

Your name: _____

Your section (circle):

Mon. Tues. Wed. (am) Wed. (pm)

Metaphysics Exercise 8

Phil. 93, Winter 2006. Due Tues., Feb. 14.

1. The Meditator looks into the possible causes of error because:
 - a. So far, he doesn't know whether he ever goes wrong about anything. By isolating the causes that might lead to error, he can find out whether he has to worry about it or not.
 - b. He knows that he has sometimes gone wrong. By isolating the cause that might lead to error, he may be able to avoid it better in the future.
 - c. He knows that he has sometimes gone wrong, and this seems to conflict with his argument that God is not a deceiver.
 - d. He knows that he has sometimes gone wrong, and this seems to conflict with the *cogito* argument, according to which whatever he thinks is true for him.
 - e. (b) and (c).
 - f. (b), (c) and (d).

2. On p. 100, Descartes (or the Meditator) says: "For since I now know that my nature is very weak and limited, whereas the nature of God is immense, incomprehensible and infinite, I also know . . . that he is capable of countless things whose causes are beyond my knowledge." Which of the following is correct?
 - a. Descartes thinks this means that we can only ever know about our own existence and the existence of God. Knowledge beyond that (for example, knowledge of the causes of things in physics) is impossible for us.
 - b. Descartes thinks this means that we should try to understand the causes of things in physics with our own reason (based on the clearly and distinctly known nature of bodies). We should not bring in any considerations about God's supposed purpose in creating one thing or another.
 - c. By saying this, Descartes shows that he is not really a rationalist, after all. He thinks that human reason is not good for much; if we want to know almost anything about the world we will have to rely on divine revelation.
 - d. As we know from other places, Descartes is a rationalist. Therefore, he couldn't possibly mean what he says here. He must be saying it to avoid condemnation by the Church.
 - e. (a) and (c).
 - f. (a) and (d).

3. It makes a difference whether error is due to a “pure negation” or a “privation” (as those are defined on p. 100) because:

a. A pure negation, strictly speaking, has no cause. In particular, God cannot be blamed for causing a pure negation. A privation, on the other hand, is a real entity which must be explained.

b. A pure negation is a quantity, whereas a privation is a quality. But bodies are quantities, so a thinking thing, which is not a body, is not subject to pure negation.

c. We know clearly and distinctly that there are no pure negations. Every negation always has at least some positive benefits to it. A privation, on the other hand, is completely bad.

d. If I am a thinking thing, I can make pure negations into assents by using my will to think (judge) that they are true for me.

e. (a) and (b).

4. Descartes (or the Meditator) says that he has an absolutely free will, and that the exercise of that will sometimes leads to error and sin. But he also says (on p. 104) that God could have made him such that he would never go wrong about anything. He explains that this makes sense because:

a. God could have made him without a free will, and just forced him to always assent to the truth.

b. God could have made him with a free will, but nevertheless “brainwashed” him into never using it, and instead forced him to always assent to the truth.

c. God could have made him with a free will, but also given him a clear and distinct perception of the truth in all the (finitely many) cases where he actually needs it to decide correctly. In that case he would always have freely assented to the truth.

d. Freedom is not the same thing as indifference. On the contrary, indifference is a very defective state (at least, for a created being).

e. Freedom is not a perfection. It is an occult property. Therefore, we should not try to understand it, but should rely on faith.

f. (c) and (d).