



Week 3:  
Descartes 2

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Weekly Quiz

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*Reductio* Argument

Meditation 5

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Meditation 6

Conceivability  
Argument

Argument for Bodily  
Causation

Assignments

## Week 3: Descartes 2

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Southern University of Science and Technology

SS149 (社会科学中心), Spring 2024

**Early Modern Western Philosophy (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries)**

近代西方哲学（十七-十八世纪）



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Quiz 2: When it comes to the amount of reality in virtue of what it is *outside* the human mind, or the kind of thing it is (i.e. mode or finite/infinite substance), what is this reality called in Descartes's *Meditations*?

- ① Objective Reality
- ② Final Reality
- ③ Material Reality
- ④ Formal Reality

This is not related to your final grade, but intended to observe your understanding of the last class.



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- ① Objective Reality
- ② Final Reality
- ③ Material Reality
- ④ **Formal Reality (Check the 'degrees of reality' in M3)**

**FR** to the degree to which it exists formally.

**OR** to the degree to which there is an *idea*, i.e. *object*, or whatever is *represented* in one's mind.

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- ① *Catharsis*, detachment, or analysis: a movement from sensation to imagination and memory, to science and mathematics, to theology.
- ② *Skepsis*, despair, or nihilism.
- ③ Reflection (*peripeteia*), a reflection that performs a revolutionary change.
- ④ Recognition (*anagnorisis*) of the reflexive, corrective power of the will; the discovery of the law of noncontradiction as a methodological principle validating *reductio* arguments.
- ⑤ Ascension from the psychological to the ontological order; proofs for the existence of God.
- ⑥ Reconstruction of the world and the self.
- ⑦ Possible 7th day of philosophical *sabbath*. [Christian rest]

– Rorty, 'The Structure of Descartes' *Meditations*' (1986, 10–11);  
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Descartes's meditation (Letter to Princess Elizabeth, CSMK III 227)

**'I can say with truth** that the chief rule I have always observed in my studies [...] has been never to spend more than a few hours a day in the thoughts which occupy the imagination and a few hours a year on those which occupy the intellect alone. I have given all the rest of my time to *the relaxation of the senses and the repose of the mind* [emphasis added, *au relâche des sens et au repos de l'esprit*].'

## ⑦ Possible 7th day of philosophical *sabbath*. [Christian rest]

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- ② ***Skepsis*, despair, or nihilism. [MM1–2: I exist!]**
- ③ **Reflection (*peripeteia*), a reflection that performs a revolutionary change. [MM2–3: God exists!]**
- ④ Recognition (*anagnorisis*) of the reflexive, corrective power of the will; the discovery of the law of noncontradiction as a methodological principle validating *reductio* arguments.
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- ⑤ **Ascension from the psychological to the ontological order; proofs for the existence of God. [M5]**
- ⑥ **Reconstruction of the world and the self. [M6]**
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## *Reductio ad absurdum* ('Reduction to an absurdity')

So-called 'indirect proof' (see Rosenberg, the end of ch. 3):

- **Law (principle) of non-contradiction (LNC):**  $\neg(\varphi \wedge \neg\varphi)$
- **Principle of explosion:** anything follows from a contradiction, which is false (*ex falso/contradictione quodlibet*)

- ④ Recognition (*anagnorisis*) of the reflexive, corrective power of the will; the discovery of **the law of noncontradiction as a methodological principle validating *reductio* arguments.** [M4]

So, a form of *reductio* argument:

- ⑤ Ascension from the *res cogitans* to the *res extensa* for the existence of the body
  - ⑥ Reconstruction of the *res extensa* as a *res cogitans*
  - ⑦ Possible 7th day of creation
- Rorty,  
Oda and Buccafurri
- ①  $\neg\varphi$  [assumption: my perception is deceived]
  - ②  $\neg\varphi \supset \psi$  [if so, then my will goes wrong]
  - ③  $\neg\psi$  [my will *does not* go wrong]
  - ④  $\perp$  [contradiction  $\psi \wedge \neg\psi$ : false by LNC]
  - ⊃  $\varphi$  [assumption must be false]



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# Subtitle of Meditation 4: 'Truth and falsity'

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## Synopsis (CSM II 11)

In the Fourth Meditation it is proved that everything that we clearly and distinctly perceive is true, and I also explain what the nature of falsity consists in. These results need to be known both in order to confirm what has gone before and also to make intelligible what is to come later.

- Is there any problem in this *clear and distinct* perception, or such a judgement of truth and falsity?

– M4: CSM II 37–43



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In the Fourth Meditation it is **proved that everything that we clearly and distinctly perceive is true**, and I also explain what the nature of falsity consists in. These results need to be known both in order to confirm what has gone before and also to make intelligible what is to come later.

- Is there any problem in this *clear and distinct* perception, or such a judgement of truth and falsity?

– M4: CSM II 37–43



argument about  
judgement

To begin with, I recognize that it is impossible that God should ever deceive me. [...] Next, I know by experience that there is in me a faculty of judgement which, like everything else which is in me, I certainly received from God. And since God does not wish to deceive me, he surely did not give me the kind of faculty which would ever enable me to go wrong while using it correctly.

- Fourth Meditation, CSM II 37–38





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– Fourth Meditation, CSM II 37–38

## Argument about one's own judgement

- ① God is not a deceiver.
- ② My faculty of judgement was created by God.
- ③ If God is not a deceiver, then no faculty created by God goes wrong when used correctly.
- C Therefore, my faculty of judgement does not go wrong when used correctly.



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To begin with, I recognize that it is impossible that God should ever deceive me. [...] Next, **I know by experience that there is in me a faculty of judgement which, like everything else which is in me, I certainly received from God.** And since God does not wish to deceive me, he surely did not give me the kind of faculty which would ever enable me to go wrong while using it correctly.

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## Argument about one's own judgement

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Then the problem: Why do I go wrong sometimes?



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  - ② My faculty of judgement was created by God.
  - ③ If God is not a deceiver, then no faculty created by God goes wrong **when used correctly**. **[Defend premiss 3]**
- C Therefore, my faculty of judgement does not go wrong **when used correctly**.

Then the problem: Why do I go wrong sometimes?



# The Basic Idea: Privation Theory

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I realize that I am, as it were, something intermediate between God and nothingness, or between supreme being and non-being: my nature is such that in so far as I was created by the supreme being, there is nothing in me to enable me to go wrong or lead me astray; but in so far as I participate in nothingness or non-being, that is, in so far as I am not myself the supreme being and am lacking in countless respects, it is no wonder that I make mistakes. I understand, then, that error as such is not something real which depends on God, but merely a defect. Hence **my going wrong does not require me to have a faculty specially bestowed on me by God**; it simply happens as a result of the fact that the faculty of true judgement which I have from God is in my case not infinite.

But this is still not entirely satisfactory. For error is not a pure negation, but rather a privation or lack of some knowledge which somehow should be in me. And when I concentrate on the nature of God, it seems impossible that he should have placed in me a faculty which is not perfect of its kind, or which lacks some perfection which it ought to have.

– Fourth Meditation, CSM II 38



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– Fourth Meditation, CSM II 38



# Intellect and Will

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Next, when I look more closely at myself and inquire into the nature of my errors. [...] I notice that they depend on two concurrent causes, namely on the faculty of knowledge which is in me, and on the faculty of choice or freedom of the will; that is, they depend on both the intellect and the will simultaneously.

**Intellect** 'enable[s] me to perceive the ideas which are subjects for possible judgements' so as to 'contain no error in the proper sense of that term'.

**Will** 'consists in our ability to do or not do something (that is, to affirm or deny, to pursue or avoid)'; **or rather**, 'when the intellect puts something forward for affirmation or denial or for pursuit or avoidance, our inclinations are such that **we do not feel we are determined by any external force**'.

From these considerations I perceive that the power of willing which I received from God is not, when considered in itself, the cause of my mistakes; for it is both extremely ample and also perfect of its kind.

– Fourth Meditation, CSM II 40



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**Intellect** 'enable[s] me to perceive the ideas which are subjects for possible judgements' so as to 'contain no error in the proper sense of that term'.

**Will** 'consists in our ability to do or not do something (that is, to affirm or deny, to pursue or avoid)'; **or rather**, 'when the intellect puts something forward for affirmation or denial or for pursuit or avoidance, our inclinations are such that **we do not feel we are determined by any external force**'.

From these considerations I perceive that the power of willing which I received from God is not, when considered in itself, the cause of my mistakes; for it is both extremely ample and also perfect of its kind.

– Fourth Meditation, CSM II 40



# Intellect and Will

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Assignments

Next, when I look more closely at myself and inquire into the nature of my errors. [...] I notice that they depend on two concurrent causes, namely on the faculty of knowledge which is in me, and on the faculty of choice or freedom of the will; that is, they depend on both the intellect and the will simultaneously.

**Intellect** 'enable[s] me to perceive the ideas which are subjects for possible judgements' so as to 'contain no error in the proper sense of that term'.

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# The Right Use of Judgement

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If, however, I simply **refrain from making a judgement in cases where I do not perceive the truth with sufficient clarity and distinctness**, then it is clear that I am behaving correctly and avoiding error. But if in such cases I either affirm or deny, then I am not using my free will correctly.

– Fourth Meditation, CSM II 41

M4 conclusion (CSM II 43)

'[E]very clear and distinct perception [...] cannot come from nothing, but must necessarily have God for its author. Its author, I say, is God, who is supremely perfect, and who cannot be a deceiver on pain of contradiction; hence the perception is undoubtedly true.'

Implied *reductio* argument: the supposed contradiction (a set of premisses) leads to the refutation of initial assumptions (conclusion).



# The Right Use of Judgement

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‘[E]very clear and distinct perception [...] cannot come from nothing, but must necessarily have God for its author. Its author, I say, is God, who is supremely perfect, and who cannot be a deceiver **on pain of contradiction**; hence the perception is **undoubtedly true**.’

Implied *reductio* argument: the supposed contradiction (a set of premisses) leads to the refutation of initial assumptions (conclusion).



# Implied *reductio ad absurdum* ('reduction to an absurdity', so-called 'indirect proof')

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## Descartes's *reductio* argument for the meditator's perception

- ① Every clear and distinct perception comes from **nothing**.  
[assumption]
  - ② God can be a deceiver. [methodological doubts earlier on]
  - ③ God cannot be a deceiver. [because He is 'supremely perfect' as the meditator judges '**on pain of contradiction**', P2 and P3]
  - ④ ... [more implicit premisses]
- ⊢ Every clear and distinct perception *cannot* come from **nothing**.  
[*ex nihilo nihil fit* ('nothing comes from nothing') in Med 3; CSM II 29]

Law of Non-Contradiction (LNC):  $\neg(\varphi \wedge \neg\varphi)$

Contradictory propositions cannot both be **true** simultaneously.

**Valid proof** (if not sound): if LNC is validated, then Principle of Explosion, since from a falsehood / contradiction anything (= any proposition) follows (*Ex Falso Quodlibet*, EFQ / *Ex Contradictione Quodlibet*, ECQ).

Compare ECQ (EFQ) with ECN (*Ex Contradictione Nihil*)





# Implied *reductio ad absurdum* ('reduction to an absurdity', so-called 'indirect proof')

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## Descartes's *reductio* argument for the meditator's perception

- 1 Every clear and distinct perception comes from nothing. [assumption]
  - 2 God can be a deceiver. [methodological doubts earlier on]
  - 3 God cannot be a deceiver. [because He is 'supremely perfect' as the meditator judges '**on pain of contradiction**', P2 and P3]
  - 4 ... [more implicit premisses]
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## Descartes's *reductio* argument for the meditator's perception

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[assumption]
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Compare ECQ (EFQ) with ECN (*Ex Contradictione Nihil*)



# Six days of CREATION in Descartes's *Meditations*

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## *Reductio ad absurdum* ('Reduction to an absurdity')

So-called 'indirect proof' (see Rosenberg, the end of ch. 3):

- **Law (principle) of non-contradiction (LNC):**  $\neg(\varphi \wedge \neg\varphi)$
- **Principle of explosion:** anything follows from a contradiction, which is false (*ex falso/contradictione quodlibet*)

- ④ Recognition (*anagnorisis*) of the reflexive, corrective power of the will; the discovery of **the law of noncontradiction as a methodological principle validating *reductio* arguments.** [M4]

So, a form of *reductio* argument:

- ⑤ Ascension from the *res cogitans* to the *res extensa* for the existence of the body
  - ⑥ Reconstruction of the *res extensa* as a *res cogitans*
  - ⑦ Possible 7th day of creation
- ①  $\neg\varphi$  [assumption: my perception is deceived]
  - ②  $\neg\varphi \supset \psi$  [if so, then my will goes wrong]
  - ③  $\neg\psi$  [my will *does not* go wrong]
  - ④  $\perp$  [contradiction  $\psi \wedge \neg\psi$ : false by LNC]
  - ⊃  $\varphi$  [assumption must be false]
- Rorty,  
Oda and Bucca



# Objection: The Cartesian Circle

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And when I consider the fact that I have doubts, or that I am a thing that is incomplete and dependent, then there arises in me a clear and distinct idea of a being who is independent and complete, that is, an idea of God. And from the mere fact that there is such an idea within me, or that I who possess this idea exist, I clearly infer that God also exists.

– Fourth Meditation, CSM II 37

[E]very clear and distinct perception [...] must necessarily have God for its author [...] hence the perception is undoubtedly true.

– Fourth Meditation, CSM II 43

I have one further worry, namely how the author avoids reasoning in a circle [i.e. logical fallacy] when he says that we are sure that what we clearly and distinctly perceive is true only because God exists. But we can be sure that God exists only because we clearly and distinctly perceive this. Hence, before we can be sure that God exists, we ought to be able to be sure that whatever we perceive clearly and evidently is true.

– Antoine Arnauld, Fourth Objections, CSM II 150



# Objection: The Cartesian Circle

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Assignments

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## Response

**I was not guilty of circularity** when I said that the only reason we have for being sure that what we clearly and distinctly perceive is true is the fact that God exists, but that we are sure that God exists only because we perceive this clearly: I have already given an adequate explanation of this point in my reply to the Second Objections [...] where I made a distinction between what we in fact perceive clearly and what we remember having perceived clearly on a previous occasion.

– Descartes's response, Fourth Replies, CSM II 171



# Meditation 5

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## 1 Weekly Quiz

## 2 Overview of the *Meditations*

## 3 Meditation 4

- Argument about Judgement
- *Reductio* Argument

## 4 Meditation 5

- Anselm's Ontological Argument
- Descartes's Ontological Argument

## 5 Meditation 6

- The Conceivability Argument for Dualism
- Argument for Bodily Causation

## 6 Assignments for the Next Lecture



# Meditation 5 (CSM II 44–49)

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Assignments

## Synopsis (CSM II 11)

In the Fifth Meditation, besides an account of corporeal nature taken in general, there is a new argument demonstrating the existence of God. [...] Finally I explain the sense in which it is true that the certainty even of geometrical demonstrations depends on the knowledge of God.

## M5 Subtitle

*The essence of material things, and the existence of God considered a second time*

- How is **the second proof** (argument) different to the Third Meditation argument?
- How is this different from Anselm's ontological argument?
- Is the argument sound and convincing?





# Meditation 5 (CSM II 44–49)

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# Descartes's Ontological Argument

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But if the mere fact that I can produce from my thought the idea of something entails that everything which I clearly and distinctly perceive to belong to that thing really does belong to it, is not this a possible basis for another argument to prove the existence of God? Certainly, the idea of God, or a supremely perfect being, is one which I find within me just as surely as the idea of any shape or number. And my understanding that it belongs to his nature that he always exists is no less clear and distinct than is the case when I prove of any shape or number that some property belongs to its nature

– Fifth Meditation, CSM II 45



# Descartes vs. Anselm

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Assignments

As soon as we understand the meaning of the word 'God', we immediately grasp that God exists. For the word 'God' means 'that than which nothing greater can be conceived'. Now that which exists in reality as well as in the intellect is greater than that which exists in the intellect alone. Hence, since God immediately exists in the intellect as soon as we have understood the word 'God', it follows that he also exists in reality.

– Johannes Caterus, First Objections, CSM II 70, quoting Aquinas's presentation of **Anselm's ontological argument**

St Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109): *Proslogion* ('allocution', 1078, ch. 2)  
St Thomas Aquinas (1225–74): *Summa theologiæ*, objecting to *Proslogion*

Anselm's argument [usually *reductio* with the Fool's denial of God]

- 1 God is 'that than which nothing greater can be conceived'.
- 2 If God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived, then God exists in reality.
- 3 God exists in reality. [Modus Ponens – affirming the antecedent]



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# Descartes's Response

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Assignments

The argument [Aquinas] puts forward as an objection to his own position can be stated as follows. 'Once we have understood the meaning of the word "God", we understand it to mean "that than which nothing greater can be conceived". But to exist in reality as well as in the intellect is greater than to exist in the intellect alone. Therefore, once we have understood the meaning of the word "God" we understand that God exists in reality as well as in the understanding.' In this form the argument is manifestly invalid,

— First Replies, CSM II 82–83

Anselm's argument in Aquinas's version (through Caterus)

'God' means 'that than which nothing greater can be conceived'.  
To exist in reality is greater than to exist in the intellect alone.  
If we understand a word, then the thing signified by that word exists in the intellect.  
Therefore, if we understand the word 'God', then God exists in reality.





# Descartes's Response

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– First Replies, CSM II 82–83

## Anselm's argument in Aquinas's version (through Caterus)

- ① 'God' *means* 'that than which nothing greater can be conceived'.
- ② To exist in reality is greater than to exist in the intellect alone.
- ③ *If we understand a word*, then the thing signified by that word exists in the intellect.
- ④ Therefore, if we understand the word 'God', then God exists in reality.



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The argument [Aquinas] puts forward as an objection to his own position can be stated as follows. 'Once we have understood the meaning of the word "God", we understand it to mean "that than which nothing greater can be conceived"'. But to exist in reality as well as in the intellect is greater than to exist in the intellect alone. Therefore, once we have understood the meaning of the word "God" we understand that God exists in reality as well as in the understanding.' In this form **the argument is manifestly invalid**,

– First Replies, CSM II 82–83

## Anselm's argument in Aquinas's version (through Caterus)

- 1 'God' *means* 'that than which nothing greater can be conceived'.
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– First Replies, CSM II 82–83



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For Descartes, **Aquinas's version** (i.e. just by understanding the meaning) is fallacious, lacking a *truth* of objective reality: **premiss to be false.**

– First Replies, CSM II 82–83





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For Descartes, **Aquinas's version** (i.e. just by understanding the meaning) is fallacious, lacking a *truth* of objective reality: **premiss 3 to be false.**

- ③ *If we understand a word*, then the thing signified by that word **exists** in the intellect.

– First Replies, CSM II 82–83



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My argument however was as follows: 'That which we clearly and distinctly understand to belong to the true and immutable nature, or essence, or form of something, can truly be asserted of that thing. But once we have made a sufficiently careful investigation of what God is, we clearly and distinctly understand that existence belongs to his true and immutable nature. Hence we can now truly assert of God that he does exist.'

— First Replies, CSM II 83

## Descartes's ontological argument

- ① Whatever I clearly and distinctly understand to belong to something's nature may *truly be asserted* of that thing.

I clearly and distinctly understand that existence belongs to the nature of God.

Therefore, existence may truly be asserted of God, i.e. God exists.  
(Universal instantiation, deductively valid)



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- C Therefore, existence may truly be asserted of God, i.e. God exists.  
[Universal Instantiation]

Here at least the conclusion does follow from the premisses. But, what is more, the major premiss cannot be denied, because it has already been conceded that whatever we clearly and distinctly understand is true. Hence only the minor premiss remains, and here I confess that there is considerable difficulty.

– First Replies, CSM II 83



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Assignments

- ② I clearly and distinctly understand that existence belongs to the nature of God. [Minor Premiss]

## Objection 1: I just can conceive of God's non-existence!

I find it easy to persuade myself that existence can also be separated from the essence of God, and hence that God can be thought of as not existing.

— Fifth Meditation, CSM II 45

## Reply: No you can't!

But when I concentrate more carefully, it is quite evident that existence can no more be separated from the essence of God than the fact that its three angles equal two right angles can be separated from the essence of a triangle, or than the idea of a mountain can be separated from the idea of a valley. Hence it is just as much of a contradiction to think of God (that is, a supremely perfect being) lacking existence (that is, lacking a perfection), as it is to think of a mountain without a valley.

— Fifth Meditation, CSM II 46



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- ② I clearly and distinctly understand that existence belongs to the nature of God. [Minor Premiss]

## Objection 2: The conditionalising strategy

[I]t certainly does not follow from the fact that I think of a mountain with a valley that there is any mountain in the world; and similarly, it does not seem to follow from the fact that I think of God as existing that he does exist.

– Fifth Meditation, CSM II 46

## Reply: That is not how concepts work

From the fact that I cannot think of a mountain without a valley, it does not follow that a mountain and valley exist anywhere, but simply that a mountain and a valley, whether they exist or not, are mutually inseparable. But from the fact that I cannot think of God except as existing, it follows that existence is inseparable from God, and hence that he really exists. [...] For I am not free to think of God without existence.

– Fifth Meditation, CSM II 46



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## Objection 3: No correspondence to reality

Even if it is granted that a supremely perfect being carries the implication of existence in virtue of its very title, it still does not follow that the existence in question is anything actual in the real world. [...] So you cannot infer that the existence of God is anything actual unless you suppose that the supreme being actually exists; for then it will actually contain all perfections, including the perfection of real existence.

— Caterus, First Objections, CSM II 70

## Reply: Necessary (not merely possible) existence

It must be noted that possible existence is contained in the concept or idea of everything that we clearly and distinctly understand; but in no case is necessary existence so contained, except in the case of the idea of God.

— Fifth Replies, CSM II 83



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- ② I clearly and distinctly understand that existence belongs to the nature of God. [Minor Premiss]

## Objection 4: The existing lion

The complex 'existing lion' includes both 'lion' and 'existence', and it includes them essentially [...] [D]oes not existence belong to the essence of the composite 'existing lion'?

— Caterus, First Objections, CSM II 72

## Reply: The concept of God is not arbitrary

Such ideas [assembled by the intellect] can always be split up by the same intellect [...] so that any ideas which the intellect cannot split up in this way were clearly not put together by the intellect. When, for example, I think of a winged horse [...] I readily understand that I am also able to think of a horse without wings, or a lion which does not exist [...] hence these things do not have true and immutable natures. But if I think of a triangle [...] then whatever I apprehend as being contained in the idea of a triangle [...] I can with truth assert of the triangle.

— First Replies, CSM II 83



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- ② I clearly and distinctly understand that existence belongs to the nature of God. [Minor Premiss]

## Objection 5: I don't have that kind of idea of God

You claim that there is in the idea of an infinite God. [...] But first of all, the human intellect is not capable of conceiving of infinity, and hence it neither has nor can contemplate any idea representing an infinite thing.

— Gassendi, Fifth Objections, CSM II 200

## Reply: The finite presuppose the infinite

I clearly understand that there is more reality in an infinite substance than in a finite one, and hence that my perception of the infinite, that is God, is in some way prior to my perception of the finite, that is myself. For how could I understand that I doubted or desired – that is, lacked something – and that I was not wholly perfect, unless there were in me some idea of a more perfect being which enabled me to recognize my own defects by comparison?

— Third Meditation, CSM II 31



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- ② I clearly and distinctly understand that existence belongs to the nature of God. [Minor Premiss]

## Objection 5: I don't have that kind of idea of God

You claim that there is in the idea of an infinite God. [...] But first of all, the human intellect is not capable of conceiving of infinity, and hence it neither has nor can contemplate any idea representing an infinite thing.

– Gassendi, Fifth Objections, CSM II 200

## Reply: The finite presuppose the infinite

I clearly understand that there is more reality in an infinite substance than in a finite one, and hence that my perception of the infinite, that is God, is in some way prior to my perception of the finite, that is myself. For how could I understand that I doubted or desired – that is, lacked something – and that I was not wholly perfect, unless there were in me some idea of a more perfect being which enabled me to recognize my own defects by comparison?

– Third Meditation, CSM II 31



# Objections to the Minor Premise

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Assignments

② I clearly and distinctly understand that existence belongs to the nature of God. [Minor Premiss]

- Other objections?
- Does Descartes's ontological argument succeed?



# Meditation 6

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## 2 Overview of the *Meditations*

## 3 Meditation 4

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## 4 Meditation 5

- Anselm's Ontological Argument
- Descartes's Ontological Argument

## 5 Meditation 6

- The Conceivability Argument for Dualism
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## 6 Assignments for the Next Lecture



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## The Story So Far

**M1** Doubt everything that can be doubted!

**M2** My existence (as a thinking thing) cannot be doubted (when I attentively consider my own thinking), but the existence of the wax (as an extended thing) can be.

**M3** The existence of God cannot be doubted (when I attentively consider the idea of God).

**M4** I cannot doubt that what I clearly and distinctly perceive is true (when I attentively consider that God is not a deceiver).

**M5** I cannot doubt that what I clearly and distinctly perceive as belonging to the true and immutable nature of a thing really belongs to it. **The nature of body is extension**, and the nature of God is perfection (which implies necessary existence).

## M6 Subtitle

*The existence of material things, and the real distinction between mind and body [i.e. **mind-body dualism**]*



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*The existence of material things, and the real distinction between mind and body [i.e. mind-body dualism]*



# The Nature of Body

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And now [that I know that God exists] it is possible for me to achieve full and certain knowledge of countless matters, both concerning God himself and other things whose nature is intellectual, and also concerning the whole of that corporeal nature which is the subject-matter of pure mathematics.

– Fifth Meditation, CSM II 49

But besides that corporeal nature which is the subject-matter of pure mathematics, there is much else that I habitually imagine, such as colours, sounds, tastes, pains, and so on – though not so distinctly.

– Sixth Meditation, CSM II 51



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# Mind is not Body

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I know that everything which I clearly and distinctly understand is capable of being created by God so as to correspond exactly with my understanding of it. Hence the fact that I can clearly and distinctly understand one thing apart from another is enough to make me certain that the two things are distinct, since they are capable of being separated, at least by God. [...] Thus, simply by knowing that I exist and seeing at the same time that absolutely nothing else belongs to my nature or essence except that I am a thinking thing, I can infer correctly that my essence consists solely in the fact that I am a thinking thing [...] it is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it.

– Sixth Meditation, CSM II, 54

## The Conceivability Argument for Dualism

① I can clearly and distinctly conceive of myself existing without a body.

② Whatever I can clearly and distinctly conceive is possible (since God can make it actual).

③ Therefore, it is possible that I exist without a body. (UI from P1, P2)

④ It is possible for  $x$  to exist without  $y$  iff  $x$  and  $y$

are not necessarily co-extended.





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- 1 I can clearly and distinctly conceive of myself existing without a body.
- 2 Whatever I can clearly and distinctly conceive is possible (since God can make it actual).
- 3 Therefore, it is possible that I exist without a body. [UI from P1,P2]
- 4 If it is possible for x to exist without y, then  $x \neq y$ .

5 Therefore, I  $\neq$  a body: [MD from P3,P4]



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I know that everything which I clearly and distinctly understand is capable of being created by God so as to correspond exactly with my understanding of it. Hence **the fact that I can clearly and distinctly understand one thing apart from another is enough to make me certain that the two things are distinct, since they are capable of being separated**, at least by God. [...] my essence consists solely in the fact that I am a thinking thing [...] it is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it.

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Now there is in me a passive faculty of sensory perception, that is, a faculty for receiving and recognizing the ideas of sensible objects; but I could not make use of it unless there was also an active faculty [...]

– Sixth Meditation, CSM II 55



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– Sixth Meditation, CSM II 55

## Argument for bodily causation

- ① My sensory ideas are not caused by me.
- ② If my sensory ideas are not caused by me, then either they are caused by body or they are caused (directly) by God.
- ③ They are not caused (directly) by God.
- C Therefore, my sensory ideas are caused by body. [MP+Disjunctive S.]



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[...] there was also **an active faculty, either in me or in something else, which produced or brought about these ideas**. But this faculty cannot be in me, since clearly it presupposes no intellectual act on my part, and the ideas in question are produced without my cooperation and often even against my will. So the only alternative is that it is in another substance distinct from me [...] This substance is either a body [...] or else it is God [...] But since God is not a deceiver, it is quite clear that he does not transmit the ideas to me [...] For God has given me no faculty at all for recognizing any such source for these ideas.

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– Sixth Meditation, CSM II 55

[T]he very fact that God is not a deceiver [... entails] **the impossibility of there being any falsity** in my opinions which cannot be corrected by some other faculty.

– Sixth Meditation, CSM II 55–56



# Descartes's Conclusion

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At the end of the six meditations...



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I know that in matters regarding the well-being of the body, **all my senses** report the truth much more frequently than not. [...] I can use **both my memory**, which connects present experiences with preceding ones, **and my intellect**, which has by now examined all the causes of error. Accordingly, **I should not have any further fears about the falsity** of what my senses tell me every day; on the contrary, the exaggerated doubts of the last few days should be dismissed as laughable.

– Sixth Meditation, CSM II 61

Q. Possible 7th day of philosophical *sabbath*? (CSMK III 227)

'I can say with truth that the chief rule I have always observed in my studies [...] has been never to spend more than a few hours a day in the thoughts which occupy the imagination and a few hours a year on those which occupy the intellect alone. I have given all the rest of my time to *the relaxation of the senses and the repose of the mind* [emphasis added, *au relâche des sens et au repos de l'esprit*].'



# Descartes's Conclusion

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# Concluding Philosophical Questions

Week 3:  
Descartes 2

odat@tcd.ie

Weekly Quiz

Overview

Meditation 4

Argument about  
Judgement

*Reductio* Argument

Meditation 5

A's Ontological  
Argument

D's Ontological  
Argument

Meditation 6

Conceivability  
Argument

Argument for Bodily  
Causation

Assignments

- Is Descartes right that we should begin by doubting everything?
- If we start by doubting everything, can we ever dig ourselves out of that hole? Can Descartes really know that he is not deceived by a demon?
- In order to gain knowledge of reality, is it necessary for the mind to be led away from the senses, as Descartes says in the Synopsis?
- Do the sense reveal to us the true nature of external objects?



# Assignments for the Next Lecture

Week 3:  
Descartes 2

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Overview

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Meditation 5

A's Ontological  
Argument

D's Ontological  
Argument

Meditation 6

Conceivability  
Argument

Argument for Bodily  
Causation

Assignments

## 1 Weekly Quiz

## 2 Overview of the *Meditations*

## 3 Meditation 4

- Argument about Judgement
- *Reductio* Argument

## 4 Meditation 5

- Anselm's Ontological Argument
- Descartes's Ontological Argument

## 5 Meditation 6

- The Conceivability Argument for Dualism
- Argument for Bodily Causation

## 6 Assignments for the Next Lecture





# Next Week 4: Spinoza and Leibniz

Week 3:  
Descartes 2

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Weekly Quiz

Overview

Meditation 4

Argument about  
Judgement

Reductio Argument

Meditation 5

A's Ontological  
Argument

D's Ontological  
Argument

Meditation 6

Conceivability  
Argument

Argument for Bodily  
Causation

Assignments

- Be aware of the office hours of the instructor (myself) and TAs. Mine are Mondays 2-4pm (Centre for Social Sciences, C111) or appointment by email: [odat@mail.sustech.edu.cn](mailto:odat@mail.sustech.edu.cn)
- **Blackboard** (SS149, Spring 2024) contains all the basic info and recommended references.
- Join the **WeCom/企业微信** group for this course's updates.



Assignment 1: *Re-read* the 'Argument Advice' and discuss what you still do not understand with TAs first (then with me).



Assignment 2: Read Spinoza's *Ethics*, Appendix to Part I, and Leibniz's *Discourse on Metaphysics* §§19–22, 'Tentamen anagogicum' pp. 477–479, *Theodicy* §§345–349.