

PHILOSOPHY TRIPOS Part II

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Wednesday 29 May 2019

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 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 × 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) Does Avicenna justify the role he gives to the Agent Intellect in his theory of cognition?

OR: (b) What does Avicenna want to show by his Flying Man example? Does he succeed?

4. In what ways is Averroes's theory of intellectual knowledge faithful to Aristotle, and in what ways not?
5. EITHER: (a) 'For Aquinas intelligible species are representations of things in the external world.' Discuss.  
OR: (b) 'According to Aquinas, our self-knowledge is always indirect.' Discuss.
6. What are Olivi's central objections to the Aristotelian view of intellectual knowledge?
7. Given that Pomponazzi admits that the human intellect is immaterial, what are his grounds for arguing that it is mortal?
8. 'What relationship can possibly be understood to exist between corporeal and incorporeal parts?' (GASSENDI). Discuss whether Descartes can answer this criticism of his theory about mind and body.

TURN OVER

9. 'Everything that is cognized is cognized not according to its own power, but rather according to the capacity of the cognizers.' (BOETHIUS). To what extent is Boethius able to use this principle to show that divine prescience is compatible with the contingency of future events?
10. Can Abelard coherently hold that, although God cannot do other than he does, a sinner who has in fact been damned might have repented and been saved by Him?
11. 'Al-Ghazali's view of causality is, despite appearances, too close to Averroes's own for Averroes's criticisms to be effective.' Discuss.
12. Does Ockham's critique of Scotus's theory of God's contingent causation simply beg the question?
13. To what extent, according to Gersonides, does God exercise particular providence? How well does he justify his position?
14. 'Things could have been produced by God in no other way, and in no other order than they have been produced.' (SPINOZA). Discuss.

## PASSAGES

### Question 1

- (i) We state that the theoretical faculty in humans also emerges from potentiality to actuality by the illumination of a substance that has such an effect upon it. That is because nothing can emerge from potentiality into actuality without something that endows it with actuality; it cannot do so by itself. The actuality with which the theoretical faculty is endowed is the form of the intelligibles. Hence, there is something that endows the soul with the form of the intelligibles, and imprints them upon it from its own substance. Thus, this entity must have the form of the intelligibles essentially, and it is therefore essentially an intellect. If it were merely a potential intellect there would be an impossible infinite regress, or else the regress would be blocked by something that is an intellect in substance, and is what causes everything that is a potential intellect to become an actual intellect. This cause will be sufficient on its own to render potential intellects into actual intellects. This is what is called the "Active Intellect," in comparison with the potential intellects that emerge into actuality, just as the material intellect is called the "passive intellect" in relation to it, and the faculty of representation is called another "passive intellect" in relation to it. The intellect that exists between the Active Intellect and the passive intellect is called the "acquired intellect."

TURN OVER

- (ii) A thing is intelligible according as it is in act. Now the ultimate perfection of the intellect consists in its own operation: for this is not an act tending to something else in which lies the perfection of the work accomplished, as building is the perfection of the thing built; but it remains in the agent as its perfection and act ... Therefore the first thing understood of the intellect is its own act of understanding. This occurs in different ways with different intellects. For there is an intellect, namely, the Divine, which is its own act of intelligence, so that in God the understanding of His intelligence, and the understanding of His Essence, are one and the same act, because His Essence is His act of understanding. But there is another intellect, the angelic, which is not its own act of understanding, as we have said above, and yet the first object of that act is the angelic essence. Wherefore although there is a logical distinction between the act whereby he understands that he understands, and that whereby he understands his essence, yet he understands both by one and the same act; because to understand his own essence is the proper perfection of his essence, and by one and the same act is a thing, together with its perfection, understood. And there is yet another, namely, the human intellect, which neither is its own act of understanding, nor is its own essence the first object of its act of understanding, for this object is the nature of a material thing. And therefore that which is first known by the human intellect is an object of this kind, and that which is known secondarily is the act by which that object is known; and through the act the intellect itself is known, the perfection of which is this act of understanding. For this reason did the Philosopher assert that objects are known before acts, and acts before powers.

## Question 2

- (iii) But, you will say, if it has been placed within my power to change my intention, then I shall grieve Providence, since, perhaps, I shall have changed the things that it has foreknowledge of. I shall answer that yes, you can alter the course of your intention; however, since the present truth of Providence observes that you can do so and whether you will do so and to what end you will redirect it, you cannot avoid divine foreknowledge, just as you cannot escape the gaze of its present eye even though you redirect yourself by your free will toward actions of different sorts. Well then! you will say; will divine knowledge be changed by my arrangements, with the result that, when I wish for now this thing, now that, divine knowledge seems to switch back and forth the vicissitudes of its foreknowing? Hardly. For the divine gaze runs on ahead of every thing that will come to pass and twists it back and calls it back to the present of its own proper preception; it does not, as you reckon it, switch back and forth in an alternation of a foreknowledge of now this thing, now another; rather, remaining stable, it anticipates and embraces your changes in its single stroke.

TURN OVER

(iv) The first is that our opponent claims that the agent of the burning is the fire exclusively; this is a natural, not a voluntary agent, and cannot abstain from what is in its nature when it is brought into contact with a receptive substratum. This we deny, saying: The agent of the burning is God, through His creating the black in the cotton and the disconnexion of its parts, and it is God who made the cotton burn and made it ashes either through the intermediation of angels or without intermediation. For fire is a dead body which has no action, and what is the proof that it is the agent? Indeed, the philosophers have no other proof than the observation of the occurrence of the burning, when there is contact with fire, but observation proves only a simultaneity, not a causation, and, in reality, there is no other cause but God. For there is unanimity of opinion about the fact that the union of the spirit with the perceptive and moving faculties in the sperm of animals does not originate in the natures contained in warmth, cold, moistness, and dryness, and that the father is neither the agent of the embryo through introducing sperm into the uterus, nor the agent of its life, its sight and hearing, and all its other faculties. And although it is well known that the same faculties exist in the father, still nobody thinks that these faculties exist through him; no, their existence is produced by the First either directly or through the intermediation of the angels who are in charge of these events. Of this fact the philosophers who believe in a creator are quite convinced, but it is precisely with them that we are in dispute.

**END OF PAPER**