

## Phil. 126 -- Midterm test

Answer one Descartes question and one Leibniz question, for a total of two answers. Each answer should be 700-850 words long. Tests due to your TF by March 5, 5:00pm (New Haven time).

### Descartes Questions – answer one of these

1. Explain how Descartes argues in Meditation Six from the existence of God to the existence of “corporeal things.” (Don’t explain how Descartes proves the existence of God: We are granting Descartes that, at least for the sake of argument, in this question. Just suppose Descartes has proved the existence of God, and explain how the argument goes from there.) Then explain what seems to you to be the most important potential objection to that argument and evaluate the argument in light of that objection. (Again, since we’re granting the Descartes his proof of God, don’t object to that proof.) Does the argument succeed (supposing that God’s existence has been proved)? Explain and defend your answer.
2. Explain the problem of the “Cartesian Circle” that many have thought infects Descartes’s procedure in the Meditations. Why can it seem that Descartes is guilty of viciously circular reasoning? Explain what you think is the most promising way of trying to understand Descartes such that he is not guilty of viciously circular reasoning. In the final analysis, do you think Descartes is guilty of viciously circular reasoning, or not? Explain and defend your answer.

### Leibniz Questions – answer one of these. If you answer question 4, choose either 4a or 4b to answer.

3. What, according to Leibniz, is the relation between mind and body? Why does what happens to one correspond so well with what happens to the other, so that my arm goes up when I decide to raise it, and I feel pain when violence is done to my body? Two rival explanations of this correspondence are interactionism and occasionalism. Explain these accounts, and why Leibniz thinks his own account is superior to them. Finally, explain in what way Leibniz is an idealist. Does he believe that bodies exist, and, if so, how does their existence relate to the perceptions of monads?

4. [If you do this question, answer the first part of it, and then choose either the a) or the b) ending to also answer.]

According to Leibniz’s views, could you have existed without the rest of us existing as well, or is it essential to you that the rest of us exist? (“Us,” here, refers to the monads that actually exist.) Explain the two interpretations of Leibniz’s essentialism that we discussed (“super essentialism” and “perceptual essentialism”), and how this question is correctly answered on each interpretation.

**a.** On either interpretation, it seems that there could have been a mind (whether or not it would have been you) that had all the same perceptions that you have had, even though it was the only mind in the world, other than God. Such a mind would be massively deceived about the nature of the world it inhabited. Discuss the question: On Leibniz’s views, what grounds do you have for thinking that you are not such a massively deceived mind?

**b.** On either interpretation, shockingly many of our properties are essential to us. Explain how Leibniz nonetheless maintains that we can be free in what we do.