

MARKSCHEME

May 2002

PHILOSOPHY

Higher and Standard Level

Paper 2

1. Lao Tzu: *Tao Te Ching*

Explain and discuss Lao Tzu's view that the "chief rule to live an ethical life is to rely upon the actions of the opposites by living in a manner opposed to the end you seek".

Key Points

- The doctrine of the mean.
- Abandonment of selfishness.
- Notion of 'invariants'.
- Goal: state of quiescence.

Discussion

- The mean: a balance, a middle ground that strives to perpetuate itself effortlessly, 'willessly'. Is this something a person brought up in a Western contemporary culture can grasp?
- The perception of the self and our attachment to it, to its satisfaction and growth, hinders the reaching of the goal of a still mind. What values lie in this abandonment of self? What social goods, if any, can we see as an outcome of it?
- The paradox of the state of quiescence: unreachable if one tries to reach it. It will happen of its own accord if the circumstances are right. Are we ready to surrender to the uncontrolled?

2. Confucius: *The Analects*

Confucius said: "The superior man understands righteousness; the inferior man understands profit." Evaluate.

Key Points

- The revolutionary view of the superior man brought forth by Confucius: the superior man as a man of greater moral character who lives a virtuous life is opposed to the previous concept of the superior man defined as the man of higher social standing.
- The narrow-mindedness of the inferior man as opposed to the open-mindedness of the superior man. The relationship between learning and knowledge and their impact on human conduct.
- Qualities inherent in the superior man: *e.g.* how he can empower others.
- The concept of the superior man and its relation to *jen*.
- The concept of the superior man and its relations to principles of government.
- What does Confucius mean by righteousness?

Discussion

- Is Confucius proposing a view of human nature that defines human beings as fixed, unchangeable individuals? Would a positive answer necessarily imply the ineffectiveness of education in enhancing the moral character of individuals?
- Is Confucius proposing a binary view of human beings? Are we either superior or inferior individuals? Can it be argued that we are a mixture of both?
- What are we to make of Confucius' condemnation of the search for profit? Is his critique a valid condemnation of the free market economy?
- Is the search for profit inherently damaging for the person who engages in it? Or is it rather that the damaged ('inferior') person engages in it because they are already morally damaged?

3. Plato: *The Republic, Books V-IX*

Plato acknowledged that equality of political opportunities and freedom for the individual to do as he wishes are the main characteristics of democracy. Explain his views in more detail and critically examine his position on democracy.

Key Points

- Democracy as one of the worst forms of imperfect political systems.
- Freedom of speech will be unlimited but this is undesirable as it will incite discontent and upheavals leading to political instability.
- No compulsion to exercise authority if you are competent to do it, or to submit to it if you are not.
- Democracy caters to the satisfaction of desires and wants. Yet reason would dictate that satisfying these is often ill advised.

Discussion

- There is some truth in Plato's view if we judge by some contemporary examples of political instability under democratic regimes.
- Democratic societies struggle still with freedom of speech: should all and every kind of expression be tolerated? If no, what criteria should be applied to limit it?
- Is perhaps Plato right in his judgement of democracy's failures? Are we not so prejudiced in favour of democracy that we cannot objectively appreciate its shortcomings?
- Arguments such as those of John S. Mill address some of Plato's concerns about the role of free speech in democracy. A comparative discussion.

4. Aristotle: *The Nicomachean Ethics*

Analyse and discuss Aristotle's view of voluntary and involuntary actions.

Key Points

- Blame and praise can only be assigned to voluntary actions.
- Actions are involuntary when done:
 - in ignorance: when and why there is room for pity and compassion.
 - under compulsion.
- Distinction between involuntary and non-voluntary actions.
- Consequences of these distinctions for justice.

Discussion

- Are Aristotle's distinctions adequate and helpful? In what sense?
- How do these compare with modern discussions on free will and determinism?
- Can we argue that although Aristotle never mentioned free will as such, this view encompasses free will?
- Contemporary examples: should we prosecute soldiers for war crimes when their actions were ordered by their superior in command, and when disobedience would mean death?

5. Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae*

Explain and discuss Aquinas' view that it is not possible that human understanding is common to all men.

Key Points

- The concept of immaterial substance (soul). Relationship between immaterial substance and material substance (body).
- Distinction between knowing the universality and being universal.
- Reasons to agree that human understanding is common to all men, for instance that no immaterial substance multiplies itself numerically in the same species.
- Reasons to agree that human understanding is not common to all men. For instance, one could arrive at the absurdity that two individuals are the same human being.
- Possible comparison and contrast with other conceptions of understanding and reason, like the ones of Aristotle or Descartes.

Discussion

- Various questions arisen from the distinction between immaterial and material substances, *e.g.* relations between universality and particularity or the need for abstraction.
- Would upholding this thesis mean that there are human beings who do not have understanding?
- If understanding is not common to all men, does this imply that there could be incompatible types of rationality?

6. Descartes: *Meditations*

Why must Descartes prove God's goodness?

Key Points

- First, Descartes must prove God's existence as the key stone of his system.
- Does Descartes effectively prove the goodness of God or is he making an assumption?
- God must be good in order to rescue Descartes from scepticism.
- God's goodness is the decisive argument against the evil genius.
- Intuitions about the external world only become reliable once they are guaranteed through God's goodness: God does not want me to be deceived.

Discussion

- If we reject as invalid Descartes' proof for the existence of God, is there anything left of Descartes' system that has any validity?
- Descartes limited the impact of God's goodness to epistemology. Would it not be more compelling to stretch it to other sectors of human activity?
- Descartes' arguments for the goodness of God exists because he was already a believer and needed to justify his own belief.

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

Why does Locke think he is correct in arguing that the sole function of government is the protection of private property?

Key Points

- State of nature and its lack of recognition/protection of private property.
- Formation of civil societies.
- Private property based on labour. The moral values linked with private ownership.
- The limits to private ownership.

Discussion

- Is labour the essential element in turning common goods into private property or is it as Marx suggests a mode of alienation?
- Does Locke's sole role for the state in protecting private property make any sense today in our complex, demanding and highly structured societies?
- How is consent effectively gauged in society?
- Are there any citizens who do not own private properties?

8. **Hume: *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding***

Regarding the notion of causality, explain and discuss Hume's claim "that it is impossible for us to 'think' of any thing, which we have not antecedently 'felt', either by our external or internal senses".

Key Points

- The foundation of knowledge in experience.
- Metaphysical explanations and the idea of necessary connection.
- Absence of the idea of necessary connection in all single instances of the operation of bodies or minds.
- When many uniform instances appear, and the same object is always followed by the same event, we then begin to entertain the notion of cause and connection.
- The illustration of the shock of two billiard balls.

Discussion

- Hume's argument is important most of all because of its implications.
- Hume maintained that it is impossible to know the causes. Why then did he not recommend abandoning the concept of causality?
- We can accept that we do not know the reality of the causes, but we can agree we can know their appearances as phenomena.
- The entire argument depends on the idea that all knowledge proceeds from experience.

9. **Rousseau: *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality and Social Contract***

Rousseau considered ancient Athens, with its sophisticated arts and sciences, to be morally degenerate compared to the military state of Sparta, with its emphasis on discipline and frugal living.

Why does Rousseau hold this position? Is his argument to support his claim justified?

Key Points

- State of nature.
- Language and civilisation.
- Alienation and freedom.
- Benevolence of the State.

Discussion

- Didn't the experiments in 'back to nature' living in the 60's and 70's show that Rousseau's vision is an utopian fantasy?
- Are people naturally solitary or are we social creatures who need others?
- Surely the technologies that have emerged from civilisations have made our life on earth more tolerable, comfortable and therefore enjoyable?
- With Rousseau's emphasis on conformity, is his ideal society a totalitarian one?

10. **Kant: *Groundwork on the Metaphysics of Morals***

What is the relationship between freedom and reason in the context of Kant's thought, and why is it crucial in the formulation of the categorical imperative?

Key Points

- Rational beings as universal lawmakers.
- Reason and freedom of the will.
- Autonomy and heteronomy of will.
- The categorical imperative, duty, and universal law.

Discussion

- Why does Kant say that there is really only one categorical imperative?
- Is Kant's concept of a fully rational person problematic?
- Is Kant's idea of freedom what we understand as freedom since there is no real choice involved for the subject but to obey the command of reason (nature of 'freedom')?
- Does Kant's transcendental argument beg the question of the relationship between freedom and reason rather than explain it?

11. Nietzsche: *The Genealogy of Morals*

Do you agree with Nietzsche that our moral consciousness is the result of a sickness of the instincts?

Key Points

- Origin of responsibility.
- The instincts are oriented towards the outside world, but they are repressed.
- Polemics over the concepts of soul and I.
- Guilt, ‘bad consciousness’.
- Cruelty and the pleasure of seeing and inflicting suffering.
- Cruelty and morality. The origin of moral consciousness in cruelty.
- The ‘invention’ of ‘bad consciousness’, of moral consciousness.
- Man is always a ‘beast’.

Discussion

- Nietzsche’s analysis is an ‘historical fantasy’. There is no evidence for what he argued.
- Nietzsche’s argument does not acknowledge any authentic source of morality.
- What are ‘healthy’ instincts? Does culture influence what we refer to as ‘instincts’?
- If we accept Nietzsche’s position, it is impossible to found any morality.

12. Mill: *Essay on Liberty*

Identify the circumstances which, in Mill’s view, make it justifiable for society to intervene against an individual. Discuss Mill’s justification for his position.

Key Points

- Justifiable only when the agent’s acts detrimentally affect others’ welfare and property.
- The agent is the best person to decide on his course of action, provided he is of sound mind, of mature age, and his judgement is not impaired by alcohol or drugs.
- Moral disagreement over the agent’s choice does not justify interfering, though I can choose to avoid his company, I cannot make his life miserable.
- Mill illustrates his view with reference to sexual morality: homosexuality and prostitution.

Discussion

- This approach is that of ‘live and let live’. To what extent is this accepted in the world today?
- Is there a place for morality in the law?
- Is Mill’s choice of examples a valid one? Why?
- Should we strive to enforce this view or to limit it? Why?

13. Freud: *Civilisation and its Discontents* and *Outline of Psychoanalysis*

Explain and discuss the conceptual implications of Freud’s assumption “that mental life is the function of an apparatus to which we ascribe the characteristics of being extended in space and of being made up of several portions”.

Key Points

- The topographical model of mental life.
- Portions of the psychic apparatus: id, ego and superego, their functions.
- The concept of psychic apparatus justifies the claim of psychoanalysis to be an objective, impersonal science.
- Possibilities of knowing the nature of the psyche. Possible discussion with other models of the mind.
- One implication could be the possibility of conflicts between the parts.

Discussion

- Freud is still locked in body-soul dualism.
- Talking of psychic space is only a metaphor; it can not be taken as knowledge.
- Spatiality is not a characteristic of the soul. Mental life is characterised by its temporality.

14. Buber: *I and Thou*

Examine critically what Buber means in his claim that: “The You encounters me by grace – it cannot be found by seeking.” Discuss.

Key Points

- What does Buber mean by ‘grace’?
- The relation with You is not the result of the individual’s will; we must accept that some other power intervenes, yet it is not mediated.
- The relation is not controllable; it is alive in the present.
- “The relation is election and electing, passive and active at once.”
- Relation can only happen with You, never with It.

Discussion

- In most relationships, we believe that the will to make it work combined with good communication skills is what is needed to make it successful. Is grace some form of mysticism that Buber brings in because he didn’t know any better way to explain relation?
- We live in a world paradigm where we believe in individual free will, and reject most forms of divine intervention. Is Buber simply caught in an outdated world view?
- In the glory of the Ego, are we ready to accept humbly that there are limits to what we can provoke (e.g. the relation with You) and surrender the Ego?
- Is there any room left for a ‘relation with You’ in the material world we live in?

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

Explain and evaluate Ortega’s claim that history is “the systematic science of the radical reality, of my life”.

Key Points

- History is the system of human experience linked in a simple, inexorable chain.
- Nothing can be truly clear in history until everything is clear.
- My life as the basic reality, in the sense that we must refer all other realities to it.
- History as a science of the present.

Discussion

- The fact that I found everything related to my life does not necessarily mean that all things are related to me.
- ‘Systematic science’ and ‘my life’ are mentally excluding concepts.
- Counter-argument history is not and must not be a science.
- My life is something important to me, but it is not ‘the’ radical reality.

16. **Wittgenstein: *The Blue and Brown Books***

“The kernel of our proposition that that which has pains or sees or thinks is of a mental nature is only, that the word “I” in “I have pains” does not denote a particular body, for we can’t substitute for “I” a description of a body.”

Outline Wittgenstein’s analysis of the problem of solipsism. Do you think he solves the problem?

Key Points

- The argument against solipsism.
- Wittgenstein’s method of philosophy.
- Meaning of a word as its use.
- ‘Private’ experience and the *cogito*.

Discussion

- Is the ‘I’ more than just a grammatical construction? Surely ‘I’ nominates a unique body in space with its own private experiences?
- Does Wittgenstein’s method of doing philosophy render it a merely descriptive task rather than one which provides answers?
- Is the only language that has meaning factual language?
- If Wittgenstein is correct in his dismissal of the mental image theory of reference, then what epistemological status do our mental images have?

17. Arendt: *The Human Condition*

Hannah Arendt claims that “To live an entirely private life means above all to be deprived of all things essential to a truly human life.” Explain and discuss.

Key Points

- What is a private life as understood by Arendt? The deprivation of objective relationships with others: of being seen and heard.
- What are the essential things that make life human?
- Why does it matter to live a truly human life?
- The similarities between Christianity and communism in the destruction of public realm.

Discussion

- Is Arendt’s analysis of the distinction between public and private life a valid one? Why?
- Arendt identifies the emergence of private property as a key factor in this distinction. Is this emphasis on property warranted?
- Arendt claims that the chief activities of *vita activa* – labour, work and action – need to be displayed publicly if they are to exist at all. Hence she links public life with the realm of politics. Candidates should discuss the role of politics in private vs. public life.

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

What does de Beauvoir mean by the ‘Aesthetic Attitude’?

Key Points

- The ‘aesthetic attitude’ consists of a way of looking at the world in a detached, objective way, as if the events observed do not call on us as a free agent to commit ourselves.
- It can be to indulge oneself in poetry, art, history. Anything to avoid the crushing present.
- While the aesthetic attitude can be adequate for historians looking at the past, it is a condemnable attitude for our contemporaries who adopt it as a way of not being disturbed by events going on around them. This is a way of pretending that they do not have the freedom to make a choice in front of these events.
- This attitude may be a refuge for intellectuals caught in difficult situations: they attempt to rise above the masses. It is, in the end, only ‘bad will’.

Discussion

- Just as Kierkegaard condemned the aesthetic attitude so does de Beauvoir. A comparison between the two views: similarities and differences.
- Can this refuge in aesthetics be the only way someone can actually survive the crushing circumstances surrounding him/her? Rather than condemning them, should we not have compassion towards them?
- Isn’t it contradictory for an existentialist to claim absolute freedom on the one hand, and, on the other hand, implicitly condemn those who choose a path de Beauvoir condemns?
- What becomes of the aesthetic attitude when life is good?

19. Rawls: *A Theory of Justice*

Evaluate John Rawls' argument on moral and religious toleration. Identify the elements justifying this toleration and discuss the validity of his claim.

Key Points

- Moral and religious freedom follows the principle of equal liberty. It is consistent with principles of justice.
- This rests on an appeal to common sense: “Generally shared ways of reasoning and plain facts accessible to all.”
- An intolerant sect has no right to complain if their liberty is limited: “a person’s right to complain is limited by the principles of liberty he himself acknowledges.” However, in a well-ordered society, where the two principles of justice are upheld, there are no reasons to deny freedom of faith to the intolerant.
- A person is always free to change his faith.

Discussion

- Isn't it naïve to believe that individuals who are intolerant will abide by principles of justice rather than by the command of their faith? Should their faith call for an action against the principles of justice what will they obey?
- Are we not bound by reason to reject the intolerable (example: the excision of female genitalia of African women)? Does the meaning of toleration necessarily imply that we compromise on what can be compromised, thus implying we will not compromise what cannot be compromised?
- Is the mounting influence of religions in current affairs an alarming sign that liberalism and toleration are being eroded? Is the intolerant side winning over the tolerant one?

20. Feyerabend: *Farewell to Reason*

Feyerabend argues that moral debates between opponents from different cultures illustrate tensions between values and not disagreements over facts. Discuss this view of Feyerabend.

Key Points

- Separating facts, values and rationality is an artifice.
- The three essential ways to resolve the alluded tensions: power, theory and open exchange between the colliding groups.
- Characteristics of the theoretical approach: conceited, ignorant, superficial, incomplete and dishonest.
- Decisions concerning the value and the use of science are not scientific decisions; they are what Feyerabend proposes to call ‘existential’ decisions.
- There exists no scientific argument against using or revising non-scientific views.
- The fictitious unit ‘science’ that is supposed to exclude everything else simply does not exist.
- There is no conflict between scientific practices and cultural pluralism.

Discussion

- The tensions mentioned by Feyerabend are not exclusively tensions between values.
- Appealing to the notion of power in the way Feyerabend does changes the focus of the problems rooted in knowledge.
- ‘Value’ remains a general and not sufficiently explained concept in Feyerabend’s argument.
- Is extending the idea of science to other areas of our life an acceptable one?

21. Foucault: *The History of Sexuality*

Explain and discuss Foucault’s method of analysing knowledge of sexuality in terms of power.

Key Points

- Foucault points out that there are different ways of misunderstanding ‘power’: (a) as a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens, (b) a mode of subjugation, (c) a general system of domination exerted by a group over another.
- Foucault’s claim that power can be understood as ‘the multiplicity of force relations’.
- Propositions about power: (a) power is exerted in the interplay of relations, (b) relations of power are not superstructural, but they have a productive role, (c) power comes from below, (d) power relations are both intentional and non-subjective.
- The four rules: of immanence, of continual variations, of doubling conditioning and of the tactical polyvalence of discourses.

Discussion

- As in every science knowledge of sexuality represents a legitimate interest in knowledge as such.
- Foucault’s method is not properly a method, it is just a set of general considerations about sexuality.
- ‘Power’ in the different sense (see first point) denied by Foucault has also to do with ideas about sexuality.

22. Putnam: *Reason, Truth and History*

What relevance and meaning can Putnam's analysis of the nature of rationality have? Does his argument have only a theoretical finality or does it have other implications?

Key Points

- Models of understanding rationality: logistical positivism.
- Models of understanding rationality: epistemological anarchism.
- Refutation of anarchism.
- The tasks of philosophical reflection in the present.
- Analysis of the opposition fact-value.

Discussion

- What can we understand by giving a human and well-balanced description of the scope of reason?
- If we set aside the possibility of rational justification, philosophy as such loses its meaning.
- The analysis of rationality is important above all because of its practical consequences at a moral level.
- After the criticism of the idea of reason, every attempt at giving rational justifications is condemned to fail.

23. Taylor: *The Ethics of Authenticity*

How does Taylor manage to avoid falling into relativism while at the same time arguing for authenticity?

(The Ethics of Authenticity, chapter II, the Inarticulate Debate.)

Key Points:

- Relativism and subjectivism are the easy traps for people living in modern times – Taylor denies that they hold a moral value and sees them essentially as a Rationalisation of the pursuit of self-fulfilment.
- The ideal of authenticity implies a moral force.
- The ideal of authenticity can best be achieved in a liberal society that remains neutral on questions of what constitutes a good life.
- Taylor claims that you can argue in reason about ideals (inclusive of the ideal of authenticity) and about the conformity of practices to these ideals.

Discussion

- Do you agree with Taylor that there are no moral values in subjectivism or relativism?
- Taylor claims that rational arguments can make a difference in morality: is this the case?
- Is the idea of authenticity a valid moral ideal for our time?

24. Nussbaum: *Poetic Justice*

Nussbaum argues that if I am a comfortable middle class person, classical utilitarian theories of morality make more demand upon me than most other moral theories. What does Nussbaum mean by saying this? Outline her justifications and examine her claim.

Key Points

- Nussbaum is referring to Sidgwick and Bentham's theory.
- Nussbaum values their emphasis on the equal worth of persons.
- I must not count myself or my loved ones as any more important than anybody else in the world, nor should my projects hold superior importance than those of others.
- The illustration of her view through Dickens' *Hard Times*.

Discussion

- Nussbaum is criticising a particular approach to rational utilitarian economics. Is she successful in her moral criticism of economics?
 - What alternative is there for harmonious social life outside of some form of utilitarianism?
 - An example from contemporary life.
-