

Handout 3: Foundationalism (Meditations 1 & 2)

Group #1 – Meditation 1

1. What is the goal of Meditation 1? What is Descartes trying to do here, and *why*?

2. How is this goal achieved?

Here is a hint. Descartes employs three skeptical steps, and each step undermines the justification of beliefs that we commonly hold. Articulate each three of these steps, and explain what beliefs they undermine.

3. From only a consideration of Meditation 1, was Descartes successful in his goal? What is your take on the method that he employs to achieve his ultimate goal?

Group #2 – Meditation 2

1. What is the goal of Meditation 2? What is Descartes trying to accomplish in this Meditation and why?

Here is a hint. Descartes's goal is to acquire a justified, basic belief that serves as the basis of his classical foundationalist theory of epistemic justification. What is the basic belief he discovers is infallibly true?

2. What is the argument for necessary truth of this argument?

3. What are some other consequences of this Meditation? What does it tell us about the notion of the self? Was Descartes successful in achieving his goal? What else does he need to do in order to make his classical foundationalist theory plausible?