I. Descartes and the Modern Conception of the Self

A. Descartes bequeathed to modernity the basic framework for understanding self and world

1. the major influence on Descartes was the newly emerging natural sciences – mathematician
2. Descartes project was to give an account of human being and the world consistent with the natural sciences of Galileo
3. This project could probably be termed "Man the knower", or "Man the Master"
    1. Descartes the first modern philosopher, he still had Scholastic presuppositions
4. In Plato the logos was both rational and moral and apprehended by reason
5. In Christianity world is meaningful as a creation of divine being and apprehended by faith, beyond reason
6. in D mechanistic world, the natural world as a clockwork
7. Descartes accepted the Galilean idea of knowledge which now became representation, to know reality was to have a correct representation of things – a correct picture within of outer reality
8. Goal: certainty, a foundation ideas that are so clear and distinct that they cannot be doubted
9. From this foundation of first principles unified science with all forms of knowledge interconnected world as quantity, calculable through math

B. Plato's love of the Good has been transformed into Descartes' quest for certainty – the Cartesian anxiety

1. Why this anxiety? Old world views are breaking down, reason in the form of modern science has undermined the sacred canopy/
2. New forms of legitimation are required? Descartes saw himself as a scientist and it is an attempt to put science in the place of religion, but only partially
3. Descartes other motivation not to be burned at the stake by the Inquisition for heresy

C. Descartes account of the self (and world)

1. Descartes was a rationalist; he therefore wanted to explain reality from deductively from an idea that was certain
2. As in math and science establish axioms, or first principles and deduce from these
3. D assumes that there are a priori truths, which are self-evident and can't be doubted – ideas
4. that a justification of the scientific world view can be deduced from these a priori truths

5. how does he characterize certainty? -clear (in itself) and distinct (from every other belief) – self-evident to reason - independent – not based on other beliefs - must exist, so that beliefs about other things can be deduced
6. No one really thinks Descartes arguments are convincing, nor the empiricists, but the ideas shape our worldview

II. Descartes argument – methodical doubt
   A. e begins by doubting everything
   B. especially sense experience, depended on sense organs, can be doubted
   C. even math can be doubted if there is evil demon
   D. what can't I doubt? even if I am being deceived, I can't doubt that i am being deceived
   E. Doubting is one aspect of thinking, and
   F. if thinking is going on there must be a cause
      1. Cogito ergo sum, I think therefore I am
   G. Descartes thinks that through methodical doubting he has discovered the arche, that one certain thing from which all else can be deduced – THE THINKING SUBJECT
   H. Does it meet the criteria for certainty? fails and the second and third criteria
   I. he has created a problem by third criteria though?
      1. this self-contained thinking substance is inside the body, by definition, independent
      2. how to we get to knowledge of the outside world?
      3. the Cartesian dilemma and compromise?
   J. God – Avoiding solipsism and proving the world – in the end God is the only substance that meets the criteria
      1. The self is finite
      2. and the self has a priori ideas
      3. everything has a cause, ideas must come from somewhere, cause must be like effect
      4. but my idea of God is of a infinite being, can't have a priori idea of infinite in finite mind, everything has a cause
      5. God must have put it there, and God can't be a deceiver, or that would be imperfection or a defect
      6. therefore God must exist
      7. If God is not a deceiver then I can deduce in the same manner that the ideas I have of the physical world represent the real physical world
      8. idea of external reality must have a cause
      9. cause must be like effect, idea of physical reality must reflect physical reality

10. Which is according to Descartes not what the senses perceive, what is it? res extensa – extension, size, shape and substance
11. qualities belong to the mind, the external world is matter in motion

K. In his quest for certainty he has derived two substances metaphysically distinct
    1. the thinking subject without extension or materiality and inner, encased in a body, undetermined and free
    2. extended substance, the physical world, which corresponds to the scientific world view – quantity, not quality, measurable, and calculable

L. He has given shape to modern view of self, world, and reason

III. Reason, Self and Morality

A. Descartes despite his aporia asserts free will and he identifies it with reason, but not a substantive reason, like Plato's but a reason that controls desires, an instrumental reason
    1. the moral thinkers of the Enlightenment will attempt to develop morality in terms of quantity or rational principle

B. no longer can the person turn outward to the cosmos which is the embodiment of meaningful order which can define the good for us – it is disenchanted, objectified

C. no essential connection to it, no moral connection, just externally connected through the laws of nature

D. disenchantment and objectification of nature is inseparable from seeing nature as a domain of instrumental control

E. connection between knowledge and power

F. This disjunction, this bifurcation of nature, reducing the natural world to a mechanism that can be controlled, rationally mastered through instrumental reason

G. as a parallel in the moral sphere, reasons mastery over the passions, reason gets the passions under instrumental control

H. This form of reason - instrumental - presupposes the disengagement of the self from the world and its objectification, and the objectification of the body "The true function of reason, then, in the conduct of life is to examine and consider without passion ...

I. Reason is procedural and an internal property of subjective thinking- morality is exercising rational mastery - the will- over the passions
    1. it involves disengagement "The true function of reason, then, in the conduct of life is to examine and consider without passion . . .

J. Dignity becomes the goal of the moral person, the person who exercises rational self-mastery of his passions, and the world

IV. Summary

A. We have the structure for the modern western understanding of self and world
    1. self-enclosed consciousness inside a body, subjectivity

2. a separated sphere, mind independent reality, disenchanted
3. knowledge is representation of this mind independent reality so that it can be calculated and mastered
4. emergence of ideal of objectivity – disengaged subject
5. disengaged from one's body
6. disengaged from the world

B. disengagement =s objectification = disenchantment
1. morality has nothing to do with the order of the good
2. but rational mastery through disengagement and objectification
3. construct a picture of things following the canons of rational thinking