

DESCARTES, LECTURE #3

Concerning the Existence of **Material Things**, and the Real Distinction between **Mind and Body**

I. FIRST THINGS FIRST: SUMMARY OF WHAT THE MEDITATOR KNOWS.

- A. The Meditator exists and understands his essence (thinking).
- B. God exists and is not a deceiver.
- C. Clarity and distinctness indicate truth.
- D. Because his will is free and unlimited (infinite), he can make errors (his volition outruns his judgment).
- E. A cause must be adequate to create the effect.

II. WHAT THIS MEDITATION WILL DO

- A. Ask whether the material world exists
- B. Establish the distinction between mind and body

III. DOES THE MATERIAL WORLD EXIST?

- A. The difference between imagination and intellection
 - 1. Can you imagine
 - ▶ a triangle
 - ▶ a chiliagon (1000-sided figure)
 - ▶ a myriagon (10,000-sided figure)
 - 2. To understand, the mind “turns toward itself” (93).
 - 3. To imagine, the mind “turns toward the body” (93).

III. DOES THE MATERIAL WORLD EXIST? (CONT.)

- A. [The difference between imagination // intellection cont.]
 - 4. Imagining is not part of the Meditator's essential identity (essence).
- B. God has given the Meditator a body in order to experience the material world.
- C. Since God is not a deceiver, the material world exists.

IV. DISTINCTION BETWEEN MIND & BODY

- A. The mind is a thinking thing, *res cogitans*.
- B. The body is an extended thing, res extensa.
- C. The mind and body are tightly joined (commingled) (98).
- D. The body is divisible; the mind is indivisible (101).

V. THE LAST WORDS ON DOUBT

- A. Hyperbolic doubts are “ludicrous,” but human beings are prone to error and must watch for it (error).
- B. The meditator rejects the dream hypothesis, because dreams lack memory.
- C. The infirmity of our nature and why it matters.

VI. REFLECTIONS ON DESCARTES' PROJECT

- A. The urgency of the project
 - Psychological & intellectual doubt
- B. Descartes' significance
 - 1. The isolated res cogitans
 - 2. A persuasive interiority
 - 3. The thinking self: a subject invulnerable to skeptical critique
 - 4. Elevation of present moment of inquiry over the legacy of the past
 - 5. The non-gendered quality of "I" exist

VII. HOW HAS YOUR THINKING CHANGED?

- A. What does the first thesis mean to you now?
 - “Descartes demonstrates that thinking is itself the source of knowledge.”
- B. Has anything surprised you?
- C. What questions do you have?
