PART IB PAPER 05:
EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY

SYLLABUS

- Locke, Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Books I and II.

Some comparative questions may be set.

COURSE OUTLINE

In the wake of the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century the Early Modern period saw intensive work on knowledge and scepticism, and on the nature of thought and its ability to represent reality. As well as representing the world we also act in it, and the nature of agency, motivation, choice and the explanation of action is a further common theme discussed by philosophers in this period.

Offered for study are central texts by some of the most important Early Modern thinkers. They comprise Leibniz, often referred to as the 'rationalist', who stressed the power of reason as the basis for our knowledge of nature and its properties. They also include Locke, Berkeley and Hume, often referred to as the 'empiricists', who regarded knowledge as ultimately derived from experience and who consequently faced the problem of the limitation of knowledge.

The course provides an opportunity for students to develop a critical understanding of some of the most important ideas and arguments of these philosophers, and of the relation of their positions to one another.

Prerequisites

None

Objectives

Students taking this paper will be expected to:

1) Acquire a detailed knowledge of some of the arguments contained in the texts studied.

2) Acquire some sense of how the positions on different topics relate to each other.

3) Engage closely and critically with some of the ideas and arguments studied.

4) Develop their ability to think independently about the issues presented, through study of the set texts and, where appropriate, comparison of them with modern positions.

Preliminary Reading

GARBER, Daniel, and Michael AYERS, eds., The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy. 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Also available online at: Vol. 1: http://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521307635 and Vol. 2: http://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521572330. [This is not an introductory work, but it will give you a good sense of much of the field and also contains a large bibliography]


The following introductory texts may be useful:


READING LIST

The set texts are required reading. Items marked with asterisk* are important.

General Introductions


General and Comparative Readings on Locke, Leibniz, Berkeley and Hume


POPKIN, Richard, The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza (Berkeley, CA: California University Press, 1982).

VESEY, Godfrey, Idealism Past and Present (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).


Online Texts

Unmodified versions of the texts by Locke, Leibniz, Berkeley and Hume may be found at Carl Mickelsen’s website: http://dbanach.com/archive/mickelsen/

The Complete Works and Correspondence of David Hume is available online at: http://pm.nlx.com

LEIBNIZ

Set Texts

LEIBNIZ, Gottlob W., Discourse on Metaphysics.

LEIBNIZ, Gottlob W., The Monadology. [Can be found in his Philosophical Writings, translated by R. Francks and R.S. Woolhouse, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), and in other collections also]


Related Texts


Secondary Reading


BERKELEY

Set Texts


BERKELEY, George, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*.

Related Texts


BERKELEY, George, *Philosophical Works*.

Secondary Reading


HUME


*HUME, David, Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding. Also available online at: http://lib.mylibrary.com/?id=116084

Secondary Reading

GENERAL

ALLISON, Henry, Custom and Reason in Hume: A Kantian Reading of the First Book of the Treatise (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Also available online at: https://www.dawsonera.com


BAIER, Annette, The Pursuits of Philosophy: An Introduction to the Life and Thought of David Hume (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011). Also available online at: https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674063082. (Introductory)


IMPRESSIONS AND IDEAS


*HUME, David, Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Sect. 2.


THE IDEA OF SPACE AND GEOMETRY


On infinite divisibility and on the status of geometry:


On Hume’s knowledge of mathematics and natural philosophy:


BELIEF AND THE IDEA OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

A BUNDLE OF PERCEPTIONS


THE EXISTENCE OF EXTERNAL BODIES


DEMONSTRATIVE KNOWLEDGE

*HUME, David, *Treatise on Human Nature*, Book 1, Part 2, sect. 4; Part 3, sect. 1; Part 4, sect. 1.

*ALLISON, Henry, *Custom and Reason in Hume: A Kantian Reading of the First Book of the Treatise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), chs. 3 & 8. Also available online at: https://www.dawsonera.com


*FOGELIN, R., ‘Hume’s Skepticism with Regard to Reason’ in his *Hume’s Skeptical Crisis: a textual study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 39-54. Also available online at: https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195387391.003.0004


*YOLTON, J. W.,’Hume on Single and Double Existence’ in his *Perceptual Acquaintance*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), pp. 147-64. Also available on Moodle


A very interesting discussion:

FORCE AND VIVACITY IN THE TREATISE


On the physiology of animal spirits:


CARELESS AND INATTENTION: HUME’S SCEPTICISMS


*WAXMAN, W., ‘The Cartesian Nightmare Come True’ in his *Hume’s Theory of Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 266-79. Also available online at: https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511554520.013


Also of interest:


We welcome your suggestions for further readings that will improve and diversify our reading lists, to reflect the best recent research, and important work by members of under-represented groups. Please email your suggestions to phillib@hermes.cam.ac.uk including the relevant part and paper number. For information on how we handle your personal data when you submit a suggestion please see https://www.information-compliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/data-protection/general-data.