

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

BA EXAMINATION 2006

for Internal Students

This paper is also taken by Combined Studies Students

PHILOSOPHY

3.(a) Ethics

Answer THREE questions, at least ONE from EACH section. Candidates taking optional paper (n) Philosophy of Kant may NOT attempt question 17, marked with an asterisk. Avoid overlap in your answers.

SECTION A

1. EITHER (a) Is something's being dangerous an objective feature of that thing? What does your answer suggest about our understanding of moral properties?

OR (b) Is moral discourse committed to objectivism? If so, is this an error?
2. Are moral dilemmas more like conflicts of desire than like conflicts of belief? What consequences does your answer have for moral cognitivism?
3. 'Surely if murder is wrong, it ought to be morally permissible to commit one murder to prevent two.' Discuss.
4. 'Virtues are, in some general way, beneficial. Human beings do not get on well without them' (Foot). But must a virtue benefit its possessor?
5. Is consequentialism ultimately self-defeating?
6. Are normative reasons reducible to motivating reasons?
7. If one is to show equal concern for all, must one give each person an equal chance of being saved from death rather than always save the greater number?
8. Is the moral obligatoriness of an action itself a reason for performing it?
9. What is moral relativism? Why be a moral relativist?

TURN OVER

10. Are moral judgements irreducibly particular?
11. 'Selfishness is not an action but a character trait; hence it can never be morally wrong.' Discuss.
12. What is freedom of the will and how is it related to moral responsibility?

SECTION B

13. EITHER (a) 'It is worse to do than to suffer wrong.' Discuss with reference either to the early Platonic dialogues or to the *Republic*.
- OR (b) What conception of ethical understanding and expertise is conveyed in Plato's *Republic*?
14. EITHER (a) Does Aristotle's account of weakness of will (*akrasia*) amount to an agreement with Socrates' claim that genuine weakness of will is impossible?
- OR (b) 'According to Aristotle, humans must perform their function well to be happy. The function of humans is to be rational; and the highest use of reason is philosophy. Therefore only philosophers are happy.' Discuss.
15. EITHER (a) What is Aquinas's theory of the relation between virtue and moral law? Is it defensible?
- OR (b) Evaluate Scotus's theory of the connection between the virtues.
- OR (c) Does Ockham think that we should obey God because to do so is reasonable, or that we should act reasonably because to do so is to obey God? How defensible is his view?
16. EITHER (a) Is Hume correct to claim that sympathy is the natural foundation of morality?
- OR (b) Explain and assess Hume's view of practical rationality.
- 17.* EITHER (a) What is the role of freedom in Kant's account of morality?
- OR (b) Does Kant's conception of morality accord with ordinary intuitions about morality?
18. EITHER (a) Is Mill's distinction between higher and lower pleasures defensible?
- OR (b) Does Mill successfully defend his claim that we desire nothing besides happiness?

END OF PAPER