

## Session 2: Escaping The Matrix And Other Possible Worlds (Exploring the Work of Descartes)

### (1). Intro:

In the formal dedication to his best known work, famous French philosopher, René Descartes, wrote the following:

“I have always considered that the [question of] God...ought to be demonstrated by philosophical rather than theological argument.”<sup>1</sup>

### (2). Central Question:

Is the terrain of \_\_\_\_\_ truly a dangerous ground for battle for the verity of Christian claims?

### (3). René Descartes’ method of obtaining knowledge:

- “[T]he [usefulness] of...Doubt...is...very great inasmuch as it delivers us from every kind of prejudice...”<sup>2</sup>
- “I ought...to justify the rejection of [my beliefs] if I shall find in [them] some ground for doubt.”<sup>3</sup>
- “...I shall...in the first place attack those principles upon which all my...[beliefs rest].”<sup>4</sup>
- Descartes was willing for the sake of his fancy to banish his own\_\_\_\_\_.

### (4). The key purpose of Descartes’ Meditations:

Descartes merely\_\_\_\_\_skeptical thinking.

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<sup>1</sup> René Descartes; Meditations On First Philosophy; Translated by J. Veitch; © Our Open Media 2017. pg. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid pg. 4. Brackets mine.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. pg. 11. Brackets mine.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. pg. 11. Brackets mine. Italics mine.

“...I thought it not beside my purpose to inquire...how God may be more easily known...”<sup>5</sup>

The truths he discovered in the process of his searching have plausibly \_\_\_\_\_ the whole force of skeptic thought.

(5). The “Brain-in-the-Vat” Argument:

In 1999, famous film director duo, the Wachowski brothers, released their biggest smash-hit, entitled \_\_\_\_\_.

How can we be certain that the Matrix \_\_\_\_\_ exist?

“I shall then suppose...that...some evil genius not less powerful than deceitful, has employed his whole energies in deceiving me...[and] availed himself...to lay traps for my credulity...” (Descartes)<sup>6</sup>

(6). Decamping Skepticism:

For Descartes, math is \_\_\_\_\_ even if it turns out that we are living in the Matrix.

“...whether...awake or asleep, two and three...[equals] five...” “...it does not seem possible that truths so...apparent [could wind up being false]...” (Descartes)<sup>7</sup>

Example: The Ever-Pending Birthday:

Imagine you have walked into a room only to encounter an infinite row of tumbling dominos. Each falling tile collapses the subsequent member, causing the proceeding domino to plummet towards the earth. You then notice that the row is beginningless, leading to a final domino standing near your foot. Bending down, you notice that the domino bears an inscription which reads the exact date of your birth. You then begin to wonder: If the set of dominos is infinitely long, how much time will it take for my birthday to arrive?

A: \_\_\_\_\_.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Brackets mine. pg. 14

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Brackets mine. pg. 16

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Brackets mine. pg. 14

The Matrix world therefore *cannot* be \_\_\_\_\_.

Some initial trigger had to set the world in \_\_\_\_\_.

The initial cause would have to exist \_\_\_\_\_. Why?

Because any finite cause would require some causal \_\_\_\_\_.

Thus, if math is truly trustworthy then time in the Matrix must be \_\_\_\_\_ and not beginningless.

“...if the past were beginningless, then the present could not have occurred.”  
(Prof. William Lane Craig) <sup>8</sup>

(7). Final Comments:

If the cause has existed forever, then why not its effect?

The only way to make the cause exist without the effect would be to endow that cause with some kind of \_\_\_\_\_.

A cause of the universe endowed with free will is simply what everyone means when they talk about God. Therefore, we have effectively concluded the classical argument for God’s existence.

“...from what has been already said, we must conclude that God *necessarily* exists.”  
(Descartes) <sup>9</sup>

(8). Concluding Argument:

P1: It is impossible to conceive of a world whose past is \_\_\_\_\_.

P2: Therefore, a first cause necessarily exists in every \_\_\_\_\_ world.

P3: For this reason, the first cause is \_\_\_\_\_.

P4: The first cause is therefore \_\_\_\_\_.

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<sup>8</sup> William Lane Craig; Reasonable Faith; Crossway Publications, Wheaton Illinois; © 2008; pg. 122.

<sup>9</sup> René Descartes; Meditations On First Philosophy; Translated by J. Veitch; © Our Open Media 2017. pg. 32. Italics mine.

Answer Key:

- Reason
- Faith
- Assuming
- Disabled
- The Matrix
- Does Not
- Forever
- Eternal
- Motion
- Eternally
- Parent
- Finite
- Free Will
- Eternal
- Possible
- Universal
- Axiomatic