

Chapter 7

Descartes, Sixth Meditation

7.1 Homework

Readings :

- Descartes, Meditation VI
- Objections and Replies:
 - a) Fourth O and R: CSM II, 140-3, 154-9.
 - b) Sixth O and R: CSM II, 296-99
- BGD 10 (Clarke)

Study Questions :

1. What is the main aim of the Sixth Meditation?
2. How does the fact that we have a faculty of imagination indicate that bodies exist? Can we be certain of this?
3. What is Descartes' argument for his claim that the body is distinct from the mind? What is the difference between a real distinction and a distinction in conception? What kind of distinction does Descartes think there is between the mind and the body? Do you find his arguments and answers to the objections convincing?
4. What is Descartes' argument for his claim that corporeal things exist? Did Descartes recover the existence of tables and chairs? If not, what are the "corporeal things" looking like?

5. Why does Descartes take the "teaching of nature" to be reliable now while they were rejected in the first Meditation? What do they teach us exactly?

Text Analysis : For Friday – pp. 50-51 From "The conclusion that material things exist is also suggested by the faculty of imagination" to "necessary inference that some body exist"

1. Give an analysis of the passage
 - Describe the point the author intends to make
 - Describe the argument that the author is using to establish the point (give an outline)
2. Formulate 3 questions for further discussion about the passage – The questions might be of *any* of the following types:
 - a. Clarification request: if you think the author is not clear on one claim he makes: justify your request and propose different ways in which this claim could be interpreted
 - b. Argument request: if you think the text contains an unsupported claim: justify your request and propose a way (or a direction) for a possible argument.
 - c. Objection: if you think that one of the author's claim is false: give an argument for this!

7.2 Descartes: Sixth Meditations

The aims of the 6th. Meditation :

- Two things to recover:
 1. the existence of some external stuff
 2. such external stuff is a corporeal world
- What is the challenge? Formulated in Meditation 3 and 5:

The objection against the argument appealing to the non-voluntary character of my perceiving the ideas of external objects was that I could be unaware of an internal faculty which would cause the ideas of external objects in my mind.

→ *What is going to be Descartes' main argument against this?*

The existence of body – A probable argument from the faculty of imagination
 – *Your job!*

The existence of body - Argument from the sense-perceptions :

- Sense perceptions
- Hypothesis: existence of external bodies + of my body + resemblance thesis
- Arguments:
 1. Non voluntary
 2. Vividness
 3. Teaching of nature
- Counter-Arguments:
 1. Against our trust in the senses:
 - a. Senses are deceitful (external + internal)
 - b. Dreaming argument
 - c. Evil Genius
 2. Against the teaching of nature – deceitful
 3. Against the argument that sense perceptions are non voluntary – unconscious faculty

What to take back now? Back to clear and distinct ideas :

(1) The argument for the real distinction between the mind and the body: *highly controversial!*

(2) The argument that the corporeal things exist as the objects of mathematics

(3) The argument concerning the other qualities of external things – what to take – or not – from the teachings of nature?

- The teachings of nature concern the union of the mind and the body

- They tell us about the interaction between external bodies and my body

- Misuse of the teaching of nature

Theory of error for the teachings of nature – similar problem as in Med.

III

- Privation vs defect again

- A mechanistic explanation of error preserving God's goodness

Conclusion : Rule of thumb for checking the truth of sensation and the end of the dream argument