

MARKSCHEME

May 2004

PHILOSOPHY

Higher Level and Standard Level

Paper 1

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SECTION A

Core Theme: What is a “human” being?

1. (a) **What does this passage suggest about the human condition?** [3 marks]

The point of this question is to reflect on the determinant influence of social conditioning. By passively accepting the official description of a group of humans, individuals, who may well be otherwise ethical, responsible, and compassionate citizens, were turned into brutes capable of the most heinous crimes. Candidates should question the extent to which freedom and autonomy can be exercised within the context of a repressive political regime, and how their suppression affects our human condition.

- (b) **Compare and contrast *two* different views of the human condition.** [12 marks]

While the existentialists have claimed that humans have total freedom to decide the meaning of their lives, the social behaviourists (Skinner *et al*) have argued that we are determined in such a way as to feel free while we are totally controlled. Between these extremes, there are other arguments, such as Aristotle’s, where it is recognized that one is not acting freely while under compulsion. The passage, however, suggests that humans can wilfully participate in the creation or maintenance of a twisted worldview that purposefully reduces some humans to sub-humans, allowing that they be denied the fundamental characteristics attached to human nature. This suggests a mixture of social conditioning with a deliberate choice of worldview.

Additionally, candidates could explore other theories, for example, theories of equality: Why can’t the powerful simply abrogate all moral obligations to the others?

- (c) **Based on this passage, discuss the influences that form our perception of the human condition.** [15 marks]

- This passage makes reference to the Holocaust. It is easy to find other references, for example with the use of gender in language, and the position of women in society.
- Language games: the role and value some words have in different contexts.
- If a language does not have the equivalent for a word, that particular element cannot be found in that culture. For example, Japanese has no word for the feeling of guilt (self reproach), though it has one for shame (guilt in the eyes of others), thus Japanese do not experience guilt in the way a Westerner would. How do the limitations of the language we use form and limit our understanding of the human condition?
- Can a person be reduced to being a mechanical instrument of destruction at the hands of the State? How does this affect them? More plainly, how can they sleep at night, knowing that they have committed atrocities ordered and condoned by authority?
- Do humans really have autonomy, or is autonomy only a possibility within certain political regimes, otherwise humans are only slaves to the state.
- How can anyone find meaning in such situations?
- Candidates must present a philosophical discussion, not a psychological one.

2. (a) **What philosophical issue about the person does this picture suggest?** [3 marks]

I am what I read. The picture can be interpreted narrowly and literally, or it can be interpreted more broadly to mean I am what my circumstances have made me, though this would need to be qualified to somehow give a special importance to the printed material. It does question to what extent my dreams, aspirations, imagination, emotions, and worldviews are shaped by the reading I do? It can also mean that I am a thinking person: the self, who I am, is changed by the influences.

- (b) **Compare and contrast *two* different approaches to the issue identified above.** [12 marks]

Responses should give any two approaches of the mind/body theory. Reading is an action performed by the eyes, decoded by the mind, stored in memory, and can alter what could have been a different set of actions. Since I do not necessarily choose what I read (because censorship may limit the availability of reading material), some is imposed by the educational system. Can we argue that reading forms the self or, as advocates of literacy will do, that literacy, hence freedom, is the door to freedom? Indeed, reading shapes my emotions and dreams. However, it is equally hard to defend a strict behaviourism if through reading I free myself to think what I want. Other approaches would also be appropriate: individual vs. community, culture/tradition vs. individual originality.

- (c) **Discuss the importance of reading in understanding who “the self” is.** [15 marks]

- The self identifies itself in contrast with others, in measuring differences between oneself and others. Literature offers a wealth of characters to identify with and thus broaden the realm of experiences that we engage in. We can discover new emotions, new fears, and form new desires.
- Candidates should make reference to knowledge by analogy, but, perhaps a reverse analogy: I experience Anna Karenina’s despair at the impossibility of living the life she had dreamt of, therefore I know that given my circumstances, I am desperate.
- Others - be they real persons or characters in a novel - are as a mirror of my self, a mirror through which I can observe and analyse who I am.
- Others put a limitation on my aspirations through duties they impose on me. Can characters in a novel do the same thing?
- Discussion around the importance of reading non-fiction (philosophy, history) is also appropriate.

SECTION B

Optional Theme 1: Political Philosophy

3. “People invent rights when they want power.” Critically discuss.

The point of this question is to allow candidates to explore the connections between the concepts of rights and power.

Key points

- The terms that need to be defined are “right” and “power”. “Power” can be defined as an ability to achieve something. Some philosophers like Foucault argue that all social relations are systems of power.
- Right could be defined as “a justified entitlement or claim on others” (H J McCloskey). It is possible to make further distinctions to types of rights. For example: legal rights and moral/human/natural rights; negative and positive rights, liberty, power and immunity rights.
- The idea that “people invent rights” implies that rights, properly speaking, do not exist but are only a rhetorical means to gain power.

Discussion

- Justification of rights is one possible line of discussion. The justification of rights can take many forms. Examples are: natural or human rights theories and utilitarian theories. Alternatively it could be argued that rights are a rhetorical means to achieve power as it is suggested in the question.
- The connection between rights and power may be another area of discussion – the line of discussion would depend on how the terms are defined.
- It can also be pointed out that not all rights claims are for human good. There are claims for animal rights too.
- A comparison with Nietzsche’s view on power/rights.

4. It is wrong to remove a democratically elected dictator by force?

The point of this question is to allow candidates to make an ethical judgment about civil disobedience and explore when such disobedience is justified. The question also invites discussion on concepts of democracy, dictatorship and force.

Key points

- The terms that need to be defined are “democracy”, “dictator” and “force”.
- Democracy means the “rule of the people”. This applies to both direct and representative forms of democracy. The role of party politics and the questions “who took the decision” and “whose interest the decision serves” are important considerations.
- A dictator is a leader who rules a country with absolute power usually by force and coercion. The use of force denotes making others do what one wills.
- The question calls for an ethical judgment and an argument to support it; it would be good if the ethical theory behind this judgment was made explicit.
- It is useful for responses to give examples of democratically elected dictators, such as Hitler. He was made chancellor even though he maintained that he would bring democracy in Germany to an end.

Discussion

- Responses could discuss whether the removal of a democratically elected dictator is a case of civil disobedience.
- It is possible for responses to discuss “the paradox of democracy” *i.e.* is it right for the individual to follow the majority decision even when that person disagrees with it.
- Why are democracies more desirable than other systems of government? Like Plato one could argue against democracy, or, like Rousseau, suggest that the rule of the people must be seen in the light of “general will” and common good in order to create a functional state.
- What are the acceptable limits of the use of power by a democratically elected leader?

Optional Theme 2: Knowledge

5. Do you agree that “perceiving is more than believing; it is knowing”. Why?

This question invites candidates to discuss critical issues in empiricism: perception and realism. There is scope for candidates to explain a range of empirical philosophies and how well these ideas account for knowing the external world. A distinction between believing and knowing in the question also invites discussion as to the merits, or otherwise, of this distinction.

Key points

- Naïve realism (the world as I know it through my senses **is** as my senses tell me. There is no mediation between the world and me, and the world and its objects exist independently of me.)
- Representative theories of perception: what is common to these theories are
 - (i) perceiving an object means I necessarily causally interact with that object
 - (ii) the information acquired in perception is indirect. I only have direct knowledge of my experience or sensation of the object.Examples are Hume, Berkeley, Russell, Adverbial theories, Phenomenalism.
- Sense experience as content, sense-data, ideas and impressions; phenomenology
- The criteria for knowing as opposed to believing: what further evidence/reasons do I need? what are my tests for truth?

Discussion

- If my perceptions are mistaken, then am I condemned to an illusory knowledge of the world? Does it matter?
- British (and other) empiricists could be discussed: Russell’s knowledge by acquaintance and by description, Berkeley’s Idealism, Logical Positivism and verificationism.
- Where do the laws of logic/grammar come from? From perception/experience? Are they self evident, or are these purely a consequence of the language we use?
- Are there other methods or faculties that can lead to knowledge, or is knowledge exclusively via perceptions?

6. “All the Laws of Science are based on assumptions that Science cannot prove.” Assess.

This question invites discussion about the status, value, and nature of scientific propositions, in particular scientific laws. There is also scope for a discussion about the fundamental assumptions of science and scientific method.

Key points

- Causality, prediction and induction as characteristics of scientific laws
- The laws of science as certain and infallible propositions
- Laws of science as falsifiable propositions: according to Popper, scientific propositions must be expressed in a way that they can be falsified not verified
- Science as a consensus driven enterprise rather than an “objective” truth seeking one.

Discussion

- Do scientific laws and propositions prove anything or merely redescribe phenomena? *i.e.* what is the content of a scientific proposition?
- Do the laws of science dictate its methods, or is the opposite true?
- The value of the truth of a law within various frameworks: as a falsifiable proposition, or as a proposition whose truth lies in its consensus; verificationism, correspondence, and coherence theories of truth.
- What are the laws of science? How are they determined to be laws? Compared to what?
- What consequences would follow if it turned out that the statement was true? Would that make science worthless? Could philosophy then come to the rescue of science, as, for example, Kant thought?

Optional Theme 3: Philosophy of Culture

7. **“Because we have put ourselves in our own “zoo”, we find it difficult to break out.” Critically discuss the notion of culture that this quotation implies.**

The point of this question is to allow candidates to explore the concept of culture in relation to the idea of a “zoo”. The question also allows discussion on the limits of cultural conditioning and individual liberty.

Key points

- The quote implies that “we” as humans create our own “zoo” (culture) which imprisons and represses us. Examples of repressive cultures, such as patriarchal ones, could be mentioned.
- In “the zoo” animals lose their natural freedom and instincts; they are tamed and put on display. The zoo, as a kind of prison, implies an idea of freedom and a will to break out. The quote implies that humans want to break out, and that it is possible, but difficult.
- Both creating the “zoo” and the “breaking out” are collective efforts since “we” do it; that is, unless “we” is understood in the passive tense.

Discussion

- One could contest the idea of “the zoo” as analogous to “culture”.
- Why do humans create repressive cultures? Perhaps it serves some function of individual development as Freud has argued.
- What qualities must an individual have to break out? Do they, in the last analysis, define themselves in relation to the very culture they rebel against? If this is true, maybe the idea of a truly free individual is an impossible utopia. It is perhaps not meaningful to talk about human beings without a cultural context.
- Does the idea of freedom prove that we are not completely conditioned by culture? If this is so, what is the source of the dissident thinking? Is it perhaps our “animal nature” or simply coming up with an antithesis of the prevailing cultural paradigm?
- Candidates should be rewarded for questioning the extent to which by breaking out of culture we might leave behind essential aspects of what we consider as being human.

8. “We play different melodies, but we all play the piano.” Is this an appropriate metaphor to describe how culture limits our communication?

The point of this question is to allow candidates to explore the concept of culture and the extent of the influence culture has on our communication and use of symbols. It also asks for critical evaluation if the idea in the quotation is analogous to cultural limits of communication.

Key points

- The question assumes that culture limits our communication but it also enables it.
- The terms that need to be defined are “culture” and “communication”. All our communication is based on the use of symbols that represent ideas or things. Language and art are examples of symbolic means of communication.
- Culture may limit communication in the sense that symbols have meaning in a cultural context; however, it is possible to develop new symbols, symbolic systems and cultures. For example, mathematicians have developed new symbols to express particular mathematical ideas.
- The distinction between a melody and the instrument (piano).

Discussion

- Is the quotation analogous to the limits that culture places on our communication?
- Assuming that analogy exists candidates need to explore in what sense it exists. For example do “melodies” stand for “symbols”?
- Is it possible to communicate outside the context of culture? Could it, for example be possible to create a “private language”? Is the idea of “a private language” contradictory because language refers to communication with others?
- It is perhaps possible to communicate simple ideas ostensively (by showing) without the use of symbols.
- Is it possible to communicate ideas without using symbols, for example ostensively?
- If culture limits our communication, are there any original ideas?

Optional Theme 4: World Philosophies

9. Explain and discuss the meaning that “knowing your true self” has in Buddhism and Hinduism.

The intention of this question is for candidates to explain what is meant by self knowledge and how it is achieved, and what the metaphysical or moral consequences are of knowing your true self within Hinduism and Buddhism.

Key points

- In Hinduism, self-knowledge is essential to ending the illusion (*maya*) and the suffering of existence, and finding the eternal and unchanging (*Brahman*). The liberation of the ultimate Self (*atman*) from the bonds of embodied existence is achieved by full knowledge of this embodied existence. The concern is on how these bonds come about (*karma*).
- Unlike Hinduism, for Buddhism selflessness (*anatman*) is essential in achieving “emptiness” (nirvana), so self-knowledge is knowledge that there is no essential self, apart from a projector of desires onto the reality of existence. “I” am not what has or undergoes the process of psychophysical change; rather those processes themselves constitute the “I”.
- For self-knowledge in Hinduism, samkhya (analysis) proposes that a careful understanding of the organizing principles of nature is the means for the true self to disidentify with the mind and body. Meditation and study of the Upanishads are ways to achieve this. In Buddhism, adoption of a ‘no-self’ doctrine is the key to awareness that the self is a delusion.

Discussion

- A comparison of *atman/anatman* to the concepts of Soul and self knowledge in Aquinas, Descartes, Kant...
- The metaphysical assumptions and implications of the illusion/delusion nature of human existence in Hinduism/Buddhism
- Must there be some goal in self knowledge?
- How does self knowledge determine my moral obligations?
- Is it possible to lose the self by means other than ritual such as masses, Whirling Dervishes?
- Avicenna had an Aristotelian conception of the self *i.e.* plant, animal, human (intellect) soul. The intellect is an immaterial faculty that in use actually becomes the universal it contemplates. In the Sufi tradition of Islam, the loss of self was a means to union with God.

10. Is it fair to characterize Hinduism and Buddhism as being preoccupied with the development of the individual at the expense of the community, while Islam is preoccupied with the community at the expense of the development of the individual?

The two principle issues in this question are for candidates to identify the sources of moral authority, and the subsequent duties that follow from these sources within the three World Philosophies. An evaluation of the characterization made in the question is expected.

Key points

- In Islam, the authority of the community (the father in the family and Imam in theological matters) and the duties to the community such as charity, compassion and loyalty; the theocratic nature of Islam and role of Imams in socio-political issues.
- For Hindus, society is a realm which is defined primarily by obligation to others.
- Islam's fundamental ethical relationship is between the individual and Allah. It is an individual and their deeds that are judged on Judgment Day.
- In Buddhism the paradigm of virtue, the *Bodhisattva*, is the enlightened being who is compassionately engaged with others in the here and now.
- The common characteristic that rejection of everyday life (priests, monks and gurus) is the path to moral and spiritual awakening or salvation.

Discussion

- Are there other ways to characterise the ethical concerns of these faiths? or is the description accurate?
- The benefits, or otherwise, of the role of ritual (solitary and communal) in the development of a moral being.
- Are theocracies and individual liberty mutually exclusive?

Optional Theme 5: Nature, Work and Technology

11. **“The paradox of work is that although it enriches our lives by giving them meaning, it also leads to someone or something being exploited.” Analyse and evaluate this claim.**

This question makes two claims about the nature of work: it gives our lives a meaning but is necessarily exploitative. The candidates are expected to examine these two assumptions explicit in the claim and come to some position on the merits, or otherwise, of the two assumptions and their relationship, if any.

Key points

- How work enriches our life: self-esteem, material security, as an element of ritual, as a member of a community, as a vocation.
- Exploitation of the individual and others; relationships are value based on economic exchange.
- Exploitation of nature: as something that is inevitable and necessary; nature as a commodity; nature as Other.
- The nature of work: is it necessarily social? Must all work have an economic value?

Discussion

- Is this a paradox only if work is viewed as a personally and socially enriching activity, and not an activity that is private and without tangible results? Or if interactions with nature and people in the context of work are necessarily exploitative?
- What are the dynamics of exploitation? Does finding a job in a competitive market economy constitute exploitation?
- If any interaction between work and nature is degrading or exploitative, then is the only morally sustainable social structure one of self sufficiency?
- Would a worker controlled (or democratic) work structure improve the relationships between people and nature?

12. “Technology is a false friend; it enslaves when it pretends to liberate, alienates when it pretends to be democratic.” Evaluate.

The point of this question is for candidates to explore the role and nature of technology. As the question is a statement, candidates are expected to frame their responses in the context of a discussion specifically, though not exclusively, framed by the terms in the statement.

Key points

- Concepts of technology: as a tool, as a necessary expression of human nature
- Technology as an enslaver: higher productivity for the same payment, economic and political advantage of those with technology over those without
- Technology as a liberator: from menial and dangerous tasks, improved health and longevity, a way of structuring work to complement other commitments
- Technology as an alienator: over-specialization and exclusivity in the use of technology (creating a permanent bank of under- and un- employed), the knowledge that is consequential from its use is often “privatized” or patented (restricts access to the poor).
- Technology and democracy: the intrusiveness of government and corporations into our personal lives (data collection, personal profiles via credit card use)

Discussion

- If technology is a natural extension or expression of human nature, then why is it perceived as a problem?
- Even if technology enslaves and alienates, then do the benefits outweigh the disadvantages and intrusions?
- The economic and political consequences of technology gaps: does it result in entrenching class and knowledge (power) distinctions? A cause for revolution?

Optional Theme 6: Philosophy of The Arts

13. Can a used school bag displayed in an art exhibition be legitimately considered a work of art? Examine and evaluate.

The question invites candidates to reflect on the conditions required from an object to become a work of art. The discussion can present various aspects of the issue, including the following.

Key points

- Can objects that have direct utility be works of art? A comparison with everyday objects of other cultures can serve to analyse the question. Objects that were originally made for other purposes in other cultures are now considered to be works of art. These objects were not used “aesthetically,” but, for other purposes.
- The implied conception of art can be approached from a subjective or an objective perspective.
- In a subjective view there are no objective standards to judge a work of art. Each person is the best judge of what art is.
- An objective view of art holds the view that there are objective standards of some kind in terms of which art can be judged such as balance, proportion, forms and beauty for example.
- The power of the artist and the artistic establishment in defining what counts as art.

Discussion

- Art as a social construct is dependent on a variety of contexts: historical, cultural, political and economic. The importance of the context is so decisive that almost anything can be a work of art depending on its influence.
- Art can be defined and judged only by criteria specific to art as such. According to this view contextual factors have little place in aesthetic appreciation and therefore a school bag should not be considered a work of art.
- Works of art show us how to look at the world, how to understand ourselves, who we are, and what our world is like. If the exhibition of a schoolbag helps us to fulfil that purpose, it is a work of art.
- Artists see things in a unique way and creatively find innovative ways of communicating that to us.

14. Critically assess this claim: “Art exists in the realm of contemplation and imagination. If art becomes an incentive to action it loses its true character, becoming propaganda and pornography.”

This question covers themes about the artist and his or her intentions, the public, the way in which it looks at works of art and the relations between art and society.

The question is focused on the aesthetic experience. What distinguishes aesthetic experience from every other kind of experience is something variously described as detachment, disinterestedness, and distance.

Key points

- Our ordinary view of the world is self-interested, pragmatic, and utilitarian. The aesthetic attitude is the exception to this rule, as it appears in the relatively rarer moments when we relax our strong survival mechanism and experience objects simply for the joy of experiencing them.
- If the role of the artist is considered, the following points can be discussed: (a) freedom and obedience to rules, (b) responsibility: to self, to a cause, to moral, political or social ends, (c) the artist as an agent of stability or change.
- Responses must identify the assumptions.

Discussion

- The discussion can for instance, analyse what the proper function is of the arts: to capture a perception of reality, to teach or uplift the mind, to express emotion, to create beauty, to bind a community together or to praise a spiritual power. Given that imagination could refer to the work itself, it can also analyse the nature of the work of art.
- To underline only the contemplation aspect is to disregard other essential dimensions of art, for instance its power to shape public opinion.
- Why should art not have a religious, moral or political message? Art is by its own right a way to transform the “reality” (nature and society).
- The claim is not well balanced; it does not take into account the complex factors interwoven in a work of art.

Optional Theme 7: Philosophy of Religion

15. Compare and contrast the view of religion as “a leap into absurdity” to the view of religion as cultural indoctrination.

This question seeks to engage candidates in a discussion on the nature of religion and on its acquisition by an individual. Recognition that cultures influence the faith one takes for one’s own is expected; model the cultural patterns society revolves around (examples of this: the Christmas season in Christian countries, the Ramadan period in Muslim countries, *etc.*); offer means of gaining societal approval, yet recognize that true belief, assuming there is true self, must spring from another source. Comment is also expected on the danger of blindly following the dictates of religion as indoctrination.

Key points

- What does it mean to “leap into absurdity”? Possible references to Kierkegaard’s theory of the religious stage of life.
- Pascal’s silent God, who does not respond to those who seek him. In the light of this statement by a profoundly religious man, what can we make of the subjective truth proclaimed by believers who acknowledge the irrationality of their belief?
- How do we acquire a religious belief? The religious education of the child by the parents, family, and the church play a critical role. Can one become religious if raised outside of religion? How does it happen?
- Conversions of people having a near death experience: having seen the “light”, they associate it with God, and the afterlife. What value can we give to these? Other reasons for religious conversions can also be discussed.

Discussion

- Throughout history, there have been individuals persecuted for their religion, who chose the pillory rather than denying their religion. Given these, can we conclude religion is a subjective reality? Liberal democracies recognize that religious belief is one of the cornerstones of the personality and respect it. In theocracies, individuals are not offered a choice of religion.
- Choosing to believe is, for those who have not lived a life-transforming religious experience, a wager, as Pascal pointed out. Yet, once the choice is made to engage in the pursuit of the truth of the belief, what will, if anything, convince the person that the choice is good?
- Is it in society’s interest to promote religious belief? The Nietzschean analysis of the lies between cultural values and priestly powers points out the benefits a certain elite can derive from the promotion of faith.
- Faith as the shrine of moral values that maintain the societal structure intact? A Marxist perspective on faith.

16. In order to believe in God is it necessary that we conceive God as having human characteristics?

This question wants candidates to examine the role and the importance of the anthropomorphic God figure in the act of believing. Do we need a figure to direct our thoughts in order to believe? Can a formless, metaphysical notion of Spirit inspire believers enough that they will be able to withstand attacks on their faith? The characteristics of the anthropomorphic God inspire awe, respect, and fear – three powerful emotions that bind the believer to religion.

Key points

- Images and representation of God have been held consistently in the Christian faith, but other faiths have different representations; Hinduism has gods with human and animal forms (*e.g.* Ganesha: the elephant head on a human baby's body); or no representation (Islam).
- The Freudian attack on the anthropomorphic image of God as the exaggerated projection of the father image.
- The human characteristics of God, as compassionate, loving, forgiving, forever present and listening make for a compelling image, particularly attractive to those in need as opposed to those whose life is full and satisfying. Is this image the result of unsatisfied needs?
- Would a non-anthropomorphic image yield the same power of attraction to believers?

Discussion

- Can one know the Freudian psychoanalytical analysis of the anthropomorphic image of God and still believe in it? How could one reconcile this paradox? Would the need to believe be so strong as to obliterate rationality?
- Could the anthropomorphic image of God have been a useful religious tool with non-educated populations, with children, while it becomes obsolete with the growth of educated populations?
- If so, would this signify the death of God or simply the mutation of its image into another more sophisticated form or nature? Would it still be belief in the same religion?
- How fundamental are the image and representation of God to a religion? What is the spectrum of tolerable interpretations, if any, of its description?

Optional Theme 8: Theories and Problems of Ethics

17. People want to live a good life. Should it be a morally good life?

Starting from what people usually want, the question asks for the realization of a moral dimension as a possible (necessary) part of human realization. Simultaneously, it asks for the justification of moral life too.

Key points

- The question brings out the different meanings in the word good and in the concept of good life. Aristotle pointed out that when we talk about something being good or bad we usually mean whether it satisfies the purpose or function for which it was made.
- This “means to an end” analysis of the good leads to happiness as the final good.
- A good life, according to this view, is one which develops to the fullest the inherent capacities of each person which includes the moral dimension. Living according to moral standards is an important part of human nature.

Discussion

- The question connects two important issues in moral philosophy: what is the best way for a person to live and whether this “good life” should be a morally good life or, for instance, simply a self-centred life of pleasure and fun.
- One possible line of answer is that we could and should live a moral life because being moral is being reasonable. Morality is reason. In the end, the moral person is happier than the immoral person. Lines of answer based on different approaches, such as hedonistic, utilitarian and deontological can be developed.
- Arguments contrasting opposite views such as self-interest versus the interests of others, or doing the right thing versus doing the good thing are appropriate too.
- A critic of a life based on the ideals of reason and morality from a Nietzschean or other perspectives can be adequate as well.

18. Using an example from applied ethics, evaluate the grounds on which we should justify our moral judgments.

The question, deliberately open to the development of many different lines of argument, refers to the nature of moral judgments and metaethical questions. Answers should identify a main issue, show its ethical nature and analyse the limits and possibilities of different ways of moral justification: rational, emotional, social authority and so on.

Key points

- When we decide on ethical issues we make explicit or implicit moral judgments. The question asks for the ways in which it is possible to justify moral judgments, and, simultaneously, whether it is possible to base morality only on a kind of absolute decision without any other justification.
- The question is also concerned with metaethics, which deals with ethical discourse itself. In this case the issue refers to the legitimacy of the values or criteria, that can be established as ground for judgments on specific moral issues.
- Topics of biomedical or environmental ethics, the discussion about animal rights, or of any other particular ethically relevant issue can be analysed.

Discussion

- Responses can focus on the problem as to whether only a pure decision can legitimately be the ultimate basis for morality. Good answers should clearly indicate the moral nature of the issue under discussion.
 - Good answers should focus on the main issues intended in the question, which are not, for instance, whether moral values are relative or universal, subjective or objective. If responses introduce these issues, they should clearly show their relevance to the question or to the arguments developed in the answer.
 - The analysis of the issue can lead, among other possibilities, to the problem of conflicting rules. We need some way to rank our rules in order of priority, or perhaps we need another rule that tells us how to choose one rule in preference to another.
 - In the end we can claim that a moral judgment is only a decision predicated on non-examined assumptions.
-