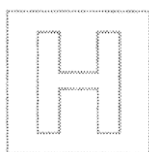


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DUNMAN HIGH SCHOOL
General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
Higher 1

YEAR 6 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

GENERAL PAPER

8807/02

Paper 2

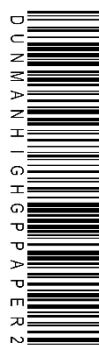
30 August 2021

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Billy Verble writes about trust in the modern world.

- 1 From summer camps to corporate team-building exercises, who has not experienced the 'Trust Fall'? You climb to an elevated position and lean your body backwards in a freefall into the outstretched arms of your teammates. The activity's easily facilitated nature makes it a favourite amongst organisers and coordinators to impart the value of trust. Yet, most psychologists agree that this contrived, one-off experience, which only requires cursory communication amongst participants to facilitate, hardly makes for an effective trust building exercise. Right now, we surely need more than just trust falls to rekindle the ties that bind, as all we witness is a never-ending barrage of media stories of protests and uprisings by those who feel betrayed by their social institutions. 5
- 2 At the heart of any functioning society is the maintenance of trust. Yet, this trust is no longer important to political leaders and bureaucrats of today. They are drunk with power and out of touch with the average voter. They constantly preach the greater good but line their pockets with corporation dollars. They fumble in the face of public crises, making empty promises before claiming they 'misspoke' when called out by citizens for their lies. But somehow these criticisms are merely water off the proverbial duck's back. Is it any wonder that people have lost faith in politics when the candidates look and sound the same, election after election? Furthermore, taxpayer-funded public institutions which were supposed to provide public goods have been pushed into privatisation in all but name, obfuscating their original, noble aims. These new institutions no longer serve the people but shareholders instead. In times of economic downturn, they turn back to the government, cap in hand for reprieve by virtue of offering 'public' goods, and claim that they are 'too big to fail'. Yet the real failure is that taxpayers are the ultimate losers: in times of economic prosperity, institutions continually raise prices to be profitable to their shareholders; and in times of austerity, taxpayers have to bear the brunt of the financial burden to keep these institutions afloat. 10
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- 3 For decades, corporations have been playing us for fools. They masquerade as a saviour when they tout their products as solutions to problems of their own creation, and we in turn believe the problems exist. For years, corporate marketing has been telling consumers that we do not gain sufficient calcium from other dietary sources and drinking milk is necessary for bone health; however, recent research suggests that there is no definitive link between dairy consumption and stronger bones and it can actually be harmful to our health. Additionally, with the advent of Big Tech, companies insidiously collect personal data on their platforms only to sell them to other companies for a profit without our explicit knowledge, leaving us vulnerable and exposed. 25
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- 4 Furthermore, religiosity has suffered a big hit. When Gallup first asked Americans to rate the importance of religion in their lives in 1952, 75% said it was very important. Today, less than half indicated so. In addition, there has been a surge in reported cases of religious leaders who have been embroiled in sexual assault and embezzlement, taking advantage of the trust of the congregation for their personal interests. If gatekeepers of moral authority are not exempt from sin, what more can we expect from those who are mere mortals? The betrayal of trust by religious leaders affects our ability to trust one another. Some couples today even draw prenuptial agreements to protect their financial assets should the marriage fail - an ironic trend considering how the marriage covenant is meant to be made with the one whom we decide to intertwine our life with till death do us part. 35
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- 5 Clearly, this is a period of decline: public trust has plummeted, people feel disgusted by the state of affairs, they turn against one another and nations start to fail. But are we really past the point of no return? Thankfully, there are opportunities to harness the many positive aspects of this trust deficit, allowing us to make this situation a turning point in our lives. An ethical shift has occurred in society, opening up possibilities for a public debate to redefine what it means to live in a just society and rid it of greed. And when governments, institutions and corporations fail us, people of distinct religions and ethnicities disregard their differences and coalesce to support one another. This is when the ordinary people challenge the goliaths. 45
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- 6 Heroes are born when a brave few rise up and assume a greater sense of civic duty and fight for increased transparency in society. Firstly, civil society organisations appear and their main purpose is to educate people about their rights and empower them to seek redress if they are being short-changed. Then, social enterprises slowly emerge in the market to present themselves as ethical alternatives to cut-throat businesses. These Impact Angels have carefully handpicked quality products that are environmentally-friendly and are priced affordably in their shops. They also tend to hire marginalised groups of people and pay them a decent salary. Most notable of all are the neighbourhood watch groups and they deserve the loudest applause. They are the eyes and ears on the ground, often monitoring and capturing public grievances, and transmitting these human stories and anecdotes back to civil society organisations and social enterprises for their assistance. They are the ones that effectively turn a divided society into a cohesive one. Their indefatigable spirit is so infectious that they are sometimes able to mobilise the entire community, even the most cynical and distrustful, to perform acts of service. These range from repairing street lamps long neglected by the municipal councils to distributing free food and clothing to the poor who otherwise cannot afford to buy them from exploitative giant malls. The whole community becomes one that is driven by compassion and trust is then slowly circulating back into the heart of the society. 55 60 65
- 7 Many assume that the pervasiveness of the internet, with its modern outlaws and renegade cowboys hiding behind its anonymity, has led to a rise in hacking, identity theft and cyberattacks. Yet, unexpectedly the 'Wild Wild Web' where existing legislation and methods of policing have proved too parochial to keep up with the ever evolving technology is the unlikely frontier where trust is being reclaimed. Cash-strapped start-ups are leading the pack, using the internet to their advantage. Referral marketing from close acquaintances or trusted influencers inspires confidence in consumers. They feel secure knowing that start-ups are only a message away on social media when issues arise. When customers leave feedback, they react faster and change their products according to consumers' wishes. These feedback loops allow customers to feel valued. Furthermore there are attempts to make the digital landscape more transparent with blockchain technology which is leveraged to improve other crowdsourcing cases where anyone can participate in an online task by submitting information. Such collective intelligence is most reliable when it consists of input from a diverse population. There is greater confidence as a thousand pairs of eyes can spot potential problems, and among a thousand ideas, surely one will solve the Gordian knot. 70 75 80
- 8 So where do we go from here? Slowly but surely, we have to restore what has been so callously squandered away or the alternative, a world devoid of trust, would be inevitable and unthinkable. Perhaps, similar to the 'Trust Fall', what we need to do now is to take a leap of faith into the unknown and to believe that we will land safely into a better future. 85

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Acknowledgements:
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