

PHILOSOPHY TRIPOS, PART II

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Friday 26 May 2023

09.00-12.00

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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 that author 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*

<p><b>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</b></p>
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**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. 'The aim of *Against the Academicians* is not to show that the academic sceptics are wrong about knowledge, but that Plato was right about it.' Discuss.
4. How, according to Saadia, do we arrive at knowledge of the truth?
5. What role do miracles play in al-Ghazali's account of cause and effect?
6. To what extent, according to Henry of Ghent, do we gain the truth from sensible perception?
7. How does Christine de Pizan use the notion of opinion to discuss different sorts of people's access to knowledge?
8. EITHER: (a) What does Descartes's evil demon hypothesis owe to earlier thinkers?  
  
OR (b): Does Descartes give convincing answers to the Objections to his strategy in *Meditation 1*?
9. 'Philosophy shows Boethius the prisoner the nature of the Good, but not how to reach it.' Discuss.
10. 'Ibn Tufayl tries to show that, both for Hayy himself, and for ordinary Muslims, happiness does not lie in knowledge.' Discuss.

TURN OVER

11. What objections would Maimonides make to those who obey God from fear of punishment and desire for reward? Should they be convinced by those objections?
12. Why does Henry of Ghent think that someone who denies that there is an afterlife should be willing to die for their country? Is his argument coherent?
13. How, in considering the relationship between intellect and will, does Buridan explain in what human happiness consists?
14. According to Spinoza, is an individual human's happiness limited by their mortality, and why (or why not)?
15. EITHER: (a) Compare the treatment of the obstacles to knowledge in one thinker in group (i) and one thinker in group (ii)

Group (i): Saadya, al-Ghazali, Augustine;

Group (ii): Henry of Ghent, Christine de Pizan, Descartes

OR (b): Compare the views about what is the greatest happiness for humans in one thinker in group (iii) and one thinker in group (iv)

Group (iii): Boethius, Ibn Tufayl, Maimonides;

Group (iv): Henry of Ghent, Buridan, Spinoza

**PASSAGES**

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**Question 1**

(i)

*Human happiness consists in the apprehension or perfect understanding of God*

I hold this thesis, first, because Aristotle and Seneca and other ancient moral philosophers, in the import of their words, altogether prefer reason and thinking to all other human acts and wisdom to all human virtues. Second, this thesis can also be made persuasive by the arguments and cited texts in Question 1 of this Book X concerning freedom and lordship of the intellect, and also in Question 3.

And again, the thesis can be confirmed from the fact that many theologians hold that, of any two entities neither of which is God and neither of which is of the essence or wholeness of the other, God can separate either from the other and conserve it without the other. They say, therefore, that by his absolute power God could conserve in Peter's soul a clear vision of God while taking away love and every act of will, and conversely could conserve in it the love of God or the act of will while taking away vision and every act of understanding.

Nevertheless, I do not either approve or reject these statements, because they do not belong to the science Aristotle gave us. They go beyond our faculty of Arts – according to which faculty, however, and not beyond it, it was my purpose to treat of morals in this book (and if I sometimes transgress, I regard this as something incidental). It is true, nevertheless, that it indeed does belong to this faculty of ours to consider what we can further infer from certain assumptions, whether possible or impossible, and this in terms both moral and natural. Let us see, then, what follows if there were clear vision of God under the concept of present to us and intimate and best, as in our true blessedness, if love and accepting volition were set aside – assuming, nevertheless, that God allows the rest to follow and proceed just as they are naturally apt to do. It is clear to me that perfect pleasure would naturally and inseparably follow such an apprehension, for the nature and condition of pleasure consists in this, that it is an inseparable property of such an apprehension, namely, of an object under the concept of good, present, and possessed. But suppose on the contrary that love and volition remain without vision, that is, without intellectual apprehension: pleasure does not follow. Then let us argue thus. That act of ours upon which, posited by itself in the way described, perfect pleasure follows is more perfect than one upon which no pleasure would follow. And so, according to the opinion of those theologians, we will conclude our point.

TURN OVER

(ii)

*Insofar as our Mind knows itself and the Body under a species of eternity, it necessarily has knowledge of God, and knows that it is in God and is conceived through God.*

Dem.: Eternity is the very essence of God insofar as this involves necessary existence (by I, D8). To conceive things under a species of eternity, therefore, is to conceive things insofar as they are conceived through God's essence, as real beings, or insofar as through God's essence they involve existence. Hence, insofar as our mind conceives itself and the body under a species of eternity, it necessarily has knowledge of God and knows, and so on, q.e.d.

## Question 2

(iii)

The answer to this is to say that the impossible cannot be done by God, and the impossible consists of simultaneous affirmation and negation of a thing, or the affirmation of the more particular with the negation of the more general, or the affirmation of two things with the negation of one of them, and what does not refer to this is not impossible and what is not impossible can be done. The identification of black and white is impossible, because by the affirmation of the form of black in the substratum the negation of the form of white and of the existence of white is implied; and since the negation of white is implied by the affirmation of black the simultaneous affirmation and negation of white is impossible. And the existence of a person in two places at once is only impossible because we imply by his being in the house that he cannot be in another place, and it cannot be understood from the denial that he is in another place that he can be simultaneously both in another place and in the house. And in the same way by will is implied the seeking of something that can be known, and if we assume a seeking without knowledge there cannot be a will and we would then deny what we had implied. And it is impossible that in the inorganic knowledge should be created, because we understand by inorganic that which does not perceive, and if in the inorganic perception was created it would become impossible to call it inorganic in the sense in which this word is understood.

TURN OVER

(iv)

But that in the second way one can know something and perceive a thing as it is is clear from things, we experience within ourselves and around ourselves, through both sensory and intellectual cognition. For in sensory cognition a thing is truly perceived as it is, without any deception or mistake, by a sense that during its own action of sensing its proper object is not contradicted by a truer sense or by an intellection received from a different truer sense, whether in the same or in another [person].

Nor concerning something that we perceive in this way should one be in doubt whether we perceive it as it is. Nor need one search in this matter for any further cause of certainty. For as the Philosopher says, it is a weakness of intellect to search for reason in cases where we have sensation, since one should not search for a reason for the thing we possess that is more valuable than reason. For the test of true words is that they agree with what is sensed. Hence Augustine says, in the same place: 'Let it be far from us that we doubt to be true those things that we have learned through the bodily senses. For through them we have learned of the sky and earth, and the things in them that are known by us.'

**END OF PAPER**