

## Meditations II

My existence is immune to all the grounds of doubt.

(If I dream that I exist I must exist.)

(If a deceiver tricks me I must exist.)

## Meditations II

My existence is immune to all the grounds of doubt.

(If I dream that I exist I must exist.)

(If a deceiver tricks me I must exist.)

But the existence of my body is not.

## Meditations II

My existence is immune to all the grounds of doubt.

(If I dream that I exist I must exist.)

(If a deceiver tricks me I must exist.)

But the existence of my body is not.

Neither are the existence of my sense organs or brain.

## Two Questions

- What am I?
- What enables me to know that I exist?

## Two Questions

- What am I?
- What enables me to know that I exist?

Let's consider the answers to these two questions together:

- Identify different sources of knowledge
- Say what each tells me that I am
- Consider whether it is correct

## Sources of knowledge

- faith in the testimony of others  
(mediate knowledge arising by inference from a more immediate perception of the words of others)
- sense perception  
(immediate knowledge by means of the senses)
- reason  
(mediate knowledge arising by inference from premises)
- intuition  
(immediate knowledge by means of the intellect)

## Theories of Human Nature

According to traditional authority (faith in testimony):

I am a rational animal

## Theories of Human Nature

According to traditional authority (faith in testimony):

I am a rational animal

According to sense perception aided by imagination:

I am a body animated by spirits



## Theories of Human Nature

According to traditional authority (faith in testimony):

I am a rational animal

According to sense perception aided by imagination:

I am a body animated by spirits

According to an intuitive conception based on inner introspection:

I am a thing that thinks

## Modes of thinking

Conceiving

Judging

(Willing, affirming, denying, doubting)

Reasoning

Sensing & Feeling

Imagining

(Sensing here is understood as having those thoughts we call sensations; which can seem to be had in a dream even when the sense organs are not working)

What am I doing when I consider myself to exist?

Having an immediate perception

But not having a sensory experience

Instead, having a direct understanding

## The epistemic thesis of *Meditations II*

All knowing is really just understanding (an act of the intellect).

When this understanding is very clear and distinct, it is indubitable.

When it is confused, it appears to us as imagination or sensory experience.

This act appears to be an exclusively mental act, not involving the body or physical sense organs.

## Two arguments

1. Even in paradigm cases of what is taken to be perception by means of the senses

e.g., sensing this piece of wax

what is really known is what the understanding perceives to be the case

what the senses and imagination tell us is either false or incomplete

(the senses only tell us about the existence of qualities that the wax can lose without ceasing to exist)

(the imagination is unable to give us a full conception of what the wax really is — something extended, flexible and movable — because it is restricted to picturing a finite number of particular states)

## 2. The very act of sense perception

e.g. looking out the window and “seeing”  
people walking in the street

is so primitive in what it tells us as to be meaningless  
apart from intellectual acts of judgment.

(all I really see is moving colour patches — I  
need to judge how these moving colour  
patches are collected together and what  
objects collections of them represent)

## Moral

I ought to consider what I know best about myself to be what I discover through an act of clear and distinct perception on the part of the intellect

— not what I discover through my senses or imagination.

## Moral

I ought to consider what I know best about myself to be what I discover through an act of clear and distinct perception on the part of the intellect

— not what I discover through my senses or imagination.

But what do I discover about myself through an act of clear and distinct perception on the part of the intellect?



## Moral

I ought to consider what I know best about myself to be what I discover through an act of clear and distinct perception on the part of the intellect

— not what I discover through my senses or imagination.

But what do I discover about myself through an act of clear and distinct perception on the part of the intellect?

Not just that I exist.

That I exist as a thinking thing, and so that my thoughts exist along with me

But I can't clearly and distinctly conceive these thoughts without clearly and distinctly conceiving what they contain and so how they are related to one another

at least insofar as these relations are immediately discerned in simple cases, without the aid of demonstration or memory

So I must know the simple truths of arithmetic and geometry

that  $2+3=5$

that the internal angles of triangles sum to two right angles

that equals added to equals are equal

*(If I ever get these things wrong, it is not when I directly intuit them, but later, when I don't bother to do that and merely rely on a memory that I have intuited them. That is the source of mistakes in demonstration.)*

I must even know such things as that orange is more like red than it is like green

or that white is not black

And I must know that something cannot come from nothing

so that everything that comes to be must have a cause

I know much more than just that I exist!