1. Is Descartes a skeptic, foundationalist, rationalist, empiricist, a real-world skeptic? An idealist? A realist?
2. What is Descartes reason in Meditation VI for saying that there is a material universe outside of his mind, and that science will eventually give a true account of its nature? How is God important to this argument?
3. What was Descartes trying to show with the wax in Meditation II?
4. Why does Descartes think that only our best scientific-mathematical view of the material universe will be guaranteed to be correct? And what, according to Descartes, gives us this guarantee?
5. What is Descartes’ proof for the existence of God in Meditation III? What are formal reality and objective reality? And how do they figure in Descartes’ proof?
6. In class, we used the analogy of proving that there must be red in the world on the basis of our knowing that we have the concept of red. What was that argument and how was it meant to explain the sort of argument Descartes was giving for God’s existence in Meditation III?
7. What premise in Descartes’ argument for God’s existence is he not necessarily entitled to say is absolutely certain? How does Descartes try to prove that that premise really is absolutely certain? And how does this proof seems to make him argue in a circle?
8. Why is the Cartesian circle called the ‘Cartesian’ circle? Why isn’t it call ‘Descartes’ circle’?
9. What philosopher as famous for point out this circular reasoning of Descartes’?
10. What are the three skeptical arguments that Descartes discusses in Meditation 1? And which of these arguments does Descartes think gives reasons to doubt not only our perceptual beliefs but even our simple mathematical beliefs?
11. What is the deception of the senses argument, and what was Descartes’ response to this argument in Meditation I?
12. What is the dream argument? And what was Descartes’ assessment of this argument?
13. What is the evil demon argument? And what was Descartes’ assessment of this argument at the end of Meditation I? Did Descartes latter re-assess the strength of evil demon argument?
14. In Meditation II, what are the beliefs that Descartes discovers are absolutely certain?
15. What does Descartes take the wax example in Meditation II to show? How does this fit into Descartes’ view that only through proper use of the intellect (reasoning and science) can we ever hope to get an objective and true representation of reality.
16. What were the two reasons why some think that knowledge requires certainty?
17. What is infallibilism with respect to propositional knowledge?
18. When infallibilist say that knowledge requires certainty, what do they mean by certainty? Do they mean feeling certain? Do they mean that there is no possibility of being wrong given your evidence?