

Previous Final Examinations Philosophy 168

Please answer all questions in the space provided.

Fall, 2013

1. What did Descartes propose, in *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* and *Discourse on Method*, as the correct method for solving a complex problem?
2. What is the motivation for the introduction of the figure of the evil (or malignant) demon in the First Meditation?
3. What is the point of the “wax” example in the Second Meditation?
4. Why did Descartes declare in the Third Meditation that he must inquire as to whether there is a God?
5. In the Fourth Meditation, how did Descartes argue that we can avoid the possibility of error in our judgments?
6. How did Descartes try to prove the existence of God in the Fifth Meditation?
7. How did Descartes explain in the Sixth Meditation the fact that we sometimes err regarding what nature teaches us about what is good for our bodies?
8. Why did Descartes in the Sixth Meditation reject the possibility that he is related to his body like a pilot in a ship?
9. In what sense of “substance” did Descartes declare in the *Principles of Philosophy* that there is only one substance?
10. What is the primary sense of “passion of the soul” that is the object of Descartes’s treatment in *The Passions of the Soul*?

Winter, 2011

1. How does Descartes describe intuition, in *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*?
2. What was the basis for Descartes’s claim in the *Discourse on Method* that we could recognize that a machine, which is shaped just like a human and acts like a human as much as a machine could, is not a human being?

3. In the First Meditation, what reason does Descartes give for doubting the truth of very simple propositions such as that two added to three makes five?
4. In the Second Meditation, Descartes describes himself as a “thinking thing.” What are the faculties of a thinking thing that he finds in himself at this point?
5. In the Third Meditation, Descartes distinguishes between several degrees of reality. What is the order of reality—from most real to least real—that is presented there?
6. What are the two kinds of human freedom, according to the Fourth Meditation, and which of the two is said to be a “lower grade”?
7. Why does the certainty of all other things depend on the proof of the existence of God, according to the Fifth Meditation?
8. How does “nature” or “essence” figure into the proof of God’s existence, in the Fifth Meditation?
9. Give a brief account of how Descartes proved the existence of bodies, in the Sixth Meditation.
10. What kinds of idealizations did Descartes make in *either* his account of the refraction of light *or* his account of motion?

Spring, 2007

1. In the *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, Descartes described the characteristics of scientific knowledge (*scientia*). What are these characteristics?
2. What was the first law of motion as described in *The World and Principles of Philosophy*? How was it supposed to be derived from the nature of God?
3. In the *Optics*, Descartes makes use of a number of “suppositions” in order to explain the phenomena of vision. Describe at least two of them.

4. What was the exact role of the evil demon (genius) in the First Meditation?
5. What was the point of the introduction of the wax example in the Second Meditation?
6. What is the “very slight, and so to speak, metaphysical” doubt that Descartes expressed in the Third Meditation, and how did he overcome it?
7. What is the key to avoiding human error, according to the Fourth Meditation?”
8. According to the Fifth Meditation, how can we infer from the idea of a perfect being that it always exists?
9. Explain the relation between substance, attribute, and mode, as stated in the *Principles of Philosophy*.
10. Give a brief description of the six principal passions of the soul, as described in *The Passions of the Soul*.