

Philosophy 203
History of Modern Western Philosophy

Russell Marcus
Hamilton College
Spring 2016

Class #2 - Meditation One

Business

- Due date for Paper 1 is *Tuesday, February 16.*
- RAT = Readiness Assessment Task
- We'll do the Descartes RAT in a moment.
- Galileo RAT
 - ▶ Only one person scored better on the iRAT than on the tRAT.
 - ▶ (I hope you'll figure out how to make that not happen!)
 - ▶ Should I put individual scores on Blackboard?

	iRAT Team Average	tRAT Score
Team	82	95
Names	74	90
Omitted	78	100
	50	85
	84	100
	54	75
	76	100
	54	80

Teams

Philosoraptors

Javier Barreto
Ryan Bloom
Daniel Finger
Sam Fogel
Ram Franqui
Darby Philbrick

Cabam

Ayo Adjibaba
Annaliese Mugele
Conor O'Shea
Marquis Palmer
Betsy Ramirez

WOT

Dan Farina
Nikolas Guevara
Helena Laporte-Burns
Felipe Suarez
Ava Tankala
Emily Teichman

CWEOJ

Cooper Halpern
Erik Johansson
Jake McDougall
Olivia Melodia
Will Royal

The First Meditation

Chris Contreras
Carlo Esquivia
Mitchel Herman
Hans Lynn
Nick Silvestri
Robbie Murden

Best Friends 5 Ever

Ian Baize
Brett Bracco
Andi Dickmeyer
Luke Gernert
Ashleah Yzaguirre

Philosofours

Pelumi Fasola
Matthew Laurence
Emily Magruder
Sam Mengual
Harry Thomas

The Matriarchy

Steven Falco
Marchel Holle
Young Kim
Brad Marston
Zach Oscar
Alex Straus

Plan for Today

- iRAT and tRAT
- False Beliefs and Descartes's Motivations
 - Some Science Stuff
- The Puzzling Letter of Dedication
- Descartes's Goals
 - Knowledge and Belief
- Descartes's Method
- The Doubts of Meditation One
- So: lots of stuff
 - I'll move quickly through some of it.
 - I'll post my slides after every class.

Descartes iRAT

- 9 minutes

Descartes tRAT

- 10 minutes
- If you want to write an appeal, you can come get a form at any time.
- No opening the texts until after the exam is done!

Appeals and Debriefing

False Beliefs

Meditation One

Several years have now passed since I first realized how numerous were the false opinions that in my youth I had taken to be true, and thus how doubtful were all those that I had subsequently built upon them. And thus I realized that once in my life I had to raze everything to the ground and begin again from the original foundations, if I wanted to establish anything firm and lasting in the sciences (AW 40).

Team Activity

False Beliefs

Rank these questions in order of the percentage of Americans who get the answer right (NSF survey 2014).

- A. Does the Earth go around the sun or does the sun go around the Earth?
- B. True or false?: Antibiotics kill viruses as well as bacteria.
- C. Is it the father's gene that decides whether a baby is a boy or a girl?
- D. True or false?: The center of the Earth is very hot
- E. True or false?: All radioactivity is man-made
- F. True or false?: The continents on which we live have been moving their locations for millions of years and will continue to move in the future
- G. True or false?: Electrons are smaller than atoms.

Question	Percent who got it right	The right answer
True or false?: The center of the Earth is very hot	84%	True
True or false?: The continents on which we live have been moving their locations for millions of years and will continue to move in the future	83%	True
Does the Earth go around the sun or does the sun go around the Earth	74%	Earth around sun
True or false?: All radioactivity is man-made	72%	False
Is it the father's gene that decides whether a baby is a boy or a girl?	63%	True
True or false?: Electrons are smaller than atoms	53%	True
True or false?: Antibiotics kill viruses as well as bacteria	51%	False

The Scientific Revolution

■ Medieval Dogmas

D1. The heavens are constant.

D2. The Earth is at the center of the universe.

D3. Causes are (partially) explained teleologically, by purposes.

- Objects tend to fall to the Earth because of their natural tendency toward the center.

D4. The heavens contain starry perfect spheres (stars and planets) which revolve in perfect circles around the Earth.

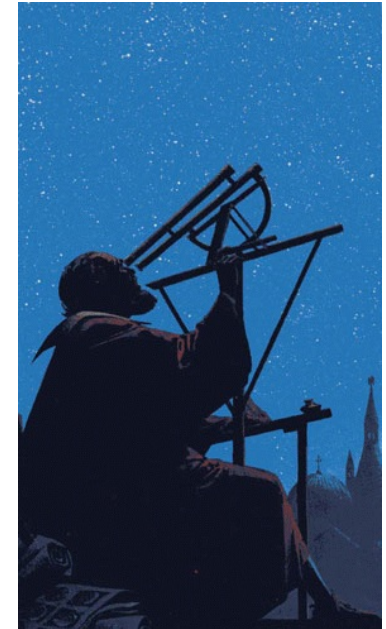
D5. There are two kinds of motion.

- On earth motion is linear, in the heavens it is circular.

■ D1, D2, and D3 come mainly from Aristotle (384-322 BC).

■ D4 and D5 come from mainly Ptolemy (2nd century AD).

- The Ptolemaic astronomer saw the sky as an object, rather than a void.
- A roof on the Earth.



Against the Dogmas I

D1. The heavens are constant.

D2. The Earth is at the center of the universe.

D3. Causes are (partially) explained teleologically, by purposes.

D4. The heavens contain starry perfect spheres which revolve in perfect circles around the Earth.

D5. There are two kinds of motion.

- In the late 15th century, a new star was discovered.
 - against D1
- Copernicus (1473-1543) hypothesized that earth was not stable, and that it underwent retrograde motion.
 - against D2
- Brahe (1536-1601) discovered that planets move in ellipses.
 - against D2 and D4
- Kepler (1571-1630) urged heliocentrism.
 - against D2



Against the Dogmas II

D1. The heavens are constant.

D2. The Earth is at the center of the universe.

D3. Causes are (partially) explained teleologically, by purposes.

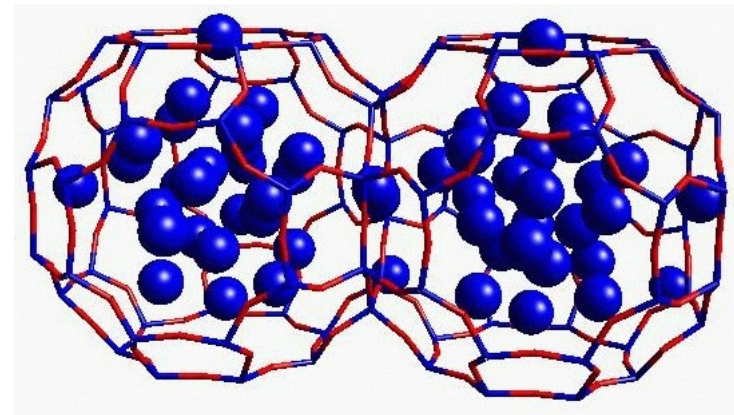
D4. The heavens contain starry perfect spheres which revolve in perfect circles around the Earth.

D5. There are two kinds of motion.

- Galileo (1564-1642) suffered under the Inquisition from 1633 for supporting Kepler's heliocentrism.
 - ▶ Jupiter's moons: more than one center of motion, against D2.
 - ▶ Bumps on our moon are evidence against D4.
- The theory of inertia
 - ▶ Aristotle: rest need not be explained, but motion does.
 - ▶ Inertia: rest is merely a limiting case of motion.
- Newton's first law of motion: an object at rest will remain at rest, and an object in motion will remain in (linear) motion, unless acted upon by an unbalanced force.
 - ▶ Only acceleration needs an explanation.
 - ▶ There is one type of undisturbed motion, linear, for all bodies, against D5.
 - ▶ Two forces, gravitation and impetus, are unifying hypotheses which explain all deviations from ordinary linear motion, against D3.

Atomism

- Aristotle and the medievals believed that there were many different kinds of things.
 - ▶ Four basic elements: earth, air, fire, and water.
 - ▶ All natural things have their own natures which make them distinct: flowers are different from trees, from frogs, from people.
- Galileo, Boyle and Descartes built on an earlier atomism (e.g. Democritus)
- According to atomists, all matter is of the same kind.
- All differences among objects can be explained by their differences in structure.
 - ▶ If you find it strange that in explaining these elements I do not use the qualities called 'heat', 'cold', 'moisture' and 'dryness' - as the philosophers do - I shall say to you that these qualities themselves seem to me to need explanation. Indeed, unless I am mistaken, not only these four qualities but all the others as well, including even the forms of inanimate bodies, can be explained without the need to suppose anything in their matter other than the motion, size, shape, and arrangement of its parts (Descartes, *The World* CSM I.89).



Descartes is a Punk Rocker

- The Mood of the 17th Century
 - Skepticism
 - Humanism
 - Natural reason
 - The scientific method
- The 17th Century is not so different from our own.
 - Increasing skepticism about religion and its explanatory role.
 - There was a rise of relativism, both metaphysical (i.e. the claim that there is no absolute truth) and moral.
 - There was optimism about science and technology.
- Descartes works with a DIY ethos: the individual has a direct relation to the truth.




The Letter of Dedication

Scriptural Circularity

From the *Meditations*' Letter of Dedication

I have always thought that two issues - namely, God and the soul, are chief among those that ought to be demonstrated with the aid of philosophy rather than theology. For although it suffices for us believers to believe by faith that the human soul does not die with the body, and that God exists, certainly no unbelievers seem capable of being persuaded of any religion or even of almost any moral virtue, until these two are first proven to them by natural reason... Granted, it is altogether true that we must believe in God's existence because it is taught in the Holy Scriptures, and, conversely, that we must believe the Holy Scriptures because they have come from God. This is because, of course, since faith is a gift from God, the very same one who gives the grace that is necessary for believing the rest can also give the grace to believe that he exists. Nonetheless, this reasoning cannot be proposed to unbelievers because they would judge it to be circular (AW 35).



because circular reasoning works

Team Activity

Letter of Dedication

- Which of the following statements best captures the view Descartes expresses in the excerpt from the of dedication?
 - A. Philosophy is more likely to be true than theology because of its use of valid arguments.
 - B. Philosophy, which deals in reasons, is not necessary to know the truth, for people who already understand the truth.
 - C. Circular arguments are poor logical form, but acceptable in religion.
 - D. Circular arguments are good logical form, but some people don't understand that they are.
 - E. We need philosophy primarily to prove that God exists and the soul is immortal.
- Read it first, and write down your own answer.
 - Three minutes
- Once everyone has an answer, determine a group answer.
 - Four minutes