Tema di: LINGUA STRANIERA
TESTO DI ATTUALITÀ – LINGUA INGLESE
(Comprensione e produzione in lingua straniera)
Learning about life: what's the point of philosophy?
If you train people to drive buses or operate lathes - the vocational option - you get skilled workers whocan do particular jobs. But if you teach people to think, and provide them with wide horizons, they can domany things; they can train and retrain in different positions, they can be flexible and adaptable inexporting their mental skills from one job to another, and in general they can provide their employers andthe country at large with the advantage of being an educated, and not merely a trained, workforce.

This is why education is a more extensive and valuable thing than training. Training relates to a specificjob, education makes a person.

Aristotle said: "We educate ourselves to make noble use of our leisure". His remark can be extended across the spectrum of what we are as individuals.

The idea of living a life that is satisfying and flourishing, in which we add value to our relationships andbring thoughtfulness to our civic responsibilities, is to the forefront. And it is these things that a broad liberal education fosters. Central to such an education is an opportunity to think about and debate the great questions that lie at the heart of being human.

Philosophy asks, "What is goodness? What is truth? What is the nature of right and wrong, the right way to get and evaluate knowledge, the ultimate nature of the world and humanity? How do you analyse arguments, spot fallacies, reason responsibly, see other points of view, think for yourself?"

In the course of the past two and a half millennia, the civilisation of the West has produced a great tradition of philosophical debate. Since its origins in classical antiquity, philosophy has started from the idea that the pursuit of truth and knowledge must be free, open-minded, and independent. It is therefore different, in its very essence, from the way people standardly acquire their views about the world, which is by accepting conventional beliefs at the behest of others, mainly parents, church leaders, and the like.

Philosophy's aim is to encourage independence of mind and a critical ability to sift good things from bad things. Many of the problems that beset the world arise from unreflective acceptance of dogmas, which prompt knee-jerk reactions and polarisation of views. Obviously enough, a little more reflectiveness would go far to making the world a better place.

There are different schools of thought in philosophy's rich tradition, offering different and often competing viewpoints. People expecting philosophy to give them ready answers to life's great questions are in effect hoping to find a tailor-made, ready-to-wear mindset that they can take off the shelf, instead of using the debates of philosophy to help them work out their own views. One thing all philosophers agree on is that people are at their best when they think for themselves, honestly and carefully. The philosophical tradition exists to provide materials for doing so.

Few kinds of vocational training would equip people to listen to points of view alien to their own, to learn how to sympathise with them, to give others space to live their lives in their own way, and to stand up in a principled and constructive way for their own choices and rights likewise.

The skills required for all this are paradigmatically philosophical ones, because they turn on grasping what is at stake in someone else's outlook, evaluating it, thinking about one's attitude to it, and adjusting one's behaviour and choices in the light of it.

The great gift conferred by a philosophical education is the light it throws on every aspect of humanity's effort to understand itself and its world. This last is a significant point for the age of the internet, which makes information available in quantities and at speeds that were unthinkable when the chief resource for investigating anything was a reference library. But information is not knowledge, and knowledge is not by itself understanding.

Information becomes knowledge when it is organised into fruitful patterns, and knowledge yields understanding when careful, clear-eyed appreciation of what it means and what its uses are has been attained. The goal of understanding is par excellence the goal of philosophy.

The Independent, 17 February 2006

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS
1. Which is the main advantage of teaching people to think?
2. Why is education more extensive than training?
3. Explain Aristotle's quotation by using your own words.
4. Which concept does a liberal education foster?
5. Which is the main aim of philosophy?
6. How do people standardly acquire their views about the world?
7. Why cannot philosophy give ready answers?
8. Which is the added value of a philosophical education?
9. Why is a philosophical education significant in the age of the internet?
10. How can a philosophical education help develop better individuals and make a better world?

SUMMARIZE the content of the passage.

COMPOSITION:
According to the article, by studying philosophy, people learn how to think. Express your views on the topic by referring to your own experience.

_____