

PHILOSOPHY TRIPOS Part II

Friday 22 May 2015

09.00 – 12.00

Paper 5

PHILOSOPHY IN THE LONG MIDDLE AGES

*Answer **three** questions, including at least one from each section. You are permitted to write on an author in section B even if you have discussed a passage by him in section A, but you must not repeat material. Write the number of the question at the beginning of each answer. If you are answering an either/or question, indicate the letter as well.*

STATIONERY REQUIREMENTS

20 Page Answer book x 1

Rough Work Pad

You may not start to read the questions printed on the subsequent pages of this question paper until instructed that you may do so by the Invigilator

SECTION A

1. Identify each of the passages below, explain the part it plays in the argument of the text from which it is taken and supply whatever background material and interpretative comments a reader now would need in order to understand its full significance. You may also compare the two passages. Passages (a) and (b) – on separate sheet
2. Identify each of the passages below, explain the part it plays in the argument of the text from which it is taken and supply whatever background material and interpretative comments a reader now would need in order to understand its full significance. You may also compare the two passages. Passages (c) and (d) – on separate sheet

SECTION B

3. How well does Boethius's solution meet the problems raised about universals in the argument he takes from Alexander of Aphrodisias?
4. EITHER (a) explain Abelard's doubts about how universal words signify and assess how convincingly he replies to those doubts

OR (b) explain Abelard's doubts about the understandings produced by universal words and assess how convincingly he replies to those doubts.
5. 'Horseness has a definition that is not in need of the definition of universality, but is [something] to which universality accidentally occurs. For, in itself, it is nothing at all except horseness; for, in itself, it is neither one nor many ...' Assess how Avicenna uses the idea proposed here to solve the Problem of Universals.
6. EITHER (a) Explain what Scotus means by a 'formal distinction' and what is its role in his theory of universals,

OR (b) Why does Scotus think that we must posit less-than-numerical unity?
7. What is Ockham's most powerful objection to Scotus's theory of universals? Would Scotus be able to answer it?
8. EITHER (a) How does Locke distinguish between real and nominal essence? Does this distinction allow him to take a new approach to the Problem of Universals?

OR (b) Contrast Locke's treatment of universals with that of either Ockham or Abelard.

9. How well does Averroes's *Decisive Treatise* explain the way in which philosophical demonstration sometimes contradicts the Quran, and yet 'truth does not contradict truth'?
10. Are Maimonides's reasons for believing that the world had a beginning as strong as he says they are?
11. 'Boethius of Dacia avoids a contradiction between Aristotelianism and Christian doctrine only by accepting a relativization of knowledge that puts the truth out of human grasp.' Discuss.
12. Explain and assess Scotus's main arguments to show that philosophical argumentation alone is not adequate for human needs.
13. EITHER (a) 'Pomponazzi's arguments against the immortality of the soul are so powerful that his real intention can only be to undermine Christian belief.' Discuss.

OR (b) How well does Pomponazzi show that belief in an after-life is not a necessary condition for virtue? What is the role of this argument in his position?
14. EITHER (a) Why does Spinoza think that understanding how the Bible was written has important consequences for political society?

OR (b) Assess Spinoza's naturalistic account of prophecy (in comparison, if you wish, with any earlier naturalistic account).
15. Compare any **two** theories of universals in the set texts, explaining which is the more successful,

Passages for Q.1

- a) And so these things exist in singulars, but are thought of as universals. Species is to be regarded as nothing else than the thought gathered from the substantial likeness of individuals that are unlike in number. Genus, on the other hand, is the thought gathered from the likeness of species. This likeness becomes sensible when it exists in singulars, and becomes intelligible when it is in universals. In the same way, when it is sensible it stays in singulars, but when it is understood it becomes universal. They subsist therefore in the realm of sensibles, but are understood apart from bodies.
- b) So neither 'man' nor any other universal word appears to signify anything. For it does not establish an understanding of any thing. But it seems there can be no understanding that does not have a subject thing it conceives. Thus Boethius in his *Commentary* says 'Every understanding arises from a subject thing either as that thing is disposed or as it is not disposed (for no understanding can arise from *no* subject).'

For these reasons universals seem wholly unsuited to signification.

But this is not so. For they in a way 'signify' diverse things by naming them, not by establishing an understanding that *arises* from them but one that *pertains* to each of them.

Passages for Q.2

- c) There is therefore no contradiction between faith and the philosopher. Why then do you make complaints against the philosopher, since you concede the same thing as he does? Nor should you believe that the philosopher, who has placed his life in the study of wisdom, has contradicted the truth of the Catholic Faith in anything. Rather, you should take care – since you have a limited understanding with respect to the philosophers, who were and are the wise men of the world – that you can understand what they say. For what a master says should be understood in the best way, nor is there anything in what some malign people say, who devote all their energies to finding reasonings that contradict in something the truth of the Christian Faith – which without doubt is impossible. For they say that a Christian, as such, cannot be a philosopher, because he is compelled by his Law to destroy the principles of philosophy. For this is false, because the Christian concedes that the conclusion concluded through philosophical reasons could not be otherwise through those things through which it is concluded. And if it is concluded through natural causes that a dead man will not immediately return alive and the same in number, he concedes that this cannot be otherwise through the natural causes through which it is concluded. But he concedes however that this can be otherwise through a superior cause which is the cause of all nature and of every caused entity. And so a Christian who understands subtly is not compelled by his Law to destroy

the principles of philosophy, but he can preserve Faith and philosophy without blaming either.

- d) That is because people's natures vary in excellence with respect to assent. Thus, some assent by means of demonstration; some assent by means of dialectical statements in the same way the one adhering to demonstration assents by means of demonstration, there being nothing greater in their natures; and some assent by means of rhetorical statements, just as the one adhering to demonstration assents by means of demonstrative statements.

That is because, when this divine Law of ours called to people by means of these three methods, assent to it was extended to every human being – except to the one who denies it obstinately in speech or for whom no methods have been determined in it for summoning to God (may He be exalted) due to his own neglect of that.

END OF PAPER