

PHILOSOPHY TRIPOS Part II

Thursday 1 June 2017

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 (i) and (ii), 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 (i) and (ii) – at end of paper.

2. Identify each of the passages (iii) and (iv), 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 (iii) and (iv) – at end of paper.

SECTION B

3. EITHER (a) What is the role of the bodily organs in relation to immaterial intellects in Avicenna's account of human cognition?

OR (b) What does Avicenna aim to show from the thought experiment of the flying man? Is he successful?

4. How well does Averroes justify his claim that there is only one intellect for all humans?

5. EITHER (a) What does Aquinas mean by 'intelligible species'? How do they help him to explain human thinking?

OR (b) 'Aquinas fails to account for central aspects of self-knowledge.' Discuss.

6. Is Gersonides justified in thinking that his account of human immortality is better than those he rejects?

7. Show how

EITHER (a) comparison with scholastic theories

OR (b) the Objections and Responses

can help to elucidate Descartes's account of the relationship between mind and body in his *Meditations*.

8. 'The object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body' (SPINOZA). Explain what Spinoza means by this assertion and how he tries to justify it.
9. 'The Philosopher's views are always cogently argued, but sometimes, Abelard indicates, they are mistaken.' Discuss with regard to Dialogue II of *Collationes*.
10. How well in the *Decisive Treatise* does Averroes defend himself and other Aristotelians from accusations of committing and encouraging heresy?
11. What are the strongest arguments Maimonides gives against the eternity of the world? How strong does he think they are?
12. 'Since Boethius of Dacia accepts that Christian doctrine is true without qualification, he cannot be described as a relativist about truth.' Discuss.
13. Why does Pomponazzi think that human immortality cannot be demonstrated? Why does he think this is an important point to make?
14. EITHER (a) How does Spinoza defend the freedom to philosophize in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*?

OR (b) Compare Spinoza's views on biblical interpretation with those of Maimonides.

PASSAGES

Question 1

- i) Objection: Further, the Philosopher says (De Anima iii, 5) there are two things in the intellectual soul – the passive intellect and the active intellect. But it does not belong to the passive intellect to abstract the intelligible species from the phantasm, but to receive them when abstracted. Neither does it seem to be the function of the active intellect, which is related to the phantasm, as light is to colour; since light does not abstract anything from colour, but rather streams on to it. Therefore in no way do we understand by abstraction from phantasms.

Response: Not only does the active intellect throw light on the phantasm: it does more; by its own power it abstracts the intelligible species from the phantasm. It throws light on the phantasm, because, just as the sensitive part acquires a greater power by its conjunction with the intellectual part, so by the power of the active intellect the phantasms are made more fit for the abstraction therefrom of intelligible

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intentions. Furthermore, the active intellect abstracts the intelligible species from the phantasm, forasmuch as by the power of the active intellect we are able to disregard the conditions of individuality, and to take into our consideration the specific nature, the image of which informs the passive intellect.

- ii) At other times, it is related in some way to the perfect potential when the acquired intelligible forms have also occurred in it after the primary intelligibles, though it is not acquainted with them and does not consult them in actuality. Rather, it is as though they are stored in it, and it can be actually acquainted with them when it so wishes and can reason about them, reasoning that it can reason about them. At that point, it will be termed an “actual intellect,” for it has reasoned and can reason when it so wishes without the effort of acquisition, even though it can be termed a potential intellect in comparison to what comes afterwards.

At yet other times, it is related to absolute actuality, when the intelligible form is present in it, it is acquainted with it and reasons about it in actuality, and reasons that it reasons about it in actuality. At that point, it will become an acquired intellect, for as will become clear, the potential intellect becomes actual only due to an intellect that is always actual. If a potential intellect connects with the intellect that is always actual in some way, it will be actually imprinted with a type of form that is externally acquired.

Question 2

- iii) If someone were to say: “Muslims have formed a consensus that in the Law are things to be taken in their apparent sense and things to be interpreted, and there are things about which they disagree. So, is it permissible for demonstration to lead to interpreting what they have formed a consensus to take in its apparent sense, or to taking in its apparent sense what they have formed a consensus to interpret?” we would say: “If the consensus were established by a method of certainty, it would not be valid [to do so]; but if the consensus about them were suppositional, then it would be valid [to do so].” That is why Abū Hāmid [al-Ghazālī], Abū al-Ma^c ālī, and others from among the leading thinkers said that unbelief is to be affirmed of no one for going against consensus by interpreting things like these.
- iv) Let the arguments for the opposite side be granted for the sake of the conclusion, although they can be resolved, since they are sophistical.

From all of this it is evident that for the philosopher to say that something is possible or impossible is to say that it is possible or impossible for reasons which can be investigated by man. When someone puts aside rational arguments, he immediately ceases to be a philosopher; philosophy does not rest on revelations and miracles. You

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yourself hold and ought to hold that many things are true, which, however, if you did not affirm them to be true except insofar as human reason could lead you to do so, you should never grant them. Such is true of the resurrection of men which faith teaches, and rightly so. In such matters one relies on divine authority, not on human reason. I will ask you what rational argument proves this. I will also ask what rational argument proves that a thing which is produced by generation can return again after its corruption without being generated, and even so as to be numerically the same as it was before its corruption. This must be the case in the resurrection of men according to the teaching of our faith. Nonetheless, at the end of *De Generatione* 2, the Philosopher states that a corrupted thing can return again so as to be the same in species but not so as to be the same in number. In saying this he does not contradict the faith, because he says that this is not possible according to natural causes. The natural philosopher reasons from such causes. Our faith, however, teaches that this is possible by reason of a higher cause which is the beginning and the end of our faith, the glorious and blessed God.

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