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PHILOSOPHY

Higher Level and Standard Level

Paper 1

13 pages

SECTION A

*Answer **one** question from this section.*

Core Theme: What is a "human" being?

1.   (a)   **How does this picture challenge our traditional view of the human condition?**   *[3 marks]*

Key points
The term "human condition" must be defined. The picture may be interpreted in different ways:
* robots or human like machines cause a reality to be contended with
* technology changes the human condition (what it means to be a human) and maybe threatens the existence of humanity (replacing humans by machines). Other interpretations of the picture are possible.

Discussion
No discussion is expected.

(b)   **Compare and contrast your view on humanoids with *two* theories of human nature.**   *[12 marks]*

Key points
Any possible theory of human nature can be chosen. Examples:
* there is no core human nature (Existentialism),
* humans are rational (Aristotle),
* humans are naturally good (Rousseau),
* humans are naturally egoistic (Hobbes) *etc.*

Discussion
The discussion can concentrate on the role, effects, function, use *etc.* of humanoids within the context of the two theories of human nature.

(c)   **"Technology enslaves humanity!" Write a short critical discussion based on this statement.**   *[15 marks]*

Key points
* "Technology" and "humanity" should be defined.
* The assumption that technology does something to us, rather than that we do something with technology, should be noted.
* Contrasting "enslaving" with "dependency" in varying degrees should also be noted.

Discussion
One can agree or disagree with the statement, or hold some other view (for example depending on how one defines "enslavement"). Those who agree with the statement could argue, for example, that inappropriate application of technology might lead to problems such as environmental damage or human alienation. The opposite view could be that using technology can solve these and other problems, and, in the past, technology has improved human life. Whichever view is chosen, critical discussion should follow – this can arise from the concepts used in the answer (such as "alienation" and "exploitation", "utility") or those used in the original statement ("humanity", "enslavement"). The assumption of technology being dangerous should be noted critically. Some reference to the concept of human nature should be made.

2. **(a)** **What philosophical idea(s) about the self can you identify in the passage above?**   *[3 marks]*

    (b) **Describe and critically examine one of the concepts you have identified above.**   *[12 marks]*

    (c) **"The self imposed isolation of the hermit or guru is the only way to truly know yourself. Only then can you begin to know others." Do you agree?**   *[15 marks]*

        Key points
- materialism/physicalism and the mind
- solipsism and the cogito: does isolation (chosen or imposed) lead to self-development?
- can I know myself without others?
- do I need to know myself before I can know others? Is the process sequential or dynamic and simultaneous?

        Discussion
- are relationships essential in being a human?
- is there such a thing as an essential self or are we social constructs?
- what role does language play in developing the concept of self and in knowing others?
- what knowledge do we have of others? How do we develop it?

SECTION B

*Answer **two** questions from this section, each on a different Optional Theme.*

Optional Theme 1: Political Philosophy

3. **Does it make any sense to talk of virtues outside of a social and political context?**

   Key points
   - The concept of virtue ethics should be included.
   - The definition of the good life is framed within a special social and political context.
   - Virtues need to be defined and explained with reference to practices; for example; a manager can become so engrossed in his work that he neglects his family (the virtue of working hard is thus lost by the suffering it generates).
   - The opposite is also, paradoxically, true: torture can never be made good.

   Discussion Points
   - The ancient and medieval concept of virtues as worth pursuing for their own sustenance.
   - Does this lead us to a relativist view of ethics? What is good within one social and political context may not be so good in another? For example, we may be inclined to think of truthfulness as virtuous. However, in a dictatorship, survival dictates that individuals must lie to protect themselves against evil.
   - The Platonic theory of the Forms – virtues as forms.

4. **"In democracies, the law makers become corrupted by money and self-interest, and so make laws to suit themselves and their sponsors. Under these conditions, civil disobedience is totally justified." Do you agree with this position?**

   Key Points
   - the role of law and the way laws are made in a democracy
   - concepts of liberty and equality and the relationship to the law in a democracy
   - power, corruption, and authority
   - concept of civil disobedience

   Discussion
   The quote makes a major assumption about the inevitable corruption of law-makers (or politicians). Candidates must identify this statement as an assumption and discuss its truth (if any). The second half of the quote makes a second assumption: that civil disobedience **is** justified. Candidates are also expected to discuss if this necessarily follows from the premise (should it be found true).
   Other issues can be discussed in the light of the above:
   - are elections the only legitimate means of expressing dissent in a democracy?
   - what are the limits of civil disobedience *i.e.* when can you start; when should you stop?
   - is civil disobedience necessarily violent – justifications for and against?
   - alternatives to democratic models in the way they deal with dissent *e.g.* how does one express dissent under a dictatorship?

Optional Theme 2: Knowledge

5. **Do concepts embodied in our conceptual schemes reflect a structure in the world that is independent of people's ability to form concepts? Discuss.**

    Key points
    - Realists believe that the structure in the world is independent of human conceptual abilities.
    - Non-realist positions point out that there is no way in which we can understand the world without using a human conceptual frame.
    - If the structure of the world is independent of people's ability to form concepts, what is to be understood by "structure"?
    - Kinds of thing we see the world as being made up of.

    Discussion
    - The structure of the world is but the organization of our concepts.
    - If concepts were a reflection of the structure of the world, would they be eternal or changing with the world?
    - How can we know that what we know is the structure of the world?
    - We can only answer this question by analysing it in parts, there is no way of giving a general answer. Therefore there is no answer to the question as such.
    - What about the relativistic consequences of non-realist positions: if conceptual schemes cannot be right or wrong, can theories be true or false?

6. **Empirical generalizations, like "all swans are white", though not verifiable, are falsifiable. Analyse and discuss this idea and its repercussions for the justification of scientific knowledge.**

    Key points
    - Induction: the method of basing general statements on accumulated observations of specific instances.
    - No number of singular observation statements, however large, could logically entail an unrestrictedly general statement.
    - The orthodox view of scientific method and Popper's view.
    - The statement offers an acceptable solution to the problem of induction.
    - Scientific generalizations are testable in spite of being unprovable: they can be tested by systematic attempts to refute them.

    Discussion
    - The statement presupposes the distinction between logic (if a single black swan has been observed then it can not be the case that all swans are white) and methodology (in practice it is always possible to doubt a statement: *e.g.* there may have been some error in the reported observation). A conclusive falsification is not attainable at the methodological level.
    - It is always possible to refuse, without self-contradiction, to accept the validity of an observation statement. We could thus reject all falsifying experiences whatsoever.
    - Is the whole of science resting on foundations whose validity it is impossible to demonstrate?
    - The statement offers but a weak solution to the problem of induction in order to avoid epistemological scepticism.

Optional Theme 3: Philosophy of Culture

7.   **Is globalization an impoverishing or an enriching phenomenon for humankind?**

      Key points
      • There is MacLuhan's notion of the global village, leading to the shrinkage of the world.
      • Human beings can be seen as citizens of the world as opposed to being citizens of particular countries (abolishing frontiers).
      • All races can be seen to be united under the same concept of humankind.
      • There are various impacts of globalization: multiculturalism versus acculturation.
      • Should there be respect for minority cultures rather than cultural domination; cultural exchange versus cultural loss?

      Discussion
      • Is resisting this global cultural homogenisation a useless attempt? No matter what we do, a culture evolves in a direction that is essentially not controlled, yielding to the more powerful influences.
      • Are we risking cultural stagnation by insisting on the preservation of minority cultures which are not living anymore, but have become folklore?
      • Is the emergence of global culture presenting an elevation or a lowering of cultural standards? *i.e.* Nietzsche's critique of cultural uniformity as the inevitable consequences of a mass culture: We will all wear jeans, drink coca cola, and listen to rock music, though perhaps in different languages.
      • Can globalization be both enriching and impoverishing?

8.   **"Every language traces around people who speak it a "magic circle", which makes them, who speak it, different from them, who do not; a "magic circle" from which we can only get out in so far as we get into another language." Analyse this statement and discuss its implications as to our identity and relationship.**

      Key points
      • What are possible accounts of "language".
      • Language is far more than just an instrument to name things or to communicate ideas. There are social dimensions of language.
      • Language can be seen as a form of cultural identity.
      • Why does the statement compare language with a "magic circle"? What are two possible implications of this metaphor?
      • There are possible comparisons with Wittgenstein's topics such as: the limits of my language represent the limits of my world, language games, language as a form of living.

      Discussion
      • Does the statement entail that we are prisoners of our language or that we only understand what we already are?
      • Does it mean that there is no possible translation or that every translation is but an imperfect approximation of the original?
      • The statement could be used to justify discriminatory points of view.
      • Identity based on language compared to others forms of identity: religious, political, ethnic.

Optional Theme 4: World Philosophies

9. **Analyse the role of reason in Islamic and Indian philosophies (Hinduism and Buddhism). Would faith be dramatically affected if reason was denied its role?**

   Key points
   - There are two main currents in Islam: the *kalam* and the *falsafah*. The *kalam* is the mystical current that originated from practical concerns. It does have philosophical consequences, for example, the relation between God's activity and human free will.
   - *Falsafah* is a word borrowed from the Greek *philosophia* and means the meeting of the Islamic and Hellenistic cultures. Plato, Plotinus and Aristotle were known and inspired the Islamic philosophical tradition.
   - *Falsafah* is represented by al-Kindi (c.801-873) and al-Razi (865-925): rationality is at the core of their thinking.
   - Islamic faith would be affected as the requirement of rationality is important. However, Sufism and other mystical currents in Islam would still remain intact.
   - Reason plays a role in the Hindu faith in different ways with different schools of Indian philosophy.
   - Sankara and the two levels of truth: "higher" truth expressing the mystical experience of release and identification with Brahman, and the "ordinary" level used in popular religion and common-sense descriptions of the world.
   - Reason and free will are intimately connected in Indian philosophies. Individuals must accept their destiny and have a rational acceptance of the inevitable (rebelling or resisting would not change it, if anything it will make things worse). Then they must act, guided by reason and doctrine and do the right thing which is "to pull yourself up by your own bootstraps", that is to improve your position entirely by your own efforts. There is a heavy focus on individual responsibility for personal salvation.

   Discussion
   - The paradox of reason within any faith: while necessary for justification purposes, it becomes an encumbrance for the mystical experience, often regarded as the fundamental religious experience.
   - Is rationality within faith a response to a very profound human need for justification?
   - Al-Razi considered that wars tended to be caused by religions. We are still witnessing many conflicts where unjustified beliefs and religious beliefs play a significant role. If reason played a bigger role in faith, would we avoid these conflicts?

10. **Could a Muslim who obeys the ethics of Islam be regarded as someone who leads a morally correct life according to the ethical systems of Buddhism and Hinduism? How could the ethical systems of these three religions be criticized?**

Key point

The ethical systems of all three religions are based on the divine command theory in which a Higher Being (god) or a prophet has set moral rules that an individual should obey if he/she wants to be rewarded and avoid being punished after death or during his/her lifetime. Doing what the religious tenets require will make a person virtuous. Thus one might say that in addition to the divine command theory, all three religions have elements of consequentialism (maximising one's happiness, whether either earthly or eternal) and virtue ethics. The terms of a particular religion should be applied in description of the ethical systems. (For example Islam: Five Pillars, Buddhism: Noble Eightfold Path, Hinduism Dharma, Yamas and Niyamas *etc.*)

Discussion

There are many possibilities which might be included for discussion depending on which aspects of ethical theories candidates might emphasize:

- The criticism of divine command theory can involve criticizing the idea of Higher Being or avoidance of living an authentically ethical life.
- The consequentialist element of these moral theories can be criticized by stating that one cannot know the consequences (particularly if there is a promise of some reward after death) and if one acts virtuously **in order** to earn the promised rewards, one is, in fact, only behaving with the goal of redeeming oneself, while one should rather be acting selflessly in virtue.
- The virtue ethics element can be criticized by questioning why certain traits are considered as virtues and others are not. One can also come up with examples in which following the divine command would possibly lead to an absurdly unjust conclusion.

Optional Theme 5: Nature, Work and Technology

11. **People's control of technology has resulted in a significant increase in physical power over the material world. Has this increase been matched by an equivalent growth in the intellectual and spiritual arena?**

    Key points
    - There is the undeniability of technological expansion.
    - Technology has increased in many areas (*e.g.* medicine and engineering) which has resulted in dramatic improvements in the quality of life and standards of living of millions of people.
    - How could we measure any increase in the intellectual and spiritual arena, if there were any?
    - What about advancements in the legal arena: where processes have been put in place to ensure that justice is made fairer and more objective?
    - Is this "a chicken and egg" question? Does technological improvement result from a development of intellectual breakthrough, or vice versa?

    Discussion
    - Undeniability of technological expansion. To rejoice or to fear? Is fear the result of ignorance of technology? For example, when cellular phones appeared there was widespread concern that having a microchip so near to your head would cause brain cancer. Does this simply speak to the ignorance of non-technologically informed individuals?
    - Technology has dramatically increased our power to destroy. One particular feature currently is the remote form of destruction (long range missiles have replaced arm to arm combat). This removes the agent of destruction from the sight of those killed and maimed. Where are the consequences?
    - Is it fair to say that no increase is noticeable in the intellectual and spiritual arena? How could we measure such an increase, if there were any? What about the creation of revolutionary documents such as the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights? This speaks of an unprecedented moral responsibility for our fellow human beings.

12. **Analyse and discuss: Labour was the original price paid for all things. All the wealth of the world was originally purchased by labour. Therefore labour should be the highest value ruling human exchange.**

    Key points
    - The real price of everything is the toil and trouble of acquiring it. Labour is toil and trouble.
    - Money or goods indeed save us this toil. They contain the value of a certain quantity of labour. Labour was the first price, the original purchase-money that was paid for all things.
    - All the wealth of the world was originally purchased by labour; and its value is precisely equal to the quantity of labour which enables people to purchase or to command.
    - How can "value" be understood. What are the types of value (*e.g.* economic, moral)?

    Discussion
    - The statement tries to justify a value judgement on a historical fact. Therefore it is a fallacy.
    - It is impossible to rule intentionally the ways in which people value things.
    - Economic values are very different from moral values. Their nature is very different; we can not compare them.
    - Seeing human action only from the point of view of labour reduces its scope, dimensions and possibilities.
    - The statement implies a materialistic point of view.
    - An alternative view: if labour is not the highest value, what else might play this role?

Optional Theme 6: Philosophy of the Arts

13. **What criteria needs to be met for a work to qualify as a work of art?**

    Key points
    • What is a work of art?
    • Are there universal criteria by which to judge works?
    • Does the impulse/intent to make such a work matter? Automatic gestures, random gestures, intended and carefully measured gestures: does it make a difference to the quality of a piece of art?
    • What if only part of the criteria are met?
    • Who is qualified to make such a judgement?
    • How do we know if a piece of art is "bad art" or "good art". Can we speak of "bad art"?

    Discussion
    • Does the fact that it is produced by a recognised artist matter? Is it possible that recognised artists produce low standards of work that would not qualify as work of art had they been produced by someone else?
    • We regularly hear that a painting has been sold in an auction for thousands, even millions of dollars. To what extent is what we call art simply an object of the market economy?
    • Every musician before Brahms (XIX century) needed a patron to support him financially. Brahms was the first to live off the revenues of the performance of his work. Has the fact that artists now get paid for working changed the nature of artistic creation?
    • With the unprecedented availability of works of arts (music through the radio, theatre through television, films, *etc.*) we could expect an increased awareness of the artistic component in our social environment. Has this happened? If yes, how? If not, should we blame poor marketing strategies?

14. **"The mass market feeds on art like it feeds on everything else – without discrimination. All art has become is just another product or image to put on postcards. Any meaning and value it had is lost on the public." Explain and assess the assumptions implicit in this statement.**

    Key points
    • Meaning/role of art in a consumerist society
    • Art and artist as expression of genius/universal truths
    • Art and the exclusiveness of presence
    • Art as an ethical ideal

    Discussion
    • If art is understood only by experience, then in what sense is it a purely personal one?
    • Does art make us virtuous?
    • Does mass exposure necessarily mean that the meaning and value of art is lost? How is this achieved exactly?
    • Is art some sort of sacred endeavour that needs protection from the masses?
    • Does reproducing art objects into every day objects (*e.g.* a Van Gough painting reproduced on a coffee mug) debase art?
    • Does the market obliterate what is truly valuable in art?

Optional Theme 7: Philosophy of Religion

15. **"What can I hope for?" Discuss the assertion that this question has meaning only within the context of a religious belief that offers predetermined possibilities for the future.**

    Key points
    • Analysis of the concepts of religion and religious belief
    • Horizon of the future as characteristics of human existence
    • The possibility that the meaning of life depends to a great extent on future expectations
    • Freedom and predetermination

    Discussion
    • Do we hope because we have a religious belief or do we have a religion because we hope?
    • Does hope necessarily refer to a Higher Being? Or to personal immortality?
    • Is religious belief a copy of anticipating the future and, in this sense, overcoming the uncertainty that future causes?
    • Religious belief does not necessarily predetermine the future. Some religions are determinist; others are not.

16. **Within love, there is constant confirmation of my self. This is why religions have developed the notion of a loving God, as in loving me this God validates my own identity. Discuss the concept of a loving God.**

    Key Points
    This question postulates the view of religion as a fabrication, a human fabrication. The candidate is expected to bring this out and discuss it. The implications of a loving God has to be analysed: does it indeed offer this sense of being affirmed/confirmed as a valuable being whose existence is worthwhile? Can one hold this view and still believe in a Higher Being?

    Discussion
    This view can be compared to Freud's view of God as a substitute father figure, and the similarities and differences highlighted.

    This view can be contrasted with Nietzsche's view of God as the creditor. If practising religion serves as a means to satisfy a psychological hunger for meaning, can we still argue that there is value in spiritual life or is it a comparable way to other psychological means of quenching one's anxiety over the absurdity of our existence?

Optional Theme 8: Theories and Problems of Ethics

17.   **Many charitable organizations have noticed that the number of female members largely outnumber the number of male members. Does this suggest that the feminine approach to ethics differs from the masculine?**

Key points
Key to understanding this statement is the distinction between the terms female (or the female gender) and feminine (a woman's trait or quality that men can also possess, just as in the reverse we think of aggressiveness as a masculine trait). Candidates are expected to discuss this difference, and point out that the statement suggests that women are endowed with more feminine traits than men. Does it make sense to construct this disposition into a feminine ethics? What would a masculine ethics look like (a Nietzschean ethics perhaps?). The statement postulates the truth of the first sentence: it would indeed be hard to deny this if we look at typical "caring" professions' such as nursing, early childhood care, social service work, *etc.* These examples were used by Neil Noddings to develop her thesis on feminine ethics.

Discussion
This suggests that women are fundamentally different from men. It brings up the discussion on equality of sexes: does equality necessarily mean sameness? One would hope candidates would see that differences can be enriching, not only a source of discrimination. Does considering ethics from a gender based position enrich the discussion on ethics?

18.   **"Because morality can only have meaning and value when we are dealing with other people, then it is obvious that the only way to judge if an action is good or bad is in its usefulness to them and me." Is this claim true or are there other possibilities?**

Key points
- Utilitarianism versus *a priori* moral truths
- Morality as rational action
- Intuition/feelings as a source of moral knowledge
- Doing the right thing versus doing the accepted thing
- The quoted passage makes a claim and offers a justification for this claim. Has the candidate seen the two fold parts? Has she/he evaluated both?

Discussion
- Is the claim true – defence of utilitarianism?
- What role, if any, do people play in an ethical system? Is it possible to conceive of one that omits others?
- If the claim is true, then is the concept of universal human rights hollow?
- How do I determine the greatest good for the greatest number?