

Philosophy 101



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

of Descartes' Quest for Truth and Certainty Descartes' goal as a philosopher is to do a total reconstruction of human knowledge, through the use of doubt methodologically in order to arrive at true knowledge with absolute certainty (Lavine 95). It is in this regard that he decided to overthrow all his existing beliefs and ideas and use only reason as his sole basis for establishing a permanent truth, i. e. the one thing, which he cannot doubt further. This move towards skepticism was motivated by his dilemma regarding what truly exists in reality, for we cannot tell the difference between our state of dreaming and waking. Thus, he began to doubt his beliefs on sense perception, material objects and physical sciences, for these all depend on our senses, which are by nature, deceptive. Furthermore, he doubted mathematics, for the reason that there perhaps may be an evil deceiver that deceives him to fall into error. Herein, Descartes uses this evil deceiver in attaining his permanent truth. I quote: " Even though there may be a deceiver of some sort... who bends all his efforts to keep me perpetually deceived, there can be no slightest doubt that I exist, since he deceives me; and let him deceive me as much as he will, he can never make me be nothing as long as I think that I am something" (Descartes 82). This is Descartes absolute and certain truth. For, inasmuch as he would doubt all the beliefs he has ever had, there is one thing, which he cannot doubt, i. e. that he exists. For to claim that he cannot tell the difference between a dream and reality, or to claim that an evil deceiver deceives him to fall into error, is not possible without him existing. In order for doubting to take place, a doubter must exist. In order for Descartes to be deceived to fall into error, he must exist. Therefore, Descartes arrives at his foundational truth: " I exist." Works Cited Descartes, R., 1960. Discourse on Method, and

Meditations. New York: Liberal Arts Press. Lavine, T. Z., 1984. From Socrates to Sartre: The Philosophic Quest. New York: Bantam Books.