

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
MPHIL EXAMINATIONS 2001
for internal students

THE PHILSOSOPHY OF BACON

Monday 14th May 2001: 10:00 – 1:00:

Candidates should answer THREE of the following questions. Please avoid overlap in your answers.

1. What did Bacon regard as unsatisfactory about traditional methods of induction? Was his confidence that his own method was superior in any way justified?
 2. `Neither the naked hand nor the understanding left to itself can effect much. It is by instruments and helps that the work is done...' (Novum Organum). What kind of instruments did Bacon have in mind? Should his method be seen as a mechanical one?
 3. What account did Bacon give of the Idols of the Mind? What role do they play within his system?
 4. Bacon drew a contrast between his own method of the Interpretation of Nature, and the Anticipation of Nature practised by his predecessors. What are the most important respects in which the two methods differ?
 5. `On wax tablets you cannot write anything new until you rub out the old. With the mind it is not so; there you cannot rub out the old until you have written in the new' (Temporis Partus Masculus). Discuss the significance of this remark for Bacon's concept of method.
 6. What roles do (a) first philosophy, and (b) metaphysics play in Bacon's system?
 7. Did Bacon hold a pragmatic theory of truth?
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8. `Bacon was a shrewd thinker with a sharp eye for human intellectual weaknesses, but his positive proposals are of no value whatever in the investigation of nature.' Discuss.
 9. Why did Bacon suppose that the investigation of nature could only be successfully undertaken by a community of researchers?
 10. What did Bacon understand by a `Natural and Experimental History'? What was novel about his conception, and why did he regard the collection of such a history as being so important?
 11. What role does the systematic critique of his predecessors play in Bacon's system?

12. Was Bacon a British Empiricist?

END OF PAPER