

Department of Humanities and Social Science
Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay

Ph.D. Entrance Examination (Philosophy)

Total Marks: 70

Duration: 3 hours (9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.)

Note: Attempt all the sections.

Section A:

Please read the two passages carefully and answer all of the questions that follow each of the passages.

Attempt all of the questions in this section. [14 + 14 = 28 marks]

(B) Passage from the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* 25: 17-18

It is not to be asserted that the Buddha exists beyond cessation, nor “does not exist” nor “both exists and does not exist,” nor “neither exists nor does not exist” - none of these is to be asserted (*Param nirodhād bhagavān bhavatīty eva nājyate; na bhavaty ubhayaṃ ceti nōbhayaṃ ceti nājyate*). Indeed, it is not to be asserted that “the Buddha exists while remaining [in this world],” nor “does not exist” nor “both exists and does not exist,” nor “neither exists nor does not exist”—none of these is to be asserted (*Tiṣṭhamāno 'pi bhagavān bhavatīty eva nājyate; na bhavaty ubhayaṃ ceti nōbhayaṃ ceti nājyate*).

Questions for the above Passage:

Some of the central expositions of Nāgārjuna appear to be bound up with *catuṣkoṭi* (tetralemma) of the Buddhist texts:

1. Can you explain the logical form of Nāgārjuna's *catuṣkoṭi*?
2. With what purpose and in what manner was this “logical apparatus” employed by Nāgārjuna towards the exposition of his philosophy?

Q. A2

Passage from Kant's *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* [14 marks]

In the natural predispositions of an organized being, i.e., a being arranged purposively for life, we assume as a principle that no instrument is to be encountered in it for any end except that which is the most suitable to and appropriate for it. Now if, in a being that has reason and a will, its preservation, its welfare—in a word, its happiness—were the real end of nature, then nature would have hit on a very bad arrangement in appointing reason in this creature to accomplish the aim. For all the actions it has to execute toward this aim, and the entire rule of its conduct, would be prescribed to it much more precisely through instinct, and that end could be obtained far more safely through it than could ever happen through reason; and if, over and above this, reason were imparted to the favored creature, it would have served it only to make it consider the happy

predisposition of its nature, to admire it, to rejoice in it, and to make it grateful to the beneficent cause of it, but not to subject its faculty of desire to that weak and deceptive guidance, and meddle in the aim of nature; in a word, nature would have prevented reason from breaking out into practical use and from having the presumption, with its weak insight, to think out for itself the project of happiness and the means of attaining it; nature would have taken over the choice not only of the ends but also of the means, and with wise provision would have entrusted both solely to instinct...

In fact we also find that the more a cultivated reason gives itself over to the aim of enjoying life and happiness, the further the human being falls short of true contentment; from this arises in many, and indeed in those most practiced in the cultivated use of reason, if only they are sincere enough to admit it, a certain degree of misology, i.e., hatred of reason; for after reckoning all the advantages they draw, I do not say from the invention of all the arts of common luxury, but even from the sciences (which also seem to them in the end to be a luxury of the understanding), they nevertheless find that they have in fact only brought more hardship down on their shoulders than they have gained in happiness, and on this account in the end they sooner envy than despise human beings of the more common stamp, who are closer to the guidance of mere natural instinct and do not permit their reason much influence over their deeds and omissions.

[Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, edited and translated Allen W. Wood (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002) 10-12.]

Questions for the above Passage:

1. Why, according to Kant, can happiness not be the ultimate end of human nature? [Outline the main premises of Kant's argument clearly] [5]
2. Why does Kant think that human reason is unfit to bring about happiness? [4]
3. Critically evaluate Kant's argument regarding the unfitness of human reason as a means to bring about happiness. [5]

Section B

Attempt *any 3* of the **6** following questions: [14 + 14 + 14 = 42 marks]

- B1. Elaborate upon Quine's critique of the 'analytic-synthetic' distinction.
- B1. Critically discuss Husserl's method of the 'transcendental reduction' in the light of the work of any other phenomenologist with whom you are familiar.
- B2. Critically examine the doctrine of *anātmavāda* in the light of the Vedantic notion of *ātman*.
- B3. What is qualia? Explain whether or not it can be scientifically explained.
- B4. How do we attribute truth to beliefs? Does the claim that a belief is true if and only if it corresponds to the facts exhaust the possibility of truth ascriptions?
- B5. Discuss Lakatos' 'research program' as a critique of Kuhn's notion of 'paradigm shift' in science.
- B6. Show how Hans-Georg Gadamer's notion of the "fusion of horizons" can make sense of the way we understand ancient texts, whose authors and way of life are no more.