

# **MARKSCHEME**

**November 2006**

**PHILOSOPHY**

**Higher Level and Standard Level**

**Paper 2**

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1. **Lao Tzu: *Tao Te Ching***

**Critically discuss the relation between the permanent *Tao* (*Ch'ang Tao*) and the forms of *Tao* that can be expressed in words and communicated to others.**

This question invites an exploration of the relation between words and realities and between worldly principles and a supreme principle. It focuses attention on the ineffability of the permanent *Tao* (*Ch'ang Tao*) in the face of various concrete teachings and precepts about it.

**Key Points**

- The word *Tao* displays a variety of meanings in the text itself
- The word *Tao* cannot serve as a name (*ming*)
- Naming indicates possession, ranking, knowledge which are not applicable to the permanent *Tao*
- The *Tao* remains fundamentally unknown
- Perceptible qualities, named qualities are neither permanent nor supreme
- Named qualities indicate arbitrary, artificial social values; the true *Tao* is formless and nameless
- The permanent *Tao* is more than a principle, it is a reality
- *Tao* indicates an unchanging unity underlying a shifting plurality, a reality giving rise to every form of life.

**Discussion**

- Is the 'dark profundity' of the text an intentional device or does it highlight the complexity and obscurity of the subject matter?
- What can we say about the *Ch'ang Tao* without compromising its supreme position? Must we be able to say anything about it? Must we be able to name it?
- How does the text understand the relation between permanence and impermanence?
- Can we ever avoid the necessity of 'naming'?
- Is it possible to understand fully the *Tao* or the *Ch'ang Tao*?
- Why can neither ordinary senses nor words grasp the central notions of the text?
- Is the *Ch'ang Tao* the 'wordless doctrine' while the *Tao* constitutes perceptible values?
- Is it possible to penetrate doctrines that claim to go beyond ordinary rational discourse?

2. **Confucius: *The Analects***

**Critically discuss the claim that man seems to be innately good yet goodness seems impossible to attain.**

The question invites a discussion of the dual perspective that man is innately good, yet the effect of his actions in the world results in widely differing qualities being displayed.

**Key points**

- The qualities of this innate goodness, *Li* (ideal moral standards), *Jen* (the silver rule is treating others as you wished to be treated) and *Chun Tzu* (the behaviour of the true gentleman)
- How this innate goodness could be developed through particular deliberate actions and pursuits ranging from self reflection, to chariot driving or writing
- The realization that other behaviours may well result in the inability of the person to develop into the true ‘gentleman’
- Goodness is natural. If so, then why can it not be achieved?

**Discussion**

- The way of developing these innate qualities is within each man. Therefore, is it an issue of self-discovery?
- Is this pursuit more an emotional journey rather than an intellectual and/or rational one? Should hearts be changed rather than minds? The possible spiritual nature of man might mean that metaphysical qualities have to play a part in this possible transformation
- All men wish or want to go towards goodness when the complex environment draws them away and seems more attractive
- Confucius himself admitted that even he could not attain his ideal. Might this mean that his fundamental claims are misplaced and set on the wrong foundation of man being innately good?
- Confucius might have displayed doubt as in the actual text the word ‘nearly’ appears. This suggests that not all men have this innate goodness or the skills to manifest it.
- Is the dual perspective of man justified?

**3. Plato: *The Republic***

**“Plato’s views of the ideal, perfect society and the character and place of the individual in that society provide standards according to which the problems of any existing society can be remedied.” Critically discuss this statement.**

This question asks for an exploration of Plato’s view of the ideal, perfect state and the corresponding view of the character of the individual. At the same time, the question invites reflection on the paradigm set by Plato’s ideal society *vis-à-vis* any existing society.

**Key Points**

- The ideal, perfect state; the ideal, perfect individual character
- Justice in the state and justice in the individual
- Wisdom, courage and self-discipline distributed in the state and individual
- The organic theory of the state; ‘one person/one job’ principle
- Personal freedom versus social obligation
- The philosopher-ruler and the education-training programme as the only remedies to the problems of existing states
- Only in the just society are individuals happy; only genuinely happy individuals constitute a just society
- The notion of total and undivided commitment to one societal role as constitutive of the ideal political situation
- Tension between individual interests and social interests.

**Discussion**

- How and why does Plato develop his views of the ideal state and in the individual as he does?
- Why does Plato demand the full, impartial commitment of each individual to his or her assigned profession?
- Does Plato justify his view that the just, perfect society, governed by the philosopher-ruler, forms the only standard by which the problems of an existing society can be remedied?
- Is subordination to the state always a bad thing?
- Is it possible to achieve a just society as Plato describes it?
- Is Plato’s vision of society founded upon questionable metaphysical assumptions?

**4. Aristotle: *The Nicomachean Ethics***

**Explain and discuss why happiness is central to living an ethical life.**

This question investigates Aristotle's concept of happiness and its role in living an ethical life. Aristotle's account was intended to show how best to achieve happiness, which necessarily entailed living according to virtue.

**Key points**

- Happiness is a central term employed by Aristotle – the concept of *eudaimonia*; happiness is an end in itself and we aim for it for its own sake; happiness thus is the highest good
- Happiness – or flourishing – plays the integral part in the ethical life and circumstances have a role to play, making precise definitions impossible (in contrast to Plato's absolutism)
- Aristotle's notion of virtue
- Happiness requires living according to virtue, which is a disposition ensuring the virtuous person acts in the right ways
- Aristotle asserts that in order for man to flourish, humans should live according to reason, having the correct intellectual virtue to help live the morally virtuous life
- Pleasure is an accompaniment to living the ethical life; the virtuous person gets pleasure from acting in accordance with virtue, thus morally.

**Discussion**

- Aristotle's separation of pleasure from happiness is different from modern notions of fulfilment
- Danger of cultural relativism and subjectivity in notions of happiness and virtue
- Naturalistic fallacy whereby moral categories are subsumed into natural features of living
- Happiness as the highest goal a human can reach is not so much what humans ought to aim for as what humans actually aim for as a *telos*.

**5. Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae*  
Analyze and evaluate Aquinas’s account of the will.**

The question gives an opportunity to explain Aquinas’s account of the will regarding its structure, relation to other powers, function and meaning. The discussion might move to free choice as well.

**Key points**

- The will desires something of necessity. The will does not desire anything of coercive necessity, because necessity of coercion is altogether contrary to the will. But necessity of end is not contrary to the will when the end cannot be attained except in one way
- The will necessarily adheres to the last end, but it does not desire of necessity whatsoever it desires, because many goods are of a contingent nature
- The will is not a higher power than the intellect. If intellect and will are considered with regard to themselves, then the intellect is the higher power
- From the fact that the object of the will occurs in something higher than that in which occurs the object of the intellect, relatively and by comparison with something else, the will is higher than the intellect sometimes
- The will is a power which is not further differentiated because it regards good under the common notion of good.

**Discussion**

- Free choice is the result of human will
- Human action refers to contingent things, therefore it can choose between contrary things.
- We choose because we desire, therefore ‘free will’ is the result of ‘appetites’
- The necessary desire directed to God seems to be a contradiction in Aquinas’s account of will and free choice.

## 6. Descartes: *Meditations*

**Discuss and evaluate the role the existence of God plays in Descartes’s account of knowledge, certainty and doubt in the *Meditations*.**

This question concerns Descartes’s move, after establishing the centrality of *res cogitans* to certainty, to establishing God as the guarantor of truth and lack of deception. (See Mediations III and IV.) The question arises as to how central the existence of God is to establishing Descartes’s area of certain knowledge.

### Key Points

- Descartes moves from *res cogitans* to establishing God then to talking about *res extensa* – how convincing is the flow of his arguing?
- God guarantees logical certainty
- The idea of God’s infinite, perfect nature could not originate from a finite, imperfect being; God must be the cause of the idea and thus must necessarily exist
- Desires arise from an understanding that we lack something; we would not be aware that we lack perfection or certainty unless there were a more perfect being actualising those things we lack
- We cannot doubt the existence of God, for we have a clear and direct perception of God’s existence
- The potentiality argument and Descartes’s dismissal of it in Meditation III
- The idea of God must be innate in Descartes, created by God in him
- God does not deceive because of his perfect nature (Meditation IV).

### Discussion

- ‘Cartesian Circle’ problem of the clear and distinct perception argument leading to the conclusion that God exists, while God’s existence guarantees the certainty of clear and distinct perceptions
- Today we no longer pursue proofs of God’s existence as integral to faith – see Kierkegaard’s ‘leap into absurdity’
- Is the conception of good, power and existence by Descartes persuasive?
- In a post-religious society can anything be salvaged of Descartes’s thinking without the assumptions contained in it about God?



## 7. Locke: *Second Treatise on Government*

**Critically evaluate Locke's claim that the true basis of legitimate government can serve as the justification for rebellion.**

This question explores the relationship between genuine political authority and the grounds for legitimate rebellion. It invites a discussion of the relationships among certain central concepts of Locke's political philosophy: natural rights, protection of natural rights, social contract, conditions for the establishment of political authority, functions of a legitimate state, conditions for legitimate and justified rebellion.

### Key points

- The state of nature; natural rights; equality and natural law
- Absence of political institutions and positive law; enforcement of the executive power of the law of nature
- Formation of the community: the social contract and the de-privatisation of the executive power of the natural law
- Formation of civil society: establishment on trust of formally constituted authority; the commonwealth
- Trust as a factor by which legitimate authority exists
- Revolution and rebellion founded on a breach of trust; change in those who govern; change in the political institutions
- Specific conditions for rebellion.

### Discussion

- Is rebellion justified when the government fails to enforce the laws of nature?
- Is rebellion justified when the government fails to further the common good?
- Is rebellion justified when the government violates the common trust?
- Is rebellion justified when the government fails to act within the bonds of positive law?
- Is Locke concerned with rebellion or with civil disobedience?
- What exactly constitutes a political rebellion or revolution?
- What is the difference between outright rebellion and a search for political change?
- Is Locke's position a plausible position? Is it relevant to contemporary political circumstances? Is it favourable to democracy?
- Is rebellion a right or an obligation in Locke's perspective?

**8. Hume: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding***  
**To what extent does the claim that we can only know ‘general facts’ limit knowledge to mathematics and science?**

This question invites an exploration of Hume’s account of knowledge in relation to mathematics and science. It provides an opportunity for judgements to be made as to whether Hume is justified in limiting knowledge to the fields of science and mathematics and consequently excluding areas such as ethics, theology and metaphysics.

**Key Points**

- The issue that he rejects a necessary connection between cause and effect means that we can only have knowledge of ‘general facts’ arrived at by deductive inference – mathematical propositions
- Our knowledge is limited to impressions and ideas built from them but not from the actual external world
- Hume’s conclusion rests upon the view that anything not founded in abstract reasoning or experimental reasoning has no foundation to become a source of knowledge
- Such scepticism leads to a dead end and excludes a wealth of human experience and activity.

**Discussion**

- Does the rejection of inductive knowledge entail the rejection of the context-giving rise to a claim to knowledge? Since Hume does explore different types of knowledge, why does he not entertain the difference between ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ knowledge?
- Questions can be raised as to whether Hume is sound in concluding that ideas are built up from impressions. Does he really understand the difference between an image and a concept or fleeting sensation and a complex universal mental construct?
- The problem of the private world of impressions might be developed and the consequence of limited or no communication if humans would not have a common world
- If we have mental constructs then is it based on our usage and an acceptance of something more than his basic premise?
- The questioning of the necessary connection between cause and effect
- Could Hume have envisaged that some mathematical claims were/are not deductive but intuitive?
- The possible consequence Hume’s ‘limited knowledge world’ has on the expansion of human experience. Is it in keeping with the everyday world?

9. **Rousseau: *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality and Social Contract***  
**Analyze and discuss Rousseau's idea that freedom is not a product of every climate, and is not within the reach of all people.**

The question asks for an evaluation of Rousseau's idea which might challenge the notion of the universality of freedom. Answers can refer to the specific depictions of climatic and, in general, geographical influences on social institutions or might discuss more general political implications.

**Key points**

- In every climate there are natural causes which condition the form of government.
- Under every government throughout the world the public person consumes, but does not produce. What s/he consumes comes from the work of members of the public. The civil society can maintain itself only so long as the product of men's labour is in excess of their needs
- The amount of this surplus is not the same in all countries. The relation of product to subsistence depends, among other factors, on the fertility of the climate
- The use of the surplus might be related to its applications. All governments are not of the same nature: some are less voracious than others. In free states everything is used to serve the common interest; in monarchies public and private resources are reciprocal, one increases and the other diminishes
- Natural conditions imposed by the climate are to be combined with other factors: work required, physical strength, consumption of food.

**Discussion**

- To what extent can climate be considered a part of political institutions and social life?
- Does the statement imply that freedom should not be for everyone?
- The purpose of political association is the prosperity and security of the 'associates'. The sign that they are secure and prosperous is the population and birth rate
- To what extent does the statement, which seems to be a factual one, become prescriptive, or even a bias, when interpreted as an absolute limit?
- Is Rousseau a forerunner of contemporary discussions (e.g. environmental issues)?
- Is it right to maintain that all forms of government do not suit all countries?

**10. Kant: *Groundwork on the Metaphysic of Morals*  
Critically discuss the claim that morality involves the acceptance that each person has value as an end in him or herself.**

The question invites an exploration of the notion of the categorical imperative in terms of how we treat others and whether it is appropriate or not to see others as a means to an end.

**Key Points**

- The notion that there are some universal principles that guide moral actions
- The idea of the categorical imperative
- The idea of recognising ‘dignity’ in all leading to how we treat other people
- How much duty influences our actions
- The idea of ‘self interest’ relating to using the ‘other’.

**Discussion**

- The questioning of the applicability of a universal law or laws in terms of moral actions
- The issue of motive known or unknown behind the action
- Inner motives/unconscious motives might in fact lead to the use of another, therefore the problem of how one eliminates self interest
- Does the realisation of duty imply self-interest?
- Is ‘goodness’ the same as ‘duty’?
- Does a good act have no self-interest or should it have no self-interest?
- Does ‘will’ relate to ‘practical’ reason?
- Can there be objective standards that judge the nature of actions?

### 11. Nietzsche: *The Genealogy of Morals*

**Explain and evaluate the extent to which Nietzsche's critique of moral values is a critique of Christian morality.**

This question explores Nietzsche's specific criticisms of Christian morality as they are used to promote his own moral schema. The analysis might involve a challenge to his critique, and answers might consider Nietzsche's assertions in the light of his contemporary circumstances and our present day.

#### Key Points

- Goodness is created by aristocracy/nobility to differentiate themselves from the 'herd' whom they designate as 'bad'; thus with two levels of morality (master/slave) each group designates what is 'good' or 'bad' – the herd identifies goodness with meekness, servitude, humility and compassion, values sponsored and epitomised by Christianity
- With no absolute morality the herd can have its own set of values, usually grounded in Christianity (though not necessarily so – they could adopt the English psychological view of utility for instance)
- Categories of good and bad are thus primarily social values which become moral categories in slave morality
- Christian morality represses life forces like desires and stands against cruelty which for Nietzsche, and the superman, can be a thing of love
- The superman negates Christian morality by re-evaluating what is meaningful and valuable
- Nietzsche speaks of customs rather than values, but claims the herd creates values by means of *ressentiment*; for Nietzsche guilt is disease rather than the route by which man enters God's forgiveness and life.

#### Discussion

- Nietzsche essentially proposes a relativist moral system in opposition to the Judeo-Christian tradition of absolutism; guilt is no reflection of a higher metaphysical standard against which mankind falls short
- Nietzsche supplies a primarily psychological account which offers a contentious reading of Christian history and theology
- Nietzsche's view of 'might makes right' directly conflicts with the source and application of Christian ethics – especially the command 'to love one another'
- Is Nietzsche's system itself not in a sense objective, since it postulates the value of self-realisation and integration, as if these are real moral attributes? Is he really subjectivist?

**12. Mill: *Essay on Liberty***

**Critically discuss Mill’s claim that he has found “one very simple principle” and that this principle will, in all circumstances, govern “absolutely the dealings of society with the individual in the way of compulsion and control...”.**

This question invites an investigation of one of Mill’s foundational political principles of a democratic society especially insofar as this principle governs society’s dealings with all its members. It invites a discussion of governmental coercion in terms of penalties on the one hand and entreaty and exhortation on the other hand. It also invites a discussion of the political, social and moral relations that come into existence among citizens and of the idea of self-protection in civil society.

**Key Points**

- Rise of democracy as a defence against mismanagement by monarchy and aristocracy
- Self-government each by him/herself versus government by all others
- The need for a principle to regulate coercive interference by government; the need to protect and evaluate the parameters and scope of liberty of personal action
- The principle of self-protection; the prevention of harm to self and to others
- A utilitarian approach to the application and circumscription of coercion
- Liberty and individuality as the supreme goals in social relations.

**Discussion**

- How can the three fundamental freedoms (those of belief, of tastes and pursuits, and of uniting with others) be reconciled with power and authority?
- Who decides when an individual’s actions harm others, how is this decision made, and how is it to be legitimately enforced?
- Is Mill an advocate of basic freedoms or does he have a different political agenda in mind?
- How can a society encourage all individuals to development without forcing them to live up to higher standards set independently of their decisions and/or wishes?
- Is defence against harm and harming an adequate criterion against governmental interference in the lives of the citizens?
- How can a person legitimately express individuality in a civil society? What are the limits for this expression?
- Is Mill’s entire essay an exploration of only this “one very simple principle”?
- How realistic was Mill’s perspective in his time and how realistic is it today?

**13. Freud: *Civilisation and its Discontents* and *Outline of Psychoanalysis*  
To what extent is it justified to equate the concept of repression with the ‘discontents’ of society?**

This question invites a judgment as to whether there is a possible relationship between repression in a person and a repressive society, which Freud argues is one of the main causes for civilisations discontents.

**Key Points**

- The divisions that Freud sees in the unconscious *id, ego, superego*
- The mechanism of repression arising out of the *superego* to attempt to reduce pleasure and consequently sex and the rise of guilt
- The rise of the feeling of guilt when committing what are perceived as socially unacceptable acts
- The possible effects of repression resulting in abnormal or perverted release of psychic energy resulting from social pressures
- The impact of the rise of self-hate and guilt upon society, and the increasing dominance of the *superego* reducing happiness and pleasure
- The nature of civilisation’s discontent.

**Discussion**

- Is there a parallel between Freud’s tripartite division of the mind and social activity
- The impact of the time frame in which Freud was drawing examples from might affect his interpretation and application
- Does civilization die as the forces of nature in human hands might win and override social controls?
- Is the social development of moral behaviour a result of individual internalisation or the rise and decline of external institutions, for example the church?
- The possibility that psychic sexual energy could be released in non-sexual ways (sport) the rise of the sensual, rather than sexual releases
- The freeing of some societies and cultures to be more or less repressive might have been evidence that Freud’s interpretation is wrong or it might be the impact of Freud’s ideas on the society (hippies, New Age people, Mughal India)
- Does commercialisation of sexuality and pleasure create a release and a decline of guilt or does it merely accentuate the repression? Does commercialised permissiveness really remove individual guilt?

**14. Buber: *I and Thou***

**Critically discuss whether the I-Thou relationship should always be reciprocal.**

The question invites a discussion of an issue, which is directly answered by Buber in a factual way for some specific cases. Buber's general approach to the I-Thou relationship can be discussed.

**Key points**

- According to Buber every I-Thou relationship, within a relation which is specified as a purposive working of one part upon the other, persists in virtue of a mutuality which is forbidden to achieve fulfilment
- There are some relationships which by their nature may not unfold to full mutuality if they are to persist in that nature: the genuine educator, the relationship between a psychotherapist and the patient
- The contribution to the generation of the personal centre can only be done by one who grasps the buried latent unity of the others soul in the person-to-person attitude of a partner
- The most emphatic example of a normative limitation of mutuality could be provided by the pastor with a cure of souls, for in this instance an inclusion coming from the other side would attack the authenticity of the commission.

**Discussion**

- Is Buber's position regarding the I-Thou relationship a way to interpret and develop the Kantian categorical imperative?
- If every particular Thou is a glimpse through to the eternal Thou, and by means of every particular Thou the primary word addresses the eternal Thou, then the possibility of reciprocity should not be excluded
- Whatever the answer could be, Buber's position makes sense only from a religious point of view
- A reciprocal I-Thou relationship should always be possible because the nature of the I-Thou relationship is to develop and be inclusive.



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

**“For man has no nature... Man is no thing, but a drama – his life, a pure and universal happening...”. Critically discuss.**

This question invites an exploration of some of the central insights of Ortega y Gasset’s notion of human life. It also invites a discussion of his judgement regarding the failure of scientific, mathematical and naturalist reason to penetrate these phenomena and their failure to understand life as history. The answer might also focus on the clash between traditional and more existentialist approaches to philosophy.

**Key points**

- Life as task, history, happening, possibilities, occasion, struggle
- Faith in God, in reason, in science
- Physical reason *versus* historical reason
- Natural science *versus* moral science, cultural science and sciences of the spirit
- The human person and the *ego* arise out of the possibilities we choose to actualise
- Freedom is freedom by compulsion
- Before us lie diverse possibilities; behind us lies what we have chosen, what we have been

**Discussion**

- Why and how is the goal of each individual to become what s/he is capable of becoming?
- Why is life not ready-made but an event that we must make for ourselves by our free choices?
- Why does a more traditional view of the person fail to understand the person as the entity that constantly makes itself, that constantly happens?
- How and why is life a drama that happens and the subject to whom it happens not a thing apart from it, but a function of it?
- How does the past form part of our present and how is life lived as absolute presence?
- Do we live the event/happening that is life alone or in community?
- Why does man have no set nature, only a history that becomes transparent in historical reason?
- What are the threats to authentic life as Ortega y Gasset understands it? Is it possible to overcome them? How?

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

**Explain and discuss why the use of words is the key to philosophical activity.**

The question invites an exploration of Wittgenstein's view that language is the route to knowledge and understanding. His claim that the limits of language represent the limits of possibility for meaning might be explored.

**Key points**

- A sign (sentence) gets its significance from the system of signs within which it operates – that is the language to which it belongs
- Meaning is not representational like Wittgenstein's earlier period, but rather meaning is denoted by use; meaning is not attached to concepts like a picture attaches to a real object
- Wittgenstein is cautious about the generality of metaphysical statements and the way words are used too generally in most metaphysical assertions; the craving for generality amongst most people leads them to think wrongly that words have fixed, single meanings
- Language games; within one sentence many different games are played and the activity of philosophy is to understand the rules of the appropriate game; see examples of words like 'can' which clearly offer great varieties of use
- Philosophical problems occur when rules are misapplied or when the use of language gets conceptually muddled – again suggesting rules being poorly applied
- Wittgenstein does not expect exactitude and he acknowledges how language admits to problems when similar words can be used in very different contexts; analogies are problematic but we must not confuse analogies in phrasing as implying analogies of meaning
- Wittgenstein talks of familial resemblance in response to questions of fixed meaning for words; certain words have similarities of use in the way members of families bear resemblance to each other
- Significant philosophical questions are about sense rather than precise answers to general questions
- The contention that understanding words in a sentence means understanding a language, which means mastering its use.

**Discussion**

- Most philosophical problems arise from misleading grammatical habits formed in our use of language
- Is Wittgenstein travelling down a subjectivist *cul de sac*? Our inherent understanding of the world suggests there is something 'out there' for us to picture accurately or not; for Wittgenstein we do not have the capacity to step out of ourselves and check the world we are describing in words – all we have is the use of our words; there is no standard outside of language to compare it to
- How do people learn new language games? Can language games mix?
- Is the comparison of activities and games to language use sustainable?
- Wittgenstein says there is no reason why words should have to be connected to the meanings we have of them in our minds – is this acceptable?
- Is Wittgenstein too dependent on linguistic analysis? Furthermore is linguistic analysis only possible in relation to other linguistic expressions?

17. **Arendt: *The Human Condition***

**“The key aim of *The Human Condition* is to locate the political realm as a sphere of human action.” Analyse and evaluate this claim.**

This question invites an analysis of the assertions and methodology Arendt makes and employs in her critique of the human condition – especially in her tri-partite division of labour, work and action. In evaluating this, answers might draw attention to the fact that while releasing man from his natural animalistic state of labour, work does not provide ultimate freedom, in the way action does. Answers might account for Arendt’s statements about the political realm and how it relates to human activity. They might also make comments on her emphasis of phenomenology and her placing of activity above idealism in human self-realisation.

**Key Points**

- Arendt’s distinction between labour, work and activity – ascending in importance in that order
- The precise relationship between labour, work and action
- Labour corresponds to man’s biological needs, necessary for the existence of life itself and is closest to animal life, and not to be considered human; the labourer is the equivalent of the slave; this sphere of life does not belong to the human public/political arena, rather it fulfils man’s private needs
- Work by contrast is unnatural and corresponds to the artificial world; it violates the natural world and exists independently from the humans who perform it
- In work humans are named *homo faber* and they build a sphere in which life can occur; however work is instrumental and teleological so is not valuable in itself
- Work does not correspond to politics, but is necessary for politics to occur, though work and labour lack the plurality in action required for political life
- Labour is threatening the public world at the expense of action
- Action is free, not determined and is about initiative and ‘beginning’; man does not possess freedom but is free because of action
- Action would be meaningless unless others are there to observe it, making it public and political
- “Freedom... is... the reason men live together in political organisations. Without it political life would be meaningless”.

**Discussion**

- The rise of *animal labourans* in the modern world threatens *homo faber* as it consumes what is perishable and challenges in the world of work “...the values characteristic of the world of fabrication – permanence, stability durability...”
- Arendt’s analysis of modern labour is two-fold with the Marxist link of productivity to the human condition, and the consumerism of modern industrial economies; is this analysis convincing?
- Is Arendt too theoretical, drawing on the philosophical tradition from Plato onwards for her primary evidence?
- Arendt puts great faith in individual will and experience – a form of political existentialism – is this too arcane or academic considering the world we live in?
- Arendt’s theory of human nature is a rejection of attempts to answer ‘what is human?’, replacing it with ‘who is a human?’
- Political life is about being devoted to the *polis*; it is not in any way determined like Hegel and Marx claimed.

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

**Analyze and discuss the claim that the ethics of ambiguity is individualistic.**

The question poses an issue raised by de Beauvoir herself, a brief and direct answer is yes and no; answers are expected to discuss both. It offers an opportunity to evaluate her position as a whole.

**Key points**

- Yes: when one means by it that it accords to the individual an absolute value, and it recognizes in him or herself alone the power of laying the foundations of his own existence
- It is individualism in the sense in which the wisdom of the ancients, the Christian ethics of salvation, and the Kantian ideal of virtue also merit this name
- No: if it is understood as solipsism. It is not solipsistic, since the individual is defined only by his relationship to the world and to the other individuals
- To say that existence is ambiguous is to assert that its meaning is never fixed
- Man is free, but he finds his law in his very freedom. First, he must assume his freedom and not flee it; he assumes it by a constructive movement: one does not exist without doing something; and also by a negative movement which rejects oppression for oneself and others.

**Discussion**

- Does this individualism lead to the anarchy of personal whim?
- de Beauvoir seems to confound the possibility of some kind of objectivity in ethical justification with system and abstract universality
- Given that according to the ethics of ambiguity ethical life consists of reconquering freedom on the contingent facticity of existence, is it a case of the naturalistic fallacy?
- Does ethical ambiguity not imply self-contradiction, strictly speaking?

**19. Rawls: *A Theory of Justice***

**Evaluate the relation between political liberty and economic equality.**

This question invites an examination as to whether Rawls's social contract theory can strive for equality in the political world as well as produce a better distribution of economic wealth.

**Key Points**

- An explanation of the 'original position' and Rawls's First Principle
- An explanation of the two qualifying rules – priority of liberty and justice overruling efficiency
- The notion of basic human rights relating to liberty and access to a fair distribution of wealth
- The hypothetical nature of Rawls's ideas and the compatibility of it with the nature of a modern state and the market.

**Discussion**

- The positive view that Rawls holds about human nature and whether this is justified in practice
- The validity of the 'original position' as a modern social contract and the extent to which the State should/could bring about political equality and impose economic equality
- A problem of a socialistic/paternalistic State operating in a market driven society. Is it your fault if you are poor? Should the State interfere and if so how much? Should all have the same opportunity? The notion that 'fairness' is a political concept and has no place in the cut and thrust of the economic world
- The problem of the interpretation and application of equal opportunity, does it mean being treated the same or does it mean to recognise differences with the resulting consequence of 'unequal acts'? Will people give up what they have at the direction of the State or out of altruism or not at all?
- Whether the interaction of the State in economics contradicts with political equality
- The problem of whether in trying to achieve economic equality the State will produce inequality, that is reduce the freedom of some to achieve economic justice
- Is there a rule that political equality overrides economic equality and does this mean that economic equality can never be achieved?
- Is there an apparent contradiction between individualism and collectivism?
- Is there a divide between the two worlds and does the concept of equality cross it or not?

**20. Feyerabend: *Farewell to Reason***

**Analyze and discuss Feyerabend's claim that relativism is not about concepts but about human relations.**

The question invites a discussion of Feyerabend's position on relativism.

**Key points**

- Relativism originally deals with problems that arise when different cultures, or individuals with different habits and tastes, collide
- Feyerabend acknowledges that most modern versions of relativism are conceptual versions
- Clashes between cultures lead to a variety of reactions. One of the reactions is dogmatism: 'our way is the right way, other ways are false'. Some dogmatists are tolerant, others fear that the proponents of falsehood might 'corrupt Truth' and react against them
- Modern dogmatists, living in democracies where pluralistic and libertarian rhetoric prevails, seek power in a more underhanded way
- Relativism tries to move away from ignorance and dishonesty. It says that what is right for one culture need not be right for another.

**Discussion**

- Relativism is the solution to the problems of conflicting beliefs and of conflicting ways of life
- As relativism is about human relations, in order to change dogmatism and authoritarianism, societies dedicated to freedom and democracy should be structured in a way that gives all traditions equal opportunities, and equal rights
- Citizens, and not special groups, have the last word in deciding what is true or false, useful or useless for their society
- For every statement, theory or point of view that is believed to be true with good reasons, there may exist arguments showing that either its opposite, or a weaker alternative is true.
- Relativism does include a cognitive, conceptual component; it is not only about human relations
- Does Feyerabend's thesis imply the impossibility of rational analysis and its contribution to human conflicts?

**21. Foucault: *The History of Sexuality***

**Explain and evaluate why we come to see sex as a key to explaining ourselves.**

This question invites an analysis of Foucault's account of the way sex has been translated into a form of science by our culture – a way that people believe they see the truth about themselves. Answers might deal with how this process has necessarily involved both knowledge and power. In addition answers might also focus on Foucault's reading of history and his analysis of power.

**Key points**

- Thinking about sex is tied up with the 'repressive hypothesis'
- Foucault believes debate and conversation about sex has proliferated since the 18<sup>th</sup> century and this has meant it has been treated as a subject of knowledge, which inevitably implies a relation with power in society
- In treating sex as a subject of knowledge, it has become like a science – objectified; this results in a new interplay between sex and power
- In speaking of sex in this scientific way people see their discourse as a form of enquiry into themselves rather than an activity
- Some forms/expressions of power, particularly in legal frameworks, are criticised for being repressive; Foucault sees aspects of power as having the ability to be creative and textured in society
- Sexuality becomes a channel of power rather than a victim of repression.

**Discussion**

- Is Foucault's reading of history convincing? It shares a feature of Marx's view of the driving influence of prosperity – is this supportable?
- Is knowledge necessarily a repressive instrument? Can it not liberate?
- Is the view that power can be masked too convenient an analysis?
- Is Foucault's view of sexuality as a social construct, rather than an inherent feature of a person's nature, convincing? This view depends on sexuality being formed by knowledge/power – despite the way power masks itself
- Does this view of sexuality work on a personal level? Is it supportable to view our knowledge of ourselves and our sexuality as being formed through discourse?

**22. Putnam: *Reason, Truth and History*  
Analyze and discuss whether it is good to be rational.**

The question provides an opportunity to explain and discuss Putnam's position regarding rationality. It invites an analysis of the cognitive status of value arguments and its relevance for philosophical reflection.

**Key points**

- The assumptions about rationality are interwoven with a collection of cultural myths and prejudices. Putnam proposes to reverse the terms of the comparison and to ask not how rational is goodness, but why is it good to be rational
- A traditional view maintains that reason is a faculty which chooses ends on the basis of their goodness, as opposed to the 'passions', which try to dictate ends on the basis of the appetites, or 'inclination' – a claim which supports the view that it is rational to choose the good
- Asking what value rationality itself has will both force us to become clearer about the nature of rationality itself, and about the assumptions we are prone to make concerning rationality
- Weber introduced the modern fact-value distinction, his argument against the objectivity of value judgments was that it is not possible to establish the truth of a value judgment to the satisfaction of all possible rational persons
- Other points which might be considered: models of understanding rationality (logical positivism, epistemological anarchism); different conceptions of rationality; instrumentalism; majoritarianism; the success of science in the general culture and its implications.

**Discussion**

- It is good to be rational because if one is rational one can discover truths
- From the very beginning it was the impossibility, or alleged impossibility, of rational proof that cast value judgments into a somewhat suspect light. Rationality has been putting value on trial for a long time
- Each era has its own idea of rationality, our time is one of scientific rationality. Comparison with other historical conceptions, for instance Socrates and Nietzsche
- Is there any sense in which it can be called irrational to choose a bad end, as if goodness were on trial and rationality were the judge?
- What relevance and meaning can Putnam's analysis of the nature of rationality have? Does his argument have only a theoretical finality or does it have other implications?
- The analysis of rationality is important above all because of its practical consequences at a moral level.



**23. Taylor: *The Ethics of Authenticity***

**Critically discuss Taylor’s claim that, “The struggle ought not to be *over* authenticity, for or against, but *about* it, defining its proper meaning.”**

This question invites an exploration of the core concept of Taylor’s entire analysis of contemporary society. It invites a discussion of Taylor’s understanding of the individual, of the individual’s conception of him or herself, of the individual’s relationship with others, and of the individual’s roles in the social and political realms. It also explores the threats to a properly defined notion of authenticity.

**Key points**

- The emergence of a flattened individualism, the hegemony of instrumental reason, and soft-despotism/political fragmentation as threats to authenticity
- Authenticity as creative activity, originality, and opposition to restrictive rules and regulations
- Openness to horizons of significance; the dialogic character of life
- Authenticity as self-determining freedom; confronting and coming to terms with pre-existing, institutionalised values of contemporary society
- Authenticity as struggle
- Authenticity as a truly moral ideal worth espousing
- The erroneous approach of ‘boosters’ and ‘knockers’.

**Discussion**

- Is it possible and/or probable to define authenticity in any meaningful sense?
- Is it possible and/or probable that individuals can survive a confrontation with the prevailing, contemporary ethos?
- How might an individual come to terms with the prevailing values of contemporary society without compromising a properly defined authenticity?
- How realistic is Taylor’s call for a reaffirmation of horizons of significance, a recommitment to significant others, and a rediscovery of the dialogic character of existence?
- Does properly defined authenticity automatically entail political involvement?
- What are the ideals hidden in individualism and instrumentalism, and can they be reaffirmed?
- Why is it self-defeating to take a stand simply for or against the search for authenticity?

**24. Nussbaum: *Poetic Justice***

**Evaluate the claim that increased exposure to literature encourages people to show sympathy and toleration.**

This question invites a judgment as to whether Nussbaum is justified in claiming that literature can develop the traits of sympathy and toleration, and consequently change people's behaviour.

**Key points**

- The reduction of literature to practical usefulness
- A return to a classical position that literature has both an aesthetic quality and effect, along with a moral philosophical affect
- The argument that through the development of emotions you can access and develop different kinds of knowledge, and literature would facilitate this enlightenment or empathic encounter.

**Discussion**

- The role of literature to stop increasing dehumanization in an increasingly materialistic society
  - The problem of the thesis being based upon a very limited selection of literature and that other examples might not support the general case presented
  - The issue of whether all humans will or should strive for a universal goodness or whether self centredness will generate 'selfishness'
  - The issue of why the argument is restricted to some emotions; do sympathy and toleration have special qualities that set them apart?
  - The problem of judgments being involved in the application of sympathy and toleration; this is an area which Nussbaum may seem not to want to acknowledge or deal with
  - The problem that literature might not be just an end in itself but that it may well have an impact which is unpredictable, non-communicable or unnoticeable by the wider world.
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