Philosophy 203: History of Modern Western Philosophy Hamilton College
Spring 2010 Russell Marcus
Tuesdays, Thursdays: 9am - 10:15am rmarcus1@hamilton.edu

Class 4 - January 28
Meditations Three through Six
Discourse, Part Five

Topics in these notes:

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

I. The resemblance hypothesis and the start of an accounting of false judgment

Before Descartes uses his new tool he tries to account for the false judgments which led him to write the *Meditations*.
According to the discussion of the wax in Meditation Two, we know about objects through the mind alone.
The only properties we could ascribe to them were extension, and mutability.
That is, they are in space and time, and can take on more forms than one can imagine.
It seems that 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.

When you reject an argument, as Descartes does here, you should determine which premises are false.
Descartes accepts RH1, although says that those ideas can lead one astray.
Descartes provides arguments against both RH2 and RH3.

Against RH2, Descartes argues that he 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.
Imagine a race of people much like us, but who, instead of making noises with their vocal cords, merely moved those cords in such a way that others could produce (in themselves) the auditory images (sounds) intended by the so-called speaker.
(You might ask yourself how this odd race differs from humans.)
In such a case, the involuntary idea (the sound) would come from inside me, rather than outside me.

Against RH3, Descartes provides the example of the sun.
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).

We decide in favor of reasoning, and against sensation.

We have discovered a reason for making errors: reliance on the Resemblance Hypothesis.
Notice that the arguments against the Resemblance Hypothesis are independent of the three doubts.
The arguments against RH remain even if the exaggerated doubts were absent.
So, we should look at our ideas, and see if we can delete the ones which depended on the Resemblance Hypothesis.
Maybe that will leave us in better shape to conquer the doubts.

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.

II. Preparing for the causal argument for God's existence

We are now going to return, in the middle of the Third Meditation, to the central narrative, within the scope of the First Meditation doubts.
We have the cogito, and whatever makes the cogito certain, as our basic principles.
We have our ideas, as well, as long as we are careful not to judge errantly on their basis.

Strictly speaking, of course, our ideas, including our images can not, in themselves, be false.
Only judgments can be true or false.

> 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).

And again, the principle error we have discovered in the judgments depends on reliance on the resemblance hypothesis.
It is natural to take our ideas of objects, and the world in general, as resembling, as being like, the world as it is in itself.
But, the ideas which really tell us about the nature of the world are the ones which are not directly derived from sensory experience, as we saw in the case of the wax.

Descartes distinguishes three classes of ideas, depending on their origins (and independent of whether there are any ideas of each type.)
First, innate ideas are, roughly, 'a priori'; they are not instinctive abilities, but pure intuitions are among the innate ideas.
Second, acquired ideas are 'a posteriori'; they are derived from sense experience.
Lastly, ideas that I create, like those of fantasy and imagination, are also empirical.
Note that only acquired and created ideas are subject to errors from the Resemblance Hypothesis.
The innate ideas, ones which do not rely on the senses, are clean of this infection.
We can see why the "light of nature" can yield these.
They can be clear and distinct because they aren't affected by the Resemblance Hypothesis.

Descartes seems to be in a bit of confusion in the fourth paragraph of the Third Meditation.
The doubts are very strong.
But the deceiver doubt is somehow unconvincing, psychologically.

> 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)

On the one hand, Descartes wants to move forward with the most obvious claims, on the basis of their similarity (in my surety about them) to the cogito.
On the other hand, the deceiver doubt then places the cogito under suspicion.
Descartes has arrived at a solipsistic barrier.
It seems that to move on, we will have to deal directly with the question of the existence of a deceiver.

The rest of the *Meditations* depends, as I mentioned, on the goodness of God to secure the rule of clear and distinct perception, and move forward.
Descartes first argues for the existence of God, on the basis of our ideas, and then for God's goodness.

III. The causal argument for God's existence

The Meditation Three argument for the existence of God is, in short, that 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.

To look more carefully at the argument, it will help to familiarize yourself with some terms Descartes uses.
The synthetic presentation of the content of the *Meditations* in the Second Replies can be very helpful.
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.

In contrast, 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.

To prove the existence of God, Descartes relies on a general principle that 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).

Descartes urges that the idea of God is imprinted on him, as a mark of the artist on his work, 53b.
We have freedom to create ideas of the third type any way we wish, so the idea of God can not be produced by me.
And the idea of God can not be acquired, since we have no sensory experience of God.
So, the idea of God must be innate.

Tlumak (pp 35-6) presents a rigorous version of the argument, and I paraphrase it here.

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.

I have a couple of small worries about Tlumak's version of the argument.
In his original presentation, Tlumak, following Descartes, distinguishes between efficient, total, first, and principle causes.
Those distinctions, I believe are more work than necessary, at least for our purposes.
I eliminated all the kinds of cause without (I believe) doing harm to the argument.

More substantially, but still without doing harm to the argument, Tlumak says that the general principle T3 is an instantiation of the truth that something can't come from nothing.
In contrast, I think it is a more general principle from which the claim that something can't come from nothing follows.
These two criticisms are small, and I mention them just to explain why and how I simplified Tlumak's version of the argument.

Tlumak rightly questions the central claim, at T4, that ideas must have causes that are at least as real as the object of that idea.
The claim is that 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.

The proof of the existence of God raises some obvious conceptual difficulties.
Among them are:

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.

Another problem with omni-benevolence, which we will discuss when we get to Leibniz, is that it seems to entail that this is the best of all possible worlds.
Such problems, though, are problems with Descartes's conclusion, not with his argument.
We will return to them, through the first half of the course, especially.

IV. Getting Rid of the Deceiver, and Avoiding Error

We have a criterion, a way to determine whether a particular proposition is known.
At the beginning of Meditation Four, Descartes argues that the goodness of God secures this criterion.
A perfect God is all good, but the deceiver is not.
So, the argument is pretty simple: the goodness of an all-perfect good will overwhelm any worries about 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.

Unfortunately, this argument 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.
This puzzle is sometimes known as Descartes's problem of error.

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.

Since I do err, there must be a problem with this argument.
Perhaps God is really the deceiver after all!

Since PEC is false, either one of the premises of PE must be false, or the conclusion does not follow from the premises.
Descartes is committed to all three premises.
His solution is to deny that PE is valid.
That is, he claims that the conclusion does not follow from the premises.

To explain how we can err, Descartes distinguishes presents what is know as a 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.
If I clearly and distinctly understand that P then I know that P.
Remember, clarity and distinctness, as a criterion, is ensured by the presence of God.
The goodness of God ensures that there is no deceiver, no systematic deception.
I am the source of my error, and if I am careful not to judge hastily, I can be sure to never judge falsely.
Descartes's account of error thus allows small mistakes, but prevents systematic deception or misunderstanding.
I can be wrong about minor particular claims, but not about profound ones, like the existence of a physical world.
Now, we shall begin to reclaim that world.

V. What kinds of knowledge are clear and distinct?

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.
Now, having eliminated the deceiver, we can reclaim them, or at least the ones we perceive most clearly and distinctly.
Descartes reclaims mathematical truths in Meditation Five, 58b-59a.
These objects are known by proof, and are not sensory.
They are a priori, or, 'innate', as Descartes calls them.
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, 59b.

VI. Anselm's ontological argument

Descartes's ontological argument is very quick, and it might be useful to look at an earlier version of the argument, in the work of Anselm.
There are various consistent 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 for God's existence (see handout)

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.
This latter argument is not present in the *Meditations*, and need not concern us.

VII. Descartes's ontological argument

Descartes's version of the argument is simpler than Anselm's.
Anselm argued that the object which corresponds to the concept 'something greater than which can not be thought' must exist.
For, if we thought that the object which corresponded to that concept did not exist, then it would not be the object which corresponded to that concept.
There would be something greater, i.e. the object which does exist.
So, we give the name 'God' to that best possible object.

Descartes's version does not depend on our actual conception, or on our ability to conceive.
He merely notes that existence is part of the essence of 'God'.
This conceptual containment is similar to the way that having angles whose measures add up to 180 degrees is part of the essence of a 'triangle'.
Or, as Descartes notes, like the concept of a mountain necessarily entails a valley.

The essence of an object is all the properties that necessarily belong to that object.
They are the necessary and sufficient conditions for being that object, or 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 the three omnis, and existence.

VIII. Objections to the ontological argument

Descartes's ontological argument starts by noting that the concept 'God' is that of a being with all perfections.
Since it is more perfect to exist than not to exist, the concept must include existence.
And if the concept includes existence, the object to which it corresponds must exist.
You can have the concept of a non-existing object just like God, but which does not exist.
But this would not be the concept 'God', by definition.

Caterus, a Dutch philosopher, noted that the concept of a necessarily existing lion has existence as part of its essence, but it entails no actual lions.
You can find Caterus's objection and Descartes's reply in the collection of Objections and Replies I have prepared on the website; Caterus was the first objector.
Some of us will look more closely at this objection on Monday.
Caterus is saying that we must distinguish more carefully between concepts and objects.
Even if the concept contains existence, it is still just a concept.

Similarly, Gaunilo, responding to Anselm, wrote that my idea of the most perfect island does not entail that it exists.
In fact, it may entail that it does not exist, since a non-existing island would be free of imperfections.
Still, the airfare would be pretty steep.

Kant, following Hume, claims that 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.
This objection accounts for Caterus' objection.
Kant's support for his assertion, that existence is not a predicate, is thin.
He relies on the belief that logic should make no existence assertions.
In many cases this is true.
But Descartes (and Anselm) might respond that this is an exception to that rule.

IX. Descartes's metaphysics, dualism, and monism

While Descartes only discusses the reclamation of mathematical beliefs from what I called Class III beliefs, we can proceed with the understanding that Descartes believes he has secured all such clear and distinct perceptions.
It remains for us to reclaim those of Class II that we can.
Of course, specific sense properties of physical objects will never be reclaimed, since they suffer from the problems of the resemblance hypothesis.
But, by the end of the Fifth Meditation, we still have no argument for, say, the existence of a material world.

Descartes does reclaim the material world, in two stages.
By the end of the *Meditations*, he has defended a dualist view.
I mentioned that Descartes countenances three types of substances

S1. God (infinite mind);
S2. Persons (finite minds); and
S3. Extended objects (bodies).

In the first sentence of Meditation IV, he says that our quantity of knowledge of these things comes in this order.
We know a lot about God, some about minds, and very little about bodies.
In fact, 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.
Contemporary science tends toward Hobbesian materialism by identifying the mind with the brain.

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 extremely puzzling, especially Descartes's claim that the dream argument is his chief reason for doubting.
It might be worth pursuing in a paper.

The existence and nature of the physical world was brought into doubt by the dream argument.
Descartes now sees a way of judging clearly and distinctly whether we are dreaming.
So, he can reclaim the objects brought into doubt by the dream argument.
Still, we must be careful not to be misled by the (false) resemblance hypothesis.

Descartes reclaims the material world in two stages: an argument that it can exist, and an argument that it does exist.

X. Knowledge that 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.

XI. Knowledge that 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.

Of course, only the mathematical properties of this material things are known clearly and distinctly.
Their sensory properties are impugned by the resemblance hypothesis.
That is, we never defeat the illusion doubt, in the way that we reject the other two arguments for doubt.
We just do not know what these things are like in themselves, aside from their mathematical properties.
In particular, for Descartes, the essential property of a material thing is its extension.

If the senses are not useful for determining truth, i.e. the nature of the world, Descartes needs to account for our sense ideas.
For Descartes, it seems puzzling that God would give us senses if they were not useful in our quest for knowledge.
He resolves this puzzle by claiming that the senses provide natural protection of our bodies, 64a-b.
This is just the best structure for humans.
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.
The important point is that bodies are perceived by the mind, and only have extension as a real property.
The others are confused representations.

Still, our errors make God seem deceptive, since she could prevent them.
Descartes uses the mind/body distinction to block this accusation.

XII. The mind/body distinction

We have reached the last important topic in the *Meditations*, perhaps the one with the most lasting impact.
Descartes argues that we are, essentially, thinking things, i.e. minds alone, 64a.
That is, the mind is distinct from the body.
He 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

MB3 is currently thought 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.

MB1 and MB2 rely on characterizations of the mind and body.
Descartes characterizes the mind as that which thinks.
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).

Essentially, the core characteristic of thought, for Descartes, is consciousness.
Bodies, on the other hand, are mere machines.
In fact, our bodies are no different in kind from those of the higher animals.
We have similar sense organs, and brain structures, for example.
Cartesians were convinced of the absence of animal souls, and some were notorious vivisectionists.
Though, Descartes's writings on animal souls are in themselves ambiguous.

The most obvious distinction between humans and animals is our ability to reason, our mental qualities.
In the *Discourse*, Descartes further characterizes the distinction between bodies/machines and minds on the basis of language use and behavioral plasticity, 33a.
No machine, he says, including an animal, can use language, or solve a wide range of problems.
Descartes's observations remain salient, today, and are central in debates over artificial intelligence.
Machines have made great strides in language use, but plasticity remains a problem.
While some machines can be trained to do a particular task even better than humans, no machine has the ability to adapt, change, and apply its intelligence to a variety of tasks.

If the mind is essentially thinking, and the body is essentially extended, the mind and the body are clearly distinct things.
Descartes claims that we may confuse the nature of mind and body because of the union of our minds with our bodies.
For example, consider our faculty of imagination, the mind's ability to receive images from the senses.
It seems that we first receive images, and then reason about them, 63a.
Descartes argues that this Aristotelian picture is misleading.
We can even exist, and think, without imagination, p 64a.

Descartes has separated thought from sensation, perhaps his most remarkable achievement.
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.

XIII. An objection to the first argument for the mind/body distinction

Consider the following objection, in the spirit of Arnauld's worries, to Descartes' argument.
If Descartes' argument is valid, then this argument is valid:

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 the Superman argument is clearly false.
But, the form of the argument is the same as the form of Descartes' argument.
Descartes has to respond by finding a difference between the two arguments such that the Superman argument can be unsound while the mind/body argument remains sound.
Descartes could insist that we do not have a clear and distinct understanding of Clark Kent.
Instead, our knowledge of him is inadequate.

Denigrating our knowledge of Clark Kent solves the problem with the Superman argument.
But, that solution might undermine the first premise of Descartes's original argument.
We have to wonder whether our knowledge of the body is also inadequate.
Perhaps, if our knowledge of the mind were adequate, then we would understand that the mind is the body, and not distinct from it.
Hobbes, for example, urges this.
We will return to some of these topics next week, and throughout the course.

XIV. Descartes's second argument for the mind/body distinction

Descartes's second argument for the mind/body distinction is 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.

For Descartes, we are primarily our minds, but our bodies are part of us, as well.
Descartes steers a narrow path between the old Platonic view that our bodies are completely inessential and a materialist view on which we are just our bodies.
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.

In response to D, we might again just not have noticed that the mind is in fact divisible.
There are other attributes of the mind and soul, which Descartes discusses elsewhere.
Descartes mentions that these other attributes contribute to the argument for the distinction between the mind and the body.
The most important attribute is Descartes's argument that knowledge of God is innate, impressed on the soul of human beings like the mark of a painter on his work.
Also, Descartes discusses the distinction between willing and understanding, which helps account for the problem of error.
The way in which discussions of these attributes contributes to the main argument is that they serve as support for the claim that we have a complete understanding of the mind, without any material attributes.

Lastly, notice that Descartes does not even broach the subject of the immortality of the soul in the *Meditations*.
He does discuss it very briefly at the very end of the *Discourse.*

> 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.

XV. 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