

MARKSCHEME

November 2007

PHILOSOPHY

Higher and Standard Level

Paper 2

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1. **Lao Tzu: *Tao Te Ching***
Critically assess the claim that society corrupts the human.

This creates an opportunity to evaluate the role society and groups of humans have on distorting and upsetting the possible harmony humans could have with nature.

Key points

- The idea that *Jen*, humanity, can only be reached outside and having harmony with the cosmos. The problem of the corrupting influences of education and socialization. The route to the *Tao* cannot be taught and in fact education hinders the discovery of the *Tao*
- Society brings with it rules, regulations and ways of behaving, simply to make one conform. Contrast the simplicity of the approach to the *Tao*, the Way. This is the rejection of the *Li*, social rules and rituals, which come from society in favor of the *Tao*. This rejection of regulations and controls and codes of behavior allows a more harmonious relationship with nature
- People's duty is to care and feel concern for others which arises not out of socialization but from *Wu Wei*, non-interference and non-action, thus allowing a more spontaneous movement towards the *Tao*
- The fundamental consequences of *Wu Wei* is the establishment of a balance with more mutuality and less self interest, more understanding of the whole and one's role in the cosmos

Discussion

- Does the movement away from socialisation and social interaction lead to greater harmony with nature or does it result in a loss of a sense of a shared community?
- If non-action, *Wu Wei*, is practiced then there are no rules, therefore how is anything in terms of human interaction to be achieved? How does progress happen? Does stagnation result? Is stagnation and passivity a problem for humans?
- Is a group of humans who are not righteous or benevolent (things that would be rejected according to Lao Tzu if one steps away from society) more just, because the individual is more aware of their duty to the whole? They care and are more compassionate because they have a greater sense of their place as part of a bigger group
- How does one discover the Way, *Tao*? The *Tao*'s discovery could be by innate ability or by letting go of social links and letting life unfold more spontaneously
- Does separation and inaction result in a lack of responsibility rather than more responsibility?

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

Explain and evaluate how the virtuous person differs from other persons.

This question asks for an exploration of the central notion of ‘virtue’ (*ren*) especially as it is exposed in book 4 of *The Analects* where the character of the virtuous person in an individual and in a social/communal context is set out.

Key Points

- Virtue (*ren*) is a character of actors, not of acts
- Human activities depend on the possession of virtue
- There exists a clear distinction between the character of the virtuous person and the character of all other persons
- A perfected (virtuous) person possesses equanimity born of virtue itself. It is an all encompassing ideal
- Virtue puts a person in correct relation to the way (*dao*), the right (*yi*), and moral force (*de*)
- The virtuous person is unconcerned with death, conventional opinions, special favors, leniency, and appearances
- The virtuous person is fit to govern by means of correct ritual and deferential attitudes
- The virtuous person exhibits filial piety and strikes a balance between words and actions
- The virtuous person does not seek a virtuous social environment; he creates such an environment

Discussion

- Is Confucius convincing in his argument that virtues are not only acquired, but must be expressed in personal and social contexts?
- Is the fundamental difference that separates the virtuous from others, that virtuous people live out their virtues while others only attempt to possess virtues?
- Are virtues their own rewards or do virtues bring rewards to a person?
- Why/how is the virtuous person at home in private, social and communal contexts?
- Is it the case that a virtuous person’s behavior must not follow predictable patterns nor aim for conventional goals?
- Is there a possible relationship between Confucius’s account of a virtuous life and the account put forth by virtue ethics? If so, what is it?
- Does virtue come before good behavior or does correct behavior nurture virtue?

3. Plato: *The Republic*
Critically evaluate the role ‘the Good’ plays in knowledge.

This question invites an investigation of Plato’s idea of the Good and how this idea affects an understanding of what for Plato is ‘real’ knowledge.

Key Points

- The role of the Good in Plato’s theory of forms. The Good being the ultimate stage, the ‘Form of Forms,’ the ultimate aim of human knowledge and conduct
- The parallel between the Sun in Plato’s simile of the sun and the Good. The idea that the Good is the root of the relationship which makes it possible for knowledge to be an object of the intelligible mind
- The realization that if one perceives the Good then one has become good, that is knowing the Good will result in good actions – no one will knowingly commit wrong acts
- Plato’s link between Good and God. Philosophers should strive to grasp the Forms and then the Good and in so doing encounter God, a supreme being, the author of the nature of things, the creator of ultimate reality. The encounter with the Good might be seen in the simile of the cave with the prisoner seeing the light and being freed and being able to encounter a new world and be more free or not

Discussion

- The issue of trying to link Good in terms of sources of reality (the top of the pyramid of the Forms) while also being a statement of values and behaviour, might be seen as confusing and perhaps contradictory with the problem of the Evil. Does bad have Good within it?
- The notion that there are absolutes rooted in the Good. Is the world divided into two parts physical non-absolute that is changing and flexible, while the intelligible mental world is fixed and absolute? Is there a transition to enlightenment? The shift from ignorance or opinion to knowledge
- The extent to which knowledge of the Forms and the Good is essential for the philosopher, and hence the philosopher is the best ruler of a State
- The possible links between Plato’s notion of Good and medieval Christianity’s notion of God, the source of all natural and human actions and behaviours, the ultimate essence
- Did Plato really understand his own idea of the Good and whether knowledge might be pleasure? How could an application of pure reason provide guidance to everyday situations. Surely the circumstances might influence action and decisions
- Is a ‘virtuous consciousness’ achievable, desirable and even a worthwhile pursuit? Might there be better things to do?

4. Aristotle: *The Nicomachean Ethics*

“Happiness, then, is found to be something perfect and self-sufficient, being the end to which our actions are directed.” Discuss and evaluate.

This question asks for an exploration of the notion of ‘happiness’ (*eudaimonia*), one of the central notions of Aristotle’s text. It allows for a discussion of *eudaimonia* in general and the place this notion plays especially in the arguments of books I, II and X.

Key Points

- Every activity aims at some good
- Happiness (*eudaimonia*) is the highest, supreme good to which all things aim
- Happiness as virtuous activity of the soul
- The soul as vegetative, sensitive and rational
- Happiness and success: good fortune, and prosperity, happiness and flourishing
- Happiness and craft knowledge, physical training
- Happiness and moral virtue; happiness and intellectual virtue
- Happiness chosen for its own sake not for the sake of other goals; happiness leaves nothing to be desired
- Happiness as the final, self-sufficient goal
- The supreme Good: the life of pleasure; the life of politics; the life of contemplation

Discussion

- How is happiness acquired? Is it learned? Is it taught?
- Is Aristotle’s view of happiness supported by popular belief?
- Is happiness achieved only after a person’s life is complete?
- Is happiness a means to an end or an end in itself? How? Why?
- What role does pleasure play in a life of happiness?
- Is happiness a state of existence? An activity? A way of life?
- Can everyone achieve happiness? How?
- How/Why does happiness have practical implications?
- Is a good life in material terms required for a good life in ethical terms?
- Can there be a single supreme good valid for every person’s life?

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

Explain and discuss Aquinas's distinction between immaterial and material substances.

This question seeks to explore the relation Aquinas discusses between the immaterial (soul) and the material (body). Arising from this is Aquinas's treatment of form, matter, particularity and universality.

Key points

- The concepts of the immaterial (soul) and the material (body)
- Their relationship in Aquinas – both through application of reason and experience, we can come to know God and increase knowledge
- Universality and particularity in Aquinas
- The relationship between form, which in man is his intellectual principle, and body; the intellectual principle is united to the body as its form
- The human soul is the highest of forms and its power is the intellect
- The soul retains its existence beyond the dissolution of the body
- No immaterial substance can be multiplied in number within the same species

Discussion

- Aquinas leans on Aristotle; is his treatment fair to Aristotle?
- How does Aquinas compare to other traditions in the mind/body relationship (like Descartes, modern materialism, Eastern traditions *etc.*)?
- The relation between reason and experience

6. Descartes: *Meditations*

Explain and evaluate Descartes's reasons for which we may, generally speaking, doubt about all things.

The question is focused on the series of arguments, which open the *Meditations*, intended to cast doubt upon everything formerly believed, and culminating in the hypothesis of an all-deceiving evil genius.

Key points

- The path to certainty begins with doubt. Against skepticism Descartes asserted that real, certain knowledge is possible. Doubting about all things, especially material things, is a method to ground certainty
- Descartes says: "I realized that it was necessary, once in the course of my life, to demolish everything completely and start again right from the foundations if I wanted to establish anything at all in the sciences that was stable and likely to last"
- Arguments designed to eliminate current beliefs in preparation for replacing them with certainties: senses' deception, dream argument, and human imperfection are what makes us likely to be deceived all the time
- The evil genius argument: a device to help prevent the return of the former beliefs called into doubt

Discussion

- Function of these arguments in Descartes's project: "free us from all our preconceived opinions, and provide the easiest route by which the mind may be led away from the senses"
- The extent to which human mind can aspire to certainty and reach it
- Without the supposition of the idea of God, there is no need for certainty
- The whole discussion is based on the assumption of the difference between two substances
- All the arguments against skepticism are ultimately a way of defending a kind of dogmatic philosophy

7. Locke: *Second Treatise on Government*

Critically assess the idea that Locke regards the emergence of civil society as a barrier to tyranny.

This question explores some of the key themes that Locke discusses about the relation between man, the state and society. Locke's philosophical assumptions about the emergence of civil society as a result of the abandonment of the state of nature might be discussed, as well as Locke's contention that tyranny can be avoided through the actions of a civil society.

Key points

- Tyranny equals “the exercise of power beyond right”
- The emergence of civil society by contract, which engages man fundamentally into the process
- Government as an act of trust, the breakage of which can lead to conditions for civil unrest
- Civil society emerges out of the state of nature and provides a protection through the guarantee of certain key interests, namely property
- The protection of property is the justification for action against any force that would oppress (tyranny, even of the King)
- Locke's conditions in chapter 19 for forming a new government
- The people judge when a government exceeds its power – this goes beyond Locke's usual appeal to natural law to arbitrate in civil disputes

Discussion

- Do people welcome an executive power which protects their ‘property’? See modern disenchantment with political classes
- Is Locke's view of natural rights convincing?
- How can the people properly decide when the government has become tyrannical?
- The context of Locke's writing, supporting the replacement of one King (Charles II) with another (William III); see also parallels with today's political and world scene

8. **Hume: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding***
“In Hume’s theory of knowledge there is no recourse to substance, self or God. There are just impressions and ideas.” Discuss and evaluate.

This question asks for a critical exploration of the central thesis of Hume’s evaluation of what constitutes knowledge, how we acquire human knowledge, and what information must be rejected according to the criteria for knowledge established by Hume. It also asks for an evaluation of Hume’s perspective of what the limits of human knowledge might be.

Key Points

- Perception constituted exhaustively by impressions and ideas
- Impressions may be of sensations and of reflection
- Ideas are fainter images of impressions
- Impressions may reappear in memory or in imagination
- Association of ideas governed by resemblance, contiguity and cause/effect
- Contingent causality *versus* logical necessary causality
- Substance, self and God cannot be traced back to a sense perception and, therefore, cannot qualify as knowledge
- ‘Hume’s fork’: relation of ideas *versus* relation of facts
- Hume’s project: Establish a clear definition of knowledge

Discussion

- Is Hume’s evaluation of knowledge accurate? Realistic? Credible?
- Is Hume’s view of knowledge overly restrictive?
- Does Hume’s approach convincingly eliminate the possibility of metaphysical speculation?
- Does ‘Hume’s fork’ justifiably establish exhaustive criteria to distinguish knowledge from nonsense?
- Does Hume’s approach inevitably commit us to a radical skepticism?
- If self, God and substance do not constitute matters of fact nor matters of knowledge, what are they?
- Does Hume’s evaluation offer a complete and convincing account of the contents of the mind?
- What are the benefits of adopting Hume’s view? What are the disadvantages?

**9. Rousseau: *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality and Social Contract*
Explain and discuss why equality may not be achievable by any form of government.**

This question creates an opportunity to discuss how certain forms of government prevent the establishment of equality among humans. It might also invite a discussion of how inequality might be generated and how it might be eliminated.

Key Points

- The notion of natural law; rules produced by God and existing in nature. Natural law does not establish differences and inequality
- The notion of physical inequality based on age, size physical ability
- The notion of moral inequality which is created by human society and produces divisions of people according to wealth, power and class. This might not be a natural state
- The notion of equality in the state of nature; that is no divisions primarily because man has few needs and is ‘amoral.’ It might be a state of happiness
- The forms of government that Rousseau discussed; despotism, democracy and elective aristocracy, and how each falls short of creating equality, with democracy being the closest to having no inequalities

Discussion

- The possibility that Rousseau did not really offer ways of achieving equality, more he described a loss of pity and the rise of self-preservation in the *Discourse*. Does he do more to establish the ways to achieve equality in the *Social Contract*? The problem of property. Does the idea of ownership decrease equality?
- The issue of Rousseau’s type of freedom (both mental and physical), that is an opportunity to act without restraint and have what one needs, may not be possible in a complex society
- Is the purpose of government to establish freedom or to limit freedom? Can government by definition strive for freedom which would produce equality when the government itself is a product of inequality?
- The extent to which Rousseau does not face the realities of his own local political experience in Geneva, then an elected aristocracy, which was riddled by gender inequality, religious intolerance. How far are Rousseau’s views male orientated?
- How far are government and equality incompatible concepts? Would government dare to limit the accumulation of wealth by a few to achieve equality? Would they have the strength of conviction and means to achieve this control of wealth?
- Might Rousseau’s state of equality be only achievable in rural and non-heavily industrialized societies
- Is consensus on the scale that Rousseau wished achievable given that it would bring happiness (equality) but it might be that conflict and disagreement are the drivers of social change?

10. **Kant: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals***
“I ought never to act except in such a way that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law.” Explain and evaluate.

The question offers an opportunity to explain and assess the very basis of Kant’s moral philosophy from the angle of this initial formulation of the categorical imperative.

Key points

- The distinction between maxim and law
- The analysis of ordinary rational knowledge of morality as a way to reach the fundamental principle of morality
- The four classes of duty: perfect duties to oneself, such as the prohibition of suicide; perfect duties to others, such as the prohibition of deceitful promises; imperfect duties to oneself, such as the prescription to cultivate one’s talents; and imperfect duties to others, such as the prescription of benevolence
- Virtue lies in the good will of an agent rather than any natural inclination or any particular end to be achieved
- Good will is manifested in the performance of an action for the sake of fulfilling duty rather than for any other end
- What duty requires is the performance of an action not for the sake of its consequences but because of its conformity to law as such

Discussion

- The criterion of universality as the foundation for morality in comparison and contrast with other ethical views, *e.g.* virtue ethics, Utilitarianism
- Links with other formulations of the categorical imperative
- Kant’s basic ethical view implies the impossibility of acting morally as an individual, since my will is reduced to the universal will
- The role of rationality in the justification of the categorical imperative. ‘Rational’ could mean different things for different people

**11. Nietzsche: *The Genealogy of Morals*
Critically evaluate the notion of bad conscience.**

This question invites a discussion of the arguments that support the establishment of the idea of bad conscience, as well as an investigation of its impact on Nietzsche's view of humans.

Key Points

- Definition of bad conscience and linking it to debt and guilt. The idea that debt was not initially linked to morality but to revenge when a failure to fulfill a promise had accrued. Effectively letting down someone results in a debt which could lead to punishment
- The link to pleasure, that is, pleasure by getting repayment of debt or by carrying out a reprisal resulting in suffering of one and joy for another
- The idea that suffering could and should happen and there is nothing wrong with it. It is instinctive
- The role of the Aesthetic Priest and religion trying to reduce suffering. This could be linked to the removal of God and then the return to instinctive behavior and the return of suffering, increased joy and reduced guilt
- How bad conscience becomes the basis for morals which are not instinctive, through the rise of 'slave morality' compared to the 'noble ideals.' Equally the rise of responsibility can be linked to the growth of bad conscience

Discussion

- How far does Nietzsche's theoretically based noble society really gain pleasure through the suffering of others? Does this create a distorted image of humans without humanity?
- How convincing is the argument that commercial debt is the root of bad conscience in moral behavior?
- Is it possible that 'slave morality,' a caring, compassionate, humble human is not weak, and that bad conscience is not a negative trait?
- To what extent is a God fearing, religious, book quoting fundamentalist, happy or miserable because of the fear of guilt?
- Is the neuroses of modern society, the reliance on therapy and dependence on drink and drugs, a result of bad conscience? Remove bad conscience and we would all be happier
- How far is the development of a theory of bad conscience a way of reacting to over zealous puritanical values? Consideration of when Nietzsche was writing and the social mores at the time

12. Mill: *Essay on Liberty*

Examine the view that Mill is concerned about the tendency of society to force compliance on the individual.

This question explores the key theme of the individual in relation not just to the ruling state but also the prevailing mood of society. In examining this theme of *On Liberty* answers might analyse Mill's basic concept of liberty as expressed early in his essay.

Key points

- The view that *On Liberty* is Mill's expression of concern that society forces compliance on the individual and an attempt on his part to outline ways to deal with this tendency
- Mill defines three basic notions of liberty against which the idea that society compels compliance can be tested: liberty of thought; liberty of taste/opinion; liberty to join with others of common opinion
- Censorship is morally wrong however repugnant the view expressed; opinion must not be suppressed however strong the disapproval from the general view
- Dissent is essential to help test truth against the common view which may be errant; popularity does not guarantee truth
- To achieve progress in society, individuals must be allowed to make mistakes (within the reasonable conditions of not hurting anyone else)
- Despite the absence of a real 'social contract,' there is the offer of protection which implies obligations; but this must not enable society to stretch its influence beyond the guarantee to protect individuals from harm

Discussion

- Liberty is vital to ensure progress in society
- A democratic system runs the risk of producing a 'tyranny of the majority'. What alternatives are there?
- The fundamental value equals individuality – is this sound?
- An emphasis on individuality will guarantee progress and protection from repression and conformity
- Possible links with Mill's moral theory where the happiness of the individual demands particular attention
- Modern examples of communities that sacrifice individuality for the greater good – see cult communities; types of corporations; communist dictatorships and so on

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

Discuss and evaluate the contention that civilization is responsible for human misery and suffering.

This question invites an exploration of Freud's contention that civilization is an arena of conflict, misery and suffering. It also invites a consideration of Freud's view that civilization in part accounts for our subliminal hostility towards civilization itself and in part exhibits the very tensions that he felt existed in the human psyche.

Key Points

- The emergence of civilization: *Eros* and *Ananke*, love and necessity, affection and aggression, totemic culture
- The pleasure principle: negative and positive energy
- Civilization as tension between exclusive love (erotic) and generalized love (*caritas*)
- Civilization's antagonism towards sexuality
- Positive aspects of civilization: Protection from nature, regulation of mutual relationships, establishment of conventions
- Negative aspects of civilization: Subordination of individual to group, limitation of personal liberty and freedom, renunciation of instincts, restriction of sexuality, cultural frustration
- Civilization and the struggle between *Eros* and *Thanatos*
- Conflictual nature of civilization as disciplining of *Ego* by *Superego*
- Guilt as a central threat to civilization

Discussion

- Do we organize ourselves into civilized societies only to escape misery and suffering?
- Why/How does Freud draw an analogy between the evolution of civilization of the libidinal development of the individual?
- Is Freud's analysis of certain key historical events as the key factors responsible for disillusionment with civilization a convincing analysis?
- How effectively does civilization bind people libidinally to one another?
- How convincing is Freud's view that one of the primary functions of civilization is to restrain our aggressive impulses?
- What are the credible points of contact between the human psyche and human civilization?
- Are social compacts a function and manifestation of Freud's analysis of human instincts?
- Is civilisation exhaustively an unresolved struggle between *Eros* and *Thanatos*?
- Does the individual's *Superego* find a parallel in a collective *Superego*?
- How do people actually counter the experience of suffering in civilization? Is Freud's analysis helpful in this respect?

14. Buber: *I and Thou***Explain and discuss the notion of love and its role in relation to humans and God.**

This question encourages an investigation of the nature of Buber's ideas on love and the responsibilities and consequences of building loving relations with one's fellows and God.

Key Points

- Definition of 'I-thou' – having an actual or perceived relationship that has mutuality
- Love involving a person which is an ultimate expression of the 'I-Thou'
- Love involves an encounter which is an engagement with the whole person. Theoretically the encounter could be with an inanimate object. Buber seems to restrict the enactment of love to humans and God because of the reciprocity which is implicit
- The idea that the encounter is more than experience, because for Buber experience involves a utilitarian aspect and this is alien to love
- Love as a cosmic force which transforms and changes relationships
- The degree to which the relationship with God is an ultimate relationship in that through love of a human one learns how to deal with the all encompassing love of God
- The attributes that come with love, that of responsibility and potential pain and loss

Discussion

- Whether in experiencing love one really does go beyond feeling and enters into a spiritual relationship with the Other
- The degree to which a potential spiritual relationship with a fellow human can prepare us for the encounter of the spirituality needed when 'meeting' God
- The fact that duty might cease and responsibility arise with all its consequences
- Does Buber, by developing the notion of love, mean that all 'I-Thou' relationships have the same depth, mutuality and reciprocity? Is this really possible? If so, it would be a radical change in our human interactions. Does he want this?
- The degree to which he might simply be naive in his understanding of relationships in that desire and lust and even in-depth relationships might be transitory
- The relevance of Buber's notion of love in a multi-faith world. Can his notions be seen in other faiths and therefore in actual fact be quite acceptable cross culturally?
- Does the loving relationship with God override all concerns and make humans more spiritual?
- Can humans really cope with the negative consequences of his idea of love? The potential pain and need for sacrifice, the exposure to those who do not understand
- Are humans strong enough to live a life based on his love, when not all will buy into this notion? Would it lead to a growth of Pacifism? Is this good? Does it negate a strong aggressive response to that which is seen as evil?

**15. Ortega y Gasset: *History as a System*
Explain and assess Ortega's idea that I am me and my circumstances.**

The question asks for the essential Ortega's view on human life as an absolutely unique kind of reality. Answers might develop different lines of argument, for example an explanation of the impossibility of conceiving it from the point of view of physical reason, or an analysis of life from the point of view of historical reason.

Key points

- 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
- 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
- A human being has no nature and is not his body, which is a thing, nor his soul, psyche, conscience, or spirit, which is also a thing. A human being is no thing, but an historical reality, a structure of relations
- The mode of being of human life, even as simple existing, is not a being already. A human has to create his being, each person for himself in a context of social relations
- 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
- 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. The way to apprehend the uniqueness of human life is the 'historical reason,' opposed to the naturalist reason

Discussion

- Ortega'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 modern European culture
- Ortega'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, to some extent, simplistic opposition
- A concept of freedom is presupposed in Ortega's claims

16. Wittgenstein: *The Blue and Brown Books*
Explain and evaluate the analogy between language and games.

This question asks for an investigation of one of Wittgenstein's key concepts by means of which he attempts to establish an analogy between language and games. It invites a consideration of how language might work and the role of language in human activities.

Key Points

- The nature of language: not one uniform thing but a host of different activities
- Words and the ways in which we use words
- The nature of games: playing in accordance with rules *versus* playing according to the rules
- Language games: forms of language with which we begin to make use of words
- Language games and primitive forms of language; language games and more complicated forms of language
- Language and notation; language and signs; language and naming
- Language games as seeing connections

Discussion

- Is Wittgenstein's analogy between using a language and playing a game a useful approach to an investigation about language?
- Why and how does Wittgenstein use the phrase 'language game'?
- Did Wittgenstein see the various language games as isolated islands of discourse?
- How, and to what extent, does the notion of language games throw light on the uses of language?
- How do rules function in the use of a language?
- Are all aspects of language sufficiently determined by rules?
- How does Wittgenstein understand the use of language?
- Do questions about language games lead us to more complex questions about language?
- Is language actually a collection of language games?

17. Arendt: *The Human Condition*

Analyse and evaluate Arendt's fear that humans are in danger of becoming slaves to the things they know how to do, but do not understand.

This question explores the danger Arendt expresses explicitly in the prologue about humankind's creative and technological abilities outstripping our political capacities, thus rendering achievements less meaningful by our not understanding them fully. The question addresses Arendt's central concern to show what it means to be human, not through an account of human nature, but through understanding human activity.

Key points

- 'Truths' gained through a modern, scientific world-view though expressible through mathematical language and empirical testing are not conducive to normal expression in speech and thought
- If we are no longer able to speak about – which means understand – the things we do, then we become slaves to things we know how to do but not understand
- Humankind is conditioned by what we make/do *i.e.* what we create becomes the condition by which we live
- We must make space for human action, not submit to theories of nature that treat humans as objects
- Man is essentially free and able to define the conditions of life, not simply a pawn of some abstract social law/structure

Discussion

- Scientific and philosophical developments lead humans to focus on themselves which undermines commitment to others, and thus undermines our political activity
- Modern examples might include the use of technology to disengage from proper communication, or shortcut labour and experience
- Is Arendt justified in her conclusions and the method of her analysis?
- The elimination of certain human activities will result in humankind becoming defenceless in the modern world – is this necessarily so?

**18. Simone de Beauvoir: *The Ethics of Ambiguity*
Explain and discuss de Beauvoir's analysis of individualism.**

This question opens a possibility to examine the risk of individualism and the role of individuals in de Beauvoir's conception of human existence.

Key points

- The central importance of individual freedom, and how human freedom requires the freedom of others for it to be actualized
- The tragedy of the human condition is how the spontaneous drive for freedom is crushed by the pressures of the external world
- De Beauvoir's critique of philosophical systems that represent the desire of humans to seek an external absolute – like Hegel and Marx
- Philosophical systems that suppress the needs of the individual in favor of a historical destiny are unethical
- In contrast existentialism enables plurality and individuality; though the context of individual lives involves interaction with a community
- Oppression of the individual by false reference to the order of nature
- Individualism as over-estimation of the individual

Discussion

- The ethics of ambiguity as propounding an existentialist view of ethics
- The separation between the world of the individual and the external world
- De Beauvoir's analysis of the growth of the child in relation to the emerging individual – individuals must have a past, present and future
- Context of nationalistic movements like Nazism, which claim external absolutes to demand the sacrifice of individuals

19. Rawls: *A Theory of Justice*

Explain and evaluate the extent to which the idea of justice as fairness is able “to provide the most appropriate moral basis for a democratic society.”

The question asks for an evaluation of Rawls’s basic argument of justice as fairness.

Key points

- Rawls’s main idea of justice as fairness is designed to explicate and justify the institutions of a constitutional democracy
- The principles of justice (equal basic liberties and fair equality of opportunity) affirm the priority of equal basic liberties over other political concerns, and require fair opportunities for all citizens, directing that inequalities in wealth and social positions maximally benefit the least advantaged
- The idea of an impartial social contract to justify these principles: free persons, equally situated and ignorant of their historical circumstances, would rationally agree to them in order to secure their equal status and independence, and to pursue freely their conceptions of the good
- Given complete ignorance of everyone’s position, it would be irrational to jeopardize one’s good to gain whatever marginal advantages might be promised by other alternatives
- The role of democratic legislation is not to register citizens’ unconstrained preferences and let majority preferences rule, but to advance the interests of all citizens, so that each has the status of equal citizen, is suitably independent and can freely pursue a good consistent with justice
- The realization of the idea of justice as fairness requires political institutions that specify basic liberties immune from majority infringement

Discussion

- According to the utilitarian view parties should choose as if they were following the principle of average utility; on the other hand, it might be argued that under conditions of radical uncertainty, gambling freedom to practise one’s conscientious convictions against added resources betrays a failure to understand what it is to have a conception of the good
- Are parties in the original position moved by moral interests?
- 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
- Rawls’s original position presupposes abstract individualism, with a metaphysical conception of persons as essentially devoid of the final ends and commitments that constitute their identity
- Would other comprehensive views, *e.g.* utilitarians and pluralists endorse justice as fairness as true or reasonable?

**20. Feyerabend: *Farewell to Reason*
Critically evaluate the idea of epistemic relativism.**

This question invites an investigation of R10 and R11 as challenges to the idea that objective truth might exist. It might be seen as only dealing with scientific truths, but a broader cultural perspective could be developed to show the issue of relativism compared to absolute truth in many human activities.

Key points

- The idea that absolute truth, that is a fixed underlying claim, might not be true because it is possible that conflicting theories and positions can contradict this truth. This might be reflective of different paradigms or different cultural interpretations
- The notion of relativism as seen by Feyerabend expressed in R10 is that for every position, point of view or theory there can be another position that is opposite or an alternative. This is based upon the understanding that if the original position can be argued or held then it is reasonable for the opposite to be held and defended
- The idea of opposing positions being possible is taken further in R11 when even if good reasons exist to defend the first position then it is possible for equally good or even better reason for an opposite position to be arrived at and defended
- ‘Scientific truths’ might be used to show two alternate positions, but it might also be the case that cultural relativism could be used as concepts and ideas might actively or seemingly change their meaning when used in different contexts and cultures, therefore the truths that are claimed might not be consistent, the same or fixed

Discussion

- The issue that evidence and experimental material often has an overt or hidden judgment built into it that affects not only its interpretation but its application. Examples might be drawn from natural sciences or psychology or even history
- The problem that if this relativism is so acute then what happens to any theoretical claims made by science as to what is seen as fixed and true would, in fact, be shifting through time and cultural positions.
- The issue of paradigm positions which allow for differing/alternative/contradictory theories and descriptions yet within these context are valid and workable
- The issue of the search for overriding single truths to attempt to resolve a seeming chaos. An example might be ‘string theory’
- The problem of an objective truth arising and whether it can escape the surrounding aura of ‘feelings, faith and empathy’
- A questioning for whether R10 and R11 allows anything to be claimed and justified, might be challenged with the notion that there has to be consistency and an acceptance of ‘laws’ and/or customs
- The notion that in perception two quite different answers are right supports R11 *e.g.* the rabbit/duck picture or the old and young woman pictures
- The idea that Feyerabend’s position might eliminate dogmatism and clashes of cultures and promote a rise of more tolerance in terms of differing views about the same issue, and that an acceptance of new ideas from other cultural positions might be beneficial to human progress. Examples might come from the dogmatism of the medieval church or fundamentalism in all its forms, alongside the increasing notion of acceptance within Taoism which might create a more holistic approach of how we encounter the world and values

**21. Foucault: *The History of Sexuality*
Explain and discuss the repressive hypothesis.**

The question invites an explanation and exploration of Foucault's central contention that the history of sexuality is distorted by our acceptance of the 'repressive hypothesis.'

Key points

- Repressive hypothesis: the proposition that the primary attitude towards sex during the last three centuries was one of opposition, silencing and, as far as possible, elimination
- Foucault argues that in fact this period produced a 'discursive explosion' regarding sex, beginning with the rules of the Counter-Reformation governing sacramental confession. These rules emphasized the need for penitents to examine themselves and articulate not just all their sinful sexual actions, but all the thoughts, desires and inclinations behind these actions. The distinctive modern turn is the secularization (in, for example, psychoanalysis) of this concern for knowing and expressing the truth about sex
- The doubts which Foucault opposes to the repressive hypothesis are aimed less at showing it to be mistaken than at putting it back within a general economy of discourses on sex in modern societies since the seventeenth century
- The object of Foucault's examination, in short, is to define the regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustains the discourse on human sexuality
- Foucault's genealogical view emphasizes the essential connection between knowledge and power. Bodies of knowledge are tied to systems of social control. This essential connection of power and knowledge reflects Foucault's view that power is not merely repressive but a creative, if always dangerous, source of positive values

Discussion

- Is the repressive hypothesis an established historical fact?
- Foucault's genealogical method is neither sociology of culture, nor history or other better established disciplines. Therefore their results are basically opinions
- Repression is not only or mainly a hypothesis, but a palpable reality, particularly during the 19th century
- The concept of repression is a basic tool of the psychoanalytical theory of personality, which also inspired a Freudian-Marxist approach such as the one of Wilhelm Reich, who posed the question: 'How could the masses be made to desire their own repression?'

22. Putnam: *Reason, Truth and History*
Critically assess Putnam's attempt to refute skepticism in the context of his argument about 'Brains in a Vat.'

This question asks about the famous Cartesian sceptical notion that we could never know that the proposition that we were a brain in a vat was false, since if it were true, then the experience would be exactly as it is. Putnam attempts a refutation through semantics specifically through what he means by 'reference.' This question offers the chance of a critical assessment of a famous argument of Putnam's contained in the first chapter of the book.

Key points

- The Martian and the accidental tree representation; an accidental resemblance cannot represent a tree, because of the lack of causal connection between the image and actual trees
- As a brain in a vat, I could not represent a tree since I would not have had causal contact with trees – just like the Martian
- As a brain in a vat I could not say or think that I were one – it would be a 'self-refuting supposition'
- A brain in a vat could not represent a statement like 'I am standing in front of a tree' because it could not by its nature know what a tree looked like
- Differences between the statements made by a brain in a vat and his normal counterpart are caused by the difference of the counterpart experiencing external causal environments (semantic externalism)
- Intentionality and its role in the mind-body debate; Putnam rejects the idea that thoughts possess intentionality

Discussion

- The connection between representations and what they represent; could an intrinsic link ever be demonstrated?
- Putnam's crucial condition for successful reference is external causality – is this acceptable?
- The Turing Test
- Putnam offers alternative accounts of how the brain in a vat speaks of 'trees' (through 'trees-in-the-image' experiences caused by a computer programme controlling the brain; electrical impulses stimulating the brain and artificially creating a causal-like response; the computer programme directing the two possibilities here)
- Objections to Putnam: Is he introducing irrelevancy into the debate about meaning by veering away from content?

**23. Taylor: *The Ethics of Authenticity*
Critically discuss Taylor's assessment of instrumental reason.**

The question asks for a critical discussion of Taylor's second malaise of modernity: the primacy of instrumental reason.

Key points

- 'Instrumental reason' 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
- The institutions of a technological society do not ineluctably impose on us an ever-deepening hegemony of instrumental reason, but that left to themselves they have a tendency to push us in that direction
- Whether we leave the society to 'invisible hand' mechanism like the market or try to manage it collectively, we are forced to operate to some degree according to the demands of modern rationality, whether or not it suits our own moral outlook
- The view of technological society as a kind of iron fate simplifies too much and forgets the essential: human beings and their societies are much more complex than any simple theory can account for
- Although instrumentalism has a head start in our world, it is still the case that there are many points of resistance, and that these are constantly being generated, *e.g.* the whole movement since the Romantic era which has been challenging the dominance of instrumental categories
- Without exaggerating our degree of freedom, they are not zero though. That means that coming to understand the moral sources of our civilization can make a difference, in so far as it can contribute to a new common understanding

Discussion

- Connections to main aspects of Taylor's general argument, *e.g.* the authentic life
- Is Taylor's opposition from moral dimensions to economical and social phenomena realistic?
- The ideal of authenticity yields the understanding of identity. Living an inauthentic life, I have no self-identity. How can I then be a member of a democratic society?
- Both statements are true: there is a great deal of truth in the description of modern society as an 'iron cage,' but at the same time the view of technological society as a kind of iron fate cannot be sustained
- Although Taylor states that moral authenticity is fundamentally dialogical in character, his view on authenticity, which is a main way to overcome instrumental reason, is still individualistic

24. Nussbaum: *Poetic Justice*

Evaluate Nussbaum's claim that “Intellect without emotion is, we might say, value-blind.”

This question asks for an evaluation of Nussbaum’s analysis of the nature of human emotion, the relationship of emotion to reason, and the role emotional reason plays in our lives. The question allows for an exploration of personal, social, and political aspects of Nussbaum’s views.

Key Points

- Literature is in league with the emotions
- Emotions emphasize compassionate concern and forges bonds of sympathy and identification.
- Many feel that reason excludes and ought to exclude emotive responses
- Many feel that human choices are meaningful only if they conform to a utilitarian economic, rational maximising conception
- The dilemma that law, economics and politics tend to be confined to a theoretical, utilitarian paradigm
- Emotions as blind irrational animal forces *versus* emotions sympathetically directed intentionally towards objects and persons
- Emotions are irrational and unpredictable *versus* emotions are intimately connected with a person’s core beliefs
- Emotions are unsuitable for deliberation *versus* emotions make engaged sympathetic deliberation possible
- Emotions solve no problems *versus* emotions identify what problems need to be solved
- The judicious spectator, spectatorial rationality and sympathetic emotionality

Discussion

- Are Nussbaum’s descriptions of emotion and reason clear enough for us to compare, contrast and distinguish them?
 - Are emotions ultimately irrational, inappropriate guides to private and public deliberations?
 - Is a good judge only a person not swayed by emotions? Why? Why not?
 - Do emotions help us become more human by showing our incompleteness and lack of complete self-sufficiency?
 - Can emotions function along with reason to assist moral evaluation? How?
 - Can emotions help us wonder about the others around us, facilitate sympathy for their suffering and joy at their well-being?
 - How do the references to the novel *Hard Times* support a more open approach to emotion?
 - How does the judicious spectator function in Nussbaum’s perspectives?
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