



ANDERSON SERANGOON JUNIOR COLLEGE

JC2 Preliminary Examination 2023

GENERAL PAPER

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PAPER 2

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Cassius Arashi discusses the power of information.

- 1 In the fascinating realm of communication, bees serve as captivating exemplars of the intricate art of how information is shared. Within their buzzing colonies, these tireless workers have mastered the subtle language of waggle dances and pheromones, creating a sophisticated network for sharing knowledge and coordinating collective action which maintains the overall functioning of their colony. Much like these industrious insects, we too, are constantly engaged in the transmission of ideas and insights, allowing us to work together to achieve common goals. As humans, unlike bees, our uniqueness lies in our ability to harness information to innovate and reshape the physical world. By rearranging atoms and creating products, we continually expand our understanding of the world around us. Undeniably, in today's fast-paced and ever-changing world, the adage 'information is power' holds truer than ever. 5 10
- 2 Today's Internet generation may find it incredulous as to how people in the past could possibly access and disseminate information without the Internet but such scepticism comes from a place of ignorance and possibly arrogance. Whether it was the days of the town crier announcing the decree of the king, or the development of 'modern' technology, like television and radio, every generation has its own way of doing this. Notably, not all media are created equal; they can be so vastly diverse in form, influence, and reach. For example, in print media, books are durable and able to contain lots of facts but are expensive to produce. In contrast, newspapers are comparatively cheaper and quicker to create, making them a better medium for the quick turnover of daily news. Television offers superior visual information, surpassing radio and static print. It excels in broadcasting live events to a nationwide audience, like the annual State of the Union Address by the U.S. President. Regardless, media remain centralised, with content carefully curated by media organisations, allowing them to control the narrative. In contrast, the new media encourages public discussion of issues and allows nearly anyone who wants a voice to have one. These days, information reaches us from different directions and in multifaceted ways. This creates a bizarre world where we control information, which in turn controls us. 15 20 25
- 3 Undoubtedly, information is power. Firstly, information improves our judgement. We use Google to find possible options for our dream house or car. We can better manage our own finances like keeping tabs on our credit card bills to check for and dispute unauthorised transactions. Being able to know our monetary commitments can also help to avoid financial embarrassment. We now speak not just passionately but with knowledge, and so have a greater ability to impress our interviewers, making job opportunities otherwise unavailable to us now accessible. Clearly, our dreams when articulated this way come across as more convincing, believable, and creditable to the interviewer. There are also healthy mealtime ideas, mental health tips, and mindfulness exercises on TikTok, YouTube, Instagram reels... 30 35
- 4 Universal access to information is a basic human necessity in the modern world. Informed voters are the basis of any functioning democracy - the country needs their people to be informed for free will to be constructive. Information empowers us to hold these leaders accountable for any mismanagement which would otherwise have not been possible. Timely access to health-related data can also help leaders keep an eye on disease outbreaks such as SARS, Ebola and malaria, and improve public health intervention. With the rise of globalisation, the increasing homogeneity across the globe presents us with other equally concerning threats. Archiving cultural practices protects cultural identities, and the dissemination of literature, poetry, and music across borders fosters dialogues and appreciation. 40 45

- 5 Indeed, having access to information gives us power and this empowerment multiplies only when we share it. By sharing knowledge, we can build on what came before. To illustrate this, think of our economy – the sum of all our interactions as a society – as a computer; each person within the economy is a personbyte. Each personbyte can merely accumulate a limited amount of knowledge and know-how. We all know, however, that teamwork makes the dream work. If this individually accumulated information is combined, the collective wisdom grows exponentially. 50 55
- 6 The creation of public benefits works in a similar manner which also frequently depends on individuals' willingness to share information. The effectiveness of disease control in the population, for example, crucially depends on the willingness of individuals to report a suspected illness to health authorities. Of course, this is assuming health authorities have the time and resources to respond. Likewise, the accuracy of policy measures critically depends on individuals' willingness to share their personal data such as age, gender, race and marital status. Additionally, the exactness of traffic information depends on individuals' willingness to share their present whereabouts and criminals can now be swiftly caught with the help of different eyewitness accounts. Granted, when it comes to matters of national security and global emergencies, leaders of nations have no choice but to take on the mandate of accessing information against the people's will. For the greater good, the end justifies the means. 60 65
- 7 However, the amount of information, especially over the Internet, is also overwhelming. We are drowning in an ever-swelling ocean of words and images, faced with relentless waves of amateur opinions. We are forced to sift through inane comments and misinformed perspectives, hoping to unearth a sliver of quality information. When our brains are overloaded with too much data from the outside world, we struggle to absorb, process, and make sense of it, hampering our ability to make smart decisions and perform at our best. The Information Overload Research Group (yes, this exists) has a word for this feeling: infoxication, also known as data smog. Take for example, the information that Nancy Pelosi diverted Social Security money to fund the impeachment inquiry, or that President Trump's father was a member of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Far-fetched as these statements sound, they were among the most shared fake news stories on Facebook in 2019, according to a report by the nonprofit organization Avaaz, which concluded that political fake news garnered more than 150 million views in 2019. Apparently, fake news actually reaches more people and spreads more quickly than the truth, dulling our ability to discern the truth. A frequent explanation for this is motivated reasoning – the idea that people's cognitive processes are biased toward believing things that conform with their worldview. Hence, a liberal voter is predisposed to believe unsavoury rumours about President Trump's father, while a conservative is more willing to accept that Representative Pelosi would illegally divert public funds. Against all reason, these ideas become hardened and difficult to remove. Never have we seen a world with so much information and yet is so uninformed! 70 75 80 85
- 8 Just as bees can get lost and fail to return to their hives without the right guidance, our own interactions can falter without reliable information. Similarly, in our own information-driven society, the consequences of misinformation can lead us astray, hindering our collective progress and understanding. It is time for us to prioritize reliable data and fact-checking so that we can find our way back to truth and unity, ensuring a thriving and interconnected future. 90

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