

**Philosophy 203**  
***History of Modern Western Philosophy***

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Class 4 - Meditations Four through Six  
*Discourse*, Part Five  
Plus, remainders from Meditation Three

# Topics for today

1. The resemblance hypothesis
2. The causal argument for God's existence
3. The problem of error
4. Reclaiming mathematics, and other Class III beliefs
5. The ontological argument
6. Reclaiming the material world
7. The mind/body argument
  - ▶ Immortality of the soul
  - ▶ Distinction between people and animals

# The resemblance hypothesis and the start of an account of false judgment

- The source of some of my errors is in believing that sensory experience leads to knowledge.
- The resemblance hypothesis says that my ideas of objects are like (resemble) the objects as they are in themselves.
- Descartes rejects the Resemblance Hypothesis.
- But, in order to examine it, he first presents an argument for the hypothesis.
  - RH1. I have ideas about objects involuntarily.
  - RH2. Involuntary ideas come from outside of me.
  - RH3. Objects send me their own likeness.
  - RHC. So, my ideas resemble their causes, i.e. physical objects.
- Descartes accepts RH1, although says that those ideas can lead one astray.
- Descartes provides arguments against both RH2 and RH3.

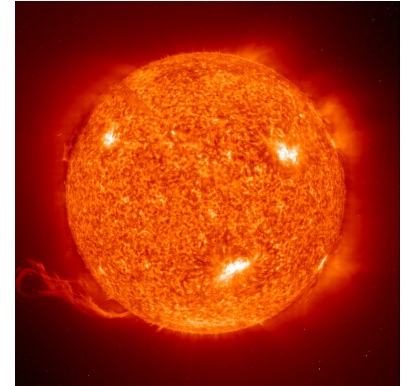
# Against RH2

RH2. Involuntary ideas come from outside of me.

- We may have an unnoticed ability to create images.
- As with dreams, we may create these ideas without realizing that we are doing so.
- Or we may have another faculty inside us for making these sensations.
  - ▶ The aliens

# Against RH3

RH3. Objects send me their own likeness.



- The senses tell us that the sun is very small.
- We reason that the sun is very large.
- “Both ideas surely cannot resemble the same sun existing outside me; and reason convinces me that the idea that seems to have emanated from the sun itself from so close is the very one that least resembles the sun” (49a-b).

# The role of the rejection of RH

- The arguments against the Resemblance Hypothesis are independent of the three doubts.
- We can delete the ideas which depended on the Resemblance Hypothesis.
- We now have reasons to keep the rotten apples out of the basket: the three doubts.
- We have criteria for putting good apples back into the basket: the criterion for certainty, clear and distinct perception.
- And we also have a criterion for recognizing bad apples: reliance on the Resemblance Hypothesis.

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# Ideas



- “Now as far as ideas are concerned, if they are considered alone and in their own right, without being referred to something else, they cannot, properly speaking, be false. For whether it is a she-goat or a chimera that I am imagining, it is no less true that I imagine the one than the other. Moreover, we need not fear that there is falsity in the will itself or in the affects, for although I can choose evil things or even things that are utterly nonexistent, I cannot conclude from this that it is untrue that I do choose these things. Thus there remain only judgments in which I must take care not to be mistaken” (48b).
- Three classes of ideas, depending on their origins
  - ▶ Innate ideas are, roughly, ‘a priori’; they are not instinctive abilities, but pure intuitions are among the innate ideas.
  - ▶ Acquired ideas are ‘a posteriori’; they are derived from sense experience.
  - ▶ Ideas that I create, like those of fantasy and imagination, are also empirical.
- Only acquired and created ideas are subject to errors from the Resemblance Hypothesis.

# The Solipsistic Barrier

But what about when I was considering something very simple and straightforward in arithmetic or geometry, for example that two and three added together make five, and so on? Did I not see at least these things clearly enough to affirm their truth? Indeed, the only reason for my later judgment that they were open to doubt was that it occurred to me that perhaps some God could have given me a nature such that I was deceived even in matters which seemed most evident. And whenever my preconceived belief in the supreme power of God comes to mind, I cannot but admit that it would be easy for him, if he so desired, to bring it about that I go wrong even in those matters which I think I see utterly clearly with my mind's eye. Yet when I turn to the things themselves which I think I perceive very clearly, I am so convinced by them that I spontaneously declare: let whoever can do so deceive me, *he will never bring it about that I am nothing, so long as I continue to think I am something*; or make it true at some future time that I have never existed, since it is now true that I exist; or bring it about that two and three added together are more or less than five, or anything of this kind in which I see a manifest contradiction. And since I have no cause to think that there is a deceiving God, and I do not yet even know for sure whether this is a God at all, any reason for doubt which depends simply on the supposition is a very slight and, so to speak, metaphysical one. But in order to remove even this slight reason for doubt, as soon as the opportunity arises I must examine whether there is a God, and, if there is, whether he can be a deceiver. For if I do not know this, it seems that I can never be quite certain about anything else (Meditation III, AT VII.35-6)

# The Causal Argument for God's Existence

- There is one idea which can not be merely constructed by myself.
- The idea of God has properties which make it such that it can not be created by me, alone.
- Since I have doubt, I can not be perfect.
- So, I have the idea of perfection..
- But, the idea of perfection can not have come from an imperfect source.
- That would violate a general principle which prohibits something coming from nothing.
- So, the idea of God must come from God.

# Definitions

see also the synthetic presentation

- The objective reality of an idea is a quality that an idea has in regards to that which it represents.
  - ▶ The idea of God has more objective reality than the idea of a person, which has more objective reality than the idea of a mode (or property) of a person.
  - ▶ There are really three kinds of objective reality: of modes, of finite substances, and of infinite substances.
- Formal reality is what we ordinarily think of as existence.
  - ▶ The idea of Easter Bunny has the same kind of objective reality as the idea of myself.
  - ▶ Both ideas are of finite substances.
  - ▶ But, I have formal reality, whereas the Easter Bunny does not.

# The General Principle

there is more reality in the cause of something than in the effect

- From this general principle, we can derive that something can not come from nothing.
- This general principle holds for ideas as well as for other objects, like physical ones.
- Indeed, at this point in the presentation, it can only hold of ideas.
- The general principle yields the particular claim that there must be more reality in the idea of God than there is in the idea of a person.
- In fact, there is so much reality in the idea of God that we can not have constructed it ourselves.
- The idea of God contains the ideas of all perfections.
- But, I am imperfect, and could not have devised the notion of such perfections purely from my ideas.
- “Although the idea of substance is in me by virtue of the fact that I am a substance, that fact is not sufficient to explain my having the idea of an infinite substance, since I am finite, unless this idea proceeded from some substance which really was infinite... I clearly understand that there is more reality in an infinite substance than there is in a finite one. Thus the perception of the infinite is somehow prior n me to the perception of the finite... How would I understand that I doubt and that I desire, that is, that I lack something and that I am not wholly perfect, unless there were some idea in me of a more perfect being, by comparison with which I might recognize my defects” (51b).
- The idea of God is imprinted on him, as a mark of the artist on his work, 53b.

# Tlumak's version

T1. Ideas are like images in that they represent things as having certain characteristics.

T2. Some of the objects of my ideas are represented as having more formal reality than others (i.e. some ideas have more objective reality than others).

T3. Whatever exists must have a cause with at least as much formal reality as it has.

T4. Every idea must have a cause with at least as much formal reality as the idea represents its object has having.

T5. I have an idea of God as an actually infinite, eternal, immutable, independent, all-knowing all-powerful substance by whom I (and anything else which may exist) have been created.

T6. I do not have all the perfections which my idea of God represents God as having.

T7. I am not the cause of my idea of God. (From 4, 5, and 6)

T8. The cause of my idea of God is some being other than myself who possesses at least as much formal reality as my idea of God represents. (From 4, 5, and 8)

TC. So, God exists.

# Tlumak's worry

- Tlumak questions the central claim, at T4, that ideas must have causes that are at least as real as the object of that idea.
- If I have an idea of a rock, there must be a cause of that idea with at least as much reality (i.e. the ability to create) that rock.
- The cause of my idea of the rock need not be the immediate source of my idea; I can just look at the rock.
- But, it must be the first cause of my idea of the rock.

# Conceptual difficulties with 'God'

- G1. Evil, which seems to conflict with omni-benevolence.
- G2. Error, which seems to conflict with omnipotence.
- G3. Free will, which seems to conflict with omniscience.
- The best of all possible worlds.

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# Defeating the Deceiver

- To move forward, we need the criterion (C&D perception).
- To secure the criterion, we need to eliminate the possibility of a deceiver, 54b.
- GG
  - GG1. Deception is a defect.
  - GG2. God has no defects.
  - GG3. So God is no deceiver.
  - GG4. God created and preserves me.
  - GGC. So, I am not deceived by God.

# The problem of error

- GG appears to be too strong.
- If my creator and preserver can not, by her goodness, deceive me, it is a puzzle how I can ever err.
- PE
  - PE1. God exists and is perfectly good.
  - PE2. God creates and preserves me.
  - PE3. My faculty of judgment therefore comes from God.
  - PEC. So, my judgments never err.
- Descartes is committed to all three premises.
- He claims that the conclusion of PE does not follow from the premises.

# The two-faculty theory of the mind, 55b-58a

- Our minds have faculties both of will and of understanding.
- Our power of willing is infinite, but our power of understanding is finite.
- We err when we apply our will (and judge) outside our understanding.
- The way to avoid error, then, is to avoid judging unless you have a clear and distinct understanding.
- The goodness of God ensures that there is no deceiver, no systematic deception, though we might make particular errors.
- I am the source of my error, and if I am careful not to judge hastily, I can be sure to never judge falsely.

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# Reclaiming Class III beliefs

- Let's look back at the three-tiered classification of our beliefs:
  - ▶ 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.
- The possibility of a deceiver eliminated all of our Class III beliefs.
- Having eliminated the deceiver, we can reclaim them, or at least the ones we perceive most clearly and distinctly.

# Mathematics and mathematical properties

- Descartes reclaims mathematical truths in Meditation Five, 58b-59a.
- Sensory information is still in doubt, since the dream argument lingers, even with the defeat of the deceiver.
- The problems of the resemblance hypothesis have not been resolved, but mathematical knowledge is not impugned, even in dreams.
- Consequently, Descartes reclaims the mathematical properties of objects (e.g. length, shape, and anything describable using mathematics).
- This reclamation leads to Descartes' second argument for the existence of God, the ontological argument.

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# Definitions of 'God'

- There are various characterizations of 'God', to many of which Descartes alludes.
  - ▶ Whatever necessarily exists
  - ▶ All perfections, including omniscience, omnipotence, and omnibenevolence
  - ▶ Creator and preserver
- Anselm (1033-1109) uses a different characterization: 'something greater than which can not be thought'.
- These are definitions of a term, or a word, but not an object.
- There is no presupposition in this characterization that such a thing exists.
  - ▶ Or, so it seems.

# Anselm's ontological argument

- AO
  - AO1. I can think of 'God'
  - AO2. If 'God' were just an idea, or term, then I could conceive of something greater than 'God' (i.e. an existing God).
  - AO3. But 'God' is that than which nothing greater can be conceived
  - AO4. So 'God' can not be just an idea
  - AOC. So, God exists.
- Anselm further argues that one can not even conceive of God not to exist.

# Descartes's ontological argument

- Descartes's version does not depend on our actual conception, or on our ability to conceive.
- Existence is part of the essence of 'God'.
  - ▶ having angles whose measures add up to 180 degrees is part of the essence of a 'triangle'.
  - ▶ the concept of a mountain necessarily entails a valley.
- The essence of an object is all the properties that necessarily belong to that object.
  - ▶ necessary and sufficient conditions for being one of that type.
  - ▶ Something that has all these properties is one.
  - ▶ Something that lacks any of these properties is not one.
  - ▶ A chair's essence (approximately) is to be an item of furniture for sitting, with a back, made of durable material.
  - ▶ The essence of being a bachelor is being an unmarried man.
  - ▶ A human person is essentially a body and a mind.
- The essence of 'God' is perfection.
  - ▶ the three omnis
  - ▶ existence

# Objections to the Ontological Argument

- Caterus
  - ▶ The concept of a necessarily existing lion has existence as part of its essence, but it entails no actual lions.
  - ▶ We must distinguish more carefully between concepts and objects.
  - ▶ Even if the concept contains existence, it is still just a concept.
- Gaunilo
  - ▶ My idea of the most perfect island does not entail that it exists.
  - ▶ A non-existing island would be free of imperfections.
- Kant, following Hume
  - ▶ Existence is not a property, the way that the perfections are properties.
  - ▶ Existence can not be part of an essence, since it is not a property.
  - ▶ Kant's support for his assertion, that existence is not a predicate, is thin.
  - ▶ Logic should make no existence assertions.

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# Dualism and Monism

- Specific sense properties of physical objects will never be reclaimed, since they suffer from the problems of the resemblance hypothesis.
- Descartes does reclaim the material world, though.
- By the end of the *Meditations*, he has defended a dualist view.
- Descartes countenances three types of substances:
  - S1. God (infinite mind);
  - S2. Persons (finite minds); and
  - S3. Extended objects (bodies).
- S1 and S2 are similar in kind.
- So, we call Descartes a dualist: he believes that there are minds (both finite and infinite) and bodies.
- A monist believes that there is only one kind of substance.
  - Berkeley is a monist who believes that there are only minds.
  - Hobbes is a monist who believes that there is only matter.

# Removing the dream doubt

- We reclaimed Class III beliefs only after removing the third doubt.
- Descartes does not remove the dream doubt until the very end of Meditation Six, where he says something similar to what Evan mentioned last week in class.
- “The hyperbolic doubts of the last few days ought to be rejected as ludicrous. The goes especially for the chief reason for doubting, which dealt with my failure to distinguish being asleep from being awake. For I now notice that there is a considerable difference between these two; dreams are never joined by the memory with all the other actions of life, as is the case with those actions that occur when one is awake” (68b).
- I find this passage puzzling.

# The material world *can* exist

- “I now know that [material things] can exist, at least insofar as they are the object of pure mathematics, since I clearly and distinctly perceive them. For no doubt God is capable of bringing about everything that I am capable of perceiving in this way “(61).
- God is omnipotent.
- So, she can create anything that I can perceive.
- In fact, she can create anything that does not create a contradiction.
- She may not be able to create a round square, or a sphere that’s both blue and red all over.
- Still, the question remains whether she did in fact create these things.

# The material world *does* exist (64b)

- MW

  - MW1. I seem to sense objects.

  - MW2. If I seem to sense objects, while there are none, then God is a deceiver.

  - MW3. God is no deceiver.

  - MWC. So, material things exist.

- Only the mathematical properties of this material things are known clearly and distinctly.
- We never defeat the illusion doubt, in the way that we reject the other two arguments for doubt.
- The essential property of a material thing is its extension.

# The utility of the senses

- The senses are not useful for determining truth.
- It seems puzzling that God would give us senses.
- Descartes resolves this puzzle by claiming that the senses provide natural protection of our bodies, 64a-b.
- Since the body must have a method for transmitting information to the brain, it is bound to be imperfect.
- It is better to be deceived once in a while, than not to have any information for the protection of the body.
- See 66a and 68a.

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# The mind/body distinction

We are, essentially, thinking things, i.e. minds alone, 64a.

- Descartes provides two arguments, though most attention gets paid to the first.
- MB
  - MB1. I have a clear and distinct understanding of my mind, independent of my body.
  - MB2. I have a clear and distinct understanding of my body, independent of my mind.
  - MB3. Whatever I can clearly and distinctly conceive of as separate, can be separated by God, and so are really distinct.
  - MBC. So, my mind is distinct from my body

# The Major Premise

MB3. Whatever I can clearly and distinctly conceive of as separate, can be separated by God, and so are really distinct.

- MB3 is especially contentious.
- If we weaken the third premise to remove reference to God, substance dualism does not follow.
- Another form of dualism, which one might call conceptual dualism, does follow from the argument with a weakened third premise.
- Conceptual dualism just says that we have distinct concepts for the mind and the body.
- Conceptual dualism is, essentially, a semantic thesis, and not a metaphysical one.
- Thus, we can express MB3 as saying that conceptual dualism entails substance dualism.

# Substances and Essential Characteristics

- MB1 and MB2 rely on characterizations of the mind and body.
- In the *Principles*, he says that every substance has one essential characteristic.
- “To each substance there belongs one principal attribute; in the case of mind, this is thought, and in the case of body it is extension. A substance may indeed be known through any attribute at all; but each substance has one principal property which constitutes its nature and essence, and to which all its other properties are referred. Thus extension in length, breadth and depth constitutes the nature of corporeal substance; and thought constitutes the nature of thinking substance. Everything else which can be attributed to body presupposes extension, and is merely a mode of an extended thing; and similarly, whatever we find in the mind is simply one of the various modes of thinking” (*Principles of Philosophy* 53).
- The core characteristic of thought is consciousness.
- Bodies are mere machines; our bodies are no different in kind from those of the higher animals.

# Persons and Animals

- The most obvious distinction between humans and animals is our ability to reason, our mental qualities.
- Descartes appeals to language use and behavioral plasticity, 33a.
- There are many ways in which particular animals are better than humans in particular tasks. (Smart Chimps.)
- Humans perform a wider range of tasks.
- Descartes concluded that humans were different in kind, having souls.
- Cartesians were notorious vivisectionists.
- Descartes's observations remain in debates over artificial intelligence.

# Separating thought from sensation

- We may confuse the nature of mind and body because of their union.
- Consider our faculty of imagination.
  - It seems that we first receive images, and then reason about them, 63a.
  - Descartes argues that this Aristotelian picture is misleading.
- We can exist, and think, without imagination, p 64a.
- On Cartesian dualism, the senses have been demoted from their lofty position as the origin of all knowledge.
- The senses merely provide natural protection of our bodies.

# An objection to the first argument for the mind/body distinction

in the spirit of Arnauld

- SC

SC1. I have a clear and distinct understanding of Clark Kent, as someone who can not fly.

SC2. I have a clear and distinct understanding of Superman, as someone who can fly.

SC3. Whatever I can clearly and distinctly conceive of as separate, can be separated by God, and so are really distinct.

SCC. So, Clark Kent is not Superman.

- The conclusion of SC is clearly false.

- But, the form of SC is the same as the form of MB.

- Descartes could insist that we do not have a clear and distinct understanding of Clark Kent.

- ▶ Denigrating our knowledge of Clark Kent solves the problem with the Superman argument.
- ▶ But, that solution might undermine our confidence in the first premise of Descartes's original argument.
- ▶ We have to wonder whether our knowledge of the body is also inadequate.



# Descartes's second argument for the mind/body distinction

based on the divisibility of bodies, 67a

- D
  - D1. Whatever two things have different properties are different objects.
  - D2. The mind is indivisible.
  - D3. The body is divisible.
  - DC. So, the mind is not the body.
- In response to D, we might again just not have noticed that the mind is in fact divisible.
- Descartes mentions other attributes.
  - that knowledge of God is innate
  - the distinction between willing and understanding
- We have a complete understanding of the mind, without any material attributes.

# A Return to Plato?

- For Descartes, we are primarily our minds, but our bodies are part of us, as well.
- For Plato, the body is merely a vessel for the soul.
- For Descartes, we are tied to our bodies in a remarkable way, unlike a sailor and ship, 65a.
- We do not merely observe injury to the body, but have a special relationship to it.
- Philosophers call this relationship privileged access.
- In Fourth Objections, Arnauld claims that Descartes has returned to Plato's view, but Descartes denies it, in response.

# Immortality

- “When one knows how different [the mind and the body] are, one understands much better the arguments which prove that our soul is of a nature entirely independent of the body, and consequently that it is not subject to die with it. Then, since we do not see any other causes at all for its destruction, we are naturally led to judge from this that it is immortal” (34).
- I leave the evaluation of this argument to you.

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Yay!

# Some topics for review

1. Three doubts:
  - Illusion
  - Dream
  - Deceiver
2. Skepticism
3. Three classes of beliefs
4. Rationalism and empiricism
5. A priori and a posteriori knowledge
6. The cogito
7. Clarity and distinctness as criteria for knowledge
8. Resemblance hypothesis
9. Three sources of ideas (innate, acquired, produced by me) and their characteristics.
10. The problem of error and Descartes's account of error
11. Descartes's metaphysics: infinite mind, finite minds, bodies
12. Necessary truths (e.g. those of mathematics) and how we know them
13. The ontological argument for God's existence
14. The role of our senses
15. The possibility and existence of physical objects
16. The mind/body thesis

# For Next Class

Synthetic Version of the  
*Meditations*

In class, a group exercise on  
the *Objections and Replies*