

# Introduction to Philosophy

Philosophy 110W  
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Experience

# The Dream Argument

- Descartes wonders if there is a way to know whether he is dreaming.
- Three distinct questions:
  - A. Is there any way of distinguishing waking from dreaming experience?
  - B. What beliefs does the possibility of our dreaming eliminate?
  - C. Is there anything of which we can be sure, even if we are dreaming?
- We started discussing A.



# *Inception*



- The difference between waking states and dreaming states.
- Totems
- Moll secretes her totem, choosing to live in a dream state.
  - Does she control her beliefs?
  - Doxastic involuntarism (again!)

# Distinguishing Waking from Dreaming Experience

- We can dream of things that do not exist.
- We can dream that things which do exist have different properties than they actually do.
- Anything we can do when we are awake, we can dream we are doing.
- We would need to know that the totem is a true indicator of the difference between waking and dream states.
- If the totem continues to spin, one can be sure that one is in a dream state.
- Why couldn't we dream that the totem stops spinning?
  - Chart
- There is no mark to distinguish waking from dreaming.

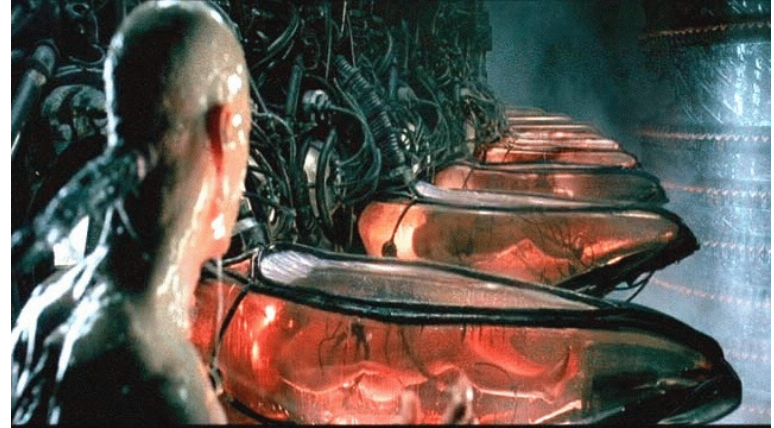
# What Beliefs Does the Possibility of Our Dreaming Eliminate?

- The answer will be long and detailed.
- We can fantasize entirely novel objects, so we can not be sure that the objects in our dreams exist.
- There need not even be any Earth, or any people.
- We could be sentient machines, dreaming about people, in the way that we, supposing our ordinary views of the world, can dream of sentient machines.
- We can even doubt that any objects exist, since we could be just disembodied minds.
- If we can not be sure that we are not dreaming, then we can not be sure of anything our senses tell us.

# What Remains?

- If we can not be sure that our sense experience is veridical, perhaps there is non-sensory knowledge that resists the dream doubt.
- Even if we are dreaming, our beliefs in mathematical claims, like '2+2=4' or 'the tangent to a circle intersects the radius of that circle at right angles' may survive.
- Descartes also claims that the universals from which objects are constructed, the properties of objects, remain, as well.
  - color, shape, quantity, place, time
- Even if no object has these properties, the properties remain, insofar as they are in our minds.
- "It is from these components, as if from true colors, that all those images of things that are in our thought are fashioned, be they true or false."

# The Deceiver



- What if there were a powerful deceiver who can place thoughts directly into our minds?
- Brains in Vats
  - According to such examples, our thoughts really happen in brains.
  - There is a physical reality, but it is unlike the one we perceive.
  - In contrast, the deceiver hypothesis is consistent with the non-existence of the physical world.
- We could be disembodied minds, whose thoughts are directly controlled by an independent source.
- When we apply the deceiver hypothesis to our beliefs, we notice that just about all of them can be called into question.
- Nothing, it seems, is certain.

# Descartes's Goal

- Descartes does not want to defend skepticism.
- His goal is to provide a new foundation for knowledge.
- He seeks a single, unassailable truth, one that resists all reason for doubt.
- “Archimedes asked only for one fixed and immovable point so as to move the whole earth from its place; so I may have great hopes if I find even the least thing that is unshakably certain” (66).



# The Cogito

Whenever I am thinking, even if I am doubting, I must exist.

- ‘Cogito’ is Latin for ‘I think’.
- “I think; therefore I am”?
  - ▶ looks like a logical inference
- A logical deduction would require previous knowledge of premises, and that the conclusion follows from the premises.
- But Descartes eliminated logical knowledge on the basis of the deceiver doubt.
- Thus, the Cogito must not be a logical deduction according to prescribed rules from prior premises.
- Descartes calls it a pure intuition.

# What Does the Cogito Get Us?

- The cogito establishes the existence of a thinker, as long as the thinker thinks.
- Our thoughts, though, may not tell us anything true about the world.
  - The doubts about the content of thought remain.
- Even if our thoughts misrepresent the world, they still appear to us.
  - We certainly seem to sense the table.
- Even a dream world consists of appearances, with certain characteristics.
- I have direct access to my thoughts in a way that I seem to lack access to thoughts of others.
  - privileged access
- Ideas can not be false, considered only as images in our minds.

# Why Do You Believe?

In groups

C1. You exist.

C2. You are taking a philosophy class.

C3. Your best friend likes you.

C4. Gabrielle Giffords was shot by Jared Lee Loughner.

C5. Shakespeare wrote *The Tragedy of Macbeth*.

C6. The sun will rise tomorrow.

C7. An object in motion will remain in motion, an object at rest will remain at rest, unless acted upon by an unbalanced force.

- ▶ Look for general principles.
- ▶ Are these things that we know?
- ▶ How do we know what we know?

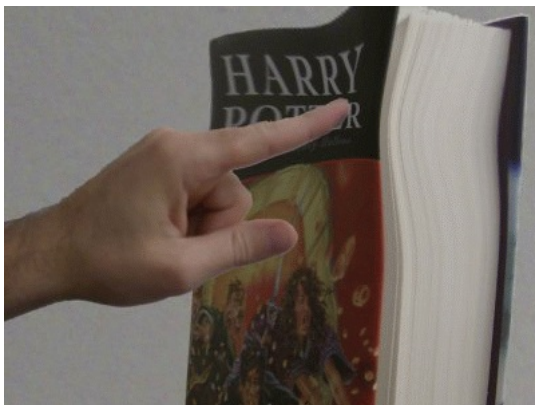
# Thought is Sense Experience

- Kolak and Martin first suggest that thought is just sense experience.
- Daydreaming (visual fantasies)
- Auditory images of mental chatter.
- Internal causes of sensation are sensations nonetheless.
- It looks like thought is significantly sensation.



# Sense Experience is Just Thought

- Consider the content of our thought when we press on the book.
- When we eliminate the content of our thought, the mental contribution to the experience, the contribution of sensation to experience seems very thin.
- K&M conclude that there is an interactive effect between thought and sensation which yields experience, 63-4.



# Descartes's Wax



- First, it is cold, hard, yellow, honey-flavored, and flower-scented.
- We bring the wax near a fire.
- After it is melted, the wax becomes hot and liquid, and loses its color, taste, and odor.
- All of its sensory properties have shifted.
- We have images of the wax, in several incompatible states.
- But we do not have an image of the essence of the wax, or of wax in general.
- “I grasp that the wax is capable of innumerable changes of this sort, even though I am incapable of running through these innumerable changes by using my imagination... The perception of the wax is neither a seeing, nor a touching, nor an imagining...even though it previously seemed so; rather it is an inspection on the part of the mind alone “(46a).

# Real and Apparent Properties

- According to the new science, the wax is just a body which can take various manifestations, hot or cold, sweet or tasteless, etc., but is identified with none of these particular sensory qualities.
- “Perhaps the wax was what I now think it is: namely that the wax itself never really was the sweetness of the honey, nor the fragrance of the flowers, nor the whiteness, nor the shape, nor the sound, but instead was a body that a short time ago manifested itself to me in these ways, and now does so in other ways... Let us focus our attention on this and see what remains after we have removed everything that does not belong to the wax: only that it is something extended, flexible, and mutable.”

# The Senses are Irrelevant to Knowledge

- Knowledge of physical objects comes from the intellect (or mind) alone.
- Any information we get from the senses does not rise to the level of knowledge.
- We can believe that the chair is blue, but we can never know this.
- We know that the wax can take more forms than we could possibly imagine: more shapes, more sizes.
- Our knowledge that there are other potential shapes and colors must go beyond anything that could come from the senses.
- Two different types of beliefs about the wax.
  - It has a particular shape, color, and other sense properties.
    - not knowledge
  - It can take on innumerable many different forms.
    - knowledge

# Next Class

- Two empiricist approaches to the problem of knowledge
  - Locke
  - Berkeley