



INNOVA JUNIOR COLLEGE
JC 2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATIONS 2
in preparation for General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
Higher 1

GENERAL PAPER

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Paper 2

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INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This insert contains the passage for Paper 2.

This document consists of **4** printed pages.



Innova Junior College

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- 1 What a world! The phrase 21st century is already a yawn, perhaps because all the hype has dulled our senses. Yet at the same time, we feel bewildered and bamboozled by the sheer speed, volume and implications of societal and scientific change. In particular, the accelerating pace of scientific advances is creating moral dilemmas where potentially immense and far-reaching ethical decisions are required to be made against the blur of warp-speed change. We are forced to contemplate issues that previous generations neither conceived of nor could imagine. 5
- 2 These issues come with deep ethical considerations and are commensurate with immense biological and medical implications. With the fast accelerating pace and scope of such efforts to cure diseases and extend longevity – and, it has to be said, to increase profits – the particular ethical paradox of eugenics rears its head. How do we handle, for instance, the increasingly sharply focussed moral dilemma of whether to abort foetuses that we know will become disabled children or that may not possess the desired qualities – such as the “right” sex or intelligence potential? How do we deal with the fact that experiments on human embryos are required for science and medicine to advance in the field of eugenics? Or that cloned embryos will be required for the human spare-parts industry? In the name of science, we have reinvented human sacrifice. The sirens of science are usurping the role of priests, dulling our moral sensibilities with the bewitching illusion of immortality. 10
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- 3 This ethical dilemma is heightened by Western society’s moral ambivalence and degradation of traditional and spiritual values. Never before have we so sorely needed a firm moral and spiritual basis by which to make sense of the pace and direction of science. Yet Western culture – especially our political, religious and commercial leadership – is, as a whole, utterly incapable of providing such direction or guidance. We find ourselves groping in an unfamiliar, fast-changing spiritual wilderness, trying to pin down this elusive issue of ethics. At a time of immense scientific and medical progress, it is ironic that we are perhaps less morally equipped as a society to deal with the issues than at any time in our recent history. 25
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- 4 It seems obvious that our moral losses far outweigh our gains. Part of the problem is that we have increasingly equated enlightenment with scientific advancement. This has led to a smug belief that the stances we take on moral issues – often very different and even opposed to those of our predecessors – represent real social or moral progress. Those who beg to differ are labelled as Victorian, repressive or discriminatory – and certainly not politically correct. Scientific rationality is extremely selective. The traditional voices that once would have been heeded above the daily fray of business and science – such as those of religious and national leaders – have fallen virtually silent. When they do speak out strongly on moral issues, they are often ignored or ridiculed. Other, more secular voices have taken their place. 35
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- 5 The utopian vision (or nightmare) of English philosopher Francis Bacon is upon us. The scientists are now in effect the rulers. They decide what of their discoveries shall be communicated to the public at large. It is their discoveries that determine what will count as the relief of man's estate, and what shall be done. Through what they discover we can do, they define the direction of society and human life. It is on their foundations that the reconstruction of science, the arts and humanity itself is based. This is to be done in conscious rejection of ancient wisdom and prejudice. Scientific developments, particularly in the fields of genetics and medicine, are laying to waste ancient conceptions of the sacredness of life. Science is pushing the development of our systems of value, and not vice versa. At a deep level, science is not value-free, but itself determines the erosion of value, by what it makes possible and by what it seems to be telling us about ourselves. 45 50 55
- 6 Scientific detachment is also largely a myth. We will see over and over again the way scientific developments and theories have affected our most precious insights and beliefs. Science does not and cannot leave everything else as it is. In its very pretension to complete unprejudiced objectivity, it dismisses everything that does not fit into its framework as mere superstition. It is here that, if we have a care for the human world, we must begin to resist the imperialism of science, its claim to be able to tell us everything about the world and what we are. 60 65
- 7 Furthermore, there is an ironic moral self-destruction inherent within the dog-eat-dog, competitive system we call capitalism. Technical mastery in the Industrial Revolution was fused with a character structure which accepted the idea of delayed gratification, of compulsive dedication to work, of frugality and sobriety, and which was sanctioned by moral service to God and the proof of self-worth through the idea of respectability. Yet all this was undermined by capitalism itself. Through mass production and mass consumption, it destroyed the Protestant ethic by zealously promoting a hedonistic way of life. By the middle of the twentieth century capitalism sought to justify itself not by work or property, but by the status badges of material possessions and by the promotion of pleasure. The rising standards of living and the relaxation of morals became ends in themselves as the definition of personal freedom. 70 75
- 8 The result has been a disjunction within the social structure itself. In the organisation of production and work, the system demands provident behaviour, industriousness and self-control, dedication to a career and success. In the realm of consumption, it fosters the attitude of carpe diem, prodigality and display, and the compulsive search for play. But in both realms the system is completely mundane, for any transcendent ethic has vanished. 80 85
- 9 The leaders of our liberal society, including those in such fields as government and religion, are facing a dilemma. They cannot resist ever

more extreme and unrestrained demands to take the creed of personal freedom, extreme experience, and sexual experimentation into areas where the liberal culture – which would accept such ideas in art and imagination – is not prepared to go. Yet the liberal culture finds itself at a loss to explain its reticence. It approves a basic permissiveness, but cannot with any certainty define the bounds. Moreover, it leaves the moral order in a state of confusion and disarray. The value system of capitalism repeats the old pieties, but these are now hollow because they contradict the reality, the hedonistic lifestyles promoted by the system itself.

- 10 One can also lament the morally derelict landscape. In such a world, it is wise and prudent not to make long-term plans or invest in the distant future; not to get tied down too firmly to any particular place, group or cause, even to an image of oneself, because one might find oneself not just unanchored and drifting but without an anchor altogether. We now belong to, or are committed to, nothing besides ourselves. Even the family can often turn out to be a relationship of convenience, to be discontinued if it doesn't suit.
- 11 By valuing the preservation and enhancement of our own lives above all moral considerations, we actually end up desecrating the very sanctity of life – particularly when that life belongs to one who is less equipped to survive than we are – or, like a human embryo or foetus, is unable to defend itself. An amoral society – bent on nothing more exalted than the physical perpetuation of life, the pursuit of pleasure and the elimination of pain – is actually moving toward the ultimate cheapening of human life through scientific advances, untrammelled by moral restraints.
- 12 As never before, humankind desperately needs a moral compass to provide guidance and direction through the turbulent sea of ethical dilemmas. More to the point, each individual human being needs that guidance to make sense of a world increasingly dominated by bewildering scientific advances largely unimpeded by moral considerations.

Modified from David Lloyd, Advancing Toward the Moral Brink