Questions on Descartes’ *Meditations I & II*

1. How does the Principle of Sufficient Reason guide the Rationalist explanation of events in nature?
2. Why did the Rationalists think that mathematics provided the right model for philosophic method?
3. Why is Descartes’ method of doubt important in achieving his two aims in philosophizing? What are those aims?
4. For Descartes, why can’t knowledge gained through sense experience be trusted as the basis of knowledge?
5. What is it about corporeal objects that seemingly can be known even if they are only objects of dreams?
6. How are the doubts raised by our experience of dreaming different from, and more profound than, doubts raised about errors in sense experience?
7. Does Descartes really doubt the existence of the world, or is he merely pretending to doubt? If he really doubts, then how can he explain the things he knows? If he is only pretending, then what’s the point?
8. What does he mean by saying that the doubt does not consider the question of action, only that of knowledge?
9. How is the evil genius argument intended to be broader in scope than either the arguments about doubting sense experience or dreaming?
10. Why can’t the evil genius deceive Descartes into thinking that he (Descartes) does not exist?
11. What is the point of Descartes’ doubt about having a body? Why can’t he be a body? What is a body?
12. Why does Descartes limit his description of himself simply to a thing that thinks, an “I think” (*cogito*)?
13. What is the point of the wax example? How is it important in knowing the self?
14. How does Descartes describe clear and distinct perception? What is the difference between the two?