

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON  
MPHIL EXAMINATIONS 2001  
for internal students

THE PHILOSOPHY OF DESCARTES

Answer THREE questions. Please avoid overlap in your answers.

1. 'The cogito is no better a starting point for Descartes' positive programme than any other clear and distinct perception.' Discuss.
2. 'In all consistency, Descartes is bound to regard many other ideas than those of God and the self as innate.' Is this so?
3. In what way do Descartes' reflections about the wax in Meditation II support his rationalism?
4. Can Descartes render his belief that there exist bodies other than his own clear and distinct?
5. 'To think of Descartes' epistemology as foundationalist is to be misled by his own marketing strategy.' Discuss.
6. 'There must be at least as much reality in the cause as in the effect, and hence what is more perfect cannot arise from what is less perfect.' Discuss.
7. 'The fact that there can be nothing in the mind, in so far as it is a thinking thing, of which it is not aware ... seems to me self-evident ... We cannot have any thought of which we are not aware at the very moment when it is in us.' What does Descartes mean by this? .And does it commit him to a confusion of 'mere' and 'reflexive' consciousness?

PLEASE TURN OVER

8. What did Descartes mean by the 'common sense'? What role does this concept play in his account of the transition from sensory stimulation to the formation of ideas or proto ideas?
9. 'I saw that while I could pretend that I had no body and that there was no world and no place for me to be in, I could not for all that pretend that I did not exist ... From this I knew that I was a substance whose whole essence is to think, and which does not depend on any place or material thing in order to exist.' Discuss.
10. To what extent, on Descartes' view, do animals lack minds?

END OF PAPER