

PHIL 331 Handout 1
“Descartes’ dualism” 22 Jan 2020

Argument from doubt [from *Discourse Part Four*; also see Preface to the *Meditations*, ¶4]

1. I cannot doubt that my mind exists.
2. I can doubt that my body exists.

Therefore (by Leibniz’s Law):

3. My mind \neq My body

Leibniz’s Law:

- If $x = y$, then x and y must have the exact same properties.
- If x has a property that y does not have, then $x \neq y$

[FYI: These two statements of Leibniz’s Law are equivalent to each other. One is the *contrapositive* of the other.]

Conceivability argument [from the Sixth Meditation, ¶19; also see Synopsis, ¶12]

1. I have a clear and distinct idea of myself as a thinking thing only (without anything to do with extension); and I have a clear and distinct idea of body as an extended thing only (without anything to do with thinking). [from *Second and Fifth Meditations*]
2. If I have a clear and distinct idea of something as being a certain way, then God can create it that way. [from *Third through Fifth Meditations*]
3. Therefore, God can create me as a thinking thing only, and body as an extended thing only.
4. If God can create something as being a certain way, then it can exist in that way.
5. My mind can exist as a thinking thing only, and body can exist as an extended thing only.
6. If x can exist on its own without y , and y can exist on its own without x , then there is a real distinction between x and y .
7. Therefore, there is a real distinction between my mind and my body.

Divisibility argument [from the Sixth Meditation, ¶19; also see Synopsis, ¶12]

1. My mind cannot be divided into parts.
2. My body can be divided into parts.

Therefore (by Leibniz’s Law):

3. My mind \neq My body.

Descartes’ version of dualism:

- Descartes thinks he can provide *a priori* demonstrative proofs of dualism (see above).
- Descartes is a substance dualist. He’s not a mere property dualist.
- Descartes is an interactionist dualist who affirms a close mind-body union. He’s not a Platonist.
 - o see Sixth Meditation, ¶¶12–13
- Descartes contends that the pineal gland is the principal seat of the soul.
 - o see *Passions of the Soul*, §§31–34