

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

577 0225

MA Examination
for Internal Students

PHILOSOPHY

Early Modern Philosophy

Tuesday 3 June 2008: 2.30 – 5.30pm

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

1. What is the 'mechanical' approach to physics, and what are its principal differences from the Aristotelian approach?
2. 'If someone asks what would happen if God were to take away every single body contained in a vessel, without allowing any other body to take the place of what had been removed, the answer must be that the sides of the vessel would, in that case, have to be in contact' (Descartes). Discuss.
3. Critically assess the following argument: 'God could not act on spatial things unless His own substance was spatially present. But His substance could not be spatially present except by being corporeal. And yet He does act on spatial things. Therefore, He must be corporeal.'
4. What was Newton's 'whirling bucket' experiment designed to show? How successful was it?
5. Expound and assess Malebranche's theory of vision in God.
6. 'All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call Impressions and Ideas.' What account does Hume give of the relationship between these two kinds of perception? Does he make a strong case for his view?
7. Explain and assess Berkeley's argument for the claim that the things we immediately perceive are ideas which exist only in the mind.
8. 'The object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body, or a certain mode of extension which actually exists.' Can we make sense of Spinoza's view?
9. 'Even to express the distinction between primary and secondary qualities requires a notion of representation that is not merely causal' (Ayers). Discuss with reference to Locke.

11. **Either** (a) 'The idea of the sun is the sun itself existing in the intellect' (Descartes). Can Descartes reconcile this view of ideas with his claim that many of our sensory ideas are dissimilar to their objects?
- Or** (b) The proper purpose of...sensory perceptions...is simply to inform the mind of what is beneficial or harmful for the composite of which it is a part...[we] misuse them by treating them as reliable touchstones for immediate judgements about the essential nature of external bodies' (Descartes). How successfully does Descartes argue for this view?
12. Explain and evaluate Descartes's argument for his claim that mind and body are distinct substances.
13. What is the Cartesian Circle? Does Descartes have a way out of it?
14. The First Meditation introduces a doubt based on the possibility that the meditator might be dreaming, and a doubt based on the possibility that the meditator might be the creation of a deceiving God. What roles do these doubts play in the argument of the *Meditations*? Is it important for Descartes's project that he should distinguish them?
15. Explain and evaluate one of Descartes's arguments for the existence of God.
16. Does Descartes succeed in reconciling human error with the perfection of God?
17. According to its Preface, one of the aims of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* is to combat superstition. Why does Spinoza view superstition as a problem, and how does his analysis of prophecy contribute to his attempt to combat it?
18. In what sense does Spinoza think there is a divine law? What if anything is distinctive about his view?
19. Why does Spinoza want to establish that philosophy and theology are independent of one another? Does he succeed?
20. According to Spinoza, the sovereign of a state is not bound by the law. Assess his account of the constraints that prevent sovereigns from becoming tyrannical.
21. How does Spinoza attempt to reconcile the claim that the sovereign has the right to make religious law with the claim that individual citizens can exercise freedom of judgment without infringing the right of the sovereign?

END OF PAPER