

# **MARKSCHEME**

**May 2006**

**PHILOSOPHY**

**Higher Level and Standard Level**

**Paper 1**

*This markscheme is **confidential** and for the exclusive use of examiners in this examination session.*

*It is the property of the International Baccalaureate and must **not** be reproduced or distributed to any other person without the authorization of IBCA.*

**SECTION A**

**Core Theme: What is a ‘human’ being?**

1. (a) **What philosophical problem or idea about the mind-body relationship could be identified from this extract?** [3 marks]

The extract might raise issues concerning the mind-body relationship:

- Characteristics of mental states. Consciousness
- Mind-brain theories
- Positions concerning the relationship (*e.g.* monism, dualism)
- Issues related to personal identity
- The issues of introspection and self-awareness.

- (b) **Compare and contrast *two* different philosophical positions that explore the issue that you have identified.** [12 marks]

A variety of philosophical positions might be contrasted some of which are:

- Dualist/monist positions might be compared
- The ‘ghost in the machine’ idea compared to a separate consciousness might be explored
- The conflicting views as to whether the bicameral brain created a sense of consciousness within, when it might simply be awareness of the two halves of the brain sending messages – Jaynes’s Theory
- Eastern views might be raised and whether contemplative states increase awareness of the inner self
- Whether consciousness is a static state or whether it is developmental both in the individual and humans generally, hence the described condition might be explored in a contrasting way of developing one’s level of consciousness
- Differing views as to the possible seat of the mind or consciousness might be explored as the extract makes mention of brain, mind and heart.

- (c) **“Introspection is an illusion of the mind. It has no validity.” Discuss.** [15 marks]

The following points might be explored:

- The problem of verification of the inner knowledge that one claims. Therefore its possible status as weak knowledge
- Whether the process of introspection can be observed scientifically through the measurement of electro-chemical impulses, therefore it might be happening but we cannot objectively know what it is about
- The state of awareness in some mental conditions that create complete denial or loss of memory. “Memento” film might have been seen and mentioned
- There might be a sharing of in-depth knowledge of epilepsy and the impact it has on creative processes, and whether this non logical portrayal of inner activity is more valid than a logical one
- A challenge that validity is not the issue; effectively it does not matter that it cannot be validated, it is of individual value and enrichment of itself
- The impact of the relationships with others on introspection.

2. (a) **What philosophical problem or idea about the human condition could be identified from this picture?** **[3 marks]**

Some of the following points could be seen in the picture:

- The duality that is seen of those who imprison: they are themselves prisoners, perhaps within their own values
- The symbol of Nazism might be identified and some mention of the ‘prison nature’ of totalitarian regimes might be developed.
- ‘Guards’ on the roof seem unable to escape. Could they also be prisoners?
- The people on the roof might be seen as rescuers and therefore the picture might be seen as showing the inability of the rescuers to enter the building or prison, therefore it might be seen that there is no rescue or escape from the constraints that humans experience.
- The outer containing wall might be interpreted showing that society tries to contain a totalitarian regime represented by the swastika, or that if you get over or remove one constraint you only meet another
- The issue of freedom as a contrast to the stimulus
- The nature of punishment; the right of a society to imprison those who don’t conform
- The justification of punishment (retribution, deterrence, rehabilitation?).

- (b) **Compare and contrast *two* different philosophical positions that explore the issue that you have identified from this picture.** **[12 marks]**

A variety of philosophical positions might be contrasted some of which are:

- Rousseauian man – the noble savage good, free, contrasted with the Marxist view that man is free, but constrained by the society that surrounds him and the nature of that society
- There may be a mention of a totalitarian system which constrains excessively, contrasted with the liberal self imposed constraints of reason and consideration.
- Nietzsche might be brought up and linked to a possible Nazi interpretation and this might then be contrasted with a more religious view which might still be seen as imprisoning but in a more subtle way.
- It is possible that the Hindu interpretation of the symbol might be seen and mention of how eastern systems limit freedom, contrasted with non eastern views of human society and its constraints.
- The varying degrees of government involvement in peoples lives might be developed with a contrast shown between a socialist state and a more market driven state with the latter still directing and constraining but in a more subtle way.
- Society as a limitation to freedom or society as a space for freedom.

- (c) **Discuss the extent to which humans can or should seek individual freedom.**

*[15 marks]*

The following points might be explored:

- Varying definitions of freedom might be explored: freedom from, freedom to
- The difference between ‘can’ and ‘should’ might be developed.
- The elaboration of the consequences within a social setting resulting from increased freedom
- Some exploration of the inherent drive for humans to be more free, or in contrast, the realisation that freedom involves responsibility and therefore people avoid seeking the freedom that might be attainable.
- Positive freedom, negative freedom – how individual freedoms might impose a decrease of other kinds of freedom.

## SECTION B

### Optional Theme 1: Political Philosophy

#### 3. To what extent should a law be deterrent by means of punishment?

The question is intended to give the candidate an opportunity to analyse and evaluate the notions of law and deterrence by punishment. They could evaluate the possibility of deterrence as the only goal of legal punishment, or whether other kinds of justification for punishments – revenge of the victims, retribution to society, rehabilitation of the criminal – are valid.

#### Key points

- Main ground notions implied in the question: law, justice, right, punishment; analysed from legal or other points of view
- The sense of punishment in law as deterrence of future misdeeds; the advantages and disadvantages of this kind of justification for punishment
- Other justifications of punishment: revenge of the victims, retribution to society, rehabilitation of the criminal; advantages and disadvantages of these other kinds of justification for punishment
- Can a single justification for punishment, like deterrence, suffice to make punishment plausible? Is there not a combination of different justifications that make punishment plausible in a just legal system?
- Analysis of the diverse opinions about the justification for punishment that different political philosophies support: *e.g.* socialist philosophies prefer rehabilitation as the main purpose of punishment because it applies better to its idea about the origin of society (and the origin of anti-social deeds, like crime).

#### Discussion

- Is the fear of punishment the only thing that deters us from committing crimes? Could there be other ways (*e.g.* ethics, education), apart from legal punishment, to attain this deterrence?
- Do victims have any right of revenge on the people who have committed a particular crime against them? Should we completely avoid the notion of revenge in the justification of our legal punishments (*c.f.* Sharia Law)?
- Social knowledge is not an exact science, therefore we cannot be sure about whether a particular punishment is the causal factor in behaviour change. The change could be caused by other factors in society. Does it not set a serious problem to the doctrine of punishment as a deterrence of crime?
- Does the notion of punishment as deterrence imply a belief in freedom, or is it compatible with a deterministic point of view about human action?

**4. Is it justifiable to disobey a law in a democracy because it goes against moral principles?**

Candidates might critically discuss the relationship between moral and positive law in democratic political systems which provides them with an opportunity to address and assess questions like the distinctiveness of laws in a democracy, the limits of the majority rule, the difference between the moral and the legal, the limits to subjective moral principles that a political system may legitimately impose, and the superiority (or inferiority) of personal moral principles over democratic legal decisions.

**Key points**

- Democracy and majority rule: the legitimacy of laws generated by democratic process, and the limits to the decisions of the majority set forth by personal rights
- The extent to which a personal moral principle (any subjective moral principle) might be superior to democratic laws. The limits to the rights of the individual set forth by democratic decisions.
- The collision between legitimate democratic decisions of a society and legitimate moral principles of an individual. Ways of dealing with the collision between the two: non-violent resistance, active protest against the law, passive acceptance, civil disobedience, dissent, tolerance
- Particular moral principles that might be superior to positive law and whether legitimate law should recognize and manage them. The right of particular groups to be exempted from obedience to certain laws.

**Discussion**

- Philosophical analysis of historical examples of laws that were against the moral principles of some people, and were finally changed, are welcome, as well as historical examples of the opposite.
- In the case that if the law is not democratically voted for by a majority, does it automatically lose all legitimacy and might be freely disobeyed by any individual on account of their particular moral principles?
- Who should decide the kind of personal moral principles that might be superior to laws in a democracy: the individual, the ruler, the judges, an international organization?

## Optional Theme 2: Knowledge

### 5. “Many scientific discoveries are based on ‘acts of insight’ or simple intuition.” To what extent does this invalidate a scientific method?

This question asks the candidate to both explain and then evaluate the scientific method with relationship to the work of the scientific researcher and scientist. In addition, the extent to which the uses of intuition could affect the scientific method might be discussed.

#### Key Points

- Explanation of the nature of the scientific method or methods
- The difference between the work of everyday science investigation and cutting edge research
- The nature of intuition and the occurrence of paradigm shifts: the concept that the value of intuition in science is based on already established scientific principles (*e.g.* knowledge of the first principles in Aristotle’s, Plato’s or other’s concept of science)
- Whether all discoveries are sequentially linked but not controlled by a consistent method
- The contrast between ‘context of discovery’ and ‘content of justification’

#### Discussion

- Presentation of the views of Popper (falsifiability) which would challenge the convention of the scientific method and the logic of discovery
- Some mention of Kuhn’s ideas on scientific progress or Feyerabend’s position ‘against method’ might be made.
- Mention of great scientists and great discoveries being based on guess work, luck or just sheer hard work
- The idea that the scientific method is flawed as it constrains while true science is a free investigation of nature *i.e.* the view that if you are following strict procedures you might not be doing true science
- Whether the ‘method’ is a retrospective construct to gain recognition and acceptance. An example would be Newton’s presentation of the nature of the prism which he never practically proved. Similarly the problem of ‘proven’ theory contrasted with practical experimentation and experiential proof.



6. **“If one applies the idea of ‘seeing is believing’ to our understanding of the world, nothing remains as real except our present perception of it.” Discuss.**

This question invites candidates to discuss the problems associated with perception and the application of this to the physical world and the interpretation of information about the physical world.

**Key Points**

- The problems of perception might be investigated – illusions.
- Common sense and representative realism and the issue of two worlds: mental and physical
- The nature of belief and whether belief is based upon sense data and its interpretation
- Belief and its relationship to knowledge
- Plato analysis of perception
- Kant’s distinction between concept and intuition

**Discussion**

- Illusions and how we apply past knowledge to resolve what we think we see yet do not believe.
- The nature of sense data evidence
- Some of Russell’s and/or Wittgenstein’s ideas might be developed about private experience and a public world and meaning
- The mention of the Biblical context of the need to have first hand experience before belief takes place
- Concern over how we understand the world as opposed to having information about it and consequently, the need to interpret information which might involve previous knowledge.

### Optional Theme 3: Philosophy of Culture

7. **“To allow for cultural advancement we should not hesitate to destroy previous cultural productions to make space for new ones.” Evaluate.**

The candidate is given the opportunity to assess the relationship between cultural preservation and cultural innovation. The status of various aspects of culture might be explored so as to illustrate the interaction between new and past creations.

#### **Key points**

- The general value of cultural inheritance
- Its value in order to promote further cultural advancements
- Culture as an evolutionary endeavor
- Cultural innovation not only as a destruction of the cultural past, but also as a derivation from it
- The role of the past as a source for experienced knowledge, creativeness, inventive imitation (*mimesis*).

#### **Discussion**

- Could the preservation of past cultural productions have such a big influence in the rest of our culture that it might impede the advancement of these other activities of our culture?
- What is the relationship of the development of creativity in different cultural spheres?
- Which kind of culture might be implemented if we were to obey the wishes of the producer? Can we imagine such a culture? Are there any real (past or present) examples of this kind of attitude?
- The possibility of radical cultural revolutions, why and how the wish of these cultural revolutions emerge in some concrete moments of cultural history
- Examples in which the past is really a hindrance in order to make cultural advancements, and examples in which this is not so
- The value of innovation.

**8. “I love my country too much to be a nationalist.” Explain and discuss this statement.**

The statement of Albert Camus presented in this question is intended to make the candidate critically reflect upon the nature of nationalism and its philosophical implications. From this philosophical perspective matters such as the difference between patriotism and nationalism, or arguments from a cosmopolitan point of view might also be explored.

**Key points**

- Definitions of nationalism. Difference between simple love of one’s country and nationalism
- Advantages and disadvantages of nationalism for the very nation that it claims to support. In particular, is nationalist action always good for the culture of the country where it emerges?
- Alternatives to nationalism that might also be inspired by the love of one’s country: civic patriotism, cosmopolitanism
- The conflict between love and support of a country and individual or universal ethical standards.

**Discussion**

- Ambivalence of nationalism: is there any element within nationalism that necessarily causes good or bad consequences for the nation, or does it depend on particular circumstances? Possible historical examples of both kinds of consequences, analyzed from a philosophical point of view
- Legitimacy of nationalism: what kind of circumstances might justify an attitude of extreme nationalism? Is nationalism in these cases a solution or is it always a problem?
- Nationalism and the rest of the culture: are nationalist ideas, in general, a stimulus or a hindrance for the cultural flourishing of a country *e.g.* art, music, drama?
- Does nationalism necessarily exclude cosmopolitanism?

### Optional Theme 4: World Philosophies

**9. To what extent is egolessness possible and desirable? Critically discuss with reference to at least one of the following: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam.**

The question can be approached mainly from Buddhism or Hinduism, or a combination of both, but Islamic ideas could also be developed. To explain and evaluate the notion of egolessness answers may employ some main concepts from these traditions.

#### Key points

- According to Buddhism, ego identity ultimately fails, and comes from a very limited awareness of the nature of the self and of reality itself.
- Ego identity leads to suffering, since it makes central an ego that does not have inherent existence and is constantly vulnerable to conditions.
- Egolessness is part of Buddhist soteriology, which is summed up in the Four Noble Truths: *dukkha* (worldly life is unsatisfactory), *samudaya*: (attachment or desire rooted in ignorance is a cause of suffering), *nirodha*: (*nirvana* is the end of suffering), *narga*: (there is a path that leads out of suffering: the Noble Eightfold Path).
- The Upanishadic sages sought to penetrate the lived experience of the ultimately real (*braham*) and of the ultimate self (*aatman*) by meditation, study, discussion, debate and intellectual enquiry.
- *Aatman*, the normal Sanskrit word for self, is ambiguous. It seems to refer to the self as opposed to the body; to the individual person; to the person precisely as embodied; sometimes to the body as opposed to the limbs, the extremities.
- Hinduism and Buddhism share the view that trapped in a cycle of birth, death and rebirth, human beings seek *moksha*, or release, from this cycle through piety and inner illumination. Salvation is *nirvana*, a state in which there is the total loss of individual identity.
- Indian philosophical tradition has generally committed itself to the view that the aim of philosophy is liberation from illusions about the self.
- Islam's holistic view of the individual which stresses the importance of the ego.

#### Discussion

- The degree to which Ego and Self could be interpreted in a western way
- The answer depends on how ego is understood.
- Desirability and possibility of egolessness can be combined in different ways.
- Egolessness is neither possible nor desirable from a western secular approach.

**10. Explain and evaluate the value of the individual in at least one of the following: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam.**

The question offers the possibility of examining the value of the individual and to consider themselves in relationship to fundamental notions (*e.g.* universe, freedom, destiny, immortality) of at least one of these traditions. Answers can be developed in many different forms ranging from working within the context of one tradition to comparing two or the three of them.

**Key points**

- Islam looks at the individual as a whole. Individuals are required to submit to Allah on the other hand, Islam teaches freedom, cherishes it, and guarantees it for the Muslim as well as for the non-Muslim. The Islamic concept of freedom applies to all voluntary activities of man in all walks of life. Man is born free from subjugation, sin, inherited inferiority, and ancestral hindrance. His right of freedom is sacred as long as he does not deliberately violate the Law of God or desecrate the rights of others.
- Every man is entitled to exercise his freedom of belief, conscience, and worship. Religion depends upon faith, will, and commitment, these would be meaningless if induced by force. Furthermore, Islam presents the Truth of God in the form of an opportunity and leaves the choice for man to decide his own course. The individual's right of freedom is as sacred as his right of life.
- In general, Hinduism tends to hold that there is nothing in the universe which is absolutely good or absolutely evil; good and evil are value judgments made by the individual mind in keeping with its inner disposition caused by past *karma*.
- According to Hinduism the joys and suffering of a human individual are of his own making; the destiny of the soul is immortality through self-realization.
- Buddhism points to man and man alone as the creator of his own life and sole designer of his destiny. In this aspect, the individual is the creator of his own world, the master of his own life, the controller of his own fate and destiny under the causal law of action (*karma*).

**Discussion**

- Comparisons with aspects of western thought *e.g.* modern western thought is individualistic, concerned with human rights *etc*
- Eastern philosophic traditions generally tend to see the individual as an intrinsic and inseparable part of the universe, and to think that attempts to discuss the universe from an objective view point as though the individual was something separate and detached from the whole are inherently inadequate.
- Implications of individual freedom for Buddhism in the threefold action: in thought, in speech and in deed. Man has human value in the individual who acts in a worthy way for their own welfare and for that of others. Everyone, expressing themselves through body-with-mind, is a chooser; they have the choice between free play of will and restraint of will by regulation.
- In some traditions, the individual is required to submit completely to God.

### **Optional Theme 5: Nature, Work and Technology**

11. **“We do not own our natural world but have merely inherited it from our parents and are borrowing it from our children.” Discuss the implications of this statement on our responsibility towards the environment.**

This question gives an opportunity for the candidate to explore the relationship of humans and their natural environment and the theories and ideas that surround an environmentalist approach to the issue.

#### **Key points**

- The differing perceptions of the role of man and nature; religious, humanist, scientific, environmentalist
- The awareness that this was originally a pre-industrial position which has now become a post industrial position
- Change is possible and that humans perhaps have the right to interfere with nature for human betterment
- Responsibility when dealing with non human phenomena
- Responsibility to others and other generations.

#### **Discussion**

- The role of humans in protecting nature or living in harmony with nature and its difference
- Greenpeace and other environmental lobbyist’s position on preventing particular developments because of the perceived impact upon the environment
- The scientists/industrialist position is that nature is available for humans to use
- Mention of the loss of seeing nature and humans as part of the same community or continuum with examples from North American first nation peoples
- Responsibility linked to values and whose values. Examples such as a ban on hunting with dogs can be seen as a response to the inhuman treatment of the fox compared to a long standing natural regulatory factor. Whose value system should prevail?

**12. “Work and Play” to what extent are these two ideas opposites, one and the same, or is there another relationship?**

This question allows candidates to explore the two concepts and discuss the changing degree of interrelation between them.

**Key Points**

- Definitions of work and play
- A Marxist position on the role of work or labour
- The issue of financial reward
- The social perception of the need to work to have an identity
- The nature of play as a process of learning
- The role of work in self-realisation.

**Discussion**

- The perception that if you choose or enjoy the activity or task then it may not be work but play
- Personal perspectives based on the notion that one man’s play is another man’s work
- The increasing leisure time of some might increase the practice of play
- The idea of the recuperative aspect of play – ‘all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy’. Do they have different psychological functions?
- Supposed social divisions that play is what children do and when you grow up you work.
- The possible social stigma of the ‘play boy’ or the person who needs to work to generate an income
- The notion of ‘hard’ work which is a taxing activity compared to something that is easy, being merely play - that which is not demanding in any particular way.
- The influence of children’s play upon their future work behaviour.

## Optional Theme 6: Philosophy of The Arts

### 13. “In order to create, artists must be free from moral responsibilities.” Discuss.

In this question candidates are being asked to identify and discuss the philosophical perceptions of an artist, specifically the moral dimensions and consequences of these perceptions. Some of these might be the questions of a duty of self-censorship, or a duty to make art that is uplifting or not offensive, or an obligation to hold to an aesthetic vision or set of values.

#### Key points

- The artist as a reporter/commentator/agent provocateur: if artists promote their work as social commentary then they are obliged to speak out on behalf of others, and to take up causes of justice *i.e.* artists and their art represent the moral conscience of a generation
- Creativity and freedom: artists must have freedom from observing the manners and unwritten laws if art is to be an expression of moral or social value; the need for an objective standpoint means the artist by virtue of their position is beyond the need for social conformity.
- Moral responsibilities of an artist: to an aesthetic vision, to ‘truth’, to a political cause; an overriding duty to these responsibilities is based on the perception of an artist as being morally virtuous and concerned with the truth.
- Publicly funded art and responsibility: artists have a duty to create art that is aesthetically and morally acceptable if they going to accept public monies for their work; this is a perception based on the artist as a craftsman.
- The extent to which artistic creation would be impossible without such an exemption.

#### Discussion

- To what extent should an artist collaborate or identify with a repressive political regime if it meant they could still make art or perform?
- If the artist is to make art that is morally uplifting, then are the moral qualities of an artist necessarily reflected in their art? *e.g.* Does Wagner’s music sound anti-Semitic?
- If I cannot use my dedication to a football team as an excuse for failing my moral responsibilities, then why should we allow an artist to use their dedication to an aesthetic vision as their excuse?
- Is self-censorship a feasible moral requirement when it seems impossible to make art without causing some degree of offence to someone?



**14. “The marketplace is the only reliable judgment in assessing the value of a work of art.” Evaluate.**

In this question candidates are asked to engage in a number of possible debates on how art is to be judged, the role of experience in aesthetic evaluations, commercialism and art, and if art has a significance, moral or aesthetic, that is independent of commercial or public appreciation.

**Key points**

- Aesthetic realism and anti realism: realists say that aesthetic value lies in the object itself, independent of us, so statements about beauty are factual; anti-realists claim that the judgement is based on responses from the observer.
- Art as an ethical ideal: a number of philosophers (Buber, Murdoch, Feyerabend) have argued that by contemplating art, we glimpse a ‘world’ and set of values beyond our own immediate world of experience so art has a significance and means of evaluation above and separate from commercial considerations.
- Art and the market: with commercialisation firstly via postcards and posters, and recently via the internet, art moved from the exclusive domain of the rich and privileged
- Aesthetic appreciation based on emotional/subjective/experiential criteria: art can and should be assessed on its ability to evoke emotions or the intellect; assessing art requires a presence at the event, a description of a work of art is not enough to create the appropriate emotional response.
- The value of a ‘unified meaning for life’.

**Discussion**

- If aesthetic judgements are based on subjective responses, then is the role of the critic redundant? If so, how do we reconcile this with the requirement that knowledge is usually a pre-requisite for any judgment?
- How can art make us more virtuous, or allow us to experience a moment of transcendence, if the experience is purely subjective? How do I verify these feelings?
- Does mass exposure necessarily mean that the meaning and value of art is lost? How is this achieved exactly?
- Without a market for art, then there is no art, except for the rich or for the State; the artist is still beholden to the whims and judgments of others for a living and a reputation and so must pander to their dictates
- Objections to the ‘instrumentalist’ assessment of religious faith.

### Optional Theme 7: Philosophy of Religion

#### 15. “The role of religious faith is to provide a unified meaning for life.” Discuss.

The question raises a cluster of concerns related to the nature and function of religious faith. Answers might involve different discussions and be formulated in many different ways, depending on how religious faith and unified meaning for life are understood.

#### Key points

- Whatever else it might entail, the question involves attention to such additional issues as these: Who, or what, am I? Why am I here? What am I to do? These questions form the basis for an attempt to make sense of life.
- The relation between faith and reason is another of the topics which can be involved. Some, such as Aquinas, have argued that what we can know about God by reason and what we can know about God through faith constitute two parallel paths toward knowledge of God.
- Other philosophers, such as Kierkegaard, have insisted to the contrary that faith is not based on reason at all but is a ‘leap’ beyond rationality in a move that acknowledges utter dependence on a power greater than ourselves.
- Some religions, such as Christianity and Islam, find that the present life can only be fully understood as preparation for a future life. This means, among other things, that there can be no comprehension of the significance of life on earth without this added belief in human destiny. There is a strong sense that this present life is not the life we were meant to have, but only a preparation for life in the fullest sense.
- Other roles of religious faith: psychological comfort, guarantees for the after-life, justification for ethical behaviour
- The value of a ‘unified meaning for life’.

#### Discussion

- Supposing that faith must provide a meaning for life, why should it be ‘unified’? What does it mean?
- There are belief systems, such as Confucianism, without any belief either in God or a future life. The primary concern of Confucianism is with the correct ordering of this present life with its emphasis on the well-organized society, filial piety, and respect for ancestors.
- Religious faith opens human beings to something divine, different from them, it is far more than an instrument or function to organize human life.
- Some philosophers have suggested that the question of life’s meaning is either too vast or too vague to be answerable.
- Objections to the ‘instrumentalist’ assessment of religious faith.

**16. To what extent should spirituality eliminate the need for rational knowledge about God?**

Answers might refer to the relationship between spirituality and rational knowledge about God. Answers could also discuss whether we can claim to have knowledge of God, or even to know something about God.

**Key points**

- Approaches to the nature of spirituality *e.g.* Kierkegaard (leap into the absurd), James (experience), Eckhart (mysticism)
- Rational knowledge about God – ontological, change, contingency and design arguments.
- Possible relationship between spirituality and rational knowledge *e.g.* mutually exclusive, convergent, contingent (one leads to the other).

**Discussion**

- Can we claim to have any knowledge of God? If so, how? If not, why not? Is such knowledge the result of reason and inference, of argument and analysis?
- Rational arguments are public; they can be examined by anyone and tested by the standards of logic, in contrast to spirituality, which tends to be private and perhaps even inexplicable.
- The religious heritage of the West has always given an important place to reason. In the Christian thought of the Middle Ages, reason and divine revelation (that is, Holy Scripture) were considered twin paths to the truth.
- Kant and James argue unless a thing can be experienced, it cannot be known. All we can legitimately term 'knowledge' must be derived from what we can experience.
- Does knowledge of God come from some direct experience of the divine presence? The latter claim is made by the mystics, those who say they have had an experience of God. Such experiences are private, and ineffable, beyond explanation and understanding.
- Is spirituality direct experience?

## Optional Theme 8: Theories and Problems of Ethics

### 17. “Morality requires a person to act for the good of others.” Evaluate this claim.

In this question, candidates might engage with arguments addressing ethical egoism and altruism, and the extent of the universalizable. Some discussion and criticisms on the psychological and ethical motivations for egoism, and similarly on the need to behave well, or otherwise, toward others could be developed.

#### Key points

- The nature of ethical universal principles and the conditions of universalizability
- Two main types of egoism: thoughts of self-gratification motivate me to action (psychological egoism); though I could aim at the good of another, the moral life is the life that maximises good for me (ethical egoism).
- Love and compassion as exclusively human defining capacities: the need for, and expression of both may be biologically innate; compassion is the outcome of experience and self reflection and understanding; compassion is in some degree rationally determined.
- Moral arguments of means and ends: moral principles cannot be based on ethical egoism because this would mean that people would necessarily be treated as a means to an end, not as ends in themselves.
- Utility as the basis for moral principles towards others: benefits, lack of harm, acknowledge a consideration of others above purely self-interest, sometimes to the subject’s own detriment
- The possibility of altruism.

#### Discussion

- An explanation of kindness and altruism as evolutionary adaptations to living in social groups: as humans are social creatures, any ability to promote social co-operation and tolerance places the individual at a competitive advantage
- What are our duties and obligations to others if they are necessary in forming moral principles? Is it true that everything we desire is an enhancement or fulfilment of the self?
- The difficulties of proposing egoism as a moral principle: how can I form moral imperatives if they are supposed to have authority over all other considerations, self-interest in particular? How can I resolve conflicts when my interests conflict with another?
- Contrast between formal (universalizable) and material (the objective to achieve goodness) ethics
- Nietzschean or Objectivist (Ayn Rand) criticisms of moralities that promote compassion and humility above egoism or self-fulfilment; nature as a model for morality (social Darwinism and survival of the fittest).

**18. Discuss the degree to which the rightness of moral actions should be independent of circumstance, culture, history or gender.**

In this question the underlying ethical issues for discussion and contrast are moral relativisms or moral particularism and ethical theories that propose moral principles, which recognise certain human motivations as universal (pleasure, happiness, or other benefits), or insist on universal principles.

**Key Points**

- Ethical relativism *i.e.* any position which argues that moral judgments are essentially dependent upon the practices and norms accepted by a social group at a particular place and time; usually based on sociological or anthropological evidence
- The requirement that moral principles be ones that are conceived of as rationally based and universal because this is the only way to ensure the dignity and rights of the individual
- The evidence of the relativist can be used to support the counter claim, namely that there are basic common human concerns over a range of cultures *e.g.* abuse of power by a leader, solving disputes impartially
- For the particularist there may be objective moral facts, but they can't be neatly systematized, as the wrongness of an action is too sensitive to contextual factors.

**Discussion Points**

- Are the emotional aspects of moral sentiments like compassion, pity, and love universally experienced, and if they are, could this serve as a basis for all moral judgments?
  - If relativism is a viable framework for morality, then what does this mean for the universal declarations of human rights and crimes against humanity?
  - Appealing to anthropological evidence as support for moral relativism is not making a philosophical case for its rightness, in fact relativism can offer no basis for moral evaluations or moral imperatives as it rejects any standards for judgments.
  - Though moral relativism is a sound principle for tolerance, its use as a universally morally binding principle is undermined by its claim that all moral principles are relative to other facts.
  - Utilitarianism/consequentialism: moral positions which look to the consequences of an action for its moral goodness
  - The issue of supervenience.
-