

EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

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PHILOSOPHY SYLLABUS

INTRODUCTION

I.

The nature of philosophy can be made clear by examining its activities. It penetrates all fields of human activity, from the analysis of language, knowledge, and values, to forms of behaviour and social organisation. It is part of a history in which it has been at the same time the origin and the model of civilisation.

Man's increasing knowledge and mastery of the world about him has led to a growth in the number of specialised disciplines, both theoretical and practical. Philosophy has evolved in the same direction. Nevertheless, it has kept its fundamental permanence and unity, which are related to its beginnings. If other disciplines consist essentially of thought about some aspect of the world, philosophy is concerned with thinking about the nature and foundations of these relationships of man with the world. In this sense, philosophy, far from losing itself in a multiplicity of theoretical and practical disciplines, permits us :

- to analyse the structure and limits of these disciplines.
- to establish their mutual relationships (and thus to encourage interdisciplinary dialogue)
- to analyse critically their aims and values.

In this way, the profound relationships between theory and practice are revealed as the philosophical quest seizes values and brings light to the debate which is at the very basis of history. Philosophy is therefore the creation of a language by means of which the signs of the world acquire a reciprocal meaning, and man is no longer a stranger to man. For this reason, it is justified as an educational subject and contributes, within the educational framework, to the development of the man and the citizen.

II.

The themes to be studied are divided into two groups - Themes A (Compulsory) and Themes B ('cours d'approfondissement').

Respect for cultural diversity and for different national traditions presupposes that the teacher should have complete freedom in the choice of teaching methods and in the order of exposition ; he may regroup, divide, or supplement the proposed themes, provided that he deals with all the obligatory themes in the syllabus.

A. ANTHROPOLOGY- Aims

The study of anthropology attempts to study man's psychology, as well as man in his relationship with the natural environment and as part of the society in which he evolves. In such a context, and as a result of consideration of human creativity to do with work, techniques, invention and symbolism, the problem of the relationship between nature and culture is naturally posed.

Themes A (Compulsory)

- The relationships of man with the physical, biological and social environment.
- The conscious and the unconscious.
- Language as expression and communication.
- Intelligent action.
- Nature and culture.

Themes B ('cours d'approfondissement')

- Conceptions of man and methods of approach.
- The origins and historical nature of man.
- The emotional life.
- Perception : the construction of the object in space and time.
- Freedom of the will.
- The personality.

B. ETHICS- Aims

- To examine, in a critical spirit, so-called 'certainties' which have been adopted prior to thought, and to search for the foundations of moral values which the pupil himself considers worthy of being pursued. This ordered and thoughtful search, making reference to different philosophical traditions and tendencies, should exclude all dogmatism. In particular, the pupil should be encouraged :
- to reflect on values, social customs, and individual attitudes, as well as on the conditions necessary for the realisation of those values.
 - to study the historical dimensions of axiological choices.
 - to elucidate and compare several classical and contemporary systems of ethics and their basic assumptions.
 - to examine the relationships between ethics and other fields of human activity (scientific, artistic, political, religious, etc.)
 - to appreciate and understand other moral values in a spirit of tolerance.
 - to reflect on the meaning which can be given to his own existence and to his future.

Themes A (Compulsory)

- Moral conscience.
- Moral values.
- Liberty and constraint (autonomy and heteronomy ; transcendence and immanence)
- Biological, psychological and social conditions for the accomplishment of moral values.

Themes B ('cours d'approfondissement')

- Duty and responsibility.
- Pleasure and happiness.
- Violence.

C. POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY- Aims

The teaching of political philosophy should help the pupil to develop a critical and analytical attitude towards the political ideas expressed in the modern world, based on the understanding and comparison of some of the major currents of ideas in the history of political philosophy. It should also help the pupils to make their own political choices in an informed manner and to understand the political ideas expressed around them in a wider context than would otherwise be the case. The teaching of political philosophy should be free from all dogmatism, and should encourage freedom and clarity of thought. In particular, such teaching should ::

- help the pupil to understand the key terms currently used in political discussion, and encourage him to use such terms with accuracy and care ;
- help him to reflect on the moral implications of political decisions and on the problem of means and ends ;
- lead him to ask himself to what degree the individual owes obedience to the State and, inversely, if or to what degree the State's authority over the citizen can be justified ;
- allow him to consider, in a general fashion, the aims particular to different conceptions of the state.

Themes A (Compulsory)

- Positive and natural law.
- The State and the individual.
- Utopianism.

Themes B (Cours d'approfondissement')

- Morality and politics.
- Liberty.
- Equality.

D. AESTHETICS

Aesthetics is, like ethics, a philosophical discipline concerned with values. In its character as 'the theory of beauty' (in a wide sense) it has its own history. At the core of this history, we find the appreciation of the object, created or not, in relationship with aesthetic values. The aesthetic object, whether it is a work of art or not, appears as a sign responding to individual or social aspirations which together constitute the 'aesthetic sense' and which allows the apprehension of reality from a particular point of view distinct from a technical, scientific or pragmatic point of view. The aims of the study of aesthetics are, therefore :

- to make the pupil aware of the specific character of aesthetic judgement in general and of art in particular ;
- to help him to reflect on problems of taste, or art as expression and communication ;
- to help him to develop his own aesthetic judgement.

Themes A (Compulsory)

- Some typical examples of aesthetic theories.
- The foundations of aesthetic judgement.

Themes B ('Cours d'approfondissement')

Several aesthetic concepts (e.g. beauty, prettiness, the sublime, harmony ; ugliness, grotesqueness, the inharmonious ; the ironic, the shocking, the fantastic.)

Art and technique.

Art and morality.

Beauty in nature and Art, examined in several modes of expression. (Cinema, photography, fashion)

E. LOGIC

- Aims

Logic constitutes a means of becoming aware of the models on which various 'forms of discourse' are founded ; in this aspect, it is, in particular, a necessary prelude to epistemological research. Like every science, it has a historical origin and has travelled the path which has enabled it to arrive at a formal and symbolic description of these 'forms of discourse'.

Given that a programme for secondary school pupils cannot cover all theories of logic, the choice of themes has been limited in function of their cultural importance, their theoretical value, and their importance in the development of logic towards formalisation.

Themes A (Compulsory)

- The logic of propositions (different models of discourse) ; the syllogism, axioms and the axiomatic method, analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction.
- Logical principles : identity - non-contradiction - excluded middle.

Themes B ('Cours d'approfondissement')

- The proposition (the judgement in its main forms) ; the concept.
- Dialectics.
- Rhetorical and logical discourse.
- Variety of possible messages.

F. EPISTEMOLOGY

The philosophy of science is concerned with specific character with scientific forms of knowledge, their fields of application, their implications and methods.

- Aims

Aiding an awareness of the similarities and differences between both different sciences and between the methods specific to them, epistemology has an interdisciplinary function. Critical thought on the meaning, the limits, and the diversity of methods, as well as on the relationship between the field and the method of study, leads to an awareness of the specific character of scientific work. From this, the pupil becomes familiar with the values which are linked with the scientific attitude ; for example, respect for logic and for facts, and the ability to distinguish between the self-critical search for truth, intolerant dogmatism, sterile scepticism, and the search for objectivity. The pupil should learn to see science as a cultural product, and to realise the importance of the sciences for involving practical problems ; he should also become aware of the problems posed by the use of scientific knowledge and by the moral responsibility of the scientist towards society.

Themes A (Compulsory)

- Problems of scientific truth (objectivity - subjectivity).
- Different scientific methods (e.g. the axiomatic method), statistics, dialectic ...).
- Fields of application of the sciences (for example, mathematics, natural sciences, history...) and their limits.
- The problem of determinism.

Themes B (Cours' d'approfondissement)

- Scientific and pre-scientific knowledge.
- Characteristic attitudes of the scientific mind.
- The unity and variety of the sciences.
- Description - Explanation - Understanding - Proof.
- Facts - Hypotheses - Laws - Theories.
- The problem of scientific models.
- Science and technique.
- Science and society (ideology and politics).

G. METAPHYSICS

- Aims

The term 'metaphysics' partly overlaps with that of 'ontology', but it is nevertheless useful to distinguish the former. The pupil should be encouraged to recognise the importance of metaphysics in the development of ideas over the centuries ; the interest of the problems it considers, such as the origin of the world, the existence and permanence of the soul, the foundation of being, etc. ; the historical and critical attitude which it can encourage ; the impossibility of resolving metaphysical disputes by scientific methods ; and the perennial nature of these specifically human problems.

Themes A (Compulsory)

- The problem of metaphysics.
- The notion of Being.
- The idea of God.

Themes B ('Cours d'approfondissement')

- The phenomenal world and the thing-in-itself.
- The body and the soul.
- Liberty.

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