



OXFORD UNIVERSITY

PHILOSOPHY TEST

Thursday 2 November 2017

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 or argument to support them.



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

PART A

1. Read the following passage, and answer the questions which follow it.

The Being of God, as Barth has taught us, is the Being of one who loves in freedom. What we mean by freedom here is essentially love. [Barth writes,] ‘The essence of every other being is to be finite, and therefore to have frontiers against the personality of others and to have to guard these frontiers jealously ... It is in its very nature that it cannot affirm itself except by affirming itself against others.’ God, on the other hand, is free in that he knows no such limits, that he has no frontiers to guard, and no frontiers to his self-giving. Free self-giving is what love is. Grounded in himself, in an eternal act of self-giving, God has no ‘need’ of otherness, but his self-giving nevertheless overflows as grace into creation and redemption. The freedom which human beings seek, therefore, in seeking God or transcendence, is not the absence of any constraint (which is as far as many liberal theories of freedom take us – ‘free’ love and the ‘free’ market being expressions of the same reductionist anthropology) but the longing for self-possession and self-giving, in short, for the ability to love. The fear of freedom and the quest for this freedom mark every aspect of human experience, and political systems structure both the fear and the quest.

T J Gorringe

- a. Explain in your own words the conception of freedom discussed in the passage above.
- b. EITHER: Is the concept of ‘freedom without limits’ a coherent one?

OR: In what ways may political systems structure the fear of freedom?

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PART B

2. Discuss the relationship between the following three concepts: ritual, ceremony, tradition.

3. In what follows, P and Q stand for English declarative sentences (sentences which have a truth-value, true or false). An argument is a collection of declarative sentences, one of which is marked off from the others (for example, by the word 'therefore') and claimed to follow from the others. The following is a valid form of argument; 'Q is true' follows from the other sentences, whatever declarative sentences we choose for P and Q:

P is true; If P, then Q; therefore, Q is true.

Comment on the validity of the following arguments. Where appropriate, give examples to support your reasoning.

- a) Q is true; If P then Q, therefore, P is true.

- b) Peter believes P; If P then Q, therefore, Peter believes Q.

- c) Jane does not believe P; If P then Q; therefore, Jane does not believe Q.

- d) Siobhan believes P. Therefore, if Siobhan believes 'If P then Q', Siobhan believes Q.

- e) Derek does not believe Q. If P then Q. Therefore, Derek ought not to believe P.

- f) P is true. Prudence does not believe 'If P then Q'. Therefore, Prudence does not believe Q.

4. According to a major business analysis organization, only 14.2% of the top five leadership positions in 500 major listed companies are held by women. According to official statistics, only 14.5% of school exclusions (for example, on grounds of behaviour) in English state primary schools are of girls. If either of these statistics worries us, should the other do so as well?

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