

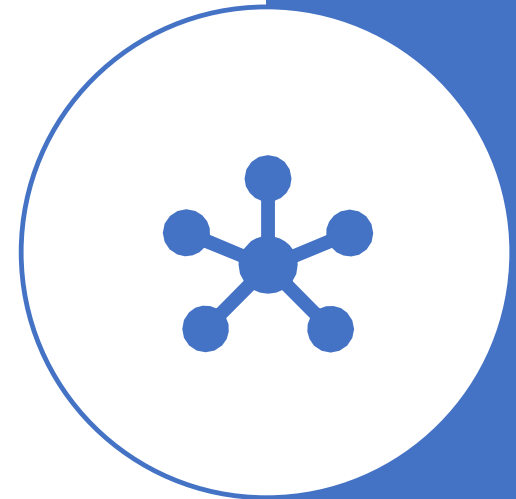
Meditation II

Descartes picks up where he left off, until he finds something that he can be certain of.

The *cogito*

Descartes considers the proposition:

I exist



The *cogito*

Descartes thinks that this proposition (“I exist”) *isn't doubtable*.

The *cogito*

This is sometimes identified as

cogito ergo sum, or

“I think, therefore I am”

(but Descartes doesn’t actually say this here.)

This is called “the *cogito*” for short.



What exists?

So what is this “I”, the thing that Descartes is sure exists?

It is fundamentally a *thinking thing* (*sum res cogitans*)-- that is, a *mind*.

The Cartesian Self

Critical to understanding western thought is this idea of the “Cartesian Self.”

The “self” for Descartes, is *fundamentally an immaterial mind.*

While Descartes eventually holds that he has a (material) body, and that he is “intertwined with it,” what he is *fundamentally* is an immaterial mind.



Discussion Question

Give an account of human persons-
what does it mean, fundamentally,
to be a human being?

If you “uploaded” your thought
processes into a computer, would
that still be you?

| Substance
| Dualism

Idealism:
Berkeley

Dualism:
Descartes

Materialism:
Hobbes

Beyond Idealism and Materialism

“In the first thesis, Marx states his objections to ‘all hitherto existing’ materialism and idealism. Materialism is complimented for understanding the physical reality of the world, but is criticized for ignoring the active role of the human subject in creating the world we perceive. Idealism, at least as developed by Hegel, understands the active nature of the human subject, but confines it to thought or contemplation: the world is created through the categories we impose upon it. Marx combines the insights of both traditions to propose a view in which human beings do indeed create — or at least transform — the world they find themselves in, but this transformation happens not in thought but through actual material activity; not through the imposition of sublime concepts but through the sweat of their brow, with picks and shovels. This historical version of materialism, which transcends and thus rejects all existing philosophical thought, is the foundation of Marx’s later theory of history” (Wolff 2017)

Sense data
restored
(sort of)

So, because he is a thinking thing, he knows that his thoughts exist-- this includes his perceptions.



Now the perceptions may not match up to anything in the “external world,” or perhaps they are not accurate, etc. but he knows *that he has the perceptions*.