

PHILOSOPHY TRIPOS Part II

FRIDAY 25 May 2018

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) 'Avicenna describes abstraction at length, but does not make clear what is its role in intellectual cognition.' Discuss.

OR (b) Analyse the connections Avicenna makes between the idea of self-awareness and his claim that humans have immaterial intellects.

4. 'According to Averroes, no individual human being is independently a thinker. But without humans, thought would be impossible.' Discuss.
5. EITHER (a) According to Aquinas, the human intellect can receive only immaterial intelligible species. In what sense, then, are what it understands material things?

OR (b) 'Everything is cognizable according to its being in act, not according to its being in potency' (AQUINAS). How does this position explain Aquinas's theory of self-knowledge, and is the explanation adequate?

6. How does Gersonides individuate immortal souls? Does he thereby succeed in giving an account of individual human immortality?
7. '...it is not yet transparently clear to me that this knowledge [of myself] is complete and adequate, so as to enable me to be certain that I am not mistaken in excluding body from my essence' (ARNAULD, *Fourth Objections*). How well do Descartes's views, as developed in the *Meditations* and in his *Responses*, allow him to answer this objection?

TURN OVER

8. How does Spinoza use his conception of attributes to develop an account of the relation between mind and body?
9. 'There is a way which seemeth just to a man: but the ends thereof lead to death' (*Proverbs*). What limits are suggested by Abelard's *Collationes* to human reason's ability to reach the truth?
10. How does Averroes use his principle that 'people's natures vary in excellence with respect to assent' to vindicate Aristotelian philosophy against its Islamic critics?
11. Maimonides openly declares that there are stronger arguments that the world has a beginning than that it is eternal. Should we therefore conclude that this is his view?
12. Is it wrong to describe Boethius of Dacia as a relativist about truth, given that he acknowledges that Christian doctrine is absolutely true?
13. EITHER (a) How well does Pomponazzi argue that an Aristotelian understanding of the human soul implies its mortality?

OR (b) Does Pomponazzi propose a coherent ethical theory in *On the Immortality of the Soul*?
14. To what extent does Spinoza's historical examination of the Bible in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* make revelation superfluous?
15. With regard to the theme of EITHER (a) thinking and the self, OR (b) scientific truth and revelation, examine critically the idea of the Long Middle Ages, by comparing one of the set texts written before 1500 with one written afterwards.

TURN OVER

PASSAGES

Question 1

- i) Return to your self and reflect whether, being whole, or even in another state, where, however, you discern a thing correctly, you would be oblivious to the existence of your self (*dhātaka*) and would not affirm your self (*naśaka*)? To my mind, this does not happen to the perspicacious – so much so that the sleeper in his sleep and the person drunk in the state of his drunkenness will not miss knowledge of his self, even if his presentation of his self to himself does not remain in his memory.

And if you imagine your self (*dhātaka*) to have been at its first creation mature and whole in mind and body and it is supposed to be in a generality of position and physical circumstance where it does not perceive its parts, where its limbs do not touch each other but are rather spread apart, and that this self is momentarily suspended in temperate air, you will find that it will be unaware of everything except the “fixedness” (*thubūt*) of its individual existence (*anniyathihā*).

- ii) As stated above, 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, as is said Metaph. ix, Did. viii, 8. 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.

TURN OVER

Question 2

- iii) When something pertaining to these interpretations is declared to someone not adept in them – especially demonstrative interpretations, due to their remoteness from things about which there is shared cognizance – both he who declares it and the one to whom it is declared are steered to unbelief. The reason is that interpretation includes two things: the rejection of the apparent sense and the establishing of the interpretation. Thus, if the apparent sense is rejected by someone who is an adept of apparent sense without the interpretation being established for him, that leads him to unbelief if it is about the roots of the Law. So interpretations ought not to be declared to the multitude, nor established in rhetorical or dialectical books – I mean, books in which the statements posited are of these two sorts – Abū Hāmid [al-Ghazālī] did.

For this kind [of people], it is obligatory to declare and to say, with respect to the apparent sense – when it is such that the doubt as to whether it is an apparent sense is in itself apparent to everyone, without cognizance of its interpretation being possible for them – that it is one of those [verses] that resemble one another [whose interpretation is] not known, except to God, and that it is obligatory for the stop in His saying (may He be exalted) to be placed here: “None knows their interpretation but God”.

- iv) We maintain, therefore, that the world is not eternal but was created *de novo*, although this cannot be demonstrated by rational arguments, as we have seen above, as is also true of certain other things which pertain to faith. If they could be demonstrated, then [faith] would not be faith but science. Therefore, in defense of the faith, sophistical argumentation should not be advanced, as is evident; nor should dialectical argumentation, since it does not produce a firm habit but only opinion, and faith should be stronger than opinion; nor should demonstrative argumentation, since then faith would extend only to those things which can be demonstrated.

At this point it is necessary to reply to the arguments offered for both sides, and first to those which endeavor to prove that which is contrary to the truth, that is, that the world is coeternal with God.

END OF PAPER