

BA EXAMINATION 2003

For Internal Students

This paper is also taken by Combined Studies Students

PHILOSOPHY**3(a) Ethics**

Tuesday, May 6th, 2003, 10.00 am - 1.00 pm.

Answer THREE questions, at least ONE from EACH section. Candidates taking optional paper (I) Philosophy of Kant may NOT attempt question 18, marked with an asterisk. Avoid overlap in your answers

SECTION A

1. 'All affirmative first order moral judgements are false, since they include, by virtue of the very meanings of their terms, unwarranted claims to objectivity' (Mackie). If so, should one cease to moralize?
2. Can the motivational content of an ethical concept be separated from its descriptive content?
3. Can moral judgements only be interpreted and assessed relative to an assumed moral framework ?
4. EITHER (a) Does the existence of moral dilemmas tell for, or against, moral realism?
OR (b) Does the aptness of using 'ought' in expressing each horn of a moral dilemma shed light on the nature of such dilemmas?
5. EITHER (a) 'Virtues are, in some general way, beneficial. Human beings do not get on well without them' (Foot). Is this true of individual agents?
OR (b) Can we understand what it is to benefit a human being without knowing what is morally valuable or permissible?
6. Is it irrational to be motivated solely by considerations of self-interest?
7. 'The claim that moral principles are those which nobody could reasonably reject is either empty or false.' Discuss.

8. EITHER (a) Can one consistently affirm the following two claims: (i) 'One is obliged to save A and B rather than A alone'; (ii) 'One is not obliged to save B and C rather than A'?
- OR (b) How could anyone argue with the claim that one should always maximize the good?
9. Is it wrong to do good by causing evil, but permissible to cause evil by doing good?
10. Is there any compelling counter-example to the claim that one is blameworthy for what one has done only if one could have done otherwise?
11. 'All friendship is preferring the interest of a friend, to the neglect, or perhaps, against the interest of others ... Now Christianity recommends universal benevolence, to consider all men as our brethren, which is contrary to the virtue of friendship' (Dr. Johnson). Discuss.
12. Is death bad for the person who dies?
13. Is there a tenable moral distinction to be drawn between active and passive euthanasia?

SECTION B

14. EITHER (a) When Socrates declares (in the *Apology*) that he cares not at all about dying, and everything about not acting unjustly, how might he justify his attitude?
- OR (b) Should Plato's guardians be competent to rule? If so, how?
- OR (c) Should Plato's guardians be willing to rule? If so, why?
15. EITHER (a) Can Aristotle defend himself from the objection that becoming virtuous, on his conception, depends upon luck?
- OR (b) 'The decision rests with perception.' How then can we reliably discriminate between good and bad decisions?
- OR (c) Why does Aristotle think that a life of contemplation is the best life for a human being? In his view, can the best life also include acting virtuously?
16. EITHER (a) Did Aquinas endorse a divine commandment theory of morality?
- OR (b) Did Ockham have a defensible theory of moral obligation?
17. EITHER (a) What, according to Hume, is the role of reason in morality? Is he right about this?
- OR (b) Is Hume right to think that it is not necessarily irrational to act knowingly against the requirements of justice?
- *18. EITHER (a) Why, according to Kant, should I do my duty?
- OR (b) 'There is no such thing as the Categorical Imperative; there are only hypothetical imperatives.' Discuss.

19. EITHER (a) In Mill's Utilitarianism, can anything besides pleasure be a part of happiness?
OR (b) 'No reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person ... desires his own happiness. This, however, being a fact, we have ... proof ... that happiness is a good: that each person's happiness is a good to that person, and the general happiness, therefore, a good to the aggregate of all persons.' What grounds does Mill provide for these claims, and are these grounds persuasive?

END OF PAPER