

TOPICS FOR SECOND PAPER (given out: 3/21/91)  
**Six Pages** (double-spaced typing) **DUE 4/29/91** (no extensions)  
PHILOSOPHY 211: HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY II  
“Philosophy in the World of Language [*Logos*]”

- A. Consult the hand-out, “Ten Clues to Better Papers in Philosophy,” before, during, and after written composition. Note especially the need to “proof-read” the drafts of your paper. A good clue to apt punctuation can be had from reading your paper aloud; commas normally occur where you would naturally pause while speaking.
- B. Consultations on these and proposed topics are available—please make an appointment—in Humanities 2003, Mondays & Thursdays, 1:15–2:00, and on Wednesdays when your instructor is not involved in meetings.
- C. *Be sure that your paper addresses questions raised in the readings, lectures, and discussions of this course.*
- D. No research beyond the texts for this course is required (you may, of course, consult further literature if you wish; but this assignment is an occasion for interpretive arguments—hence the reference to a PRIME TEXT—concerning the materials at hand, not for a research paper).
- E. Devote at least 3 pages of your essay to an interpretation of the PRIME TEXT in each of the topics listed below; use the remainder of the essay to show how the problem indicated in the PRIME TEXT arose and how it shaped the development of subsequent philosophy.
- F. What follow are suggested *topics* (other topics are acceptable *if proposed in writing*, and with a PRIME TEXT, by 4/22/91 and approved):
1. On Hobbes’ (a) Distinction between “Mental Discourse” and “Verbal Discourse,” (b) his insistence that “*true* and *false* are attributes of speech, not of [physical] things” and, (c) his argument that We can but Conjecture about Things whereas We can have a Science when our Verbal Discourse follows our Mental Discourse (a possibility only realized in Geometry, by Euclid, and Civil Philosophy, by Hobbes). [You may find it convenient to recall the distinction between “Internal Reason” and “External” or “Uttered Reason” (*Logos*) in the Stoic tradition]. On Hobbes’ sharp distinction between (i) the language of truth and (ii) physical theory, briefly compare and contrast Descartes, Spinoza, and Hume. PRIME TEXT: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chs. III–V (Popkin, 195–211).
  2. On the Knowability (or Unknowability) of *Created* Things in Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz. PRIME TEXT: Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation IV (Popkin, pp. 154–161).
  3. On the Philosophical Significance of Montaigne’s Invention of “the Essay” as a Distinct Genre of Literature, with Reference to Sextus’ *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (Saunders, pp. 152ff.), to the Standard Form of Scholastic “Treatises” (e.g., Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*, as represented by “The Treatise on Law” and other selections in our text Saint Thomas Aquinas, *On Law, Morality, and Politics*), to the Recovery of Sextus’ text (ca. 1562), Montaigne’s *Essays*, and to the Development Philosophical Literature (in the “Essay” **vs.** the “Treatise” Form) in two of the following: Locke, Berkeley, or Leibniz. PRIME TEXT: Montaigne, “The Apology for Raimond Sebond,” in *Essays*, Bk. II, Ch. 12 (best English edition by Donald Frame, *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, Stanford, CA: SUP, 1957) as

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abridged in our assigned readings (Popkin, pp. 70–81). *This topic has been especially designed for students with an interest in Literature.*

4. On the Philosophical Significance of the “Revolutions” in Astronomy and Physics in the Early Modern Period of Western Thought, with special Reference to (three of the following): Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Descartes (if you wish to consult his *Principles of Philosophy*, now translated by Miller & Miller, Boston: D. Reidel Pub. Co., 1984), and Newton. PRIME TEXT: Newton, from the *Principia* (in Beck, pp. 13–21). [Students interested in this topic will wish to look at—consider, but not study in any detail—one of the following: Pierre Duhem, *To Save the Phenomena: An Essay on the Idea of Physical Theory from Plato to Galileo* (1908), Chicago: UCP, 1969 (a gem of brilliant and easy exposition in just 117 pages), **or** Herbert Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science: 1300–1800*, New York: Macmillan, 1960 (an enormously successful popularization of Duhem, among others), **or** Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution: Planetary Astronomy in the Development of Western Thought*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1959, **or** E.J. Dijksterhuis, *The Mechanization of the World Picture: Pythagoras to Newton*, Princeton: PUP, 1986.]
5. Why the Proposition “That the world is Eternal” was a Necessary Component in Spinoza’s *Ethics*, including Comparisons with Descartes and Leibniz. [It will be noted that this topic is the inverse of #2.] PRIME TEXT: Spinoza, from *The Ethics*, Book One, “Concerning God” (in Popkin, pp. 247–258).
6. On the Sudden Appearance of Probability as Statistical Inference in the 17th Century, with especial reference to its avoidance in Descartes, its emergence in Gassendi and Hobbes, and its articulation by Pascal and Leibniz (you need only deal with two of the above in any detail). [Students interested in this topic will wish to consult—sc., “read around in”—Ian Hacking, *The Emergence of Probability*, Cambridge: CUP, 1975.] *This topic has been especially designed for students with interest(s) in Mathematics, Physics, or Economics.*
7. Why Leibniz’s Monads are “Windowless,” with Consideration of the “Rationalist” Critique of “Empiricist” Theories of Truth (truth as “correspondence” with things external to the mind—the theater of Stoic “lecta” or Hobbsian “mental discourse”) in (two of the following): Bacon, Locke, Berkeley, or Hume. PRIME TEXT: Leibniz, *The Monadology* (Beck, pp. 194–207).
8. How “Empirical” Data came to be regarded as “Evidence,” with special Reference to the Jewish (Philonic)-Christian-Islamic Doctrine of the World as a Creation from Nothing, giving an Account of (three of the following): Ockham, Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, and Leibniz (in our assigned readings). This topic, like #5, is a variation upon #2. Those interested in this variation are advised to consult Michael Foster, “The Christian Doctrine of Creation and the Rise of Modern Natural Science,” *Mind*, Vol. XLIII, 1934, reprinted in O’Connor & Oakley, eds., *Creation: The Impact of an Idea*, New York: Scribner’s, 1969 (pp. 29ff.). PRIME TEXT: Galileo, “Letter [on sunspots] to the Grand Duchess Christina” (1615, in Popkin, ed., pp. 61–63).

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9. Students with a special interest in Kant may formulate a topic on this philosopher even though we will not, as a class, have had an opportunity to consider Kant at the due date of this paper. Those so inclined are advised to consider Kant's place in the Stoic tradition, with special reference to Hobbes' philosophy of language.

AGAIN: Whatever topic you choose—whether one of these or one of your own devising—try to develop an *argument* that will exhibit your *present* orientation (you have no other) within the context of early modern thought as you have come to know it. You are not being asked to come up with any radically novel or especially “brilliant” interpretation. Simply take the opportunity to put together your thoughts on the readings and arguments considered so far in this course. Do not try to *say* everything; your paper will *show* how much you have comprehended the materials studied. You may well be astonished to discover how much you have learned. But you will only make this discovery once you have attempted to put your thoughts in written form. (A project for thought in an idle moment: when you attempt to put your thoughts into written form will you be making a transfer from “Mental Discourse” to “Verbal Discourse” à la Hobbes and the Stoic tradition?)

This paper will be the principal determinant of your grade for PHI 211.