

## **Descartes' Second Meditation**

### **Today's goal:**

understand and evaluate Descartes' argument for Substance Dualism in the second meditation.

### **Reviewing Last Time**

- Descartes wants knowledge that is 100% certain
- His method: doubt everything until all hypotheses of error can be ruled out (e.g.: dreaming hypothesis, evil deceiving demon)

### **One thing you know for sure**

You exist. Even if there's an evil deceiver, the deceiver cannot make it the case that you are nothing.

### **What Kind of Thing Am I?**

1. It's impossible for me to doubt my own existence, so long as I'm thinking.
2. It's possible for me to doubt the existence of all bodies (i.e., material things).
3. If you know something with certainty, that thing's existence cannot depend on the existence of something that is uncertain.
4. Therefore, my mind is fundamentally a different kind of thing than my body, and can exist independently of it.

### **Substance Dualism**

The view that there are two fundamentally different kinds of things that can exist independently of one another — material substances and minds.

### **Materialism**

The view that there is fundamentally one kind of thing that can exist — material things. All other things, including minds, are dependent on matter.

**Group 1 (January-April birthdays):**

Look at Descartes' reasoning for P1 (on pages 16-17). In your own words, how would you explain Descartes' reasoning in defense of P1 a friend of yours? Do you think he's right?

**Group 2 (May - August birthdays):**

Consider the example of the piece of wax from pages 20-22. How does this example support premise 2 of Descartes' argument?

**Group 3 (September - December birthdays)**

On pages 18-19, Descartes claims that we can't have certain knowledge of something if it depends on something which we are unaware of. Can you think of something you know with certainty that is dependent on something you don't know about? How do you think Descartes would respond to such a counterexample?