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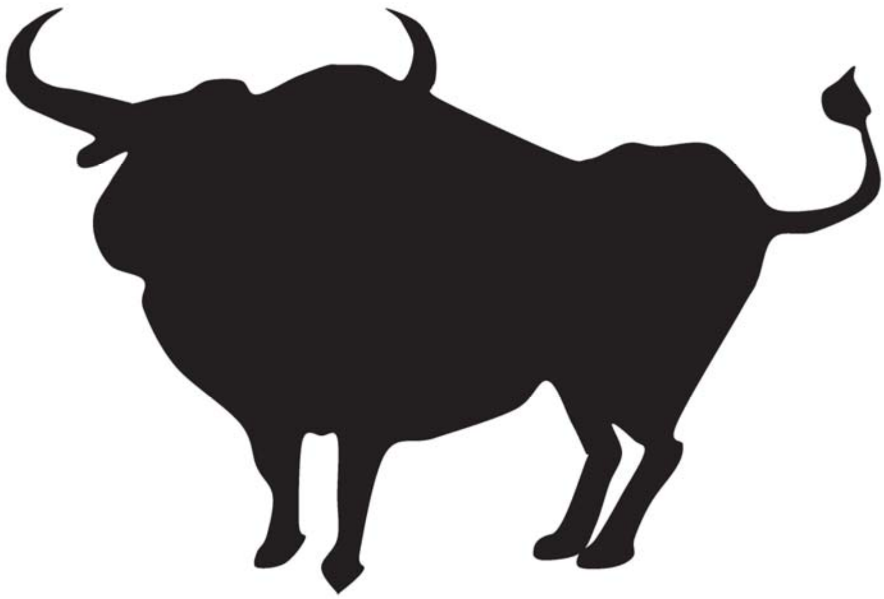

Raffles Institution

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2015 | GP Prelim | Paper 1 **Cynthia Zheng Yixin | 15S03N**

'Disease is the greatest threat facing mankind today.'
To what extent do you agree with this statement?

It was not too long ago that the front pages of our newspapers were plastered with daily updates of the Ebola outbreak that shook the world. Originating in the Southwestern corner of the African continent, the virus spread through the world's airline networks. It infected not only nations in the region, but also slithered its way to the very doorstep of British soil – a country that was separated from its area of origin not only by physical distance but also by healthcare standards. A quick Google search would also turn up horrifying descriptions of the disease's potency; as one of the most lethal diseases in the world, Ebola's name is a bell tolling for the arrival of death. However, joyous news was heard recently that the last Ebola patient in one of the outbreak's worst-hit countries has been discharged. Several months down the road, Ebola has been silenced through multinational cooperation, quarantine and efforts –the Black Rider's horse chained. When we set aside the newspapers and take a step back to survey the state of the world today, it becomes apparent that diseases such as Ebola are not the only problems on our plate. Rogue states, pollution, and humanitarian exploitation still lurk unseen, their influence robbing thousands of lives daily beyond the vision of the average man. Thus, this essay will take the stand that although diseases of all types continue to be a threat to mankind, the greatest danger we now face is in fact created through man's own actions.

Throughout history, diseases have been a significant threat to our lives. Flip open any history textbook, and one would be treated to a morbid smorgasbord of tales regarding plagues and pandemics past. From the Black Death to the Spanish Flu, and then most recently Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) just a decade ago, Nature's assassins never fail to take lives. Pathogens lurk in every corner of our lives, able to cause the greatest form of harm to us – by taking away life entirely. This is especially true in the developing world, where millions are struck down by disease every year. Water-borne infections, malaria, sleeping sickness – the list is seemingly never-ending. Even in the highly-sanitised Western world, diseases still take away lives of those unfortunate enough to contract them. With conventional infections illnesses eliminated, a new host of ailments appear to take their place. Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), the world's most well-known superbug, now claims thousands of lives yearly. When humanity seemingly defeats one pathogen through innovation and antibiotics, another appears to take up arms in its place. Bacteria, too, evolve, resulting in a never-ending arms race, a delicate balance that is just as easily tipped against our favour as it is in our favour.

Even if the threat of external disease-causing agents can be eliminated, our lifestyles can also be a cause of disease. In most developed countries, a third of all deaths are caused by cardiovascular complications. In the absence of transmittable ailments, long-term disease can also kill in its place. Obesity, high blood pressure and chronic over-stress may not be caused by external agents, but they also belong to a category of disease all their own. Cancer, too, has taken the spotlight, being the second-largest cause of death in the Western world. Affluence may shield us from malnutrition and infections by virtue of access to antibiotics and sufficient food supplies, but it has also made 'slow illnesses' more apparent. To put it simply, we have begun to live long enough for our own physical machinery to fail. Thus, the ability of diseases and illnesses to take away lives is perennial.

However, to name disease as the greatest threat to mankind would be too premature a conclusion. While it is true that all forms of maladies combined do result in death tolls in the millions every year, these deaths are often on an individual level: the aged being laid to rest after a long life, the child struck by unfortunate childhood cancer – all these stories are of families, of individuals. Their deaths, while being mourned, are closures of only one or a few individuals' life stories. The true, greater threat lies in the forces which can snuff out thousands of lives in just a single, unexpected blow.

The killing power of diseases is undeniable, as any doctor can testify to. However, the reach of disease has been repeatedly truncated. The pandemics of yore are distant memories; outbreaks are the anomaly rather than the norm. An increase in sanitation levels, scientific knowledge, and medical advancement has armed humanity with the ability to slow and cage disease. Smallpox, once a beast that ravaged young and old alike, was the first disease to be eradicated from the planet. Polio is soon to follow, with only a few pockets of the pathogen left worldwide. While diseases still dog our footsteps, they have been stripped of most of their spreading power, thus drastically reducing their ability to pose as a threat to a whole population. Even the Ebola situation in the United Kingdom was quickly contained by quarantine and contact tracing, isolating susceptible individuals at airports on arrival and thus preventing the virus from spreading. No longer are we living in constant fear of a wave of disease spreading across our nations. The power that illnesses once wielded, to fill the hospitals and streets with the dead and the dying, is now gone. This threat of mass death has been effectively neutralised.

What, then, still holds this terrifying power of mass destruction of human lives? Ironically, the answer seems to point in the direction of our own actions. In the witty bestseller 'Good Omens' by Terry Pratchett published in 1990, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse have undergone restructuring. Famine has retired, replaced by a new Rider: Pollution. While the literary gesture is rather tongue-in-cheek, it still serves its purpose well. While deaths from pollution-related causes do not outnumber that of disease, it is the vast number of victims from just one incident that makes it a threat. Chemical by-products from manufacturing and commercial activity have far wider impacts than that of illness. For example, mercury

have to compare w disease

poisoning from electronic waste dumping leaks a few years ago claimed 30,000 lives in the Ivory Coast. One would be hard-pressed to find a disease with similarly high death tolls in just one country. And this is not just a phenomenon in the developing world, either. In inland California, where the United States' shipping empires build their warehouses, noxious fumes from truck exhaust have poisoned children's lungs, leading to stunted development and reduced respiratory capacity by 10-12%. These instances of lethal pollution have all arisen from the greed of multinational corporations cutting corners to achieve higher profits, skimping on waste disposal and vehicle catalytic converters. Add to this the Sanlu milk scandal in China, where thousands of children were grievously hurt or even died from drinking milk tainted with melamine in order to raise its protein content. Would any disease be able to claim so many lives and hurt countless others in today's society? The odds are so very slim. Thus, the greater threat now lies in the greed of those who are willing to go to great lengths to satisfy their lust for money.

Setting aside the health hazard posed by pollution and industrial activity, we also find another Rider rearing its head now. War is now casting its shadow far longer than it has in recent history. Seventy years after the end of World War II, the Red Rider is making itself felt through the rise of insurgents and rogue states. More nations have had access to nuclear weaponry, and unguarded nuclear missiles from former Soviet launch centres have circulated for a very long time in the black market. Even conventional weaponry is far more lethal – the bombing of the Erawan Shrine in Thailand recently reminded us of just that. In a single instant, a Singaporean family was torn apart. If this family had been struggling with a grievously ill elder, the situation would have been much more different – they would be able to at least say their goodbyes. The threat of bombs, guns and other weapons may seem far removed from the lives of comfort that people of developed countries enjoy, but this incident reminds us otherwise. And this is not even taking into account the unrest and hardship that the less unfortunate face on a daily basis – the war in Syria against ISIS places the lives of civilians in danger with no respite. So many lives can be obliterated at the click of a single button, often in a location far removed from the site of disaster. Is this not a heavier threat than disease, which requires physical proximity to spread, if it even can? In contrast, insidious tentacles of radicalisation and conversion cross national boundaries with terrifying ease.

At the end of the day, the threat of disease does pale somewhat in comparison with the multitude of other threats lying in wait. Diseases have captivated most of our attention, as it is after all a factor of life that follows us from birth to death. However, it is an individual shadow, and rarely a collective one. Arms and weaponry have far larger killing power, as is stipulated in their very purpose. Even corporate greed is liable to cause widespread harm from pollution and adulteration of essentials such as food, water, and air. Perhaps humankind's next achievement would be to force Pestilence to retire – for the Pale Rider is already being eclipsed by its fellows, namely War and Pollution.

Marker's comments:

This is a very good, well-handled response. Fully relevant piece which systematically sets up the issue and then challenges the notion that disease is not the greatest threat today. Good organisation of ideas. Lucid introduction and conclusion, with sound linguistic ability and confident personal voice evident throughout. Some points could have been better developed, however; you tended to get carried away with descriptions of what you seemed to be most passionate about.

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2015 | GP Prelim | Paper 1 **Lim Yi Qing | 15S06R**

'The developed world should bear the burden of climate change.' Discuss.

During his term in office, former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott announced news to scrap Australia's carbon tax, sending a shockwave throughout the scientific world. The message was clear: Australia is not obliged to take on climate change alone. As the adverse effects of climate change become more prominent, it is notable that international discussions seem fixated on who should assume responsibility of tackling climate change. While developed countries (DCs) were responsible for past industrialisation, have greater capacity for change and are morally obliged, the developed world should not bear the burden of climate change alone as it would undermine efforts in tackling an international issue best addressed by both the developed and developing world.

Arguably, the developed world should bear the burden of climate change as they are to blame for the current state of the climate change crisis. After all, it was the Industrial Revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries that propelled the United Kingdom (UK) and United States of America (USA), among other developed countries, to their current positon of status and wealth, where people today enjoy relatively high standards of living. This was despite warnings from scientists during that era, such as French polymath Joseph Fourier and Swedish chemist Svante Arrhenius, who cautioned against the excessive carbon emissions and the repercussions of accelerated greenhouse effect and global warming. However, such advice was blatantly ignored by profit-driven industrialists, and this has resulted in the climate change crisis the world is caught in today. Since the developed world is largely responsible for climate change, they should bear the burden of climate change.

Moreover, the developed world should bear the burden of climate change as the sheer scale and costs of bearing this burden mean only developed countries best have the resources to do so. Today, DCs have relatively high living standards and have the financial resources to plough into research and development of the latest green technology. Sweden, for instance, has invested tremendously in the latest cutting-edge carbon sink and storage technologies. On the other hand, it is simply less logical and practical to expect developing countries to prioritise environmental conservation when they still struggle to solve fundamental problems such as poverty and hunger, and the opportunity cost of bearing the burden of climate change, such as scaling back on industrial production (and consequent reduction of carbon emissions), will translate into much slower economic growth and progress –a cost too huge to bear. While China is now the world's second largest economy, many of its people are still struggling in poverty, especially those in rural villages of inland China, which have enjoyed less of the prosperity of industrialisation seen in major cities such as Shanghai and Beijing. This shows how the burden of climate change may simply be one too heavy to be borne by developing nations. Since DCs have greater means to effect significant change, they should bear the burden of climate change.

Furthermore, moral conscience dictates that the developed world should bear the burden of climate change, as consequences of climate change are blind to the sins and moralities of polluting countries, and developing countries may arguably be more vulnerable. While this is not to argue that DCs are isolated from the unprecedented consequences of climate change, as illustrated by the devastating Hurricane Katrina that hit the USA in 2005, the issue now lies in the fact that less developed countries may be less equipped to handle the consequences due to poor governmental response and a lack of proper infrastructure, which has the ability to turn this into a humanitarian crisis. In Southeast Asia, Cambodia is one of the victims of climate change. Altered weather patterns have resulted in scorching droughts, interrupted by erratic rainfall. Such events have exacerbated water shortage at times, and more importantly, it has resulted in poor crop yields and threatens the future food security of Cambodians. If the developed world chooses not to bear the burden of climate change when they are better equipped to, this would go against the very sense of human justice, in that it will ultimately be people in developing countries who will suffer. Thus, the developed world should bear the burden of climate change as it is simply a moral duty to do so.

Regardless, changing circumstances have enforced the view that the developed world should not bear the burden of climate change unless the developing world takes initiative to effect change. Today, major polluters also include developing nations such as China and Russia. These countries are now industrialising and risk following in the footsteps of their developed counterparts. Should the world then allow the same mistake of history to repeat itself? US ecologist Garrett Hardin observed in 1968 the "tragedy of the commons", where scarce resources will become depleted if one party is allowed to be irresponsible. In other words, to allow developed countries to bear the burden of climate change alone will be insufficient, especially when developing countries are now key players that the world cannot afford to isolate from discussions. Moreover, developing countries should by now have recognised that their citizens are now being plagued by the worsening effects of climate change. In Bangladesh and India, searing heat waves with temperatures soaring to over 40° C have led to many deaths across these nations. These countries therefore have the responsibility to bear the burden of climate change as well due to this changing set of circumstances. Thus, the developed world should not bear the burden of climate change unless the developing world promises to bear the responsibility as well.

Above all, while a global issue is best addressed with concerted efforts from all countries, whether developed or developing, it is imperative to recognise that the developed world should bear more of the burden of climate change. This works on the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities". The Kyoto Protocol of 1997 had worked on this principle, exempting developing nations such as China and India from the same carbon emissions reductions obligations as developed countries like Japan. This is simply because the developed world has greater capability of bearing this burden. However, it is crucial to note that developing countries must not shirk responsibility as it will cause a furore and greatly reduce the willingness of the developed world to bear responsibility. A successful example would be Brazil, which aims to curb illegal deforestation in the Amazon, one of the main roots of climate change. Even the disappointing Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in 2009 initiated the setting up of a fund for developed countries to help developing ones develop their green technologies. While the developed world pours in resources to tackle climate change, developing countries should also be receptive to the assistance and bite the bullet to make their countries more environmentally friendly even if, at times, it may compromise economic growth. Thus, developed countries should bear a greater burden of climate change to spearhead progress in tackling this grave crisis.

In conclusion, on the discussion of who should bear the burden of climate change, responsibility should not be divided on mere statistics of past and present emissions as countries can simply pay the value sum for the emissions that they are supposedly responsible for. Undoubtedly, the developed world should bear responsibility since they have the necessary resources and the moral obligation to do so, but developing countries cannot, and should not divert the burden of climate change away from themselves as they too are culprits of climate change. Australia, it seems, has already given up on this fight. While the theory of "common but differentiated responsibilities" seems to be easily comprehended on paper, the complexities of international politics have already sealed the fate on a fruitless discussion. Thus, while the developed world should bear a greater burden on climate change, unfortunately, it does not necessarily mean they would.

Marker's comments:

There are certainly very current and relevant points raised, communicating clearly your conviction in this area. Response shows commendable knowledge as well as strong awareness that all parties need to play their part, while recognising the challenges being faced regarding the latter.

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2015 | GP Prelim | Paper 2 | Passage

Judith Shulevitz writes that child-minding duties are not equal between mothers and fathers.

There's a story my daughter loves to hear me tell: the day after I came home from the hospital with her big brother, my first child, I was seized by the certainty that I was about to die. I sobbed uncontrollably. I asked my husband, "But who will keep him in socks? Who'll make sure he's wearing his little socks?"

New parenthood, of course, does things to your brain. But I was on to something, even in my deranged, postpartum way. I should state for the record that my husband is perfectly handy with socks. Still, the parent more obsessed with the children's hosiery is the one who'll make sure it's in stock. And the shouldering of that one task can snowball into responsibility for the whole assembly line of child-minding. She who buys the bootees will surely buy the bottle washer, just as she'll probably find the babysitter and pencil in the class trips. I don't mean to say that she'll be the one to do everything, just that she'll make sure that almost everything gets done. Sociologists sometimes call the management of familial duties "worry work", and the person who does it the "designated worrier", because you need large reserves of emotional energy to stay on top of it all.

I wish I could say that fathers and mothers worry in equal measure. But they don't. Disregard what your two-career couple friends say about going 50-50. Sociological studies of couples from all strata of society confirm that, by and large, mothers draft the to-do lists while fathers pick and choose among the items. And whether a woman loves or hates worry work, it can scatter her focus on what she does for pay or clean off a career path. This grind of apprehension and organisation may be one of the least movable obstacles to women's equality in the workplace.

It's surprising that household supervision resists gender reassignment to the degree that it does. In the United States today, more than half of all women work, and women are 40 percent of the sole or primary breadwinners in households with children under 18. The apportionment of the acts required to keep home and family together has also been evening out during the past 40 years (though, for housework, this is more because women have sloughed it off rather than because men have taken it on). Nonetheless, "one of the last things to go is women keeping track of the kind of non-routine details of taking care of children: when they have to go to the doctor, when they need a permission slip for school – paying attention at that level," says the social psychologist Francine Deutsch, author of *Halving It All: How Equally Shared Parenting Works*.

The amount of attention that must be paid to such details has also ballooned in the past few decades. This is because of our commitment to what the sociologist Annette Lareau calls "concerted cultivation". We enrol children in dance classes, soccer, tutoring — often three or four extracurricular activities a week.

These demand reluctant effort, obviously, but also have less visible time costs: searching the web for the best programme, ordering equipment, packing snacks and so on. We fret that we're overscheduling the children, but don't seem to realise that we're also overscheduling ourselves. And when I say 'we', you know who I mean. A 2008 study by Dr Lareau and the sociologist Elliot B. Weininger found that while fathers often, say, coach games, it's mothers who perform the behind-the-scenes labour that makes kids' sports and other pursuits possible.

Of course, sweeping generalisations about who does what always have a near-infinite number of exceptions. There are many more men in charge of child care than there were 20-odd years ago. How many more depends on whether you ask men or women: half of the men surveyed in a Families and Work Institute study from 2008 said they were either the responsible parent or shared the role equally with their spouse, while two-thirds of the women said they were the one in charge.

And then there are the stay-at-home dads: two million of them in 2012, up from 1.1 million in 1989, although only around a fifth of those fathers stay home for the children. The other four-fifths are unemployed, ill, in school or retired. Some of these fathers serve as primary caregivers. On average, however, men who are out of work eke out slightly under three hours a day of housework and child care combined — less than working women do (3.4 hours a day).

One reason women like me get stuck with the micromanagement is that we don't see it coming, not at first. Pamela Smock, a sociologist at the University of Michigan, tells a story about the students in her "Women and Work" class. Mostly women, they spend a semester reading about the gendered division of domestic labour. And yet in their presentations, even they slip up and talk about men "helping out". "As long as the phrase 'he helped' is used," says Dr Smock, "we know we have not attained gender equality."

No matter how generous, "helping out" isn't sharing. I feel pinpricks of rage every time my husband fishes for praise for something I've asked him to do. On the other hand, my friends and I have never gotten around to drawing up the List of Lists and insisting that we split it. Even though women tell researchers that having to answer for the completion of domestic tasks stresses them out more than any other aspect of family life, I suspect they're not always willing to cede control.

I've definitely been guilty of "maternal gatekeeping" — rolling my eyes or making sardonic asides when my husband has been in charge but hasn't pushed hard enough to get teeth brushed or bar mitzvah practice done. This drives my husband insane, because he's a really good father and he knows that I know it. But women can't help themselves. They have standards, helicopter-ish though they may be.

Allow me to advance one more, perhaps controversial, theory about why women are on the hook for what you might call the human-resources side of child care: women simply worry more about their children. This is largely a social fact. Mothers live in a world of other mothers, not to mention teachers and principals, who judge us by our children. Or maybe we just think they're judging us.

But there is also a biological explanation: we have been conditioned to worry. Evidence from other animals as well as humans makes the case that the female of the species is programmed to do more than the male to help their offspring thrive. Neurological and endocrinological changes, the production of hormones such as oxytocin and oestrogen during pregnancy and after birth, exert a profound influence over mothers' moods and regulate the depth of their attachment to their children.

So we worry. When we worry, we coordinate. When we coordinate, we multitask. We text about a play date while tending to a spreadsheet. And we underestimate how many minutes we rack up on stuff we're not being paid to do. Smartphones are particularly dangerous in this regard, because they make multitasking seem like no work at all.

But what is to be done? When Martin Luther King, Jr. had the Dream in inspiring the civil rights movement, we enacted laws that broke the attitudes on segregation, painful as they were in the beginning. We created avenues that allowed blacks and whites to come together in meaningful ways, awkward as it was for both groups. Most of all, King created a vision never seen before. I want that — for mothers!

All this may change as men as well as women chafe against the lengthening and increasingly unpredictable workday foisted upon us by globalisation and the Internet, among other forces. It should be said, however, that planning for equality is not the same as achieving it. The realities of child rearing — the shortage of time and sleep, the fraying of tempers, the pressure on women to be the right kind of mother and on men not to let family affect career — tend to define equality down. It's about time things get easier when Mom and Dad feel happier looking after junior. Just ask the Finnish mothers.

Adapted from the New York Times Sunday Review

Judith Shulevitz argues that mothers play more of an active role in their children's lives than fathers. How far would you agree with the author's views? Relate your views to both you and your society.

Shulevitz first argues that one reason mothers tend to play a more active role in their children's lives is that they are judged, or at least believe that they are judged, by other mothers based on their children, leading them to worry more than their spouses. In this respect, I am inclined to agree with Shulevitz's opinion. With the rise of dual-income families and hence the number of working mothers in Singapore, in part due to rising costs of living, the conflict between traditional expectations of a "good" mother and the demands of working life is becoming increasingly apparent for mothers. Perhaps due to Asian cultural influences, where women are predominantly the homemakers, working women today are often still expected to fulfil their traditional role as the homemaker, even if they are working – and are often criticised by other women if they do not do so. For instance, it is not uncommon to hear grandmothers berating their own daughters (and not their sons-in-law) for the bad behaviour of their grandchildren. Similarly, the refusal of some working mothers to stay at home for a one-month period of "confinement" – a conventional Chinese practice after giving birth – is often frowned upon by their mothers and mothers-in-law as poor parenting. In this respect, it can be seen why the expectation placed on women, by other women, to juggle their responsibilities at home and at work, can lead to women worrying more about their children than men.

Yet, whether this is a trend that will continue into the long term is something that can be questioned. With new initiatives from the government such as extended paternity leave, some may choose to think that fathers may begin to play a larger and more active role in future. Then again, spending more time with children does not necessarily equate to taking up a greater responsibility. Arguably, for men to start investing themselves more in the responsibilities of child-minding, what is required is a mindset change, not just in men but in women as well.

Next, Shulevitz also highlights that one reason micromanagement is so stressful for women is that the number of details surrounding a child's life have skyrocketed in the past few decades, due to parents overscheduling their children for extracurricular activities. Again, in a country where the "kiasu" (dialect for "afraid of losing") mentality is known to characterise parenting, Singapore parents are notoriously over-zealous in signing their children up for piano and ballet classes, on the basis that such classes will benefit their child's development. While not strictly extracurricular activities, Singapore's billion-dollar tuition industry also serves to illustrate how parents are engaging their children in a multitude of commitments, hence inadvertently overwhelming themselves as well. Shulevitz's argument that micromanagement has become increasingly stressful in recent years is hence one that I believe applies to Singapore as well.

Marker's comments:

There are astute observations of what a typical middle-class child has to go through in Singapore life. You could also focus more on explicit 'father' expectations/ sentiments rather than a general analysis of local parenting. It should be even more interesting to compare the analysis here of a largely Chinese background to those of other ethnic backgrounds in Singapore.

2015 | GP Prelim | Paper 2 | AQ **Tan Kong Hui Daniel | 15A13A**

Judith Shulevitz argues that mothers play more of an active role in their children's lives than fathers. How far would you agree with the author's views? Relate your views to both you and your society.

One of the claims that the writer makes is that women end up playing a more active role in part due to "social" reasons. I do to a large extent agree with this view as I recognise the prevailing social pressures in Singapore that actively enforce on women the role of a mother. What this implies is that the worth of a woman is greatly linked to her ability and her duties as a mother. In many speeches by the government, the contributions of women in society are often celebrated in the context of them giving and nurturing life. What exists behind the veil of this celebration may be argued to be an unspoken pressure and signal that one of the fundamental and core pursuits of women in society should be that of parenthood, and the ultimate implication is that women in society are strongly urged to take on a dominant and active role in childcare simply because it is perceived to be their natural duty and role. Critics may argue that there are instances in society where the advancement of women in their careers (emergence into politics or managerial roles) is equally celebrated, easing the social expectations and pressure on women by establishing new modes in which the achievements of women may be celebrated. This is undoubtedly true, and the fact that change has been present is undeniable. However, the reality for most Singaporean women is that their worth and the measure of their success is still significantly tied to their roles as mothers due to prevailing traditional mindsets that are deeply entrenched in the minds of the older generation in particular. Change has arrived but it is still far from desirable in its extent.

Another assertion the writer makes is that parenthood "scatter[s]" the focus of women, preventing them from successfully pursuing their careers in some cases. This is debatable in Singapore's context, with the presence of a large number of domestic helpers from neighbouring regions. This has freed up the attention of many working mothers, allowing them to pursue their careers with less worry over the care of their children. These domestic helpers aid in taking the burden of parenthood off the shoulders of many mothers, reducing their involvement in the process of childcare, in turn allowing them of focus on their careers. One possible loophole in this argument, though, is that this is a luxury only available to more well-to-do families and mothers. Poorer households simply cannot afford domestic helpers. However, in the latter case, it must be said that alternatives exist, such as leaving one's children with one's parents, achieving the same effect of reducing the childcare requirements of mothers, allowing them to pursue their own careers.

Finally, Shulevitz states that there is an expectation of men to "not let family affect career", which in turn perpetuates their lower levels of contribution in childcare. Arguably, this is true to a large extent in my society, with men still being seen as the major breadwinners of society. However, with the high levels of education attained by the female population in Singapore, as well as the growth of policies that encourage fathers to help out with childcare, such trends may be said to be on the reverse. The implementation of shared parental care leave between husband and wife encourages husbands to play a more active role in looking after children. There might still be a huge disparity in the number of days of paternal care leave as compared to maternal care leave offered, but it is undoubtedly a step in the right direction.

Marker's comments:

A very forceful and succinct analysis of the local parenting trends! Differing expectations of paternal and maternal roles, both by society and the individuals themselves, have been captured well.

2015 | KI CT2 | Paper 1 **Tan Wei Ying Kate | 15S03U**

Consider the extent to which knowledge claims can never be satisfactorily justified.

Few would question why justification is a necessary condition for our working definition of knowledge as justified true belief. After all, when a friend comes to you with an absurd knowledge claim, such as 'I know that aliens exist', your immediate and instinctive response would be to ask how they know, and what grounds they have for their belief – namely their justification. If your friend gives you a reason why they have this knowledge claim, you may or may not be satisfied by it. It depends on what level of certainty you demand, as well as the nature of the justification. To say that knowledge claims can never be satisfactorily justified as to give us reliable knowledge is absurd, but the extent to which a justification satisfies us depends on the nature of the justification and the knowledge claim, and the level of certainty demanded.

If one defines satisfactory justification as that which gives us absolute certainty about the knowledge claim, then we can only claim knowledge in certain limited cases. We can claim a priori knowledge which we can derive using reason alone and without any experience. A priori knowledge such as 1+1=2 is necessary and eternal, and justification lies in the fact that the predicate is contained within the subject, and we cannot negate the statement without running into a contradiction. It is not conceivable that 1 plus 2 does not equal 2, and hence our justification for this satisfactorily gives us certain knowledge.

However, such a definition of satisfactory justification is clearly not tenable in reality, as it limits our scope of knowledge to merely a priori statements. Clearly, instinctively, we are justified in making simple knowledge claims such as 'this chair is blue'. In this case, our justification lies not in reason but in experience. Is that sufficient? Those who demand absolute certainty would disagree, saying that our sense data of seeing a blue chair might not correspond to the actual colour of the chair, because we might be 'brains in a vat' being sent signals to receive such sense data. Such sceptics demand absolute certainty, and hence no other justification would be satisfactory to them. For most of us, however, the justification seems to be strong. The justification of 'I see a blue chair' can be made even stronger by the reasoning that I am not colour-blind, and that I am not subject to any conditions that might affect my vision. In this way, reasoning and experience can complement each other to provide stronger justification for our knowledge claim.

However, some knowledge claims requires stronger justification than others. Consider knowledge claim A, 'I see a blue chair', justified by my sense data of a blue chair, versus knowledge claim B, 'I see a dinosaur', justified by my sense data of a dinosaur. We are more willing to accept claim A than claim B, although their justifications seem similar. This is because knowledge claim A coheres well with my existing web of beliefs, including beliefs that chairs can be blue and that chairs exist. On the other hand, claim B does not cohere with existing beliefs, such as 'living dinosaurs do not exist' and 'dinosaurs are extinct'. In this case, stronger justification is needed for claim B – for example, if I also found out that a laboratory released a statement on a cloning experiment gone wrong, and that government sources have confirmed its sighting, I might consider this new justification satisfactory. To do so, I would have to throw out contradicting pre-existing beliefs and replace it with this knowledge claim and its justifications. In essence, the more removed a knowledge claim is from our existing web of beliefs, the stronger justification is needed to satisfactorily justify the claim.

In addition, not all justifications are equally strong. Consider a knowledge claim that all swans are white. The justification of having seen the white swans is much weaker than the justification of having seen thousands of swans from different regions of the world, all of which are white. The strength of an inductive justification is affected by how likely the individual premises represent the group as a whole, such as by the number of premises. Inductive justifications are also weaker than deductive justifications, such as 'All unmarried males are bachelors, and John is an unmarried male, hence John is a bachelor."

The idea that knowledge claims can never be satisfactorily justified seems unintuitive and based off the demand for knowledge with absolute certainty. While some claims may require stronger justification, and some justifications may be weaker than others, it is possible to imagine scenarios in which most knowledge claims, even ones that seem ridiculous, can be satisfactorily justified in light of strong and valid evidence. Indeed, it seems that the only knowledge claims that cannot be satisfactorily justified are those that are self-contradictory, such as 'bachelors are married men' or 'I know that I cannot know anything'. Apart from such claims, most claims can be satisfactorily justified should suitable evidence (in the form of experience or other knowledge claims) arise, although the strength and extent of justification which is needed does ultimate depend on one's web of beliefs.

It is however possible to have a situation where there are two contradicting knowledge claims within two separate webs of beliefs that are equally strong. It could be said then that the two claims can never be satisfactorily justified as there is no way of determining which set of beliefs to keep and which to reject. This possibility of underdetermination is the reason why most knowledge claims may be satisfactorily justified in theory and but not in reality, due to lack of suitable justification at this point in time.

In addition, if one uses a foundationalist justification rather than a coherentist one, depending on the foundational beliefs, it is possible that one can never build up one's foundation of beliefs to have sufficient justification for a particular knowledge claim. This may be because one cannot construct the justification needed for the knowledge claim due to lack of reason or experience. For example, the knowledge claim that 'I know that God exists' may not be sufficiently justified by a foundation of beliefs starting with one's sense data.

Overall, most beliefs can theoretically be satisfactorily justified, but the extent to which this is possible is reality is subject to the availability of evidence and justification in reality.

Marker's comments:

Comprehensive discussion of what counts as satisfactory justification for knowledge. Good use of examples to make the points. Cogent piece, except for penultimate paragraph.

2015 | KI CT2 | Paper 1 Wu Chin Ying | 15S03R

Consider the extent to which knowledge claims can never be satisfactorily justified.

Justification is definitely essential to knowledge, but just what kind of justification? To what extent can knowledge claims be satisfactorily justified? In this essay, I hope to show that different types of knowledge claims require different criteria and standards for justification. As a result, though some knowledge claims will never be satisfactorily justified by the highest of standards, they can still count satisfactorily as knowledge by other, more tenable standards.

For example, I can say that I know kangaroos are marsupials because I read that in an encyclopaedia. However, the sceptic can ask, what justifies your implicit belief that the encyclopaedia told you the correct thing? What justification does the person or organization who wrote the encyclopaedia have to say that they know that kangaroos are marsupials? We see here that apparently, this piece of evidence, that "I read it in an encyclopaedia" does not seem to satisfactorily justify the knowledge claim that "kangaroos are marsupials" because one can keep asking questions about the justification about this supposed justification. Extending this, we see that we run into an infinite regress of justification – we seem to need infinite pieces of justification to satisfactorily claim that "kangaroos are marsupials"! This seems very absurd.

To quell the infinite regress, foundationalists posited a super-structural model for knowledge, where we have a bedrock of indubitable beliefs upon which our super-structural knowledge claims can rest upon and hence be satisfactorily justified. Empiricists say these beliefs are our sense data; after all, while we can question what our sense data tell us, or whether these sense data may in fact be the work of an evil demon casting delusions in my mind, we cannot doubt the existence of the sense data itself. I may not know if I have indeed a head or a body, but I can say for certain that I have sensations which feel like my head hurts. Rationalists say these beliefs are a priori truths or "clear and distinct ideas" (as Descartes called them). These, like that "1+1=2", or that "all spinsters are women", are accessed purely by thinking about them and attaining a grasp of the concepts involved, and as such, are true in and of themselves without need for further justification. Hence, we see that a priori truths are necessary and are always very satisfactorily justified. Knowledge claims derived deductively from such truths, like those in Math, can also be said to have that status of being absolutely well-justified. For example, from Euclid's 5 axioms we can deductively derive other truisms such as that all angles on a line add up to 180 degrees, lines perpendicular to the same line are parallel to each other, and so on. Indeed, for such knowledge claims we can say on nearly all accounts, that they are satisfactorily justified.

But if we return to the original example, the knowledge claim that kangaroos are marsupials, we see we haven't made much progress in finding satisfactory justification for it, by the criteria that we hold a priori truths up against. This evidently brings up a key problem with using such criteria for our justification: we wouldn't be able to hold any contingent (non-necessary) knowledge claims about the world on that account! This is because there is a gap between what we know purely by thinking and what we can know only through our access of the world. The latter group, which contains most, if not all, of the knowledge we have about each other and the world around us, is evidently impossible to attain merely based on the absolute truisms of the first group. For instance, I know I have sensations of reading an encyclopaedia, but how does that tell me that the encyclopaedia exists or that what is written on it is true? Hence we must move on to consider other criteria or standards of justification, because otherwise most of our knowledge claims would be rendered void (and by common sense we know this cannot be the case).

Perhaps, then, we can look at justification in a different light. Instead of seeking to anchor them in absolute truisms, we can evaluate justifications by their own nature as well as how they link to the knowledge we are claiming to justify.

For example, one may assert that knowledge must be reliably grounded; that is to say, justifications must be derived through reliable means. Take, again, "I know that kangaroos are marsupials because I saw it in an encyclopaedia." The sceptic may question my perceptions – how do I know that at the moment when I was reading the section on kangaroos, I did not actually fall into a great stupor where delusionary sensations (of reading "kangaroos are marsupials") filled my mind? To reply him, I say that I cannot know for sure that such a scenario did not happen, but because my sensations and perceptions are generally reliable – they have proven to be right time and time again, only misguiding me on very rare occasions – I have enough reason to trust in my reading of that encyclopaedia, and hence have satisfactory justification to hold the claim that kangaroos are marsupials. I am also justified by the fact that encyclopaedias are generally a reliable source, because they are written by reputable organisations, cross-referenced and proofread by several people, several times, and so on and so forth. We see that such criteria gives one reason to say that one has satisfactorily justified knowledge. For instance, a farmer may have the true belief that the best time to start planting rice crops is when a pink bug starts appearing in the soil. He may believe this to be due to the manifestation of a divine god of agriculture on earth, giving his blessings, which may be nebulous and hence seemingly not a good justification for knowledge. However, do we say that the farmer, who has been reaping successful harvests year after year after year, does not know when the best time to plant rice crops is? No, we probably would not, because the farmer's knowledge claim is supported by the fact that when he planted crops at the time when the pink bug appeared, his harvest was greater than when he planted crops anytime else. His knowledge is satisfactorily justified by virtue of the fact that his justification has proven to be reliable through years of practical testing. This criterion allows us to ascribe knowledge status to claims like "Mr Lee Kuan Yew was the first Prime Minister of Singapore", in History, to others like "this marker will fall to the ground once I let go of my grip", in Science.

However, knowledge claims that are justified by this method may not be justified by other methods used. For example if I say that I know there is a jar of honey on the shelf because I see it there, I seem to have a reliable justification and hence knowledge; however, if what I actually see is in fact a realistic 3D painting of honey that is hung in front of the shelf (though there is really a jar of honey on the shelf behind the painting), then my justification, however seemingly reliable at first, is defeated, because my knowledge claim is really just based on falsehood. That there are such instances leads us to worry that what we may at first glance consider satisfactorily justified knowledge claims may turn out to be actually not well-justified, or may be defeated epistemically in its justification (i.e. the falsity of the justification eliminates its characteristic ability to turn a mere true belief into knowledge). One may say that we need indefeasible knowledge, that is to say, a true belief that is undefeatably justified. That would be a satisfactory justification, one might say. But in order to achieve this, one would have to first ensure that one's justification is true, and that the belief in question cannot be proven wrong in light of any further pieces of

evidence. This seems much too high a demand for us living our everyday lives; it seems to be much too high a bar for "satisfactory justification".

What now? I would say that while such instances do show that justifications are liable to defeat, they are in general good enough to sustain true beliefs as knowledge claims. This seems to show that there will be some knowledge claims which will never be satisfactorily justified. Perhaps, by such a paradigm of justification, yes; however, we ought to remember that knowledge claims may not need to be supported by single pieces of justification – they can perhaps be justified simply by their coherence to several other beliefs. This eliminates the need for traditional justification, and allows us to have knowledge claims.

Such instances do show that justifications are liable to defeat. However, the knowledge claims that we hold at any one point in time can also be justified not purely by virtue of their individual justifications, (e.g. "I know Newton's third law is true because I have observed xxx number of experiments and they have all reported Y which proves this generalization true") but also by their coherence to one another (e.g. "I know Newton's third law is true, also because it coheres with my other observations, with the mathematical laws and other proven laws in science, etc."). Pragmatically speaking, one can technically dismiss justification as irrelevant and say that knowledge is that which works. Similar to the farmer example, if this knowledge claim that "XX planting time is the best time to plant rice" gives me the best harvest and lots of rice to eat and sell, then it is impractical and unintuitive to say that such a claim is unsatisfactorily justified.

These other accounts of knowledge allow us to consider justification in a non-conventional sense, allowing us to ascribe satisfactory justification to the knowledge claims that we live by. After all, "satisfactorily justified" knowledge claims simply refer to claims which are well-justified and have good reason to call knowledge; each of these claims is indeed satisfactorily justified by different criteria and approaches.

Marker's comments:

Cogent and well developed except for the structural quibble I have – where you place the example paragraph on "honey".

2015 | Year 6 | KI CT2 | Paper 2 | Section A | Passage

The world of art is full of fakes. Perhaps there is no real thing? But do we have no way of distinguishing true from false art, or saying why art matters and how? I shall make a few positive suggestions. Three words summarise my answer - beauty, form and redemption.

For many artists and critics, beauty is a discredited idea. The modernist message, that art must show life as it is, suggests to many people that, if you aim for beauty, you will end up with kitsch. Kitsch is not about the thing observed but about the observer. It does not invite you to feel moved by the doll you are dressing so tenderly, but by yourself dressing the doll. All sentimentality is like this - it redirects emotion from the object to the subject, so as to create a fantasy of emotion without the real cost of feeling it. The kitsch object encourages you to think, "Look at me feeling this - how nice I am and how lovable."

This is a mistake, however. Kitsch tells you how nice you are. It offers easy feelings on the cheap: a means to cheap emotion. Beauty is an end in itself. We reach beauty through setting our interests aside and letting the world dawn on us. There are many ways of doing this, but art is undeniably the most important, since it presents us with the image of human life and asks us to look on it directly, not for what we can take from it but for what we can give to it. Through beauty, art cleans the world of our self-obsession.

Our human need for beauty is not something that we could lack and still be fulfilled as people. It is a need arising from our moral nature. We can wander through this world, alienated, resentful, full of suspicion and distrust. Or we can find our home here, coming to rest in harmony with others and with ourselves. That is what we see in Corot's landscapes, Cezanne's apples, or Van Gogh's unlaced boots.

This brings me to my second important word - form. The true work of art is not beautiful in the way a flower or a landscape is beautiful. It is a consciously created thing, in which the human need for form triumphs over the randomness of objects. Our lives are fragmented and distracted - things start up in our feelings without finding their completion. Very little is revealed to us in such a way that its significance can be fully understood. In art, however, we create a realm of the imagination, in which each beginning finds its end, and each fragment is part of a meaningful whole. The subject of a Bach fugue seems to develop of its own accord, filling musical space and moving logically towards closure. But it is not an exercise in mathematics. Every theme in Bach is pregnant with emotion, moving with the rhythm of the listener's inner life. Bach is taking you into an imagined space, and presenting you, in that space, with the image of your own fulfilment.

Formal perfection cannot be achieved without knowledge, discipline and attention to detail. The illusion that art flows out of us is no longer believable. Gone are the days when you can make a stir by sitting in silence at a piano for four minutes and 33 seconds like John Cage. To be really modern, you must create works of art that take modern life, in all its disconnectedness, and bring it to fullness and resolution. It is fine for a painter to splash paint around like Jackson Pollock, but the real knowledge of colour comes through studying the natural world, and finding our own emotions mirrored in the secret tints of things, as Cezanne found peace and comfort in a dish of apples. If we look at the true apostles of beauty in our time, we are immediately struck by the immense hard work, the studious isolation, and the attention to detail which have characterised their craft. In art, beauty has to be won and the work is hard, but the task is worth it, and this brings me to my third important word - redemption.

In the face of sorrow, imperfection and the fleetingness of our affections and joys, we ask ourselves: "Why?" We look to art for the proof that life in this world is meaningful and that suffering is not pointless, but a necessary part of a larger, redeeming whole. Tragedies show us the triumph of dignity over destruction and compassion over despair. They endow suffering with a formal completion and thereby restore the moral equilibrium. The tragic hero is completed through his fate. His death is a sacrifice, and this sacrifice renews the world.

Tragedy reminds us that beauty is a redemptive presence in our lives. It is the face of love, shining in the midst of desolation. We should not be surprised that many of the most beautiful works of modern art have emerged in reaction to hatred and cruelty. The poems of Akhmatova, the writings of Pasternak, the music of Shostakovitch - such works shone a light in the totalitarian darkness, and showed love in the midst of destruction. Something similar could be said of Eliot's Four Quartets, of Britten's War Requiem, of Matisse's chapel at Vence.

Modernism arose because artists, writers and musicians held on to the vision of beauty as a redemptive presence in our lives. And that is the difference between the real work of art and the fake. Real art is a work of love. Fake art is a work of deception.

2015 | KI CT2 | Paper 2 | Section A **Wu Chin Ying | 15S03R**

Analyse and evaluate the argument in the given passage, responding with your own critical comments to support or challenge the author's position. Where appropriate, make reference to issues surrounding knowledge and inquiry in the field of aesthetics and/or art.

The author argues that real art can be distinguished from fake art by the following criteria: beauty, form and redemption. These are the aspects that characterise why and how art matters and can hence be used to distinguish real art and fake art.

He argues that beauty is a key criterion because it is through beauty that art cleans the world of our self-obsession and fulfils our human need (arising from our moral nature). He argues that form is a key distinguishing aspect of real art because art fulfils us by creating a realm of imagination where each fragment is part of a meaningful whole – this is a formal property of the art object that allows the fulfilment of the human need for form and therefore distinguishes real from fake art. He also argues that knowledge, discipline and attention to detail, the pre-requisites for formal perfection, are key characteristics of art because the true apostles of beauty do showcase these. Lastly, he argues that redemption is an important characteristic because art if characteristic is proof that life in this world is meaningful.

Firstly, the author argues that beauty is an end in itself, and that, through beauty, art cleans the world of our self-obsession. He says "we reach beauty through setting our interests aside" – this is in line with how Kant characterizes aesthetic judgement, as disinterested. When we judge something to be beautiful, then, we are doing so without an ulterior motive in mind, and we desire the object not out of material gain or personal benefit but simply because it is aesthetically pleasing. In this sense, art can perhaps be distinguished from fake art that may for instance only promote kitsch where the feelings of pleasure arise not from the object itself. For real art, the beautiful object itself is the one that arouses pleasant emotions. But art is also a very subjective matter. I may feel that some object is beautiful while another person may not; this is a common dispute in artistic circles. How then can beauty be a criterion for deciding if something is art or non-art if there is no objective standard?

Next, on his points about form: he says form is a vital aspect of art because it is through form that art is able to piece together fragments to form a meaningful whole. He implies that true art is consciously created, and this is embodied in how, in art, form triumphs over randomness of objects and how, in art, we create a realm of the imagination where each fragment is part of a meaningful whole. This sort of makes sense because we generally do recognize art as a field that arouses our imagination and helps us make sense of our world.

He also presents knowledge, discipline and attention to detail as prerequisites for formal perfection, and argues that these characteristics are evident in the artworks of the "true apostles of beauty". However, in raising this, he seems already to be presuming a category of artworks which he has predetermined to be "true art". This argument is somewhat circular because he is drawing defining characteristics of true art from this category, but who or what determines what artworks belong in that category to begin with? He also criticizes Jackson Pollock and John Cage, dismissing their works presumably as fake art on the basis of their works lacking hard work. However, in today's modern art society, several critics do indeed consider these artworks to be true art, for various reasons – maybe John Cage's 4'33'' presents the audience with a period of silence in which reflection and possibly self-actualisation can be realized; or Jackson Pollock's "random" colour splashes presents beauty in randomness. These art critics may value other criteria for arm over form and beauty (or they may find beauty in other things), and who is to say that the author's criteria are more justified than these art critics'?

Ultimately, we can question the author's main conclusion that we indeed have an objective way of drawing a line between true and false art. Can Marcel Duchamp's "La Fontaine" or Andy Warhol's drawings of Campbell soup be regarded as art? To some, yes; but to others, no – different people have different criteria for distinguishing real and fake art. The author does present a case for why beauty, form and redemption can be regarded as criteria to distinguish true and false art, and these characteristics are indeed justified to be present in several artworks, but he has not justified his implicit stance that these are the key, if not the only, important criteria (as can be implied from his dismissing of certain artists over others). If we consider Morris Weitz's proposed "Open Concept Argument", whereby the definition of what counts as art is left open, perhaps then there can be several other things which distinguish art from fake art, or perhaps the author's three suggestions may not be valid in certain instances, to some people.

Marker's comments:
Some points left undeveloped, but there are clearly articulated responses that address author's main points.

Does music offer anything more than momentary pleasure?

A common complaint lobbed at music today is that it is meaningless and trivial, with songs being churned out onto charts endlessly, full of the same lyrics and themes of sex or drugs or teenage love, set to pounding drum beats that mindlessly drone on. While we have to acknowledge that out there in the vast world of music, there will definitely be such genres, it is certainly shallow to label all music as being trivial, fit for nothing more than fleeting, momentary pleasure. Far from being so insubstantial as claimed by some, music instead holds far more for us. When we consider music and what it offers us, what it means to us, we not only have to consider the various dimensions of music, from their cultural value and historical value to their power to connect people, but we also have to evaluate it from different perspectives, considering that when we ask what music means to 'us', this 'us' could refer to many different groups of people, from individuals, to performers, to communities of fans to historians. This essay will attempt to explore each of these aspects, and uncover the true depth of meaning that music holds and has to offer.

Music, firstly, has a tremendous power to connect people, to have listeners of the same song all sharing that same space in a concert hall, to connect listeners to performers as well, and to connect people through time. This is far from a momentary pleasure, with this feeling of solidarity generated being one that goes deeper than mere pleasure, and has a much more lasting effect. We see this when we consider how music often manifests itself in our lives as anthems, whether literal, such as with national anthems like "Majulah Singapura" or "Le Marseillaise", or figurative, when we think of the personal favourite songs that we feel signify who we are, that we listen to when we are down and need a pick-me-up. Through these anthems, we see how people connect, with literal national anthems or school songs being symbols of collective identity, an expression of pride and a shared group identity when sung together. That depth of fervour and identity evoked is why we see athletes breaking down in tears of emotion, as they sing their national anthem on the podiums, for music is not simply empty sounds, but instead carries much deeper meanings of patriotism in this case, and stirs up emotions of pride, of a visceral connection with one's country that transcends mere pleasure. Even the figurative anthems do this, from pop songs that all one's friends know and sing along to at a sleepover, to classic hits that are the trademark of a particular generation's era, or the deeply personal songs which we share with and listen to with our closest friends. Music offers a platform through which people bond, and because of these occasions and memories of interactions with treasured people that music reminds us of, music then holds meaning for us. That song which was on the radio that evening as you dined out with your closest friends, which all of you danced to, becomes much more than just a random collection of sounds on the airwaves, passing through to be forgotten. Music can hold meaning and memories for us on a very personal level and connect us with those who share that same connection with that piece of music.

Alongside the personal and patriotic bonds which music offers us, we also see that, in a broader sense, music is a touchstone of human culture and history, both past and present, with cultural value that far transcends momentary pleasure. In terms of the past, music can act as a way through which the values and history of past people get conveyed to us. From traditional ancient folk songs which recount old tribal tales that reveal important details of how early humans viewed and comprehended the world, to more recent movements such as songs from the 1960s that conveyed the values of the American counterculture and anti-war movement, we see that music has a history of being a vehicle that captures ideas and thoughts from the past, as a time capsule of sorts, opening up our eyes to the past and offering us a glimpse into what it was like. Music thus has substance – a clear, solid historical value. In the present day as well, music carries considerable social and cultural value. It acts as an important mirror of social trends, with the important modern phenomenon of globalisation reflected in how music of different languages is spreading, with J-pop and K-pop gaining worldwide popularity, for instance, as music that was once much harder to find outside of their native countries is now readily discovered through globalising media such as the internet. Music, other than reflecting social trends, also shapes it, by being an integral factor stimulating public cultural discourse, with an example being Iggy Azalea's pop song "Fancy", where Azalea's faux African-American accented rapping raised considerable debate over concepts of 'ownership' of hip-hop culture, whether a non African-American such as her mimicking African-Americans was cultural appropriation, and where we draw the line between appropriation and appreciation. Instead of being merely a fleeting bout of pleasurable music, "Fancy" sparked concrete, far-reaching and weighty public conversation about contemporary and cultural matters. One might personally have no taste for modern styles of music, but one cannot deny their significance and capacity to hold and convey meaning.

In relation to the idea of conveying meaning, when we delve deeper into why it conveys meaning, we uncover yet another aspect of music, which is that of how, from the perspective of a performer, it holds significance as a form of expression. The reason that music can convey the zeitgeist of past eras and stimulate contemporary cultural discourse is due to how music was meant by the creators and performers to express ideas. So when we look at it not from the listener's point of view but instead from the performer's point of view, we find that for them it serves as an important source of expression. This expression could be deeply personal, when we look at say "Wake Me Up When September Ends" by Green Day, in which singer Billy Joe Armstrong sings of his grief and pain at the loss of his father, with the music here quite clearly being neither momentary – for it clearly holds deep emotional significance for him – nor pleasurable – as grief and the death of a loved one hardly are. Such personal expression for the performers thus brings some sort of emotional fulfilment, by being for them a channel to explore and possibly resolve their internal struggles.

Intertwined with this expression is sometimes also a sense of belonging, as performers are able to find companions in their bandmates and perhaps fellow musicians in the genre. In punk rock, for instance, the belief enshrined in the genre is that of self-reliance, independence, and an attitude of rebelliousness and a desire to be free. In being part of the scene, in performing punk rock with their band, those performers are able to find a community of performers around them that holds the same views and wishes to express the same ideas as them, and so music as a form of expression can thus sometimes be a form of common expression, forging bonds and building communities around the music that go far beyond momentary pleasure, and are instead lasting connections of deeper feeling.

In the modern age of globalisation and the internet, performers are also able to find community through collaboration which, in addition to the aforementioned comfort of common expression in a genre, is also more personal, as it means a closer, more direct connection between the collaborating musicians, which can sometimes go further than the sharing of beliefs, and in fact can forge lasting friendships as well. For instance, Nujabes, a Japanese hip-hop DJ, would call up rappers from the UK and US and invite them for collaborations, and one of the rappers who collaborated with and toured with him, Funky DL, recalled in a tribute interview recorded after Nujabes' death the times they spent talking about their lives over bowls of ramen or over the phone, forging friendships. Through this, we see how music can connect performers together when they collaborate, and how these connections can be quite deep at times, as Nujabes and Funky DL demonstrate, with their close lifelong friendship.

Ultimately, then, while we acknowledge music sometimes is just momentary pleasure, as we don headphones to drown out the rumble of the train as we head home after work for instance, we also have to appreciate that music holds so much more meaning to us, as listeners, as performers, as friends, as citizens, as humans with a history. It offers much more than just momentary pleasure. Instead, it offers a wealth of meaning and depth, bonding people through ideas, connecting us to our past while shaping and reflecting our present, and being an important part of what bonds us to our closest friends and communities.

Marker's comments:

A quite sweeping and informative exploration of the substance and sensibilities of music. That you managed this in one and half hours, under exam conditions, is impressive. You have also avoided the pitfall many fall prey to of inadvertently digressing from the key ideas encapsulated in 'momentary pleasure' into other functions and benefits music can attain. However, a stronger concession would have been useful. Still, overall, well argued, well developed, and very well substantiated with germane and effective illustrations.

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2015 | GP Promo | Paper 1 **Lee Yu Tse | 16S06E**

Does music offer anything more than momentary pleasure?

From concert halls to the latest music video, or even an advertisement jingle, music can be found in every corner of our lives. Music, perhaps, encapsulates the entirety of human life, from our conception when mothers often play Mozart's works for their babies to hear, to our death when we are sent off from this world with a sombre funeral march. Given the omnipresence of music, one may question if music provides us with anything more than a brief sense of joy and indulgence. I believe that music is certainly not a momentary episode of enjoyment, but carries much more value in its way of bonding people and the society together in a universal language.

Some may argue that music is merely momentary pleasure because it is intangible and has no practical value. Beyond the psychological relief and respite we gain from listening to music, it cannot be used for any further purpose. Imagine listening to a Haydn symphony or a Chopin nocturne. While we may be able to find pleasure in listening to the counterpoint and juxtaposition of melodies in the Haydn, or feel the tranquillity and harmony in a Paris night sky through the Chopin, after we leave the performance or simply flick the switch of our MP3 player, the music lasts no longer, and away it takes our induced feelings that came from the music. This is the very nature of music: it is temporary enjoyment. The laws of physics dictate that sound waves lose energy as they reverberate, and hence music cannot last forever. It may be able to give us feelings of pleasure by exciting our auditory senses and evoking human emotion, like how composers play with the pitch and timbre of a Carl Orff tenor aria in the famous "Carmina Burana" to evoke sympathy for a roasting swan. These sounds stimulate our emotions through their resemblance to natural sounds or the cacophony of harsh dissonances, but after they are played, these feelings are lost with them. We can neither recreate the exact experience nor use the music for any other material purpose once it is over, and hence, music offers merely a brief sense of pleasure, and after it dies off, it can no longer serve the same purpose, nor be used for physical gains.

It may even seem as if music offers not even momentary pleasure when it is used to incite negative feelings or used as oppression. By catalysing the evil side of human nature, music offers nothing but darkness and suffering. Take the example of Prokofiev's "Hail to Stalin", which glorifies Stalin's reign and disguises all his atrocities. Or Richard Wagner's operas like "Die Walküre" in "Der Ring des Nibelungen", which sing praises for anti-Semitism and attack the Jews in a way that modern Germans find disgraceful. These show that music can often be manipulated for immoral purposes because of two reasons: the artistic license and the irrationality of music. Musicians champion their freedom of self-expression in music, and while this may have led to musical progress in breaking conventions and taboos, it also opens the door for musicians to use their music to promote discrimination or propaganda, as after all, music is supposed to be free from restrictions. In addition, music as an art form appeals to the human emotion, bypassing logic and rationality. It speaks to the subconscious, inciting our animalistic instincts and is hence able to expose our dark side of human nature without control. These explain why the Nazis use Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" as celebration of "brotherhood", as music brings out the bad in people through its freedom and its appeal to irrationality. Hence, music does not even offer momentary pleasure, but rekindles the evil flames in humanity. As said by Jean Rostand, "The beauty in art is often nothing but ugliness subdued", and music is no exception.

However, beyond these psychological boon and bane of music, it actually offers real, literal value as a source of income and a lucrative industry. Music has been the livelihoods of classical composers, who receive commission from their patrons, and today, music has evolved into a large commercialised art, from pop music and its stars to advertisement music or jingles. Even in such a small country as Singapore, concert-goers pay millions of dollars in tickets to listen to music and operas. This shows that music can actually generate income and money in the economy, because it appeals to our senses. When we listen to the very common "I-V-vi-IV" chord progressions in pop songs, it gives us a sense of pleasure because it is in the perfect fifths that the human ear finds resonance and consonance, as given by the laws of superposition. By commercialising music, one is able to use the "momentary pleasure" that music offers for economic and financial benefits, as consumers will be willing to pay money to enjoy music in that way. Music is also a great source of income for musicians. One may have heard of the story of how the Chinese pianist Lang Lang had to have his only house sold in order to participate in a youth piano competition, only to win the top prize and gain a foot in the international stage. Similarly, there are stories of black rappers like Lil Wayne "hustling" their way to fame and fortune after being trapped in poverty during their childhood. These show that the commercialisation of music gives artistic talents a chance to break the poverty cycle and establish careers through the music industry. Therefore, music offers more than just momentary pleasure, as this pleasure can be translated into commercial value.

Moreover, music is also an important part of cultural and historical heritage, and it can lay the foundation of building a national identity. In this sense, it offers more than brief enjoyment. Music, although temporary in its experience, can be documented and left for future generations through scores, letters and books. By looking back at the music of the past, one can see the values and beliefs that were important in those times unfold before him. Folk tunes are a great example. From classical cantatas to Oriental folk songs, once can often identify the style and ideas of the past, as did ethnomusicologists like Bela Bartok and Zoltan Kodaly when they documented and promoted Hungarian tunes to their own people. Moreover, music can serve as a gel for people from the same society to bond together, as it represents a shared history and a common heritage that people can identify themselves to. For example, jazz is known as the quintessential American music, and despite starting out as blues for African slaves, it became a common "language" that many Americans, regardless of their creed, speak, listen to and share with each other. This shows the power of music, by serving as common heritage, in binding people together in spite of racial and religious differences. Therefore, music is more than just momentary pleasure, but also a treasure that tells the stories of the past and builds social cohesion and culture.

Furthermore, music can be a platform for social change, and by bringing out the good in people, it is a potent driver of the betterment of human lives. In this sense, it is clearly more than momentary pleasure. This is particularly so in a global landscape, as music is a universal language recognised by all. It transcends the different barriers we may have to communication and is reaches to every corner of the globe. For example, the late Michael Jackson used a number of his songs like "Beat It", "Heal the World" and "Man in the Mirror" to promote peace and humanity. He also used his fame and wealth to set up the "Heal the World Foundation" to promote social change, encouraging humanitarian aid and environmental conservation. Because pop music stars like him have a wide fan base spread throughout the world and act as role models to his listeners, this makes music powerful in directing people together for a great cause. Artistes like U2 and Lady Gaga have also used music for larger social purposes, to great support and effect. Therefore, as music speaks to all of humanity regardless of their backgrounds, it, combined with globalisation, can be used as more than momentary pleasure, but a platform for change that creates permanent enjoyment in the world.

In conclusion, while music may appear to be a fleeting source of pleasure, it is the very same nature – its appeal to all of humanity – that makes it a powerful language to build cultural heritage, create income and catalyse social change. The power of music transcends its apparent frivolousness and brevity, as it is the very same power to stimulate pleasure, placed in the right hands, that allows the human nature of kindness and good to shine. That is, perhaps, the greatest harmony in music.

Marker's comments:

You are clearly in your element. Suitably wide in breadth, and authoritative in terms of your grasp of the forms and functions of music. Would suggest that in your antithetical paragraph, you maintain a distance from the claims and assertions throughout, and not just in the opening topic sentence.

2015 | GP Promo | Paper 1 Chan Zhi Wei, Jeremy | 16A01A

To what extent is it desirable to place limits on scientific research?

Scientific research has allowed man to discover and understand the world around him, develop advanced technology, and in general lead to a better standard of living in today's modern world, through the application of the scientific method formalized in the late 19th century. While in the past, science was carried out largely unrestricted by governments, states, or international bodies, the modern world has seen limits being placed on scientific research, usually for moral or ethical reasons. While some argue that these limits serve no benefit to society, impeding rather than guiding research, I believe that limits on scientific research are necessary and should exist, to the extent that these limits can ensure ethical standards in scientific research while not significantly impeding it.

Some individuals argue that placing limits on scientific research directly restricts scientific progress and the ability of our scientists to conduct research in the most accurate and efficient manner. Proponents of this argument believe that limits are often little more than restrictions brought about by human paranoia or by certain religious or ethical dogma that certain individuals or groups believe in. Because of this, we could argue that limits are not mere guidelines but rather unnecessary restrictions to what would be an effective and accurate scientific method. For example, research on stem cells has been proven to be able to yield benefits such as the ability to regrow human organ parts, saving countless individuals who would otherwise die from the lack of available organ transplants. Yet, such research is opposed by certain religious groups citing moral concerns about these stem cells being harvested from human embryos, seeing the act as being akin to murder. Even though scientists have repeatedly proven that these embryos are unable to feel, sense emotion or think, and are hence not strictly living organisms, opposition to stem cell research has not diminished. Additionally, one may consider the use of human volunteers in chemical trials of vaccines – this is a process restrained by both national and international medical law. The inability of researchers to utilise human test subjects sometimes even when they have expressed consent forces them to rely on animal testing or computer models, which are less accurate and reliable. On both secular and religious grounds, we see limits being imposed on scientific research that impedes, rather than facilitates, the processes and efficacy of science. We can therefore see how limits on scientific research can be seen as undesirable, especially if they are an impediment to research rather than a guiding force.

Opponents to limits further cite the ambiguity of the ethical and moral grounds that these limits are based on as being another reason that limits can never be agreed on or imposed. The assertion is that morality can take many dimensions and lines of reasoning, and that there is no single ethical or moral code that humanity can agree on. Because of this, one might find it unjust or even plain impossible to impose limits on scientific research, since any limits imposed would be arbitrary to a certain extent. This is especially true if research carried out benefits humanity as a whole while compromising the moral integrity or rights of certain test subjects. For example, the United States Navy conducted a series of tests in the San Francisco Bay area, California, in the 1950s, releasing large amounts of seemingly harmless pathogens in the atmosphere in an attempt to model and hence prepare for possible biochemical attacks. Such tests did prove beneficial to the national security of the United States, but did compromise the health and well-being of tens of thousands of unsuspecting test subjects, who reportedly suffered illnesses as a result of the testing, as well as a single fatality. In this case, would it be justified to assume a utilitarian model of ethics and sacrifice the rights of the few for the benefit of the many? Another example of such moral ambiguity comes from a recent ruling by the World Health Organization that certain dangerous vaccines, which may have adverse side effects but could treat serious illnesses, can only be legally tested in a list of specified less-economically developed countries. Many have spoken against this decision, accusing the WHO of perpetuating a new wave of "medical imperialism" where the lives and welfare of citizens in the less developed world are seen as morally inferior to those of individuals in the developed world, even though the WHO originally intended such a ruling only to expedite and improve medical scientific research on extremely promising vaccines. As a human society, we are yet unable to agree on a collective standard of morality or ethics. It hence follows that it is unjust and unfair to the scientific community, which works to advance and benefit mankind, to be subject to an arbitrary code of conduct that we cannot even agree upon. Limits should not be placed on scientific research, for it is impossible to do so.

Nevertheless, one must consider the serious implications of allowing scientific research to go unchecked, since the deregulation of scientific research would necessarily bring about a propensity of abuse to the discipline of science. Reasonable limits to scientific research must be imposed, for the lack of these guiding principles could see the gross abuse of scientific research, and resultant harm to humanity either through the processes of outcome of this research. For example, scientific organisations in the World War II such as the Japanese Unit 731 and the German doctor Joseph Mengele and his staff each carried out grossly unethical and inappropriate experiments on human subjects, in the name of science. Both these groups utilized methods such as vivisection, the forced injections of human subjects with deadly pathogens, as well as the denial of treatment to these subjects in the name of scientific research into the effects and spread of biochemical weapons. Under Unit 731 alone, the world saw more than 20,000 civilian deaths – a terrible violation of human rights. Years later we saw similar experiments conducted again, for example the Tuskegee syphilis experiment (1948) in the United States, where certain African American individuals were knowingly denied treatment of the disease to model its effects on a population. Unchecked scientific research without limits has a great propensity of abuse that can cause grievous and widespread harm to humanity. Although it is true that we as a species cannot agree on a single moral code, it is untrue that we are not able to agree on certain fundamental principles such as the right to life, which must be protected at all costs and is enshrined in multiple documents, including the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. It is necessary, desirable and feasible to place limits on scientific research, and humanity should do so to prevent harm and exploitation of our own species in the name of science.

One could also argue that rather than limiting scientific research, the imposition of limits on scientific research is beneficial since it serves as a catalyst for further research to take place, creating more humane, morally acceptable or less invasive techniques and technologies. This argument is premised on the fact that scientists too have an incentive and motivation to develop technologies and methods more acceptable to society through the course of their research, and limits to unethical scientific research only serve to reinforce this motivation. For example, the opposition to animal testing as an inhumane and degrading procedure by animal rights activists has led to the development of advanced computer modelling software that can act as a substitute for the animal, modelling to a high degree of accuracy the effect of chemicals or products on the animal's body. Such developments not only are beneficial to ethics in science, but have also proven to be far more accurate than testing on live animals, improving scientific ethics alongside the progress of scientific research. Another example of such developments is the creation of Mass Resonance Imaging (MRI) scans as an alternative to invasive operations on human patients. The MRI, for instance, not only allows scientists and doctors to monitor human patients without an operation, but also allows research into areas of the brain, which were previously impossible due to the risk to any individual participant in such research. Such a development once again expands the boundaries of scientific research without compromising on ethics, arguably even improving it. As we can see, limits on scientific research may pose short-term impediments to the scientific process, but more often than not, in the long run serve as motivation for researchers to develop more acceptable and appropriate methods, which as a whole are beneficial rather than detrimental to the study of science. SR vs LR

Finally, we could argue that limits being places on scientific research encourage efficiency in the scientific research community, since scientists and researchers are constantly incentivised to work on goals and topics that are beneficial to humanity as a whole. Key to this argument is the understanding that resources devoted to research are finite, and that to acquire these resources, a researcher must necessarily prove the benefit and utility of his project, creating an incentive for scientists to do more research into topics that benefit human well-being or society in general. For example, we can cite the 2009 stimulus package that the United States provided to its scientific community as a means to assist the global economic recovery. This multi-billion dollar stimulus package was split proportionally between the relevant research institutions in the United States based on the projects that they were working on, and the possible returns that these projects could provide to the American people and economy. Without ***** limits being placed on funding, there would inevitably be waste in the scientific community. With limits, however, scarcity is present, leading to the necessity of distributing and utilising resources efficiently. Another example of this is the Indian Mars probe launched in early 2015: a tight budget allowed the Indian Space Agency to send and build its mars probe in a mere fraction of the cost of all other previous Mars probes sent by the European Space Agency or NASA. Limits to scientific research force scientists to economise and make the most out of available resources and, where possible, work on topics that are morally acceptable given the benefit they bring to mankind.

Ultimately, limits on scientific research are a double-edged sword, and a sharp one indeed. On the one hand, this sword may be used to defend the integrity of the scientific process as well as human rights and dignity. Yet, if used wrongly, this sword could hurt the progress of science and research, impeding it rather than empowering or strengthening it.

With the ever-changing definition and debate on morality, one may think that limits cannot be set, yet the alternative of not having any limits is an even greater cost to bear. Society must come to accept that scientific research cannot go unregulated, for even if there are resultant short-term impediments, appropriately placed moral and ethical limits on scientific research prevent the abuse of science, encourage the efficient use of resources to benefit mankind, and even spur scientific progress in the long run. To the extent that these limits do not significantly compromise scientific research while instilling moral and ethical guidelines, it is desirable to have them. To the extent that as a whole, they provide benefit to our society and protect us from harm, it is desirable to have them. To the extent that the above is true, limits on scientific research are desirable, justified and even beneficial.

Marker's comments:

The evaluation was done well and the insights generally showed great awareness of the issue and a level of maturity. Certain areas could be better argued; some facts need clarification (e.g. WHO & vaccine tests); some illustration did not quite address the issue as relevantly as others (e.g. MRI); and contemporary examples are needed at points to supplement more dated ones – but on the whole it was well argued.

2015 | GP Promo | Paper 1 **Qiu Jiayu | 16S06A**

'Migration is a necessity, not an option.' What do you think?

The globalised world that we live in today is characterised by the free flow of goods, of services and, most notably, of people. Ever since the days of the colonial era, people from across the world have chosen to migrate in search of greener pastures – to leave their homes and settle in a new one in order to escape from dire conditions back from where they came and in hopes of finding a better life as migrants in a new country. As our societies become increasingly globalized, our people too become increasingly mobile. The ease of migration in modern times has therefore led some to remark that perhaps for most in modern era, migration is but one of the many ways people can find better opportunities and seek a better living and is definitely not a situation borne out of necessity. However, what they fail to realise is that migration for most represents the only way they can achieve their dreams and aspirations, and that even in developed countries, people still do migrate out of a genuine need to seek out a different way of life. To claim that migration is but an option is to also ignore the many refugees who are forced to migrate as they face persecution and hardship in their countries and to neglect how, in the larger scheme of things, every country needs migration in order to survive. Migration is thus, undeniably, a necessity, not an option.

Opponents who argue that migration is an option and not a necessity typically point to the migration of the wealthy and educated citizens of developed countries who are incredibly mobile globally. They claim that in many of these developed countries, opportunities to establish a better life abound and that choosing to seek greener pastures overseas is therefore not a necessity. Indeed, this does seem to be the phenomenon observed across many developed countries in the world today. Even though global cities such as Shanghai are experiencing rapid economic growth and have among the highest GDP per capita, many educated Chinese are still choosing to leave the country and settle down elsewhere. This brain drain phenomenon is similarly observed in Singapore, where some of our brightest and best minds in the country are choosing to settle overseas, even though economic opportunities are abound in Singapore, and many of such education backgrounds can still find local opportunities that enable them to hold a steady income and provide for their families. In this light, some observers would assert that migration is really a choice, since the same opportunities can be found even without migrating and there is therefore no real need to migrate in search of greener pastures.

However, what these detractors have failed to take into account is that necessity is not just restricted to the economic sense. While it may be true that the educated and wealthy in developed countries do not have an economic need to migrate elsewhere, migration is still the only way for them to fulfil other aspirations and dreams. Regardless of how developed their home countries may be, the conditions to achieve a certain type of living or a certain type of success are simply not comparable to that in other countries. For instance, while Chinese citizens migrating out of Shanghai may not be doing it out of a need for jobs, migration is still a necessity for them to escape the heavy pollution in the city. Similarly, many of the educated Singaporeans who are giving up their citizenship are heading off to Scandinavian countries to fulfil their dreams and aspirations of leading a better quality of life and to escape from the pressure cooker that is the modern Singapore workforce. Even though these migrants are not migrating for economic reasons, it still remains a fact that there are other conditions such as living environment and culture which their home countries cannot measure up to. For these migrants who are in search of a better life in those contexts, migration is thus a necessity and not an option.

Furthermore, for the more impoverished, it is ludicrous to claim that migration is an option and not a necessity, simply because we still live in a world of unequal development, meaning that there are people who genuinely have to migrate to earn a living or survive. In the rural parts of Philippines, for instance, so many families are choosing to leave the countryside and settle in slums near the capital city of Manilla because they can no longer earn enough just from farming. Given that living conditions in slums are dire, with poor sanitation, little electricity or water supplies and infested with pests and diseases, the fact that millions are still willing to put up with these conditions really demonstrate that they have no choice but to do so. Therefore, a significant part of the world today still migrates out of economic need, and for these individuals or groups, migration is clearly a necessity, not an option.

In addition, migration is also definitely a necessity and not an option for those fleeing persecution or war from their countries. Refugees escaping from these regions risk their lives to move to another country, simply because the potential dangers and hardships of migration are nothing compared to the real threats they are facing back home. For example, millions of Syrian refugees have chosen to take the perilous journey to Europe, even though they are fully aware that it involves a dangerous journey across the Mediterranean Sea in an overcrowded boat that is very likely to capsize, even though they know that they would still have to travel for miles within Europe to get to the country they want. Similarly, in Southeast Asia, the persecuted Rohingya minority in Myanmar face similar conditions when they choose to flee Myanmar and make the journey through Thailand or Malaysia to Australia. The fact that these dangerous conditions do not impede people from migrating underscores that the threat of war and persecution is really one that can only be resolved by migration. For this reason, we see how migration is a necessity and not an option for refugees.

Finally, on a broader level, migration is a necessity for all countries wishing to survive on today's competitive global stage, simply because migrants provide much needed expertise and manpower for many countries. One of the reasons why Germany, for example, is more welcoming towards Syrian refugees is that they are facing an ageing population and a shrinking workforce, and many of the refugees who are entering the country can thus rejuvenate their economy. Conversely, in the case of Japan, a country that is notoriously hard to migrate to, their economy has been slowly declining, in part due to their reserved attitude towards migrants. On the global arena, migration is thus a necessity for some countries to remain competitive as migrants are a substantial source of manpower for their economic development.

In conclusion, all migration is a search for a better life. While for the more economically privileged amongst us, a better life may not refer to economic opportunities, the desire for an alternate way of life to what our home countries can offer does constitute a need for migration. Needless to say, for the less economically privileged and refugees facing persecution and war, migration is the only way for them to attain a basic quality of life as well as peace and security, and is thus patently a necessity. On a larger level, migration is too crucial to countries as it is part of the free flow of manpower that allows a country to prosper. Hence, migration is a necessity, not an option.

Marker's comments:

Conveys a sound understanding of various models of intra/inter-country emigration & immigration. Commendable examples and cogent language.

How important is the study of history to a nation's future?

To many, the study of history is treated with disdain, as they dismiss its relevance to current affairs and the future direction of nations. However, how current affairs unfold, as well as their impact on the future, is rooted in its historical context. To a nation, which is a group of people or community that defines itself as one united group distinct from others, the study of history is especially important. The premise of this stand is that the study of history influences a nation's future as it allows politicians to draw lessons from historical patterns and hence formulate future policies, it allows individuals to share a common historical narrative and enhance national unity, and it allows wrongs against groups in a nation to be brought to light, delivering justice.

Detractors argue that, to a nation, the study of history is irrelevant to its future. The reason behind this is that both national and international contexts have changed, and are likely to continue to change in the future. This means that whatever happened in the past, and patterns and lessons that can be learnt are neither relevant nor applicable to a nation's future decision-making process. Therefore, they say, the study of history is irrelevant to shaping a nation's future, and thus unimportant. They bring up the example of Francis Fukuyama's dissertation regarding "The End of History", where he argues that given the end of the Cold War, the ideological supremacy of capitalism and liberalism has been proven, and thus all nations henceforth will adopt capitalism and democracy. While there was a wave of democratisation in the immediate post-Cold War period, the rise of a multi-polar world and religious fundamentalism has changed international and national contexts, rendering these lessons moot. Case in point: the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) proves that law based on religious fundamentalist principles can be a virulent, if bloody, ideology. Thus, detractors crow, the study of history is unimportant to a nation's future.

However, regardless of changing international contexts or otherwise, there are still enduring features of history and mankind that allow consistent patterns to be discerned, This means that the lessons learnt from history are still applicable to modern and future contexts. Indeed, since history is essentially the study of human interaction with other groups of people in the past, and since the human condition and manner in which people interact are likely to endure through time, the lessons learnt from history regarding societal functions and structures are still applicable and relevant now and in the future. These lessons are especially important for a nation. Nations are constructed: they are not natural creations. It was only in the 19th century that people began to identify themselves as “Germans” or “Italians”, precipitating the formation of nation-states. Therefore, the lessons that can be learnt from history, such as society and nation building, are especially important for nations and their future given that these lessons shape how a nation is presently constructed and hence its future policies. For example, Singapore’s policies took heed of historical patterns of how oppressing any minority group invariably leads to dissent and violence, such as local race riots in 1964, the US civil rights movements happening at the same time, symbolised by Ku Klux Klan lynching of black Americans and the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., or even further back with the Thirty Years’ War, arising from the suppression of Protestant people in 17th-century Central Europe. Thus, it is inherent in Singapore’s domestic policy to have zero tolerance to racism or religious intolerance, resulting in acts such as the Sedition Act and the suing of Amos Yee, who made derogatory comments against Christianity. This attitude, which stems from historical lessons, is important to Singapore’s future as it preserves national stability and trust. Therefore, a study of history is important to a nation’s future as they shape current and future policies.

Furthermore, the study of history enables a nation to create a common historical narrative with which to unite disparate groups of people and merge them into a single, united nation. The study of history is usually shaped by a nation’s ministry of education: what is to be studied and how it is kept consistent. This creates a common historical narrative from which all individuals can reference. Consequently, people who study, accept and internalise this common historical narrative are more likely to feel a sense of kinship with each other and relate to each other. This is important for nations, as they are self-defined entities: the more the community imagines themselves to be and identifies themselves with the nation, the stronger it is. A common historical narrative binds people together and strengthens national unity. This is especially important in the future because increasing globalisation lowers barriers between countries and allows for increased migration, creating a more plural and heterogeneous society. In such a future, it is all the more important for nations to look into their past to reinforce and induct these new migrants into their national identity. For example, the United States is a nation of immigrants, both in the past, with Irish and Poles fleeing repression in Europe, and now, with migrants from Mexico and refugees from Syria. All these immigrants are required to study the history of the US, regardless of ethnicity, and take a test to become citizens. Through their study of history, these individuals learn and accept the norms of the American nation and, being united in this historical narrative, form an integral part of it.

Thus, the study of history is demonstrated to be important in developing and reinforce national unity and is hence important in an increasingly globalised and multicultural future.

Finally, the study of history allows the wrongs committed against marginalised groups in society to come to light, delivering justice and strengthening trust within a nation, which is important in securing its future. It is not just policymakers and individuals in society who study history that guarantee a nation's future, but society as a whole. Should there be wrongs committed against a marginalised group in society, the study of history by the nation as a whole would bring these wrongs to light, and aid in trust-mending and -building between all groups within a nation, helping the nation to be stronger and more united. This is important to a nation's future because national trust and unity engender societal stability, which is an essential precondition for economic growth through attracting investment and encouraging entrepreneurship and spending. Hence, the study of history by society as a whole is important to a nation's future. For example, in South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission studies the wrongs committed against blacks during the apartheid era. This commission has been credited by international observers as mending trust between the victims of apartheid and the rest of South African society, enabling South Africa to become one of the most stable nations in Africa as well as one of the fastest-growing economies, even hosting the FIFA World Cup in 2010. Another example would be how Germany, after World War II, repented for the holocaust by preserving the concentration camps as memorials and funding holocaust museums, mending trust between Germans and Jews; today, Germany is one of the most minority-friendly nations in the world. Thus, the study of history is important to a nation's future as it ensures social stability.

In conclusion, the study of history is undeniably significant in a nation's future. Nevertheless, it is not the only factor in securing a nation's future; other disciplines such as the sciences are also critical in providing human resources that precipitate economic growth. Thus, the study of history in conjunction with other disciplines is important to a nation's future.

Marker's comments:
This is a very well-argued piece of work. Arguments are well articulated, explored and substantiated with salient, illuminating examples. There is systematic attendance to the key concepts in the question, meaning that the reader always gets a clear sense of the significance and relevance of what is being written. Well done.

2015 | GP Promo | Paper 1 **Nah Sze Perng | 16A13A**

How important is the study of history to a nation's future?

History as a discipline is concerned with the analysis of past events, the accounting and explanation of how past events happened when they happened. History also aims to explain the causal links between past events and current affairs, with historians primarily occupied with preserving a version of the truth for future generations. Detractors of history claim that it has limited relevance in today's society as it does not chart out the future that is currently vested in other areas such as science and technology. They also point to the historical inheritance of nations that seemingly constrains and shackles the current ability of nations to project their power beyond their borders, impeding growth for the future. However, nations and their peoples' will attest to the paramount role of history in not only preserving their historical legacy but also in serving a normalising function that has significant and tangible impacts on a country's future.

Detractors of history claim that its importance is only limited to textbooks as its primary concern is with the past. Where the future is forward-looking, history is backward-looking and has a reflective perspective that is diametrically opposed to innovation. They claim that innovation is to be found in scientific advancement that seeks progress, while history's primary focus is dealing with events in the past. They point to breakthroughs such as the discovery of the Higgs boson particle that only came about when scientists discarded outdated atomic models and ventured to postulate ground-breaking ideas to achieve such a breakthrough. They argue that if scientists had taken a more historically-centred approach, they would have been less likely to break with past ways of thinking and, consequently, been less likely to make a breakthrough. This shows that history's preoccupation with the past can impede the scientific progress that the future is so dependent upon.

Furthermore, critics of history point to the burden and constraints of a country's historical inheritance that impairs its ability to project its power and facilitate growth for the future. Historical inheritance refers to a specific period or point in time in history where a nation had suffered a psychological scar borne of humiliation, a crushing sense of defeat or a grave moral transgression. Such impacts of history have a discernible outcome on the actions of the generations of today, leading to disavowals of certain types of action that greatly restricts a nation's ability to expand its influence so as to progress for the future. For example, the current Japanese administration under the incumbent Prime Minister Shinzo Abe recently passed two security Bills allowing for Japanese peace-keeping forces to maintain a presence abroad and to come to the aid of its allies, a direct disavowal of Japan's post WWII pacifist constitution. In explaining the passing of the bills, PM Abe claims that the historical inheritance of the Japanese defeat in WWII and its subsequent pacifist constitution has led to a curb in its military force and its presence on the world stage. His rationale is that history has shackled the ability of the current generation of Japanese leaders to expand Japan's power abroad and that it greatly impairs future growth. In addition, the study of history sustains and perpetuates conflict. It serves as a stark reminder to current generations of past transgressions and fuels a toxic rhetoric to take retaliatory and punitive action for past wrongs. This prevents people from looking beyond past events to strive for future development. In the Arab-Israeli conflict, for instance, one of the main reasons for the perpetuation of the conflict has been the historical narratives of the Israelis and the Palestinians. Each side portrays the other as inherently hostile through its own version of history, which constantly indoctrinates the local populace that justice has not been served and traps them in the mentality that conflict is to be accepted and responded to with even more conflict. This study of history detracts them from a compromise as it resurfaces old wounds even when, to the rest of the international community, the need for a two-state solution to the conflict is glaringly obvious. Thus, the study of history not only curbs the future growth of a nation, but also engenders and perpetuates conflict by fuelling anti-conciliatory rhetoric based on past transgressions that current generations have little control over.

However, that is not to say that the study of history has no importance. The study of history reminds us of our historical legacy and grounds the people in a tangible set of commonly shared values and culture. This serves two important functions for the nation. It firstly serves as a bulwark against extremist ideology and secondly, normalises collaborative behaviour through the creation of a shared historical narrative. The study of history reminds the current generation of the values that have led to their current progress in society. Renowned political scientist Samuel Huntingdon notes that one of the key preventions of political anomie, the feeling of displacement and vulnerability by groups of people is the entrenchment of the study of history. He points to the study of history in the European Union, where under the current EU parliament, each citizen is educated in how the history of the EU post-WWII and its belief in republicanism and liberty accounts for the present state of development. On the other hand, Huntingdon points to the lack of a compelling historical narrative in the current migrant Muslim population in Europe. He claims that their study of history lacks a shared narrative with the Europeans, making them prone towards manipulation by others. This adds to the sense of displacement and alienation suffered by so many Muslim youth, to the extent that they are susceptible to extreme ideology and motivated to relinquish their life in Europe to fight in the Middle East. Thus a compelling history and its study by citizens can serve as a bulwark against extreme ideology by reminding us of the values that have led to our development and warns us not to stray off that path. Consequently, the reduction of conflict borne through a more grounded understanding of history that removes wrong perceptions and biases creates stability needed for future development.

Another benefit of the study of history is its normalising function, building societal consensus upon which development is predicated. Historical narratives and the study of such narratives are able to engender collaboration between different groups of people by creating a shared set of values and culture that everyone subscribes to. This minimises conflict and tension, leading to more favourable conditions for development. In Singapore, the study of post-colonial history under the national education syllabus is made mandatory for all students. Students learn that racial tension and negative ethnic ossification hindered Singapore's progress and threatened its ability to survive in the 1950s and 1960s. Consequently, the study of history helps students realise the importance of racial harmony and acceptance of other races that is integral in Singapore's nation building narrative. The study of history in this instance normalises racial harmony that prevents future conflict by creating a shared set of values. Thus, the study of history can foster unity needed for further progress.

Lastly, the study of history prevents the recurrence of historical atrocities. Although the study of historically-sensitive events such as the Holocaust and the Rape of Nanking threatens to reignite historical tension, it remains an indelible part of the discipline. It reminds current generations that such atrocities are not a mere aberration removed from themselves, but was the result of tangible socio-political forces that managed to convince entire nations to commit such atrocities. This stark reminder prevents society from falling into the same pitfalls as their predecessors and ensures the future will not repeat the mistakes of the past. In Germany, the study of the Holocaust in German schools has curbed nascent neo-Nazi movements in the political sphere. From young, Germans are reminded of the atrocities that anti-Semitism and cruel racism have foisted upon millions of innocents. They are thus more likely to disavow such behaviour and encourage others to reject such behaviour. The study of history restricts the rise of such movements and prevents historical atrocities from recurring by denying the legitimacy for such social conditions and perceptions to fester.

Ultimately, the study of history charts a nation's future. The historical narrative propagated by governments and groups in society can normalise collaborative and unifying behaviour to minimise conflict, though its manipulation can also engender conflict that detracts from future development. What is undeniable is that studying history serves as a reminder of past mistakes. Although it may be uncomfortable for some, a thorough analysis of a nation's past mistakes and an honest reflection by its citizenry can prevent such mistakes from happening again. By reconciling the past and making informed, enlightened decisions, can nations create the conditions for stability and have the necessary foresight for future growth.

Marker's comments:

Authoritative in terms of scope, depth and sophistication. That you have managed this feat under exam conditions is really impressive. An acknowledgement concerning the skill with which language was used to deliver your ideas both clearly and impactfully is in order. Well done!

Is your society doing enough to protect the rights of the disadvantaged?

It has been said that "society is judged by how it treats its weakest member". In a time when other parts of the world, such as Europe, are plagued by social unrest and economic collapse, it appears, on the surface, that Singapore is treating the most vulnerable and downtrodden in her society relatively well. Proponents of this view often argue that a myriad of legislation and social policies have been sufficient to protect the rights of the disadvantaged. Yet, these efforts are often laudable in principle, but piecemeal and ineffectual in practice. Moreover, many disadvantaged groups in Singapore still have their plight ignored, or their needs marginalised by social conventions, meaning that Singapore still has a long way to go when it comes to protecting the rights of the disadvantaged.

Some may argue that Singapore has one of the strongest legislative frameworks for anti-discrimination in the world to protect the rights of the disadvantaged. This is because Singapore, as a state that is not ethnically homogenous, has paid particular attention to the rights of ethnic minorities since independence. This is especially after the destructive racial riots in the 1950s and 1960s. Consequently, Singapore has made special constitutional provisions for the needs of minorities who are traditionally disadvantaged, such as the Presidential Council for Minority Rights, which ensures that all laws passed by parliament do not disadvantage or discriminate along racial lines. Other legislation that fulfils this purpose would be the Sedition Act, which bans hate speech on racial or religious terms, or workplace anti-discrimination acts, which prevent employers from unfairly hiring or firing on racial grounds. In a country with a significant Chinese population currently consisting of close to 75% of the population, such measures can surely be seen as fairly progressive in the protection of disadvantaged minorities from the tyranny of the majority. Thus, it can be said that Singapore is doing enough to protect the rights of the disadvantaged.

In addition, proponents of this view also argue that Singapore sufficiently protects the rights of the disadvantaged through social policy. This was especially evident after the 2011 General Elections, after which the ruling party was seen by many commentators to have made a decisive shift towards the left in terms of welfarism. In contrast to the emphasis on personal responsibility prior to this, the government rolled out programmes that benefitted the poor and disadvantaged greatly. Programmes such as CHAS

(Community Health Assist Scheme), designed to relive the financial burden on poorer families for healthcare, and the Pioneer Generation Package, which benefitted the elderly poor the most, have relieved the financial burden of the disadvantaged to a significant extent. Hence, in terms of social policy, it can be said too that the government is doing enough to protect the needs and rights of the disadvantaged.

However, even while Singapore has done enough for the disadvantaged through such means, these measures are often piecemeal, insufficient and ineffectual in practice. This is because rights go beyond the basic framework of anti-discrimination; issues such as the socio-economic rights of minorities have often been ignored. For example, despite anti-discrimination laws, Malay Muslims in Singapore are still relatively poor as compared to other racial and ethnic groups. Notable civil society figures, like Alfian Sa'at, have spoken up about how anti-discrimination laws do not solve the systemic and structural disadvantages that Malay Muslims face. These disadvantages can come in the form of ostensibly racist attitudes such as the Cultural Deficit Theory, which was until recently still subscribed to by senior government officials and society at large. All this shows that while legislation is a laudable effort in practice, it does not target the root causes of poverty and disadvantage that disadvantaged ethnic and racial groups face. Hence, Singapore can and should move beyond anti-discrimination legislation to tackle far more significant issues of socio-economic rights, which are the main problems that ethnically-disadvantaged groups feel today.

In addition, while social policy has indeed shifted toward being more receptive to the needs and rights of the poor than in the past, these efforts are still ultimately insufficient for the most economically disadvantaged of individuals in Singapore. This is because a means-tested system of welfare has led to many of the most economically vulnerable falling through the cracks. For instance, the harsh system of means testing has meant that those who are poor and illiterate often find it hard to find out that they even qualify for financial assistance from the government, much less receive such financial assistance. Even for those who do manage to successfully apply for financial assistance, the amount given is often insufficient and paltry. For instance, according to statistics raised by Dr Lily Neo in parliament in 2011, cash handouts to the most downtrodden who were unable to work due to disability or other medical conditions amounted to roughly only $200 a month. Even though the government has increased that figure to $500 a month, this sum is hardly sufficient to upkeep an individual's cost of living in the most expensive city in the world. This sum would have to pay for rent, utilities, medical bills, and a whole host of other living expenses. In an economically prosperous city with the highest number of millionaires per capita in the world, Singapore's economic inequality stands at a staggering 0.412 on the Gini Coefficient in 2014, one of the highest rates of wealth inequality in the developed world. Clearly, Singapore ought to do more to correct this, to protect the rights of the most vulnerable of our citizens, not least because it can, but also because it should.

Finally, there is a class of disadvantaged people in Singapore who have their rights forfeited because of social conventions. This is because Singapore, as a relatively conservative society, sticks to a rather antiquated traditional conception of the family as a union between a man and a woman. This means that those who fall outside of this traditional conception of the family are marginalized and not accorded the rights that other families are accorded. For example, groups such as single mothers are not recognised as being in a traditional family unit, and hence do not qualify for the full duration of maternity leave, and also do not have priority in the purchase of public housing. This is despite their often needing more help than the average family, as the mother is the sole breadwinner and caregiver of the family. Moreover, groups such as homosexuals are not allowed to marry in Singapore, due to the strict definition of the union of marriage as between one man and one woman. In this way, societal conventions have become a tool for institutional discrimination against the rights of those who do not subscribe to the traditional or conjugal view of the family. These people, however, are no less human than everyone else, and deserve the same rights and privileges accorded to other families. In this way, Singapore as a society is not doing enough to protect the rights of this marginalised and disadvantaged group.

In conclusion, while first steps have admittedly been taken to protect the rights of the disadvantaged, these are just that – first steps – as they are ineffectual in practice. More can also be done to recognize the right of previously ignored disadvantaged groups. More can and should be done to aid the disadvantaged and protect their rights. More will be done to make it a fairer, more equal and just society. If society is truly judged by how it treats its most vulnerable member, then Singapore ought to do more, to truly achieve happiness, prosperity and progress not for just some in the nation, but all in the nation.

Marker's comments:

Definitely a thoughtful response which was consistently argued, although some assertions in the penultimate paragraph tend to be sweeping (e.g. the claim that the notion of the traditional family is "antiquated"). Good use of illustrations to reinforce your point. Keep it up.

2015 | GP Promo | Paper 2 | Passage

Howard Jacobson is concerned about the unstoppable advance of the selfie and its tyranny.

There is a pelican that I am fond of, which lives most of the time on a little rocky island on St James's Park. He has a snooty, imperturbable air and is less interested in humans than humans are in him. If you want to take his photograph, well and good, but if you want to take your own photograph with him as incidental curiosity, he is not having any. The last time I saw him, he was quite annoyed, and all because a tourist had stood beside him and stuck out a stick on the end of which was her smartphone. There was she, beaming into her own remote lens, the object of all she surveyed, and there was he, having to stand around like a slice of lemon on a main dish. In other words - like an extra rather than the star attraction.

The pelican was right to take umbrage. A selfie stick, as its name implies, is an agent of self-absorption, a lightning rod of narcissism, linking the self that is being photographed and the device that is doing the photographing, to the exclusion of all else. Who would dare break into the field of vision policed by a selfie stick? I would as soon walk between two lovers kissing. But the stick is a side issue. It is the concept of the selfie itself that should greatly concern us. And do not tell me that the great painter Rembrandt would have leapt at the chance of taking selfies had the technology only been available in the seventeenth century.

"Had the technology only been available" is an argument advanced by those who cannot believe that all other ages were not impatiently awaiting ours. Had the technology only been available, Shakespeare would have written for the *EastEnders* TV series, Schubert would have composed on a Digital Audio Workstation, and Palaeolithic men would have decorated their caves with selfies downloaded from Instagram. Pity the poor ancients having to get by without our advantages.

It is always possible that there is some Rembrandt of the selfie out there, using his phone to investigate the ravages of age, the incursions of melancholy, and even the psychology of self-obsession itself, but commonly the selfie performs a less self-critical function, putting the self at the centre of everything we see, marking the landscape with our faces, as though the only possible interest of the outside world is that we are in it.

There is, of course, nothing sinister and certainly nothing new about posing for a holiday snap. Long after we have forgotten the name of the mountain range behind us, and the person we have our arm around, it is nice to be reminded that long ago we had fun somewhere or other. But there is a subtle difference between having someone take your photograph and taking it yourself. A third party will see something you do not. A peculiarity, perhaps. A self-delusion. On a school trip to Paris, a friend took a photograph of me outside the Moulin Rouge. Had I taken it, I would have made myself look like some weary Parisian poet, a glutton of sensuality, wearing the expression of a man bored with the pleasures of life. What my friend saw was a preposterous English schoolboy with delusions of grandeur. Truly, it is the scrutiny of others that saves us from the folly of self-aggrandisement.

But the camera is only the half of taking selfies. We are narcissists now in every corner of our lives, fascinated by the most trivial thought that trundles through our brain, communicating every twinge of feeling, every passing impulse, every momentary sentiment to friends and strangers alike, regardless of their interest in us.

Books, where the self should most be quiet, are where it is currently most rampant. I have been to reading groups in which participants discuss who they are and what they think, and leave, full of cottage pie and wine, convinced they have been on a journey into a writer's mind, though they have not, for a single second, left their own. When poet John Keats compared reading the writer George Chapman's translation of *Homer* to the excitement of New World adventurers first setting eyes on the Pacific, he imagined them looking at one another with surprise and surmise. With astonishment, in other words, not recognition. But in the taking of selfies, there is neither surprise nor surmise. Confirmation is what the selfie-reader seeks. One more self-portrait. "I cannot identify with your characters" - those words, plastered all over the review pages of Amazon sites, strike terror into the contemporary novelist's heart. For once the reader is unable to identify with your characters, you are sunk, Mister.

It is undoubtedly one of the pleasures of reading, when we are young, to come across characters who feel as we do. Oliver Twist hungry and having to ask for more - why, that was exactly what I wanted to do after every school lunch. Jane Eyre orphaned and demeaned, blamed for crimes she did not commit – what a painful childhood. But it is no less a pleasure - and as our experience of reading deepens, it should be a still greater pleasure - to meet characters who are not mirror images of us at all, whose feelings we might not immediately sympathise with or even recognise and whose views of the world confront ours. This is one of the first justifications of reading - that it liberates us from the tyranny of being who we always are, seeing what we usually see, into the exhilaration of the unknown. We might read to find ourselves when we are young, thereafter we should read to lose the self we found.

The self is an entity that easily atrophies. In the absence of disagreement and challenge, we fall into patterns of like-mindedness, believing what others believe, dressing, feeling, thinking alike, fearing what is not us, safe only in the company of people who take the same photographs of the same faces with the same cameras, until at last, all life is one big indistinguishable selfie.

Edited from BBC News, The Tyranny of the Selfie, Howard Jacobson.

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2015 | GP Promo | Paper 2 | AQ **Lim Ee Sing | 16S07B**

Howard Jacobson raises concerns about the selfie's effects on people. How far would you agree with his observations, relating your opinions to your own society?

Jacobson states that the selfie causes people to be more narcissistic and seek greater confirmation by others. I feel that this is especially true in Singapore, with a greater number of teenagers and even adults taking selfies as a platform to showcase their looks so as to make themselves feel better. This is especially the case since many Singaporeans have relatively low self-esteem due to the different pressures that are placed on them. Singaporean students face the pressure of having to do well not only academically but also holistically such as expectations to be outstanding in their co-curricular activities, and some may even be expected to play a role of taking care of their family members. This great pressure placed on Singaporeans has caused their self-esteem and self-worth to drop, hence they might turn to other platforms such as selfies in order to get the self-assurance that they seek. Furthermore, the impact of selfie of causing Singaporeans to seek greater confirmation is enhanced by the fact that there is widespread use of social media in such an advanced country like Singapore. Since more Singaporeans have already met their basic needs such as food and housing, they might be looking for something more to lead a more fulfilling life, and this might translate into taking selfies for confirmation. For example, many shopping centres such as Cineleisure organise "selfie-taking competitions" where the best selfie of each month is showcased in the shopping centre. This further acts as a catalyst for Singaporeans to take selfies to seek confirmation, as winning such a competition allows the winner to feel "pretty", "handsome", or even "up to standard", hence increasing their self-esteem. While it is true that Singaporeans might seek confirmation in other ways even if the selfie did not exist, it cannot be denied that the advent of the selfie has made the search for confirmation even more interest and prevalent.

Jacobson states that the selfie causes one to be self-absorbed, excluding the people or the scenery surrounding it. I feel that this is not very relevant in Singapore, as many Singaporeans actually use the selfie as a means of forming stronger bonds with the people around them. Since Singapore is an advanced first-world society with high levels of technology, most of the population owns smartphones, hence taking selfies has been a common activity that everyone engages in. While seemingly insignificant, the mere act of taking a selfie can be used as a common shared experience and interest that allows people to bond and form strong relationships. This common activity serves as a rallying point for people to come together as it is a similarity that most Singaporeans have. In fact, selfie-taking might also be encouraged for the simple fact that it is an activity that everyone can relate to. For example, when National Youth Council (NYC) organized Youth Festival in July 2015 and invited famous YouTubers, one of the activities that many of these YouTubers engaged in with the youth audiences is selfie-taking. The very act of young Singaporeans taking a selfie with a famous YouTuber that they all adore serves as a common experience and conversation topic for youths to communication and build attachment, which fulfils one of NYC's goal which is to create a cohesive and supportive youth community in Singapore. While the mere act of selfie-taking might not necessarily form strong bonds all the time as that ultimately depends on the individuals' willingness, it cannot be denied that selfie-taking provides a promising start to strong, supportive bonds. Furthermore, it can act as a catalyst for Singaporeans to form lasting friendships.

Jacobson also states that the selfie causes one to put oneself at the centre, losing interest in events in the outside world. I feel that this is not relevant in Singapore. As mentioned previously, selfie-taking is such a common activity in Singapore that it is carried out by everyone. This popularity of the selfie – along with the fact that selfie-taking is common and is the current trend – has the potential to act as a platform to spark interests in Singaporeans in topics and issues other than themselves. By taking a selfie with Singaporeans, they will be interested to find out more about the event or the issue. This shows that selfie-taking can actually act as a catalyst for Singaporeans to find out more about the outside world since selfie-taking is such a widespread activity that almost is interest about. For example, it is a well-known fact that Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong enjoys taking selfies as a way to interact and create a closer relationship with the masses. This very activity has spurred many Singaporeans to learn more about PM Lee or the political scene in Singapore as they are intrigued by the fact that their Prime Minister participates in such a routine activity that majority of the masses carry out. This increases Singaporeans' knowledge on the political scene of Singapore as they are inspired by PM Lee's selfie-taking to research and discover more, thereby showing their interest in nation-wide events and issues. It can be argued that nor all organizations or personnel might make use of this strategy to spark the masses' interests and the outcome of using this tactic is highly dependent on the masses' receptiveness. While I concede that the above point is true it also has to be admitted that this common activity of selfie-taking indeed has the potential to spark Singaporeans' concerns and passions in issues other than themselves.

Markers' comments:

Good response (though somewhat lengthy), with specific examples provided. There is sustained attempt to engage with the text, although some assertions (e.g. Singaporean's "relatively low self-esteem") may be over-generalised or shaky.

'The use of violence inevitably leads to more problems.' What is your view?

Violence begets violence. The history of humanity is marked by bloody struggle, a seemingly ceaseless path of destruction, where one despotic, tyrannical government is overthrown by violent revolution only to bear yet another equally brutal ruler. From the most oppressive of theocracies and communist regimes to the most liberal Western democracies, governments and civilians alike have wielded the sword as a solution to society's problems. I argue that the use of violence inevitably leads to more problems due to the socio-political instability created and the moral stain on societies.

Some might argue that the use of violence is a necessary evil in defeating a greater evil, such as transgressive authoritarian regimes. After all, it has been through violent, morally-bankrupt leaders that some of the greatest political progress has been made. The French Revolution, which established democracy in France and acted as a springboard for democratisation of Europe, was a bloody and violent conflict that saw thousands of guerrilla fighters and innocent civilians alike killed. Yet, it was necessary to resolve the greater problem of a despotic French monarchy that spared no regard for the poverty, suffering, and quality of life of the French proletariat. Therefore, the use of violence might be said to be a necessary means to resolve greater problems, and thus its achievements outweigh any possible problems it could lead to. Some would argue that the bloodshed and consequent social impoverishment or annihilation of political structures following violence revolution is minimal compared to the vast social progress brought about.

However, I argue that political leaders who emerge from the carnage of violent revolution tend to use violent governance to rule, thereby leading to far more intractable problems of governments abusing their monopoly of force to consolidate power by oppressing civilians. Violent revolutionaries such as Leon Trotsky and the Bolsheviks in the Russian Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 only rose to power due to their dauntless appropriation of violent, military means. They therefore consolidated their power by using violent, military means. Josef Stalin, for instance, whose party secured power through violence, ruled for more than 30 years with a secret police who routinely arrested and shot innocent civilians based on vague suspicions – never proven – of treason. This is because the use of violence to rule breeds paranoia and insecurity in leaders who fear being deposed and thus use violence in an attempt to eliminate any opposition. This only creates a culture of violence in politics that, in turn, breeds similarly ruthless and merciless leaders who employ equally immoral means to consolidate power.

This legacy of heavy-handed, unrestrained use of violence borne out of the use of violence is also a product of the fear of successors in confronting their organisation's tried-and-tested methods of successful rule. This results in an inescapable cycle of despotism from which the nation cannot escape. In Iraq, for instance, the political history of the unhesitatingly violent Ba'ath Party is such that no successor has challenged the mould of authoritarian militaristic rule, leading to three decades of suffering in which innocent Iraqi citizens who disobeyed military law as well as Kurdish minorities were systematically persecuted. Similarly, Bashar al-Assad, leader of Syria, acquired his entire understanding of political rule from his father, a violent dictator who starved the city of Hama for a minor disobedience, then firebombed the city. Consequently, his political arsenal consisted largely of violent methods, leading him to craft a major part of his political agenda around demonising minorities and systematically massacring them. Leaders borne out of violence tend to only know violence as a means of leading or establishing a cult personality and legacy for themselves. The victims of this violence are often ethnic minorities and society itself, which is left divided by deep-seated ethnic rifts.

These deep-seated ethnic rifts created by violent leaders who use violence to carve out ethnic distinctions between majority and minority groups within a nation subsequently lead to sectarian tensions or even civil war. The Middle East has long been divided into Sunni, Shia and Kurdish religious-ethnic factions by leaders who persist in using violence to persecute the minority faction in their nation. In Iraq, upon succeeding Saddam Hussein, Nouri al-Maliki tried to violently oppress the majority Sunni Muslims in a tit-for-tat, evidence that even when a particular leader is replaced, the inter-sect tensions are so vitriolic that they continue to legitimise and sanction violence. The result of this has been long civil wars in various ethnic battlefields in the Middle East. The sense of authorisation resulting, where one group feels itself to be under existential threat from another group, irrevocably damages any seed of national unity or reconciliation.

The entrenched mindsets of resentment and hatred toward opposing forces in any violent conflict are especially pernicious in the economic sphere, even if far away from the frontlines. In Turkey, the ongoing conflict between Kurds and the majority Arabs has led to ramifications in the workplace or the neighbourhood, where one in three Kurds reported workplace discrimination or threats to their bodily safety in 2014. This prevailing sense of fear felt by the persecuted group in any violent conflict not only disrupts the economic productivity of a nation, but also makes the quality of life for such individuals significantly degraded. Discrimination bred by violent conflict, stoked by the tragedy of death of ethnic comrades, leads to a social atmosphere that inhibits any meaningful actualisation of a good life free from fear and insult.

Furthermore, the use of violence to militarily intervene in such civil wars or conflicts inevitably invites violent retaliation from the very enemy that the foreign forces were seeking to quash. This is because, in the process of military intervention, collateral damage inevitably results, where destruction of non-target entities can be catastrophic. This is due to the lack of precision in many weapons of conventional warfare, such as cluster munitions, which have a one square kilometre precision range, or drones, which have extremely poor sight of the target, leading to civilians being inadvertently killed. The civilian body count from the USA's 2003 invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan was in the hundreds of thousands, and became a major rallying point for Islamic fundamentalists seeking to establish a caliphate in the Middle East, and take revenge against the Western world. The violence inevitably caused to civilians by the USA in 2003 became a selling point for the Islamic state's recruitment campaigns that have been sickeningly successful in radicalising moderate Muslims, who in turn launch violent attacks on Western cities. From the Charlie Hebdo shootings to the Paris bomb blasts of November 2015, it is clear that violence invites retaliation, and retaliation only multiples the devastating loss of lives.

Moreover, when soldiers or police officers are given the capability to exact terrible violence on civilians or enemy soldiers, irresponsible or disproportionate use of violence often results, which compounds the problems of unjust deaths of civilians with a massive accountability deficit. In the USA, police officers, even those on patrol duty who are not likely to need to use lethal gun force against civilians, are given a gun and the legal sanction to use lethal force as long as it is in the ambiguously-defined "self-defence". The fact is that no judiciary can ever meaningfully ascertain if Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, or Sandra Bland were shot in "self-defence" or murdered by a police officer with unwarranted, racist paranoia towards black citizens. However, the fact remains that vesting a civil servant with the ability to use lethal force significantly increases the likelihood that he or she will use it. The use of violence results in an inevitable deficit in terms of accountability, because there will always be inadequate evidence to prove that the use of violence was unwarranted. The violence and consequent acquittal of these perpetrators of violence will be seen by citizens as a miscarriage of justice, as in the case where "Black Lives Matter" activists have launched an indictment of the justness of the American police and judicial system. The social tensions and due delegitimisation of the government is a grave irrevocable problem of disenfranchisement that is not easily resolved.

In conclusion, that which is born from violence learns only the language of violence. Violence is necessarily unjust and destabilises societies that would otherwise have survived.

Marker's comments:

Response shows very good knowledge, breadth of illustration, and conviction of argument, making a strong case against the quote. If there was a weakness, it was that the opposing argument was given insufficient coverage, making your approach a tad lopsided. Language is excellent, with minor slips. The word "violence" could do with assorted paraphrasing to avoid monotony. Personal voice came through.

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2016 | GP CT1 | Paper 1 **Clarisse Gan Jia Shuen | 16S06N**

Discuss the view that countries should always take in refugees.

When pictures of the corpse of a young Syrian boy, who drowned in the Mediterranean Sea while travelling to Europe, surfaced on the Internet, it did not take long before it went viral and sparked debates on whether or not it is a country's responsibility to accept refugees, should they land on the country's shores. Some are of the opinion that counties should always welcome refugees, as it is a fundamental human right for them to seek asylum. However, it is undeniable that there are a myriad of constraints that countries face, and although most countries do their best to help these refugees – whether through taking them in or by providing other forms of aid – it is not always within their means to accept refugees.

Proponents of the view that countries should always take in refugees argue that these refugees have a fundamental right to seek asylum, according to the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, thereby mandating that countries should take them in. Having been forced out of their birth countries, either due to ongoing civil war and ceaseless fighting in the case of Syria, or because of government brutality and discrimination towards minority races in the case of Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims, these refugees have no other alternative but to travel long and far to seek asylum elsewhere. Due to the treacherous journeys these refugees take and the harsh conditions they face along the way, most would be exhausted and frail, some even on the brink of death, such as the Syrian refugees who travel for weeks on overcrowded boats across the Mediterranean Sea. This explains why human rights advocates posit that it is the duty of the country which the refugees arrive in to accept them and provide basic commodities like food, warmth and shelter. Life is sacred and no person's life is less worthy than another's, and as fellow members of the human race, it should be intuitive to reach out to those in need, especially if they end up at your doorstep, or in this context, at your country's border. Whether or not the government later decides to formally welcome the refugees into the country is a separate issue, but at the point in time when the refugees arrive on a country's shores, it should unquestionably render aid and minimise the casualty count.

However, this may be nothing more than an ideal for many countries facing constraints such as limited space, funds and resources to take in or even help the refugees with the basic necessities that they need. This may stem from a very pragmatic point of view, but it is indeed a very real problem that many countries face, leading to a moral dilemma because, on the one hand, they believe that it is their obligation to take in refugees and save lives, but on the other hand, they are weighed down by practical constraints. For instance, thousands of Rohingya Muslims have been denied citizenships in Myanmar, even though their ancestors originated from Myanmar and they have been residing there as a population for years. Yet, because they are a minority in the entire population, they have been ostracised in society and deprived of many fundamental rights and for this reason, thousands have departed from the country in search of a new place to call "home", in search of hope and in search of a better life. Having very minimal access to resources and money, they resort to travelling to other neighbouring Asian countries on rudimentary boats, making them vulnerable to harsh weather conditions and pirates along their journey. When they finally end up at their destination like Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia, however, they are met with hostile officials who at best provide a few days' worth of supplies, and then send their boats back to sea. These countries that refuse to take in the Rohingya refugees, even just for a few days, cite financial and land constraints, and brush the responsibility off their shoulders. Although it may seem inhumane and selfish of these countries to respond to the helpless refugees in such a cold manner at first, upon analysing such reasons more deeply, it is actually understandable why some countries choose not to take in the refugees. Take Singapore, for example: our government has expressed that we are unable to take in any Rohingya refugees in view of our very scarce land area and manpower to accommodate them. The government has faced huge backlashes since the 2000s when it increased its intake of foreign workers already, so we can only imagine the response of Singaporeans if the government were to accept these refugees, who could potentially increase congestion in the city and compete with locals for housing or for jobs. Therefore, it is not practical for every nation to take in refugees, and countries should not if it is beyond their means.

Other than the practical limitations confronting countries that hinder them from taking in refugees, countries should also reconsider taking in refugees if doing so compromises the safety of locals. More often than not, when refugees are hastily accepted in countries, there are insufficient measures put in place to ensure that they integrate well with the rest of the population. Adults may face discrimination in the workplace, while their children could be ostracised in schools for their differences, and being subjected to such prejudices cultivates in them a deep-seated hatred and hunger for vengeance over time. This increases the likelihood of them resorting to violence to vent their frustrations, particularly if the discrimination stems from religious or racial divides between locals and refugees. Additionally, the lack of supervision of these refugees could result in the formation of ghettoes in parts of the country. This phenomenon is evident in Germany, which has currently taken in a million refugees, where large numbers of Muslims congregate in certain areas, and locals have expressed concern for their own safety as the gathering of many Muslim refugees is intimidating to them, possibly due to the recent spate of terrorist attacks committed by Islamic extremists. Germany and France have also seen a spike in rape cases on women by male refugees, underscoring the dangers of taking in too many refugees in too short a span of time. Thus, countries should be prudent in their rate of acceptance of refugees, lest the safety and standard of living of local residents is severely compromised.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that seeking asylum is a fundamental human right for refugees and that countries should take them in to preserve as many lives as they can. Yet, countries must also be cautious of the potential trade-offs, such as lower political support if locals feel overwhelmed by the influx of refugees, as well as the safety of locals. Governments can also put in more effort to bridge the gap between locals and refugees and make integration into society for refugees smoother. Ultimately, this is a multi-faceted issue requiring action and input from all countries, but I opine that countries should take in refugees, although not always, insofar as the act of doing so does not compromise the safety and standard of living of locals, and is within the means of the country.

Marker's comments:

Response shows maturity of thought, with good balance and quite in-depth discussion (though this was not consistent throughout). Discussion covers not just the EU, so there's breadth. Language is generally excellent. While there are some slips and iffy paragraphing, generally you write clearly and with a strong personal voice.

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Discuss the view that countries should always take in refugees.

Today, more attention than perhaps ever before has been paid by the media and global public to the issue of whether countries should always grant refugees that come to their borders the right to residence that they seek – a question made all the more pertinent and urgent in light of the migrant crisis and unprecedentedly large flows of refugees into Europe today. While it can be argued that countries should always take in refugees in the name of protecting them as a profoundly vulnerable group of people fleeing from life-threatening human rights abuses and economic destitution, this principle must be subject to several qualifications: the economic viability of and need for taking in refugees, the ease with which refugees can be integrated into society – consideration which serve, in many senses, to protect the refugees' own interests as well – and assessment of the legitimacy of their statuses as refugee, all of which imply that not all countries, at all times, should take in refugees.

First and foremost, countries should take in refugees if they are to commit to their own principles of protecting the vulnerable and guaranteeing basic human rights, especially when the absorption of refugees comes at little real cost to their countries. Most of the countries that refugees flee to tend to be liberal democracies founded on the protection of the individual's right to life and the empowerment of the disenfranchised. In this sense, the absorption of refugees can be seen as but an extension of these countries' already extensive global efforts to protect human rights and provide aid to the economically impoverished, and part of their existing commitment to protecting the vulnerable within their own borders. Refugees, after all, are a profoundly vulnerable group of people, whose statuses as refugees in the first place are defined by the atrocities, human right abuses and unliveable environments that they have suffered and are fleeing from. For instance, refugees from Syria that have recently flooded European borders are fleeing from a multi-pronged domestic civil war, a dysfunctional political system, an economy pervaded by military conflict that threatens their very survival, and the constant possibility of being executed as a civilian by their own government a part of Bashar al-Assad's brutal counter-insurgency campaign. In such cases, European countries that have committed themselves to the protection of the human rights that these refugees have been stripped of, and who are equipped with readily available economic resources to given them a chance to rebuild their lives, very much have the duty to do so instead of keeping them waiting in destitution around their borders. This is especially the case when taking in refugees comes at little cost to the countries themselves, meaning there is little to no trade-off with the interests of its own citizens – as is the case with South Korea, which has almost always accepted the relatively small flows of refugees fleeing an oppressive, kleptocratic government and starvation from the neighbouring DPRK.

However, whether countries should take in refugees must always be subject to qualifications, the most important of which is the economic viability of doing so. This is most clearly seen in the contrast in the desirability of taking in refugees for countries with vastly different economic or demographic contexts. Turkey, for instance, sees huge waves of refugees constantly at its borders due to its close proximity to many crisis-stricken Middle Eastern countries from which these refugees are fleeing. However, it is not well-positioned to absorb them due to existing unemployment and an economy without readily available jobs that refugees can take up immediately, meaning that even refugees given staying rights still live in poverty and, past a certain saturation point, any further absorption of refugees prevents most of them from being integrated into a new life. This is especially important when we consider that other than a duty to protect refugees, Turkey must also protect the interests of its own citizens, who would be displaced from their jobs and suffer from an oversaturated job market and welfare system with excessive inflows of refugees. In contrast, Germany, whom Turkey has increasingly urged to absorb the refugees that come to them, is relatively more equipped to economically integrate these refugees into its economy that is currently suffering from a labour shortage in middle-skilled jobs like engineering and healthcare, areas which many refugees have qualifications and even university degrees in to help fill in this economic gap, leading to Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision to gradually let in more refugees. Hence, we see that whether a country should take in refugees can depend heavily on its economic and demographic context – not all countries are always well-positioned to absorb refugees.

Furthermore, the possibility of quick social integration is also an important consideration, as it determines the pace at which countries can afford to take in refugees. In Germany, for instance, refugee immigration is limited less by economic factors than by the fear of forming refugee enclaves that would threaten social cohesion and the social integration of refugees themselves. Indeed, it must be recognised that it is fundamentally impossible for the country to take in the more than 300,000 refugees awaiting asylum from it at the moment, or for Europe to take in the approximately one million refugees at its borders. The intake of refugees must necessarily be moderated in its pace, to avoid the kind of situation already breeding in Europe: of schools and housing communities in England and Germany consisting almost exclusively of refugee immigrants that are given lower priority in government aid and regulation, moving towards segregation and pockets of poverty. Clearly, the intake of refugees must necessarily be limited by the ability of countries to support refugee inflows, rather than governed by a blanket policy of always taking in refugees leading to demographic and irreversible social shocks.

Finally, the unequivocal intake of refugees must be qualified by the legitimacy of their status as refugees in the first place. If the purpose of absorbing refugees is to protect their rights as a vulnerable group, only the truly vulnerable should be takin in by countries as refugees. This is especially important when the limits on refugee intake due to socioeconomic factors means that countries have to make a trade-off between different groups of refugees. In Europe, for instance, many refugees also come from Lebanon, and these refugees, although suffering from the still-crippling effects of its 1975 civil war with unfavourable living conditions for the majority Shi'a Muslim populace, face no direct threat to their lives; compared to those fleeing the civil war in Syria or from ISIS in Iraq, they face no immediate mortal danger or human rights abuses, only economic impoverishment. In such a case, countries must decide to consider some refugees more as economic migrants and give priority to those with more immediate, legitimate needs, rather than always accepting all of them.

"No one puts children on a boat, unless the sea is safer than the land";' – the vast majority of refugees today are fleeing from legitimate sources of oppression, civil war and destitution; countries committed to the protection of human rights and the vulnerable have a duty to take them in. At the same time, governments must necessarily balance their needs against that of their own populace, and moderate both the pace and extent of taking in refugees based on the country's ability to integrate them socially and economically – considerations which, in the end, serve to ensure that once taken in, these refugees have a meaningful chance at pursuing the better life which they seek.

Marker's comments:

Fluent, thoughtful response. Essay addresses the requirements of the question throughout. Largely effective use of illustration, though most of your examples can be traced back to the Syrian crisis. Overall, good effort. However, your sentences can get lengthy, and your handwriting definitely needs to be improved.

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Editorial Team