



OXFORD UNIVERSITY

PHILOSOPHY TEST

November 2021

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

Question Paper and Answer Booklet



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| 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.

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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.

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 carefully through the following passage, and answer the questions which follow.

No Christian is likely to cause uproar in a church by praying ‘Lord, grant peace to our world.’ It is a safe prayer to make, allowing those who make it to continue pursuing peace by whatever means they think effective. Let us suppose, for example, that I, in company with all the political parties, the majority of Christians and of Christian leaders in Britain, am a firm believer in our national defence policy as a means of preserving peace. Why then should I not make the following prayer for peace? ‘Dear Lord, inspire our scientists that they may invent yet more lethal weaponry (for the more lethal, the more it will effectively deter), preserve us from any unfortunate accident in its testing (lest we suffer an even greater disaster than Chernobyl), bless our economy that we may put these weapons into plentiful production (otherwise they will fail to deter), succour the homeless, the unemployed, the sick and elderly of our own and other nations until such time as our defence commitments allow us to do more. Strengthen our leaders in a strong defence policy, drive out from our midst any who by thought, word, or deed undermine our national security, and grant us the protection of nuclear weaponry now and forever, Amen.’ Some readers may dislike this prayer and consider it a distortion of the views of those who believe in the morality of nuclear deterrence, but the point of the prayer is to illustrate that our spirituality has a split nature and that when we do bring our everyday actions and attitudes into prayer, then our prayers disturb.

GERARD W. HUGHES

- a. State briefly the author’s aim in setting out and contrasting these two prayers.
- b. **EITHER:** What does the author mean when he says that our spirituality has a ‘split nature’?
OR: Would a religion which did not include prayers of request to a god or gods be lacking in anything important compared to one, like the Christianity Hughes discusses, which does?

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PART B

2. 'I remember reading a criticism of the song for being sentimental but that's wrong; though it does allow itself to be emotional about football' (David Baddiel, co-author of the 'Three Lions' England football song). Carefully distinguish the meanings of the three words *sentimental*, *emotional* and *nostalgic*.

3. It is often possible to specify, in fairly general terms, the conditions which would make a sentence true. For example, it is quite common to think that 'Freda knows that Curly likes chocolate' involves three things: the truth of 'Curly likes chocolate' (because there seems something odd about knowing a thing and that thing being false), Freda's having a belief that Curly likes chocolate, and there being a suitable connection between the truth and the belief, to prevent it being accidental or just a guess on Freda's part. Similarly, 'Morris sees a rabbit' at least requires Morris to have properly-functioning visual equipment (eyes, say), and also that there actually is a rabbit in his field of vision (as opposed to – or maybe in addition to – a long-eared guinea pig, or a disguised meerkat).

For each of the following sentences, discuss conditions which would make the sentence true.

- a. Morris thought he saw a rabbit.
- b. Morris imagined he saw a rabbit.
- c. Morris realized he saw a rabbit.
- d. Cuthbert imitated Colin.
- e. Cuthbert was guilty of imitating Colin.
- f. Cuthbert was found guilty of imitating Colin.
- g. Connie accused Cuthbert of imitating Colin.
- h. Connie informed Charlie that Cuthbert imitated Colin.
- i. Connie lied to Charlie that Colin imitated Cuthbert.

4. Test results suggest that a new vaccine to protect against a disease will reduce deaths among people infected with the relevant disease from 20 per 100 000 to 10 per 100 000, thus saving 10 lives per 100 000 among those infected. Unfortunately, known side-effects will result in 3 deaths per 100 000 people vaccinated; these side-effects are entirely unrelated to the disease itself. What factors should determine (a) whether the vaccine should be used at all, and (b) whether receiving the vaccine should be made compulsory?

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