Examiners’ Report
AM Philosophy
First Session 2019
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A. STATISTICAL INFORMATION
The total number of candidates who registered to sit for AM Philosophy was **84**, which is **14** candidates less than in 2018. This confirms a trend of decreasing candidate registrations for this subject.

Table 1 shows the distribution of grades for the Main 2019 session of the examination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Abs</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Candidates</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% OF TOTAL</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Distribution of grades for Philosophy 2019 Main Session

B. GENERAL REMARKS
In Paper 1, the majority of candidates showed a good grasp of the topic in Section A. The majority of essays in Section B were well-structured and clear. However, at times, some essays lacked the use of proper philosophical language and a proper engagement with philosophical ideas. This also applies for Paper 2. At an Advanced Level, Philosophy students should be able to show a good understanding of theories they learned and apply them accordingly in relation to the question being asked, to avoid going out of point.

C. COMMENTS ON PAPER I AND PAPER II

Paper I

Section A: Logic and Reasoning

Question 1
This was the least popular question. Many candidates failed to give a correct logical structure of the fallacies and, instead, provided a superficial explanation of the fallacy in their own words.

Question 2
Many candidates chose this question and the majority fared well. In part (b), some candidates did not correctly identify the deductive argument and gave an incorrect explanation of it. Many got part (ci) correct while some failed to identify the implication as being transitive in (cii).

Question 3
Many candidates chose this question and the majority got full marks. Some candidates were not familiar with modus tollens in (bii) and some others did not correctly work the truth-tables in part (c) and, as a result, did not identify the correct logically equivalent propositions.

Question 4
This was the second least popular question. Most of the candidates did not properly explain what modus ponens is in part (a). However, the rest of the question was correctly answered by the majority of candidates.
Section B: Ethics and Society

Question 5
Many candidates opted to mention all they knew about the philosopher disregarding what was actually being asked for. It was also noted that, for the majority of responses, philosophical depth was lacking. Only a few candidates provided a well-structured philosophical essay, linking ideas and explaining clearly the relevance of what they were mentioning with regards to the essay title. Other candidates merely presented a historical essay, writing about Nietzsche’s background and recounting his ideas without any critical analysis.

Question 6
This question was the least popular. The majority of those candidates who answered this question only provided a generic essay based on their everyday knowledge of the internet. There was minimal, at times even no mention, of theories of privacy and a grounded argumentation on the loss of privacy and freedom, sustained by theories and philosophical ideas.

Question 7
This was the most popular question. Most candidates accurately discussed utilitarianism in great detail and some even went into the issue of euthanasia. However, some candidates showed less confidence when it came to address the Kantian imperatives. It was also noted that most candidates were more familiar with the categorical imperatives than the hypothetical ones. Moreover, not many candidates succeeded in making a comparative analysis of the Kantian imperatives and Utilitarian theory, whilst highlighting their contrasts.

Question 8
This was the second most popular question. Whilst many fared well in this essay, some candidates failed to support their claims with theories such Utilitarianism, or Kantianism. Only a few essays made a clear reference to moral theories and linked them to Artificial Reproductive Technologies. Some of the candidates only mentioned these theories in passing, such as in the concluding paragraph.

Paper II
Section A: Key Questions in European Thought

Question 1
This compulsory question was about an excerpt from Descartes’ Meditations on First Philosophy (second meditation). Students had to answer questions on Descartes’ notion of ‘thinking thing’, his ideas on ‘the deceiver’/‘evil genius’, his method of doubt, his substance dualism, and his rationalism. Most candidates could explain Descartes’ views on the separate nature of mind (res cogitans) and body (res extensa). Candidates identified the role played by the ‘evil genius’ in Descartes’ attempt to secure knowledge; however, few candidates referred to Descartes’ arguments for the existence of God in reaction to deception and error. In the question on Descartes’ method of doubting, various candidates gave a general account of how Descartes proceeds in the Meditations, while better answers linked his method of universal/hyperbolic doubt with the establishment of the certainty of the cogito, thus giving a fuller account of his epistemological views. With regard to substance dualism, various correct answers were given, including identifying Plato as another dualist philosopher. Various candidates correctly explained rationalism as a theory of knowledge, and contrasted it with empiricism.
Section B: Key Questions in European Thought

Question 2
Few candidates chose to answer this question on Aristotle’s definition of ‘man’ as a ‘social being’ or ‘political animal’, and its contrast with Plato’s political philosophy. In this question, candidates were expected to discuss Aristotle’s ideas of *zoon politikon/homo politicus*, according to which humans are, by their nature, bound to society. Few students discussed Aristotle’s ideas on good government (monarchy, aristocracy, polity), or linked Aristotle’s views on politics with his ideas on an ethics of *eudaimonia*. Some candidates successfully contrasted Aristotle’s views with Plato’s, noting how Plato’s approach to politics was idealist (rather than practical) and emphasised an aristocratic approach to good government ruled by philosopher-rulers.

Question 3
Several candidates chose to answer this question, in which candidates were asked to react to the claim that ‘all our actions are determined rather than free’. It is noted that, when a question does not specify a philosopher’s name in the title, some candidates do not draw upon a philosopher/s’ ideas, and instead write an open and argumentative essay with no theoretical support, thus obtaining lower marks. Candidates must identify which philosopher or school of thought the question is asking about, and to write an essay that clearly engages with such views. In this question, candidates were expected to describe views and notions such as determinism, causal necessity, free will, compatibilism, physical and psychological laws, and elaborate on the philosophical positions of philosophers such as Thomas Nagel, Leibniz, the Stoics, Augustine or Aquinas.

Question 4
This question asked candidates to refer to the views of Skinner and Chomsky on whether language is innate or not. For the most part, candidates who chose to answer this question fared well by referring to Skinner’s behaviourist model of language acquisition, in contrast to Chomsky’s criticism of Skinner in the form of his theory of universal grammar.

Question 5
This question asked about the Stoics’ views on nature, virtue and evil. In this question, candidates could provide an account of Stoic views on physics and ethics, referring to their pantheism, their views on the rational law of nature, and determinism, and link it with their ethical positions on virtue, indifference, and *ataraxia*, as well as their views on moral and natural evil. Stoic philosophers that candidates could draw on included Seneca, Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus. In such a question where candidates could focus on one school of thought, it is advisable that candidates structure their essay well in order to clearly show how their different aspects link with each other to present a coherent system of thought.

Question 6
Similar to the point raised in relation to Question 3, when a specific philosopher/s is not clearly indicated in the question title, some candidates did not root their essay in philosophical views. In this case, the question on whether a computer can think, and mean, a message such as ‘I love you’, was clearly asking candidates to discuss notions such as syntax and semantics, in relation to a discussion of the Turing test, and especially Searle’s ‘Chinese Room’ experiment.
D. CONCLUDING COMMENTS
The examiners note that when it came to essay writing, candidates need to back their claims by making a clear reference to a philosopher’s, or philosophers’, ideas instead of merely writing a generic essay based on the candidate’s opinion. Candidates must identify which philosopher, or school of thought, the question is asking about, even when not specified, and write an essay that clearly engages with such views.

Chairperson
Examination Panel 2019