



MARKSCHEME

May 2011

PHILOSOPHY

Higher Level and Standard Level

Paper 2

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Note to examiners

This markscheme outlines what members of the paper setting team had in mind when they devised the questions. The topics listed in the bullet points indicate possible areas candidates might cover in their answers. They are not compulsory points and not necessarily the best possible points. They are only a framework to help examiners in their assessment. Examiners should be responsive to any other valid points or any other valid approaches.

Using the assessment criteria

Candidates at both Higher Level and Standard Level answer **one** question on the prescribed texts.

Bhagavad Gita

1. Explain and discuss the concept of sacrifice.

This question invites an explanation and discussion of a central concept in Krishna's yoga; that of sacrifice, primarily as a type of morally significant action, but also in other ways. Sacrifice, in all meanings, was a necessary condition to attain *nirvana*.

Key Points

- Sacrifice as a renunciation of desires and pleasures. The world of the senses and humanity is transient, and searching for the truth there is fruitless and leads to ignorance. Attachment to the material world is an obstacle to knowing Krishna because it misleads and distracts reason
- In performing or contemplating any action, the Yogi acts as if all actions were a sacrifice to Krishna
- Consecrating all action to Krishna is one of the ways a sinner may be redeemed and saved, and for the good person it is a further step closer to Krishna. For all people, it is the only way to attain true perfection
- Along with the works of gift and self-harmony, the works of sacrifice are all works of purification
- A sacrifice is pure and is purifying when it is an offering of adoration to Krishna, in harmony with the holy law, with no expectation of reward, and out of a sense of duty (*dharma*)
- The reason for Arjuna's reluctance to fight is because the sacrificing of men's lives under his command, and the sacrificing of those in the opposing army, causes him great sorrow

Discussion

- If sacrificial acts are done from a sense of duty and with no expectation of reward, does that mean that the only actions that are truly sacrificial are those where the individual does not recognize any suffering or resistance to action?
- Can contemporary secular conceptions of altruism be accommodated with Krishna's or other theistic views on morally significant actions?
- Is the material world and its attachments really an obstacle to knowing God, or is it the source of this knowledge?
- If a sincere love of Krishna is at the heart of all morally valuable actions, are any of the other conditions really necessary?
- Is reason essential when experiencing God or acting morally?
- A comparison of motivations for sacrifice; expiatory, propitiatory
- The concept of sacrifice as an ethical principle. Comparison with other views

2. Explain and discuss the images of light, fire and darkness.

This question invites an explanation and discussion of the means by which Krishna describes Himself, and might consider the images used for the tripartite division of all nature and action, which represent the three types of human personality, and moral standards of action.

Key Points

- All elements and representations and manifestations of light, fire and darkness are Krishna, and within Him. He is the darkness of death, the light and fire of the sun, the food and fire of sacrifice
- Light (*sattava*), fire (*rajas*), and darkness (*tamas*) are the three *gunas*, the three intertwined “strands” of the real world, which are, at the same time, both the basic constituents and the changing conditions of nature; their liberty is restrained within a finite body
- *Sattava* is pure and gives health to the body. It is the source of wisdom. It binds a person’s soul to earthly happiness and lower forms of knowledge (knowledge of the material world)
- *Rajas* is the source of passion and greed; it binds a soul to action
- *Tamas* is born of ignorance in a soul of darkness. The soul of the individual is apathetic, negligent, and lazy
- Any action performed in a state of *sattava* bears the pure harmony of the self, while in *rajas*, any action brings with it pain, and in *tamas*, it brings ignorance
- There is constant interaction and temporary dominance of one *gunas* over the others, but it is most important that the soul be dominated by *sattava* at the time of death; this is the only path to immortality and the truth
- If death occurs in *rajas*, then the soul is reborn with those who are bound to restless activity, and if death occurs and the soul is in *tamas* then the soul is reborn in those with an irrational mind

Discussion

- Is it possible to talk about the nature of God without resorting to metaphors, similes, and other types of imagery?
- Is there such a thing as “human nature”, and if there is, is it what Krishna says it is?
- If actions of darkness, or evil, are because of ignorance and lead to more ignorance, then are people wholly responsible for the consequences of their actions?
- Does Krishna imply that people are determined by their actions, and furthermore, are they trapped by their natures into a cycle of reincarnation into either *rajas* or *tamas*?

Confucius: *The Analects*

3. “In the practice of the rites or rules of propriety (*li*), harmony (natural ease) is the most valuable thing, and in the ways of the ancient kings this is regarded as the most beautiful thing. It is adopted in all matters, both small and great.” Discuss and evaluate.

This question invites a discussion and evaluation of the importance of propriety (*li*) and its relations with other central ideas of Confucian ethics, social and political philosophy.

Key Points

- *Li* (rites, rules of propriety), together with *ren* (benevolence), and *yi* (rightness, righteousness), constitutes the conceptual framework of Confucian ethics
- *Li* covers everything from table manners to the three years of mourning on the loss of one’s parent, from the institution of parenthood to the appropriate posture for expressing commiseration
- One is one’s roles and relationships; the goal of living, then, is to achieve harmony and enjoyment for oneself and others through acting appropriately in those roles and relationships that constitute one
- The life of every human being is played out within the context of their particular family, for better or for worse. For Confucius, it is one’s family and the complex of relationships that constitute it, rather than the solitary individual, that is the basic unit of humanity
- What Confucius calls *ren* – literally “becoming a person” – is the recognition that personal character is the consequence of cultivating one’s relationships with others
- When respect is shown according to what is proper one keeps far from shame and disgrace
- It is by the rites or rules of propriety that the character is established
- If a man is without the virtues proper to humanity, what has he to do with the rites of propriety? If a man is without the virtues proper to humanity, what has he to do with music?
- Respectfulness, without the rules of propriety, becomes laborious bustle; carefulness, without the rules of propriety, becomes timidity; boldness, without the rules of propriety, becomes insubordination; straightforwardness, without the rules of propriety, becomes rudeness

Discussion

- Confucius’s social philosophy largely revolves around the concept of “compassion” or “loving others”; cultivating or practising such concern for others involves deprecating oneself
- Rulership as a continuation of relationship; for Confucius, what characterized superior rulership was the possession of *de* or “virtue”. Conceived of as a kind of moral power that allows one to win a following without recourse to physical force, such “virtue” also enabled the ruler to maintain good order in his state without troubling himself, and by relying on loyal and effective deputies
- Does the Confucian teaching imply that we should treat others as family? Would it be realistic today?
- Much of *The Analects* is ostensibly concerned with the business of learning from past experience in order to organize the future, and Confucius is presented as one who is devoted to the task of such transmission. Family is a key element in keeping the tradition
- To what extent is what Confucius calls *li*, a code of formal behaviours?
- Does the expression “rites” involve the wider ethical dimension indicated by the notion of *li*?
- Advantages and problems with Confucius’s concept of *li*, and the potential usefulness (or not) of the notion

4. Evaluate the claim that if the notion of humaneness (*ren*) is adequately understood, it has significant potential to be applied to different fields of contemporary life.

This question gives an opportunity to evaluate the notion of humaneness (*ren*) and the ways in which Confucius's teachings might be applied in present societies.

Key Points

- *Ren* (literally “becoming a person”), does not precede practical employment; it is not a principle or standard that has some existence beyond the day-to-day lives of the people who realize it in their relationships. Rather, *ren* is fostered in the deepening of relationships that occur as one takes on the responsibility and obligations of communal living, and comes fully to life. *Ren* is shared human flourishing
- The relation with the way (*Tao*); the way implies that a particular person chose to live his/her life. The power and lasting value of Confucius's ideas lie in the fact that they are intuitively persuasive, and readily adaptable
- Confucius is arguably one of the most influential philosophers in human history, and his teachings are still present in Chinese contemporary thought. Recognized as China's first teacher both chronologically and in importance, his ideas have been the rich soil in which the Chinese cultural tradition has grown and flourished
- Confucius began the practice of independent philosophers travelling from state to state in an effort to persuade political leaders that their particular teachings were a practicable formula for social and political success
- Confucian insights regarding the most basic and enduring aspects of the human experience; family, friendship, education, and community, among others
- *The Analects* transmits both an account of how one man cultivated his humanity, and also formulae by which everyone should live. Application might be developed in both senses
- His influence was not restricted to China; all of the Sinitic cultures – especially Korea, Japan and Vietnam – have evolved around ways of living and thinking derived from his wisdom

Discussion

- Confucius had established a school with the explicit purpose of educating the next generation for political leadership, therefore his teaching does purport intentions of application for the future
- Is humaneness characteristic of individuals, of communities, or both?
- Do the difficulties in defining the central notions in abstract terms make them not applicable to the present?
- The Confucian idea of humaneness is unique; it combines abstract aspects with very concrete ones, it is not merely the combination of theoretical and practical Western reason
- How could a wisdom originated in a radically different society be applied nowadays?
- Confucian life-wisdom is restricted to oneself or small groups' relationships
- The resonance of the teaching on *ren* in different cultures today

Lao Tzu: *Tao Te Ching*

5. Explain and discuss the importance of non-action (*wu wei*) to an understanding of the *Tao*.

This question invites an explanation and discussion of *wu wei* (“effortless action” or “non-action”). Answers might draw on a broad range of material from the emphasis of *wu wei* in assuring good rule to a more individual or personal approach.

Key Points

- The principle of action and non-action; active non-action is desirable
- The goal of *wu wei* is alignment with the *Tao*, revealing the hidden nature of all things
- When linked to the *Tao*, which creates and sustains everything in the universe, non-doing means the actionless-ness of Heaven
- Non-doing refers to not forcing things on our way, or action without effort
- The analogy with water – soft and yielding yet able to move rock
- The challenge for man is to align his will according to the *wu wei* principle in order to be in harmony with the world
- *Wu wei* is the principal means of achieving naturalness
- The contrast between nature’s passive qualities and the active, striving way that man lives
- *Wu wei* enables balance and harmony to be achieved without reference to self-interest; *wu wei* achieves balance through internal contentment in contrast to external ambition and striving
- The wise leader practises non-action as a part of good rule in order to facilitate people’s ability to stand up for themselves and order their own lives
- Stillness as a desirable state of being
- The importance of understanding natural limitations and the true nature of things as a guide to appropriate action

Discussion

- Is Lao Tzu’s concept in danger of being seen as meaningless given the inherent contradiction in a concept called “non-action”? Is “non-doing” coherent?
- Some commentators describe *wu wei* as a kind of intelligence; is this intelligible?
- Is there too much emphasis on personal contentment or personal balance?
- What is the relationship between materialism and *wu wei*?
- Given the ineffable quality of the *Tao* how can any recommendation in human affairs be justified?
- Is non-action a convincing quality for the ruler to exude?
- Are Lao Tzu’s recommendations politically workable or realistic?
- Is the emphasis on passivity attractive or appealing today? If so, for what reason?
- What possibility is there of criticizing the notion of *wu wei*?

6. Explain and discuss the unspoken nature of the *Tao*.

This question enables an explanation and discussion of a central part of Lao Tzu’s teaching and might draw on a variety of approaches including the content and style of the delivery of Lao Tzu’s message.

Key Points

- The *Tao* as the way, and its various interpretations
- Lao Tzu offers a reflection on the *Tao* which encourages others to encounter it in silence
- The sage offers “wordless lessons”
- As the *Tao* comprises guidance from the whole universe including future events, then necessarily, part of that guidance cannot be spoken of
- We encounter the world through studying its unspoken lessons in silence
- The *Tao* is discovered in the silence of the non-actions of the cosmos
- To study the silence of the cosmos is to study the unspoken teachings of the *Tao*
- Any part of the *Tao* that can be described is not the eternal *Tao*, just as a name that can be spoken is not the eternal name
- All language distorts the *Tao*

Discussion

- Why does Lao Tzu speak of something that is not able to be spoken of?
- Is the *Tao Te Ching* merely a signpost to something that cannot really be described? In which case how can we judge our understanding of it?
- The irony of the claim that “all language distorts the *Tao*” being itself a piece of language
- The emphasis in Taoism on reducing activity in general
- To empty the mind is also to take a positive step
- Only an ego needs to define or proclaim itself; emptying of content enables greater understanding; how does this idea fit in with just causes or protest?
- The assumptions about the nature of the universe implicit in the *Tao* being thought of as unspoken (as opposed to articulated)

Plato: *The Republic*, Books IV–IX

7. Explain and discuss the nature of belief and knowledge.

This question gives an opportunity to explain and discuss the differences and relationship that Plato suggests exists between the nature of belief and knowledge.

Key Points

- Plato’s view of belief being neither ignorance nor knowledge, being clearer than ignorance but vaguer than knowledge; a transition state
- The divided line simile as an explanation of the relationship of belief and knowledge
- The Allegory of the Cave
- Belief having two aspects; opinion, *pistis* and illusion, *eikasia* and being concerned with the physical world
- Knowledge is concerned with the intelligible world and is made up of mathematical reasoning, abstract thought, *dianoia* and intelligence and pure thought, *noesis*
- Knowledge is unchanging and cannot be qualified
- An explanation of the Theory of Forms
- The development from belief in the less real to knowledge of the truly real
- The route to true knowledge is through the dialectic which is to seek, reach and understand “ideas”

Discussion

- The extent to which the difference between belief and knowledge is relevant to universals; qualities which objects or things possess
- Is Plato’s division of the intelligible world and the physical world really a division between direct perception and interpretation, judgment?
- Is there a need in human development to move understanding from belief to knowledge?
- In our rapidly changing world is knowledge as fixed as Plato argues?
- To what extent is Plato’s division of the universe into appearance and reality too simple?
- If all knowledge is already in our minds why does Plato entertain the idea of belief?
- To what extent is Plato justified in claiming that the “Ideas” which are the concern of knowledge are not merely objects of the minds, but exist in the eternal?

8. Explain and discuss the qualities of the ideal ruler.

This question allows for an explanation and discussion of what qualities the ideal ruler should have and whether they are appropriate for the task of ruling in the ideal state.

Key Points

- The key qualities that Plato outlines for the philosopher; love of knowledge, an appreciation of the Forms, fair minded, gentle measure and full of grace, a seeker of wisdom with a good memory, full of courage, temperance, a friend of truth, justice and courage; a person who pursues a virtuous life
- The analogy of the captain of the ship to show the skills needed to lead and rule and how the populace reacts to the ideal ruler
- The well governed soul
- Comparison with the soul of the tyrant
- The ways in which society might corrupt the nature of the ideal ruler; the desire for a sophist approach to life, the desire for democracy and lack of trust in meritocrats
- The analogy of the control of the beast
- The perceived uselessness of the ideal philosopher ruler because s/he is too far divorced from current societal trends
- The need of special education and training; physical fitness, aspects of maths leading to harmony and the dialectic
- The need to change the nature of society so that the ideal ruler could be accepted

Discussion

- Is the ideal ruler really achievable in either Plato's time or an industrialised/post-industrialised society?
- Are the qualities outlined for the ruler unachievable in a normal human?
- Is Plato's lack of faith in democratic processes justified?
- How far has Plato's view of leadership been affected by unusual, if not unique, personal experiences which might invalidate his conclusions?
- Can a strict education regime of a few fulfil the objective of creating philosopher rulers?
- Should an educational regime have as its goal the changing of the nature of society?
- To what extent will the ideal ruler produce a better society?
- Should individual rights be suppressed for the benefit of the community?
- How paternalistic is Plato's state? Is a "nanny state" good?
- To what extent is Plato's ruler leading a society of equals given his attitude to slavery? Is his perfect state still a world of inequalities?
- Plato's virtue ethics. Comparison with Aristotle's ethics?

René Descartes: *Meditations*

9. Explain and discuss Descartes’s concept of the self.

The aim of this question is to invite an explanation and discussion of the nature of the Cartesian self, the *cogito* and dualism.

Key Points

- Because of Descartes’s sceptical method, he sees a person as a thinking being. A Cartesian self can at least feel secure in the knowledge that s/he doubts and is aware that s/he doubts
- It is the mind that detects or imagines a difference between itself and the body. The mind is indivisible
- Our bodies occupy space and have extension, but because of fundamental doubt in the senses and memories, the body’s existence is uncertain
- The body’s existence is tied to God’s existence, as God sustains or causes the body to exist from one moment to the next
- A finite body cannot be self-causing
- Mind and body are intermingled, rather than the mind being “present” in the body
- The relation of the *cogito* to Descartes’s notion of the self

Discussion

- Are the contents of our minds always clear and unambiguous to us? What of the contents of the unconscious mind? Can I truly know my self?
- A consequence of the Cartesian model of consciousness, or mind and body, is the problem of knowing other minds
- The critical problem of dualism is to explain the interaction between mind and body if they are conceived of as substances
- Does science support or contradict Descartes’s conclusions about the self?
- Other concepts of self, or dualism, *e.g.* Christian, Buddhist

10. Explain and discuss the argument for the belief in the existence of the external world.

This question invites an explanation and discussion of Descartes's argument for the existence of the external world, which in turn, may rely upon his argument for the existence of God.

Key Points

- Sceptical doubt is the fundamental method of enquiry. By removing from consciousness all images of corporeal things, then only that which is very clearly and distinctly apprehended or conceived is true
- Because of this doubt, the existence of the external world could be an illusion, or, at the least, contingent upon something else
- Descartes makes this contingency God; as God exists, then because he does not deceive, my idea of the external world is true
- All ideas must be caused by something or someone different from the one who has the idea, and because I am a finite being, I cannot have originally conceived of an infinite substance; it can only have been given to me by some being which is infinite
- The distinction Descartes makes between innate, adventitious and factitious ideas
- The idea of God is not drawn from the senses, nor is it pure production or fiction; it is innate in the same way as the idea of myself is, which I also received from God
- Descartes's idea of God is a being that is eternal, infinite, all-knowing, all-powerful, and the creator of all things that are out of Himself. The idea of God has in it more objective reality than those ideas which represent finite substances

Discussion

- A problem of this argument is that if I, who possess this idea of God, clearly and distinctly believe that there is no God, then could I exist?
- Descartes makes certain assumptions about God's nature (as well as His existence), *e.g.* His reliability in guaranteeing the correctness of our sense experiences. Are they well founded?
- Why must the idea of God be externally inspired and not a direct product of my desire or will?
- Descartes makes God's existence and nature the guarantee for reality. Is he as justified in doing this as science leaves existence contingent upon non-moral and random forces and processes?
- How much of the argument about the existence of the external world holds or can be rescued without recourse to God? Is it still reasonable to believe in the existence of the external world without believing in God?
- Is the idea of God like the ideas of mathematics and extension (clear and distinct)? Is it dependent on being situated within a Christian cultural and mind frame?

John Locke: *Second Treatise on Government*

- 11. “Locke’s primary contention is that the right to govern comes with a duty to govern in the interest of the governed.” Discuss and evaluate this claim.**

This question invites a discussion and evaluation of the idea of political power in Locke’s political philosophy. It involves its central ideas, therefore answers might follow different lines of argument.

Key Points

- Political power is that power which every man has in the state of nature, but gives up into the hands of society, and therein to the governors whom the society has set over itself, with the express or tacit trust that it shall be employed for their good and the preservation of their property (Sect. 171)
- The end and measure of political power is the preservation of all the society, “that is, all mankind in general”. In the hands of the magistrate, “it can have no other end or measure, but to preserve the members of that society in their lives, liberties, and possessions” (Sect. 171)
- Locke’s view of what “in the interests of” actually means
- Political power has its origin only from agreement, and the mutual consent of those who make up the community
- Men are naturally free and equal; this is part of the justification for understanding legitimate political government as the result of a social contract where people in the state of nature conditionally transfer some of their rights to the government in order to better insure the stable, comfortable enjoyment of their lives, liberty, and property
- Since governments exist by the consent of the people in order to protect the rights of the people and promote the public good, governments that fail to do so can be resisted and replaced with new governments

Discussion

- Sources and ways of legitimizing political power
- Why is personal property prior to government?
- The “state of nature”; a merely ideal abstraction, a historical situation, or both?
- In postulating the mechanisms by which political and property rights emerged – a collective act of trust and individual labour, respectively – Locke gave a philosophical justification of some main aspects of the modern state, combining as it did centralized political authority with dispersed economic rights
- Present reconstructions of a grant of political authority *a priori*, on the grounds of what would have been reasonable – or in the case of those like Locke who favour a natural law constraint – legitimate grounds to agree upon
- Common good and consent as important for the defence of the right of revolution
- To what extent should those who govern feel responsibility for the development of the state which they govern?

12. Explain and discuss the extent of legislative power.

This question invites an explanation and discussion of a central issue with many relationships to, and ramifications for, Locke's political conceptual framework.

Key Points

- The basis of civil law in the law of nature
- The natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but to have only the law of nature for his rule (Sect. 22)
- The power to make laws derives from political power
- The liberty of man in society is to be under no other legislative power but that established by consent in the commonwealth; nor under the dominion of any will, or restraint of any law, but what that legislative shall enact, according to the trust put in it (Sect. 22)
- The legislative is the supreme power of the commonwealth, sacred and unalterable in the hands where the community has placed it
- The original purpose of the legislative and executive power of civil society is to judge, by standing laws, how far offences committed within the commonwealth are to be punished (Sect. 88)
- No man in civil society can be exempted from the laws of it (Sect. 94)
- Limits of the legislative, *e.g.* it is not, nor can possibly be, absolutely arbitrary over the lives and fortunes of the people (Sect. 135)
- The legislative, or supreme authority, cannot assume to itself a power to rule by extemporary arbitrary decrees, but is bound to dispense justice, and decide the rights of subjects, by promulgated standing laws and known authorized judges (Sect. 136)
- The legislative cannot transfer the power of making laws to any other hands (Sect. 141)

Discussion

- Sources of political power and division in powers
- Does Locke's political philosophy adequately justify his division in power?
- Reasonability and justification of the division in powers in Locke's political philosophy and beyond
- The extent to which the division in powers is or should be related to other social, economic, political main situations or institutions, *e.g.* wealth distribution, division of work, international law
- Implications of expanding the power of the legislative, *e.g.* over taxation or limiting it, laws without enforcement

John Stuart Mill: *On Liberty***13. Evaluate the relationship between liberty and utility.**

This question invites an evaluation of two key themes in Mill’s arguments, especially how his views about liberty fit with his views about the significance of utility.

Key Points

- Mill’s main argument is on the issue of liberty, in which he makes a general case that there is no justification for any other individual to limit the freedom or action of any individual except where that individual’s actions would cause harm – the Harm Principle
- Mill’s handling of liberty – positive and negative notions of freedom
- Mill believes liberty is not afforded a high enough estimation as a necessary part of civilization and he believes people’s attitudes and actions should reflect respect for liberty
- Mill’s moral outlook is dominated by the notion of utility; the sole matter in consideration of the rightness or wrongness of any action is the amount, and quality, of the utility it produces
- The two principles of liberty and utility may seem to come into conflict since it is very possible to conceive of occasions when guaranteeing liberty would not lead to the greatest accumulation of pleasure or utility, but Mill disagrees, not by maintaining a right to freedom, but rather by appealing to the long-term consequences of restricting it, *e.g.* the dangers of conformity

Discussion

- Sovereignty of the individual – Mill regards the effect on those around the individual of that individual’s self-harming activity as an “inconvenience ... which society can afford to bear, for the sake of the greater good of human freedom”; many would object to this and claim that Mill disregards the effect of self-harming activity on close friends/others, thereby offending his law of utility
- Generally if more utility can be produced from restricting liberty, then for a utilitarian that would have to be desirable
- Mill sets the utilitarian calculation beyond individual societies and regards it as “the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions; but it must be utility in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being” (Chapter 1); when Mill talks about utility in its largest sense he talks about “the Human Race” or even “species” – so in his casting of the utilitarian calculation net Mill adjusts his account by claiming that satisfying liberty is always maximally utilitarian; is this persuasive?
- Mill also looks into the issue of the best conditions for individuality to grow, and appeals to the full development of the whole human being, thus stepping out of the narrow confines of utilitarian calculation
- For Mill, utility is the primary rule by which other rules are judged, thus the principles of liberty and utility are not in direct competition because one is subordinate to, and indeed contained in, the other

14. Evaluate the problem posed by conformity.

This question invites an evaluation of the issue of individuality and liberty that is at the heart of Mill’s thesis.

Key Points

- Mill sees diversity as good and encourages people to “dare to be eccentric”
- Custom can cause progress to cease
- Conformity is allowing custom to rule one’s life according to the single faculty of “ape-like ... imitation”
- Blindly following custom stops human qualities developing like perception, judgment or feeling for others
- If you consciously choose how to act you make use of all your faculties
- Liberty is founded on the notion that different modes of living can be empirically tested and people can make a rational choice about which mode to adopt/accept
- Mill deals with social institutions and says they are based upon experience – but these experiences may not be applicable to all individuals
- Spontaneity represents a problem and “... is hardly recognized by the common modes as having any intrinsic worth”
- Individuality is seen as “troublesome and rebellious” but Mill attempts to draw a line between offence and harm in the Harm Principle
- The Harm Principle as defending spontaneity in individual expression
- Mill fears that the homogeneity of society will enable a paralysis to set in; he is concerned that a single dominant culture will be established and we shall become increasingly alike

Discussion

- Comparison with notions of individuality today
- Does the Harm Principle militate against individuality and spontaneity?
- Mill puts a lot of emphasis on using empirical experience as a guide, but experience can be too narrow or open to misinterpretation
- There must be a standard social setting from which eccentrics can differ, or from which non-conformity can be judged
- Eccentricity can militate against correct interpretation of behaviour or custom
- Liberty is good unless it entails harm to others, which may then encourage conformity
- Mill acknowledges that some people have greater gifts or are more suited to lead than others
- The forces of conformity in the modern world, especially with global media and communication
- Could the exaltation of individual freedom and individuality in Mill also be seen as a conformity to a particular cultural perspective?
- How is non-conformity to be understood?

Friedrich Nietzsche: *The Genealogy of Morals*

15. Evaluate the claim that our morality has a clear and traceable genealogy.

This question invites an evaluation of the basic claim made by Nietzsche that human morality has an origin that can be defined and traced.

Key Points

- A challenge to the accepted position that morals come from God; morality is evolutionary and not absolute
- As the source of morals is naturalistic, there is no need to appeal to the supernatural origin as a response to produce social cohesion
- Circumstances drive morals, not the other way around
- Morality could, and perhaps does, restrict natural societal development
- The source of our existing morals was outdated religions and *ressentiment* and this produces the decay and decadence that he saw in current Western society
- The distinction between origin and genealogy; a fixed definable starting point compared to a more flexible evolutionary process
- The language argument whereby links between commercial practice, debt punishment and feeling of guilt and humility develop out of a desire to exploit and be exploited
- The existence of “bad conscience” being rooted in Christian values
- Relationships between “the slave” and “the noble” value system and the desire for an *Übermensch*, and the notion that there were once people free from herd morality
- The critique of the ascetic priest
- The relationship of morality and power dynamics within society

Discussion

- Is Nietzsche’s distinction between origin and genealogy effective?
- To what extent is it possible to condemn traits of compassion and love for one’s fellow man as wrong and a sign of weakness; might it be a sign of strength?
- Is there a need for religion as a psychological prop or should humans stand on their own?
- Could Nietzsche’s critique of the role of Christianity be applied to all religions?
- Are there variations in the “herd” and *Übermensch* morality or is the uniting of *Übermensch* an oxymoron? Is the *Übermensch* beyond morality?
- Nietzsche tended to blame the faults in his current society on the dominance of a herd morality – would the values of *Übermensch* generate even less cohesion?
- Is *ressentiment* real or an invention of Nietzsche?
- How far is it justified to draw parallels between commercial life and moral feelings?
- Is the attack on the priesthood justified?
- If Nietzsche could have looked beyond Western Christianity would he have his same genealogy?
- Is it justified to attribute the development of morality as a tool of social groups to maintain power?
- Is retrospective analysis of the type Nietzsche demonstrates justified given the limited nature of evidence?
- How far does Nietzsche’s interpretation of morality reflect his own life experiences, particularly his illnesses?
- In what ways could genealogy be useful as a method of inquiry? What are its advantages and disadvantages?
- Contemporary frameworks using the genealogical method

16. To what extent is the will to power the essence of life?

This question invites an evaluation of the meaning and significance of the “will to power” for Nietzsche. Answers might explore how Nietzsche uses this idea to explain human actions as well as why it might be seen as the essence of life.

Key Points

- The “will to power” as the essence of life and an instinct for freedom. Things and concepts have no inherent purpose, but are given purpose by the different forces and “wills” that act upon them
- Contrast the “will to power” with a “will to life” or a “will to meaning”
- The need to be free from any domination by others, things or movements
- Ways in which a “will to power” can generate different interpretations of the motives of actions
- The “will to power” being the main driving force in humans; achievement, ambition, the striving to reach the highest possible position in life
- The counter-position that the “will to power” is the most fundamental aspect of reality – more fundamental even than being, *e.g.* Schopenhauer
- The internalization of punishment in the form of a guilty conscience and of an internal punishing mechanism that no longer necessitates the severe physical inscription of debt and punishment
- The mastering of one’s self is a disguised form of the “will to power”
- Weakness is the extinction of will in life and particularly in art
- The rejection of asceticism, which seeks to “will” nothingness, but this in itself is seen as willing and is better than no will
- The idea that questioning in science is not self-sustaining, because it does not contain its own “will to power”; it concerns itself with facts, and not interpretation which means it does not assert a will
- The “will to power” is self-desiring and a natural process
- The “will to power” as the overcoming of guilt

Discussion

- Is power more important than life?
- Does Nietzsche see the “will to power” as metaphysical and so undermine his own argument?
- Is the “will to power” so much a contrast to life that it is a negative concept and could generate self-destruction?
- Does the “will to power”, as the basic drive of all humans, belittle ideas based on altruism?
- Is the “will to power” a unifying concept of all human activity?
- To what extent can all human drives be reduced to one? Contrast might be made with Freud and Foucault
- Is the negation of will in itself an expression of will?
- How far has Nietzsche’s perspective influenced postmodernist thinking?
- Is every human action a “will to power”, a desire not to be dominated but to be dominant?

Bertrand Russell: *The Problems of Philosophy*

17. Evaluate Russell’s claim that the essential characteristic of philosophy is criticism.

This question seeks an evaluation of the claim that the main purpose of philosophy is to be critical. It also allows for a challenge to this claim.

Key Points

- The idea that the activity of criticism makes it different to a scientific activity
- By becoming critical, humans can rise above everyday concerns and become more insightful of themselves and the universe
- The search for inconsistencies is applied to science and everyday pursuits
- The challenge that philosophy reveals is that science might not give us, *e.g.* knowledge of universals
- The rejection of complete scepticism; the acceptance that critical investigation should only be applied to that which seems doubtful
- The resemblance of physical objects to sense-data
- Not all beliefs need or should be challenged in the realm of critical philosophy
- Counter-positions which suggest that philosophy is more than criticism and does and should build metaphysical positions and systems
- The fallibility of philosophy must be accepted
- The position that philosophy is a worthwhile activity which can free us from the prejudices of the “practical man”. Its value rests in critically examining convictions, prejudices and beliefs and consequently might not give firm definitive answers

Discussion

- Is criticism the main function of philosophy? If so is it really productive or simply a way of being negative about all claims?
- Is criticism the only means of producing progress in understanding?
- To what extent can criticism improve the condition of humans?
- Is the role of philosophy to broaden the perceptions and understandings of humans and not just to argue about semantics?
- If bodies of distinct knowledge break away from philosophy proper, does this limit the scope of philosophy or increase its relevance and importance through the practice of critical insight?
- To what extent does Russell’s function of philosophy allow for a study of the self and the mind?
- If we are not connected to the physical world how can we effectively critically investigate and analyse it?

18. Discuss and evaluate Russell’s claim that, “all our knowledge depends upon our intuitive knowledge”.

This question invites a discussion and evaluation of the claim that intuition is the only way of establishing and justifying knowledge.

Key Points

- Various sources of knowledge; acquaintance, description. Knowledge of immediate things is intuitive and the knowledge of truths is self-evident
- The problematic nature of an error of judgment with knowledge by description compared to acquaintance
- Common beliefs and the role of forgetting the degrees of inference that create a sense of intuition
- The private nature of intuition
- Self-evident truths; the general principle of the truth of perception and the problem of intuitive judgments
- The role of memory and its degrees of unreliability due to time and intensity of experience
- The contrast between the logical and mathematical bases of self-evident truths
- The claim that some sense-data, logic, maths and some ethical propositions might be based in intuition
- The nature of derivative knowledge of truths consisting of everything that we can deduce from self-evident truths
- Other forms of knowledge that might not be based on intuition, such as knowledge by acquaintance

Discussion

- To what extent are Russell’s sources of knowledge limited? Are there others?
- How far is intuitive knowledge clearly explained by definition or example?
- How can contradictions within knowledge be based on intuition and self-evident truths be resolved? Can truths be self-contradictory?
- According to Russell, intuition is private; is this a firm basis for public knowledge?
- Is memory as problematic as Russell suggests? If the degree of scepticism is so great, why rely on it at all?
- Is Russell’s fundamental line of argument flawed by relying on the foundation of knowledge as acquaintance and description and self-evident truths?
- Are universals really universal as Russell suggests or are they open to challenge because they are based on private, personal experience?

Hannah Arendt: *The Human Condition*

19. Explain and discuss Arendt's claim that work gives permanence to the world.

This question invites an explanation and discussion of the dimensions of Arendt's concept of work, in particular the idea of *homo faber*, and the mechanism by which the permanence of human identity is achieved through work.

Key Points

- Work stands in opposition to nature, which is the context of labour and *animal laborans*
- Work is the result of humanity's interaction and exploitation of nature, above and beyond the interaction that is required for daily existence and survival; the sphere of action defined by work is created only by humanity
- Without this opposition, or world, between nature and work, there can be no objectivity assigned to nature
- *Homo faber* is humanity as a fabricator of objects; human thought conceives of objects, but no thought can become tangible without reification and materialization
- Reification is, basically, abstraction. Nothing is fabricated without a model of it first being conceived by the fabricator; materials must be removed from their natural environment and refined, shaped *etc.* to fulfil this purpose
- Fabricated objects have, in most instances, a utility and a market value
- Permanence is established through the relative independence of these fabricated objects from their fabricator; our identity is given stability because of their independence, durability and repeated usage
- Art, paradoxically, is the most permanent of objects, and so is responsible for much stability, according to Arendt; the lack of utility gives a work of art an aura of otherworldliness, and further removes it from the subjectivity of human life, and the market value is often incalculable

Discussion

- Why look for permanence in the durability of human-made objects when the objects of nature are much more durable and permanent?
- Must nature be an opponent to be controlled, as Arendt suggests?
- Is Arendt correct when she claims that the work of *homo faber* is overwhelmed by the sphere of labour, and so humanity is not only alienated from nature, but also from itself?
- Arendt privileges the value of work over that of labour. To what extent might this privilege be regarded as somewhat elitist or theoretical? Why is this hierarchy central to Arendt's purposes in *The Human Condition*?
- Is human identity a purely external creation rather than an innate quality?
- Comparisons to other concepts of work, labour, and alienation, *e.g.* Marxist

20. Discuss and evaluate the role that speech and power play in the *vita activa*.

This question invites a discussion and evaluation of what the conceptual and other connections are between power and speech in the *vita activa*. This may develop into a broader discussion and evaluation of Arendt's concept of the public/political sphere, and of the nature of political action itself.

Key Points

- For Arendt, the political life (*vita activa*) is essentially Aristotelian; beautiful deeds stem from the “excellence” of the participants
- Action is the highest form of relationship between individuals in a public context, the *vita activa*; it is for the benefit of all
- Political life is only possible when the necessities of life (money) are no longer time consuming
- Arendt's desire for a political class based on a meritocracy of wealth and equality amongst its members
- Speech is not merely a means of communication, but in the *vita activa* it serves to disclose the identity and qualities of the speaker
- When participants gather together, it is their presence and speech in a public realm, a realm of appearance, where the *vita activa* occurs
- Power is what keeps the realm of appearance, the public sphere, in existence; it is not the same as strength, which is a quality of individuals; rather it is a collective entity that cannot be quantified. It is actualized when word and deed are one, and is transient

Discussion

- Arendt argues that Western philosophy has devalued the *vita activa* in the benefit of the *vita contemplative*, but does Arendt's analysis perpetuate this devaluation?
- Does Arendt's political model, based on Athenian and Aristotelian concepts of the *polis*, have any relevancy or value in contemporary society?
- Though Arendt values action over theory, does she over emphasize the value of speech, particularly in its role of public self-revelation?
- Is mutual benefit the only criterion for action? Does this promote or deter corruption in the public sphere?
- Are Arendt's views relevant only to a wealthy, educated elite?

Simone de Beauvoir: *The Ethics of Ambiguity*

21. Explain and discuss de Beauvoir’s account of how adult responsibility emerges out of childhood.

This question invites an explanation and discussion of the way de Beauvoir handles the implications for the individual of the essential freedom and meaninglessness of the human condition. Answers might explore the ethical consequences of the responsibility that de Beauvoir identifies the individual as possessing.

Key Points

- The existential meaninglessness of a godless universe gives rise to responsibility; all humans have to contend with the chaos of the universe
- The lack of a source of ethical authority outside the individual gives rise to greater – not lesser – responsibility for the individual who must fashion meaning for him/herself; without God we assume a responsibility we cannot escape
- De Beauvoir uses an extended analysis of the way adult experience is conditioned by the way children find themselves embedded in a world with meaning; the so-called “serious world”
- This childhood world is not alienating however, because as children we are not yet ready for responsibility and freedom, thus childlike obedience is natural to give
- The child’s lack of responsibility allows space for creativity and ethical freedom
- Children are “mystified” by the world they inhabit, believing that their place is secure and unchangeable
- Adolescence ends this metaphysically privileged existence and anxiety begins to creep in as we are called to make moral decisions and assume responsibility in a meaningless universe
- Leaving childhood, we are called to renounce the “serious world” we inhabited as children and take on full responsibility in a meaningless world
- To treat adults as children is to commit a wrong and to attempt to stay as an adult in the child’s world is an act of bad faith
- There are material conditions that may stop an adult fully entering into responsibility, but if we are not exploited then we can be accused of having bad faith if we do not assume responsibility
- We may exploit others by being overcome by anxiety about failure and about freedom

Discussion

- Can de Beauvoir’s assumptions about, and account of, the human condition be accepted?
- Are we asked to accept too much which is simply stated rather than demonstrated?
- Is de Beauvoir treating her material from a philosophical, psychological or feminist perspective?
- The difference between ontological and ethical freedom
- To meet the challenge of freedom of responsibility we must not just acknowledge our freedom, but act upon it – is de Beauvoir persuasive?
- Our use of freedom and responsibility must take into account the situations of those around us
- Is de Beauvoir’s linking of seriousness with an evasion of responsibility convincing?
- Advantages and disadvantages of an ethical view that makes personal responsibility so central

22. Explain and discuss de Beauvoir's treatment of the individual.

This question invites an explanation and discussion of the theme of the individual and his/her relation to others. Answers may engage in different aspects of de Beauvoir's treatment in its existential, ontological and ethical dimensions.

Key Points

- The central importance of individual freedom which is exercised in a meaningless world requires acting in good faith through proper treatment of other individuals
- The individual and ambiguity
- The challenge of the human condition is how individuals get side-tracked by external pressures and make present actions dominated by future considerations
- Ethically, the individual cannot achieve freedom without insisting on and providing the means of freedom for others – both in political and economic means
- Ontologically, spontaneity is defeated by pressures from outside, the mistreatment of, and by, other individuals and by refusing to embrace the anxiety that arises when faced with a meaningless universe which requires individual responsibility to be embraced
- De Beauvoir acknowledges that the future is open but the fear of the future can affect individual development and authenticity
- Individuals are linked with others and inter-subjectivity is key in possessing spontaneous consciousness
- Notions of historical destiny are anti-individual and are unethical
- De Beauvoir seeks laws that can be framed in a way which binds individuals together; the common goal of seeking freedom is not an individualistic one but a joint enterprise taking into account situations in life
- The ethical life requires the participation of others
- Some adult individuals return to a child mentality submitting to the authority of others or submitting to notions of future destiny
- The individual and nature

Discussion

- De Beauvoir's treatment of humanity as a quasi-entity, a "we"
- The separation between the external world and the world of the individual
- The importance of the political setting for de Beauvoir
- De Beauvoir argues that violence is occasionally necessary for individual authenticity – is this justifiable?
- De Beauvoir's general treatment of violence
- Some ethical approaches encourage an exploitation of others which compromises their individuality and their freedom
- De Beauvoir terms man who rejects freedom as "serious" – is this acceptable?
- Is de Beauvoir's analysis of individual development convincing?
- Is de Beauvoir's analysis of individual choice convincing?

Charles Taylor: *The Ethics of Authenticity*

- 23. Evaluate the claim that the self fits with the aspiration to combine full moral autonomy with the recovery of community and is both expressive of the common life of its members and constitutive of their individuality.**

This question invites an evaluation of Taylor’s central notion of the self.

Key Points

- Development and realization of the self requires both individuality and community
- The fragmentation of political life endangers the realization of the self; a fragmented society is one whose members find it harder and harder to identify their political society with a community
- The actual danger is not despotic control but fragmentation – that is, a people increasingly less capable of forming a common purpose and carrying it out. Fragmentation arises when people come to see themselves more and more atomistically, *i.e.* the bonds and common interests with their fellow citizens deteriorate
- This fragmentation comes about partly through a weakening of the bonds of sympathy, partly in a self-perpetuating way, and through the failure of the democratic initiative itself
- In many different versions of the fragmentation of political life, Taylor sees a common theme of competing demands for recognition of the legitimacy or value of different identities; this “politics of recognition”, appearing in nationalism, ethnic politics, feminism and multiculturalism, is an outgrowth of the modern valuation of self and ordinary life
- A presumption of mutual respect is a useful beginning, but also a “mere ought”, unless linked to a notion of the self as, first, necessarily socially engaged rather than merely observing from an external vantage point; second, limited in its capacity for understanding by the very cultural frameworks that make its individuality and understanding possible; and, third, open to change through communicative interaction

Discussion

- There is no resolution to this dilemma in pure individualistic liberalism because of its homogenizing conception of the person and consequent incapacity to provide a sense of significant differentiation. Consequently, partial communities can be centres of value within larger politics in ways that connect members to the whole
- Relation to art; Taylor draws a parallel between the shift in concepts of the self and individualism and the movement in art from *mimesis* to creation. Art also serves as an example of how the “subjectivation” of the self does not mean that this “subjectivation” leads to narcissism and egoism
- Can the tension between the individual and the community be properly resolved?
- The Marxist idea of relating or subsuming the individual into a collective
- Examples of cultural and social variations of democracy and their functioning
- A serious attempt to engage in the cultural struggle of our time requires the promotion of a politics of democratic empowerment, which would strengthen communitarian bonds

24. Discuss and evaluate Taylor’s view that our current main task is to lift culture closer to the ideal of authenticity.

This question takes Taylor’s argument as a whole from the angle of one of its central goals, opening different possible discussions and lines of evaluation according to the source and development of authenticity.

Key Points

- Shifts of emphasis in the definition of the individual; the divorce from the medieval “Chain of Being”, the move was essentially from external definitions to an internal one based on feeling
- Cutting the individual free from long held definitions gives place to the birth of the modern concept of authenticity
- Malaises of the modern culture which threaten authenticity; individualism, disenchantment of the world, instrumental reason
- Three basic premises; (a) authenticity is truly an ideal worth espousing, (b) it is possible to establish in reason what it involves, (c) this kind of argument can make a difference in practice
- The ideal of authenticity yields the understanding of identity
- Authenticity is fundamentally dialogical
- The importance of the formation of an effective common purpose through democratic action to orientate the culture, as it is the only effective counter to the drift towards atomism and instrumentalism built into the market and bureaucratic state
- Although the institutions of a technological society don’t ineluctably impose on us an ever-deepening hegemony of instrumental reason, when left to themselves they have a tendency to push us in that direction
- The role of the horizon of significance in understanding authenticity
- The ideal of authenticity is to be realized in a society ordered by market relations; the present challenge is to combine the action and results of the market with the possibility of cultural development. We can’t abolish the market, but nor can we organize ourselves exclusively through markets

Discussion

- Taylor defends the search for authenticity as a noble tradition made possible by the Enlightenment. In modern democratic and technological societies is this search only possible for those with the means to do so?
 - Is Taylor’s opposition between moral dimensions and economical and social phenomena realistic?
 - Does Taylor successfully answer the criticism of those who maintain that the collapse of external points of self-reference must necessarily lead to a false search for authenticity?
 - The ideal of authenticity yields the understanding of identity. Living an inauthentic life, I have no self-identity. How can I then be a member of a democratic society?
 - Although Taylor states that moral authenticity is fundamentally dialogical in character, his view on authenticity, which is a main way to overcome instrumental reason, is still individualistic
 - Possibilities and limits of democratic systems to change social and cultural conflicts
 - Is Taylor being deceitful when he at once acknowledges and celebrates the plurality of the modern world, but argues against even a soft version of relativism?
 - The present situation seems to call for a complex, many-levelled struggle; intellectual, spiritual, and political, in which the debates in the public arena interlink with those in a host of institutional settings, like hospitals and schools
-