I will be away and it will be difficult to make any change. Let nothing happen to you. We are expecting you dead or alive.

Yours in Christ,
[signed]
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The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

Qualifying Examination Answers,
History of Philosophy

24 February 1954
[Boston, Mass.]

Just before his visit to Detroit and Lansing, King took this qualifying examination. He answered six of the seven questions, per instructions. DeWolf wrote on the examination: "Graded independently by Dewolf & Schilling. When notes were compared it was found both had arrived at the mark of A - . Both regarded the work as very good to excellent, excepting only Question #3. Let's discuss that some time."

1. State the problems which were central in the attention of the following schools of Greek philosophy and show how these problems were related to each other: 1) School of Miletus; 2) Pythagorean School; 3) Eleatic School; and 4) the Atomists.

1. In the School of Miletus the central problem was the problem of substance. This school was interested in discovering the one stuff which gave rise to all other stuff. In other words they were interested in knowing what is the one stuff which is dependent on nothing else, but upon which everything else is dependent.

   The central problem in the Pythagorean school was the problem of number. The Pythagoreans noticed proportion, relation, order, and harmony in the world. They reasoned that none of these could not exist without number. So for them number became the ultimate reality in the universe. The clue to the meaning of all reality was found in number.

   The central problem in the Eleatic School was the problem of Change and Identity. On the one hand they noticed that things seem to change. But how can a thing change into something else? How can a thing both be and not be at the same time? How can being come from non-being? Or how can thought even conceive of non-being? All of these questions grew out of the the underlying problem that confronted the Eleatics.
They answered the problem by affirming that only the One underived
Being exist. Change, motion, and the many are all illusions.

The Atomists were also confronted with the problem of change and
Identity. On the one hand they noticed with the Eleatics that ultimate
reality must be unchangeable. But on the other hand, they noticed with
Heraclitus the reality of change. So they were confronted with the
problem of determining which is real, permanence or change. They end up
affirming the reality of both. In a real sense the Atomists form the syn-
thesis to the problem of change and identity. The thesis is set forth
by the Eleatics who affirm that “All is One.” The antithesis is set forth by
Heraclitus who affirms that “All is change.” The synthesis is set forth
by the Atomists who affirm that with the Eleatics that there can be no
absolute change, but agree with Heraclitus in declaring that there is rela-
tive change.

It is not difficult to see how each of these problems is related to each
other. For an instance as soon as one solves the problem of substance, he
is confronted with the Pythagorean problem of determining whether
this underlying reality is form (number) or matter. In other words, he is
confronted with the problem of whether quality can be reduced to quan-
tity or quantity to quality.

We can also see how both of these problems are related to the problem
of change and identity. After one has determined the essence of the
underlying reality of the universe, he is confronted with the problem of
explaining how the world of multiplicity arose from the One substance.
And then the question arises, how is the one related to the many, and
the further question, is reality One or many? If it is one, how explain
the many? If it is many, how explain the mind’s demand for unity.

All of the problem of early Greek philosophy are closely cemented to-
gether. It is when we come to the great systematizers, Plato and Aristotle,
that we get a treatment of all of these problem in their relation to each
other Plato, in his theory of ideas, for an instance brings these problems
together. The ideas are substance, they are also forms and they are one
amid the many.

2. What were Aristotle’s chief criticisms of Plato’s thought? Evaluate them.

2. Aristotle’s chief criticisms of Plato’s thought develope around the theory
of Ideas. We many briefly list some of these criticisms:

(1) the Ideas do not explain things. Granted, says Aristotle that whiten-
ness exist; this still does explain white things.

(2) The theory of Ideas does not explain the relation of the Ideas to
particular things. It is true, says Aristotle, that Plato attempts to
explain with such words as “participation” and imitation, but these
are mere poetic metaphors.

(3) The Ideas do not explain motion in things. How can motionless
unchangeable Ideas give motion to particular things.

(4) The most emphatic argument that Aristotle give against Plato’s
theory of Ideas is that they are set forth as the essence of things, and yet are separated from things. How can the essence of a thing be separated from the thing?

This forms the basis of Aristotle's philosophy. The universal does not exist, as Plato said, in some transcendent realm, but it exist in the particular. Matter and form, the universal and particular exist together. The universal in and of itself is not substance. Substance is the unity of both the universal and the particular. From this we can see that Plato adheres to a transcendental teleology and Aristotle adheres to an immanent teleology.

We can also see a great difference between the two men in the realm of psychology. Plato felt that the soul had a sort of unnatural union with the body. The body was the prison of the soul. Aristotle disagreed totally with Plato at this point. For him the body and the soul were joined indisolubly together. The soul, for Aristotle, is the form or actuality of a body with the potentiality for life.

Many of Aristotle's criticisms against Plato are warrented and they have meant much to the growth of philosophy. But on the other hand, Aristotle seems unfair to Plato. It seems that there are two Platonic dialogues that Aristotle completely ignored, viz., the Parmenides and the Timaeus. In the former Plato raises many of the same criticisms of himself that Aristotle raises against him later.

Aristotle [strikeout illegible] affirms that Plato only recognized two of the causes, viz., material and formal cause. But it seems certain to me that Plato recognized clearly final cause in his idea of the Good. Also it seems that in his positing of the Demiurge in the Timaeus he set forth efficient cause. In this dialogue Plato seems to affirm that there are three eternal and uncreated realities, (1) the Ideas, (2) the Demiurge (God), and the Recepticle. If this is the case the relation of Ideas to things and the problem of motion are explained by the work of the Demiurge. This Aristotle completely overlooked.

3. What was the main problem of the medieval Schoolmen? Evaluate its underlying presuppositions and purpose.

3. The most important problem confronting the medieval Schoolmen was the problem of the universal and particular or the problem that developed as a result around nominalism and realism. The former affirmed that the universal is a mere name. The latter affirmed that the universal is real and exist independent of the particular. Some Schoolmen such as Roscellinus and William of Occam took sides with nominalism. Others, like Anselm and William of Chapeaux took the realistic position. The problem continued through the middle ages. A synthesis was reached in
the thinking of Abelard. According to Abelard universals cannot be things (realisms), but just as little can they be words (nominalism). The universal is a concept (conceptualism) (1) The generic term refers to a class of [strikeout illegible] resembling particulars. (2) The object of a concept is a universal essence pervading the particular.

It is not difficult to see why this problem was basic for the Schoolmen, particularly for the Church. Many of the dogma of the Church, such as transubstantiation and original sin were based on the validity of the doctrine of universalism. Also the whole idea of the Church universal was based on it.

The other main problem of the Schoolmen was that of reconciling element which had previously been in conflict, such as nature and grace, reason and revelation, philosophy and theology. This was the great medieval synthesis. They wanted to prove that the doctrines of the Church were grounded in reason. So the Schoolmen used philosophy to validate or rather substantiate the doctrine of the Church. Philosophy became the handmaiden of theology.

[4. Trace the development of the doctrine concerning the object of knowledge from Locke to Berkeley to Hume to Kant.]

4. Locke came on the scene rejecting innate ideas and affirming that the mind at birth is like a blank sheet of paper. How then does knowledge arise? It arises, Locke answers, through experience. Ideas come only through sensation and reflection. The ideas as they first enter the mind are simple ideas. The mind is passive in receiving simple ideas. On the other hand the mind through its powers to abstract, compare, and combind, forms simple ideas into complex ideas.

Now the external object has the power to produce certain ideas in us. This power Locke refers to as quality. Some of these qualities are inherent in the objects themselves. These are original or primary qualities. The include such things as extension, shape, and motion. Some of the other qualities do not exist in the object, but have the power to produce sensations in us through the primary qualities. Such qualities as color, smell and taste come under this class.

So we can see that for Locke the object of knowledge along with the primary qualities have objective existence outside of mind. Only the secondary qualities are subjective.

Berkeley comes on the scene affirming that we have no right to posit the existence of anything but ideas and minds that perceive them. We gain nothing else in experience. He goes on to argue that primary qualities are just as subjective as secondary qualities. The object of knowledge is only our idea and there is no experiential evidence for the existence of a material substrate in which qualities inhere. What then is the cause of our sensations? It is mind itself. So he came to his famous Esse est percipi
Hume came on the scene and came empiricism to its logical conclusion. Since we experience only our impressions and ideas we have no right to affirm the existence of anything besides that. No only is there no evidence for material substance, but there is no evidence for mental substance. Moreover there is no evidence in experience for cause and effect. All that we experience is a series of passing impressions. To affirm the existence of substance or causality is a mere fiction of the imagination. So Hume ends up rejecting alike the materialism of Hobbes, the dualism of Descarte and Locke, and the mentalism of Berkeley.

Kant comes on the scene attempting to save philosophy from the skepticism which Hume had left it in. He goes on to show that Hume’s weakness was his failure to see the creative activity of mind. Kant agrees with the empiricist in affirming that all knowledge begins with experience. But he transcends them by affirming that all knowledge is not derived from experience. Experience only furnishes the bricks, but it is mind the furnishes the cement. Kant divides the faculty of knowing into three subordinate faculties, Sensibility, Understanding, and Reason. It is the first two, through the forms of time and space and the categories of thought, that constitute knowledge. So Kant would say that Hume is wrong for looking for causality and substance in the external world. There are categories of the understanding which are necessary presuppositions for experience.

So for Kant sensations come to us as a blind manifold. Sensibility then gives it meaning through the forms of time and space. But we still don’t have knowledge. Percepts must be thought understood and conceived. So the categories enter to give percept meaning.

In this whole analysis Kant is stressing the creative activity of the mind. The phenomenal world is constructed by the a priori forms of the mind synthesizing or giving meaning to the disconnected fragments of sensations.

Kant ends up with a noble mediation between continental rationalism and British empiricism.

5. Summarize and criticize the ethics of Fichte.

Fichte found his theory of right upon the freedom of individuals in their external relations with one another. An individual can realize his freedom only in a world of material things and of persons. It follows that each individual must recognize the equal right of others.

In contrast to the external relations between individuals, ethics for Fichte deals with the internal conflict which arises within each person between his natural impulse for self preservation and pleasure, and his rational impulse to secure freedom through conformity to the moral law. The two impulses must be reconciled in such a way that rational freedom will prevail and the individual will do his duty. Fichte affirms that this
cannot be done in time. The duty confronting man is infinite. Therefore he needs infinite time or immortality to complete it.

Fichte goes on the affirm that every individual has been created for a special vocation. It is the job of every person to discover this vocation and set out to do it with his whole self. The Ego has posited the Non-ego in order that man might fulfill his duty.

Just as every individual has been called for some vocation, so have nations been called for certain vocations.

There is something quite sublime about this ethical system of Fichte. To see that the external world exist for persons and as an outlet for their fulfillment of duty is quite lofty. Also his stress on freedom is to be accepted, along with his emphasis on the value of persons. However there is a nationalistic emphasis in Fichte's system which can hardly be accepted. If persons are of supreme worth and the world is the material of duty, it must transcend all nationalistic bounderies.

[6. What is the relation between the individual and the larger whole to which he belongs according to Hegel? Discuss critically.]

[7. What does Schopenhauer mean by will? By idea? How are will and idea related in his philosophy?]

7. When Schopenhauer speaks of the world as will he is not speaking merely of conscious volitions, but he is also speaking of subconscious and unconscious volition. In other words, he is speaking of the whole striving and conative side of nature. This will is blind and purposeless. It is moving to no direct end.

Schopenhauer speaks of will as the thing in itself (Ding an Sich). This will that he speaks of as thing in itself is not each individual will, but the universal will before it becomes individuated into particular will. The universal will is free and undetermined. Individuals wills are determined and derived.

When Schopenhauer speaks of the world as Idea he is using idea in the same sense as Berkeley use it, i.e. as sensation. There is no underlying material substratum in the world. “The world is my idea” There is no object without a subject.”

The idea for Schopenhauer represents the outer side of reality. Will represents the inner side. It is true that all the world is idea (idealism). But the idea is the manifestation of will. (voluntarism). So Schopenhauer is a Voluntaristic Idealist. The world is idea, but idea is in the final analysis a manifestation of will. Idea is only the outer side of reality. Will is the inner and basic side. The body and the whole external world, which are really ones ideas, are the objectification of will. The eye is an objectification of the desire to see. The foot is an objectification of the desire to walk. The whole universe, including ideas, can be explained in terms of the endless striving of blind will.