KAZAN STATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY

Department of History, Philosophy, and Sociology

Discipline: “Philosophy”

Specialization: Medical care

Examination card 3

1. Why is the definition of philosophy as love of wisdom not satisfactory?

2. What constitutes each thing according to Aristotle?

3. Do you agree that the existence of god is necessary to back up the moral law?

Criteria for evaluation of answers

90-100 баллов (excellent) clearly formulated personal position, combination of philosophical argumentation with textual information, correct use of scientific terminology, clear logical structure of the answer.

80-89 баллов (good) clearly formulated personal position, predominance of personal reflection over philosophical argumentation and textual information, the correct use of scientific terminology, clear logical structure of the work with insignificant faults

70-79 баллов (satisfactory) implicitly formulated personal position, predominance of personal reflection over philosophical argumentation and textual information, correct use of scientific terminology, implicit logic of work

69 and less (unsatisfactory) implicitly formulated personal position, or lack of it, or a high share of borrowings, a lack of philosophical reasoning and terminology, implicit logic of work

1. Why is the definition of philosophy as love of wisdom not satisfactory?

2. What constitutes each thing according to Aristotle?

3. Do you agree that the existence of god is necessary to back up the moral law?

1. According to Aristotle, philosophy is the love of a particular kind of wisdom. In the Greek language three different words were available for Aristotle to use in his understanding of wisdom. There was technical wisdom, the kind of ‘know-how’ used by a craftsman. There was practical wisdom, an understanding of how to live life well and ethically. And, for Aristotle, there was a wisdom that brought people closer to divine rationality, ‘sophia’. This wisdom was for thinking about questions such as the nature of the divine, ethics or the function of the state.

As you say, the word philosophy is literally a love of wisdom but wisdom, on Aristotle’s understanding, is broader than the Greek word for it used in ‘philosophy’. During the Enlightenment especially, wisdom became imprisoned within a concept of reason from which it is gradually breaking free. Although I’m not a philosopher, from what I read, many contemporary philosophers are writing about practical matters as much as about those which are primarily for intellectual debate.

Wisdom has been defined largely in terms of knowledge, whether knowing information or knowing how to do a thing. The maxim, ‘Knowledge is knowing that tomato is a fruit; wisdom is knowing not to put it in a fruit salad’, still defines wisdom as a form of knowledge. Certainly knowledge is an important aspect of any definition of wisdom as is knowing how to make good decisions and how to flourish in life.

Personally I think it is important to add to knowledge based definitions of wisdom in two ways. First, I think wisdom involves a passion for life, not just for our own well being and success but for the well being of others and the world. As Cornell West has expressed it, wisdom involves an erotic relationship with the world, a desire to know and to love. Beyond that, I think that wisdom involves a relationship with the transcendent, whether with ultimate questions such as meaning and purpose or with the divine. Although this aspect of wisdom has fallen out of favour in secular societies, it has been an aspect of wisdom for thousands of years and has much to teach us, not least about the need for humility in the face of human limitations.

2.Aristotle's Categories is a singularly important work of philosophy. It not only presents the backbone of Aristotle's own philosophical theorizing, but has exerted an unparalleled influence on the systems of many of the greatest philosophers in the western tradition. The set of doctrines in the Categories, which I will henceforth call categorialism, provides the framework of inquiry for a wide variety of Aristotle's philosophical investigations, ranging from his discussions of time and change in the Physics, to the science of being qua being in the Metaphysics, and even extending to his rejection of Platonic ethics in the Nicomachean Ethics. Looking beyond his own works, Aristotle's categorialism has engaged the attention of such diverse philosophers as Plotinus, Porphyry, Aquinas, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Brentano and Heidegger (to mention just a few), who have variously embraced, defended, modified or rejected its central contentions. All, in their different ways, have thought it necessary to come to terms with features of Aristotle's categorial scheme.

Plainly, the enterprise of categorialism inaugurated by Aristotle runs deep in the philosophical psyche. Even so, despite its wide-reaching influence — and, indeed owing to that influence — any attempt to describe categorialism faces a significant difficulty: experts disagree on many of its most important and fundamental aspects. Each of the following questions has received markedly different answers from highly respected scholars and philosophers. What do the categories classify? What theory of predication underlies Aristotle's scheme? What is the relationship between categorialism and hylemorphism, Aristotle's other major ontological theory? Where does matter fit, if at all, in the categorial scheme? When did Aristotle write the Categories? Did Aristotle write the Categories? Is the list of kinds in the Categories Aristotle's considered list, or does he modify his views elsewhere? Is Aristotle's view of substance in the Categories consistent with his view of substance in the Metaphysics? Is there some method that Aristotle used in order to generate his list of categories? Is Aristotle's categorialism philosophically defensible in whole or in part? If only in part, which part of categorialism is philosophically defensible?

Given the divergence of expert opinion about even the most basic aspects of Aristotle's Categories, it is inevitable that an attempt to give a neutral account of the basic positions it contains will be seen as wrong headed, perhaps drastically so, by some scholar or other. One could attempt to address this problem by commenting on every scholarly debate and opinion; but such a project would fail to bring to life the most striking features of Aristotelian categorialism. In what follows, therefore, I shall take a different route. I first present a natural, though perhaps overly simplified, interpretation of the main structures in Aristotle's categorial scheme, while pausing en route to note some especially controversial points. I then go on to discuss one important scholarly and philosophical debate about the categories, namely the question of whether there is some systematic procedure by which Aristotle generated his famous list. The debate is of interest in large part because it concerns one of the most fundamental metaphysical topics: what is the correct system of categories? I am not ultimately concerned to present the correct interpretation of Aristotle's Categories. Rather, I only hope to provide a useful introduction to the content of this endlessly fascinating work.

3.Moral arguments for God’s existence form a diverse family of arguments that reason from some feature of morality or the moral life to the existence of God, usually understood as a morally good creator of the universe. Moral arguments are both important and interesting. They are interesting because evaluating their soundness requires attention to practically every important philosophical issue dealt with in metaethics. They are important because of their prominence in popular apologetic arguments for religious belief. Evidence for this can be found in the amazing popularity of C. S. Lewis’s Mere Christianity (1952), which is almost certainly the best-selling book of apologetics in the twentieth century, and which begins with a moral argument for God’s existence. Many ordinary people regard religion as in some way providing a basis or foundation for morality. This fact might seem to favor religious arguments for morality rather than moral arguments for religious belief, but if someone believes that morality is in some way “objective” or “real,” and that this moral reality requires explanation, moral arguments for God’s reality naturally suggest themselves. The apparent connection between morality and religion appears to many people to support the claim that moral truths require a religious foundation, or can best be explained by God’s existence, or some qualities or actions of God.

After some general comments about theistic arguments and a brief history of moral arguments, this essay will discuss several different forms of the moral argument. A major distinction is that between moral arguments that are theoretical in nature and practical or pragmatic arguments. The former are best thought of as arguments that begin with alleged moral facts and argue that God is necessary to explain those facts, or at least that God provides a better explanation of them than secular accounts can offer. The latter typically begin with claims about some good or end that morality requires and argue that this end is not attainable unless God exists. Whether this distinction is hard and fast will be one of the questions to be discussed, as some argue that practical arguments by themselves cannot be the basis of rational belief. To meet such concerns practical arguments may have to include a theoretical dimension as well.