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Question 1:

Reality is objective and exists independent of anyone or any perspective. And appearance is the perception, usually through senses, of reality by human, or how the reality appears to human.

For example, to a color blind person, a red apple might appear green to him/her, and to him/her, the green apple is the appearance but it’s not the reality. Furthermore, the sensual experience of color itself is indeed just appearance, not reality. It’s simply the lights reflected by the objects into our eyes, and our brains interpret them as colors.

Question 2:

Truth is relative to a particular person, or a particular point of view. If a belief is not contradicted with reality to a person, then it is truth to this person. One can never verify if something accepted as truth is indeed the real reality.

Reality is objective and does not depend on human or any perspective. It can be perceived and understood by human, but it’s ultimately objective and independent from anyone’s view of perspective or anyone’s mid

Question 3:

Plato’s allegory of the cave is meant to show the relationship between appearance, or what one perceives, the limitation of human, and the reality.

The cave represents the limitation we as human are in; shadows on the wall represent our perception of appearances; and the escape into the outside the world represents the exposure to the reality.

Question 4:

The Experience Machine is a thought experiment where a person is given a chance of entering a machine where in reality he/she will stay in the machine while his/her mind leads a life in a simulation of virtual reality. This life in the experience machine is preprogrammed with every kind of experience he/she wants, but it’s preprogrammed so the person will lose, to a certain extent, his free will.

The purpose of this experiment is to explore whether experiencing good is self-justified good and valued, and more generally, what is self-justified valued and should be pursued by human.

Question 5:

Descartes doubts the foundations of his beliefs, and since he thinks most of the accepted truths come from perception of senses, he starts by doubting the reliability of senses.

This would work, since, according to Descartes, if the foundation is not trustworthy, then every belief built upon this foundation will collapse. Also, if something certain about the foundation is established, then everything contradicting with it will then be false and he can also seek truth from this established certain foundation.

Question 6:

Descartes thinks that the most general and simplest things are still true and real, such as arithmetic and geometry, even if everything is in a dream.

Just as a painter paints based on elements from reality, however fictitious and imaginative his paintings are, dreams are based in reality as well. It’s impossible to dream of something that has no connection with reality. For example, we can dream of a unicorn, which is nonexistent, but it’s still a combination of a horse and a corn, which both come from reality. And just as a painter, even if he paints something extremely unrealistic, still uses pigments, shapes, and colors, which are all real, in our dreams, 2 plus 3 is still 5, and a square still has 4 sides. Therefore, Descartes concludes the most general and simplest things are still true and real.

Question 7:

“A thinking thing” means that what Descartes can be sure about himself, or the existence of himself, up to this point, is that he is thinking. And everything else, whether he is an animal, or more fundamentally, whether he has a body, is uncertain and cannot be known.

Before this conclusion, Descartes uses a malicious demon to doubt his beliefs. According to Descartes, the demon can put everything to his mind and deceive him about everything, but the demon cannot make him believe he is nothing while he thinks he is something. Therefore, “I think, I am”. From this perspective, thinking naturally becomes the fundamental feature of existence. Later in his second meditation, Descartes also points out that everything is ultimately known through understanding, and this process enhances the idea that he is a thinking thing.