



MARKSCHEME

November 2008

PHILOSOPHY

Higher Level and Standard Level

Paper 1

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SECTION A

Core Theme: What is a ‘human’ being?

1. (a) **What philosophical issue could be identified from this image?** [3 marks]

The image might raise some of the following issues:

- The brain *versus* the mind; brain-states *versus* mind-states
- Brain as body; mind as spirit
- Self-consciousness and the brain *versus* self-consciousness and the mind
- Mind-body relationships: monism, dualism, functionalism, *etc.*
- Defining the self; locating the self; knowing the self
- The self as a unified notion of mind and body
- Having a brain *versus* having a mind
- I am my body *versus* I am my mind
- The person and various manifestations of personhood.

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

A variety of philosophical approaches might be compared and contrasted. Some of them include:

- Monism: The mind or self is reduced to the physical body
- Dualism: Mind and self are substances independent of the body or physical matter
- Rationalism: The self is what my mind indubitably knows to be the case and is separate from the physical body
- Parallelism: Mind and body run in parallel like two pre-determined clocks
- Occasionalism: There is a link between mind and body, a link established by God
- Epiphenomenalism: Body-states cause mind-states but mind-states do not cause body-states or other mind-states
- Physicalism: All mental events are exhaustively accounted for by the physical activity of the brain
- Existentialism: The self is an incarnate mind-body unity immersed in the world of common human experience. Separating mind and body is not possible
- Buddhism: Physical and mental states of desire must be extinguished; the self must be extinguished
- Behaviourism: The extent of myself is observable in my actions
- Functionalism: Mind-states are defined in relation to other mind-states and behaviour patterns
- Religious, political, cultural and non-traditional approaches to human identity (*e.g.* feminism).

- (c) **“Every person carries within himself or herself the entire human condition.” Critically discuss.** [15 marks]

The following ideas might be included in the critical discussion:

- Can any individual person live in isolation from other persons?
- Do all persons share responsibility for one another?
- Is our experience of the human condition a private experience or a shared experience?
- Is the human condition intersubjective? Are there moral implications for intersubjectivity?
- If each individual shares the human condition with others do we also share ethical and moral obligations to each other?
- Does an individual's experience of life contribute to what is commonly referred to as the human condition?
- What does/should the human condition show us? Teach us?
- Does a common experience of the human condition have political implications?
- How have cultural pluralism, multinationalism and globalism challenged our understanding of the human condition?
- If we all carry within ourselves the entire human condition, are we committed to dialogue with others?

2. (a) **What philosophical issue could be identified from this cartoon?** **[3 marks]**

The cartoon might raise some of the following issues:

- Freedom of choice; free will; condemned to be free
- Authenticity and freedom
- Life as infinite possibility
- Existence in time: Our experience of the past, present and future
- Life as pre-determined package *versus* life as an undetermined project
- Relationships with another person in sharing/determining life-options
- Realistic estimation of possibilities *versus* impractical/unrealistic possibilities
- Defining the self by the choices one makes
- Commitment to life's challenges *versus* escape from life's challenges
- Prioritising possibilities: Values, responsibilities, obligations, duties
- Reason and feeling.

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

A variety of philosophical approaches might be compared and contrasted. Some of them include:

- Existentialism: I am what I make myself through my free choices
- Determinism: I am always limited by my situation which determines what choices I am able to make
- Rationalism: The human condition and the possibilities it offers must be assessed rationally and logically
- Buddhism: The desires flowing from the human condition are a distraction and must be extinguished
- Nihilism: There is no sense to be found in my experience of the human condition. All choices and possibilities are without meaning and significance
- Theism: God's commands preclude certain choices I can make
- Utilitarianism: I should make those choices that bring the greatest happiness to the greatest number
- Hedonism: I should actualise those possibilities that please me the most
- Religious, political, cultural and non-traditional approaches to human choice.

- (c) **“My knowledge of myself as a unique person is, at every moment of my life, everything and yet nothing at all.” Critically discuss.** **[15 marks]**

The following ideas might be included in the critical discussion:

- What is the nature of the self?
- Can I know myself? What kind of knowledge would this be?
- What is the relation between the self and others?
- How do I retain knowledge of myself over time?
- Can I identify and locate myself in space? In time?
- Is the self continuous throughout time?
- Do I create/invent the self and then place the self at the centre of a universe I also create?
- Is the self real or just a product of brain activity?
- Is consciousness of self different from knowledge of self?
- Does the self have a personal history?
- Is the self a product of imagination? Of hallucination? Of wishful thinking?
- Is the knowledge of the self culturally conditioned? Multiculturalism?

SECTION B

Optional Theme 1: Political Philosophy

3. “There is a difference between having rights and having the possibility of exercising rights.” Discuss and critically evaluate.

This question asks for an examination of the notion of rights both on theoretical and on practical levels. It also invites an exploration of the relationship that might exist between freedom and rights in personal and political contexts.

Key points

- The notion of rights: personal, political, universal
- Rights: Inalienable, acquired, natural, distributive, self-evident, God-given
- The notion of freedom: personal, political, universal
- Rights *versus* duties, responsibilities, obligations
- Political authority and rights
- Violation of rights; suppression of rights; denial of rights; extension of rights; protection of rights
- The struggle and the demand for rights
- Rights and justice
- Forms of government as contexts for the acquisition and exercise of rights
- Positive freedom and its possible implications

Discussion

- Is it possible to speak of rights without speaking of the possibility of exercising those rights?
- Do rights imply the duty and/or obligation to exercise them? To protect and preserve them?
- How do various theories of rights promote or limit the acquisition and exercise of rights (*e.g.* Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Mill, Rawls, Nozick, Lucas)?
- How have various political philosophers and philosophies defined the notion of rights and the notion of freedom and justice in the exercise of rights?
- What are the alternatives or options to a political situation that denies, represses, limits or violates rights?
- How can political institutions promote, maintain and protect rights?
- What is the nature of the relationship between rights and responsibilities? Is there one?
- Is the possibility of exercising one’s rights itself a right?
- Do the possession and exercise of rights have ethical/moral implications?
- Can we speak of the possession and exercise of universal rights?
- How does cultural pluralism and a global community impact on our understanding of rights?
- Social democratic points of view

4. **“Political liberalism is primarily concerned with the freedom and autonomy of the individual and is uninterested in – or even antagonistic to – the larger community of individuals and society.” Critically assess this claim.**

This question asks for an examination of political liberalism and the status of the individual, the community of individuals, and society at large in a liberal political context. It also invites an exploration of the strong and weak points of a liberal political perspective or platform.

Key points

- Liberalism; definition and characteristics
- Liberalism and personal freedoms, rights and obligations
- Liberalism and communal and/or societal freedoms, rights and obligations
- Political liberalism *versus* economic liberalism, personal liberalism, neo-liberalism
- Liberalism and multinational, global and multicultural contexts
- Alternatives to liberalism
- Conceptions of community

Discussion

- Does liberalism’s focus and emphasis upon the freedom and autonomy of the individual inevitably set it on a collision course with the values of the larger community?
- Does liberalism assume that people are or must be egocentric?
- Does liberalism inevitably advocate a minimal state? Anarchy?
- To what degree does liberalism neglect social, communal, or societal interaction? Does it really neglect these notions?
- Does liberalism lead to political and ethical subjectivism and relativism?
- How can liberalism function in a multicultural, ethnically pluralistic context?
- How could the weaknesses of liberalism be addressed?
- How could the strong points of liberalism serve the greater political community?
- What is society?

Optional Theme 2: Knowledge

5. To what extent could scepticism be challenged?

This question asks for an examination of scepticism's claim that the certainty of our knowledge about the world is unobtainable and our ways of justifying knowledge about the world are unreliable. It invites an examination of possible ways of resolving scepticism's challenge.

Key points

- Scepticism; attitude of doubt, a doctrine about the certainty and reliability of knowledge, a method of suspending judgement about knowledge, a systematic critical method
- Philosophical scepticism *versus* scientific scepticism *versus* religious scepticism *versus* common-sense scepticism
- The rationalist's response to scepticism: Plato, Descartes, Kant
- The empiricist's response to scepticism: Hume, Locke
- The logical response to scepticism: Russell
- The common-sense response to scepticism: Moore, Reid

Discussion

- Is scepticism a credible philosophical position to hold?
- Can scepticism be a useful and/or positive tool in assessing knowledge claims?
- Is sceptical doubt about the knowledge of the world also doubt about the existence of the world?
- Is scepticism fundamentally self-defeating?
- How can empiricism ground our knowledge in a sensible world impervious to scepticism's attack on the reliability of the senses in the acquisition of knowledge?
- Can rationalism provide us with indubitable knowledge impervious to the attack of scepticism?
- Is the common-sense approach to scepticism a satisfactory and convincing challenge of it?
- Can we resolve scepticism by ceasing to talk about knowledge and rather talk about faith or justified belief?
- Can we deal with complete scepticism but not with moderate scepticism?
- Is it possible to formulate a religious response to scepticism by appealing to revelation, faith and belief?
- Is scepticism inevitable in the face of the globalization of knowledge?

6. What could constitute legitimate justification for knowledge? Explain and discuss.

This question invites a consideration of what elements might count as legitimate factors in making knowledge claims. It also allows for comment on the nature of truth and belief.

Key Points

- Knowledge as justified, true belief
- The nature of knowledge, truth and belief
- Justification as a necessary condition for knowledge
- Conditions for justification *versus* conditions for truth
- Justification as grounds for certainty; justification as having good reasons; justification as providing reliability
- Foundationalism
- Justification: sufficient *versus* necessary evidence
- Doxastic justification
- Justification: Coherentism and holism, reliabilism and pragmatism
- Justification by empirical evidence, by reason and logic, by faith, by intuition, by common sense, by causality, by innate ideas
- Justification: strong and weak senses of ‘to know’; inferential and non-inferential justification
- Theoretical *versus* practical justification

Discussion

- Just as there are several definitions of knowledge, are there also several methods for justifying knowledge claims?
- Why isn’t true belief adequate justification of knowledge claims?
- Are truth, belief and justification all necessary conditions for knowledge?
- Is true belief the equivalent of knowledge?
- Can we justify true belief by appealing to more fundamental, foundational beliefs?
- Is there any form of evidence for knowledge which is not in need of justification?
- Can the immediate objects of sense experience provide the foundations for knowledge?
- Can we know something without believing it to be true?
- Is it possible to confuse knowledge with certainty?
- Do different cultures define and justify knowledge in different ways?

Optional Theme 3: Philosophy of Culture

7. “Globalization creates a diversity of cultural values rather than a world culture.” Discuss and critically evaluate.

This question provides an opportunity to analyse the impact of globalization on the development of cultural values across the world and whether it is possible, inevitable, and desirable for a world culture to be established.

Key Points

- A definition of globalization; possibly the perceived notion that sameness spreads across the world in terms of materialism and values
- A definition of the nature of culture: that which relates to all human activity, *e.g.* religion, science, art, beliefs, language and rituals; a distinction between high and low culture might be made
- Culture as ‘symbolizing’, an activity perhaps unique to humans
- Material factors which influence the cultural systems
- The role of environment upon cultural development
- The driving force of globalization could be seen as materialism and the availability of similar goods anywhere in the world
- The extent to which values spread and are assimilated in the same way as goods across the world
- Globalization as language and conceptual development; a *lingua franca* creating a universal culture

Discussion

- How far can one culture be developed when diverse environments exist? Does continuing adaptation inevitably lead to diversity of culture even with common goods?
- Is the concept of globalization reflective of only a developed industrialized and post-industrialized world and therefore the concept has little relevance to rural non-industrial communities?
- Does globalization really drive radical reactions to commonly imposed values? Are radical fundamentalist beliefs a reaction to global materialism?
- Is it right to limit an interpretation of culture to merely goods and artefacts or is it more to do with behaviour?
- Does the growth of sameness in fact accentuate the differences?
- How far does globalization impact upon low culture more so than on high culture yet makes high culture more available?
- Does the internet and the availability of a globalized information system mean that all humans think the same and value the same?
- Is one world language being established? Is there a reaction to linguistic imperialism?
- Is globalization producing a universal code of symbols? For example, the rise of China in the 21st Century and its ways of perceiving the world and recording its perceptions of the world might be seen as a challenge to the globalization process that might have been to date routed in the west

8. To what extent is it philosophically justifiable to consider one culture superior to another?

This question seeks a philosophical investigation into whether criteria can be created to produce a hierarchy of cultures and the consequences of this activity. It might also raise the issue of how biased cultural perceptions might be developed.

Key points

- Culture as belief systems
- Culture as myths and traditions, art, science, technology, ritual and custom
- Culture as all activities that meet both human social and spiritual needs
- Culture as work and technology – superiority of tools and materials used
- Culture as the ability to create symbolic systems
- Culture as seen as dominance, resulting in the simple claim that if a group or individual has particular knowledge, attributes or skills then they are considered above the other
- Criteria which might be used to classify cultures *e.g.* types of technology or sophistication of worship systems
- The notion of ‘superior’ – possibilities of who or what holds the position of judgement and therefore the issue of cultural relativism and bias
- Acculturations as a sign of superiority
- Consequences of superiority might be cultural conflict and the dominance of one culture over another with the possible elimination of one by another

Discussion

- Is the idea of saying one culture is superior to another a result of being unable to escape one’s own cultural constructs?
- Is claiming superiority the first symptom of cultural decadence, and decline?
- If the criteria for judgement are ‘relativities’, does this itself invalidate any discussion of producing hierarchies of culture?
- Can a human group ever be able to claim the highest form of culture when culture by definition may be in a constant state of evolution?
- Is cultural conflict and/or one culture superseding another, a natural developmental process of culture?
- Is a culture founded upon ideals of international understanding, *e.g.* sympathy, empathy and toleration superior to one founded upon racism, aggression and exploitation?

Optional Theme 4: World Philosophies

9. Explain and discuss the response of at least one of the traditions (Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam) to the idea of non-violence and the values this view might reflect.

The question creates an opportunity to explore, with reference to one or more of the traditions, the approach to the idea of non-violence and its impact upon society and values.

Key points

Buddhism

- Non-violence is at the heart of Buddhism
- The need of moral clarity is clouded by aggression and, for some, even the consumption of meat stirs anger and violence
- Violence is a low level of human activity and therefore to practice harmlessness and non-violence is a sign of a higher level of human activity
- The interrelationship of Buddhism with Hinduism and Jainism with non-violence is crucial to a proper life and growing sense of contentment

Hinduism

- The notion of *Ahimsa*; the idea of non-violence in thought, word and deed
- *Ahimsa* as a route to self-realisation, a spiritual strength and a way to unity of self
- A way to goodness
- A spiritual practice that needs to be translated into deed; vegetarianism, not doing to anything that you would not do to yourself (*Manu Smriti* 5:56)
- For Jainism non-violence is central: the belief that every thing has life and should be treated as ends in themselves

Islam

- The definition of Jihad in a traditional sense with reference to the physical world allowing for a defensive war and not one of aggression; the idea of *qital* (*Surah* 2: 190) a response to attack
- The literal meaning of Islam as submitting to God and seeking peace
- The interrelationship of politics with a doctrinal position of non-aggression
- The notion that God dislikes violence (*fasad*) (*Surah*) 2:205
- Peace is one of God's names (*Surah*) 59:23
- The idea that patience is advocated as well as non-aggression

Discussion

- Does an inability to follow *Sunnah* (the way of the Prophet) lead to misinterpretations of Jihad and produce a basic contradiction within Islam?
- How far do the 'traditionalists' views on non-violence only work in rural societies?
- Is a non-violent approach naive in a world of complex mixed ethnic groupings and violence at every corner?
- To what extent is non-violence only possible in a non-mobile homogeneous society?
- The impact of these notions of non-violence on a western society seeking new ways to deal with growing conflict
- Without resorting to a violent reaction how do people in these traditions protect themselves and their rights?

10. With reference to at least one of the philosophical traditions (Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam) evaluate philosophically the significance of the family as a foundation of society.

This question encourages a philosophical enquiry into the role of family in developing values that might form the essence of society.

Key points

- In all three traditions the family is seen as an important and continuous foundation of society as a whole
- In all three the family is held in reverence and has differing functions including raising levels of spirituality and the creating of a sense of security

Buddhism

- In the *Mahamangala Sutra* the family is the source of happiness and blessing; it provides support, love, duty, help to relatives, and reverence and contentment
- In the family the value of sharing and equality of Buddhism comes to the fore
- Clear mindedness, closeness and truth allow the major aspects of Buddhism to be practiced – giving, morality, selflessness, patience, mediation and responsibility
- Marriage is a civil and social institution not religious; divorce is possible but because family is considered important it is not encouraged
- Celibacy is practised by some

Hinduism

- Marriage and the family is the second stage of salvation – *Ghihasth Ashran*
- The family is the source of new generations, and within the Vedic traditions girls have a choice confirmed by the *Manu Smriti*
- Polygamy although practiced by gods is not approved of in the real world
- In some aspects of Hinduism marriage and the family are seen as a distraction from the purpose of life; that is the transition towards *Brahma*
- Individual rights in the family – adults are equal but with responsibilities
- Extended family and its function of social control and security
- Marriage is religious and a Brahmin needs to be present for the union to be religiously acceptable

Islam

- Given that submission to Allah is the prime aim, the family and marriage is seen as the most promising of surroundings to achieve this submission
- No monastic traditions exist and the family is the cradle of society and the place to contain erotic desires
- Rights in the family and defined roles
- The family is a refuge, a place of harmony, love and kindness; a place for the protecting of children
- It is the basic unit of *ibadah* (worship)
- Patriarchal in nature it places much responsibility on the husband
- The possible role and influence of the *Ummah* on the family

Discussion

- Do the traditions have different notions of the function of society and therefore the role of the family?
- Does the possible clash of tradition and doctrine affect practice? Which is more dominant?
- Does the family exert too much control so reducing ideas of equality that might have been traditionally present?
- Do the contractual aspects of marriage impact on practices within the family – rights, property, and choice?
- How far are arranged marriages attempts to protect the family or merely a hangover of a more distant tradition?
- Is the extended family of these traditions a bulwark of belief or a hurdle to modernism?
- Does property and maintenance of wealth affect the structure of the family?

Optional Theme 5: Nature, Work and Technology

11. “In exerting mastery over the natural environment, the human species demonstrates a fundamental separation between itself and the world from which it comes.” Critically assess this claim.

This question enables an exploration of the theoretical notion that humans stand in separation from the natural world. Concepts which describe the human relation to the environment they inhabit in terms of mastery or control can be discussed, as well as theories which erode any distinctions at all.

Key points

- In what ways can the relationship between the human species and the natural environment be understood?
- What is ‘mastery’ in a natural context? Are notions of control appropriate to describe man in relation to nature?
- Is there a logical difficulty in any attempt to separate humans from a natural environment that created them?
- Notions of stewardship, ownership, ‘borrowing for future generations’
- Metaphysical traditions; Monotheistic creation accounts, Plato’s innate soul as distinguishable from natural bodies
- The ‘human instinct’ to control nature – rational or biological?
- Native Indian accounts of nature and human activity
- Ontology and function in understanding human nature and the natural environment; are humans what they do in the natural world?

Discussion

- Conceptual pictures like ‘Gaia’ in providing a framework from which to explore the human relationship to the natural world
- Understanding human nature through reductionist paradigms (*e.g.* Newton, Darwin) or materialistic analysis
- The human ability to set up analogies about our relationship with the world, despite the fact that we form part of the world
- The role of rationality in human nature – is it a distinguishing feature?
- Do humans have unique duties towards the natural world?
- Does traditional mind-body dualism create a context in which humans can detach themselves from the environment?
- Does the natural world have rights? (The Deep Ecology Movement)

12. To what extent does work define the human being?

This question enables an exploration of work and the extent to which it has been used in understanding the development of the human being.

Key points

- Work as an expression of choice, interest, skill
- The human being as the product of experiences *versus* the human being as innately wired for activities
- ‘The protestant work ethic’ – concepts of work as a test of resolve, punishment from an original ‘ideal state’
- Marxist historical determinism models in which work that originally alienates, enables fulfilment and release
- Alienation when means and gains of production are separated
- The link between work and reward
- Leisure in the context of a normal working life – or a life without work at all
- Work and the individual and work and society – tax systems and social fairness

Discussion

- The unequal distribution of talent – should such inequality be compensated for?
- Nepotism, freedom and choice
- Unemployment *versus* leisure or idleness – the impact on notions of the human being when forcibly not being able to work
- Work and society more generally
- Activity as work, activity as play (indigenous American Indian traditions)
- Legal concepts of work
- Voluntary work
- Work as part of the social contract distancing ourselves from a noble pre-industrial, social existence
- The emergence of the virtual workplace in the computer age where work occurs at all times and in all places; virtual labour

Optional Theme 6: Philosophy of the Arts

13. To what extent does the expression of the artist's feelings define a work of art?

This question relates two main issues; what art is with artistic expression. It invites reflection on the conditions which might define a work of art.

Key points

- Many kinds of psychological states can be expressed in or by works of art, but it is the artistic expression of emotion that has figured most prominently in philosophical discussions of art; emotion is expressed in pictorial, literary and other representational works of art by the characters that are depicted or in other ways presented in the works
- If the work contains characters (for example, through depiction or description), then these characters might experience emotions to which their behavior or circumstances give expression
- A central case of the expression of emotion by works of art is the expression of emotion by a purely musical work; a piece of music expresses emotions and engages its audience, often calling forth an emotional response
- A functional definition of art regards something as art only if it serves the function for which we have art, usually said to be that of providing aesthetic experience
- A procedural definition of art includes: (a) an artist is a person who participates with understanding in the making of an art work; (b) a work of art is an artefact of a kind created to be presented to an 'artworld' public; (c) the 'artworld' is the totality of all 'artworld' systems; (d) an 'artworld' system is a framework for the presentation of a work of art by an artist to an 'artworld' public. The 'artworld' is the historical and social setting

Discussion

- Is a rigorous approach to a definition of art possible? It has been argued that art has no fixed essence and, hence, that no real definition of art can be successful; this approach notes that when we look, we find no property common to all works of art
- Art-making is creative and, hence, inevitably defeats the definer's attempt to congeal what is a fluid process
- The possibility that art is to be defined in terms of a relation between the activities of artists, the products that result and the audiences that receive them
- It seems that there is more than one tradition of art making; also, what is possible at a given time within one tradition or culture might not be possible at the same time, or at any time, in others
- Are there works of arts without any expression of feelings or emotions at all?
- Is the communication subject related where the artist enables the recipient to respond in his/her own way, or is art communication more deliberate? Is more complex communication (for example a difficult novel, piece of music) necessarily better artistically?

14. On what basis can we make a judgment about the quality of a work of art? Explain and discuss.

The question offers an opportunity to explore different bases for making judgments about a work of art.

Key points

- To criticize a work of art is to make a judgment of its overall merit or demerit and to support that judgment by reference to features it possesses
- If one wishes to say that the thing is good, great or awful, one is making a claim that goes beyond any statement of one's personal preferences, a claim that may invoke an appeal to a shared sentiment, value or evaluation
- A realist approach would like to indicate a property, or some combination of properties, displayed by art works; *e.g.* observable features, such as onomatopoeia, alliteration, patterns of plots, sound patterns in music or colour areas in paintings
- Aesthetic perception may require practice and experience
- Disagreements in art criticism are widespread and frequently intractable
- A 'fact' to be noticed is the widespread agreement in critical judgments over the pre-eminence of such figures as Sophocles, Mozart, Tolstoy, Beethoven, Rembrandt and Shakespeare
- Art criticism has been identified as the activity of detecting and of helping others to detect the perceptual value and devaluing features of works of art

Discussion

- There are no proofs or standard procedures in critical judgment of art as there might be in the sciences
- Is criticism a rational activity? Can critics give reasons for their judgments that would persuade potential dissenters of the rightness of those judgments?
- Critical judgments are not objective if by objective we mean that reasons can be given to prove them; however, this is not the only way in which objectivity is possible
- Aesthetic perception may require practice and experience; what is required in criticism is an ability to see the qualities of visual works of art, hear the qualities of music and notice the features of literature. Objective features of art works are only visible to an aesthetically educated spectator
- Can we make a distinction between the 'neutral' features of a work of art and the 'merit' features? A neutral feature would be a feature such as the possession of iambic pentameter, alliteration or a colour patch in a certain position; the feature is neutral with respect to conclusions of its merit
- Art has as many kinds of value as there are points of view from which it can be evaluated; we can make judgments about works of art and give our reasons, but we can only intend to communicate our perspectives and not try to find an objective justification

Optional Theme 7: Philosophy of Religion

15. Discuss and critically evaluate the meaning of hope in the religious experience.

The question invites an exploration of the notion of hope and its meaning for religious experience. Answers might explore the relationship between hope and faith. Answers might also develop different approaches going from sustaining that without hope there is no religious experience to an examination of the role of hope from its original religious context to more recent secular contexts.

Key points

- The term ‘religious experience’ is properly used for any experiences one has in connection with one’s religious life, including a sense of guilt or release, joys, fears, longings, a sense of gratitude, and so on. In this context, hope might have various meanings
- Hope can be either intentional or dispositional. Intentional hope is oriented to some desired state of affairs which is believed to be attainable. Hobbes describes such hope as an ‘appetite with an opinion of attaining’. Dispositional hope is a state of being hopeful. This state should be distinguished from optimism and wishful thinking
- From a Christian traditional point of view hope is identified as a virtue, whereas to an existentialist it refers to the very structure of human life, *e.g.* ‘I hope in thee for us’. Hope is here understood as trust without self-interest. It is not like the hope of patients who place their hope in the doctor, which can be expressed as ‘I hope in thee for me’. Such hope is still bound up with self-interest
- A fundamental form of hope: as expressing human dignity, as the ability to transcend one’s own desires and to hope for a shared project. Here hope transcends self-interest; such hope might be located against a background of faith in God
- To place one’s hope in somebody is not the same as to hope for something, that is, for some desired object, although it is usually related to such a hope
- Kant held that hope presupposes faith. For him the ultimate hope is no longer a hope for union with God, but a hope to attain the highest good (*summum bonum*) which is demanded by the moral law. The three postulates of pure practical reason, namely the hope for the existence of God, for immortality and for the attainment of perfect freedom, are all subordinate to this superordinate hope, and ultimately to the moral law

Discussion

- Hope should also be distinguished from wishful thinking. It is as impossible to hope legitimately for something which is impossible as it is inappropriate to hope for something which is certain. All wishful thinking is by its nature illusory, whereas only illegitimate hopes are illusory
- Being hopeful is not based on the certainty that things will get better; hope, unlike optimism, presupposes a degree of uncertainty
- Religious hope is a relation between man and divinity
- Secular views of hope; Walter Benjamin held that even the historical materialist cannot abandon hope for those who have suffered past injustice, and therefore, cannot regard the past as closed
- Alternative explanations of hope (*e.g.* Freud, Marx, Hume, Darwin)
- The role of hope in religious experience in comparison to the role of hope in other forms of human experience (*e.g.* the aesthetic experience, the romantic experience)

16. Critically assess the view of the divine, which conceives God as a human ideal.

The question asks for an exploration into the diversity of conceptions of the divine, possibly using one of them as a guide.

Key points

- God as an ultimate reality, the source or ground of all else, perfect and deserving of worship. Such a conception is common to both eastern and western religions
- Within the Christian culture this vision of the divine has one of its bases in the anthropological interpretation of religion (*e.g.* Feuerbach)
- Ernst Bloch for instance conceives God not as radically opposed to the human subject, as the absolute Other, in the way Kierkegaard does, but as a human ideal. Bloch interprets faith in God as a hypostatized longing for a utopian form of existence
- Although Bloch's anthropological interpretation of religion owes a great deal to Feuerbach he was, however, deeply critical of Feuerbach for eliminating all traces of the transcendent from religion. To Bloch the promise of perfection is the transcendent element which remains in religion, even after its anthropologization
- The Vedic texts suggest that divinity permeates the whole universe, the fields, the crops, animals, human speech, and so on. This conception involves many gods and goddesses, but it is not polytheism, for each god or goddess is praised as the supreme deity. In the Vedanta system, God is conceived under two aspects: God pervades the world, and is also beyond it. God is both immanent and transcendent
- The divine might be equated to ultimate reality (Brahman), which is beyond all relations to objects, to humanity, to thought and to language. Ultimate reality is pure, impersonal, universal consciousness, devoid of any internal or external difference. This consciousness is identical with the self of the individual, which is different from other selves and material objects only at the surface level. At the deepest level, every person, as also every material object, is identical with Brahman

Discussion

- Some philosophical views of the divine: God as first-cause of the universe, God as a perfect being. These views seem to be incompatible with the idea of God being only a human ideal
- Much of classical theism's concept of God unfolds from the claim that God is the ultimate reality. According to it God is, among others: wholly independent of all else; simple – completely without parts; immaterial; without accidents – lacking non-relational contingent attributes; immutable; and eternal
- Other theistic models: Panentheism, Polytheism, Henotheism, Kathenotheism
- Pantheism consists of two theses: that (a) all things are parts of, appearances of or really identical with someone being, and (b) this being is divine
- When the divine is seen as a human ideal, it is no longer divine; divinity requires transcendence.
- Animist traditions

Optional Theme 8: Theories and Problems of Ethics

17. Critically assess the view that ethical judgements should be based on natural properties or nature.

This question enables an exploration of the view that moral reality stems from natural properties in the world, enabling objective or realist accounts of morality to emerge.

Key Points

- Naturalism as a basis for ethics; Aristotle, Utilitarianism, Social Darwinism, Ethical Egoism, Ethical Naturalism *etc.*
- Aquinas and Natural Law
- The role of reason in naturalistic accounts (*e.g.* Utilitarianism)
- The concept of virtue
- Psychological accounts of human nature and morality; Psychological Egoism
- The fact-value distinction

Discussion

- The naturalistic fallacy, GE Moore
- Linguistic challenges to naturalism in ethics; Emotivism, Prescriptivism
- Is Egoism capable of being labelled ‘ethical’?
- Naturalism *versus* divine command and metaphysical theories
- Is ethics an empirical pursuit?
- The advantages of a naturalistic account of ethics for combating relativism or nihilism

18. Explain and discuss the notion of duty in forming moral decisions.

This question enables an exploration of duty-based ethical systems and answers could be developed in the light of examples from the applied ethics issues studied.

Key Points

- Deontological ethics and duty as a basis for morality
- Kant and divine command ethics
- Situation ethics
- Hypothetical *versus* categorical motivations for ethical decisions
- Various examples to be utilised from bio-medical issues, animal rights or environmental issues – in which a duty-based approach should be stated and illustrated, perhaps by contrast with a teleological (or other) approach to ethics
- Ways of discerning duty (Kant could be contrasted with Situation Ethics)
- The issue of conflicting duties

Discussion

- The difficulty of justifying the rationale of duty for an ethical system
 - The danger of inflexibility and duty being seen as the heartless pursuit of rules for their own sake, cutting people's concerns off from ethical discourse
 - The difficulty of discovering duty, especially in a conflict between two duties (*e.g.* the care and needs of a dying patient and the requirements of the law)
 - Examples from Applied Ethics in discussing the notion of duty
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