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Philosophy

Higher level

Paper 3

14 November 2025

Zone A morning | **Zone B** morning | **Zone C** morning

1 hour 15 minutes

Instructions to candidates

- Do not open this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Read the text and write a response.
- Answer both parts of the question.
- The maximum mark for this examination paper is **[25 marks]**.

Unseen text – philosophy and contemporary issues

Read the following extract and answer **both** parts (a) and (b) of the question.

Conventional wisdom holds that China—the world’s most populous country—is a polluter, that it puts economic goals above conservation in every instance. So China’s recent moves towards environmentalism have raised some eyebrows. But should they?

5 Analysts have argued that China’s Confucian roots helped influence policies that often promoted man’s use of nature, hindering the development of a conservation ethos. Confucians argued that states should provide for the livelihoods of their people and that to do so they had to exploit the wealth of nature. But these views only account for one aspect of Confucian teachings.

10 In fact, Confucian thought contains ethics promoting both development and conservation. Mencius, the second great Confucian thinker, argued that wise resource management was vital to people’s subsistence. Yet the conservation ethic has historically come up against that other core Confucian mission: to provide for people’s livelihoods.

Writing in the fourth century BCE, Mencius was a Chinese philosopher. In this excerpt, he is advising a King about how to manage his state:

15 “If you do not interfere with the busy seasons in the fields, then there will be more food than the people can eat; if you do not allow nets with too fine a mesh to be used in large ponds, then there will be more fish and turtles than they can eat; if tools are permitted in the forests and the hills only in the proper seasons, then there will be more wood than they can use. When the people have more grain, more fish and turtles than they can eat, and more timber than they can use, then in the support of their parents when alive and in mourning of them when dead, they will be able to have no regrets over anything left undone.

20 If the mulberry is planted in every home, then those who are fifty can wear silk; if chickens, pigs and dogs do not miss their breeding season, then those who are seventy can eat meat; if no one is lacking work during the busy seasons, then families with several mouths to feed will not go hungry. Exercise due care over the education provided by the village schools, and discipline the people by teaching them the duties proper to sons and younger brothers, and those whose heads have turned grey will not be carrying loads on the roads. When those who are seventy wear silk and eat meat and the masses are neither cold nor hungry, it is impossible for their prince not to be a true King.

30 Now when food meant for people is so plentiful as to be thrown to the dogs and pigs, you fail to realize that it is time for saving and storing it, and when men drop dead from starvation by the wayside, you fail to realize that it is time for distributing food to them. When people die you simply say, ‘It is none of my doing. It is the fault of the harvest.’ In what way is that different from killing a man by running him through, while saying all the time, ‘It is none of my doing, it is the fault of the weapon.’ Stop putting the blame on the harvest and the people of the whole Empire will come to you.”

- (a) With reference to the text and your own knowledge, explain the tension between providing for the livelihoods of people and conserving the environment. [10]
- (b) With reference to the text and your own experience of doing philosophy, discuss the role of philosophy in relation to environmental problems. [15]
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References:

1. Miller, I.A. and Yin, G., 2014. Confucian thought and China's environmental dilemmas. *The Conversation*, [online] 18 December. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/confucian-thought-and-chinas-environmental-dilemmas-35585/> [Accessed 12 January 2024]. Source adapted.
2. From *Mencius* by Mencius published by Penguin Classics. Copyright © D. C. Lau, 1970, 2003. Reprinted by permission of Penguin Books Limited.