

## PH.D. QUALIFYING EXAMINATION

### History of Modern Philosophy

March 2010

#### Instructions

1. Answer **exactly four questions**, two from Section 1 and two from Section 2.
2. The questions are equal in weight so you should expect to spend about one hour on each question.

#### **Section 1**

1. Many have argued that Descartes' *Meditations* is circular. What exactly is this charge and what is its basis? Is the *Meditations* circular?
2. Present and discuss Leibniz's reason for thinking that it is impossible for one monad to cause any change in any other monad.
3. Spinoza contends that our (erroneous) belief in our (metaphysical) freedom is the result of our having inadequate ideas about power and the will. What is it about these ideas that make them inadequate, according to Spinoza? What beliefs would result if we were to remove these inadequacies?
4. "For Descartes everything is possible, for Leibniz some things are possible and some things are not, and for Spinoza nothing is possible except what is actual." Explain in detail what lies behind this statement and argue for a position on the extent to which the statement is true.
5. Compare, contrast, and explain Descartes', Leibniz's, and Spinoza's respective positions on minds and bodies.
6. Compare, contrast, and explain Descartes', Leibniz's, Spinoza's respective views on substance.
7. Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz are usually classified together as rationalists. What common aspects of their views lead to this grouping? Are there any important ways in which it is misleading? Discuss.

#### **Section 2**

1. How does Locke define an innate principle? Present, explain, and discuss his arguments for the claim that there are no innate principles of speculative metaphysics or of morality.
2. Explain Locke's distinction between primary and second qualities and his distinction between ideas of primary qualities and ideas of secondary qualities. What roles do both

distinctions serve in his metaphysics and in his epistemology? Present and discuss Berkeley's reasons for rejecting both distinctions.

3. Berkeley contends that, with respect to ordinary physical objects, *to be is to be perceived*. What does he mean by that? How does he defend it? Is there a connection between his dictum and his rejection of Locke's doctrine of abstract general ideas? (Explain Locke's doctrine.) If so, what is the connection? Explain.
4. Hume argues that there is no necessary connection between causes and their effects. Present and discuss his argument for that claim. What is Hume's positive view of causation? (Be sure to address both the objective and subjective components he finds in the notion of cause.)
5. Is Hume a skeptic? Is he an epistemological naturalist? Is he a "conceptual analysis" philosopher"? Is he all three, one or two, or none at all? In short, which of the three views of Hume, if any, do you think is most accurate given his thoughts about causality, the self, induction, and metaphysics in general?
6. Locke, Berkeley, and Hume are usually classified together as empiricists. What common aspects of their views lead to this grouping? Are there any important ways in which it is misleading? Discuss.
7. Kant denies that he is an Idealist of a Berkeleyan sort. What is his reason for repudiating Berkeley's Idealism? Do you agree with Kant's own self-assessment? Explain.
8. Present Kant's reason for thinking that simple arithmetic truths are synthetic *a priori*. Then, contrast his view of arithmetic with (a) Descartes or Leibniz, and also with (b) Locke or Hume.