

God

Reading (see copies for full bibliographic details)

[1] Spinoza, from the *Ethics*, Part I PP1–14, with associated definitions and axioms.

[2] Descartes, from the *Second Replies* (AT VII 164–7).

[3] ★ Descartes, *The Fifth Meditation* (AT VII 63–71).

1. [1] Briefly explain how Spinoza argues for P3.
- 2.★ [1] Why can there be no two substances that share an attribute, as P5 claims?
3. [1] [2] Does the notion of ‘degrees of reality’ make sense (cf. P9)?
- 4.★ [1] How does Spinoza argue for God’s necessary existence in P11?
5. [1] Briefly discuss some implications of Spinoza’s view of God.
6. [2] [3] Focusing on *one* argument only: how does Descartes demonstrate God’s existence? (Descartes’s argument in the *Fifth Meditation* is the one he suggests in *Proposition I*, cf. Reading [2]. He develops the full argument of *Proposition II* in the *Third Meditation*. This sequence is didactical: the meditator has to master CDP in order to grasp the later argument.)
- 7.★ [3] What does the analogy with the mountain and the valley reveal (§§9–10)?

Background Information. To possess a feature (perfection) *formally* (Reading [2] Axioms IV and V) is to have it quite literally. In this sense (and ignoring certain complications), the cup is ‘formally’ white and round. (Remember: the *idea* of the tomato is ‘objectively’ white and round.) To have a feature *eminently* is to have it in some higher or more perfect way. Two analogies: while the cup is formally white, the Antarctic is eminently white; and while the cheetah is formally fast, the speed of light is eminently fast. Something (x) can be caused by something else (y) only if y has all of x ’s features either formally or eminently. So, the more ‘perfect’ can cause the less perfect. This is relevant for enable God’s creation of the physical world. This terminology is Scholastic. Descartes’s proof of God’s existence in *Proposition I* and the *Fifth Meditation* is a version of the *ontological* argument. In contrast, *Proposition II* is a *causal* argument. “At this point [Descartes] is speaking of the sort of argument that can take some effect of God as a premise from which the existence of a supreme cause, namely God, can subsequently be inferred. [A]fter a most careful survey of all the effects, he found none which would serve to prove God’s existence except for the idea of God. By contrast, the other argument in the Fifth Meditation proceeds *a priori* and does not start from some effect.” (From the *Conversation with Burman*, 16 April 1648, AT V 153.)