of Locke’s ideas rest on the right to personal liberty, and he directly equates that liberty with property.” Analyse and critique this statement.

Candidates will focus on the concepts of liberty and property, and evaluate the connection Locke draws between the two. Ideally, candidates will be drawn towards a recognition of the ultimate importance of private property in Locke’s writing.

Key Points

- Locke’s notion of personal liberty: people are equal and invested with natural rights in a state of nature in which they live free from outside rule and where natural law governs behaviour. Each person has license to execute natural law against someone who wrongs them by infringing on their rights which include the right to accumulate the amount of property they can use.
- The origin of society: people then exchange some of their natural rights to enter into society with other people, and be protected by common laws and a common executive power to enforce the laws. Executive power protects property and defends liberty. By entering into society, people relinquish their freedom under natural law, and their right to execute law.
- Origin of Government: Government forms once people begin amassing large amounts of property, since those with property need a higher central authority to protect it.
- Locke’s notion of appropriation: the idea of the property of person – each person owns his or her own body, and all the labour that they perform with the body. When an individual adds their own labour, their own property, to a foreign object or good, that object becomes theirs. Each person has license to appropriate things in this way by individual initiative.
- People enter into society to protect these unlimited rights of property, and any society or leadership that fails to protect these individual property rights becomes subject to overthrow.

Discussion

- How sound is Locke’s foundation for personal liberty?
- Is Locke’s speculation that it was the desire to protect private property which caused people to move from the state of nature to society plausible?
- What happens to those without property in Locke’s society?
- Why would those without property enter into society; why would they give up their natural freedom to protect what they lack?
- Is modern civil society based on the primacy of private property?

8. Hume: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

We can discover causes by experience, but we cannot discover necessary connections by experience; necessary connection is not an empirical relation. Analyse and discuss Hume’s account of necessary connection.

The focus of the question is the idea of necessary connection. The concept of cause is clearly implied in the question; its analysis could be the first step of the argument. Necessary connection is understood as the ‘power’, ‘force’, or ‘necessity’ that joins a cause to its effect.

Key Points

- There is nothing prior to an experience of objects that allows us to expect any sort of effect to follow from it. The classic example is the impact between two colliding billiard balls.
- In all single instances of the operation of bodies or minds, there is nothing that produces any impression, nor consequently can suggest any idea of necessary connection.
- A necessary connection is not found in the events themselves, but in the mind’s inference from the cause to the effect.
- Necessary connections arise from that circumstance, in which the number of instances differ from every individual instance: a customary connection or transition of the imagination. This is the only circumstance in which they differ. In every other respect they are alike. We could not, at first, infer one event from the other; which we are enabled to do, after a long course of uniform experiences.

Discussion

- Answers should explore the possibility of necessary connections within the context of Hume’s account and not mainly (only) be restricted to a bare summary of a criticism of the concept of cause.
- Does the concept of cause give enough basis to understand the concept of necessary connection?
- Constant and regular conjunction of similar events gives only a weak link. It would not be enough to found the ideas of causation and necessity.
- On the one hand, the statement that necessary connection is not an empirical relation suggests that there is something more than experience. On the other hand, the idea of necessary connection can only appear after a long course of uniform experience. Are there two (at least) concepts of experience in Hume’s account?
- Comparisons of empiricism with rationalism can be adequate when they are focused on the specific issue.

9. Rousseau: *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality and Social Contract*
Based upon your critical evaluation of Rousseau’s political arguments in the two prescribed texts, do you consider Rousseau’s view conservative or revolutionary?

The focus of the question is to determine whether Rousseau is offering a conservative analysis of society, formulating a revolutionary programme of social reform, or formulating a different option.

Key Points

- Rousseau’s historical, narrative method of analysis
- State of nature versus civil society
- Formation of society: natural versus unnatural; necessary versus unnecessary
- Social contract, the people and the General Will
- Private property, law, sovereignty, and human rights
- Forms of government (family, monarchy, aristocracy, republicanism, *etc.*)
- Good *vs.* bad government: Reform, stability, revolution
- The nature of nationalism and internationalism
- Any and all changes to the social organization inevitably creates new negative emotions resulting in the decline of morality.

Discussion

- How do the political arguments of *The Discourse* relate to those of *The Social Contract*?
- Is Rousseau’s method of analysis descriptive or is his analysis motivated by a vision of the best form of government?
- How does Rousseau’s thought relate to the political thinking of Hobbes, Locke and Montesquieu?
- Is Rousseau formulating a profound critique of modern society as he saw it?
- Does Rousseau foresee the progressive deterioration of the human condition in his *Discourse* and anticipate in *The Social Contract* far-reaching societal and governmental structures to deal with that situation?
- Do Rousseau’s arguments put society and the individual under the power of the state and thereby violate human rights or does Rousseau establish the sovereignty of the individual in society?
- Is the notion of a ‘social contract’ revolutionary? Does Rousseau promote revolutionary civil and political virtues? Can Rousseau’s vision of ‘the citizen’ be the inspiration for political reform movements?

10. Kant: *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*

Compare and contrast the different formulations of the categorical imperative. Are they really as similar to each other as Kant claims?

The intention of this question is to allow candidates to demonstrate their knowledge of the different formulations of the categorical imperative while inviting them to evaluate Kant's claim that the formulations all really say the same thing. Though it requires an understanding of Chapter One, it is focused primarily on Chapter Two and Three. The best answers should concentrate on whether one formulation can, in principle, be satisfied while the others are not.

Key Points

- Kant's derivation of moral laws from the concept of a rational agent:
 - Only rational beings have the capacity of acting according to the conception of laws or principles.
 - Rational agents using practical reason, contemplate imperatives when deciding what to do.
 - Moral imperatives must be derived from the universal concept of a rational being generally.
- The categorical imperative "concerns not the material of the action and its intended result, but the form and the principal from which it results." What is essentially good in it consists in the intention, the results being what they may.
- First formulation of the categorical imperative: 'universal law'.
- Second formulation: "ends in themselves".
- Final formulation of the categorical imperative: the 'kingdom of ends'.
- Kant's argument for the similarity of the formulations: their derivation is *a priori* and their violation is a violation of the principles of reason.

Discussion

- Is Kant's assessment of human nature as a mixture of reason and inclination plausible?
- Does the derivation of moral imperatives from the concept of a rational agent make sense?
- Is Kantian ethics all form and no substance?
- Is being rational the same as being ethical?
- Is the categorical imperative essentially the same as the golden rule found in the Bible?
- Is Kant's ethics helpful?
- Is the categorical imperative culturally specific?
- Can moral law really be *a priori* in the same sort of way causation is?

11. Nietzsche: *The Genealogy of Morals*

“What ultimately explains the triumph of slave morality is the same thing that explains the triumph of the ascetic ideal, namely, its ability to give a meaning to suffering.”

Discuss and evaluate this statement.

The candidate will explore slave morality and the ascetic ideal in relation to each other and in the context of their capacity to supply a meaning to the question of suffering for all persons. The question allows the candidate to focus both on the theoretical and the practical (existential) implications of the central Nietzschean concepts mentioned in the question. The question expects an evaluation of the suggested triumph of slave morality and the ascetic ideal.

Key points

- Master/Slave distinction
- Master and Slave morality
- Nature and role of resentment
- What is the ascetic ideal and what are ascetic practices?
- The search for the meaning of life
- The problem and meaning of pain and suffering
- The existential tone of the Nietzschean analysis

Discussion

- How does Nietzsche understand pain and suffering?
- Why does “man” need to interpret pain as meaningful suffering?
- How and why does Nietzsche develop the Master/Slave distinction?
- How and why does the Slave revolt in morality depend upon and flow from the experience of suffering?
- How and why do the ascetic ideal and ascetic practices function within the context of suffering?
- Is Nietzsche’s analysis a convincing and effective approach to the existential situation?

12. Mill: *Essay on Liberty*

Mill's defence of freedom of speech entails at the same time certain limitations of that freedom. Assess the validity of Mill's argument.

Candidates should explain Mill's defence of liberty and its limits. The focus is on the application of this general conception of liberty to the particular case of freedom of speech.

Key points

- Liberty fosters human happiness (it has, then, a utilitarian justification) for three reasons: Individuals know more about their own happiness than anybody else, liberty brings happiness, and liberty further favors human progress by allowing experimentation.
- Personal liberty is limited by the rights of other people. 'Harm' is that which decreases general human happiness.
- Freedom of speech is defended by the idea on the grounds that expressing any opinion is good for general human happiness because true opinions help us in making our knowledge grow, and false opinions do the same; they challenge and improve our true opinions. Also, we cannot say that an opinion is false before carefully considering it and, hence, before allowing its complete expression.
- When freedom of speech harms others it must be restricted. The expression of those opinions are not forbidden, then, because they are false or against our customs or conceptions: they are forbidden only because they affect someone else's liberty.

Discussion

- Does knowing the truth and improving our knowledge always further our happiness? How can we know if an improvement of our knowledge is useful in increasing happiness?
- Is it always possible to decide whether a speech is harmful or only a legitimate expression of protest?
- Which kind of society is favored by a conception like Mill's on liberty? What are the pros and the cons of such a liberal society?
- Are there some acts that do not harm the freedom of other people but should be restricted (*e.g.* suicide, drug addiction, incest, duels *etc.*)?

**13. Freud: *Civilisation and its Discontents* and *Outline of Psychoanalysis*
Critically assess Freud's idea that both *Eros* and *Ananke* are at the origin of civilisation.**

Candidates will describe *Eros* and *Ananke* which led to the creation of large human communities and civilization. They will outline the process of this creation, and the roles of sexual love and aim-inhibited affection. Candidates should identify Freud's paradox that sexual love, though at the origin of civilization, ends as a potential enemy of civilization and civilization an enemy of sexual love.

Key points

- Human beings formed families mainly for two reasons: *Ananke* (necessity: the company of other humans helps us satisfy our living needs, the compulsion to work) and *Eros* (*i.e.* constant sexual desire, characteristic of human beings, made it advisable for them to establish constant links with others, the objects of our desire). These primitive families evolved into larger communities in which taboos maintained the situation. These taboos are the first examples of rights or law.
- *Eros* develops into a modified form. Its first form (sexual and genital love) evolves into an affection not directed to single objects but to humans in general, transforming the instinct into an impulse with an inhibited aim. Civilization fosters this because it controls instincts of aggressivity in order to satisfy the necessities of the community (*Ananke*).
- Although the first kind of *Eros* (sexual-oriented love) is at the origin of civilization, the relation between the two forms becomes problematic. Love conflicts with the interests of civilization (*Ananke*), and civilization imposes several substantial restrictions on love.

Discussion

- Every kind of *Eros* is a derivation of sexual love. Does Freud fully demonstrate this point? Does non sexual (aim-inhibited) love 'detract' energy from sexual love?
- Does civilization always impose restrictions on our sexual desires, or does it instead help us to configure these very desires? Are not our objects of love at least in part determined by culture and civilization?
- We, human beings, are the only animals with constant sexual desire. Does this fact affect us in any way, apart from the one described by Freud? Is sublimation a consequence of sexual desire?

14. Buber: *I and Thou*

Buber claims that the modern world encourages us to gain more experiences. Discuss Buber's criticism of this tendency.

This question hopes to bring candidates to an understanding of the potentially superficial nature of a life oriented towards seeking more experiences. Consequently candidates should reflect on the value of spirituality.

Key Points

- The meaning of experience in Buber's It-world: what is lived as experience cannot be lived relationally. Life lived without engaging in I-YOU relation is a life of poverty for the spirit.
- Buber contends that the more a civilization evolves the more it fixates the focus on the I-IT world, and the less it can direct individuals to spirituality.
- Buber illustrates this preoccupation with experiencing the growing importance given to emotions, as if emotions testified to spirituality. For Buber, emotions are of the It-world. It is something one has.

Discussion

- We speak of a spiritual experience: is this an oxymoron?
- Is it the case that civilizations as they advance, become more preoccupied with the world of 'I-IT', rather than with the world of 'I-YOU'? Is the consumeristic society an illustration of this?
- Why are relations so important?

15. Ortega y Gasset: *History as a System*

Explain and discuss the limits and ultimate failure of naturalist reason to understand human life.

Ortega's argument aims to show that human life should be understood as an absolutely unique kind of reality. Ortega responds to the attempt to conceive of the human being from the point of view of modern natural science. Answers could develop this discussion in different ways.

Key Points

- Man has no nature. Man is not his body, which is a thing, nor his soul, psyche, conscience, or spirit, which are also things. Man is not a thing, but a pure and universal happening which occurs to each one of us and in which each one in his turn is nothing but happening.
- The mode of being of life, even as simple existing, is not a being already, since it is the only thing that is given us, and human life is having to make it, each one for himself. Life is a gerundive, not a participle: a faciendum, not a factum. Life is a task.
- Life sets us plenty of tasks. At every moment of my life diverse possibilities open before me: each individual must make his choice and decide for himself between them. These decisions are based on convictions. The structure of human life depends primordially on the beliefs on which it is grounded.
- The prodigious achievements of natural science in the direction of the knowledge of things contrasts brutally with the collapse of this same natural science when faced with the strictly human element. The human element escapes physico-mathematical reason. Human life is not a thing, has not a nature.
- The way to apprehend the uniqueness of human life is by means of 'historical reason', as opposed to the naturalist reason.

Discussion

- Ortega's opposition between nature and history is only a new formulation of dualism.
- Natural, biological dimension, on the one hand, and social, cultural, historical dimensions, on the other, are interwoven in more subtle and complex ways than Ortega's too strong and, to some extent, simplistic opposition.
- The human being is not always able to decide to make himself according to a decision, a previous project or a basic belief.
- Ortega y Gasset does not provide a philosophical analysis of the concept of freedom, as it is presupposed in his claims.
- A comparison with other similar approaches *e.g.* existentialism, historicism, could be developed.

16. Wittgenstein: *The Blue and Brown Books*
Analyze and discuss Wittgenstein’s examination of general terms and its importance for philosophy.

Answers could develop arguments focused on Wittgenstein’s criticism of general terms or on his approach to philosophical questions. Good answers should connect both aspects. Answers could refer to his conceptions of language games and meaning as use, but this is not compulsory.

Key Points

- Wittgenstein claims that instead of giving any kind of general answer to philosophical questions we should look closely at particular cases.
- Wittgenstein criticizes the idea that in order to get the clear meaning of a general term, one has to find the common element in all its applications.
- The craving for generality is the result of a number of tendencies connected with particular philosophical confusions:
 - to look for something that is common to all the entities;
 - to think that to understand a general term is to possess a kind of general picture;
 - to ask and answer questions in the way science does, reducing the explanation of natural phenomena to the smallest possible number of primitive natural laws.
- Instead of giving any kind of general answer to a question such as ‘What are signs?’, Wittgenstein proposes to look closely at particular cases which we could call “operating with signs”.

Discussion

- Can Wittgenstein’s defense of the analysis of the case be seen as nominalism?
- Can Wittgenstein’s idea of reducing the complex philosophical problems to more elementary forms of language be contradictory in some way? Can these kinds of problems be explained by technical or complex languages?
- An example of one line of discussion: If we study the grammar of, for example, the words ‘wishing’, ‘thinking’, ‘understanding’, ‘meaning’, we shall not be dissatisfied when we have described various cases of wishing, thinking, *etc.* If someone said, “surely this is not all that one calls ‘wishing’ ”, we should answer, “certainly not, but you can build up more complicated cases if you like.”
- Since Socrates’s theory of definition philosophy has always been a search for general concepts, is Wittgenstein’s procedure based on analysis of single cases more of a literary one?
- In fact Wittgenstein’s procedure starts with the analysis of cases, but after that it looks for some kind of generality. Is it avoidable to use general terms considering that they belong to the very nature of language?

17. Arendt: *The Human Condition*

“A life without speech and action...is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men.” Explain and critically evaluate Arendt’s claim.

The candidate will explore and evaluate issues of personal, social and political identity in the context of certain of Arendt’s key notions (see below). The candidate will touch upon the phenomena disclosure and revelation through speech and action. The essay will consider the dynamic between authentic and inauthentic existence.

Key Points

- Speech and action as characteristically human capacities
- Work, labour, *homo laborans*, *homo faber*, and *vita activa*
- Life of action vs. life of mind
- Disclosure and revelation
- Space of appearance, web of relationships and enacted stories
- Speech, action and reification, what is the role and relevatory nature of speech and action in the space of appearance?
- Making vs. acting
- Political and public aspects of speech and action

Discussion

- Why are speech and action the beginnings of the disclosure of the person?
- How are speech and action the modes in which persons achieve distinction, insert themselves in the human world and be together?
- Why are speech and action the hallmarks of an authentic life?
- How are speech, action, labour and work the fundamental elements of *vita activa*?
- How do speech and action create the public space of freedom and equality?
- How do the web of relationships and enacted stories describe the human condition?
- Are the political situation and political action characterised by frailty and unpredictability?
- What functions do the power of promise and the power to forgive play in the human condition?

18. Simone de Beauvoir: *The Ethics of Ambiguity*

De Beauvoir affirms ambiguity and rejects the absurd as a valid foundation for ethics. Present her argument and critically evaluate it.

The goal of this question is to engage the candidate in the discussion of whether life must have a meaning: it cannot simply be deemed absurd. Ambiguity therefore serves as the sole possible foundation for existentialism.

Key Points

- A working definition of the Absurd. Anything along the lines of: ‘Life has no meaning, I must choose to be happy nevertheless’ constitutes a reasonable summary.
- Rejecting this position leaves a vacuum, as existentialists previously also rejected traditional ethical systems, religious or nationalistic.
- Ambiguity rests on the paradox of admitting the absence of inherent meaning in life based on the famous principle that ‘existence precedes essence’. While adding the limitations imposed by the condemnation of living in ‘bad faith’ on the one hand we can, on the other, affirm the imperative of ‘living as if I were responsible for the whole world’. There is no easy recipe for living morally.
- Ambiguity rests squarely in taking full responsibility for my liberty.

Discussion

- Is de Beauvoir herself guilty of bad faith in her adoption of socialism as the avenue for the ethics of ambiguity?
- Is the full burden of living one’s life fully responsible for all one’s acts manageable? We take comfort in simplifying our life through automatic behaviour. Do these become a moral weakness in the light of these ethics?
- De Beauvoir insists that morality implies the real existence of the human being. Does a moral system devoid of explicit guidelines stand a chance of ever succeeding? Do we not need specific boundaries for our conduct?

19. Rawls: *A Theory of Justice*

Critically discuss why Rawls concludes that people would select the difference principle.

The focus of this question is the difference principle which states, essentially, that there should be no differences except those that can be justified on the grounds of efficiency. Rawls claims that the parties to the original position will use, as a principle of rational choice, the so-called maximin decision rule. Candidates might explain the principle and evaluate the validity of Rawls' argument which concludes that people would choose this principle.

Key Points

- The original position: a hypothetical situation in which people (assumed to be rational) are imagined as choosing those principles of social relations under which their principles would do best.
- The veil of ignorance: constrains choices in the original position – people do not know facts about their principles which would be morally irrelevant to the choice of principles of justice (age, sex, religious beliefs *etc.*)
- The choice of two principles of justice:
 - affirming the equality of basic rights
 - an approach to social inequalities governed by the difference principle
- The difference principle: inequalities are unjust unless removing them would worsen the situations of the worst-off members of society.
- Maximin decision rule: faced with a choice of alternative states of the world with each state containing a range of possible outcomes, one should choose the state of affairs where the worst outcome in that state of affairs is better than the worst outcome in any alternative.

Discussion

- Does the difference principle refer to the distribution of income wealth only?
- Does the veil of ignorance ensure impartiality, despite the self-interestedness of the choosers?
- Does Rawls reduce ethical and political principles of right to principles of prudence?
- Is the best way to assess how economically just a society is to look at how its worst-off members are doing? Do you not also need to consider its overall level of wealth, or the details of how that wealth is distributed among the various classes?
- What is the conceptual link between our moral attitude toward inequality and our rational attitude toward risk?
- Does the difference principle violate egalitarianism? Does it infringe on liberty through taxation? Does it provide sufficient rewards for ambition?
- How can we attack Rawls' reasoning?

20. Feyerabend: *Farewell to Reason*

Feyerabend argues that “relativism... is not about concepts [...] but about human relations”. Critically discuss and evaluate this claim.

The candidate will explore the various facets and implications of Feyerabend’s notion of *relativism* and evaluate approaches that he rejects. The candidate will consider, discuss and evaluate the personal, social and cultural dimensions of *relativism* and their existential impact on the human person living in the community.

Key Points

- Relativism as a way of understanding cultural diversity
- Practical, democratic and epistemic relativism
- Existential and theoretical approaches to cultural traditions, perspectives and practices
- Cultural and intercultural truths and realities
- The role of power in deciding about truth and reality
- Authority vs. tradition; Community versus expert; Law versus practice
- Concern with ideas versus concern with life

Discussion

- Is relativism best understood when cultures collide?
- Does an obsessive concern with truth, objectivity and uniformity cause people to lose touch with the concerns of human existence?
- How do rational, technological cultures and societies threaten multicultural pluralism and ethnic variety?
- Can relativism help us appreciate the reactions of concrete individuals confronted with challenging situations?
- Can relativism help us appreciate ‘truths’ found and practised in each individual culture?
- Are cultures closed systems or are they constantly interacting with other cultural systems exchanging, rejecting, assimilating, and transforming ways of life that meet existential needs and serve practical purposes?
- Do experts and super-experts decide cultural matters or do the members of the culture make these decisions based on their common lived experience?

21. Foucault: *The History of Sexuality*

Explain and discuss why, according to Foucault, sex is so secret.

This question aims at bringing candidates to a critical examination of some accepted societal codes surrounding sexuality and its secrecy. This should give candidates the opportunity to uncover and discuss Foucault's central concept that knowledge is power, and how this uses human sexuality as a means of societal control.

Key Points

- By keeping sexuality secret, whoever is entitled to discuss it (physicians, therapists, priests in confessionals *etc.*) therefore hold a form of power over the individual and the society in codifying and defining acceptable sexual practices within the social context. All other expressions of sexuality become perverse, sinful, or sick depending on who practices them. It is thus important to surround sex with an aura of secrecy so that the power entrusted in those 'in the know' remains unchallenged.
- The confession and the 'scientific discursivity' are really two prongs of the same fork.
- Sex became 'inscribed not only in an economy of pleasure but in an ordered system of knowledge'.
- How the *scientia sexualis* became another form of pleasure: the pleasure of finding the truth about the pleasure of sex. But an innocuous truth: codified, de-sexualized, de-eroticized. Thus "sex" is secret!

Discussion

- Does Foucault have a point? If one looks at the popular media and its non-censored display of sexually explicit material, can one seriously claim that 'sex is secret'?
- Foucault's thesis that knowledge is power is extended to the area of human sexuality: this specific knowledge is also power. How does this power control operate?
- Are there ways by which I can free myself from societal control and behold my sexuality?

22. Putnam: *Reason, Truth and History*

How could (if at all) the reference of our representations be fixed? Explain and discuss Putnam’s analysis of reference.

Different lines can be followed because the question involves many issues, concepts, cases and examples (*e.g.* brains in a vat, Turing’s test) some of which are indicated below. Candidates are not expected to develop all (not even many) of them, but rather to explore some of them. Answers can allude to reference of representations, terms, words, signs and the like.

Key Points

- The reference of our representations is not fixed simply by our mental states; the conclusion of the analysis of ‘brains in a vat’ is that mental representations do not intrinsically refer to external things.
- Some basic concepts employed:
 - Extension: the set of things a term is true of.
 - The intention of a word is a function $f(M)$ whose value on each possible world M is the set of possible objects which are the case denoted by the word in the world M .
 - Bracketing or notional world: a device which is used to talk about what goes on in someone’s head without any assumptions about the existence or nature of actual things referred to by the representations
- Putnam criticizes the ‘magical theories of reference’, the basis of which is the belief that some representations (in particular names) have a necessary connection with their bearers.
- The opposite view is that a name only has a contextual, conventional connection with its bearer.

Discussion

- Putnam’s argument discusses the common sense explanation that linguistic expressions have their meaning because they stand for things; on this view, words are like labels.
- The problems implied by the discussion give rise to two (main) points of view: externalist and internalist. According to metaphysical realism (externalist perspective) the world consists of some fixed totality of mind-independent objects.
- Putnam defends an internalist perspective which holds that “What objects does the world consist of?” is a question that it only makes sense to ask within a theory or description.
- If we assume a mind-independent world, there are indefinitely many different ‘correspondences’ which represent possible reference relations. A way out consists in saying that our intentions, implicit or explicit, fix the reference of our terms.

23. Taylor: *The Ethics of Authenticity*

Taylor discusses the relation between narcissism and authenticity. Present his views and critically analyse them.

The goal of this question is to bring candidates to reflect on the easily confused boundary between authenticity and egoism, the latter under the disguise of narcissism. Without advocating self-effacement and abnegation of the self, Taylor strongly condemns all forms of narcissism. In their critique of Taylor's view, it is hoped that candidates can explore the ethical horizon this question raises and do so against the horizons of significance as defined by Taylor.

Key points

- Taylor's conception of narcissism in a contemporary worldview.
- Narcissism as a false understanding/attempt at authenticity, confusing hedonism and self-fulfillment with authenticity
- Narcissism as an element of the sliding scale into soft relativism: what is significant is the result not so much of me having decided so, but rather because it has slipped into some area of significance. The advent of soft relativism: things have significance not so much in themselves, but rather because some persons have successfully deemed them to have significance.
- The culture of narcissism makes self-fulfillment the greatest value in life, to the detriment of others surrounding us: family and friends. Narcissism is very self-centered, self-indulgent, and very low.

Discussion

- Taylor criticizes quite harshly the slide into narcissism. However, perhaps he fails to give guidelines to avoid tampering with our attempt to keep authenticity from falling into narcissism. How are we to recognize that we have passed a threshold that transforms our self-becoming pursuit from a worthwhile one into an immoral one?
- Can we envisage a form of amoral narcissism?
- Is authenticity a form of selfless narcissism?
- Can authenticity ever become a deontological duty?

24. Nussbaum: *Poetic Justice*

To what extent do you agree with Nussbaum’s claim that the literary imagination is part of a public rationality?

The question asks for the very core of Nussbaum’s argument: to show that storytelling and literary imagining are not opposed to rational argument, but can provide essential ingredients in a rational argument. Answers should refer to the concept of literary imagination and critically assess some of the fundamental features of her argument.

Key Points

- Nussbaum identifies her main concern by means of Walt Whitman’s point of view, who wrote that the literary artist is a much-needed participant, and that the poet is ‘the arbiter of the diverse,’ ‘the equalizer of his age and land’. Whitman’s call for public poetry is, she believes, as pertinent to our time as it was to his.
- In today’s political life there is an excessive reliance on technical ways of modelling human behaviour, especially those that derive from economic utilitarianism. These models frequently prove incomplete as a guide to political relations among citizens.
- The literary imagination is an essential part of citizenship. The ability to imagine the concrete ways in which people different from oneself grapple with disadvantage has great practical and public value.
- The contrast between emotion and reason has become a commonplace of public discourse.
- The ‘judicious spectator’, a figure introduced by Adam Smith in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, offers a way to evaluate emotions. Literature becomes a source of moral guidance.

Discussion

- A novel like *Hard Times* is a paradigm of the education to public rationality by means of emotions. Candidates can analyse their own examples.
 - The contrast between emotion and reason as a commonplace of public discourse can be discussed.
 - Two opposite views can be confronted: Plato’s banishment of literary artists from the public realm and Nussbaum’s defense of the literary imagination and its contribution to public rationality.
 - Although literature can be a way of emotional education for public rationality, should public rationality be based in other at least equally important dimensions: history, rights and politics?
 - Nowadays public rationality is strongly formed by other means, different from literary imagination. Collective imagination is manipulated by political and economical interests, basically through the media.
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