

**BA EXAMINATION 2009**

for Internal Students

This paper is also taken by Combined Studies Students

**PHILOSOPHY**

3.(b) Political Philosophy

**Thursday, 14 May 2009: 10am – 1 pm**

Answer THREE questions, including at least ONE from EACH section. Candidates taking Optional Paper (r) Marxism may NOT attempt question 8, marked with an asterisk. Avoid overlap in your answers.

**SECTION A**

1. EITHER (a) Does Plato have good grounds for thinking that there will be no end to the troubles of states, or indeed of humanity itself, until philosophers become kings?  
  
OR (b) Does Socrates argue convincingly that he should remain in prison to face a death sentence even though this sentence is the result of a conviction he regards as unjust?
2. EITHER (a) Does Aristotle think that justice is proportional equality? Is his view defensible?  
  
OR (b) What does Aristotle mean when he claims that humans are political animals? Is he right?
3. EITHER (a) ‘This is to think, that men are so foolish, that they take care to avoid what mischiefs may be done them by *pole-cats*, or *foxes*; but are content, nay, think it safety, to be devoured by *lions*’ (Locke). Is this a fair criticism of Hobbes’s argument that in the state of nature it is rational to agree to absolute sovereignty?

**TURN OVER**

- OR (b) According to Hobbes, 'will' is the 'last act in deliberation'. What does he mean by this, and what are its consequences for his view of the legitimacy of the sovereign?
4. EITHER (a) On what grounds does Locke affirm a natural right to punish? How plausible is his claim that there is such a right?
- OR (b) How might an egalitarian understanding of Locke's 'enough and as good' proviso regarding the ownership of land lend support to his claim that one tacitly consents to the government of a political society by remaining within its borders?
5. EITHER (a) Does Hume show that political obligation has nothing to do with consent?
- OR (b) 'Hume's basing of property rights on convention is both a strength and a weakness: a strength because the rules of property can have no other source, a weakness because justice in property distribution cannot be a matter of convention.' Discuss.
6. EITHER (a) Why does Rousseau distinguish the general will from the will of all? How clear and illuminating is this distinction?
- OR (b) 'Obedience to the law prescribed to oneself is liberty.' What are Rousseau's grounds for affirming this claim, and are these grounds sound?
7. EITHER (a) 'The state is the actuality of the ethical idea.' Discuss.
- OR (b) How might a charitable reader of Hegel rebut Bertrand Russell's claim that 'What Hegel means by "freedom" is no more than the right to obey the police'?
- 8.\* EITHER (a) Is a belief in the inevitability of communism consistent with the workers' motivation to bring about the revolution?
- OR (b) 'Marx thought capitalism was unjust, but he did not think that he thought so' (Cohen). Discuss.
9. EITHER (a) To what extent, according to Mill, may the state coerce individuals to come to the assistance of others? Is this position consistent with Mill's harm principle? Is the position consistent with his principle of utility?

**TURN OVER**

- OR (b) Why does Mill claim that the state may not criminalize behaviour in order to prevent people from doing harm to themselves? Are his arguments sound?

## SECTION B

10. EITHER (a) 'Although it is essential to Rawls's case for his liberty principle that the parties in the original position do not know their particular conceptions of the good, Rawls does not have good grounds to deprive the parties of such knowledge.' Discuss.

- OR (b) 'Although he fails to show that this principle would be chosen in the original position, Rawls nevertheless provides a powerful case for the difference principle.' Discuss.

11. Explain Rawls's distinction between political and comprehensive liberalism. Are these genuinely distinct positions?

12. 'Principles of justice do not apply to the decisions of economic agents in daily life, since their behaviour occurs within, and does not determine, the basic structure of society.' Discuss.

13. Is redistributive taxation on a par with forced labour?

14. EITHER (a) Are there obligations of egalitarian justice that extend beyond the boundaries of states? If there are, are they triggered only when individuals are involved in certain kinds of social interaction?

- OR (b) Does Rawls provide convincing argument in *Law of Peoples* for not extending his two principles of justice to the international order?

15. EITHER (a) 'The value of democracy resides not in the quality of the decisions made by democracies, but in the transformation of the character of the citizens included in the democratic process.' Discuss

- OR (b) Explain and assess the criticism that representative democracy fails to be democratic.

16. EITHER (a) What is the 'levelling down' objection to equality? Can this objection be answered?

- OR (b) What are the most important objections to 'luck egalitarianism'? How convincing are they?

**TURN OVER**

17. EITHER (a) Is the absence of humanly imposed impediments to possible action sufficient for political liberty? Is it necessary?

OR (b) In what sense, if any, do credible threats reduce freedom?

18. Are rights side-constraints, or should their violations be minimized?

19. Does the 'principle of fairness' provide an adequate account of political obligation?

20. 'The state should not recognize and support same-sex marriage because it should not recognize and support marriage in any form.' Discuss.

21. What is Communitarianism? Give an account of its strengths and weaknesses.

**END OF PAPER**