



MARKSCHEME

May 2001

PHILOSOPHY

Higher Level & Standard Level

Paper 1

Paper Specific Guidance - Key points and Discussions

How to use these guidelines

The aim of the following guidelines is to give an indication to assistant examiners of the kind of responses to the questions the paper-setting team were anticipating when they prepared the examination papers.

They show that in the candidate's answer you should expect some relevant knowledge and some attempt to analyse or evaluate the theme or text under consideration.

However, they are not a prescriptive list of the points a candidate must include to be rewarded. Some candidates will make perfectly valid points that are not noted here or take a different approach to the topic. In all cases, therefore:

- *be open-minded to the candidate's answer and expect a variety of responses*
- *exercise your own judgement in deciding whether the candidate's answer is an appropriate response to the question.*

Section 1: Myself and Others

1. Who or what am I referring to when I am talking about “me”?

Key points

- Difference between asking who? and asking what?
- Difference between a simple grammatical way to identify myself (“I”) and expressing something about myself.
- Talking about me implies a communication with someone else. What difference does it make to me, if any, that someone is listening?

Discussion

- Is there a self at all? (*e.g.*: Hume's and Bhudda's denial of the existence of the self).
- “Je est un autre”, (Rimbaud): Am I a single entity or am I a multiplicity of beings with conflicting/complementary roles?
- interpretation of the question from the point of view of philosophy of language.

2. Can you be sure that your mother is not a robot?

Key points

- What is a robot?
- The mother: is she a special other? Is the mother the person who gave me life? and/or is the mother the person who raised me?
- What impact does this have on me? Am I also a robot?
- How can I verify this?

Discussion

- The behavioural sciences have shown that baby monkeys' needs are equally satisfied emotionally with a fabric-made mother substitute. Would the same be true of us?
- If I love my mother, does it matter whether she is a robot or not? Would my love be affected if I suddenly were to discover that she is a robot?
- Is the 'maternal instinct', if there is such a thing, an automatic (robotic) reaction?
- Assuming that I can answer definitively for my mother that she is not a robot, can I assume the same is true for others? (*e.g.*: my father, my brother, my friend, my neighbour, *etc.*)
- Would it not in fact be better in some instances (if not in all instances) if a perfectly well programmed robot took care of children? After all, there are mothers who neglect their children.

3. A great philosopher argued that young people often confuse the desire for friendship with real friendship because of their innate desire for friends. Explain and critically assess this proposition.

Key points

- Do we have an innate desire for friends? Could we live a good life without friends?
- What are the elements of a 'real friendship'?
- Can we know when a friend is a 'real friend'?
- Is this confusion typical of the young people and only of them?
- Is the cause for this confusion the desire for friends or the desire to escape solitude?
- Why do we seek friends?

Discussion

- Is it morally wrong to make this confusion? or simply emotionally bruising?
- Can we escape this error? How?
- The paradox of the innate desire for friends and the impossibility of escaping solitude.
- Is this desire for friends potentially leading me into being artificial?
- Is friendship a duty (as opposed to a desire)?
- The duties of friendship: telling the truth, loyalty, *etc.*
- Is the desire for friends different or similar to the desire for a life partner?

Section 2: Individuals and Institutions

4. Should the Law make special provision for the care of the disadvantaged? If so, why? If not, why not?

Key points

- What makes a person someone with a disadvantage? Examples.
- Are all persons with a disadvantage equally needy?
- What kinds of provisions are we talking about?
- Am I my brother's keeper?
- Is the law a mirror of the majority's sentiment or is it the nature of Law to protect such minority groups?

Discussion

- Who is behind the Law? the government?
- Who is responsible for a person with a disadvantage? The state, the Church, the parents, charitable private organisations, or the person him/herself?
- Is making such provisions a phenomenon of wealthy societies? or a fact of civilised societies? (*i.e.* in societies under duress, parents would kill a new born that was severely disabled)
- Is it necessarily a good that such provisions exist? Does it create dependency?
- The social consequences of such provisions as 'positive discrimination'.
- The social consequences of NOT making these provisions.

5. We generally speak of "Human Rights" and "duties of citizens". Would it not make more sense to speak of "Human Duties" and "Citizens' Rights"? Why?

Key points

- What is a citizen in liberal thinking?
- Human Rights as a moral provision added to legal obligations citizens have.
- It does not make sense to talk of Human Rights in a void. It only makes sense in a social and political context. Therefore wouldn't it make more sense to talk of citizens' rights?
- What do we mean by Human Duty? What would be an example of it?

Discussion

- Liberal thinking emphasises the notion of inalienable rights while communist thinking emphasised the duties of the citizens towards the State.
- It would be self-defeating for societies to cancel citizens' duties, they must be maintained.
- The example of immigrants: they have a human right to immigrate, yet they stress the citizens' duties. Could we defend the view that citizens should be granted the right to limit immigration.
- Should we change the way we look at Human Rights? Can we reconcile these two positions?

6. Is it a sign of weakness to condemn violence?

Key points

- Definition of violence.
- The nature and motivation of non-violence: fear, cowardice, masochism, weakness.
- Nature of sign: does a sign have a necessary connection to a state of affairs?

Discussion

- Paradox: are those who condemn violence actually stronger than those who use it? Are those who are violent trying to cover up their true weakness?
- Is it possible to condemn violence without using force in another way? Is condemnation a violent act?
- Examples of non-violence and passive resistance: Christ, Gandhi. Is passive resistance possible? is resistance also a form of violence?

Section 3: Human Environment

7. Cultures all over the world are heavily influenced by Western culture and products. Can this influence be considered a desirable phenomenon?

Key points

- Concept of culture: is it a closed entity? Does it need to be protected? Idea of globalisation and westernisation.
- The question assumes that westernisation is happening (as opposed, for example, to creation of multiculturalism).
- Examples: Internet, pop music, market economy, jeans!

Discussion

- Notion of purity and originality of a culture: is any culture distinctly original?
- Is it possible to judge if westernisation, if it is happening, is desirable or not? On what grounds could such judgement be based?

8. Are scientific theories explanations of reality or merely tools for technology?

Key points

- The notion of explanation: does it ever reach the essence of the reality or is it dependent on conventional understanding?
- Relationship of science and technology.
- There might be more options than the offered ones: harnessing nature, *etc.*

Discussion

- Distinction between validity and the truth of explanations in general.
- Instrumentalism vs. scientific realism.
- Examples of the relationship of science and technology and their social role.

9. Is work a human fate or a human right?

Key points

- Notion of fate and right: biblical concept of work as a fate, modern concept of work as a right.
- Work and leisure.
- Is there a necessary connection between work and humanity?

Discussion

- Fate: humanity is determined and doomed to work. If work is a fate, does it mean that life is a struggle for survival?
- Right: society has a duty to provide you with work. As a 'worker' you are a full member of a society.
- Work as a means of expression of oneself; service to the growth of humanity; or as a form of repression and a source of inequality.

Section 4: Reason

10. Can absolute scepticism be defended without contradiction?

Key points

- What is scepticism?
- What is absolute scepticism? Can scepticism NOT be absolute?
- What does it mean **to defend** a theory?
- How can a theory like scepticism be defended? Would it not mean using tools that demonstrate that I can know something? After all, language is learned.
- The **paradox** of defending scepticism.
- The paradox of defending a philosophical theory that ultimately denies the possibility of philosophy.

Discussion

- The Cartesian approach to scepticism: scepticism as a starting point to knowledge which ends up in the denial of scepticism.
- Scepticism as an excuse and a refusal to search for truth and to take moral responsibility.

11. Is sense experience *sufficient* for knowledge? Or, is sense experience *necessary* for knowledge? Justify your answer.

Key points

- What is a sense experience? Is it deprived of any addition from reason?
- Are sense experiences by themselves sufficient to know?
- If we experience all the physical characteristics of an object (colour, form, texture, taste, sound, noise), is this sufficient to claim knowledge of this object?
- What else, if not sense experience, could knowledge be based on?
- Kant would answer that sense experience is **not** sufficient for knowledge but **it is** necessary.

Discussion

- Sense experience as **necessary** for knowledge: the famous case of Helen Keller: illness as a baby left her blind, deaf, mute but, through very astute training, she became a fully developed adult living a full life. Can we, however, say that she knew fully what reality is?
- What about the case of persons in coma, or worse, in vegetative state? Do they perceive? Can we even know the answer to these questions?
- What about the foetus? Does it perceive? Does it know anything?
- Does it make sense to talk about a pure experience of perception in which there would not be any admixture of rationality?

12. Does the danger lie in having too much will or in not having enough?

Key points

- Notion of will: is it a distinct faculty of mind?
- Lack of will, lack of vital energy, weak volition, lack of control of emotions.
- Too much will: the interpretations of will as hubris vs. strong rational control.

Discussion

- Role of will in the good life: at what point does will become a destructive function? The Zen interpretation of will as an impossible means to ends.
- Possibility of regulating the excess of will, and how could a weak-willed person get more will?
- Problem of interpretations of the concept of will: as a vitalistic notion as well as moral and intellectual notion.

Section 5: Meaning and Value

13. “Our moral values are only the reflection of the opinions of our time and our community.” Explain and critically assess this proposition.

Key points

- How can I verify what are the moral values of our time and of our community?
- Is it the case that our values come from our community? Do they not come from a Supreme Being? Or from my own thinking or feelings?
- How do societies transmit their moral values?
- If this is the case, we are condemned to moral relativism.

Discussion

- As rational beings, we are capable of free will (positive freedom).
- If we all receive the same social influence, how can we account for diverging views among us?
- We can observe a growing confusion in the moral values of youth: there is a melting down of the difference between aesthetic and moral values. *e.g.* it is wrong to be obese, it is right to be slim, to have nice skin, nice teeth.

14. “What our century needs is human beings eager to develop what is specifically human in them.” Explain and critically assess this statement.

Key Points

- Are ‘specifically human traits’ desirable? Examples?
- Is this unique to this century? is it not what humanity always needs?
- How could human beings develop their specifically human traits?
- Is it what this century needs?

Discussion

- Are societies creating environments where such development can come about? *e.g.*: does the education system favour the capabilities that would enhance this development?
- The question assumes that these traits are desirable ones. Does the candidate identify the assumption and does s/he comment on it? *e.g.*: What would happen if what is specifically human were the destructive tendencies that social control mechanisms are trying to curb - violence, torture, exploitation of weaker members of society, dishonesty, *etc.*?
- Is this proposition not simply a reflection of our innate fear of the uncertain future?
- Is this proposition a response to our awareness that we possess the means of mass destruction, and of environmental destruction? This is a new occurrence historically speaking.

15. Can a miracle be a proof of the existence of a Supreme Being as the light in the light-bulb is a proof of the existence of electricity?

Key points

- What does it mean to prove something?
- What is a Supreme Being?
- What is a miracle? Who ultimately decides if it is a miracle? *e.g.* is the fact that Johnny passed his math course a miracle?
- Can we compare such disparate things as electricity and a Supreme Being?

Discussion

- Do believers require a proof of the existence of the Supreme Being in order to believe? Doesn't believing entail that you don't have proof?
- Can a physical event such as a miracle prove the existence of a metaphysical being?
- In the past, we called miracles the natural events which we were not able to explain. Is this still the case today?
- Does it even make sense to talk about existence when we talk of a Supreme Being? Does a Supreme Being 'exist' in the normal sense of the word 'exist'?