

**2019**

**M.A.**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Semester Examination**

**PHILOSOPHY**

**PAPER – PHI-205**

**Full Marks : 40**

**Time : 2 Hours**

The figures in the right-hand margin indicate full marks.

Candidates are required to give their answers in their own words as far as practicable.

Illustrate the answers wherever necessary.

1. Answer any four questions out of the followings:

(2x4)

- i) What is the central Philosophical task that Descartes undertakes in *Meditations* ? 2
- ii) Explain the Philosophical significance of Scepticism which Descartes undertakes in *Meditations*. 2
- iii) In the beginning of *Meditations*, Descartes encourages us to ask questions such as 'do I have a body' ? , 'Is this my hand'? etc. If you were to ask such questions, Many would respond that ' you have gone mad '. Do you think that Descartes is being irrational ? 2
- iv) In the beginning of *Meditations*, Descartes states that his beliefs are built on "shaky foundations" . Explain . 2
- v) Is there any similarity between a 'clear visual perception ' and a 'clear idea' which Descartes introduces ? Explain . 2
- vi) In *Meditations* , Descartes famously says the following : " I think, therefore I am", Here is ' I am' being inferred from ' I think' ? Explain . 2
- vii) Descartes doubt knowledge based on sense experience. But he does not doubt mathematical knowledge . Is it true or False ? Explain . 2
- viii) Descartes considers the possibility of an evil demon. Does it suggest that he is superstitious ? Discuss . 2

2. Answer any four questions out of the following . (4x4)
- i) In *Meditations* , Rene Descartes makes an argument based on the possibility that we might be misled by an evil demon . Before considering this option, he attempts to make a similar argument by invoking 'God'. However , Descartes realizes that such an argument is fraught with difficulties . What are the difficulties that he points out ? 4
- ii) Descartes notes that senses sometimes deceive us. Then he says as follows :  
 "... prudence dictates that we should never fully trust those who have deceived us even once ". Do you agree with this position of Descartes ? Explain . 4
- iii) If we systematically doubt everything, Descartes hold , we will end up with very little knowledge. Suppose someone responds to Descartes that therefore such a skepticism is not helpful for us as epistemic agents. How would Descartes reply to such a criticism ? Discuss . 4
- iv) What is 'real distinction' which Descartes introduces ? Explain . 4
- v) Explain the notion of 'clear and distinct idea' in Descartes . 4
- vi) Describe the way Descartes conceptualise 'mind' and 'body' in *Meditations* . 4
- vii) How does Descartes invokes the 'divisibility' or ' non-divisibility ' of mind to argue for the duality between mind and body ? Discuss . 4
- viii) Do the arguments which Descartes proposes for the distinction between mind and body lead to any serious philosophical problems ? Explain . 4

3. Answer any two questions out of the following :

(2x8)

- i) In *Meditations*, after considering the dreams argument, Descartes notes the following 8  
“From all this , perhaps , we may safely conclude that physics, astronomy,  
Medicine and all the other disciplines which involve the study of composite  
things are indeed doubtful ; but that arithmetic , geometry, and other disciplines  
of the same kind which deal only with the very simplest and most general things  
... contain something certain and indubitable”. Explain and critically examine  
What Descartes is getting at here .
- ii) Describe and critically examine the ‘evil demon argument’ which Descartes proposes 8  
in *Meditations* .
- iii) Critically examine Descartes’ quest for certainty, and for a firm foundation for the 8  
knowledge system in *Meditations* .
- iv) What are the similarities and differences between the ‘dream argument’ and the 8  
‘evil demon argument’ ? Critically examine .