

1 **RENÉ DESCARTES**
(1596 - 1650)

LAST DESCARTES LECTURE, FALL 2009

The Existence of God

The Existence of Material Things

The Real Distinction between Mind & Body

(Part of Meditation #3 and all of Meditation #6)

2 **I. GOOD ORDER DEMANDS THAT I CLASSIFY MY IDEAS (71).**

- A. Class #1: mental images (e.g., a man, a **chimera**, God). Mental images are **"ideas"** which simply exist in the mind (NOT right/wrong).
- 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." **Here is where mistakes can lie.**

3 **II. All the following slides concerned with Meditation #3 deal with mental images.**

- A. There are 3 kinds: innate, adventitious, & made-up
 - 1). **The M. expands on adventitious ideas or those derived from an external source (72).**
 - a) Heat
 - Not from his will
 - Driven by "spontaneous impulse to believe"
 - Spontaneous impulse vs light of nature (72)
 - b) Two ideas of the Sun
 - **Reason convinces the meditator that the idea that comes from the senses needs to be corrected (73).**

4 **A. There are 3 kinds: innate, adventitious, & made-up (cont.)**

- 2. The terms "formal" and "objective" reality enter his argument.
 - 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 emphasis added).
 - b) For any idea to be represented 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).

5 **2. The terms "formal" and "objective" reality enter his argument (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).
- e) Compare: He could be the source of certain external ideas—angels, etc. See pp. 75-6 for what he could and could not do.

6 **B. Further arguments for God's existence**

- 1.. God and finite perception
 - a) the idea of "an infinite, independent, supremely intelligent and supremely powerful" being could not have come from himself; therefore he concludes that "God necessarily exists" (76).
 - b) Perception of the infinite is prior to perception of finite. It is not a negation of the finite (76).
- 2. God and potentiality: 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).

7 **C. Where, the meditator asks, did I come from?**

- 1.. Not from himself
 - He couldn't have created himself and he has no power to conserve himself (78).
- 2.. 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).
- 3.. 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).
- 4. "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).

8 **III. Meditation #6 will ask if the material world exists**

- **A. The difference between imagination and intellection**
 - **Can you imagine**
 - ▶ a triangle
 - ▶ a chiliagon (1000-sided figure)
 - ▶ a myriagon (10,000-sided figure)
- **B. Some interesting claims about imagination**

Imagining is not part of the Meditator's essential identity (essence) (93). See also p. 96 for more about his essence. The "power of imagining depends on something distinct from me" (93)

9 **C. To Understand . . .**

To imagine . . .

- 1. To understand, the mind "turns toward itself" (93).
- 2. To imagine, the mind "turns toward the body" (93).
 - **God has given the Meditator a body in order to experience the material world.**
- 3. God is not a deceiver (the material world exists) (97)
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- 4. Review of what the Meditator used to believe (94-5) leads him to understand the next problem for this Meditation.

10 **IV. MEDITATION #6 also establishes the Distinction between Mind and 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).

11 **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.