IB DIPLOMA Topical Past Papers

PHILOSOPHY

HL | Paper 1

2016 — 2021

Chapter 1	Being Human	Page 1
Chapter 2	Aesthetics	Page 12
Chapter 3	Epistemology	Page 14
Chapter 4	Ethics	Page 16
Chapter 5	Philosophy And Contemporary Society	Page 18
Chapter 6	Philosophy Of Religion	Page 20
Chapter 7	Philosophy Of Science	Page 22
Chapter 8	Political Philosophy	Page 24
	ANSWERS	Page 26

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1 - (PHILO-S 2016-Paper 1/0-Q1) - *Being Human*

Read the following passage and develop your response as indicated below.

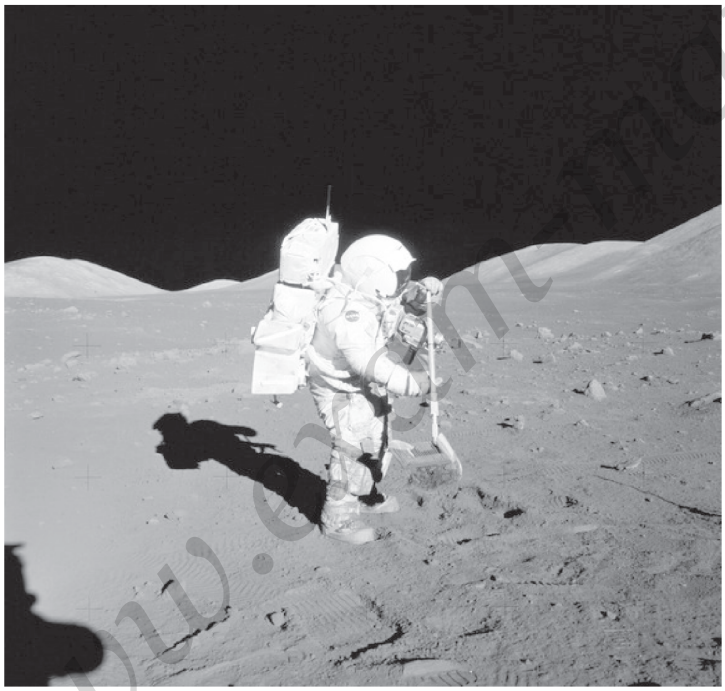
The UN Millennium Charter is an indispensable foundation for a more peaceful, prosperous and just world. It supports all efforts to uphold: the right to self-determination of peoples which remain under colonial domination and foreign occupation; respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; respect for the equal rights of all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion; and international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character.

[Source: adapted from United Nations Millennium Declaration: www.un.org, accessed 16 March 2015]

With explicit reference to the stimulus and your own knowledge, discuss a philosophical issue related to the question of what it means to be human.

2 - (PHILO-S 2016-Paper 1/0-Q2) - *Being Human*

Look at the following picture and develop your response as indicated below.



[Source: © NASA]

With explicit reference to the stimulus and your own knowledge, discuss a philosophical issue related to the question of what it means to be human.

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3 - (PHILO-W 2016-Paper 1/0-Q1) - *Being Human*

Read the following passage and develop your response as indicated below.

In this extract the character is describing how he and others were trying to bring down a hot air balloon from the air with people in it that had lost control, and they were tugging on a rope together to attempt to get the balloon grounded in the field.

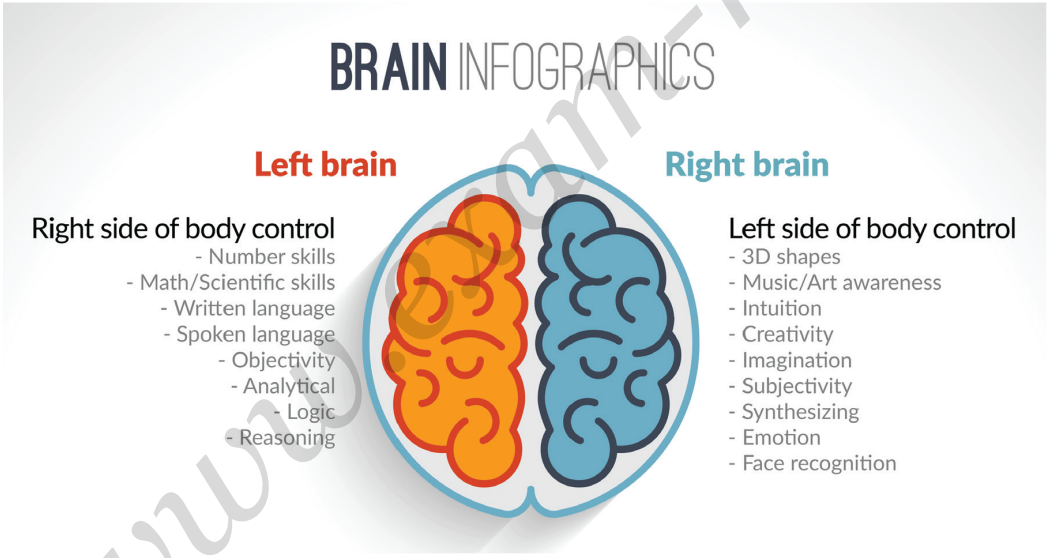
I didn't know who let go first... What is certain is that if we had not broken ranks, our collective weight would have brought the balloon to earth a quarter of the way down the slope a few seconds later as the gust subsided. [T]here was no team, plan, or agreement to be broken. So can we accept that it was right, every man for himself? Was this a reasonable course? We never had that comfort, for there was a deeper covenant, ancient and automatic, written in our nature. Cooperation – the basis of our earliest hunting success, the force behind our evolving capacity for language, the glue of our social cohesion. Our misery in the aftermath was proof that we knew we had failed ourselves. But letting go was in our nature too. Selfishness is written in our hearts. This is our mammalian conflict – what to give to others and what to keep for yourself.

[Source: adapted from Ian McEwan (2006) *Enduring Love*]

With explicit reference to the stimulus and your own knowledge, discuss a philosophical issue related to the question of what it means to be human.

4 - (PHILO-W 2016-Paper 1/0-Q2) - *Being Human*

Look at the following picture and develop your response as indicated below.



[Source: Macrovector/Shutterstock.com]

With explicit reference to the stimulus and your own knowledge, discuss a philosophical issue related to the question of what it means to be human.

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ANSWERS

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1 - (PHILO-S 2016-Paper 1/0-Q1) - *Being Human*

Article from *United Nations Millennium Declaration* **[25]**

The following paragraphs provide only a framework to help examiners in their assessment of responses to this question. Examiners should be responsive to a variety of philosophical perspectives and approaches. Examiners should be aware that candidates might respond to this passage in a variety of ways including ones not mentioned in the summary below.

This question requires candidates to identify and discuss philosophical issues and/or concepts in the set passage, related to the fundamental question of what it is to be human. Responses are likely to focus on human nature. This could include discussion of issues such as individuality and universality. Alternatively responses could focus on the key concept of freedom, discussing issues and concepts related to the opposition between freedom and determinism, or focus on issues such as identity and personhood, exploring questions in relation to social and cultural identity.

Responses should make explicit reference to the passage. Candidates may for example pick up on individual parts of the passage, discussing different positions on human nature or general social theories.

Alternatively candidates may pick up on the references to central notions such as "human rights and fundamental freedoms" and make links to conceptions of freedom and conceptions of personhood.

In addressing these philosophical issues candidates might explore:

- Human possibilities and limits (at individual, communal, societal or global level) of constructing a more peaceful, prosperous and just world
- Pessimism and optimism regarding the origin and destination of humanity
- The individual and the community/society/state
- Theories of the state of nature based on human nature: Rousseau and the noble savages living in harmony with each other and with nature. Theory of evolution, natural selection, the idea of "social Darwinism". Hobbes's view of all against all
- Approaches to aggression, war, cooperation and peace that reflect a worldview, not necessarily drawing on a classical philosophical school, but on religious, political or cultural perspectives, *eg*, traditional non-Western views; wars as being fought in the minds of people, "cultivate peace in their minds and there will be no wars" (*Bhagavad Gita*)
- Can a human be in charge of his or her own destiny? Is it possible that all aspects of life are predetermined?
- Perhaps life has no sense external to humanity. Does this devalue living and make life pointless?
- Is it a common human activity to search for the meaning of life?
- What is it to be a person? The extent of this notion. Could animals or machines be persons? Which are the defining features of being a person or human?
- The extent to which being part of a race, sex, language or religion is (and should be acknowledged as) constitutive of the individual's and community's identity
- Difficulties in realizing those ideals, *ie* violations of human rights, wars, or economic interests.

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2 - (PHILO-S 2016-Paper 1/0-Q2) - *Being Human*

Image of astronaut **[25]**

The following paragraphs provide only a framework to help examiners in their assessment of responses to this question. Examiners should be responsive to a variety of philosophical perspectives and approaches. Examiners should be aware that candidates might respond to this passage in a variety of ways including ones not mentioned in the summary below.

This question requires candidates to identify and discuss philosophical issues and/or concepts in the picture, related to the fundamental question of what it is to be human. Responses are likely for example to focus on the relation between the human being and nature as being constitutive of the human condition, or on the place of man in the cosmos as an indication of central questions such as the origin and finality of human existence as an individual and/or member of a species. The discussions could explore positive philosophical and religious interpretations of the origin and destiny of the human existence or negative interpretations of the human life such as nihilism, fatalism, philosophy of the absurd, *etc*. Alternatively the response may focus on the concept of individual identity, with discussion focusing on the questions: Who am I/who are we?

Responses should make explicit reference to the picture. They may, for example, make reference to the relation between the human being and outer space or the Earth. Alternatively they may focus on an immediate interpretation of the stimulus referring to the conquest of space, making references to the human capacities deploying knowledge and technology. Responses could also, for example, refer to the usual feelings when we encounter extreme situations in nature in relation to *eg*, infinity and sublimity, leading also to discussions on God(s) and religion. Further, this stimulus might encourage a reflection on the extent to which the relation with an origin or creator is a central distinctive feature of the human condition. On a different note candidates may also for example pick up on some salient features such as the shadow, the equipment, the loneliness or the question whether we are seeing a human being or a robot.

In addressing these philosophical issues candidates might explore:

- Exploring and inhabiting as the transformation or manipulation of nature (the existing physical and biological environments) to satisfy human needs and goals
- For some, human life takes place “between Earth and sky”. Where would we be according to the picture?
- Interpretations of the human condition: Biological and social necessities; social conditioning
- Implications of the possible biological transformations of the human body living outside the Earth
- Investing in the exploration of outer space when we are confronted with the desires and needs of the human population
- Are we imprisoned by the technological development?
- Is technology transforming human nature?
- Human nature and its continuity in the future
- Man or robot? What is it to be a person? Could machines be persons?
- Infinity; mythological traditions, physics and mathematics. Discussions on forms of infinity, the universe and the search for a principle or God(s)
- Religious approaches to the nature and purpose of human beings
- Man as tool-maker/practical animal, and man as a colonizer/dominator
- The extent to which humans are driven by a natural desire to reach for the unknown
- The human right – or not – to explore beyond the world
- The urge in humans to explore and go beyond their limits or the ability to redefine their limits
- Controlling technology and conquering new territory: Are these universal or more particular features of the human condition? When these are foregrounded, are there other traits of the human condition or other humans that are obscured?

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3 - (PHILO-W 2016-Paper 1/0-Q1) - *Being Human*

Extract from *Enduring Love* **[25]**

The following paragraphs provide only a framework to help examiners in their assessment of responses to this question. Examiners should be responsive to a variety of philosophical perspectives and approaches. Examiners should be aware that candidates might respond to this passage in a variety of ways including ones not mentioned in the summary below.

This question requires candidates to identify and discuss philosophical issues and/or concepts in the set passage that are related to the fundamental question of what it is to be human. Responses are likely to look at how human beings relate to, and what arises as a result of, those human relations. Some aspects of being human are given categorisation, like gender or race, and this applies to groups of people as well as individuals. Interest is also given to faculties like reasoning and language, and how they relate across and between different individuals. The relationship between individuals and society is of philosophical interest, as is the general question of the relationship between parts and a whole – and also the particular and the universal.

In addressing these philosophical issues candidates might explore:

- "The object is greater than the sum of its parts" – metaphysical speculations about activity or matter when joined together
- Inter-relations and the other
- Reasoning in a group, reasoning as an individual
- Scientific and materialistic accounts of human motivation and behaviour
- Rational accounts of human motivation and behaviour
- The implications for understanding of the self in relation to others
- Accounts of social interaction *eg*, Plato, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Rawls
- "Every man for himself" – accounts of social formation and social activity and so-called progress
- Selfishness as a rational explanation for morality
- Cooperation and altruism as motivations for behaviour *eg*, game theory
- "We had failed ourselves" – what might this mean? The notion of self
- The role of language as "social glue"
- Reference to evolution for explaining human behaviour; the genetic fallacy.

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4 - (PHILO-W 2016-Paper 1/0-Q2) **-** *Being Human*

Image of the brain **[25]**

The following paragraphs provide only a framework to help examiners in their assessment of responses to this question. Examiners should be responsive to a variety of philosophical perspectives and approaches. Examiners should be aware that candidates might respond to this passage in a variety of ways including ones not mentioned in the summary below.

This question requires candidates to identify and discuss philosophical issues and/or concepts in the image related to the fundamental question of what it is to be human. Responses are likely to use the image to discuss the way a physical entity like the brain can influence a person's behaviour or an activity like thought. Assigning different human abilities to parts of the brain, suggests that a materialist explanation of human behaviour might be appropriate, but many thinkers disagree. Thinkers have speculated on the relationship between the body and the mind for centuries and responses are likely to reflect that and to engage with different types of approach to the issue. These may include religious, psychological, neurological and metaphysical accounts of the human person and behaviour. Responses might also look at the possibility of drawing comparisons between human and non-human animals with brains, and the possibility of artificially replicating brain activity through computing and other technological advances.

In addressing these philosophical issues candidates might explore:

- What might account for the perennial philosophical interest in the question of what the relationship of the brain to the mind or the person is?
- Accounts of the mind-body relation *eg*, dualism, monism, idealism, materialism
- The problem of other minds
- Consciousness, qualia and intentionality
- Theories like behaviourism, functionalism *etc*
- The impact of science on understanding the mind, cognitive science, neurological science
- The impact of psychology on understanding the mind
- The differences between scientific and psychological methodologies and philosophical activity
- Religious accounts and the different assumptions involved in religious and other metaphysical accounts of the human person
- Non-Western accounts of the person
- Non-human minds
- Artificial intelligence
- Emotion, intuition, and creativity in relation with reasoning.

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