OXFORD UNIVERSITY

PHILOSOPHY TEST

Wednesday 4 November 2015

Question Paper and Answer Booklet

Surname	
Other names	
School/College name*	

*If you are an individual candidate, taking this test away from a school or college, please write the name of your examination centre in this box.

Centre Number						Candidate Number	P					

UCAS Number (if known)				–				–				

	d	d		m	m		y	y
Date of Birth			–			–		

Oxford College of Preference	

Candidates should attempt Part A, which consists of one question, and ONE QUESTION ONLY from Part B. The two questions you answer will be given an equal weighting, so you are advised to spend half of the available time on each of them.

Any planning and rough working should be completed in this test booklet, and clearly indicated as such. There are 10 pages available for you to write on, including those with the printed questions; no additional pages are available, and none should be used.

The Philosophy Test is a test of philosophical reasoning skills. There is no expectation that candidates will have undertaken any formal study of philosophy, and it is not a test of philosophical knowledge.

Credit will be given for precise and careful reasoning which answers the question asked, with particular merit being given to answers which anticipate and are able to answer objections to the reasoning given. No credit will be given for irrelevance, nor for the mere statement of opinions without evidence of argument to support them.

Admissions Testing Service

Administered on behalf of the University of Oxford by the Admissions Testing Service, part of Cambridge Assessment, a non-teaching department of the University of Cambridge.

*Answer **PART A** and **ONE QUESTION ONLY FROM PART B**.*

Spend half an hour on each and do as much as you can within that time.

PART A

1. Read the following passage carefully, and then answer questions (a) and (b) below.

Before the rise of nineteenth-century biology, the process of generation in living organisms was conceived as a reproductive process, that is, a process by which the specific form of the parent organism was reproduced in the offspring. Any failure to reproduce it exactly was regarded as an aberration, a failure in the strict sense, a shot in which nature simply missed her mark. And of course there was a vast amount of evidence in favour of such a view; within our experience organic species remain relatively stable, and conspicuous aberrations from their form are in general either incapable of living or at least incapable of reproducing themselves. But [the fossil record], as studied by the geologists of the eighteenth century, made it clear that over a longer stretch of time this evidence no longer held good; for geology very soon presented us with pictures of past ages in which the flora and fauna of the world had been very different from what they are now. The natural way of interpreting this new knowledge was by assuming that the organisms of today trace their pedigree not through a line of ancestors all specifically identical with themselves, but through these specifically different forms; so that the specific form itself undergoes change in time as the history of the world proceeds. This hypothesis was greatly strengthened, if not actually suggested, by the study of human history, where the forms of political and social organization can be seen to have undergone an evolution of the same kind. It was verified by the study, due especially to Darwin, of the breeding of domestic animals, where within comparatively short spaces of time human agency, by selecting certain strains to breed from, can produce forms having at any rate a strong resemblance to independent species and capable like them of breeding true to type.

(R.G. Collingwood)

a) Outline, in your own words, the central argument of the passage.

b) Discuss the concept of evidence as it occurs in the passage. Should the evolution of human social and political organization be regarded as evidence for the truth of the hypothesis under discussion?

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PART B – Answer EITHER Question 2 OR Question 3 OR Question 4

2. Can laws against blasphemy serve any useful purpose?

3. 'Prayer is a state of mind; one can pray perfectly well without believing in God.' Assess the truth of this claim.

4. One use of the English word 'and' is to join sentences together to form new, longer sentences. For example, 'Oxford has a university' can be joined to 'Siobhan studies theology' to form the new sentence 'Oxford has a university and Siobhan studies theology'.

Often, a sentence formed of two shorter sentences joined with 'and' can be compressed. For example, 'Leeds is a city and Bradford is a city' is more normally written as 'Leeds and Bradford are cities'. Here, even in the compressed version the 'and' still has a sentence-joining function.

For each of the following sentences, state whether the use of 'and' has this sentence-joining function. Give your reasoning, and state, where appropriate, the sentences you take to be joined by the 'and'. Where 'and' does not have this function, what role is it playing?

a. Oxford and Cambridge have universities.

b. You can travel to Oxford and Cambridge from this station.

c. Oxford and Cambridge have a friendly rivalry.

d. This railway links Oxford and Cambridge.

e. To get a degree from Poppleton University you must satisfy the entrance requirements and be very clever or work extremely hard.

f. Fish and chips are best eaten with salt and vinegar.

g. Monica was bitten by a shark and died.

h. You can delete the email and no one will ever find out.

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