

# Humanities 112



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Descartes Discourse on the Method (Part IV) Wayne Murphy Strayer  
University World Cultures II HUM112054GA050-1116-001 Dr. Darryl C.

Clayton July 18, 2011 Abstract The purpose of this essay is to choose one of the three reading selections from the list of topic choices below. 1.

Descartes??™ Discourse on the Method (Part IV) 2. Swift??™s A Modest Proposal 3. Voltaire??™s Candide Read the selection topic in the textbook, and write a three to four paragraph essay with (250 words which analyzes the surprise ending of the reading selection. Clearly state in your own words the surprise ending in the reading you selected. Identify the point in the reading when you realized that the ending would be different from what the beginning of the reading suggested that it would be. Descartes Discourse on the Method (Part IV) The Discourse on the Method is a philosophical and autobiographical treatise published by Rene Descartes in 1637. Its full name is Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting Ones Reason and of Seeking Truth in the Sciences.

The Discourse on Method is best known as the source of the famous quotation ??? Je pense, donc je suis??? (??? I think, therefore I am???), which occurs in Part IV of the work (Sayre, 2011, p. 918). The Discourse on the Method is one of the most influential works in the history of modern philosophy, and important to the evolution of natural sciences. In this work, Descartes tackles the problem of skepticism, which had previously been studied by Sextus Empiricus, Al-Ghazali and Michel de Montaigne. Descartes modified it to account for a truth he found to be incontrovertible. Descartes started his line of reasoning by doubting everything, so as to assess the world from a fresh perspective, clear of any preconceived notions.

Discourse on the Method is Descartes's attempt to explain his method of reasoning through even the most difficult of problems. He illustrates the development of this method through brief autobiographical sketches interspersed with philosophical arguments. Descartes offers proofs of the existence of the soul and of God. Contemplating the nature of dreams and the unreliability of the senses, he becomes aware of his own process of thinking and realizes it is proof of his existence: I think, therefore I exist (Cogito ergo sum).

He also concludes that the soul is separate from the body based on the unreliability of the senses as compared with pure reason. His own doubts lead him to believe that he is imperfect, yet his ability to conceive of perfection indicates that something perfect must exist outside of him namely, God. He reasons that all good things in the world must stem from God, as must all clear and distinct thoughts. Descartes arrives at another proof of God's existence by way of geometry. He notes the certainty with which geometers can prove facts such as the fact that the angles in a triangle add up to 180 degrees.

This is part of the essence of a triangle, and yet for all that, there is no assurance that one triangle actually exists in the world. When contemplating God, however, he recognizes that existence is as much an essential property of God's as having three angles that add up to 180 degrees is an essential property of triangles. God's existence is thus as certain as a geometric proof. Descartes remarks that people have difficulty with these proofs because they rely exclusively on their senses and imagination. God's

™s existence can only be perceived by reason, and not by these other two faculties.

In conclusion, the surprise for me, I did not realize there was so much controversy over whether God??™s existed and the discussions centered on it. God??™s existence seem more certain than anything else, since all other things are subject to the doubts that Descartes has already raised. These doubts can only be removed by the recognition that God exists. Thanks to God we can be assured that our clear and distinct perceptions are true, since those perceptions come to us from God, and we can rest assured that all our perceptions must be true to the extent to which they are clear and distinct. We perceive clearly and distinctly when we exercise our reason properly, and we are misled when we rely exclusively on our senses or imagination.

ReferencesEliot, C.

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