SECOND PUBLIC EXAMINATION
In the Honour Schools including Philosophy

MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY: AQUINAS

TRINITY TERM 2019

Wednesday 05 June 2019, 9.30am – 12.30pm

This paper contains sixteen questions.

Answer THREE questions.

You are not obliged to answer the commentary question (q16).

Do not turn over the page until told that you may do so.
1. ‘Critics of versions of the Ontological Argument have often suggested that we cannot conclude from the meaning of the word “God” that there is anything in reality corresponding to it, and Aquinas seems to support this line of thinking, though he does agree that knowledge of what God actually is would leave us with an understanding that God has to be.’ (DAVIES) Discuss.

2. ‘An intermediate cause as such needs only to be a middle causal link between an earlier cause and its effect; therefore, an intermediate cause as such needs to be dependent not on a first cause, but on an earlier one.’ (CAJETAN) How would Aquinas reply to this objection to his First and Second Ways?

3. Explain and evaluate Aquinas’ assumptions about essence and existence at work in his account of necessary and contingent beings.

4. Why does Aquinas want to deny any kind of composition in God? How convincing are his arguments?

5. How can Aquinas consistently maintain that the human soul both is what makes the human body alive and yet survives the death of the human body?

6. Why does Aquinas insist that the human soul has acts of thought when separated from the body? Does he give a satisfactory explanation of this claim?

7. Why does Aquinas only posit an agent intellect and not also an agent sense?

8. How plausible is Aquinas’ view that there is not a bodily organ of thought? How can this view be reconciled with his claim that acts of thought depend on bodily images (phantasms)?

9. Explain and assess Aquinas’s view that acts of will are dependent on acts of the intellect but not reducible to them.

10. ‘By the will we are masters of our own actions. But we are not masters of that which is of necessity. Therefore the act of the will cannot be necessitated.’ How would Aquinas deal with this argument?

11. Why does Aquinas feel it necessary to add an account of supernatural happiness to his account of natural happiness?

12. Present and assess Aquinas’ account of man’s last end.

13. How convincing is Aquinas’ distinction between acts commanded by the will and acts elicited by the will? Why does he think that this distinction is useful?

14. ‘He [Aquinas] denies that an act is just an act and that there is no more to be said of it apart from noting that it is just an act of doing such and such .. for example, focusing on the notion of “drinking alcohol” without reference to who is doing this and in what context.’ (DAVIES) Discuss.
15. Explain and assess Aquinas’ claim that natural law is a participation in eternal law.

16. Comment on THREE of the six following passages:

(a) Thirdly, because God is the most noble of beings. Now it is impossible for a body to be the most noble of beings; for a body must be either animate or inanimate; and an animate body is manifestly nobler than any inanimate body. But an animate body is not animate precisely as body; otherwise all bodies would be animate. Therefore its animation depends upon some other thing, as our body depends for its animation on the soul. Hence that by which a body becomes animated must be nobler than the body. Therefore it is impossible that God should be a body. (ST I Q3 a. 1 c)

(b) The soul has no matter. We may consider this question in two ways. First, from the notion of a soul in general; for it belongs to the notion of a soul to be the form of a body. Now, either it is a form by virtue of itself, in its entirety, or by virtue of some part of itself. If by virtue of itself in its entirety, then it is impossible that any part of it should be matter, if by matter we understand something purely potential: for a form, as such, is an act; and that which is purely potentiality cannot be part of an act, since potentiality is repugnant to actuality as being opposite thereto. If, however, it be a form by virtue of a part of itself, then we call that part the soul; and that matter, which it actualizes first, we call the "primary animate." (ST I Q75 a. 5 c)

(c) It is absolutely impossible for one intellect to belong to all men. This is clear if, as Plato maintained, man is the intellect itself. For it would follow that Socrates and Plato are one man; and that they are not distinct from each other, except by something outside the essence of each. The distinction between Socrates and Plato would be no other than that of one man with a tunic and another with a cloak; which is quite absurd. It is likewise clear that this is impossible if, according to the opinion of Aristotle (De Anima ii, 2), it is supposed that the intellect is a part or a power of the soul which is the form of man. For it is impossible for many distinct individuals to have one form, as it is impossible for them to have one existence, for the form is the principle of existence. (ST I Q76 a. 2 c)

(d) Violence is directly opposed to the voluntary, as likewise to the natural. For the voluntary and the natural have this in common, that both are from an intrinsic principle; whereas violence is from an extrinsic principle. And for this reason, just as in things devoid of knowledge, violence effects something against nature: so in things endowed with knowledge, it effects something against the will. Now that which is against nature is said to be "unnatural"; and in like manner that which is against the will is said to be "involuntary." Therefore violence causes involuntariness. (ST IaIIae Q6 a. 5 c)
(e) Wherefore if the will be offered an object which is good universally and from every point of view, the will tends to it of necessity, if it wills anything at all; since it cannot will the opposite. If, on the other hand, the will is offered an object that is not good from every point of view, it will not tend to it of necessity. And since lack of any good whatever, is a non-good, consequently, that good alone which is perfect and lacking in nothing, is such a good that the will cannot not-will it: and this is Happiness. Whereas any other particular goods, in so far as they are lacking in some good, can be regarded as non-goods: and from this point of view, they can be set aside or approved by the will, which can tend to one and the same thing from various points of view. (ST IaIIae Q10 a. 2 c)

(f) The law belongs to that which is a principle of human acts, because it is their rule and measure. Now as reason is a principle of human acts, so in reason itself there is something which is the principle in respect of all the rest: wherefore to this principle chiefly and mainly law must needs be referred. Now the first principle in practical matters, which are the object of the practical reason, is the last end: and the last end of human life is bliss or happiness, as stated above. Consequently the law must needs regard principally the relationship to happiness. Moreover, since every part is ordained to the whole, as imperfect to perfect; and since one man is a part of the perfect community, the law must needs regard properly the relationship to universal happiness. (ST IaIIae Q90 a. 2 c)