



## Week Three Writing Assignment

exploring  
**Mind and Self**  
ID1§13, Fall 2005

Please **email** me your paper in MS Word format sometime before 5 p.m. on Monday, September 12.

In the last assignment, you described an author's position on an issue. This time you will lay out an author's *argument* as clearly as possible. It is very difficult to do some of things one aims to do in an essay — e.g., successfully criticize someone's view — without first clearly summarizing the person's position and arguments for that position.

In Meditation VI, Descartes argues for the existence of the soul. In **one to two pages**, explain, as clearly as you can, how he argues that the mind is something distinct from the body.

Late addition: you may also write **one to two pages** explaining what you think is wrong with the argument we discussed in class on Thursday, what we might call the *dubitability argument for dualism*.

1. The existence of my body is dubious.
2. The existence of my mind is not dubious.
3. Therefore, by Leibniz's Law, my mind  $\neq$  my body

Leibniz's Law says the following: if  $x=y$ , then  $x$  and  $y$  have all the same properties. This is equivalent to: if  $x$  and  $y$  differ in even one of their properties, then  $x \neq y$ .

Note: please focus on a **single objection** to the argument. I'm less interested in a laundry list of things that are wrong with the argument than a sustained discussion of one item from your list.

### Some Suggestions

Whenever you describe an author's view, your goals are, first, to explain the claim for which the author is arguing (this is straightforward in the present case); and, second, to present, as clearly as possible, the argument or arguments for that claim. Because **precision** is a central virtue in philosophy (running a close second only to clarity); you need to give more than a *rough idea* of the author's position and argument. Bear in mind that Descartes is tying up many loose ends in Meditation VI. Your aim is to *extract* the argument for dualism, which is not the same task as summarizing the entire Meditation from beginning to end. In many of the readings we'll encounter, the author does not present the argument all in one place, or in the clearest way possible.

The intended audience for your paper is not myself, nor the other students in the class — you know we are familiar with the argument and the vocabulary in which it is stated. Your aim is rather to make this argument easily understandable to someone completely *unfamiliar* with the material, like your average college student. Pretend your reader will be another Pomona first-year who switched in to our ID1 section, and your paper is all they have to catch them up. By far the best way to do this is to express the view or

arguments in your own words. If you introduce a bit of new terminology you think your average reader won't know, you should explain what it means.

## **Mechanics and Style**

Please use a large, easy to read font (at least 12 point); **double spacing**; standard margins; page numbers; correct spelling and grammar.

This is not a complete essay, so you do not need an introduction or a conclusion.

Avoid rhetorical flourishes; e.g., "Throughout the ages, humans have been mystified by everything from thunder to drought to the meaning of life..." Get right to the point.