

# Descartes' Meditations on First Philosophy

David W. Agler  
[Teaching Notes 2008]

## Contents

Descartes' Meditations on First Philosophy .....	1
Meditation 1 .....	1
Hobbes' Objections to Meditation I and Descartes Reply.....	5
Meditation 2 .....	6
The Wax Example .....	11
Hobbes' Objections to Meditation 2, Descartes Replies to Hobbes' .....	12
Meditation 3 .....	15
Second Half of Meditation 3: Innatism & Against the Evil Demon .....	19
Hobbes' Objections to Meditation 3, Descartes' Replies .....	21
Meditation #4: Concerning the True and the False .....	25
First Task: The Source of Err & Proper Use of Judgment .....	26
Second Task: Theological Issues with God: Couldn't He Keep Us From Error? .....	28
Hobbes' Objections to Meditation 4 .....	30
Meditation 6 .....	32
First Goal: The Distinction between Mind and Body .....	32
Argument #1: from Thinking .....	33
Argument #2: from Simplicity .....	33
Second Goal: Existence of Material Things .....	34
Third Goal: Full Conception of the Self .....	34

## Meditation 1

### ➤ Methodological Skepticism (Summary)

- Doubt everything in search of that which is absolutely certain or to conclude that nothing is certain
  - Search for the possibility of a *foundation for all knowledge*
  - Pyramid or Fountain (Metaphor)
- Not merely doubting what is false, but everything that is not absolutely certain
- Not a search for *what might be true*, but a search for what is *necessarily true*.

“Anything which admits of the slightest doubt I will set aside just as if I had found it to be wholly false; and I will proceed in this way until I recognize something certain, or, if nothing else, until I at least recognize for certain that there is no certainty” (par.1)

- Methodological Skepticism is a tactic to find the foundation of all knowledge

- Wipe away anything that can be doubted and search for the one *true* source
- **A Third Type of Skepticism: Not Academic & Pyrrhonian, but Methodological**
  - Use of this skepticism is to search for knowledge, not dissolve it.
  - Our focus has mainly been to view skepticism as a way of destroying knowledge, but they can be used to make it *secure*. To make it uncorruptible.
- *The Meditations* are a series of reflections by René Descartes
  - They are his effort to think about the *foundation* of all knowledge.
  - In order to obtain this foundation, he is going to *use* skepticism!
- **Situation (Par. 1)**
  - *Double Realization*
    - Realization that what he was taught as a child was *false*
    - Realization that the system by which he gained this information was dubious
  - *Rectification*
    - Reevaluate what he should believe by starting from the foundations
    - Waited until he had enough time and was mature enough to do so.
- **Statement of Method, Step 1: Demolition of the Old System & Search for Foundations!**
  - Plan is to search for an immutable *foundation* for all knowledge
    - Search for **some belief** and **some method** that is not capable of being doubted.
      - Does not require that he show all his beliefs are *false*, only that they are not completely *certain* or *indubitable*. Only needs to show that they are capable of being *doubted*.
        - Descartes knows that these beliefs could, in fact, be true but he will treat them as false to serve the purpose of finding a *foundation*.
    - The Method: Does not require that he go through every single belief, only needs to demolish the *foundations*.
      - Only need to destroy the foundations for beliefs
        - Foundation of the senses: cannot believe in anything from sense experience
        - Foundation of the mind: cannot rely on mental activity
- The *Meditations* is not merely a **philosophical argument**, it is sort of a **philosophical story**
  - In this story, there is only one person
    - The author is Descartes, but you are supposed to be the *main* character
    - Idea is that you are supposed to be meditating but Descartes is guiding you through this philosophical Argument
  - Like any story, there are scenes.
    - There are basically ***Three Moments to the First Meditation***
      - Unreliability of the Senses because of Illusion
      - Unreliability of the Senses because of Dreams
      - Unreliability of the Intellect because of the Evil Demon
- **First Point: Unreliability of the Senses: *Illusions***
  - Senses deceive us with respect to reality (not always reliable)

- Optical illusions, the size of distant objects
- Senses also do not give us clear knowledge of some components of reality
  - Very small objects
- Many things the senses do not deceive us about
  - This is my body! I am here in this classroom.

“I am sitting here next of the fire, wearing my winter dressing gown, that I am holding this sheet of paper in my hands, and the like” (p.10).

- *Conclusion of the First Point*
  - Senses do not always give us reliable information about the world, whenever it doesn't we can say that this information is not to be the foundation.
  - Optical illusions, distance, very small perceptions are all subject to doubt, therefore this information from the senses cannot be the foundation.

➤ **Second Point: Unreliability of the Senses: *Dreams***

- Even though our senses assure us of many things, it may be that we are just *dreaming*!

“How often does my evening slumber persuade me of such ordinary things as these: that I am here, clothed in my dressing gown, seated next of the fireplace—when in fact I am lying undressed in bed!”

- There is no definitive sign to distinguish *awake* from *asleep*
  - It may be that being *awake* is more distinct, but how do we know that this is not just all a dream?
  - We are capable of doubting *more* about the senses
    - We can doubt that this is our body, that we are in fact opening our eyes, that we actually even have a hand at all.
    - We can doubt that what appears to us corresponds to how the thing actually is
  - Images still must correspond to *something*!
  - Also even if our senses deceive us, we still have mathematical knowledge left
    - Arithmetical truths:  $2+3=5$  even if we are asleep
    - Conceptual truths: a triangle has three sides even if we are dreaming
- *Conclusion of the Second Point*
  - In a search for a foundation for knowledge, we must realize that reality may itself be a dream.
    - We cannot trust that our body is our own, that how things appear to us *actually* correspond to the actual object
    - Any particular existent thing can be doubted.
      - Mathematical truths are not capable of being doubted because they do not rely on any particular instance (e.g.  $2+3=5$ ; square only has four sides).<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> First Part: Rejection of Universals reliant on Particulars. Some universals fail to make sense without relation to their particulars (chair w/o chairs). We only believe in the universal concept because we believe that the particular

- All we can remain sure of is that there is *something* that produces these images and mathematical truths
- **Third Point: Unreliability of the Intellect, Unreality of Pure Universals: *Evil Demon***
  - Summary
    - We can doubt the senses for two reasons: weakness of the senses & dreams
      - *Weak senses* do not penetrate illusions & do not apply to small objects
      - *Dreams* keep us from believing that how things appear to us corresponds to how things actually are.
        - They are of *increasing strength*. Dreams allow us to doubt more than weak senses.
    - All we cannot doubt are pure universals. These are mathematical truths!
  - Rejection of Pure Universals
    - God (Evil Demon) hypothesis<sup>2</sup>

“just as I consider that others sometimes go astray in cases where they have the most perfect knowledge, how do I know that God has not brought it about that I too go wrong every time I add two and three or count the sides of a square, or in some even simpler matter, if that is imaginable?” (par.9)
    - If we suppose some evil demon tricks us all the time, then the result is
 

“but am finally compelled to admit that there is not one of my former beliefs about which a doubt may not properly be raised” (par.10).
  - *Conclusion of the Third Point*
    - All our beliefs are subject to doubt. All knowledge (even mathematical knowledge) is not certain.
      - Example #1: You are going to add 2+3 and every time you go to do the addition, an evil demon comes in and tricks you.
      - Example #2: Every time you go to add the sides of a triangle, an evil demon comes in and make you say “four” instead of “three”.
    - There is no foundation for knowledge: everything we believe is capable of being *rationaly* doubted.
- **Result of Mediation 1**
  - The goal was to demolish our foundations for belief.
  - Resultant Conclusion: all of our former opinions are utterly false and imaginary.
    - Senses are unreliable with respect to distance

---

exists. Reject all sciences/concepts that make use of universals that contain particulars (physics, astronomy, medicine, etc.)

<sup>2</sup> Even if we reject that there is an Evil Demon, Descartes says that what is important is that we recognize that the intellect always has the capacity to go wrong even in matters that we think to have *perfect knowledge* (see beginning of paragraph 10).

- Objects of immediate perception are spurious
- Our bodies are capable of being doubted
- Particular Universals and Pure Universals are capable of being doubted (including mathematical truths)
- Conclusion: We cannot be completely confident in any of our beliefs. Result is a state of vertigo, confusion.
  - While in practice we *are easily led to believe the things we normally believe*, we can engage in a theoretical meditation.
    - In this theoretical meditation, even though we **cannot know anything true**, we can still **withhold our assent to anything false**.
    - Attitude is a sort of truth-security. Don't go wrong!
      - "even if it is not within my power to know anything true, it certainly is within my power to take care resolutely to withhold my assent to what is false" (par.12)

## Hobbes' Objections to Meditation I and Descartes Reply

### ➤ Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

- English philosopher best known for his work in political philosophy
- Wrote a work (called the *Leviathan*) that details a form of *social contract*, where individuals give up certain rights in order to escape "the war of all against all"
- Known for advocating *materialism* and *determinism*
  - Materialism: the view that there is only one substance and it is *matter* (no soul)
    - All of life is matter in motion
  - Determinism: the view that all events are determined (no freedom)

### ➤ Hobbes's Objections to Descartes

- The *Meditations* were published with a series of objections (and Descartes replies) by a number of famous philosophers and theologians. One set of these were Hobbes's very short objections.
  - Much of philosophy involves putting forward an argument and then countering it with an objection.
  - Some of Hobbes's objections are not very good (or just mere quibbles), but since they are so short we will examine them.
- Hobbes's Objection to Meditation #1
  - Hobbes agrees with Descartes's Meditation but says that there is nothing new here.

### ➤ Descartes's Reply

- Descartes agrees: there is nothing novel in Meditation #1 but there is something important

- Reason #1: In upcoming Meditations, Descartes plans to respond to these skeptical doubts, and this will show how ***strong*** Descartes philosophy is.
  - It is *so strong, so intellectually powerful* that it will be able to give us knowledge that can withstand weak senses, dreams, and even the tricks of evil demon.
- Reason #2: **Contextual Importance**
  - These skeptical doubts are a sort of introduction. They introduce what Descartes is trying to do. He is trying to come up with a *solid* foundation for knowledge that can withstand *these* skeptical doubts.

### ➤ **Summary of Skepticism**

- What is Skepticism
  - A response to the problem of *knowledge* – what we can know
    - Three Forms of Skepticism
      - Academic
      - Pyrrhonian
      - Methodological
- Why is Skepticism a Good Thing
  - *Skepticism* is a powerful philosophical response to the problem of knowledge and ultimately shows that we should show some trepidation in making knowledge claims, especially those involving *absolutes*
    - Against Dogmatism & Fanaticism & Cocksurenness
    - Useful for Securing Knowledge
      - If you can answer skeptical claims, then it is pretty clear that you have knowledge
      - This is important, knowledge is more important than mere belief
    - Focuses our Attention on the *justification* of Knowledge
      - Prompts us to think about the *source* of knowledge
- What to take away:
  - Whenever someone says “I know *x*, *y*, or *z*”, you might want to consider *how* they know that, and what *justifies* their calling it knowledge rather than a mere belief.

## ***Meditation 2***

- **What Can be Doubted (summary from *Meditation 1*)**
  - All that we see is doubtable
  - All that we receive through the senses doubtable
    - Includes our body, space, distance, extension, movement, etc.
    - Even *the existence of our body* is subject to question
  - Universal truths are doubtable
    - Mathematical Truths and Definitions
- **Is There Anything that Cannot be Doubted? (*Tactic of Meditation 2*)**
  - The search for a foundation, *an Archimedean point*

- Archimedes said that if he were given a place to stand, one strong point, and a large enough lever, he could move the world
- Descartes is after the same thing, one strong belief that we can build all the rest from
- **Not:** Our own very existence
  - not our body, hands, or information we receive through perception
- Does it follow that if we have no body or senses *we do not exist*?
  - **No**, if we are being deceived, then there is *something* that is being deceived
    - Even if we are convinced we have **no body**, it is *we* that are being convinced (some sort of *awareness*)
  - What remains is something that is *us*, but the nature of that thing is unclear.

So after considering everything very thoroughly, I must finally conclude that this proposition, *I am, I exist*, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind (par 3, p.16).

➤ What is the *I* that exists?

- **Body:** Human being with a body, hands, face, etc.

“by a body I understand whatever has a determinable shape and a definable location and can occupy a space in such a way as to exclude any other body; it can be perceived by touch, sight, hearing, taste or smell, and can be moved in various ways, not by itself but by whatever else comes into contact with it” (par.5).

- Body not capable of moving itself, only capable when it comes into contact with other things. *Not something that is free.*
- This is not what the *I* is since we can be deceived about whether we have a body since our senses can be tricked.
- **Soul/Mind:** something that senses and thinks
  - It is *thinking*!
    - It is the fact that we as *thinkers* are being tricked by the evil demon or by our senses or are judging that we know *we exist*!
    - We might be wrong about all our particular thoughts, but what we know for sure is that if we are being tricked then we are being tricked as a *thinking being*.
- The Arguments for **Cogito ergo sum** and that the “**I**” is a **Thinking Thing**

Argument for Cogito Ergo Sum	
P1	If I am being tricked by my senses, by dreams, or by an evil demon, then it is <i>I</i> am being tricked, or am thinking
P2	All thinking things are things that exist
C	I think, I am

Argument for the “I” as a Thinking Thing	
P1	If I am being tricked by my senses, by dreams, or by an evil demon, then it is <i>I</i> am being tricked, or am thinking

P2	Bodies are defined by being extended in space and don't think
C	The <i>I</i> is a thinking thing, i.e. a soul

➤ **Group Activity**

- Are these arguments convincing?
  - Pick a premise that seems open to doubt or false
  - Explain why it is false.

➤ **Absolute Certainty about Cogito Ergo Sum**

- If you try to deny it, you reaffirm it.
  - I don't believe it is true!
    - What are you saying?
      - *I* think that what you are saying is false.
      - You are saying: *I, a thing that thinks, think you are wrong.*

➤ What is a *thinking being*?

“But what then am I? A thing that thinks. What is that? A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, and also imagines and has sensory perceptions” (par.8).

➤ **What is a Substance: Soul vs. Body**

- **Two Types of Substances: Mind & Body**
  - These are the *subjects* or the *things* which take or hold certain predicates or properties
    - Example: John is a tall human being
      - What we mean is the *body* John is tall
        - extension, height, weight = apply to bodies
    - Example: John is thinking about the planets
      - What we mean is ambiguous: body or the mind/soul
        - thinking, feeling = apply to souls
  - Substances is like a container that holds certain predicates qualities

➤ **Are we something more than merely a thinking being?**

- Do we have bodies?
  - Maybe, but this cannot be known with absolute necessity
  - It may not be false, but it is *doubtable*, it could be merely a *dream*.
- Do we have a soul
  - Absolutely, it is the *thinking thing*, known with absolute necessity

➤ **Rationalism**: All Knowledge is through the *Mind Alone*

- Descartes contends that our knowledge about the world is **not** through our senses. It is from our **mind alone**.
  - Counter-intuitive to your usual understanding of the world.
    - You see something, someone tells you what it is, and you examine its properties, behavior, etc. on a regular basis.
    - From this you formulate a judgment about the object.



- Descartes understands this is the *normal* way of understanding things but thinks that the mind plays the primary role in the formation of our knowledge.
- **But it is a special type of knowledge through the mind**
  - Imagination
    - No: imagination is merely the contemplating of the shape or image of a corporeal things.
      - We do not know that there is anything corporeal or has the nature of the body; all we know is that we are a thinking thing
      - We are *imagining beings* but it isn't true that there is anything that corresponds to what we imagine

➤ **Review**

- Know & Don't Know
  - **Know:** that we are *thinking, sensing, imagining beings*
  - **Don't know:** that any of our thoughts, sensations, images produced by imagination correspond to anything in the world
- **There seems to be a problem**
  - We seem to know bodies more distinctly or clearly than we know ourselves
    - **The body is clearly known, but what is this mysterious I?**
    - Descartes switches gears and says "let us just this once allow it [our minds] completely free reign"
      - He means, let us move away from the ties of methodological skepticism and investigate the distinction between knowing *bodies* vs. knowing *immaterial substance*

➤ **Group Activity**

- Examine The wax example. What is Descartes trying to do or say here?
  - First: One is that our knowledge of the wax is not sensible
  - Second: Our knowledge of the wax is through the mind alone

➤ **The piece of wax: Knowledge of Immaterial Substance**

- Imagine a candlestick and think about its properties
  - Tastes sweet, has a red color, has a circular shape, it is cold, it is hard to the touch, it has a certain size
- Now expose it to *fire*
  - Taste goes away, colors changes, shape changes, it becomes warm, it is soft to the touch, it increases in size
- It is the **same wax**, but what about it is the same?
  - What is the Wax?
    - Nothing from the senses: not the taste, not the touch, nor the sight of it
    - **A Body:** something that is extended, flexible, mutable (AT VIII 31)
      - Our knowledge of the wax is **not**:
        - merely that it is capable of increasing/decreasing magnitude
        - nor that it is capable of changing from changing dimensionality
      - Our knowledge of the wax itself **involves**:

- Wax is capable of an *infinity* of changes
  - Alter the size, shape, dimension of the wax
  - **This infinity is impossible for us to grasp through our senses or imagination, but it is something we think to be a property of the wax itself**
- This is a *real* property of the wax, although it is a property **not found in the imagination** or through the senses
- **How do we know it then?**
  - We know it because *our mind grasps it*, it has direct contact with the object.

➤ **Rationalism: In Sum**

- **Rationalism:** the philosophical view of knowledge that says that we know *all* things through the *intellect* alone.
  - When we see the wax, we grasp its real essence through the *intellect*
    - Sure, we see and sense something with certain properties, but when we strip these properties away
      - When we take all of its clothes off, we see it for what it really is (not with the senses or with the imagination but with the mind)
    - **There are properties found in the wax that are not found in our total sensory experience of it.**
      - We know that the wax is capable of an infinity of changes, but we never have this experience.
- **Empiricism:** the philosophical view of knowledge that says that we know *all* things through the *senses* alone.
  - Descartes says that the senses cannot account for this infinitary aspect of things.

## The Wax Example

- The Wax Example: Three Parts Argument Why Wax is Not Known by Senses or Imagination
  - We want to know what about the wax stays the same through the changes and how we know this
  - Part 1: *Wax is all of its sensible qualities*
    - Wax is a body that has honey flavor, scented, color, shape, size, hard, cold, sound
    - Subject the wax to the flame and flavor dissipates, scent goes away, color changes, size increase, soft, no longer cold but hot instead, if you hit it against something it will not make a loud sound
  - Part 2: *Wax is an body that is extended, mutable, and flexible* (known via imagination)
    - Wax is an extended body capable of changing and flexibility
      - Known via *imagination*: piece of wax can change from a round to a square shape or from square shape to triangular
        - Run through this process in our mental imagination (picturing it to ourselves)
    - Objection: The wax is capable of *innumerable changes*
      - The wax is capable of an infinity of changes in shape, innumerable movement and flexibility but this cannot be imagined
        - We can only imagine some (not all) of them
      - Therefore, the wax is not an body that is known via the imagination
  - Part 3: Wax is an imagined body that is mere extension
    - Wax is merely an extended body: known through an increase and decrease of size
    - **Same objection as above**
  - **Conclusion**
    - The piece of wax cannot be known by the senses nor by the mental process of imagination.
    - The piece of wax can only be known by the mind alone
      - Descartes says that “the perception of the wax is neither a seeing, nor a touching, nor an imagining. Nor has it ever been, even though it previously seemed so; rather it is an inspection on the part of the mind alone” (AT VIII 31)
- The Scope of the Wax Example
  - This applies not merely to *wax* but also to people we see
    - We see a person that looks like our best friend, wearing a hat, a sweater, etc.
    - Descartes says *yes* we see them but we don’t know them by comparing them to a picture in our brain, nor by sensation, but by the **mind alone**.
    - Says quite explicitly “I now know that even bodies are not, properly speaking, perceived by the senses or by the faculty of the imagination, but by the intellect alone, and that they are not perceived through their being touched or seen, but only through their being understood” (AT VIII 34)

## Hobbes' Objections to Meditation 2, Descartes Replies to Hobbes'

- ❖ Three things to think about
  - Hobbes's Materialist view on the world
  - All activities/accidents have a subject
  - If corporeal activity is *extension*, then how thinking is possible?
- ❖ Hobbes's Objection 2: Materialism
  - **Materialism**
    - Hobbes **agrees** that thinking does imply that a thinking thing exists.
      - All activities imply a subject to which this activity inheres
        - ◆ Running implies a runner
        - ◆ Motion implies a body
        - ◆ Killing implies a killer
        - ◆ Thinking implies a thinking thing
    - Hobbes **rejects** that this thinking thing is *immaterial*.
      - **Descartes's Dualism**
        - ◆ Descartes argued in Med. 2 that if *body is extension*, then we can explain increase/decrease in size (increase in extension) and motion (change of extension)
        - ◆ There is no way to explain thinking in terms of extension alone, therefore it must be a non-extended thing, i.e. a mind or a soul.
        - ◆ **Argument from thinking**

Descartes's Argument for the "I" as a Thinking Thing	
P1	If I am being tricked by my senses, by dreams, or by an evil demon, then <i>I</i> am being tricked, or am thinking (I think therefore I am)
P2	Bodies are defined by being extended in space and extended space does not think
C	The <i>I</i> is a thinking thing, i.e. a soul

- **Hobbes's Materialism**
  - ◆ Hobbes argues the thinking thing is material (not clear what the argument is)
    - Group Activity: Construct Hobbes's argument in P1, P2, C form.

Hobbes's Argument for the "I" as a Material Thing	
P1	If I am being tricked by my senses, by dreams, or by an evil demon, then <i>I</i> am being tricked, or am thinking (I have a being)
P2	Bodies are defined as extension and it may be that thinking is a corporeal activity (also says subject of all acts can only be understood as a material subject; all activities cannot be separated from matter)
C	Therefore it is possible that the thinking thing is material

- ❖ **Group Exercise:** Can you think of reasons to make premise 2 stronger? What *evidence* is there that thinking is an activity of the body and not the mind? Now that you have given a

reason for believing premise 2, how might a reasonable person respond? That is, what *reason* is there for believing that premise 2 is false?

- **Answer 1: Brain Damage:** May be that there is an interconnection between mind and body.
- **Answer 2: Intelligence:** Link between thinking capacity and brain structure

#### ❖ **Descartes's Response to Hobbes's Objection 2**

- Agrees that “an act of thinking cannot exist without a thing that thinks” (AT VII 175-6)
- Descartes argues that Hobbes merely assumes that it is possible for a thinking thing to be material, but does not *prove* this!
- Two different types of acts in two different substances)
  - Corporeal acts — size, shape, motion, speed all belong to space
    - These are **all** properties of *bodies* (body as one substance characterized by extension)
  - Cogitative acts — understanding, willing, perceiving, imagining
    - These are **not** properties of *bodies* (cannot be explained in terms of *spatial extension*)
      - ◆ Explain how chocolate tastes or how hot feels
        - You can explain the causal sequence of material parts (neurons and sense-stimuli) but is this an adequate explanation of the feeling?
    - These are properties of a *thing* that thinks (immaterial substance)

#### ❖ **Summary of Rationalism**

- Hobbes is concerned with Descartes calling the *thinking thing* “immaterial”, but this is not really what the Second Meditation is about.
  - Thinking thing is immaterial but this is not the overall point
- **First:** It sets the stage for Descartes *rationalistic* philosophy by giving us a belief that serves as a foundation for all knowledge
  - Cogito ergo sum
    - We don't need sensory experience to tell us this is true.
    - Even an evil demon cannot convince us otherwise
- **Second:** It sets the stage for Descartes *rationalistic* philosophy by telling us how *real* knowledge is formed
  - All knowledge is obtained **through the mind alone!**
    - When we examine the piece of wax, our senses do not inform us about the **real essence** of the wax (what the wax really is)
      - ◆ The essence of the wax is not its color, its hardness, its shape (see AT VII 175)
        - When we melt the wax, we subject it to a variety of different changes and none of the sensible properties seem to stay the same
    - It is our *mind alone* (rationalism) that tells us what the wax really is, i.e. a particular extension capable of an infinite number of alterations in extension and dimension

◆ Hobbes's Argument Against the Wax

Hobbes's Argument against the Wax	
P1	Wax is capable of undergoing an infinite number of changes
P2	Descartes says that we know the object via the mind alone. This is wrong because it can be explained in another way, i.e. by the same matter
C	Therefore we know things through the senses, i.e. we know the wax because we sense the same matter.

- Hobbes is an empiricist and thinks that all our knowledge is from the senses alone
  - Do we really perceive or sense matter independent of its properties? Do we have a sensory?

## Meditation 3

- **Two Points: Skepticism about the Source & the Resemblance Thesis**
  - There is an epistemological divide between the **subject & hypothetical object**
    - We know we exist, but we don't know anything about objects
      - All Meditation 2 establishes is that we exist and that the way in which we will know anything cannot be through *sensation* nor through *imagination*
      - How do we bridge the divide?
  - **First: Skepticism** about the *Source* of Appearance not the Appearance Itself
    - *We have sensory experience* of something but that does not mean anything exists independently of our thought (solipsism)
      - Sensory perception may simply be an internal *mode of thought*
      - We don't know anything about the *object* of our appearance
        - **Solipsism**: some impressions *do not* depend on our will but that does not mean that they *proceed from things outside of us* (produced by dreams)
          - **The impressions might be produced by our subconscious**
  - **Second: Non-resemblance Thesis (Skepticism)**
    - There may be an object outside of us, but we do not clearly and distinctly perceive **that the *things outside of us* (not the ideas *within* us) resemble our ideas in all respects. We don't perceive the connection between the two like we perceive the appearance**
    - **Why do We Think that Ideas Resemble Things**: *Things impress their own likeness*
      - Some ideas are **innate**
        - Ideas that I have, not created by me, but not given to me from outside of me
        - Usually stem from our own nature (what a thing is = We know because we are a thing)
      - Some of ideas are **constructed (invented)**: imagine a circle, or a mythological being
        - We create this with our mind so they conform it conforms to its object (the object is imaginary)
      - Some ideas are **given**
        - Example: heat, pressure, a smack to the head
          - **Belief: Ideas that come to us *independently* of our will resemble the objects**
            - A stove feels *hot* therefore the stove is *hot*
            - A wall feels hard, therefore the wall *is hard*.
        - Things impress upon us *their own likeness*.
      - **Skepticism**: certain impressions *do not* depend on our will but that does not mean that they ***resemble*** the things themselves
        - The impressions and the things themselves might be entirely different

➤ **Summary**

- Since we don't have a clear perception of the *connection* between our appearance and its object, we cannot say our **idea of a thing resembles** the **thing itself**.
- *What we need*: we can say something about the *source*, if we can find some truth about it, then we can have knowledge

➤ **Doubt: Mathematical Truths**

- The only reason we doubt mathematical truth ( $2+2=4$ ) is because we suppose that there is some evil demon (or God) that tricks us.
  - If we could show that the evil demon hypothesis is not justified, we could reestablish certain truths about the world: mathematics, knowledge about certain abstract (or necessary properties) of things
  - Is there any reason to believe that such a being exists?

If God does not exist	then we <i>have no reason</i> to believe that we would be tricked about mathematical truths
If God does exist	then we have reason to believe that he might be a trickster.
If God does exist and he is not a trickster	then we <i>don't have</i> a reason to believe that he is a trickster
If God does exist and he may be a trickster	then we <i>have</i> reason to believe that he is a trickster

➤ **Descartes Argument for the existence of a Real Object & God: Introduction**

- Descartes has already established that "I exist" with his cogito ergo sum (Med.2) but is left with uncertainty about whether (1) he is the only thing that exists (*solipsism*) and (2) whether the external world has any resemblance to how it appears (*skepticism*).
  - The **first** major conclusion of Meditation 3 will be "I am not alone in the world, but that something else, which is the cause of this idea, also exists" (AT VIII:42)
    - This undermines *solipsism*
  - The **second** major conclusion of Meditation 3 will be "God necessarily exists" (AT VIII 45) and that God "cannot be a deceiver, for it is manifest by the light of nature that all fraud and deception depend on some defect" (AT VIII 52)
    - This undermines *skepticism* that was produced by the evil demon

➤ **Descartes Argument for the existence of a Real Object (God): Structure & Proof**

- Descartes argument involves a lot of different premises and can be hard to understand. Here is one version of it

Short Argument for the Existence of God: Against Solipsism	
P1	I think therefore I am (Med.2)
P2	I cannot be mistaken about my ideas, although can be mistaken about the source



P3	There can never be more <i>objective reality</i> in the effect (i.e. the idea) than there is <i>formal reality</i> in the cause (i.e. object of the idea). <sup>3</sup>
P4	I have an idea of an infinite substance that is perfect
P5	My idea of an infinite substance is the most objectively real idea that I have
P6	The idea of an infinite substance cannot be caused by reflection on my own nature (a finite substance) or upon the nature of other finite substances
C	The only possible cause of the idea of an infinite substance is the existence of the infinite substance

➤ **Defense of Premises**

- **Premise #1 & 2:** Uncontroversial
- **Premise #3:** There can never be more *objective reality* in the effect (i.e. the idea) than there is *formal reality* in the cause (i.e. object of the idea)
  - Things always have more reality than ideas of those things
  - If a thing *causes* an idea, that thing has more reality than the idea itself
- **Premise #4:** I have an idea of an infinite substance that is perfect
  - We have an idea of a substance that is infinite, independent, supremely intelligent and powerful, and that created me along with everything else that exists
    - We have an idea of God in our mind
- **Premise #5:** My idea of an infinite substance that is perfect is the most objectively real idea that I have

<b>Argument the Infinite Substance is the Most Objectively Real Idea</b>	
P1	To have more being is to be better (or have more reality) than to have less being
P2	Infinite beings have more being than finite beings (since the infinite contains the finite)
C	My idea of an infinite substance that is perfect is the most objectively real idea that I have

- **Premise #6:** The idea of an infinite substance cannot be caused by reflection on my own nature (a finite substance) nor can it be given to me
- **Not Myself:** I cannot be the source of the infinite idea because it cannot come from my own nature (a body, a soul that is finite, etc.)
  - **Not Imagination:** We have other ideas given to us via sense (animals, angels, etc.) but these we just put together from other finite substances
  - **Must be given to me by God**

➤ **Descartes Argument for the God not being a Deceiver: *Structure & Proof***

---

<sup>3</sup> What Descartes means by “formal” and “objective” reality is somewhat of an issue. One way to think about it is *formal reality* refers to actual or existing things while *objective reality* refers to our representation or idea of things. Any idea that *can* actually be thought (so not contradictions) has objective reality. Some ideas can have more objective reality than others because **some ideas depend upon other ideas (accidents depend on the substance)**. For example, the idea of the number 1 has less objective reality than the idea of *number in general* since the former depends upon the latter. One principal thesis that Descartes advances is “there must be at least as much [reality] in the efficient and total cause as there is in the effect of that same cause” (AT VIII 40). This means that **all ideas** have a cause but **some** of these ideas will be caused by other ideas (e.g. ideas about the material world).

- This argument is a lot shorter, easier to understand, but perhaps less convincing

<b>Argument that God is not a Trickster: Against Skepticism of the Evil Demon</b>	
P1	God exists and God is defined as an infinite substance that is supremely perfect
P2	Only non-perfect beings intentionally deceive finite beings <sup>4</sup>
C	Therefore, God is not an evil demon

- We now have two arguments against skepticism and solipsism
  - We have knowledge of the following
    - Ourselves as immaterial things
    - God as a perfect being
    - Mathematical truths and abstract properties of things

#### ➤ Homework

- See test preparation in Angel
  - Go to Review Materials & Homework and click Review Materials and Homework pre-Test #2 and click **Cartesian Rationalism**
  - If you want further, practice, review the questions in homework and take a look at **How to Study for Philosophy Tests in Philosophy Tips**.

#### ➤ Questions

- In lectures 1 and 2, Descartes contends that a number of different beliefs we previously held to be true are doubtful (e.g. mathematical truths, the existence of objects). In lecture 3, Descartes contends that what it takes for an idea to be true is that it is clearly and distinctly perceived. What *exactly* is being doubted?
  - That we are actually having *ideas* inside of us (about unicorns, etc.)
  - That we are thinking beings
  - That our ideas actually correspond to *things* that resemble them in all respects.
- At the beginning of lecture 3, what methodological move does Descartes make in order to investigate whether we can believe in mathematical truths?
  - Argue that it is blatantly obvious and doesn't need explanation
  - Investigate the existence of God and whether God is a trickster
  - Invoke the authority of Great Philosopher Aristotle, claiming that Aristotle proved this and no further investigation is needed
  - Investigate biblical claims of the Bible and whether or not it contends that God exists.
- For Descartes, in the third Meditation, what kinds of ideas can be true or false
  - Judgments, such as "That chair is blue"
  - Exclamations, such as "Wow!" or "Fantastic!"
  - Questions, like "Is there a cow in that barn?"
  - Imperatives or Commands, such as "Pass me that fork!"

---

<sup>4</sup> We also might need to add the caveat that "only a non-perfect being would allow finite beings to be deceived by a being greater than them". This would ensure that God would prevent us from being tricked by evil demons.

## Second Half of Meditation 3: Innatism & Against the Evil Demon

1. **Evaluation of P6 (*innatism*):** The idea of an infinite substance cannot be caused by reflection on my own nature (a finite substance) or upon the nature of other finite substances
2. **Argument Against Epistemological Skepticism**

### ➤ **Evaluation of P6: Idea of God is from God**

- On AT VIII 46-49 (and earlier), Descartes considers a number of different ways that we might have acquired our idea of God (or infinite substance). The thought is that maybe we acquired this idea by another means
  - He considers (at least) *four* possibilities
    - Obtained from our ideas of other finite things (men, animals, or angels)
    - Obtained by negating a finite idea
    - Obtained from nothing or nowhere
    - Obtained because I am god
- *Not Obtained from Our Ideas of other finite things*
  - We have other ideas given to us via sense (animals, angels, etc.) but these we just put together from other finite substances
  - We can only get the finite from the finite
    - Proof take any finite set of numbers and add them to another set, the result will be another finite set
- *Not Obtained by Negating a Finite Idea (AT VIII 45-6)*
  - Argument seems to be that we don't obtain our notion of the infinite by merely saying it is not the finite (not clear why)
    - He says that our perception to the infinite is *prior* to the finite

Argument that Perception of Infinite is Prior to the Finite (AT VIII 46)	
P1	If we understand something that thinks, doubts, desires, lacks, and is not perfect, then we must understand the thing that knows all, does not desire, and is perfect
P2	We do understand something that has these properties
C	Our perception to the infinite is <i>prior</i> to the finite

- Argument is that we cannot know ourselves without a being that we can *contrast* ourselves with, so as soon as we know ourselves, we get the idea of God
  - Therefore, the idea of God is not obtained through *negating* a finite thing but is necessary for understanding a finite thing
- *Not Obtained simply Nothing (AT VIII 46-7)*
  - The idea cannot merely be false since it has the most *objective reality* in terms of ideas.
    - Remember that Descartes thinks that there must be at least *as much reality* in the *cause* as there is in the *effect*

- We have an idea of *God*, which is an infinite substance, independent, supremely intelligent and powerful, and perfect — This has the most reality
    - We cannot get this idea from ourselves since we are finite
    - We must get it from something outside of us, which is God
  - *Not Obtained because I am God (AT VIII 47-49)*
    - Descartes considers that we might be perfect (like God) but these perfections are only in us *potentially*, i.e. we will ultimately be God
      - Objection: This does not work because the definition of God is an *actually infinite thing* not a thing that just continues to get better (a *potential infinite*)
  - **Conclusion**
    - Descartes seems to think that the only way we can receive the idea of an infinite substance is if it is actually given to us (put into us) by God
    - This view is called *innatism*. We have certain innate ideas inside of us that we receive neither from the outside world nor is it that we make them up
      - Ideas that we *discover* by thinking
      - Part of the objective structure of who we are
- **Descartes Argument for the God not being a Deceiver: *Structure & Proof***
- This argument is a lot shorter, easier to understand, but perhaps less convincing

<b>Argument that God is not a Trickster: Against Skepticism of the Evil Demon</b>	
P1	God exists and God is defined as an infinite substance that is supremely perfect
P2	Only non-perfect beings intentionally deceive finite beings <sup>5</sup>
C	Therefore, God is not an evil demon

- **Conclusion of Meditation 3**
- Argument Against Solipsism
    - At least one other thing exists in the world, and this is *the infinite substance*
  - Argument Against Epistemological Skepticism
    - Since God is not a deceiver, and God is perfect, we know that he is not an evil demon
      - We thus have knowledge of the following *three* things
        - Ourselves as thinking things (Meditation 2)
        - The Infinite & Perfect Substance (Meditation 3)
        - Mathematical truths and abstract properties of things (Med. 3)
  - What is left for Descartes to Do?
    - We still want to establish the reality of the material world (Med.5)
    - We still want to a method for generating truth (Med.4)

---

<sup>5</sup> We also might need to add the caveat that “only a non-perfect being would allow finite beings to be deceived by a being greater than them”. This would ensure that God would prevent us from being tricked by evil demons.

## Hobbes' Objections to Meditation 3, Descartes' Replies

### ➤ Hobbes' Objection V: No idea of God

- Hobbes is not going to have a problem with Descartes conclusion that God, the soul, or substance exists, but he will think that Descartes argument is flawed.
- Hobbes will also reject that ideas are *innate*. For Hobbes all ideas come from the senses and are recreated through the *imagination*
  - Remember that Descartes says that we have *ideas* of God, substance, ourselves as an immaterial substance but these ideas are *innate*.
  - They are obtained through reason alone and not through *sense* or *imagination*
    - Having these ideas is important for his proof for the existence of God

Short Argument for the Existence of God: Against Solipsism	
P1	I think therefore I am (Med.2)
P2	I cannot be mistaken about the ideas that I have, although I am frequently mistaken about the source of these ideas
P3	There can never be more <i>objective reality</i> in the effect (i.e. the idea) than there is <i>formal reality</i> in the cause (i.e. object of the idea). <sup>6</sup>
P4	<b>I have an idea of an infinite substance that is perfect</b>
P5	My idea of an infinite substance that is perfect is the most objectively real idea that I have
C	The only possible cause of the idea of an infinite substance is the infinite substance

### ➤ Summary of Hobbes's Objection Against Having Ideas w/o Images

- *No Ideas w/o Images*
  - No idea of an infinite substance (God)
  - No idea of soul
  - No idea of an immaterial substance

### ➤ First Objection: No Idea of an Infinite Substance

P1	In order for something to be an idea, we must have an image of it in our mind
P2	We have no image/picture of God
C	Therefore we have no idea of God

- Whenever we have an idea, we think of an *image*
  - Think of a fire-truck, you picture one in your mind

---

<sup>6</sup> What Descartes means by “formal” and “objective” reality is somewhat of an issue. One way to think about it is *formal* reality refers to actual or existing things while *objective* reality refers to our representation or idea of things. Any idea that *can* actually be thought (so not contradictions) has objective reality. Some ideas can have more objective reality than others because some ideas depend upon other ideas. For example, the idea of the number 1 has less objective reality than the idea of *number in general* since the former depends upon the latter. One principal thesis that Descartes advances is “there must be at least as much [reality] in the efficient and total cause as there is in the effect of that same cause” (AT VIII 40). This means that **all** *ideas* have a cause but **some** of these ideas will be caused by other ideas (e.g. ideas about the material world).

- Think of your fear of a charging lion, what you have is an image of a charging plus the idea of the effect it has on your body (the feeling)
- Think of an angel, you think of a person perhaps with wings and with fire around them
- Think of your hand in a fire, or tasting some chocolate
  - For all of these ideas we suppose something composed of **visible things or some sort of experience**
- Think of God as an *infinite substance*
  - Hobbes says that we have no image of this thing and therefore no idea of him either.
- We posit God's existence because of a series of causes but we have no idea/image of this first cause in our mind
- **Descartes' Reply to Hobbes' First Objection**
  - False Assumption by Hobbes
  - You restrict the *idea* to merely an image, but I think we can have ideas of things without having an image of that thing
    - Easy for Hobbes to make this argument if ideas only equal images
    - The philosophical question then is: what is the scope of the *idea*? Is it restricted only to images (à la Hobbes) or does it include things we have no image of of (à la Descartes)?

➤ **Third Objection (VII): No Idea of a Soul**

P1	In order for something to be an idea, we must have an image of it in our mind
P2	We have no image of a soul (immaterial substance)
C	Therefore we have no idea of a soul

- The idea of God & the soul is *not innate* nor even an idea but *something* inferred
  - We simply assume that there is something in us called the soul but we don't have any idea of its properties or what it is like
- **Descartes's Reply**
  - We do have an idea of God & soul, since ideas do not need to be images
    - Descartes thinks that images are thinking via the imagination, but he also thinks that when we make inferences to the reality of something, that something is an idea (no need for a picture)

➤ **Fifth Objection (IX): No Idea of a Substance, Known only by reasoning not imagination**

P1	In order for something to be an idea, we must have an image of it in our mind
P2	We have no image of a substance
C	Therefore we have no idea of a substance

- The notion of substance is understood as that thing which is independent and holds together a *number of sensible properties* (or accidents). It is that which underlies certain

properties. The substance of an elephant is a material body. The substance of a thinking thing is an immaterial substance,

- Hobbes says that we **do not** have an idea of substance; we only have an idea of a list of visible or sensible properties that are in one place. The notion of substance is obtained only through reasoning
  - So Hobbes argues that there are substances, we just don't know anything about them
  - This point seems *trivial* since they are both agreeing that there are these things, but it is important because a lot of Descartes' *Meditations* works because he relies on the premises that we have an idea of an infinite substance to get us out of solipsism.
    - Remember that he uses this premise coupled with the premise that *the reality of an idea never has more reality than the reality of its cause* to argue that God must exist
- **Descartes' Reply**
  - **Same sort of response as above, namely that we do have an idea of substance but it is not something we *imagine***
  - Example from Meditation 6: The Chiliagon
    - Picture in your mind a triangle, you see an image
    - Picture in your mind two figures side by side, one with a million sides & one with 999,999 sides
      - They look the same but we say that they are different *ideas*

### ➤ **The Philosophical Import of this Discussion**

- The debate between Hobbes & Descartes revolves around whether or not we can have an *idea* of God, the soul, & substance
  - Hobbes thinks we only have ideas of things we can imagine (picture) and everything else is merely inference from things we imagine
    - This results in their having sometimes the same conclusions for different reasons
    - Hobbes will say that we know God exists but for an entirely different reason (cosmological argument) — we also *cannot know anything* about God's nature
    - Hobbes will say that we might infer the existence of the soul, but we can know nothing about it
  - Descartes thinks that we can have ideas without images and therefore we are justified in knowing certain things beyond the imagination
- The question is partly based upon definition but partly based upon certain epistemological commitments
  - If you think that all knowledge is through *sensation and reasoning* but you think that reason cannot go beyond the senses, then you will think that ideas are tied to the imagination (à la Hobbes). You might be able to say that God, the soul, or substance exists but since all ideas are tied to *sensory things*, you will not know anything about these things
  - If you think that at least some knowledge can be obtained through the use of *reason alone*, then you will think that ideas are not tied to the imagination (à la Descartes). You will be able to say that God, the soul, or substance exists and since ideas are not tied to *sensory things*, you will not have an image of this idea.

- The issue is important for all sorts of Practical Reasons as Well
  - **Science:** are we justified in asserting the existence of a given particle even though it has never been seen?
  - **Religion:** are we justified in living our lives according to a particular moral code based upon certain reasons obtained through properties of God?
  - **Politics:** are we justified in saying that something like *right* or *wrong* exists when we cannot picture these things?
- Take a moment to think about whether you think we can have *ideas* without images. Are you pro-Hobbes or Pro-Descartes? Remember that Descartes uses ideas w/o images to escape skepticism and solipsism so if you abandon Descartes's argument, you will have to find another way out.



## ***Meditation #4: Concerning the True and the False***

### ➤ **Summary**

- The beginning of *Meditation 4* involves a summary of the earlier meditations. What is important to note is that Descartes thinks that we can gain more knowledge
  - We know we exist
  - We know God exists and he is not a trickster
  - We also know, to some degree, that if God did not exist we would not be possible
- Descartes thinks we go further

I might progress from this contemplation of the true God, in whom, namely, are hidden all the treasures of the sciences and wisdom, to the knowledge of other things (AT VIII 53)

- Meditation 4 is dedicated to two issues, ***method for gaining truth*** and ***the proper use of our free will***
  - This is not really two separate issues as we will see. In fact, the **method for gaining truth (avoiding error) is the propose use of the free will.**
    - This is an important and perhaps not immediately apparent consequence of whether or not we have free will.
    - For Descartes, free will is responsible for *sin* and for *error*.

### ➤ **God is not a trickster & Correct Use of our Faculties**

- From Meditation 3 we know that God is perfect, deception is incompatible with perfection, therefore God does not intentionally deceive us
  - Meditation 4 starts off with a similar argument but we are left with an interesting question: *if God does not trick us, why do we make mistakes?*
- God is Not a Trickster but God Created Us

<b>Faculty of Judgment is Not Worthless</b>	
P1	If God created us, then God gave us a faculty for judgment
P2	If we have a faculty for judgment given to us by God, then it cannot be the type of faculty that will always end in deception (for God is not a trickster)
C	Therefore, the proper use of our faculty for judgment will not result in deception

- Descartes thinks that we have an idea of *God* and an idea of *Nothing*
  - Faculty of judging is **not infinite and perfect**
  - Faculty of judging is **not nothing and worthless**
- Descartes has Two Tasks
  - **First:** Descartes' task then is to figure out the *source of err* & the *proper use of our faculty of judgment*
    - Once we establish this, then we will have a method for gaining more knowledge about the world (more than merely *I exist* & *God exists*)
  - **Second:** Figure out why didn't God make us such that we *don't make any mistakes!*

## First Task: The Source of Err & Proper Use of Judgment

### ➤ Problem & Solution: Against Final Causes

- **Option #1: Appeal to God's Purpose:** If God is perfect, why did he give us an imperfect faculty (one that makes mistakes)?
  - Which is better, **to err** or **not to err**?
    - Descartes thinks this question is **pointless** if we try to figure out God's *aim* or *purpose*
    - God is super powerful, infinite, etc. and we are weak and finite. From our point of view, God's purposes are *incomprehensible*
  - We may appear full of imperfections but that might only be out of context
  - Conclusion: ***Cannot know why we err by thinking about God's plan***
    - God may have introduced this imperfection for the greater perfection of the whole universe (bummer for us)
    - Who knows what God is up to?
- **Option #2: Consider Our Nature:** If not through God's plan, maybe we can focus on ourselves, (AT VIII 56)
  - Two Potential Sources for Error
    - Faculty of Knowing (*Intellect*)
    - Faculty of Choosing (*Free Will*)
  - **Option #2a: Intellect**
    - Error is *not* found merely in the intellect
      - It merely perceives ideas, thinks things, but does not create error
        - Descartes thinks that the intellect **does not judge** anything. It sort of analyzes what is in front of it and makes a determination based upon this.
        - Acts like a sort of impartial observer/analyzer
      - It is, however, *limited* — we recognize this because God's intellect is so great
        - We do not know everything, but that does not cause us to make mistakes
  - **Option #2b: Free Will**
    - Our free will, however, is not limited. It is boundless & perfect like God's.
      - God's will appears to be more powerful but only because God has *more power and more intelligence*
        - Formally our *will* is the same as God's
      - When we say that the *will* is only a **faculty for choosing** then we see that our faculty for choosing is equal to God's
    - Definition of *Willing*

Willing being able to do or not do the same thing, that is, of being able to affirm or deny, to pursue or shun; or better still, the will consists solely in the fact that when something is presented to us by our intellect either to affirm or deny, to pursue or to

shun, we are moved in such a way that we sense **that we are determined to it by no external force** (32)

- Point #1: One of the important features of this definition is that *freedom* involves a **lack of external force**.
- Point #2: Willing **does not** consist in our ability to do either a1 or a2 since we are always inclined to do one over the other by **what we take to be good**
  - **If you have a free will, according to Descartes, you are actually *less likely to be indifferent about your decision***
    - If we know something to be *true* then we will choose the one that we think is true.
  - **Example:** If you are hungry and you want to live, you have a number of options. Not eat, eat some poison, or eat some delicious food.
    - Descartes says that **your knowledge** that food nourishes you will incline you to eat. But this knowledge is **internal** to you.
    - You are still free because *freedom* is the *lack of external force* on your decision. Your knowledge and divine grace, Descartes *seems* to contend is *internal* to your decision
      - Freedom is based upon decisions made from **internal conditions** not external ones
- **Indifference** about decision is the *lowest grade of freedom*
  - This is because there is nothing **internal** that is affecting the choice.
    - Your knowledge is not moving you one way or another
    - If we knew everything, we would never deliberate about anything, but we would be *so free*.
      - Remember: freedom does not consist in the capacity *to do* or to *choose* otherwise. It consists in the choice being made from *internal conditions* (knowledge, God giving you insight, etc.)
- **Conclusion: Free Will (by itself) does not cause Error**
  - If you are using your free will, then you are being moved by an *internal principle* to make a decision.

➤ Two Conclusions & the Source of Error

- Neither the Intellect nor the Will (by themselves) are the *cause* of error
  - **Not the Intellect** – while it is limited, it is not forced to believe that which it doesn't know
  - **Not the Will** – perfect like God's, involves internal decisions
- **Intellect & Will in Conjunction: Source of Error**
  - Source of Error: When the will *extends* further than the intellect

What then is the source of my errors? They are owing simply to the fact that, since the will extends further than the intellect, I do not contain the will within the same boundaries; rather, I also extend it to things I do not understand (AT 58, p.32-3)

- **The improper use of our *free will* results in error.**
  - When we extend our will beyond the bounds of the intellect
  - **Example:** Suppose someone *do you know where the Creamery is?*
    - To tell them, *yes* when you don't know *is wrong* (to err) since your intellect does not tell you one way or another
      - Your will is going beyond your intellect
    - It is probably alright if you *guess* but not if you take your *judgment* to be true
  - **Example:** Suppose you don't know whether to kill your neighbor is wrong
    - To say, *ah I will do it anyway, and I'm right* is *to sin* since you extended your will beyond the internal principle (i.e. beyond your intellect)
- Provided we don't let our free will ***extend beyond*** the intellect, then we will (a) *not err* and (b) *not sin*

But if I hold off from making a judgment when I do not perceive what is true with sufficient clarity and distinctness, it is clear that I am acting properly and am not committing error (AT 59-60, p.33)

#### ➤ **Summary**

- **Source of Error:** When Freedom extends beyond the Intellect.
- **Proper Use of Judgment/Freedom:** We can continually avoid error by simply abstaining from judgment when we don't know.

## **Second Task: Theological Issues with God: Couldn't He Keep Us From Error?**

### ➤ **Issues with God: Complaints and Why He Didn't Make Us Greater**

- **First:** God does not owe me anything, so I should not blame him
  - Not Really addressing the issue, but we'll keep this in mind
- **Second:** God gave me a perfect will: More is Better
  - Descartes thinks that the *essence* of the will can only be how it is; God could not give us a *free will* in a different form
  - God might be able to give us a free will that is less perfect & less like his?
    - We wouldn't want that because then we'd be like animals
- **Third:** God Could Have Given Me a Perfect Will & Kept me from Making Mistakes
  - Could do this by (a) giving me a more powerful intellect, or (b) making me never forgot how to use my will properly
    - We cannot appeal to God's purpose!
    - It may make the world a greater place if God introduces some *imperfect parts* into the world in order to make the *whole more wonderful*

### ➤ **Epistemological, Ethical, Practical, and Theological Intersections**

- One thing to note is how a number of different issues blend into each other
  - Descartes needs a *method for truth*, to gain knowledge (epistemological)
    - But he needs to talk about *free will* (metaphysical)

- When talking about *free will*, he needs to talk about *God*
  - In talking about God & free will, he comes to talk about *sin, error, rightness and wrongness* (theological, ethical, political, epistemological)
- The important thing to see is that certain abstract goals often require

➤ **Review: Definition of Freedom in Sum**

- Descartes defines Freedom as
  - Lack of an **lack of external force** making your decision. You are free if and only if there is some **internal force** that makes the decision.
  - Willing **does not** consist in our ability to *do* either *a1* or *a2* since we are always inclined to do one over the other by **what we take to be good or what our intelligent tells us is the right choice**
    - **Determinism & Freedom are Compatible**
      - All events are determined by previous events!
      - Important thing is that it is determined by the ***right kind of previous event***, namely those having to do with our internal motivation and causation.
  - It is important that you recognize this because Leibniz will make use of this definition

**Second Task: Theological Issues with God: Couldn't He Keep Us From Error?**

➤ **Issues with God: Complaints and Why He Didn't Make Us Greater**

- **First:** God does not owe me anything, so I should not blame him
  - Not Really addressing the issue, but we'll keep this in mind
- **Second:** God gave me a perfect will: More is Better
  - Descartes thinks that the *essence* of the will can only be how it is; God could not give us a *free will* in a different form
  - God might be able to give us a free will that is less perfect & less like his?
    - We wouldn't want that because then we'd be like animals
- **Third:** God Could Have Given Me a Perfect Will & **Kept me from Making Mistakes**
  - Could do this by (a) giving me a ***more powerful intellect***, or (b) making me ***never forgot how to use my will properly***
    - We cannot appeal to God's purpose!
    - It may make the world a greater place if God introduces some *imperfect parts* into the world in order to make the *whole more wonderful*
  - Not really clear how satisfactory this is

## Hobbes' Objections to Meditation 4

- **First Objection (XII): Contradiction (AT VII 54 & AT VII 56)**
  - AT VII 54: No need to account for *error* by positing a power given to me by God for the purpose of making mistakes
    - In short, God did not give me a faculty for the purpose of making mistakes
  - AT VII 56: Error depends on the simultaneous occurrence of two causes: faculty of knowing (intellect) and faculty of choosing (free will)
    - In short, error depends on my power to will beyond my intellect (given to me by God)
  - Contradiction: God is not responsible for error but God is responsible for error
    - Not Responsible: Because God didn't give me a faculty for error
    - Responsible: Because God *did* give me a faculty for Error (intellect & will)
  - Theological Consequence
    - If God is not responsible, then he is perfect but then it seems that error would be impossible.
    - If God is responsible, then God is not perfect which is problematic since Descartes proves the existence of God by noting his perfection.
- **Descartes' Response to First Objection: Worthless**
  - Pretty worthless — clear that he is getting tired of Hobbes
  - How can we Resolve this for our buddy Descartes?
    - Let's think about this passage (AT VII 54)
  - Perhaps we might say that God is not responsible because he didn't give me a faculty *solely* for the purpose of error.
    - Proper Use of the Will + Intellect ≠ Error/Sin
    - Improper Use of the Will + Intellect = Error/Sin
  - There is still a lingering question why God didn't either (a) give us a more perfect intellect or (b) constantly remind us how to use our will correctly
- **Second Objection (XIII): Belief vs. Knowledge & Assent ≠ Will (AT VII 58-9, 60)**
  - **Objection A:** When is the Light of the Intellect Shining?
    - When we judge something to be true, our intellect shines a path for the will to travel through. We then choose *a1* over *a2* because the Intellect shows the way.
      - Hobbes says that this is *unclear* and it seems that this *great light* is just the reason why we believe anything.
        - Case #1: Situation where I have to choose *a1* or *a2*. "A great light shines the way so that my will chooses *a1*." The choice is internal, I have knowledge, avoid error, avoid sin.
        - Case #2: Situation where I have to choose *a1* or *a2*. "Oh my a great *light* is *shining on me*, this is why I chose *a1*."
          - **How do we know if the Light of the Intellect is shining because we have KNOWLEDGE or because we just REALLY BELIEVE**

- **Descartes' Response to Objection A: Worthless**
    - Difference between *light in the intellect* (perspicuity/clarity of knowledge) and *obstinate opinion*
      - What is the difference between *knowing* and *believing strongly*?
  - **Objection B: Belief has nothing to do with the Will**
    - We only believe something when we are given evidence and a credible argument
      - This has nothing to do with our “giving assent”
        - The argument/evidence is **external** to us! Forces our belief
  - **Descartes' Response to Objection B: Worthless**
    - It is not clear what Descartes is talking about, take a look and see what you can make of it
- **Important Thing to Note**
- Descartes is not simply wrong because he hasn't replied to these objections
    - Objections are only effective if ***no one could respond to them***
    - Philosophy *develops* by taking these arguments, looking at these objections and then figuring out whether or not they are effective.
      - It is a matter of strengthening objections and arguments

## Meditation 6

- **Summary of the preceding 5 Meditations**
  - Meditation 1: Methodological Skepticism
  - Meditation 2: The first truth (I think therefore I am)
  - Meditation 3: God exists and deception is incompatible with his existence
  - Meditation 4: Method for avoiding error/sin (will ought to never go beyond the intellect)
  - Meditation 5: God exists (ontological argument) & Reality of Material Essence
- Aim of Meditation 6 is to establish (1) establish a **distinction between *mind* and *body***, (2) the **existence of Material Things**, (3) **determine the nature of the self**.
  - Part of Meditation 6 can be helpful for seeing the whole structure of the *Meditations* since Descartes offers a succinct summary of the preceding in it.

### First Goal: The Distinction between Mind and Body

- One of the major keys to all three rests on the difference between *imagination* and *pure intellection*
  - There is a difference between objects thought through *imagination* and objects thought through *pure intellection*
    - Both are **forms are knowing** objects
  - **Imagination** — a certain application of the knowing faculty to a body intimately present to it, and which therefore exists (AT VIII 72).
    - Application of knowing to *bodies* — thinking about extensions in space
      - **Example #1 (triangle):** When we think about a *triangle*, we think about a distinct *picture of it* (imagining)
      - **We can however understand figures without picturing them!**
      - **Example #2 (chiliagon):** When don't think a chiliagon by thinking of a confused *picture of it* (imagining). We can understand a chiliagon distinctly (pure intellection w/o imagination). Thinking about its abstract properties.
    - While we *do* think of triangles and pentagons with our imagination, we don't have to!
      - **Example #3 (circle):**  $x^2 + y^2 = r^2$ . We think of this object in terms of its abstract properties, not as a picture or as a thing extended in space.
  - **Conclusion:** We can know objects (1) through their spatial extension (by **imagination or sensation**) and (2) know these objects without spatial extension (by **intellect**)
    - **These are different modes of knowing**
      - Knowing an object through a spatial construction is *imagination*.
      - Knowing an object without a spatial construction is *pure intellection*.
        - **In both cases, the known object is the same object (a triangle) but known in different ways.**
        - **Two Aspects of the Same Object**
- **Question: Can we Think of Ourselves in this Way?**



- If we have *distinct ideas of a body and a mind*, then we can *think of ourselves as distinct from our bodies*
- We can think of *ourselves* without *imagination*!
  - Argument: which capacity *is absolutely necessary* or *indispensable*?
  - Descartes say *intellection*
    - “I find in myself faculties for certain special modes of thinking, namely, the faculties of imagining and sensing, I can clearly and distinctly understand myself in my entirety without these faculties, but not vice versa” (AT VIII 78).
    - Since we can think one without the other, we can conclude that we can conceive of ourselves as an *immaterial* or *purely intellectual being*. A *thinking thing, not as an extended thing*
      - It is the *cogito ergo sum*. It wills, it thinks, it wishes, etc.
  - It may be the case that we are *also* material, but we can conceive and know ourselves independently of imagination and sensory knowing.

### Argument #1: from Thinking

#### Argument #1: Argument from Thinking (expanded)

- P1 I am a thinking thing.
- P2 Bodies (material things) are defined as things that are *extended* in space (e.g. figures, shapes, curves, etc.)
- P3 Thinking about objects does not always need to be about objects in space. We can conceive of objects aspatially (e.g. spatial objects in terms of abstract equations).
- P3 If I am a thinking thing, then I can conceive of myself as distinct from my spatial properties.
- C Therefore, mind and body are *distinct*

### Argument #2: from Simplicity

#### Argument #2: from Simplicity

- P1 Body is divisible. We can cut it up.
- P2 Mind is utterly indivisible (simple). Does not have parts. We can think of diverse faculties, such as willing, thinking, etc. but cannot think of dividing up the mind that does these things.
- C Mind and Body are *distinct*.

### ➤ Overall Conclusions

- There is a distinction between imagination and pure intellection. The former requires *thinking* in terms of spatial extension. The latter does not.
- We can conceive of ourselves in terms of pure intellection. We are thinking, willing, hoping beings. This cannot be made sense of in terms of spatial extension.

## Second Goal: Existence of Material Things

- **Our Essence is Immaterial, Thinking Beings. Do Material Things Exist or is it Illusion?**
  - The second major task Descartes has to answer is (2) *whether material things exist*
    - His answer is YES.
      - **Argument (spatial concepts):** Some concepts can only be understood in terms of *spatial extension*, moving from place to place, taking shapes, etc. can only be understood in terms of *material substance*. They are in SPACE
        - Are these real? YES, Why?
      - **Argument (origin of spatial concepts):** We have the power to sense and imagine spatial things. This is not a power of our understanding (the thinking thing) since (1) it is produced *against our will* and (2) because space is *not part of our essence*
        - **Where does the idea of spatial extension come from? (Tactic from Med.3)**
          - Not innate to me since I can conceive of myself as a purely intellectual being.
          - Two options: **God or Material Substance**
            - **Not God:** since this would be an act of deception. God produces ideas in us that have spatial extension but this is wholly illusory.
            - **Material substance:** Our essence as a pure intellect receives ideas from outside of us. Receives them from an independent substance, which is spatially extended matter.
              - **Coincides with our natural belief that the spatial/material world is real.**
    - **Conclusion: Corporeal things exist.**
      - Material existence offers the only possible option for explaining how we get these ideas.
  - **Summary**
    - Mind can be understood in terms of immaterial substance since it can be distinctly thought in comparison to Body
    - Body is understood in terms of material substance (spatial extension) since it can be distinctly thought in comparison to Mind and because our acquisition of these ideas could only come from without.

## Third Goal: Full Conception of the Self

- What Are We?
  - Descartes contends that we are **both mind and body!**
    - “I am present in my body not merely in the way a sailor is present in a ship, but that I am most tightly joined and, so to speak, commingled with it, so much so that I and the body constitute one single thing. For if this were not the case, then I, who am only a thinking thing, would not sense pain when the body is injured; rather, I would perceive the wound by means of the pure intellect, just as a sailor perceives by sight

whether anything in his ship is broken. And when the body is in need of food or drink, I should understand this explicitly, instead of having confused sensations of hunger and thirst. For clearly these sensations of thirst, hunger, pain, and so on are nothing but certain confused modes of thinking arises from the union and, as it were, the commingling of the mind with the body” (AT VIII 81)

- Descartes contends that we are not merely the soul, floating around, completely immune to bodily damage. When the body feels pain, it registers in the soul/mind.
    - **Example #1:** Imagine that you are walking in the desert and are so thirsty that you have become delirious. If you intellect operated completely detached from your body, you would not be delirious. You would say to yourself in a calm, collected manner. I need some water.
    - **Destruction of the Material Body will destroy how the self functions in the material world.** It will keep it from moving properly, from imagining things, etc.
      - **Does not carry with it the fact that the soul can be destroyed.**
  - **Shape/Self Analogy:** While we can think of ourselves as a purely immaterial being. We can also think of ourselves as a material being.
    - **Analogy:** We can think of a triangle in terms of a mathematical equation but also in terms of a shape in space. These are two different ways of *thinking* the same thing.
      - The immaterial self is absolutely *primary* (fundamental). We cannot think of ourselves as sensing or imagining beings without thinking of ourselves as pure intellects.
- Conclusion: Who am I?
- I am both a pure intellect and a body.
  - I am both a material being and an immaterial agent.