

1 *Meditations* LECTURE 2.

FOLLOWING DESCARTES

AS HE THINKS . . .

In Med. #3, Descartes proves that God exists and is not a deceiver.

2 I. AT THE OUTSET:

WORDS USED IN AN UNFAMILIAR WAY

- A. "objective reality"
- B. "formal reality"
 - (NB: One can say mere objective reality. Formal=actual.)
 - "The term 'objective' is regularly contrasted by Descartes with the term 'formal'.... 'formal' reality [is] actual, extramental existence, while 'objective reality' [is] merely existence in the mind as an object of the understanding." *A Descartes Dictionary*, p. 46.

3 II. THE MEDITATOR RE-ENACTS HIS REJECTION OF THE SENSES.

- A. He—
 - ▶ shuts his eyes,
 - ▶ stops up his ears,
 - ▶ withdraws all his senses, and
 - ▶ blots all images of corporeal things out of his mind. (69-70).
- B. WHY? So that he can look deeply within to restate what he knows.

4 III. CLEAR & DISTINCT IDEAS (70)

- A. "What is required for me to be certain of anything?" (70).
- B. An epistemological question
- C. Seeing with the mind's eye
 - For explicit metaphor, see Med. #6, p. 93.
 - Compare "inspection on the part of the mind alone" (Med. #2, p. 68).

5 IV. PROBLEM:

- A. He has always in the past believed (out of habit):
 - 1) that things outside himself existed;
 - 2) that those 'outside things' were the source of his ideas;
 - 3) that his ideas resembled those 'outside things.'
- B. What about things like $2+3=5$?
- C. He realizes he was mistaken (or maybe his judgment was right but his judgment didn't come from his perception). And he must doubt even $2+3=5$.

6 V. TWO MOVES AND A DETOUR

- A. Going back to the touchstone: "let anyone who can do so deceive me; so long as I think that I am something, he will never bring it about that I am nothing" (71).
- B. Asking about the existence of God: "I should at the first opportunity inquire whether there is a God, and, if there is, whether or not he can be a deceiver. (71).

- C. Detouring to classify ideas.

7 VI. GOOD ORDER DEMANDS THAT I CLASSIFY MY IDEAS (71).

- A. Class #1: mental images (e.g., a man, a chimera, heaven, angel, God). Mental images are "ideas."
- B. Class #2: other
 - 1) volitions: choosing or making a decision, acts of will
 - 2) emotions: affects
 - 3) judgments: Judgment in this case means "forming an opinion or making an evaluation."

8 VII. THINKING FURTHER ABOUT IDEAS

STILL ON P. 71!

- A. Ideas simply exist in the mind. They are neither true nor false.
- B. Only about judgments must one take care not to be mistaken.
- C. The main mistake in judgments: "I judge that the ideas which are **in me** are similar to or in conformity with certain things **outside me**" (71-2).

9 ILLUSTRATION: The idea of a chimera is neither true nor false.

10 VII. THINKING FURTHER ABOUT IDEAS

- A. Some ideas appear to be innate.
- B. **Others appear to be derived from an external source.**
 - Adventitious = extrinsic, coming from without, accidental, casual.
- Others seem to be made up by himself (like sirens and hippogriffs (72)).

11 VIII. EXPANDING ON IDEAS FROM AN EXTERNAL SOURCE

- A. Heat
 - Not from his will
 - He is "driven by a spontaneous impulse to believe" the heat comes from the fire.
- B. Spontaneous impulse vs light of nature (72)
- C. Two ideas of the sun
 - **Reason convinces the meditator that the idea that comes from the senses needs to be corrected (73).**

12 IX. OBJECTIVE & FORMAL REALITY

- A. The "idea that enables me to understand a supreme deity, eternal, infinite, omniscient, omnipotent, and creator of all things other than himself, clearly has more objective reality within it than do those ideas through which finite substances are displayed" (73).
- B. For any idea to exist in the mind as an object, it must have a "cause in which there is at least as much formal reality as there is objective reality contained in the idea" (74).

13 IX. OBJECTIVE & FORMAL REALITY (CONT.)

- C. "[A]s imperfect a mode of being as this is by which a thing exists in the intellect

objectively through an idea, nevertheless it is plainly not nothing; hence it cannot get its being from nothing."

D. Descartes' Meditator then explains that if he has an idea that has more objective reality than he himself has (of formal reality), then "it necessarily follows that [he is] not alone in the world, but that something else, which is the cause of this idea, also exists" (74).

14 X. GOD AND FINITE PERCEPTION

■ A. But the idea of God is different. His idea of God "is a certain substance that is infinite, independent, supremely intelligent and supremely powerful." This idea could not have come from himself; therefore he concludes that "God necessarily exists" (76).

■ B. It is not from the negation of the finite that the Meditator's idea of the infinite derives. "[T]he perception of the infinite is somehow prior in me to the perception of the finite" (76).

15 XI. GOD AND POTENTIALITY

■ The argument concerning potentiality also proves that Descartes couldn't have invented God, since in God all is actual, nothing potential; the objective being of an idea cannot be produced by a potential being; it must be produced by an actual or formal being (77-78).

16 XII. WHERE DID DESCARTES' MEDITATOR ASKS, DID I COME FROM?

■ A. Not from himself

■ He couldn't have created himself and he has no power to conserve himself (78).

■ B. Whatever God is, he must be a thinking being, and he must have all the perfections of the objective reality of Descartes' idea of God (79).

■ C. The idea of God is innate in him. He has the 'maker's mark': "**[I]t is not astonishing that in creating me, God should have endowed me with this idea, so that it would be like the mark of the craftsman impressed on his work**" (80).

17 XIII. GOD IS NOT A DECEIVER.

■ "From these considerations it is quite obvious that he cannot be a deceiver, for it is manifest by the light of nature that all fraud and deception depend on some defect" (80).

■ Descartes' Meditator realizes that he is not alone and, as we will see, God has some work to do.