

FINAL EXAMINATION

Directions: In carefully written essay fashion, answer the following questions as directed. Potentially, each answer is worth 30 points.

I. Answer one of the following:

- a) What did Augustine mean when he said that "the Platonists know the goal but not the way"? How does he distinguish his own stance from the "Platonic" position? Do you think Augustine is a "Gnostic"?
- b) Does the relation between religion and society in the western world entail the kinds of distinctions Augustine develops in his "tale of two cities"? If not, how would you criticize Augustine's approach? If so, upon what basis can the fundamental distinctions be made?

II. Answer one of the following:

- a) What does John Dewey mean when he asserts that "reality is experience" and when he equates the true with the workable? Are those assertions implicit in his distinction between religion, a religion, and the religious? Discuss.
- b) Develop John Dewey's distinction between "reaction" and "response", and indicate the ways in which the organism's interaction with the environment can be called "religious".

III. Answer one of the following:

- a) Reinhold Niebuhr has been regarded as one whose purposes involve the mediation of basic tensions. How does he attempt to balance forces, for example, in one or both of the following contexts: 1) the relationship between the individual and society; 2) the relationship between opposing religious traditions in America? Do you think his efforts are, or can be, successful in either or both instances?
- b) Why is man "a problem for himself" according to Reinhold Niebuhr? Why does Niebuhr criticize the response of liberalistic naturalism to the problem? Discuss.

IV. Answer two of the following:

- a) Which of the writers assigned (or referred to) during the semester, do you think, has made the most significant advance in penetrating the problem of the relation between religion and society? Why? List some of the strengths of his position with respect to that problem. What, if any, are some of his weaknesses?
- b) Ethical theorists are concerned about the apparent fluctuation or fluidity of values in contemporary culture. Would John Dewey find such fluidity to be troublesome? Would Augustine? Compare and contrast Augustine and Dewey on the status of ideals.
- c) H. Richard Niebuhr cites Bronislaw Malinowski's definition of culture with apparent approval: culture is the artificial secondary environment which man superimposes on the natural, comprising languages, habits, ideas, customs, social organization, etc. Can this definition of culture or society be taken seriously? If not, why not? If so, why is culture or society described as a "secondary environment" which is "superimposed"? If society is "secondary", what is "primary"?