

Descartes Meditation I Seminar

1. Thinking of the text overall, how would you describe the way Descartes goes about conducting his “thought experiment”?
2. What are the benefits/drawbacks of this approach?
3. Why does he argue the senses can not be trusted? Why is this important and do you agree? Why does he reject this argument as a source of doubt?
4. What is his argument about dreams? Why is this argument important and do you agree? Why does he reject this argument as a source of doubt?
5. What is the purpose of the “malignant demon” discussed on line 96? Why is this idea a suitable one for him to doubt? Do you agree?
6. What is it Descartes is hoping to accomplish here? Is this just a waste of time? Do you see any application of these ideas to the real world?

Descartes Meditation I Questions

1. Summarize the main ideas of lines 7 through 22. What is he talking about and aiming to accomplish here?
2. Give a brief summary of lines 27 through 33. What are his key points in this section?
3. What is his argument about dreams? Do you agree with his reasoning here?
4. Briefly summarize the key points of lines 66 through 94. What is he arguing about the nature of God as it pertains to his doubts and whether there is objective truth?
5. In the final section (lines 96-107) what is the purpose of the “malignant demon”? How does he conclude Meditation I?
6. Is this whole exercise just a waste of time? Do you see any application of these ideas to the real world?

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In your small groups do the following:

- Pick one person to record the groups' comments (or rotate the responsibility)
- Discuss each question (or as many as you can in 30 minutes) – there is no need to rush
- At the end of 30 minutes we will have a whole class discussion on the material
- I will collect each group's discussion notes for credit