



OXFORD UNIVERSITY

PHILOSOPHY TEST

Wednesday 2 November 2016

Only to be taken by applicants for the Philosophy and Theology joint degree.

Question Paper and Answer Booklet

Surname	
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Other names	
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School/College name*	
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*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	X						
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Oxford College of Preference	
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You have 60 minutes (one hour) for this test.

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. You must use a black pen. No dictionaries of any kind are permitted.

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. In the following passage, GB Caird is reflecting on a hymn, or a fragment of a hymn, as it is found in the text of a New Testament letter, Paul's letter to the Philippians. He is discussing the hypothesis that the words of the hymn are not by Paul himself, but by some other author.

Provided we do not suppose that the hymn was inserted in Paul's letter by a later hand (and for that there is no manuscript evidence whatever), the hypothesis we are considering ought not to make any appreciable difference either to the integrity of the letter or to its interpretation. Whether Paul wrote the passage in the course of writing his letter or quoted his own or someone else's hymn, it was he who put it in its present context; and he did so because he believed that it said what he himself wanted to say. Here as always we must pay proper respect to the law of contextual determination, that words, singly or in combination, mean what the writer or speaker on any given occasion intends them to mean. The meaning of this passage *in Philippians* is the meaning Paul intends it to have, the meaning he has imposed on the ambiguities of its language. If we say with [the commentator] Beare that 'the hymn belongs to the realm of soteriology, not of Christology or of ethics', we must be aware that we are talking about the hymn in its conjectural previous existence, not about the hymn as it stands in its present context in Philippians, which is both Christological and ethical. To isolate these verses from their context is to remove them from the epistle and so from the New Testament. There may be some justification for doing this when we are speculating about early Christian origins, but not when we are expounding a letter of Paul.

GB Caird

- a) What is the core argument of the above passage about the significance, for the interpretation of the letter, of the authorship of the hymn?
- b) Develop the best argument you can against what Caird calls 'the law of contextual determination'.

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PART B

2. For this question, we take an *argument* to be a collection of sentences, one of which is marked off from the others and called the 'conclusion'. (This marking off is often accomplished in English by a word such as 'so', or 'therefore'.) The remaining sentences we call 'premises'. We say that an argument is *valid* if there is no possible situation which would make it simultaneously the case that all of the premises are true, and the conclusion false. If an argument is *not* valid, we say that it is *invalid*.

For each of the following arguments, say whether it is valid or invalid. State your reasoning as precisely as possible, noting any difficulties and points of interest.

- a. New College in Oxford is not a new college.

St Catherine's College in Oxford is a new college.

Therefore, There are at least two colleges in Oxford.

- b. Old College in Edinburgh is not a new college.

New College in Edinburgh is not a new college.

Therefore, There are at least two colleges in Edinburgh.

- c. If the creature in the box has eight legs, it's a spider.

The creature in the box is a spider.

Therefore, The creature in the box has eight legs.

- d. There are at least two colleges in Oxford.

There is only one college in Oxford.

Therefore, There are three colleges in Edinburgh.

- e. The BFG believes Charles Dickens is called Darles Chickens.

Charles Dickens is the author of *Great Expectations*.

Therefore, The BFG believes the author of *Great Expectations* is called Darles Chickens.

3. 'A successful proof of the existence of God would undermine religious faith.' What grounds are there for thinking that this claim might be true? Is it in fact true?
4. Does sovereignty matter? Why, or why not?

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