

LANGARA COLLEGE

**Philosophy 1101, Section 002**

**Essay Questions (pick one)**

(Essay due Nov. 25, 2021, but outline due Nov. 9.)

*Write about 1,200 words, double-spaced*

1. Does Locke succeed in showing that all knowledge comes from experience? Summarise two of Locke's arguments for this view, and evaluate them. (You may refer to other philosophers' criticisms of Locke, such as those of Leibniz.)
2. Thomas Reid criticised representative realism on the following grounds (*Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, Essay #2, Chapter 14):

[Representative realism] is directly contrary to the universal sense of men who have not been instructed in philosophy. When we see the sun or moon, we have no doubt that the very objects which we immediately see are very far distant from us, and from one another. ... But how are we astonished when the philosopher informs us that we are mistaken in all this; that the sun and moon which we see are not, as we imagine, many miles distant from us, and from each other, but they are in our own mind.

Define what is meant by 'representative realism', and briefly summarise some of the arguments for it. How should a representative realist respond to Reid here? (You can address such questions as: Does Reid describe representative realism accurately, or does he attack a straw man? Is it true that representative realism is contrary to common sense? If it is, then is this a good reason to reject it?) Argue for your thesis.

3. Define 'radical scepticism' and explain how such scepticism seems to be supported by representative realism (especially when combined with an internalist view of knowledge). Descartes and Locke both respond to the threat of radical scepticism, but in very different ways. Compare their responses, and evaluate them. Is either response successful? (You can develop your own alternative here.)
4. Summarise Leibniz's argument for innate knowledge, based on his assumption that scientific knowledge is produced by reasoning (as well as empirical data). What is Hume's alternative view of how we come to believe scientific theories? Evaluate both approaches to induction, and either support one of the views or develop a view of your own.

5. Summarise one version of the argument from irreducibility for dualism (e.g. the Mary argument), and then consider and evaluate objections to it. Here you might discuss Churchland's various objections to the irreducibility argument, such as:

"... it is equally difficult, note, to imagine how the relevant phenomena could be explained or predicted solely in terms of the substance dualist's nonphysical mindstuff. The explanatory problem here is a major challenge to everybody, not just to the materialist. On this issue then, we have a rough standoff."

6. In *Matter and Consciousness*, Chapter 2, Paul Churchland presents several arguments against dualism. Summarise one or two of these arguments, and evaluate them. Are any of these arguments successful in refuting dualism? (You should carefully distinguish between the various kinds of dualism, and be clear about which kind or kinds are being attacked.)
7. Do (at least some) humans have free will? Define hard determinism, and summarise some of d'Holbach's arguments for it. (You can also consider arguments by similar thinkers, such as Sam Harris.) Present and evaluate criticisms of those arguments, in order to support your own thesis.
8. Is free will compatible with determinism? Describe where exactly Walter Stace disagrees with hard determinism, and present some of Stace's arguments for compatibilism. (You can also consider arguments by other compatibilists, such as Harry Frankfurt, Daniel Dennett, or Peter Strawson.) Then evaluate these arguments and argue for your own thesis.
9. Summarise the "dilemma of free will" argument that free will is impossible, and then present and evaluate one or two criticisms of it. Your thesis can be that one of these criticisms successfully dismantles the dilemma, or that none of them is cogent so that the dilemma stands firm.
10. Libertarian accounts of free will are often said to involve metaphysical claims that are "obscure and panicky" (Peter Strawson). The major obstacle to such accounts is to explain how actions that are not pre-determined can be fully authored and controlled by the person making those actions, rather than being 'random', 'capricious', 'accidental', 'uncontrolled', 'haphazard' and so on. Is any such libertarian account successful? Develop one such account, present arguments for and against it, and evaluate them.