

Metaphysics: Problem set 11

(the last problem set!)

April 18

due date: Wednesday, April 25

Don't write more than 3 pages double-spaced

Here is an argument inspired by a famous passage in Descartes' Sixth Meditation:

I am not my body. For I could exist without my body's existing. But my body obviously couldn't exist without my body's existing.

Moreover, not only am I not my body: I am not a physical thing at all. For I could exist even if no physical things existed. But no physical thing could exist if no physical things existed. Therefore I am a non-physical thing: a disembodied mind.

1. Comment critically on the argument in the first paragraph.
2. Comment critically on the argument in the second paragraph.

Note: in each answer, you should (i) explain why someone might find the argument plausible, and (ii) consider at least one objection to the argument.

Hint: the second last sentence of the second argument might look like an obvious truth of logic. But for the argument to be valid, it needs to be interpreted differently, a substantive and perhaps controversial claim.