

MARKSCHEME

November 2003

PHILOSOPHY

Higher and Standard Level

Paper 2

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

We are told in *Tao Te Ching* that ‘The Tao (The Way) that can be told is not the invariant Way’.

Tao endures without a name (32)

Tao hides, no name (41)

The Tao is empty (4)

The gateway to all mystery (1)

So, if the subject of the book cannot be named nor described, if it is so elusive and obscure, how can the book teach us anything? Justify your answer.

The point of the question is to focus on the paradoxical character of the book and its subject matter, trying to teach something that cannot be taught intellectually or by conventional means, that cannot be captured in a system of knowledge, something that is beyond conceptual knowledge and yet at the same time extremely pervasive and important. (“Tao is the mysterious centre of all things”) This is also an indirect way to throw light on the nature of the Tao.

Key Points

- Language, naming, describing is not adequate to capture the nature of the Tao, The Way, as the book is full of paradoxes. The Way cannot be carved up in categories. It is everything, an all-embracing Unity.
- Deep wisdom is no light matter
“Considering everything easy makes everything difficult
And so the Wise person
Treats things as difficult, and in the end has no difficulty”.
“Few understand me, and that is my value.”
- To reach understanding we have to go beyond conventional learning and knowledge.
“Banish learning, discard knowledge.”
- If you try to grasp it, you fail, if you make a conscious effort it eludes you. Non-effort, not-doing, emptying the mind, these are the ways to get Tao. Return to simplicity, emptiness.
- Teaching without words.
- The book is full of metaphor, allusion and paradoxes to account for such an evasive thing. It has the cryptic nature of poems.

Discussion

- The book claims that its subject matter is the deepest principle of all, pervasive, present everywhere, the origin of everything. Such a principle is really hard to describe and understand.
- A negative approach: the opposite approach may clear the ground and yield positive insights.
- The fact that it is not conceptual, nor a concrete body of knowledge which can be defined, is not a system of rules, and paradoxically, is about emptiness, doesn’t mean there is nothing to know about it; “to know” changes meaning, it means insight, enlightenment, understanding, sometimes beyond words; it means a lived experience.
- This cannot be conveyed as a doctrine, as conventional knowledge, or as rules to live by; but some understanding of it resides in enigmatic verses, in poems and stories, in practices, in metaphor; most of all it is embodied in the example of the Sage, and in his way of going about the world, and of handling things.
- One can develop a really interesting comparison of the Eastern way versus the Western way of knowing. All of the above is opposed to a Western tradition of knowledge, with its clear representations and models of the world, explicit verbal knowledge, analysis, categorization, drawing distinctions, making judgments.

2. Confucius: *The Analects*

Evaluate the following statement by Confucius: “The superior man extensively studies literature (wen) and restricts himself with the rules of propriety.”

The intention of this question is to bring candidates to an identification and analysis of the social ethics nature of the Analects. Candidates are expected to provide a justification for this emphasis on social ethics and assess its relevance.

Key Points

- What makes a man superior? Confucius says elsewhere that we are all born equal. Superiority is a moral superiority (a gentleman, a leader) as opposed to a class distinction.
- Confucius’ theory of humaneness: virtues that must be acquired in order to become superior (qualities of the mind and of the heart, one who deals with other human beings as one ideally should).
- Since superiority is acquired, knowledge and studying are the means to get it.
- The superior man does not violate The Way. Like Confucius himself, “he is affable but dignified, austere but not harsh, polite but completely at ease” (7.37).

Discussion

- Ancient cultures valued the wisdom of the elders, so does Confucius. Is this a valid approach to wisdom?
- What has literature to offer that can guide us towards wisdom? (perhaps here a parallel with Aristotle’s view on literature, or a contrast with Plato’s would be rich in discussion). In what ways does – propriety make a person superior? Is this still a valid statement?
- Can we affirm the equality of human beings as person and in the same breath recognize the superiority of some without contradicting ourself? Confucius’ concept of superiority contrasted with other concept of superiority.

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

Plato's argument for the ideal state rests on each individual performing his/her specific function. Yet only when philosophizing and ruling come into the hands of only *one* person will the ideal state be realized. Discuss this paradox in Plato's *Republic*.

Key Points

- What is Plato's view of the ideal state and how can it be achieved?
- The social structure of the ideal state rests upon a carefully controlled distribution of a single function (techne) to each individual who has been carefully educated for his/her role in society.
- Ruling is a specific role or function just as philosophizing is a specific role or function.
- The problems of all existing states will only come to an end when the two roles of ruling and philosophizing come into the hands of a single individual.
- Plato's suggestion presents us with an apparent paradox. The paradoxical nature of the philosopher-ruler accounts for the revolutionary character of his suggestion.

Discussion

- Plato is able to develop his radical political theory as part of a complex educational, epistemological and social theory.
- The notion of balance and equilibrium amongst personal and social roles guarantees the perfection of the ideal situation.
- Only by means of careful selection and education of the three classes of citizens (philosopher-rulers, auxiliaries, craftspeople) and the subsequent segregation of each class from the others can Plato's political theory be successful.
- Surprisingly, Plato's perfect ruler (philosopher-ruler) must combine two clearly distinct functions – one serving theory (philosophizing) and the other serving praxis (ruling). This seems to add inconsistency and contradiction to his argument.
- Plato is aware of these difficulties but argues that the paradox is why the realization of the ideal state is theoretically not impossible but practically improbable.
- Does Plato's paradoxical argument bear any relevance to the contemporary world political situation? Can a balanced combination of theoretical expertise and practical experience offer any hope for the realization of a better world?

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

To whom (or what) does Aristotle confer the responsibility for education in goodness? Explain how Aristotle justifies this position and, with the help of an example, evaluate it.

The intention of this question is to bring candidates to an examination of the acquired nature of goodness. Candidates are expected to discuss notions of eudemonia and virtues, and give examples. Comparisons with current pedagogical approaches could make for an interesting discussion.

Key Points

- The State is responsible for the education in goodness because the demands of the good life would not appeal to many if there were not an element of compulsion.
- The importance of habit in upbringing.
- Because not enough people have integrated their training in virtue, we need laws to continue upholding a virtuous regimen: the “bad” men will need the dissuasion of pain to remain within the path of virtue: thus we need the effective force of the state.
- If not supplied by the state, it can be done by parents.
- Goodness as virtue.

Discussion

- What assumption(s) about human nature is Aristotle making in this model of moral education? Are these valid ones?
- What are the benefits and dangers of leaving moral education in the hands of the State?
- In separating the Church and the State, what are modern democracies doing with moral education?
- Our contemporary world is rife with examples of States where moral education became the mission of the State (e.g. the Taliban in Afghanistan). Candidates **should** provide an example.

5. **Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae***

Evaluate whether Aquinas’ account of free will is an effective counter to determinism.

Key Points

- Analysis of Aquinas’ concept of free will.
- Analysis of the notion of determinism, types of determinism, fate, and the notion that God controls events.
- The role of human reason which, in itself, is a gift of God and hence a possible contradiction.

Discussion

- The presumed nature of voluntary actions, the balancing between intellectual appetite – will and free will influenced by reason.
- The concept of choice and the implied role of reason in the decision making process.
- If human reason is so powerful how it might balance deterministic factors such as genetic factors and instinctive factors.
- The extent to which humans can by whatever means, deliberate choice, (control factors built into them that are perhaps beyond their control) examples could come from Freud, Darwin, reference could be made to “habit”, “happiness” or “pleasure” which are simply perhaps “will driven”.
- Judgment needs to appear in what is written showing that Aquinas’ argument to free will does or does not challenge determinism. In the first instance this could be the triumph of human reason, on the other hand it could be put that it is impossible to escape or ultimately control the natural drives within man.

6. Descartes: *Meditations*

Which is more effective, the arguments Descartes uses to establish doubt about *res cogitans* (thinking thing), or the arguments he uses to establish certainty about it?

The intention of this question is to allow candidates to demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of the foundation argument in Descartes' epistemology.

The focus of this question is on the strength of Descartes' arguments concerning doubt and certainty about *res cogitans*. The question requires candidates to critically evaluate the arguments. Evaluation requires an accurate account of the arguments followed by defence of their assessment. Examiners should bear in mind that this question is significantly more difficult in the eyes of the examining team.

Key Points

Descartes' sceptical arguments:

- epistemic doubt – argument from the unreliability of the senses.
- metaphysical doubt – argument from dreaming.
- logical doubt – argument from the evil demon.
- *res cogitans* should be defined: "I think, I am".

Descartes' arguments for certainty:

- logical certainty – argument from God's existence.
- metaphysical certainty – argument from doubting / thinking (Cogito).
- epistemic certainty – arguments from
 - "clarity and distinctness" criteria.
 - foundationalism.
 - deductive method.

Discussion

- Candidates who provide arguments in favour of Descartes' sceptical arguments have the advantage of the stronger arguments, and the disadvantages of objectionable implications (solipsism, and eternal uncertainty).
- Those who argue in favour of Descartes' arguments for certainty have the advantage of certainty and intersubjectivity, but at the cost of persistent circularity and seemingly irresolvable dualism.
- A discussion of these metaphysical implications of Descartes' arguments would indicate that the candidate has achieved a superior understanding of this issue.

7. **Locke: *Second Treatise of Government***

Explain under what circumstances is it permissible to dissolve the government and evaluate if these circumstances are the appropriate and only ones.

The intention of this question is to bring candidates to examine the justification for the existence of government and what justifies its continuing operation. In discussion, candidates are expected to point out what advantages exist for the maintenance of a government in an organized society.

Answers should firstly identify circumstances as asked. Given that the analysis of the dissolution of government is the culmination of Locke's argument and it almost implies all main issues of it, answers can secondly be developed in very different ways.

Key Points

- Locke draws a distinction between government and society. Of the two, society is by far the more important and enduring. The dissolution of government does not mean the dissolution of society, but when a society is dissolved, the government of that society cannot remain. A society is dissolved when it is unable to preserve its solidity and solidarity, as a distinct political entity.
- The usual, and almost only way whereby the society is dissolved, is through force, by an external over-turning: a foreign conquest. The “conquerors’ swords often cut up governments by the roots”. In this case, the society is no longer able to maintain and support itself as one entire and independent body.
- Governments may also be dissolved from within. Firstly, this happens when the legislative is altered; for example, if the Prince sets up his will in place of the laws, if he hinders the legislative from meeting, or alters the electors or the manner of election.
- Secondly, another way of dissolution from within is when the legislative, or the prince, either of them, act contrary to the trust reposed in them. They act contrary to their trust when they attempt to invade the property of the subject, or try to make themselves masters, or arbitrary disposers of the lives, liberties, or fortunes of the people.

Discussion

- Consequences of the dissolution of government can be discussed; for instance, people are at liberty to erect a new legislative, people even have the right to prevent tyranny.
- The discussion on the dissolution of government can be placed in the context of three types of government: monarchy, oligarchy and democracy.
- How to distinguish a “good” government from a “bad” one. Who shall be judge, whether the prince or legislative act contrary to their trust?
- Locke's analysis of government dissolution is attached to the alleged individual natural rights (*e.g.* private property), which in fact only reflect determined historical conditions.
- Locke's ideas strongly influenced modern political life. How could they be related to the present? Could they be applied to the conflict of powers in a democracy? Or to the relation between countries?

- 8. Hume: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding***
How do we extend our knowledge of things beyond the present testimony of our senses, or the records of our memory? Analyse and discuss how we extend our knowledge.

Key points

(see Sections IV and VII.)

- Hume’s distinction between “relations of ideas” and “matters of fact”. All reasoning about “matter of fact” are concerned with the relation of cause and effect.
- The general form of the argument, is negative, as he states: “Each solution gives rise to a new question as difficult as the foregoing”.
- Experience is for Hume the foundation of all our reasonings and conclusions concerning the relation of cause and effect.
- But if we still carry on and ask, “What is the foundation of all conclusions from experience?” this implies a new question, which may be of more difficult solution and explication.
- Therefore, a good answer should identify and analyse problematic aspects of the concept of causation.

Discussion

- All the objects of human reason may naturally be divided into two kinds: “relations of ideas” and “matters of fact”. “Relations of ideas” refers to *a priori* knowledge. Matters of fact are known through the senses.
- We derive the principle of cause and effect from experience. But we cannot prove it.
- The impossibility of proving the principle of causality does not mean that we discard it; it means that the basic principle operating in human understanding cannot be demonstrated to be true. The reason for our acceptance of causality is custom or habit.
- Kant’s and Mill’s theories of causation can be made. Kant tried to give back to causality the character of a justified concept which Hume’s considerations had taken away from it. Since Mill it has been fairly common to explain causation one way or another in terms of “necessary” and “sufficient” conditions.

9. **Rousseau: *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality and Social Contract***

Explain and discuss how Rousseau accounts for the transition from the idyllic state of nature to the establishment of the social contract.

Key Points

- Rousseau examines human nature, society, and the origin of inequality in terms of a revolutionary, rather than a reactionary, fashion.
- In the state of nature, the solitary noble savage enjoys independence, satisfaction and self-sufficiency. Personality is totally integrated and harmonious with the environment.
- Idyllic state of nature is one of natural plenty and characterized by *amour de soi*.
- The progression towards the formation of society is accompanied by a decline.
- Progressive disruption of the original natural state.
- The corruption of the original state is not natural. It is the direct historical result of choices and events leading to the invention of private property, the division of labour, the creation of the market and the associated social context. It is characterised by *amour propre*.
- The original state of nature is irrecoverable. However, the effects of inequality can be restrained by the careful design of government (e.g. social contract).

Discussion

- Rousseau's historical narrative is a critical alternative to the theories of Hobbes, Locke and theological explanations of human nature.
- The original state of nature displays physical aspects (e.g. the human being home among the beasts, natural strength, agility, etc.) and moral and metaphysical aspects (e.g. freedom vs. instinct, free will vs. natural understanding, self-improvement, etc.).
- The idyllic state of nature is characterized by a series of collective events and choices, the original state is corrupted (e.g. sexual desire, pity, love, competition, self-image, hatred, urge for power, etc.).
- The momentous events of a second phase are the emergence of private property followed by a division of labour, the invention of money and a reliance on expanding technology.
- Natural desires and the natural use of reason drive these historical events. There is no appeal to biological, supernatural or transcendental factors.
- The result is an artificial, unnatural situation of alienation, exploitation, subjugation and aggression. The history of civilization has been a history of the degradation of the human species – a cycle of physical, psychic, psychological, emotional and social oppression.
- Rousseau anticipates the continuing deterioration of the human condition and insists upon the construction of appropriate societal and governmental structures to deal with the situation.

10. Kant: *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*

Explain and evaluate how, given Kant’s reasoning, a person who behaves horribly (“the villain”) might have more moral worth than a person who is consistently nice.

The intention of this question is to allow candidates to capture the idea of intentionalism, one of the most important elements of Kant’s moral philosophy, and oppose it to consequentialism. It also asks candidates to evaluate the role of inclination and duty in the Kantian assessment of the moral worth of actions.

The foci of this question are the profoundly anti-consequentialistic orientation of Kant’s moral philosophy, its deontological focus on duty, and its reliance on a Platonic metaphysical distinction between body and mind, resulting in a prejudice against inclinations (animalistic, visceral), and a privileged estimation of reason (divine, mental). It also asks students to consider the importance of self sacrifice in the evaluation of a moral act.

Key Points

- The importance of intentions and unimportance of consequences for morality.
- The importance of good will (good intentions) for morality.
- The relationship between practical reason and a good will.
- The central importance of duty.
- Kinds of actions, with relation to inclination and duty:
 - actions which are inconsistent with duty
 - actions which conform to duty, and are done from inclination
 - actions which conform to duty, conflict with inclination, and are done from duty only
- Kant’s dependence on (questionable) teleological arguments, especially in relation to the role he assigns to instinct and practical reason.
- The role of reason in the development of a good will.
- The fundamental difference between “rational beings” and the rest of the world.
- Knowing anybody else’s intention (we cannot even know our own with absolute certainty), therefore we cannot assess the moral worth of the person who behaves horribly in comparison to the maxim of a person who is consistently nice.

Discussion

- The strengths and weaknesses of intentionalism versus consequentialism.
- A discussion of the idea of something having worth which cannot produce effects (the value of the “being behind doing”).
- The notion that **only** an act done from duty and against inclination can be morally good.

11. Nietzsche: *The Genealogy of Morals*

Explain and discuss why Nietzsche argues that the slave revolt in morality must be understood and appreciated in terms of *ressentiment*.

The intention of this question is to have candidates point out the shift from the initial essentially social and existential categories of good and bad based on the nobles' life enhancing values to what became the moral categories of good and evil of the slave morality, promoting denial of life. Candidates are expected to identify *ressentiment* as the slaves' creative force. In the discussion, candidates could point out the historic consequences of this shift.

Key Points

- The typology of the noble and the slave in social terms provides the primary ingredients for an explanation of the slave revolt in moral terms.
- The existential situation of the noble and the slave before the slave revolt presents us with the natural, necessary and innocent state of affairs during the period of a morality of custom. The socially *good (noble)*, the socially *bad (slave / common)*, and the *pathos of distance* between the two describe the situation.
- The encounter of the slave and the noble and the reversal of the master morality by means of the power of *ressentiment* present us with the creative transformation of the morality of custom into a morality of values. The morally *good (slave)*, and the morally *evil (noble)* and the values and morality of *pity (the Judeo-Christian morality)* are the results.
- *Ressentiment* is the reactive spirit of those denied the normal reaction of deeds.
- The spirit of the slave revolt in morality and the creative power of *ressentiment* endure in bad conscience, the ascetic ideal and the life-style characterised by them.

Discussion

- Lacking the physical power to act against what is perceived as the oppression of the masters, the slave attacks the master in effigy. The slave effects an imagined revenge and takes spiritual vengeance by reversing the values of the master morality to the advantage of the slavish type (e.g. *weakness* becomes a *virtue*, *impotence* becomes goodness, *restraint* becomes obedience, *cowardice* becomes patience).
- The creative spirit and energy of this attack against the masters is *ressentiment*, the undeniable awareness of perceived impotence coupled with *bad conscience*.
- To become operative and creative, *ressentiment* requires a factual or imagined hostile, external enemy. The required focus of *ressentiment* is primarily the master, but secondarily all of existence itself. *Ressentiment* falsifies in order to transform the object of hatred, casts blame in order to justify suffering, rationalises and spiritualises in order to give meaning to a meaningless life.
- The slave revolt in morality, powered by *ressentiment* provides a *feeling* of revenge and simultaneously a feeling of escape from the tedium of oppressive suffering.
- The morality of pity provides a world-view and value system that support and prolong the effects of the reversal of the noble values.
- *Ressentiment*, especially when turned against itself, finds further expression in the development of the feelings of sin and guilt, bad conscience, punishment and ascetic techniques.

12. Mill: *Essay on Liberty*

Mill presents two different means by which societies can exert control over someone's behaviour. Explain these ways and evaluate them.

In their answer, candidates are expected to describe legally and morally acceptable means to curtail freedom for the greater good of all. In doing so, it is expected that they will discuss the reasonableness of Mill's views on this issue.

Key Points

(see Chapter IV)

- First means – physical force in the form of legal penalties and economical restriction (*e.g.* taxation).
- Second means: moral coercion by public opinion for offences against decency.
- It is only justified to use any of these when faced with the need for self-protection and “to prevent harm to others”: the person's own good, either physical or moral is not sufficient warrant”, *i.e.* the protection of his/her freedom is worth the risk.
- The happiness of individuals endangering themselves is not sufficient warrant either.
- Importance of distinguishing that different standards apply to different groups of people: drunkenness is acceptable for the ordinary man but not for a policeman.

Discussion

- Mill's premise is that individuals will act freely and responsibly. Is his premise valid?
- Are the behaviour controlling means that Mill proposes sufficient to maintain order in a civilized society?
- Would society be justified to infringe upon individual's liberty to promote their happiness?
- Example: mandatory buckling of seat belt in vehicles.

13. **Freud: *Civilisation and its Discontents* and *Outline of Psychoanalysis***
Freud rejects the Marxist claim that property breeds aggressiveness. Discuss his views on private property and aggressiveness, and critically analyse them.

Candidates are expected to analyse how the mental apparatus accounts for the attachment we display towards private ownership. In examining the issue, they are meant to comment on Marx's view (briefly explained in the text) and discuss the source and function of aggressiveness. Examiners must bear in mind that it is unlikely that candidates will have studied Marx and that consequently they will display a weak understanding of his theory. Examiners should not penalize candidates for this, provided that what is referred to in the question is reasonably discussed.

Key Points

- If we were to abolish private ownership of material property, we would destroy human love of one of its objects of affection.
- We could probably never destroy the notion of property of persons (of a lover for *e.g.*); so it is impossible to foresee what the world would look like in the absence of this kind of property, but Freud supposes that aggressiveness would remain.
- Aggressiveness exists even in the absence of private property if we are to judge by anthropological evidence gathered from “primitive” societies.
- The origin of aggressiveness in libido.

Discussion

- Crimes of passion are among the most irrational acts a human can commit as they always involve the property of another human. Would that be evidence of Freud's theory?
- Freud's theory echoes Nietzsche's when it comes to repression of instincts. How do they parallel or differ here?
- What function could aggressiveness serve as an instinct?
- *Homo homini lupus*: Freud claims for himself this Hobbesian quote: do we really derive pleasure from subjecting our fellow humans to torture and pains? If not, how can we account for the endless historical episodes of it?

14. Buber: *I and Thou*

Buber claims that a community is not created because persons have feelings for each other. Explain his contention and critically assess it.

The intention of this question is to bring candidates to discuss the I-Thou model at the larger level of the communities. There are parallels that can be drawn between the individualistic relation and that of the community, but also the same pitfalls exist. How then do communities fare? The other important element in this discussion is Buber's contention that as time passes, the less possible it is for communities to allow the living relation.

Key Points

- A community is alive only where there is a living and reciprocal relation with others.
- Feelings do not generate communities. Feelings are experienced and belong to the It world. Feelings belong to the experience of living in a community: they are the results not the cause of the communal experience.
- Feelings do not produce a personal life.

Discussion

- Buber runs counter current to the North America paradigm of attempting to experience as many new facets of life as possible. Is he thereby suggesting that we impoverish our lives?
- What is the wisdom of not paying so much attention, as Buber suggests, to feelings? What should we pay attention to instead?

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

Explain and discuss Ortega y Gasset's claim that man has no nature, that man is not a thing, but a drama.

History as a System, Section VII

In this context “drama” should be identified as a synonym of “human life”. The whole argument of Ortega aims to characterize human life as an absolutely unique kind of reality. Ortega's idea is a response to the attempt of understanding the human being from the point of view of modern natural science, what he calls physical reason. Therefore the answers should develop these two lines of argument: characterization of the human life as such and explanation of the impossibility of conceiving it from the point of view of physical reason.

Key Points

- Human life is a “strange reality”, it is the basic reality, in the sense that to it we must refer all others, since all others, effective or presumptive, must in one way or another appear within it.
- Human life is not a thing. Things have their being. The stone can never be something new and different. This consistency, given and fixed once and for all, is what we customarily understand when we speak of the being of a thing. An alternative expression is the word “nature”.
- Man has no nature. Man is not his body, which is a thing, nor his psyche, conscience, or spirit, which is also a thing.
- Man is a drama – his life, a pure and universal happening which happens to everyone.
- Man is impossible without imagination, without the capacity to invent for himself a conception of life, to “ideate” the character he is going to be. Whether he be original or a plagiarist, man is the novelist of himself. Or, life is a “drama” that happens, and the “subject” of the drama would be its argument.

Discussion

- Discussion on the consequence of this claim: man has no choice but to be always doing something to keep himself in existence. Life is a task.
- The prodigious achievement of natural science in the direction of the knowledge of things contrasts brutally with the collapse of this same natural science when faced with the strictly human element. The human element escapes physico-mathematical reason. Human life is not a thing, does not have a nature.
- The mode of being is life, even as simple existing, is not a being already, since the only thing that is given us and that *is* when there is human life is the having to make it, each one for himself. Discussion could point out the existential nature of Ortega's view.
- Does being authentic to oneself matter for Ortega?

16. Wittgenstein: *The Blue and Brown Books*

Analyse and discuss Wittgenstein's claim that philosophy is a fight against the fascination which forms of expression exert upon us.

The Blue and Brown Books, p.27.

The question directly asks for the way in which Wittgenstein understands philosophical activity in connection with his conception of language during roughly speaking, the second period of his philosophy. In philosophy, we are constantly misled by grammatical similarities which mask profound logical differences. So we ask questions which are intelligible when asked of certain categories of things, but which make no sense or a very different sense when asked of things that belong to a different category. Philosophical questions are frequently not so much questions in search of an answer as questions in search of a sense.

Key Points

- Wittgenstein's philosophical method was to lead any philosophical theory back to the point where it originated. Grammatical problems seem to be tough and ineradicable, because they are connected with the oldest thought habits, *i.e.* with the oldest images that are engraved into our language itself.
- Philosophy has a double aspect. Negatively, it is a cure for the diseases of the intellect. Philosophical problems are symptoms of conceptual entanglement in the web of language. More positively, philosophy is a quest for a perspicuous representation of segments of our language which are a source of conceptual confusion.
- When we compare language with a calculus proceeding according to exact rules, we are assuming a very one-sided way of looking at language. For in general we don't use language according to strict rules – it has not been taught us by means of strict rules, either.

Discussion

- Three main lines of argument could be developed: explanation of why language fascinates us, Wittgenstein's understanding of philosophical activity, and his (mainly the second) conception of language.
- Some ideas more developed in his later work (*e.g.* language games) can be accepted as part of a very good answer.
- Philosophical problems arise primarily out of misleading features of our language, for our language presents very different concepts in similar guise. To be red is a property some things have and other things lack, but is existence a property some things have and others lack?
- Two main examples are considered by Wittgenstein: Socrates' question "What is knowledge?" and Saint Augustine's "What is time?". In the second case, solving this puzzle will consist in comparing what we mean by "time measurement" ~ (the grammar of the word "measurement").

17. Arendt: *The Human Condition*

Explain and discuss why Hannah Arendt believes that an appreciation of what she calls *vita activa* helps us to understand the human condition.

This question intends to make candidates examine *vita activa*, a key concept for the understanding of the human condition, especially in its political context. A contrast between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* should be discussed as well as the impact of *vita activa* in contemporary life.

Key Points

- *Vita activa* is a rich term for understanding the human condition, especially in its political context.
- *Vita activa* designates three fundamental human activities: labour, work and action. These activities characterize human life and exist in a rich inter-relationship.
- *Vita activa* is rooted in the world of men, women and of manufactured things.
- Tensions and interplay between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* have existed throughout human history and can help us appreciate the human predicament.
- Imbalance among the three activities of *vita activa* or an alteration of the hierarchy of the three elements can produce and/or be an indication of alienation from the self and from the human condition.

Discussion

- *Vita activa* includes three activities: **labour** that corresponds to the biological processes of natural life itself (*animal laborans*); **work** that corresponds to worldliness – an artificial world of things (*homo faber*); **action** that corresponds to the realm of plurality and contact amongst individuals (*inter homines esse*). Is Arendt’s analysis effective and convincing?
- These activities are interconnected with birth and death, natality and mortality. Do they adequately account for the human condition both in terms of what each individual *receives* and what all individuals *create* and do they show how we are influenced by and influence the human condition?
- How does the human condition transcend human nature and why does it not exhaustively account for what we do, and cannot absolutely define who we are?
- Dynamic activity, especially the *speech-act*, originally characterised human life.
- The initial Aristotelian view of free *action* (superior to *labour* and *work*) in the political sphere eventually gave way to a view of *contemplation* as the only truly free way of life (*vita contemplativa*). This shift in emphasis tended to denigrate praxis, especially in the political arena, in favour of a tradition of pure thought, contemplation and reflection about things removed from the concrete human condition.
- A levelling out of the values of labour, work and action as equal in human life and/or a disturbance in the hierarchy existing among these activities are indications of alienation.
- Tensions between a sense of eternity and immortality, the public and private realms, and personal, social and political activity transforms our understanding of persons as active, free political beings into a view of them as clients receiving benefits from the state.
- The modern age has brought about a series of transformations in the dialectical tension existing between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* and has altered our understanding of the human condition and our place/role within it:
 - Thoughtful reflection displaced by an emphasis on process and means.
 - Victory of *homo faber* and the ideas of fabrication, productivity and creativity.
 - Defeat of *homo faber* and the elevation of the principle of the “greatest happiness for the greatest number”.
 - Victory of *animal laborans* and natural life: the secularisation of the human condition, loss of faith, and the loss of the sense of immortality.
 - Alienation and a separation of knowledge (know-how) and thought (reflection).

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

Is the ethics of ambiguity individualistic? Using your own examples, justify your answer.

The intention of this question is to bring candidates to make a judgment on the value of existentialism as a moral theory. Though de Beauvoir touches on the issue in the book, it remains a somewhat difficult question. A contrast with egoism as moral theory would be interesting.

Key Points

- Definition of ambiguity: avoiding bad faith, honesty to one's self and one's project, recognition of one's inalienable freedom: I will stand free confronting my choices and accepting whatever responsibilities follow.
- It is individualistic in the sense that it grants an absolute value to the person as an individual: he only can determine his existence.
- Individualistic also in that it opposes all forms of totalitarianism that fail to recognize the individual in the name of the Man.
- However, as the individual cannot realize himself in isolation from others, it is not a solipsism: we need each other. Therefore, man has to go beyond himself.

Discussion

- De Beauvoir argues that existentialism does not offer, as other philosophies have, a consoling evasion from reality. It thrusts me in the midst of active life. I must engage myself in my life, because of my absolute freedom. Are existentialists contradicting themselves in saying that we are absolutely free and yet we must choose?
- As a natural reaction, we do not like ambiguity. We want clarity and resolution. By calling her morals "ethics of ambiguity", what is de Beauvoir achieving?
- Is the "ethics of ambiguity", in its individualistic nature, a form of ethical egoism? De Beauvoir would argue not necessarily, though it does leave room for it.

19. Rawls: *A Theory of Justice*

Analyse and discuss Rawls' conception of equal liberty of conscience.

A Theory of Justice, Chapter 4, section 33.

Rawls' analysis of equal liberty of conscience deepens his discussion of the first principle of justice. A general statement of the first principle of justice reads as follows: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for others. Although answers could and should consider the relation of equal liberty of conscience to the more general topics such as the first principle or the original position, good answers should be focused on the specific issues discussed in Rawls' examination of equal liberty of conscience.

Key Points

- The intuitive idea of equal liberty of conscience is to generalize the principle of religious toleration to a social form, thereby arriving at equal liberty in public institutions. The parties, *i.e.* the social agents, must assume that they may have moral, religious, or philosophical interests which they cannot put in jeopardy unless there is no alternative. They regard themselves as having moral or religious obligations which they must keep themselves free to honour. These obligations are self-imposed.
- Persons in the original position are not to view themselves as single isolated individuals. To the contrary, they assume that they have interests which they must protect as best they can and that they have ties with certain members of the next generation who will also make similar claims.

Discussion

- The parties must choose principles that secure the integrity of their religious and moral freedom. The question they are to decide is which principle they should adopt to regulate the liberties of citizens in regard to their fundamental religious, moral, and philosophical interests.
- The initial agreement on the principle of equal liberty is final. Equal liberty of conscience is the only principle that the persons in the original position can acknowledge. They cannot take chances with their liberty by permitting the dominant religious or moral doctrine to persecute or to suppress others. Nor on the other hand, could the parties consent to the principle of utility. In this case their freedom would be subject to the calculus of social interests and they would be authorizing its restriction if this would lead to a greater net balance of satisfaction.
- The notion of equal right is well known in one form or another and appears in numerous analyses of justice, for instance the principle of an equal right to freedom is commonly associated with Kant and can also be found in J. S. Mill's *On Liberty*. Therefore, the answer could include a discussion with these or similar positions.
- Is it the case that once the parties consider these matters, the case for the principles of justice is strengthened?

20. Feyerabend: *Farewell to Reason*

Assess Feyerabends' claim that "... practical relativism (which overlaps with opportunism) concerns the manner in which views, customs, traditions different from our own may affect our lives".

The intention of this question is to show how Feyerabend draws our attention to the threat posed by modern, powerful, industrialized societies to smaller, perhaps less-developed societies. Structures of reason and rationality are not the sole criteria to decide the value of cultural institutions. At the same time he wishes to challenge us to re-evaluate our understanding of cultural pluralism and ethnic variety. Feyerabend's main claim is that the preservation of cultural identity does not exclude the exchange of views from cultures different from one's own. Finally, we must appreciate that the members of a culture decide what is best for that culture.

Key Points

- Dominant western, rational, industrialised, developed cultures and societies threaten multicultural pluralism and ethnic variety.
- Relativism rejects the promotion, dissemination, and imposition of the truths, values, customs, beliefs of one culture upon other cultures. It promotes a respect and appreciation of the rich variety of cultural expressions each useful in its indigenous context.
- Opportunism supports the relativistic position in that it admits of the reality of selective cultural exchanges on the basis of utility and appeal.
- Practical relativism builds on the opportunistic premise by suggesting that each culture will benefit in the short and long runs by a practical (opportunistic) exchange of cultural data. Absolutism in the interpretation of cultural data is rejected.
- Practical relativism has implications in the existential, political, epistemological and aesthetic realms for each of the cultures involved in genuine interplay.

Discussion

- Practical relativism examines the actual ways truth, meaning, belief and value systems affect our lives in both factual and normative ways.
- Practical relativism insists that any group (society) can learn from the beliefs of other groups (societies) no matter how strongly a group holds to its own perspectives.
- Practical relativism argues that no specific view "de facto" overrules other views. Moreover, values, facts, or methods can never support the superiority of one view (e.g. the scientific view) over other views (e.g. folk medicine).
- Practical relativism defines conflicts emerging between differing views as conflicts of *values*, not conflicts of *information*. It is never a question of rationality vs. irrationality.
- These conflicts can be resolved by power (forceful imposition), theory (imposition of abstract views of specialised expert groups) or open exchange (interests of all parties enter into practical dialogue).
- Practical relativism facilitates political consequences. Authentically free societies are inspired by a relativism that insures equal opportunity and equal right to all traditions.
- Practical relativism puts the open exchange of ideas and beliefs before the citizens directly involved and not into the hands of abstract agencies or distant experts. Matters of truth and reality are decided locally.

21. Foucault: *The History of Sexuality*

Explain and discuss Foucault's view that sexuality is not a "natural" fact about persons but rather a social construct.

This is the most central theme of the *History of Sexuality I. The Will to Know/edge (HS)*. It runs throughout the book and it is elaborated on. It is a social constructionist view.

Key Points

- Key terms that might need elucidation: "sexuality", "natural fact", "social construct", the concepts of "knowledge and power" as Foucault understands them, *i.e.* power as a positive, productive force, the complex of power/knowledge, discourse (more implicit).
- "Sexuality" has come to denote one's sexual nature, one's instincts, desires, impulses, behaviours; it goes so deep and it is so important that it has come to characterize the self, the whole being, identity; it is a hidden, latent principle which is thought to be responsible for a great number of things (traits of the self, psychological features, physical health, mental health, dangerousness or sociability, well-being).
- "Natural" or biological fact: sexuality is a given, it is a fixed and universal trait of an unchanging human nature.
- Foucault argues that sexuality is socially constituted through the workings of power/knowledge; but, that the latter conceal their workings by reifying sexuality, "naturalizing" it, disconnecting it totally from its social production and the practices/techniques that constituted and determined our understanding of it. (See Discussion)
- "Power/knowledge": a key term in Foucault. Following Nietzsche he does not think that there is any "disinterested" form of knowledge; knowledge constitutes its objects; by choosing certain categories and classifications in which to describe its subject matter it constitutes them as objective characteristics of the thing.
- Power is a central concept; it is not merely "repressive" blocking the sexual force inside us, censoring discourse on sex. It is productive of sexuality. Through knowledge, learned discourses, practices, technologies, confession, the training of bodies, surveillance, *normalization*, it constitutes sexuality.

Discussion

- What needs discussion is the social construction of "sexuality", what we are to understand by it. Elucidation of it. Examples are useful here (like those mentioned above).
- Not just sexuality is constructed, but the subject, the self. (Difficult point)

Elaboration: The ultimate vision behind Foucault's detail is that a rational technical / scientific knowledge, which sees sexuality as a biological force (and produces scientific "truth") is not at all "neutral", but exercises at the same time power and normalizes subjects.

- Feminists have used this idea of a socially constructed sexuality to explain dominant perceptions of women's sexuality (as passive *etc.*), and the asymmetrical relations of power pervading and constituting sexuality in society.
- Is sexuality totally determined by dominant systems of power / knowledge? Are we docile bodies totally managed by bio-power, whose sexuality is formed by dominant discourses?

22. Putnam: *Reason, Truth and History*

Putnam opposes the externalist perspective to the internalist one. Evaluate Putnam's contrast of these perspectives.

Key Points

- The externalist perspective = the perspective of metaphysical realism. It perceives the world as it is: “the world consists of mind-independent objects”.
- This is “God’s eye” point of view.
- Philosophers from the internalist perspective hold that there is more than one “true theory or description of the world”.
- Each perspective entails different theories of truth: externalists hold truth as correspondence; internalists hold truth as coherence with our system of beliefs.
- Internalism is not a facile relativism.

Discussion

- Is the discussion proposed by Putnam on Berkeley and Kant sufficient to justify these perspectives?
- What other view(s) do you think Putnam should have considered?
- Does this division in two perspectives help with respect to epistemology?

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

“Self-fulfillment without regard to the demands of our ties with others or to demands from something other than human desires is self-defeating.” Explain and discuss Taylor’s position.

The Ethics of Authenticity, Chapter 4 (“Inescapable Horizons”), p. 35.

In Taylor’s call to face the moral and political crises of our time, his account of authenticity and self-fulfillment are fundamental. The ethic of authenticity is something relatively new and peculiar to modern culture. The starting point of his development could be seen in the eighteenth-century notion that human beings are endowed with a moral sense, an intuitive feeling for what is right and wrong.

Key Points

- Things take on importance against a background of intelligibility. This is called a horizon. One thing we can not do, if we are to define ourselves significantly, is suppress or deny the horizons against which things take on significance for us. This is the kind of self-defeating move frequently being carried in our subjectivist civilization.
- Defining myself means finding what is significant in my difference from others.
- The sense that the significance of my life comes from its being chosen – the case where authenticity is actually grounded on self-determining freedom. It depends on the understanding that, independently of my will, giving shape to my own life is something significant.
- The ideal of self-choice supposes that there are other issues of significance beyond self-choice.
- The agent seeking significance in life, trying to define him or herself meaningfully, has to exist in a horizon of important questions.
- I can define my identity only against the background of things that matter. Only if I exist in a world in which history, or the demands of nature, or the needs of my fellow human beings, or the duties of citizenship, or the call of God, or something else of this order, can I define an identity for myself that is not trivial.
- Authenticity is not the enemy of demands that emanate from beyond the self; it presupposes such demands.

Discussion

- Arguments concerning the deception of a subjective, “narcissistic” self-fulfillment which disregards the demands of our ties with others or the demands from something different beyond the self.
- An analysis of the sources of authenticity (Rousseau, Kant and Marx can be accepted), but the discussion of the concept of “horizon” should be included.
- Does Taylor successfully avoid egoism when promoting authenticity?

24. Nussbaum: *Poetic Justice*

Analyse and discuss Nussbaum's defence of emotions as a contribution to public rationality.

Poetic Justice, Chapter 3.

Nussbaum identifies her main concern by means of Walt Whitman's point of view, who wrote that the literary artist is a much-needed participant, and that the poet is "the arbiter of the diverse," "the equalizer of his age and land". Whitman's call for public poetry is, she believes, as pertinent to our time as it was to his. Therefore, she questions Plato's banishment of literary artists from the public realm and presents a defence of the emotions and their contribution to public rationality. Although candidates could legitimately develop her argument in a general way, the main point of the question is focused on the specific discussion on the possible rational role of emotions.

Key Points

- A general argument could point out: (a) in today's political life there is an excessive reliance on technical ways of modelling human behaviour, especially those that derive from economic utilitarianism. These models frequently prove incomplete as a guide to political relations among citizens; (b) storytelling and literary imagining are not opposed to rational argument, but can provide essential ingredients in a rational argument. The literary imagination is an essential part of citizenship.
- A novel like *Hard Times* is a paradigm of the education to public rationality by means of emotions. Emotions can sometimes be rational; emotions of sympathy, fear, and so on, constructed by a literary work such as *Hard Times* are good candidates for being rational emotions.
- The contrast between emotion and reason has become a commonplace of public discourse. Objections to emotions: (a) emotions are in a normative sense irrational; (b) emotions are very closely related to judgments but the problem is that the judgments are false; (c) emotions focus on the person's actual ties or attachments, especially to concrete objects or people close to the self; (d) emotions are too much concerned with particulars and not sufficiently with larger social units, such as classes.

Discussion

- Does Nussbaum successfully argue for the integration of emotions to public discourses?
 - Considerations regarding the objections: (a) emotions, whatever else they are, are partly ways of perceiving; emotions enable the agent to perceive a certain sort of worth or value (b) emotions are also intimately connected with certain beliefs about their object; (c) the reader of novels, receives a moral formation; (d) in a realist novel such as *Hard Times*, there appears the full world of human effort, that "real substance" of life within which, alone, politics can speak with a full and fully human voice.
 - Adam Smith's conception of the judicious spectator offers a way to evaluate emotions. He uses literary readership (and spectatorship at dramas) to illustrate the stance, and the emotions, of the judicious spectator. He attaches considerable importance to literature as a source of moral guidance.
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