

Phil IV

Xmas exam

SP02

John Shaw.

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1. How does modern philosophy differ from that of the middle ages? on the basis of your answer. Consider briefly, the philosophy you have studied so as to bring out the transitional elements.

The philosophy of the middle ages has been termed the "Scholastic". Modern philosophy differed from it in substance and to some extent in method. The scholastics began with the established truth of revelation, and through the syllogism derived the rest of their ideas. The scholastics were subservient to theology. With them philosophy was the handmaid of Christianity. Nor did it have any respect for any description of the physical world other than the one it had adopted from Aristotle.

The modern philosophers came, to a greater or lesser extent, with an open mind to face their problems. Their investigation was independent. Some of them did, however, use the scholastic method of assumption and deduction. It was not until the critical philosophy of the latter moderns that scholasticism was entirely done away with.

In Bacon, we have the philosopher who is recognised as the first to break from this subservience to theology. He, unlike the scholastics, took stock of physical phenomena whether it interfered with Aristotle's conception or not. As a result he reached a system which was altogether opposed to the description in Revelation. In his search for the final cause he clearly that the cause and the substance and the matter are all one. This lays havoc with Christian doctrine.

In Bacon you have a new method + substance entirely from the scholastics although you still begin with an assumption of the validity of the induction laws.

He is however, sincerely in favour of coming at the problem with a free mind, and after endless experiment, to eliminate all the negative instances and discover truth.

The materialism of Hobbes, and his method was new also. Although he declared his theories from the "natural laws" he did reach his position of independent observation of physical phenomena.

In Descartes' *Spinoza* and Leibniz the method is almost the same. They try to find of all clear the mind of all prejudices and then work independently from axioms, deducing the truth by a discipline of cross questioning & revision. Their method is a mixture. Their search failed in the powers of the reason does not cause them to question its validity. Although vastly different, there is still much of the scholastics in them. This is their belief in intuition.

(4)

In his *meditations* Bacon criticizes their method and lack of utilitarianism. He is especially interested in the method of arriving at truth. The scholastics, he thought, were too prone to accept what was true in their first assumptions without probing ~~the~~ it. He thought they ignored the physical phenomena around them and clung, for no reason at all, to the physics of Aristotle. Also Bacon wanted a philosophy, a method which would be beneficial to man, would serve him with commodities. The scholastic philosophy was a barren virgin. He wanted a method which would produce something.

His method was first to get rid of all the "old" which stood in the way of truth. So away with prejudice, with old thinking, tradition, for its own sake, the error that arises out of the wrong or

inexact use of words. Having done this we come at the physical phenomenon around us in an independently experimental mood. We experiment and observe. When a negative instance arises we eliminate it, by forming a new hypothesis and we are close to the truth. Finally, when no more negative instances arise we include a truth which, until proved wrong, is absolutely.

We would give truth the acid test of experiment.

In this, Bacon sits at least two important factors. A philosopher who approaches physical phenomena absolutely independently is going to get nowhere and will prove nothing. Further his leap from the validity of a large number of experiments to the validity of a general truth is itself an assumption.

His general spirit is refreshing however.

He does represent a movement which attempts to

draw the laws of nature, play them and so conquer nature. He helped to begin a new system which in some ways has greatly benefited mankind.

(5)

Descartes, begins like Bacon to do away

with all tradition and prejudices. His mathematical method of analysis and synthesis and revision is, in a way like the Discipline of Bacon's inductive method. However he does assume the validity of intuition. An axiom that is so clear that it

cannot be denied with the reason, is truth. He

tries to establish the validity of self and God and the outside world. a problem ^{about} which Bacon would not have bothered his head. He would have taken

Block himself and the world of matter for granted.

(a) The only, or at least, one of the only things of which Descartes is sure is that he doubts. This assures him that he thinks and therefore exists as a thinking being.

4) However, doubt presupposes an absolute value. Furthermore I have ideas about things which transcend myself. I have ideas of perfection which could not belong to me so I as a thinking being must be thinking of another person than myself. This idea which transcends myself must come from a higher being namely God. A gain if God has the definition of perfection he must exist because existence is necessary for perfection. God therefore exists.

c) By definition, God is also true and as my ideas of the world around me come from him they must be true. God would never lie. Therefore the physical world exists and is real.

He did, however separate the realms of mind and matter or body. Extension and motion were the only attributes of matter, they were both eternal. The mind, in attempting for instance, to move its own body, could not create or destroy this motion or energy. Therefore Descartes said it just changed its direction. However it would have to energize its energies, create or destroy them, in order to do this. Thus the question of the relationship of mind and matter was left still unresolved.