

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

577 0380

MA Examination
for Internal Students

PHILOSOPHY

Arabic Philosophy

Wednesday 20 May 2009 : 10.00 – 1.00 pm

Candidates should answer **THREE** questions. Avoid overlap in your answers.

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UL09/982

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1. Is Saadia Gaon right that we can assert that God is living, powerful and knowing without thereby introducing multiplicity into God?
2. Outline and evaluate al-Kindi's proof that there must be some True One which is the source of unity for things that are both multiple and one.
3. Is al-Kindi persuasive in his attempt to show that the world is not eternal?
4. Explain and evaluate al-Razi's theory of 'absolute' space (or place) and time.
5. Which side had the better of the dispute between Abu Bishr Matta and al-Sirafi over the relative merits of logic and grammar?
6. In what way does al-Farabi's political philosophy depend on his theory of intellect?
7. Socrates held that virtue is knowledge. Discuss this thesis with reference to the ethical thought of EITHER al-Farabi OR al-Razi.
8. What was Avicenna's distinction between essence and existence? What role does it play in Avicenna's proof for the existence of God?
9. What did Avicenna mean by saying that God knows particulars 'in a universal way'? Is this a defensible view of divine knowledge?
10. Critically discuss the following passage:

We say that one of us must imagine himself as if he were created all at once and as a whole, but with his sight covered so that he cannot see anything external, and created falling through the air or a vacuum, but falling in such a way that he encounters no air resistance nor anything else that would allow him to have any sensations, and with his limbs separated from one another so that they do not meet or touch. Then consider whether he will affirm the existence of his self (*dhât*). For he will not have any doubt in affirming existence for his essence, yet he will not along with this affirm [the existence of] the extremities of his limbs, nor his innards, his heart, his brain, or anything external to him. Instead, he will affirm [the existence of] his essence, without affirming that it has length, breadth or depth. Nor, if in that state he were able to suppose there to be a hand or other body part, would he suppose that it was a part of himself, or a condition for his self. You know that what is affirmed is different from what is not affirmed, and that what is grasped immediately is different from what is not so grasped. Therefore the self whose existence is affirmed [by the flying man] is proper to him, insofar as it is his self, not his body or his limbs, which he does not affirm. Thus one is admonished and has a way of being awake to the existence of one's soul as something distinct from the body and immaterial. (Avicenna, *al-Shifa' (the Healing): Soul*, I.1)

11. Does al-Ghazali make a good case that scepticism can be defeated only by appealing to a mystical understanding superior to what is achieved in philosophy?
12. Did al-Ghazali claim that only God can cause cotton to burn?
13. Outline and assess any ONE argument given by al-Ghazali against the eternity of the world.
14. In his *Decisive Treatise*, Averroes argues that Islam commands the study of philosophy for those who are capable of it. What role does the contrast between demonstration, dialectic and rhetoric play in his defence of this claim?
15. Why did Averroes postulate a single material intellect for all of mankind?
16. Does Maimonides show successfully that we speak of God only by means of negations and God's effects?

END OF PAPER