

Philosophy 101: Introduction to Philosophy, Queens College, Fall 2004  
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Lecture Notes, September 22

## I. Concluding our discussion of the three arguments for doubt in Meditation I

- 1) Illusion
- 2) Dreaming
- 3) Demon deceiver

Each one of these doubts corresponds to a set of beliefs eliminable on the basis of that doubt.

Class I: Beliefs about the sensory nature of specific physical objects, or the existence of distant or ill-perceived objects.  
Class II: Beliefs about the existence and nature of specific physical objects, and the physical world generally.  
Class III: Beliefs about universals, like color, and shape, the building blocks of physical objects; and about space and time.  
Beliefs about numbers, and geometrical entities.  
Beliefs about logical and semantic truths.

By the end of the third doubt, we've eliminated pretty much everything.

## II. Meditation II

The title of the Second Meditation should strike you as odd.  
We've just eliminated all knowledge.  
How can we know the mind better than the body, if we don't know anything at all?  
Also, it seems that we know about our bodies better than we know about our minds.

In order to rebuild his beliefs, Descartes seeks a single starting point.  
Like Archimedes and the lever, pp 23-24.

## III. The Cogito

We must be careful with the Cogito, pp 24-5

It can't be:  
1) Whatever thinks, exists  
2) I think.  
So, I exist

This representation, as a logical deduction, would require previous knowledge of the two premises.  
And also previous knowledge that the conclusion follows from the premises.  
But we've eliminated logical knowledge on the basis of the demon deceiver doubt.

Thus, the Cogito must be more of a pure intuition.  
It establishes the existence of a thinker, as long as the thinker thinks, pp 25-6.

Descartes concludes that he's a thinking thing.  
What can he learn from these thoughts?  
These thoughts may not tell him anything true about the world outside of him.

But even if the thoughts are false, they still appear to Descartes.

Even if there is no fire, Descartes still seems to sense the fire, in an indefeasible way.

Note the distinction between sensing and seeming to sense.

We can get certainty about our beliefs, but only inside our minds, and not of the outside world.

The cogito doesn't prove that Descartes exists (or existed). Why not?