

## History of Modern Philosophy Exam

Answer exactly three questions, including at least one question from section 1 and at least one question from section 2. In each case, you should defend your claims as well as you can and make your answers as detailed as possible. You have two hours for the entire examination, so you should devote about 40 minutes to each answer.

### Section 1

1. Ever since Descartes wrote the *Meditations*, people have been claiming that it is circular. What exactly is this charge and what is its basis? What are some ways that it has been suggested that Descartes avoids circularity? Which of these ways do you find the most promising?
2. A common view has it that Descartes faces a huge problem understanding how there could be mind-body interaction and that Malebranche advances occasionalism to solve this problem. Explain and critically discuss this view.
3. Explain in detail Spinoza's position on the problem of mind-body interaction.
4. Arnauld charged that on Leibniz's view once God created Adam "all that has since happened to the human race or which will ever happen to it has occurred and will occur by a necessity more than fatal." Explain how this seems to follow from Leibniz's theory of truth and his doctrine of individual substance. What answer does Leibniz give to this sort of criticism?
5. "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 it is true.
6. Compare and contrast the positions of two of the following on what a rock is: Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz.

### Section 2

7. Locke holds that the mind forms general ideas, such as the general ideas of color, whiteness, and man, by way of abstraction. Some scholars think that Locke holds the "Attention-Selection" model of mental abstraction, whereas others think that he holds the "Separation-Elimination" model. Present and explain each model. Which of the two, if either, do you think best captures Locke's notion of abstraction? Defend your answer.
8. Locke distinguishes ideas from qualities. Explain his distinction. He also distinguishes primary qualities from secondary qualities, and ideas of primary qualities from ideas of secondary qualities. Explain each dichotomy and give examples of each type. What roles do these last two divisions

play in Locke's metaphysics and in his theory of perception?

9. Some scholars contend that Berkeley believed that Locke's abstractionism is incompatible with Berkeley's famous principle, 'to be is to be perceived', which would explain why Berkeley attacks Locke's view of abstract general ideas in his Introduction to his *Principles*. Do you agree that Berkeley viewed the two as being incompatible? Are they incompatible? Defend your answer.

10. Berkeley claims that his position on ordinary objects like apples, unlike that of the "materialist," is commonsensical and avoids skepticism. How does he think materialism is contrary to common sense and leads to skepticism, what is his position on these objects, and how does he think his view is not contrary to common sense and avoids skepticism?

11. Some commentators view Hume as the ultimate skeptic. Others view him as an early epistemological naturalist. Still others view him as a "conceptual analysis" philosopher. Which of the three views do you think is most accurate given Hume's remarks about causality, the self, induction, and metaphysics in general? Do you think there is a problem in holding all three interpretations? Explain.

12. Hume divides all perceptions into two mutually distinct and exhaustive categories: ideas and impressions. How do ideas and impressions differ? He also holds that every simple idea is a "copy" of a sense impression. What does he mean by "copy" in this context? What role does Hume's Copy Principle serve in his metaphysics and in his epistemology?

13. 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?