



RAFFLES INSTITUTION  
2023 Year 6 Preliminary Examination  
Higher 2

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## Knowledge and Inquiry

**9759/02**

Paper 2

**19 September 2023**

**2 hours**

Additional Materials: Answer Paper

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### READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Do not turn this sheet over until you are told to do so.  
Write your name and CT group on all the work you hand in.  
Write in dark blue or black ink.  
Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid/tape.

#### Section A

Answer **Question 1**.

#### Section B

Answer **any two** questions.

Begin each response on a fresh sheet of paper.

At the end of the examination, fasten your answers to each section separately. You will be asked to submit your answer to each section separately.

The number of marks is given in brackets [ ] at the end of each question or part question.

**2**  
**Section A**

You **must** answer question one.

- 1** Art, with its captivating allure, has long been romanticized as a wellspring of profound knowledge and enlightenment. However, upon closer scrutiny, we find logical flaws and fallacies that underpin the purported contribution of art to knowledge.

Some believe that art experts can provide us with the necessary critical analysis we need to construct objective knowledge about art and from art, that is, whether something is a work of art, and non-aesthetic judgements. Through years of formal education and practical experience in studying and analysing artworks, these experts can evaluate the quality of art and tell you which art is better or worse, and why, be it through an examination of technical skill, emotional impact, conceptual depth, or cultural significance. They also can place artworks within their historical, cultural, and social contexts, as well as compare artworks across time periods, styles, and regions. Knowledge gained from engaging with art extends beyond the concept of good or bad. The expert's contextual understanding can help us interpret the intention of the artists and the impact of their work on society, and his comparative analysis can give us knowledge of the evolution of artistic expression and aesthetics. But the opinions of art experts are not infallible – their judgements are influenced by personal biases, cultural backgrounds, and prevailing trends. Placing undue faith in the authority of art experts stifles individual interpretation, limits artistic discourse, and overlooks the inherent subjectivity that defines aesthetic judgment. Requiring art experts to give us knowledge also makes art elitist and inaccessible to the common man, which is counterintuitive. How can we say that the average Joe does not know what art is?

Others believe that art's ability to elicit intense feelings and provoke introspection can equip individuals with deep insights into life's complexities, and the emotional responses evoked by art equate to a heightened understanding of the human condition. Surely this is knowledge. Besides, we can gain historical insight and cultural knowledge even without expert training. By simply looking at stained glass windows in churches can we find out about biblical stories of old, while traditional masks, sculptures and textiles from indigenous cultures can offer a window into their spiritual practices and symbolism. However, this argument commits the fallacy of mistaking emotional engagement for genuine knowledge. Emotions are subjective and fleeting, rendering them an unreliable basis for acquiring objective knowledge. Relying solely on emotional responses as a measure of artistic value distorts the purpose of art and disregards the need for critical analysis and empirical evidence. Furthermore, what if artwork was just propaganda? The portrayal of Richard III as a hunchback who orchestrated the murder of his young nephews in a Shakespearean play is a classic example of how the public were fooled into believing that the previous Plantagenet monarch was a ruthless and evil tyrant who was defeated at the Battle of Bosworth which then established the Tudor dynasty. Without proper training, we would not know that this piece of dramatic literature was untrue but was actually used to distort the historical narrative and tarnish the reputation of the Tudor's political rival. The fact that Shakespeare's play provoked outrage and condemnation from its audience which reinforced the negative perception of the historical figure tells you that we cannot trust ourselves to know anything from art.

Hence, while art undoubtedly has value in evoking emotions and provoking thought, it falls short of providing genuine knowledge in the objective sense. Art is a complex and multifaceted form of human expression and is ultimately inherently subjective in nature.

Adapted from "The Illusory Power of Art: Fallacious Claims Regarding Aesthetic Judgment"

*Critically evaluate the above argument with reference to the nature and construction of aesthetic knowledge. Respond with your own critical comments to support or challenge the author's position.* [30]

## Section B

Answer any **two** questions.

- 2 Amid political turmoil, divided societies, and an alarming increase in unmet economic and social needs, many argue that drastic action is necessary to mitigate – and reverse – the effects of past bad governance. Given today's complex political landscape, however, it is crucial to examine the reasoning behind any drastic shift in policy. Take the issue of gun violence, for example. When shootings occur, many naturally call for stricter gun control. But this ignores other contributing factors such as social and economic conditions, mental health issues, and law enforcement effectiveness. When we oversimplify the causes of complex issues, we commit the false cause fallacies that undermine the need for comprehensive analysis and evidence-based solutions.

This does not mean that we sit around and wait for miracles to happen, as proponents of radical change often accuse us of doing. They claim that if we do not invoke radical change, society will eventually collapse because there is so much wrong with society today. But they also point out that our rationale for being cautious is misplaced; even a single alteration to society could still inevitably lead to an uncontrollable chain of events, ultimately resulting in societal collapse. For instance, if we entertain the idea of implementing a universal basic income, critics argue that it will create a culture of dependency and laziness, leading to economic ruin. But isn't this just an example of radical change? These scenarios reveal the inherent contradiction in their argument – in the first, radical change is what will save society, but in the second, radical change is what will doom society. What these people actually want is not radical change but the *right* kind of change that will not lead to societal collapse.

So, while political change is essential for societal growth, it is imperative that we do not entertain illogical reasoning that can plague political debates. Thoughtful analysis, evidence-based approaches, and a wide range of perspectives are necessary to foster more effective political discourse that truly serves the needs of our society.

*Critically assess the reasoning in this argument, explaining why you do or do not accept its conclusion(s).* [15]

- 3 Many agree that biodiversity conservation is important, but few step forward to do anything about it. Stricter conservation measures might hinder resource extraction and economic development, and few want to be responsible for potentially lower Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that might lead to political instability. No one also wants to take responsibility for potential fallout from land-use conflict, especially when it concerns indigenous populations. In the face of resource scarcity and considering issues surrounding the global healthcare crisis, some argue that biodiversity conservation is not as important. But adopting this viewpoint is myopic and ignores the long-term consequences of biodiversity loss.

Biodiverse ecosystems provide vital services like pollination, water purification, soil fertility, which are essential for agriculture, human health, and overall ecosystem resilience. Biodiverse forests and wetlands act as carbon sinks, helping to regulate the climate by absorbing and storing carbon dioxide. If we are actively working towards reducing and reversing the impacts of climate change, why shouldn't we also actively conserve biodiversity? The loss of biodiversity could also mean the loss of potential future treatments of diseases since many pharmaceuticals are derived from natural sources. Shouldn't we preserve biodiversity to tackle the global healthcare crisis? Furthermore, biodiversity in crops and livestock ensures a diverse range of genetic traits that are crucial to changing environmental conditions and disease outbreaks. We would hate for the day when livestock and crops suddenly die, and people start questioning why we did not take action sooner.

*Critically assess the reasoning in this argument, explaining why you do or do not accept its conclusion(s).* [15]

- 4 Defining privacy is akin to grasping at ephemeral mist, a concept both elusive and ever-evolving. It is a complex and multifaceted notion, deeply interwoven with cultural, social, legal, and technological threads. Attempting to pin down a precise definition is like trying to capture the wind in a jar. Privacy, at its core, encompasses the right to autonomy over one's personal information, decisions, and physical space. It embodies the idea that individuals should have control over what is known about them, who knows it, and how that information is used. Yet even this fundamental definition is subject to interpretation.

The challenge in defining privacy arises from its context-dependent nature. What is considered private in one culture or era may not hold true in another. For example, in Asia, it is common and completely fine for parents to install tracking software in their children's mobile phones, but in the West, parents who do so are considered to have intruded on their children's privacy.

Technological advancements also continually reshape the boundaries of privacy, blurring the lines between public and private domains. The invention of web-based social platforms like Facebook and Instagram have done just that – we now think it is acceptable to share plenty of things about our private lives on a public online space. Just look at how many million people post content about everything about their and their children's lives online! Even the invention of seemingly innocuous technology like the Air Tag has shifted our mindset on privacy – we don't even question whether our privacy is being invaded with Apple AirTags\* (although these same people were up in arms about the TraceTogether token back in 2020).

Moreover, privacy is not an absolute concept. Social norms and physical changes to the environment play a pivotal role in shaping our perception of privacy as they evolve over time, as the changes to HDB flat design reflects. In kampongs of the past, people freely entered each other's houses, but HDB flats, with fixed doors and gate grills, prevent such behaviour from occurring now. HDB flats of the 90's used to have windows face the common corridor, but in recent years, only the doors to the flat face the common corridor.

\*Apple AirTags emit a Bluetooth signal that connects with any device on Apple's Find My network.

*Critically assess the reasoning in this argument, explaining why you do or do not accept its conclusion(s).* [15]

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**END OF PAPER**