

MARKSCHEME

May 2007

PHILOSOPHY

Higher Level and Standard Level

Paper 2

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1. Lao Tzu: *Tao Te Ching*
Explain and discuss the notion of no action (*wu-wei*).

An analysis of the key concept of *wu-wei* is invited in the context of the Tao. The difference between the notion of *wu-wei* and mere inactivity or immobility might be developed.

Key points

- Lao Tzu teaches that all striving is futile and counterproductive. One should try to do nothing: *wu-wei*. *Wu* means ‘non-being’, and *wei* means ‘unnatural’ action. Thus, *wu-wei* implies that we should refrain from doing unnatural actions (like straining in order to fulfil our desires) and we should have spontaneous behaviours.
- Thus *wu-wei* does not mean that we should literally do nothing. Instead, it invites us to discover and follow natural forces. We should effortlessly adhere to the inherent flow of events, and avoid every opposition against the natural order of things (*Tao*). Spontaneity, not immobility, is thus the key concept to be underlined.
- Therefore, Lao Tzu invites us to do two things: first, we should learn to master our circumstances by understanding their true nature or most important element. Second, we should endeavor to shape our actions in accordance with this true essence of things.

Discussion

- There is an interesting ‘loop’ in the philosophy of Lao Tzu. On the one hand, he rejects the attempts to strictly regulate society and life, and counsels instead to turn away from it to a solitary contemplation of nature and *Tao*. On the other hand, he emphasizes that by doing so we could ultimately harness the powers of the universe. By ‘doing nothing’ one could ‘accomplish everything.’ Is this ‘loop’ a problem or an advantage of Lao Tzu’s philosophy?
- Might Taoist philosophy be a good guide to rulers? Does it advise them how to govern their countries? Could we consider Taoism, in some sense, a peculiar political philosophy?
- Lao Tzu is convinced that ‘the men of old’ led their lives more in accordance with the *Tao*: they knew and practiced the *wu-wei* more perfectly than people do nowadays. According to our historical knowledge, is this view of Lao Tzu sound?
- According to Lao Tzu, human happiness consists in understanding and acting in harmony with the underlying reality of the Tao, and this is attained through a frugal, simple and peaceful way of life, not seeking after power, wealth or fame. Comparisons with other philosophers that hold similar views about happiness might be made *e.g.* Plato, Buber, Epicurus, Diogenes.

2. Confucius: *The Analects*

Explain and evaluate the relationship between ritual and morality.

The question invites a discussion of the role and importance of ritual and specific behaviours in man and the degree to which this might override the actual meaning and intent of the action.

Key points

- The difference between attitude and action, that is *Jen* (attitude), which is goodness and love and *Li* (action), which is moral discrimination and ideal conduct.
- The definition of ritual depends on two elements; its type (*e.g.* hand washing or renting of clothes) and purpose (*e.g.* expression of honour or hygiene).
- There is a difference between Ritual as tradition and Ritual as a doctrine *i.e.* the practice of long term custom compared to invented dictated rules
- Correct attitude is, according to Confucius, based on intuition. For him attitude is conscious not unconscious.
- The definition of morality is an acceptable agreed code of behaviour. It leads to *Jen*.
- The Gentleman (*Chui Tin*) is also defended and defined by behaviour; the idea that he is both a person who has certain morals and manners (rituals), while also describing him as a member of a certain class.

Discussion

- Whether action or attitude prevails in nature. Is there a difference between conduct and action?
- Does the action of the gentlemen reveal his true attitude? If the attitude is wrong does it invalidate the action?
- How far can ritual itself show the highest ethical standards?
- Whether some restrictions on action reflect cultural issues or cross cultural issues of implied politeness. If Confucius's idea of morality is reduced to reasonableness (for Confucius this refers to *Jen*), is it at the expense of universality?
- Does Confucius really explore morality/good acceptable behaviour or merely a façade, an acceptable agreed way of behaving? To what extent does he really want to get to the motive behind the action? With too many rituals does the purpose of the action get lost?
- How far is morality merely patterns of behaviour?
- Does Confucius go too far in relating even knowledge to ritual?

3. Plato: *The Republic*

Evaluate the extent to which living a life according to moral principles is necessary for the construction of the just city.

The question firstly asks for a general assessment of the relations between morality and political life, and secondly gives an opportunity to analyse and develop specific arguments for Plato's political or moral philosophy, including their connection with Plato's general philosophy.

Key points

- The epistemology and metaphysics of forms have a key role in Plato's political philosophy. Furthermore, understanding of forms, and above all of the good, keystone of the system of forms, is thus the essential prerequisite of political order, and in this way it introduces a moral element in that order.
- The ideal or just city, or some approximation to it, and the institutions which control the life of its elite governing class could only become a practical possibility if philosophers were to acquire political power, or rulers that engaged in philosophy.
- In turn, this requires moral conditions in the rulers. The rulers will be philosophers because only philosophy can issue the knowledge of the forms and of what is good in itself.
- The analogy of the cave depicts ordinary humanity as so shackled by illusions several times removed from the illumination of truth that only radical moral and intellectual conversion could redeem us.
- The philosopher-ruler whose emotions have been properly trained and disciplined by Plato's reforming educational programme, and whose mind has been prepared for abstract thought about forms by rigorous and comprehensive study of mathematics, is the only person with the knowledge and virtue necessary for producing harmony in society.

Discussion

- Was Plato's vision of a good society (which is ruled by philosopher-statesmen) really conceived as a blueprint for practical implementation?
- Does the grounding of the political life in moral principles lead to totalitarianism? Maybe the political and the moral are, and should remain, separated *c.f.* Machiavelli.
- Living a life according to moral principles might be a necessary but not sufficient condition for the construction of the just city.
- Plato's theory of the human psyche is related to morality and political life in many ways *e.g.* the opposing desires of reason, emotion and appetite render it all too liable to the internal conflict which constitutes moral disease and to political conflicts between the different classes of a city.

4. Aristotle: *The Nicomachean Ethics*

Explain and assess Aristotle's argument that prudence is the correct principle in moral conduct.

This question invites an explanation on how one of the intellectual virtues (prudence, or practical wisdom) is the correct principle when judging what the appropriate action might be when making an ethical decision.

Key points

- For Aristotle, prudence was characterised by being an intellectual virtue; it is not concerned with necessary things (Science), nor with production or skills (Art), but is a rational deliberation in the sphere of action. It is an expression of the calculative part of the soul.
- Prudence is a quality held by those who manage States or households. In managing political institutions, prudence has two aspects: legislative, and particular circumstances.
- The virtue of a thing is related to its proper function, and the function of the calculative intellect is to arrive at the right conclusion that corresponds to the right desire.
- To fully perform their function humans depend upon a combination of prudence and moral virtue; moral virtue ensures the correctness of our goals and prudence ensures the goodness of our means in attaining these goals.

Discussion

- Is there any philosophical value in the early assumption in Aristotle's argument *i.e.* that the virtue of a thing is related to its proper function? Do humans have a proper function or set of functions?
- Aristotle favours prudence as the correct principle because of its relation to the rational part of the soul and so cannot be biased by pleasure, but is there anything wrong with our aims being dictated by pleasure?
- Aristotle advises that to act toward the mean in some circumstances might involve going against your own judgment – does this imply that individual experience is ultimately the best guide to correct moral conduct?
- Is Aristotle's mean – that action should not be excessive or deficient in context – a principle that always brings happiness, or ensures a good life?

**5. Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae*
Explain and evaluate Aquinas's view on free will.**

Answers are expected to explain and critically assess Aquinas's position concerning free will, which among others can be identified in questions 82 and, especially, 83.

Key points

- Free choice is an activity that involves both our intellectual and volitional capacities, as it consists in both judgment and active commitment to one of the possibilities that our judgment shows us as plausible.
- We could say that free will is the motor (efficient cause) of our intellectual capacities.
- According to Aquinas our nature determines us to some extent as long as we pursue some general good ends (e.g. happiness). These we will of necessity not freely.
- Freedom enters the picture when we consider various means to these ends, none of which appear to us either as totally good or as the only one that will bring us that end. There is, then, free choice of means to our ends.

Discussion

- Aquinas makes some interesting comparisons between the intellectual and volitional capacities, in order to determine which one has more 'dignity'. He concludes that our intellect is in this sense superior to our will. What is the meaning of this superiority? Is this a proof of Aquinas's intellectualism?
- Is Aquinas's view of free will compatible to today's scientific discoveries? A discussion could be developed between Aquinas's ideas and the views of philosophers with totally different ideas about free will (like Freud, Marx, Nietzsche...).
- There is a curious paradox in the picture of free will designed by Aquinas. On the one hand, he states that we are free but, on the other, he states that we are necessarily and absolutely determined to strive after the greatest good (i.e. God and happiness). Is this a real freedom, if we cannot choose our ends? A comparison with a liberal political notion of freedom could be made.
- Some people think that real freedom comes when we do not pay attention to our intellectual reason. Others consider that, in order to be really free, one must forget all kinds of ethical and legal rules.

6. Descartes: *Meditations*
Explain and evaluate Descartes's position on certainty.

This question explores different Cartesian arguments relating to the possibility of attaining certainty.

Key points

- Descartes's argument of being deceived by the interpretation of sense data
- The idea that thinking is an action of the mind and therefore might have a greater degree of certainty
- The definition of certainty in Descartes's terms; an idea which cannot be questioned or challenged because it is implanted by God
- Reasons why Descartes needed to have certainty. Descartes hoped to arrive at unchallengeable information/knowledge of himself and the world so as to form the basis for further knowledge claims

Discussion

- The ambiguity of 'I think therefore I am'. Is the '*cogito*' an inference?
- The problem of the 'I' in 'I am' being already in the 'I' of 'I think'
- Whether the referencing merely implies logic which may not be certain
- Does merely doubting produce real assurance? Because I doubt 'I', does it bring one to certainty of something to a greater or different extent?
- Does introspection see anything beyond thoughts? You may not be able to see the self – the issue of self-perception does not eliminate problems of interpretation. Does this lead to degrees of uncertainty?
- The '*cogito*' is based on memory. Are memories certain?
- Does Descartes anticipate this criticism by introducing proof of God to underpin this argument, therefore certainty is not finally based on the *cogito* but on God?
- Can one doubt everything and then have a position that one thing cannot be doubted?
- Can the introspection that might produce certainty be shared? If not then is it pointless to seek public validation of certainty *i.e.* to try and create objectivity?

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

“Liberty in the state of nature is freedom from any constraint but the moral law of nature. Under government, it is freedom from the arbitrary will of another man, and from any human rule but the standing rule common to everyone of that society.” Explain and discuss.

This statement explicitly relates to some of the main concepts of Locke’s political philosophy. It gives an opportunity to explain and evaluate main aspects of liberal ideology as formulated in the *Second Treatise*.

Key points

- For Locke the state of nature is the time of no civil law. Individuals are constrained only by the laws of nature.
- The affirmation of free and equal individuals, none of whom have any claim to jurisdiction over others, is an essential feature of the liberal conception of the state, as opposed to a feudal or patriarchal or absolutist one.
- Government is a human invention to preserve freedom and the basic rights of individuals and communities. Before government everyone has a right to punish the transgressors of natural law to such a degree as may hinder its violation.
- Within civil society itself a right of war or self-defense exists whenever the law cannot be effectively exercised, whether in the immediate circumstances of threatened harm, or when the administration of the law is manifestly corrupt, and itself employed to commit violence and injury.
- Government with legislative and executive powers comes into existence when people, by consent, resign their executive power of the law of nature to the public. Each individual member gives consent, but is thereafter bound to move with the majority.
- A subject’s ultimate obligation is to the supreme power, which is the legislature. This power is bound by the law of nature in its choice of means, establishment and promulgation of laws, for the preservation of its subjects and their property.

Discussion

- Relations between state of nature and civil society *e.g.* when men enter into society, they give up their equality, liberty, and executive power they had in the state of nature into the hands of the society. Only with the intention in every one to preserve themselves, their liberty and property better; for no rational creature can be supposed to change their condition with an intention to be worse.
- Within the tradition of natural law theory Locke enunciated a classic justification of a responsible, tolerant and broadly democratic political society which has remained a major resource for political theorists ever since.
- This line of argument and the grounding of property rights provide a useable ideological underpinning for the modern liberal capitalist state.
- Comparison and contrast of Locke’s position with other views (social, political, historical).

**8. Hume: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*
Explain and discuss Hume's view on liberty and responsibility.**

The concepts underpinning this question are how Hume defines the terms necessity and liberty, and how he then applies these concepts in apportioning blame and praise for actions. Answers might discuss Hume's view on necessity and liberty, and the consequences for the concept of responsibility.

Key points

- For Hume, the problem of free will was a semantic one. If the terms are properly defined, the problem disappears
- Hume's concept of necessity is that it exists as a psychological habit; everywhere in experience we see two events conjoined, so we feel that there must be a necessary connection between two conjoined events.
- As every effect has a cause (physical objects are conjoined) so to does every action have a motive (a cause). This is borne out by observation of human actions, and when we explain any action we do it in terms of motives.
- Liberty is the power of acting or not acting according to the determination of one's will. If you act without external influences, then the action is free.
- We can only be responsible for the actions we cause, so actions that are done without any external influences are said to belong to us and so these types of actions are capable of blame, praise *etc.*

Discussion

- Is Hume's semantic solution to the problem of free will and determinism a gross over-simplification of the issue and an avoidance of any substantial discussion?
- Is Hume wrong when he states that no action is without a motive, or that liberty is when we are free to act without external influences?
- Hume's definitions of liberty and necessity make it possible for him to say that any action that is free from external influences is a free act but that it is also determined, as every action has a motive. Does his compatibility only rest on semantics?
- Is necessity only a psychological habit, a feeling, a convenience of thinking?

**9. Rousseau: *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality and Social Contract*
Explain and discuss the role that private property plays in Rousseau’s political philosophy.**

The purpose of this question is to give the opportunity to outline and assess the meaning of ‘private property’ in the context of Rousseau’s philosophical ideas. Some of the main points of Rousseau’s *Discourse* may be arranged following the thread of the notion of ‘private property’. The further developments of this idea in the *Social Contract* might be discussed.

Key points

- Unlike most theories of ‘social contract’, Rousseau claims that when we were in the ‘state of nature’, people were happier and had more freedom than today: no work, no war, no language was necessary in order to have a satisfying life. There was no private property either.
- The situation changes completely when the idea of private property is introduced. Division of labour and leisure time led people to make comparisons between themselves and others, resulting in greed, competition and inequality.
- Those inequalities progressively increased: some have properties and others have to work for them. This was the origin of social classes.
- Government is created as a means to protect (by force) the properties of the higher classes from eventual attacks by the lower classes.
- Thus, the rule of government is established through a contract. This contract claims to guarantee protection for all, but in fact its true aim is to solidify the inequalities that private property has created.

Discussion

- Rousseau’s views about private property might be compared with the views of other social thinkers such as Locke, Hobbes or Marx.
- To what extent do the normative theories exposed in the ‘Social Contract’ (like the ideas of ‘social contract’, ‘general will’, *etc.*) give a solution to the problems of social life detected in the ‘Discourse on the Origin of Inequality’?
- Is Rousseau’s analysis historically sound? Did the evolution of human society develop precisely in the way that Rousseau claims that it did?
- Rousseau’s idea of a ‘noble savage’ in the ‘state of nature’, when no private property existed at all, has a long tradition in many spheres of our culture. An assessment of some of them might be useful in this context.

**10. Kant: *Groundwork on the Metaphysics of Morals*
Explain and evaluate Kant's concept of duty.**

The question invites an exploration of the notion of duty and the problems that come with trying to fulfil actions according to duty.

Key points

- Definition of duty in Kantian terms – moral actions for their own sake, that is receiving neither intrinsic nor extrinsic reward. Duty guided action is action which is universalizable, treats people as ends and is a universal law in the 'Kingdom of Ends'
- Distinction between action for duty's sake and action that fulfils duty. For Kant freedom is the condition for the possibility for duty.
- The issue of intrinsic worth – an action that will gain no reward either material or a feeling of self satisfaction
- The issue of volition, the reasons for an action, the relationship of the action to universalizability. We have duty because we are imperfect beings and have an imperfect will.

Discussion

- Is universalizability possible or justified as the only ground for modern norms?
- Do all people adhere to the same principle or does self interest or over riding interests interfere e.g. Freud's self preservation or sex?
- Can we really act on our 'will'?
- Does duty depend on social status?
- Does cultural conditioning really play a part for some e.g. for cannibals, eating people is good and right and proper!
- Does goodness equal duty? Can duty lead to an evil act?
- Does Kant use the same consistent criteria to justify examples?
- Might it be possible that Kant's deontological approach actually contains a teleological aspect (happiness) and therefore contradicts the appeal to 'universal law'?

11. Nietzsche: *The Genealogy of Morals*

Explain and evaluate the role of language and interpretation in Nietzsche's questioning the value of morality.

The First Essay sets out to investigate the origin of moral values through an etymological quest for the root meanings of ethical terms. The Third Essay presents itself as an exercise of interpretation: “What is the meaning of ascetic ideals?” Answers might start developing one of these lines of argument or different combinations or explorations of them.

Key points

- The argument from etymology seeks to establish the former primacy of aristocratic ethics. Ethical terms are derived from terms denoting social rank, which are in turn assumed to designate essential qualities. The ‘good’ themselves *e.g.* the noble and the powerful, were the ones who felt themselves and their actions to be good, that is, as of the first rank. They first gave themselves the right to create values, to coin the names of values.
- The right of the masters to confer names extends so far that one should allow oneself to grasp the origin of language itself as the expression of the power of the rulers: they say ‘this *is* such and such’, they put their seal on each thing and event with a sound and in the process take possession of it.
- The designations of ‘good’ coined in various languages led back to the same transformation of concepts: ‘refined’ and ‘noble’ in the sense of social standing is everywhere the fundamental concept, from which ‘good’ in the sense of ‘having a refined soul’, ‘noble’ in the sense of ‘superior in soul’, ‘privileged in soul’ necessarily developed.
- Moral actions or values have had different meanings at different times. For instance, the act of punishment has been at times a celebration of one's power, at times an act of cruelty, at times a simple ‘tit-for-tat’. Moral concepts need interpretation precisely because they are products of a complicated historical development
- Morality is always rooted in drives, instincts and will, and expressed by means of language, therefore it needs interpretation.

Discussion

- A belief in an absolute truth or an absolute anything is to give in to one particular meaning, one particular interpretation of a thing. It is essentially to allow oneself to be dominated by a particular will.
- The assertion that language is originated in will to power could be an exaggeration. Language has different functions. Exerting power by means of language is only one possible function of language. Moral discussion should go beyond analysis of language.
- Will to power as a common source to values and language.
- Nietzsche's analysis is based on an alleged historical reconstruction, which is only the record of semantic changes.
- Implications for the foundations of morality: Does Nietzsche's argument allow for any possible morality?

12. Mill: *Essay on Liberty*

Discuss and evaluate the claim that Mill over-estimates the value of free speech to society and individuals.

This question prompts an explanation of Mill's defence of absolute free speech as a benefit and necessity for a progressive and free society, and as a necessary element in the formation of a virtuous character in the individual.

Key points

- Mill's defence rests on four points:
 - (a) If any opinion is silenced, it may in fact be true. This denies the majority the benefit of the truth. Silencing opinion also assumes infallibility on the issue.
 - (b) Even if the new opinion contains error, it may be partially true and can act as a supplement to the prevailing truth.
 - (c) If the current opinion is wholly true it still needs re-justification to the majority otherwise it becomes a prejudice.
 - (d) Truths need opposing ideas to keep them alive and vital.
- Knowing different opinions leads to a refinement in character and in moral judgments. Individuals are better placed to know what is more useful for themselves and for others.
- The complete liberty to contradict and disprove opinions is the very condition that justifies us in assuming the truth for its action. On no other terms can a person have a rational assurance of being right.
- Mill's use of organized religion as an example of how a noble institution can lead to ignorance in its followers by silencing contrary opinions.

Discussion

- Does Mill discuss the harm and/or offence inflicted on others by speech? *E.g.* Holocaust denial, racial hatred. Are these examples legitimate criticism of Mill's argument for absolute free speech, or a criticism that ignores historical context?
- With the current focus of Western governments on terrorism, are governments justified in silencing speech they deem as dangerous?
- Is freedom of speech a necessary element for the moral progress of a society? Isn't the current social alienation in Western societies caused by a lack of firm and clear values and beliefs that everyone can hold?
- Has the proliferation of information in the modern technological age been of any long lasting social benefit?

13. Freud: *Civilisation and its Discontents* and *Outline of Psychoanalysis*

Explain and discuss the role that the notion of guilt plays in culture according to Freud.

The purpose of this question is to invite an explanation and assessment of Freud's view on guilt and culture, and the close relationship that exists between both of them.

Key points

- Individuals have two distinct drives, *Eros* and *Thanatos*. Both of them can be a danger to the existence of society if they are not properly managed. Love (*Eros*) has to be directed not only to a sexual partner, but also to the rest of society in order to bring them together. And aggressions (*Thanatos*) among the members of society might lead to a disintegration of this very society.
- Culture has the role of hindering these two dangers. The way of doing so is through a Super-Ego or moral consciousness that directs these drives to the individuals themselves. This re-direction of *Eros* and *Thanatos* generates guilt.
- Guilt, thus, is generated by culture in order to favour society. But in this process, the individual loses his/her personal happiness, as long as his/her drives are repressed.
- As long as society becomes more and more complex, the strength of guilt has to be increased in order to control more effectively the individual's drives. The fear of an external (social) authority has to be progressively substituted by the increasing fear of an internal (moral) authority (Super-Ego).
- The feeling of guilt remains unconscious most of the time, and is expressed through an internal dissatisfaction, a malaise that is inherent to the existence of human culture.
- The role of culture in the constitution of the psychic apparatus

Discussion

- Freud's approach to the analysis of culture might be compared with the approaches of other authors like Rousseau, Marx, Nietzsche
- Might guilt be a feeling that favours human happiness at times?
- To what extent is it true that complex and more civilized societies generate more dissatisfaction than small and primitive cultures?
- According to Freud, we have in ourselves a limited amount of love (*Eros*). Thus we have to detract a part of this *Eros* from sexual love, if we want to direct it to human, communal love. Love for a person and love for humanity are conflicting drives. Is this view of love sound? Are both kinds of love of the same kind, or do they refer to different facets of the human being?

14. Buber: *I and Thou*

Explain and discuss the claim that in developing an ‘I–Thou’ relationship with God, people will learn to love the entire world.

This question invites an evaluation of whether the ‘I–Thou’ relationship with God defines a new relationship which influences all others and sets a new standard which might generate love of/for all.

Key points

- Definition of all forms of ‘I–Thou’ and ‘I–It’, the former having actual or perceived mutuality while the latter is seen as an interaction without mutuality
- The degree to which the relationship with God is an ultimate relationship. Buber argues that the extreme expression of ‘I–Thou’ is founded in a mutual relationship with God
- The notion of the relationship with the whole world in Buber’s system of relationship. The argument that the world would be a better place if filled with ‘I–Thou’ interactions.
- Buber’s concept of love, based on mutuality and reciprocity.

Discussion

- Whether in encountering God man becomes more aware of his responsibility to all parts of the world
- Whether the encounter with God is an end in itself or a transforming experience
- How might duty cease and a loving responsibility arise?
- The degree to which Buber really fulfils the notion of ‘loving your neighbour as yourself,’ and care and trust for all
- The degree to which he might simply be naive in his understanding of relationships
- The degree to which Buber is trying to create a new spirituality to replace the inhuman activity of the mid 20th century
- Does he hope to change the world and create a new community – a holy community – can he cross faiths?
- Is Buber’s ‘Holy Man’ reclusive and unable to operate in the cut and thrust of the real world? Hence is Buber’s position merely an unachievable ideal?

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

Explain and assess Ortega's idea that human life should be understood 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. Answers might develop different lines of argument: (a) characterization of the human life as such, (b) explanation of the impossibility of conceiving it from the point of view of physical reason, (c) life from the point of view of historical reason.

Key points

- Human life is not a thing. Things have their being. And this signifies not only that they exist, that there they are in front of us, but also that they possess a given, fixed structure or consistency.
- 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 physic-mathematical reason. Human life is not a thing, it has no nature. The way to apprehend the uniqueness of human life is the 'historical reason', as opposed to the 'naturalist reason'.
- Human life 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.
- The most trivial and at the same time the most important note in human life is that man has no choice but to be always doing something to keep himself in existence. Life is given to us; we do not give it to ourselves, rather we find ourselves in it, suddenly and without knowing how. But the life that is given us is not given us ready-made; we must make it for ourselves, each one his own.
- Man has no nature. Man is not his body, which is a thing, nor his soul, psyche, conscience, or spirit, which are also things. Man is no thing, but a drama – his life, a pure and universal happening which happens to each one of us and in which each one in his turn is nothing but happening. The mode of being of 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.
- Human life as a 'task', we are always doing something; human life as a set of possibilities. 'Possibility' as a concept applied to human life means something special, different from every other concept or form of 'possibility'.

Discussion

- Ortega y Gasset's opposition between nature and history is only a new formulation of dualism.
- Natural, biological dimension, on the one hand, and social, cultural, historical dimensions, on the other, are interwoven in more subtle and complex ways than Ortega's too strong and too simplistic opposition.
- Ortega y Gasset's account is excessively orientated by a concept of nature originated in physics. His opposition between physical and vital reason depends almost exclusively on the development of these concepts in the modern European culture.
- Human beings are not always able to decide to make themselves according to a decision or a previous project.
- The concept of freedom implied in Ortega's claims could be philosophically analysed and assessed.
- Possible comparisons to other similar or different approaches e.g. Existentialism or Marxism.

16. Wittgenstein: *The Blue and Brown Books*

Explain and assess Wittgenstein’s statement that thinking essentially consists in operating with signs.

This question invites an explanation and assessment Wittgenstein’s view on the relations between language and thought, and also the conceptual problems that Wittgenstein finds in the traditional answers to a traditional philosophical problem.

Key points

- Wittgenstein points to the many confusions that are made when we think of thinking as a mental activity, or as a referral to mental objects, or when the truth of propositions is judged by their correspondence to some other substantive or universal item.
- Operating with signs means using language and knowing that signs are not of the same variety or kind. Their meaning and type depend on their context and use.
- The ‘language game’ view of meaning and reference *i.e.* a simplification of normal language to study the context, use and purpose of a word, and its relationship with other words, as an approach to understanding its meaning and to end confusion.
- Wittgenstein’s belief that traditional philosophy errs in its need for generality in its search for meaning, and that contemporary philosophy errs by using scientific models when attempting to solve philosophical problems.
- In his opinion we should study the grammar of philosophical proposition to find where misunderstandings occur.

Discussion

- Does this description of philosophical activity *i.e.* investigating the meaning of words within language games, make philosophy a purely descriptive activity? Does this adequately capture what philosophy is about?
- If meaning is never transparent or complete, does this mean that truth is a convention that is culturally determined?
- Can the meaning of moral terms be understood using Wittgenstein’s approach, or must one be silent on this issue?
- The other examples Wittgenstein uses to discuss the same point could be developed: perception of colour, the diviner, Other’s pains and the question of solipsism, what is time/knowledge.

17. Arendt: *The Human Condition*

Explain and assess Arendt's notions of labour and work.

Answers are expected to present and evaluate Arendt's key concepts of 'labour' and 'work'. In this context, it might be useful to show their mutual differences and similarities.

Key points

- Labour is limited to the demands of our biology, our natural condition, whereas work goes beyond this realm of nature by transforming it according to the plans and distinct intentions of human beings. Thus, work is specifically human, non-animal: *homo faber*. Labour, instead, is something that we share with animals: *animal laborans*.
- The results of labour are impermanent, perishable; they come to an end as soon as they are consumed. Work, instead, produces objects that remain, and thus can constitute a common heritage that endures between people and across time.
- Work is under the control of humans (as long as it depends on human intentions), and therefore it implies a certain amount of freedom. Labour, instead, is subject to nature and necessity.
- Labour (*i.e.* the satisfaction of the individual's vital needs) remains basically a private affair, whereas work is essentially public: it produces a common sphere that stands between human beings and unites them.
- Thus, the productions of work are the preconditions for the existence of a political community (although work is not the kind of human activity which corresponds to politics). This world created by work is threatened in modernity with extinction, as long as labour has come to dominate the public domain, and labour cannot provide a common sphere in which humans could look for their higher ends (labour's characteristic values are so 'impersonal' as productivity and abundance, and they lead to 'world alienation').

Discussion

- Is Arendt's diagnosis of 'world alienation' plausible today?
- Arendt privileges the value of work over that of labour. To what extent might this privilege be regarded as somewhat 'aristocratic' or 'academic'? Why is this hierarchy central to Arendt's purposes in *The Human Condition*?
- The different relations between labour and action and between work and action could also be discussed in this context.
- Arendt argues that Western philosophy has devaluated the *vita activa* in the benefit of *vita contemplativa*. Could we consider that Arendt's analysis, an abstract theoretical one, has this flaw?

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

Explain and evaluate the claim that we are totally and inexcusably responsible for our actions.

This question invites a judgment as to whether the secular approach to morals presented by de Beauvoir sets a new standard to measure moral actions by and whether such a standard is possible and appropriate in restricting our freedom.

Key points

- Secular morality does not eliminate responsibility. It might increase it.
- The community can create ‘laws’ which prescribe actions therefore the community imposes responsibility on the individual. This is a problem for de Beauvoir
- The notion of freedom within a secular community linked to responsibility, duty and rights; the interaction between the three
- The relationship with the Other in terms of individual actions, taking responsibility for interactions with the Other is perceived to be betterment

Discussion

- Whether the parallel to childhood notions of freedom is an effective argument to justify self/societal controls on humans. Is treating adults as children itself immoral?
- The degree to which we do take responsibility for the choices we make
- Whether the refusal to face ourselves is a rejection of responsibility
- The notion of ‘bad faith’ as refusing to face responsibility could be questioned
- Whether her two broad definitions of man – serious or nihilist is really valid and maybe simplistic, and could therefore be the wrong basis for conclusions drawn about moral behaviour.
- Whether the claim that passion is the foundation of ethical life. Does it lead to a generous caring disposition or does it lead to self-interest and exploitation?
- Is it self evident that my freedom is determined by the freedom of others?
- Is the whole position that she puts forward too abstract and divorced from real human interaction?

19. Rawls: *A Theory of Justice*

“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.” Explain and evaluate.

The statement is a provisional form of the first principle of justice that would be agreed to in the original position. This formulation, however, reflects a main idea to be analysed and discussed. The question implies the core of Rawls's argument: the basic notions of original position and justice as fairness.

Key points

- The original position is the appropriate initial *status quo* that insures that the fundamental agreements reached in it are fair. This fact yields the name ‘justice as fairness.’ Two principles of justice would be agreed in the original position.
- The principles of justice are not dogmatically based on absolute grounds, but they are teleological; as teleological principles they permit grounds for equal liberty and provide the strongest arguments for freedom. These principles primarily apply to the basic structure of society and govern the assignment of rights and duties and regulate the distribution of social and economic advantages.
- The basic liberties are given by a list of such liberties. Important among these are political liberty (the right to vote and to hold public office) and freedom of speech and assembly; liberty of conscience and freedom of thought; freedom of the person, which includes freedom from psychological oppression and physical assault and dismemberment (integrity of the person); the right to hold personal property and freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure as defined by the concept of the rule of law. These liberties are to be equal by the first principle.
- These principles are to be arranged in a serial order with the first principle prior to the second. This ordering means that infringements of the basic equal liberties protected by the first principle cannot be justified, or compensated for, by greater social and economic advantages.
- The two principles are a special case of a more general conception of justice: all social values – liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the social bases of self-respect – are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any, or all, of these values is to everyone's advantage. Injustice, then, is simply inequalities that are not to the benefit of all.
- The central ideas and aims of the conception of justice as fairness are those of a philosophical conception for a constitutional democracy. The basic liberties of a democratic regime are most firmly secured by the conception of justice as fairness.

Discussion

- It is difficult and perhaps impossible to give a complete specification of the mentioned liberties independently from the particular circumstances – social, economic, and technological – of a given society.
- Compatibility with a similar scheme of liberties for others could mean the acceptance of an already factually established situation of inequality.
- The general conception of justice is extremely vague and requires interpretation in relation to specific and concrete social and historical conditions. Abstraction or rationality as such can be advantageous for some social groups.
- To what extent is Rawls's conception of the original position and the principles, based on rationality and not in ideological assumptions, stemming from an historical concrete situation, and only reflecting the ideals of his time and type of society?
- Are the different forms of democracy the only social systems that can be rationally supported?

20. Feyerabend: *Farewell to Reason*

Explain and evaluate Feyerabend's epistemic relativism in the context of his views of democracy.

Feyerabend's concept of epistemological relativism underpins his notion of democratic relativism. Answers might explain and evaluate the relationships between these two concepts.

Key points

- Epistemic relativism: values are essential 'ingredients' to knowledge; opinions not tied to human traditions are outside human existence; opinions are objective in the sense that they are supported by a culture's traditions but without explicit reference to them
- Truth lies with the common experiences and opinions of the many, not in abstract theories of philosophers (R5)
- Feyerabend's metaphysical views: our experiences constitute our reality but not all worlds are equally preferable; a sick person inhabits a world where everything is sour, a healthy person lives in the same world and thinks it sweet; the opinions and beliefs of the majority in a democracy can improve the State, not the opinions of the experts.
- Democratic relativism: a political system based on liberty and also caters for plurality; characterised by common sense and tolerance. Man is the measure of all things (Based on R5 and R5b, stated in R7).

Discussion

- Is the democratic relativism that Feyerabend describes either a utopian vision, or a society ruled by the whims and fancies of the majority who shun the advice of 'experts'?
- Does the claim of 'one amongst many' imply an inherently self-contradictory position when it comes to any theory of knowledge? (The criticisms of Popper and Putnam on epistemic relativism and Feyerabend's response)
- Is Feyerabend correct when he suggests that the limits of my perceptions and experiences are the limits of my world?
- Is it false to suggest that experts and science have too much authority and value when it comes to contemporary social, moral, and political matters?
- Why should citizens in democracies be tolerant of groups within the democracy that wish to undermine it?

21. Foucault: *The History of Sexuality*

Explain and evaluate the role that art and science play in our understanding of sexuality according to Foucault.

Answers to this question could show an understanding of the role of art and science in Foucault's account of sexuality *i.e.* as explained through the two concepts of *Ars erotica* and *Scientia sexualis*.

Key points

- There have been historically two ways of viewing sexuality: *Ars erotica*, or 'erotic art', is the first of them, where sex is seen as an artistic activity and a special experience, not something shameful or dirty. It has to be secret only because this secrecy increases the pleasure it brings about.
- In Western society, especially from the 17th century onwards, a second way of viewing sexuality was created: *Scientia sexualis*, or 'science of sexuality.' It has its origin in something totally opposed to *ars erotica*: the confession. A huge interest in finding out the truth about sexuality arises, thus, and society tries to control more and more sexuality through a careful understanding of all its expressions.
- We can find in this attention to detail the reason sexuality is given such importance in our society. Making sexuality something sinful did not make it disappear, but instead it was reinforced and became something to be noticed everywhere. The enlightenment, curiously, reinforced this development.
- There was also an element of social control in all this. New power relations were created through *scientia sexualis*. Foucault does not consider power to be only a negative force (something or someone that prohibits), but also a positive (and omnipresent) phenomenon in all kinds of social relationships. In each different kind of relationship, power has its own specific features. New identities are created this way.

Discussion

- Foucault's position was an attempt to oppose the common view that the history of sexuality in Western society has been a history of increasing repression. Foucault confronted this view with the thesis that Western culture has been fixated with sexuality for a long time, and thus has made it omnipresent. A discussion and reflective assessment of these two opposing views might be possible.
- Might Foucault's position be useful for sexual minorities (*e.g.* lesbian, gay, bisexual) in their fight for recognition?
- Would it be possible to give *ars erotica* a central role in our society once more? Would it be advisable? Is it possible to increase simultaneously the importance of *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis*?

22. Putnam: *Reason, Truth and History*

Explain and discuss the claim that “meanings are not in the head.”

This question invites a judgment as to whether it is possible to have abstract meanings or whether ‘meanings’ must relate to the environment and to experience to gain meaning.

Key points

- Definition of scepticism, in general terms that is the challenging of the foundation and basis of all meaning and knowledge claims
- Putnam’s argument for the rejection of scepticism based upon semantic externalism. The view that the meaning depends upon the character of the external, causal environment
- Relationship of meaning and understanding to environment and how meaning seems to only come about by reference to the external
- The brain in the vat experiment *i.e.* Putnam’s attempt to show that thought experiments can prove that meaning is arrived at by external factors
- The argument of ‘*reductio ad absurdum*’ (*i.e.* the use of logic to create meaning without reference to reality can be nonsense) that Putnam uses to show that meaning without reference to the environment makes no sense.

Discussion

- Can meaning be anything more than a mental construct?
- Does scepticism reduce everything to absurdity or does it produce clarity?
- Does the brain in the vat argument negate scepticism because the argument is false and therefore does it follow that the overall position is false?
- Is it useful to reject all sense data only because empirical knowledge can be flawed, and therefore real meaning might come from a mental act?

23. Taylor: *The Ethics of Authenticity*

“The search for authentic self-fulfillment can become incoherent and self-defeating when it is tied to atomistic individualism, the overvaluation of instrumental reason and an alienation from public life.” Explain and assess.

The question asks for a general assessment of Taylor’s main argument. He distinguishes among three different strands of experience – individualism, instrumental reason, and subjectivism – intending to show how each of these contains both destructive and creative possibilities. Answers might explain and evaluate Taylor’s general position or more specific aspects of it.

Key points

- Our individuality is grounded in sociality. We only become capable of understanding ourselves and defining our identity through dialogue. We are dialogic creatures and cannot develop into individuals without interaction with others. Through dialogue we are able to exchange our ideas with others and construct our values and beliefs.
- Authenticity should be taken seriously as a moral ideal. To go along with this, one has to believe three things, all controversial: 1. That authenticity is a valid idea; 2. That one can argue with reason about ideals and about the conformity of practices to these ideals; and 3. That these arguments can make a difference.
- Authentic life is an ethical goal and peculiar to modern culture, stemming from individualism. Individualism comes from Descartes affirming the primacy of the person as self-responsible to find the truth. This morality is also anchored in romanticism. It is a ‘voice within’ or ‘the intimate contact with oneself’. Sources of authenticity are also Rousseau, Kant and Marx.
- The primacy of instrumental reason is a malaise of modernity. By ‘instrumental reason’ Taylor means the kind of rationality we draw on when we calculate the most economical application of means to a given end. Maximum efficiency, the best cost-output. Ratio is its measure of success.
- Deception of a subjective, ‘narcissistic’ self-fulfillment that disregards the demands of our ties with others, or the demands from something different beyond the self.
- Things take on importance against a background of intelligibility. This is called a horizon. One thing we cannot do if we are to define ourselves significantly is to suppress or deny the horizons against which things take on significance for us. This is the kind of self-defeating move frequently being carried out in our subjectivist civilization.

Discussion

- What is really at stake is a fair judgment on modernity, an assessment, a fine discrimination of both its nobility and ethical allure, on the one hand, and its self-destructiveness, and self-flattening and demeaning tendencies, on the other.
- Current thought seems to be that all lives are equal. Taylor believes this causes people to become self absorbed, and can bring about a loss of meaning in their lives. Is this the only possible outcome of this type of thinking?
- Can we distinguish among our wants from a qualitative point of view (and therefore can we want to have better wants)? If this is so, then we can conceive of freedom in ways other than absence of external constraint.
- Taylor opposes moral dimensions to economic and social phenomena. Is it realistic?
- Although Taylor states that moral authenticity is fundamentally dialogic in character, his view on authenticity, which is a main way to overcome instrumental reason, is still individualistic e.g. the notion of authenticity is too focused on the individual.

24. Nussbaum: *Poetic Justice*

Explain and evaluate Nussbaum's argument that a literary imagination is a necessary element in political and judicial decisions?

This question invites an evaluation of what Nussbaum calls fancy – imagination, wonder, and empathy, and how it is essential in the formation of human character and public rationality when making decisions.

Key points

- The literary imagination (fancy) is a subtle, sensitive understanding awakened and developed by stories that connect to our experiences; the characters and narratives embody moral positions and understandings and this sparks our interest.
- The alternative Nussbaum offers to fancy is pure utility; people are seen as either economic or one dimensional entities, and not as complex, sometimes irrational beings.
- The one dimensional utilitarian view of people is tied to a purely instrumental view of reason; this does not allow decisions that understand or value the position of individuals effected by these decisions
- Rational emotions are those which provide motives for moral conduct; they are an essential component for any conception of public rationality and are those same emotions of the literary imagination

Discussion

- Does empathy help in making laws? Is a level of disinterestedness (social and moral) necessary in ensuring that the laws apply to all fairly? How is a balance ensured?
 - Are the values Nussbaum finds in texts valuable for current moral dilemmas? *I.e.* 19th century bourgeois Western values. Is the subtle reading and understanding required to interpret these texts beyond the capacity of most people?
 - Is it possible to reconcile utilitarian valuations with transcendent concepts of normative ethics?
 - Does Nussbaum adequately address the scepticism of critics that claim that literary imagination is a force that cannot help address real problems in the real world?
-