

Study Guide:
René Descartes

“Meditation I”

1. What is the task that he is going to do?
2. What must he do to accomplish his task?
3. Since considering each opinion individually, how will he find a way to doubt each of them?
4. What is the first basic principle he considers?
5. How does he reject this principle (the first skeptical argument)?
6. What is the second skeptical argument? What does it enable him to doubt?
7. What is the third skeptical argument? What does it enable him to doubt?

Meditation II

1. What does he need to find?
2. What are the things that he is no doubting?
3. Can he doubt his own existence?
4. Why does he not want to say that he is a rational animal?
5. What attributes can he assign to his body?
6. What kind of thing does he conclude he is?
7. What properties does he have?
8. Does he know if he has senses?

9. Does he know if he has a body?
10. What properties does Descartes initially think the wax has?
11. What properties change when Descartes moves the wax near the fire?
12. What does Descartes think are the real properties of the wax? (The properties of the true nature of the wax)?
13. Descartes asks the question: "What is this extended thing?" what is Descartes answer?
14. Why does Descartes deny that it is his senses that perceives the true nature of the wax?
15. How does he perceive the true nature of the wax? What does the perceiving?

16. What is the lesson of his looking out of the window and seeing people walking with umbrellas?

Study Guide:
René Descartes “Meditation III”

1. What does he know?
2. How can he list sensory experiences when he doesn't know if there is an external world?
3. What kind of perception does he think might turn out to be a perception of something true?
4. What reason did he find that caused him to doubt things he perceived clearly and distinctly (such as $2 + 3 = 5$)?
5. What question must he consider to remove this reason for doubting clear and distinct perception?
6. What are the three categories of thought (the contents of his mind)?
7. With which ideas must he be chiefly concerned at this point?

8. What is his point of claiming that he has two distinct ideas of the sun?
9. Which of his ideas has the greatest amount of objective reality?
10. Why could I not create this idea myself (as I create the idea of a unicorn)?
11. Why the perception of the infinite cannot be understood as being not finite — why the idea of the infinite is in fact clear and distinct.
12. Why couldn't I get the idea of one perfection from one source, and the idea of another perfection from another source which I then combine for the idea of a perfect being?

Study Guide:
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13. About which things does he know very little, and about which things does he know more?
14. Why is it impossible that God should ever deceive me?
15. Where does my faculty of judgment come from?
16. What problem does the origin of my faculty of judgment raise?
17. What explains my going wrong?
18. When he looks more closely into the nature of his errors, what does he find?
19. How can he avoid error?
20. Why does he have no grounds to complain to God?

Study Guide:
Descartes *Meditation V*

1. Is the property of a quantity clear and distinct?
2. What other features does he identify as being clear and distinct?
3. Does he know if a physical world exists at this point?
4. Are triangles real things that have their own natures? Explain why.
5. How does he come to know about triangles? Through the uses of his senses, or through the use of the mind alone?
6. How does this lead to a second proof of God's existence?
7. Why doesn't Descartes think that existence can be separated from the essence of God?

Meditation VI

1. Is my power of imagining part of my essence?
2. Are colors and sounds properties that are perceived clearly and distinctly?
3. Are ideas perceived through the sense more or less vivid than those produced by the imagination?
4. What two roles does Descartes give to the imagination?
5. What is the significance for Descartes that amputees can still perceive pain in the amputated limb?
6. Is everything I clearly and distinctly perceive possibly true?
7. What two possibilities are there for the cause of my sensory experience?
8. What does he conclude has to be the cause of some of my sensory experiences?

9. Why couldn't these be images put into my mind by God?
10. Are things that are actually taught by my nature in fact true?
11. What is the source of things that appear to have been taught to me by nature, but are in fact not taught by nature?
12. Does my nature teach me to draw conclusions about sensory perceptions before my intellect has examined them?
13. Has he shown that when I go near a fire and feel heat, that there is in fact heat in the fire?
14. Is there any corporeal thing that I cannot imagine me being me without?
15. How can I tell whether or not I am dreaming?