605 - MEDITATION TWO

I. PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENT

A. As I have said, philosophy is a history of questions and answers but it is also a skill.

B. Let's take a look at Descartes' use of this skill.

C. First the Argument:

1. What is a philosophical argument? What does it look like?
   - **a) PREMISES: A SET OF ONE OR MORE STATEMENTS.**
   - **b) CONCLUSION: A STATEMENT OR SET OF STATEMENTS THAT IS/ARE SUPPOSED TO BE ENTAILED BY THE PREMISES.**
2. How do you evaluate an argument?
   - **a) VALIDITY: THE TRUTH OF THE PREMISES ACTUALLY DOES ENTAIL THE TRUTH OF THE CONCLUSION. IF THE PREMISES ARE TRUE THE CONCLUSION MUST ALSO BE TRUE.**
   - **b) SOUNDNESS: THE PREMISES ACTUALLY ARE TRUE, AND THE ARGUMENT IS VALID.**
3. Some tricks:
   - **a) SOME ARGUMENTS AREN'T VALID.**
     - (1) Here's an argument.
       - A) The president had an extramarital affair with Monica Lewinsky.
       - B) Bill Clinton is the president.
       - C) Bill Clinton's wife is Hilary Clinton.
       - ∴ Hilary Clinton is crazy.
     - (2) These premises do not entail this conclusion.
   - **b) SOME ARGUMENTS ARE VALID BUT NOT SOUND.**
     - (1) Here's a valid argument
       - A) The president who was elected in 1992 is the 42nd president.
       - B) Bill Bradley was elected president in 1992.
       - ∴ Bill Bradley is the 42nd president.
     - (2) What's the problem here?
     - (3) Premise B is false. If it were true the argument would be sound.
   - **c) SOME ARGUMENTS ARE SOUND, BUT NOT INTERESTING.**
     - (1) Here's a sound argument
       - Jack is a bachelor.
       - A bachelor is an unmarried man.
       - ∴Jack is an unmarried man.
     - (2) What's the problem here?
     - (3) This is a tautology. It is always true. X=Y, Y=Z, ∴X=Z
     - (4) That is really useful.

(5)

(6) This particular application of it however is not interesting.

d) THESE ARE ALL ARGUMENTS THAT WE NEED TO SET ASIDE FOR VARIOUS REASONS.

II. RECONSIDERING MEDITATION ONE

A. First of all what's the conclusion? We know nothing.

B. What kinds of things are we going to need to know in order to determine whether or not this is a useful sound argument?

1. What is knowledge? What isn't knowledge?
2. Where does knowledge come from?

C. The argument

Assumption: Knowledge comes through the senses.
Assumption: Knowledge is the set of beliefs that cannot be reasonably doubted.
1st Our senses often deceive us.
2nd We cannot really distinguish waking from dreaming.
3rd We cannot be certain that an omnipotent being isn't deceiving us?
∴We know nothing.

D. Is this argument valid?

E. Is it sound?

F. Descartes' Method

1. Each of these premises is supported by a set of sub-premises.
2. No evidence was gathered. No statistics were taken. What did Descartes do?
   - **a) 1ST PREMISE: TAKE A SECOND LOOK AT THE FACTS. THIS IS STUFF WE ALREADY KNOW, BUT LOOK IT HAS THESE ADDITIONAL CONSEQUENCES.**
   - **b) 2ND PREMISE: TAKE A SECOND LOOK AT THE FACTS. WE ALL RECOGNIZE THE TRUTH OF THIS, BUT LOOK AT THESE ADDITIONAL CONSEQUENCES.**
   - **c) 3RD PREMISE: TAKE A SECOND LOOK AT THE FACTS. RECONSIDER WHAT IT IS TO KNOW SOMETHING. GIVEN THE DIFFICULTIES ESTABLISHED BY THE EARLIER PREMISES, ANYTHING COULD BE TRUE, INCLUDING THIS.**
   - **d) CONCLUSION: GIVEN WHAT KNOWLEDGE IS AND HOW WE GATHER IT; GIVEN THE FALLIABILITY OF THESE SENSES, THE INDISCERNABILITY OF WAKING AND DREAMING AND THE POSSIBLE PRESENCE OF AN OMNIPOTENT BEING, WE KNOW NOTHING.**
3. There is a trick here. Descartes is going to later show that this argument is not sound.
4. You've had a hint in Meditation Two, where do you think this argument goes wrong. Where do you think Descartes thinks this argument goes wrong?

III. MEDITATION TWO

A. Nothing is certain and I therefore suppose everything to be false.

1. Nothing less—things.
2. Nothing more—God.
3. But what about me?

B. But is this true?

1. I have persuaded myself that there is absolutely nothing.
   - **a) NO BODY, NO SENSES, NO MIND**
   - **b) NO SKY, NO EARTH, NOTHING AT ALL**
   - **c) NOT EVEN GOD**
   - **d) A DIGRESSION**
     - (1) You may worry that the final blow in the Med 1, is the existence of a evil ominicence, now he's saying he's sure there's no God.
     - (2) There is a distinction: The difference between God and the evil genius: power vs. perfection
     - (3) Moreover, remember he is not certain even of the existence of the evil omnicence.
2. But who is persuaded?
   - **a) I AM**
   - **b) BUT IF I AM PERSUADED I MUST EXIST**
   - **c) HILBERT IS PERSUADED IMPLIES HILBERT EXISTS**
   - **d) A CLAIM ABOUT THE LOGIC OF THE SENTENCE**

C. But what about the demon?

1. The demon is deceiving me
2. But if I am deceived then I must exist
3. Similarly whenever I consider my existence I must exist
4. Whenever I do or suffer anything I exist
   - **a) BELIEVE, BE PERSUADED, BE DECEIVED, THINK**
   - **b) THE LOGIC OF ACTION SENTENCES**

D. Certainty at last

1. I exist whenever I consider my existence
2. One question whose answer I always know
3. Do I exist?
4. Yes!
5. I am certain I exist

Let him do his best at deception, he will never bring it about that I am nothing so long as I shall think that I am something. Thus, after everything has been most carefully weighed, it must finally be established that this pronouncement "I am, I exist" is necessarily true every time I utter it or conceive it in my mind. (18)

E. Cogito ergo sum

1. I think therefore I am
   - **a) IF IT IS TRUE THAT I THINK THEN IT MUST BE TRUE THAT I EXIST**

2. I eat therefore I am
    a) **LOGIC IS THE SAME AS THE COGITO**
    b) **IF IT IS TRUE THAT I EAT THEN IT MUST BE TRUE THAT I EXIST**

F. What makes thinking special?

1. Can the demon make me think I'm thinking?
2. If I think I'm thinking then I am thinking
3. Being deceived is a kind of thinking

G. Can the demon make me think I'm eating?

1. Easily, by giving me a vivid dream of eating for example.
2. Even if I think I'm walking I may not be walking.

H. Thinking brings certainty

1. With thinking I can always prove my existence
2. I am not always eating
3. Whenever I consider the question of my own existence I am thinking
4. Thinking is always available

I. What have I proved?

1. I exist
    a) **NOT YOU OR MY WIFE OR ANYONE ELSE**
2. I exist now
    a) **NOT TOMORROW OR YESTERDAY**
    b) **AT THE MOMENT WHEN I CONSIDER THE QUESTION I AND NOBODY ELSE EXISTS**

J. I exist and am a thinking thing

1. My knowledge of my existence depends on my thought
2. I am (essentially) a thing that thinks
3. Not a thing that walks, eats, or talks.
4. I may do these things but they are not what really matters
5. What really matters is thinking

But what then am I? A thing that thinks. What is that? A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, and that also imagines and senses. (20)

K. Mind, not body is what matters

1. We don't really understand body as well as mind
2. The wax, don't worry about it
3. Our understanding of body depends on our mind
4. Not our senses

L. What we have learned

1. I am not certain I have a body or there is an external world
2. I am not certain anybody else exists
3. But there is one thing about which I will not have to change my mind
4. I exist, and am a thinking thing

M. So what?

1. Pretty boring conclusions
2. My existence doesn't seem a suitable foundation for knowledge

N. Cogito as example rather than foundation

A. I clearly and distinctly perceive it

1. Reason forces the belief on me
2. Everything I clearly and distinctly perceive is true

B. But other existences are not so clearly and distinctly perceived

1. So we need to remove some obstacles

C. Simple Logic

I think

∴ I am

D. Logically compelling

1. If you accept the premise you can't deny the conclusion
2. And the premise is indubitable

E. Simple : Can have the whole thing in mind at once

1. Clear and distinct perception

a) TO PERCEIVE CLEARLY AND DISTINCTLY IS TO HAVE A LOGICALLY COMPELLING ARGUMENT FOR TRUTH

b) THE COGITO PROVIDES THE PARADIGM EXAMPLE OF CLEAR AND DISTINCT PERCEPTION

Surely in this first instance of knowledge, there is nothing but a certain clear and distinct perception of what I affirm. Yet this would hardly be enough to render me certain of the truth of a thing, if it could ever happen that something that I perceived so clearly and distinctly were false. And thus I now seem able to posit as a general rule that everything I clearly and distinctly perceive is true. (24)