

PROBLEMS OF EMPIRICISM II/III

2nd Assignment—Take-Home Exam

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All take home exams are due 5pm **19th June**. Late exams will have marks deducted at the rate of 10% per day, including the weekend. The only satisfactory excuses for lateness are illness or serious misadventure. Pressure of other work, or computer equipment failure, does not normally count as misadventure. For further information contact the II/III Coordinator, Dr M. McDermott. Work must be placed in the box at the SOPHI office—Old Teachers College Bldg., with the proper cover sheet attached. (Please make sure you keep a copy of your essay/exam.)

2500 words only—answer only ONE question

1. Analyse the following quotation

§23. But, say you, surely there is nothing easier than to imagine trees, for instance, in a park, or books existing in a closet, and nobody by to perceive them. I answer you may so, there is no difficulty in it; but what is all this, I beseech you, more than framing in your mind certain ideas which you call books and trees, and at the same time omitting to frame the idea of anyone that may perceive them? But do not you yourself perceive or think of them all the while? This therefore is nothing to the purpose; it only shows you have the power of imagining or forming ideas in your mind; but it does not show that you can conceive it possible the objects of your thought may exist without the mind. To make out this, it is necessary that you conceive them existing them unconceived or unthought of, which is a manifest repugnancy. When we do our utmost to conceive the existence of external bodies, we are all the while only contemplating our own ideas. But the mind, taking no notice of itself, is deluded to think it can and does conceive bodies existing unthought of or without the mind, though at the same time they are apprehended by or exist in itself. A little attention will discover to anyone the truth and evidence of what is here said, and make it unnecessary to insist on any other proofs against the existence of *material substance*. (*Principles*)

2. Analyse Hume's Causal Argument

... 'twill readily be allow'd, that since nothing is ever really present to the mind, besides its own perceptions, 'tis not only impossible, that any habit should ever be acquir'd otherwise than by the regular succession of these perceptions, but also that any habit should also exceed that degree of regularity. Any degree, therefore, of regularity in our perceptions, can never be a foundation for us to infer a greater degree of regularity in some objects, which are not perceiv'd; since this supposes a contradiction, *viz*, a habit acquir'd by what was never present to the mind. But 'tis evident, that whenever we infer the continu'd existence of the objects of sense from their coherence, and the frequency of their union, 'tis in order to bestow on the objects a greater regularity than what is observ'd in our mere perceptions. (*T*, p. 197)

3. Write an essay on Berkeley and Hume's use of secondary qualities for their arguments for Idealism. In the course of it analyse the following paragraph.

§9. Some there are who make a distinction betwixt *primary* and *secondary* qualities. By the former they mean extension, figure, motion, rest, solidity or impenetrability, and number; by the latter they denote all other sensible qualities, as colours, sounds, tastes, and so forth. The ideas we have of these they acknowledge not to be the resemblances of anything existing without the mind, or unperceived, but they will have our ideas of the primary qualities to be patterns or images of things which exist without the mind, in an unthinking substance which they call "matter". By "matter," therefore, we are to understand an inert, senseless substance, in which extension, figure and motion do actually subsist. But it is evident from what we have already shown that extension, figure, and motion are only ideas existing in the mind, and that an idea can be like nothing but another idea, and that consequently neither they nor their archetypes can exist in an unperceiving substance. Hence it is plain that the very notion of what is called "matter" or "corporeal substance" involves a contradiction in it. (*Principles*)

4. Write an essay on the arguments for and against the Representational Theory of Perception. What rôle does it play in the arguments for idealism?
5. Write an essay on the is/ought gap argument.

... I have always remark'd, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, *is* and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought*, or an *ought not*. . . [A] reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it. *T*, p. 469

6. Is Hume an emotivist about ethics? What are the arguments for and against emotivism?
7. Compare Hume's arguments on ethics with his arguments on inductive/causal inference.

This is the end of your questions.