

Presidency University
Department of Philosophy
Admission Test for B.A.(Honours) 1st Semester, 2012

Time-2 Hrs.

F.M.- 100

Answer Q. No. 1 & 2 in English and the rest either in English or in Bengali.

1. Read carefully the passage given below and answer the following questions in your own language as far as practicable:

Philosophy in the field of religion is concerned, as always, with the justification of belief by means of argument.

The word "religion" itself needs clarification. A belief in God does not by itself constitute a religion: as the word is commonly used, the belief must be institutionalized, and contained in the doctrines of a religious body, such as a church or synagogue. Moreover, according to some definitions, at any rate, religion *need* not involve belief in a God. Buddhism is usually considered to be a religion, but it contains no belief in a God such as is clearly found in Judaism and Christianity. The word "religion" indeed has been stretched almost beyond recognition: some have said that belief in the fundamental goodness of man is a religion, and that an ideology such as communism is (or can be) a religion, because it is the highest value to those who hold it. In this sense, one's religion is whatever value one holds highest in life, or whatever is one's ultimate concern. Religion has even been defined as "what one does with his leisure time". In these loose senses, everyone has a religion, since everyone has something he values highly and everyone does something with his leisure time. But if the meaning of the word is stretched so far, it is doubtful whether it any longer serves a useful purpose, and it may be positively misleading: "Everyone has a religion," someone may say, but this does not mean that everyone believes in God, but merely that everyone has some ideals. Instead of saying that communism *is* a religion, it would be preferable to say that communism has some features *in common with* religion: it involves beliefs about many things, amounting to a pervasive world-view; it evokes fierce loyalties, being something that people die for (and against); and so on. It would be pointless, as well as misleading, to define "religion" in such a loose way that the statement "Everyone has a religion" becomes true by definition.

Whether or not religion always involves belief in God, we are led next to the question "What kind of belief is belief in God?" What does the word "God" mean? There is an enormous range of things that people have meant by "God" (or "gods"). At the very least, we can say that belief in God is belief in some kind of *supernatural* being: supernatural not in the literal sense of being *above* nature but in the sense of being *other than or more than* the totality of things and processes to be found in the physical universe (including human minds). Sometimes it is held that God and nature are identical; but if this were so, the word "God" would be superfluous and the word "nature" would suffice alone. Whatever is to be called God, it is not nature; it must be something beyond the totality of natural processes.

But the term "supernatural" in turn calls for clarification. God is thought to be at least a *mind*, an intelligence capable of purposive behavior. God's intelligence need not be infinite, as Christianity holds: it might indeed be quite limited, like that of many of the Greek gods. But in addition to intelligence, God must possess a certain *power*; the power need not be infinite, as in the God of Christianity, but there must be enough to execute at least some of his purposes. Usually the power must be greater than human power-it would include the power to create matter (but not in the ancient Greek religion), the power to suspend laws of nature, the power to intervene in the course of events (even if this power is not always exercised), sometimes the power to create a world-power to do things which are superhuman (that is, which no human being can do). He may or may not also be benevolent: some gods are conceived as being evil in the extreme, such as those who demand human sacrifices or demand the

plunder of entire notions to appease their wrath. In some religions, God has not only a mind but a physical body, like Zeus on Olympus, though in other religions God is a mind unattached to any physical body—a “pure spirit”, without taint of matter.

- A. Clarify the meaning of “religion”. 5
- B. When the definition of religion becomes pointless? 5
- C. What is the meaning of “supernatural” in the present context? 5
- D. Does religion always involve belief in God? 3
- E. Is there any difference philosophy and religion? Justify your answer. 5
- F. Fill in the blank: “Philosophy in the field of religion” refers to the branch of philosophy known as _____ . 2

2. Give a summary of the following passage in your own words 25

The capacity to stand erect has given our body its freedom of posture, making it easy for us to turn on all sides and realize ourselves at the centre of things. Physically, it symbolizes the fact that while animals have for their progress the prolongation of a narrow line Man has the enlargement of a circle. As a centre he finds his meaning in a wide perspective, and realizes himself in the magnitude of his circumference.

As one freedom leads to another, Man’s eyesight also found a wider scope. I do not mean any enhancement of its physical power, which in many predatory animals has a better power of adjustment to light. But from the higher vantage of our physical watch-tower we have gained our *view*, which is not merely information about the location of things but their interrelation and their unity.

But the best means of the expression of his physical freedom gained by Man in his vertical position is through the emancipation of his hands. In our bodily organization these have attained the highest dignity for their skill, their grace, their useful activities, as well as for those that are above all uses. They are the most detached of all our limbs. Once they had their menial vocation as our carriers, but raised from their position as *shudras*, they at once attained responsible status as our helpers. When instead of keeping them underneath us we offered them their place at our side, they revealed capacities that helped us to cross the boundaries of animal nature.

This freedom of view and freedom of action have been accompanied by an analogous mental freedom in Man through his imagination, which is the most distinctly human of all our faculties. It is there to help a creature who has been left unfinished by his designer, undraped, undecorated, unarmoured and without weapons, and, what is worse, ridden by a Mind whose energies for the most part are not tamed and tempered into some difficult ideal of completeness upon a background which is bare. Like all artists he has the freedom to make mistakes, to launch into desperate adventures contradicting and torturing his psychology or physiological normality. This freedom is a divine gift, lent to the mortals who are untutored and undisciplined; and therefore the path of their creative progress is strewn with debris of devastation, and stages of their perfection haunted by apparitions of startling deformities. But, all the same, the very training of creation ever makes clear an aim which cannot be in any isolated freak of an individual mind or in that which is only limited to the strictly necessary.

3. Elucidate: The role of social environment in school education (10 sentences) 20

