

PHIL 354 Descartes and Rationalism  
Fall 2002  
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## Second Paper Topics

Write a 5-6pp paper (about 1500 words) on one of the following topics. Papers should be typed, double-spaced, with standard font and margins.

Papers are **due** in class on **October 15, 2002**.

LATE PAPER POLICY: Late papers will be penalized a third of a grade for every day late. If you would like an extension you must see me **before** the due date, at which point we will agree on an alternative due date, from which the late paper penalty will apply.

1. In the middle of the Third Meditation, the meditator invokes a causal principle which he claims is manifest 'by the natural light'. Does the introduction of this principle straightforwardly violate the meditator's methodological doubt? Consider whether there is any way of reconciling this principle with the method of radical doubt.
2. In the Fourth Objections, Arnauld (their author) accuses Descartes of "reasoning in a circle when he says that we are sure that what we clearly and distinctly perceive is true only because God exists" (7: 214, S:142). After explicating just what circular reasoning Arnauld is specifying, consider whether Descartes has a way out of the circle. In doing so you may want to look at his reply to Arnauld (S, 142-3), as well as the Second Replies to which that answer adverts (S, 140-142).
3. In the Fourth Meditation the meditator contrasts a freedom of spontaneity, wherein we are moved to affirm or deny what is put forward in the intellect, with a freedom of indifference, when there is "no reason pushing me in one direction or another". He further maintains that "in order to be free, there is no need for me to be capable of moving in both directions...the more I incline in one direction...the freer is my choice". Consider this claim. Does it make sense to say that being moved in one direction makes one freer than one would be if one could go in many directions?