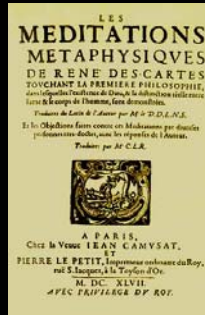


Descartes' Meditations



Descartes' First Meditation

- Four bulldozers of doubt:
 - I can't trust my senses
 - I could be crazy
 - I could be dreaming
 - A malicious demon could be out to fool me.
- Is there anything you'd stake your life on?



Is anything left standing?



Descartes' Second Meditation

- Is there anything I can't doubt?
- I can't doubt that: *I doubt.*
- Try it: I doubt that *I doubt.*
- OK, but then: *I doubt* that I doubt.
- Self-certifying process:
 - Doing it makes it so.
- So, "I doubt" is absolutely certain.

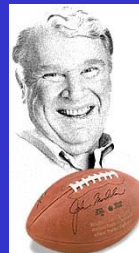
Is anything left standing?



The bulldozer itself.
The bulldozer can't demolish itself!

Self-affirming statement

John Madden:



"There isn't a person in this stadium who's left yet."

Self-undermining statement:

- Teacher (calling roll):
Johnny?
- Johnny: I am absent.

Descartes' Argument

- I doubt.
- ∴ I think. Cogito
- ∴ I exist. Ergo, sum.

Descartes' Argument

- I doubt.
 - ∴ I think.
 - ∴ I exist.
- Sound argument?*
Is it *valid*?
Doubting is a
kind of thinking.

Descartes' Argument

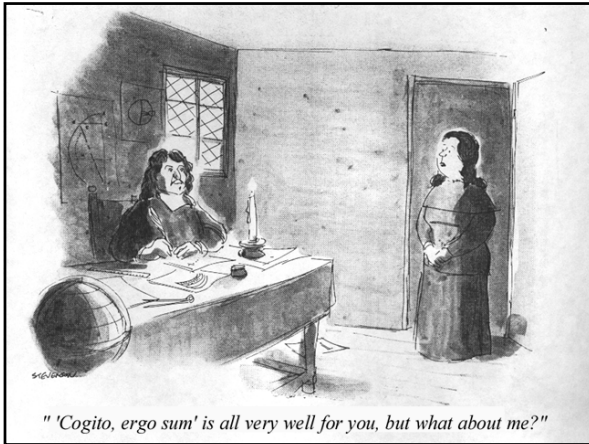
- I doubt.
 - ∴ I think.
- Sound argument?*
Are the premisses
all *true*?
“I doubt” is self-certifying.

Descartes' Argument

- I doubt.
 - I think.
 - ∴ I exist.
- Is this argument
sound?
Is it *valid*?

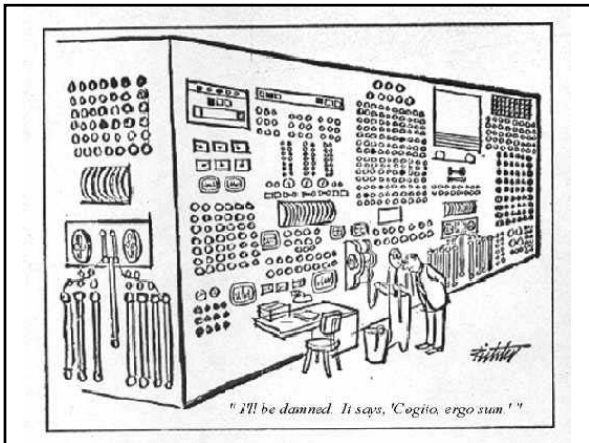
Evaluating Descartes' Argument:

- If I am dreaming, or the evil genius is deceiving me--then there is a “me” that is being deceived!
- But “I” exist, only as a *thinking* thing. He hasn't proven the existence of his *body*.
- Has he proven that *you* exist, as a thinking thing?



Evaluating Descartes' Argument:

- Only proves his own existence:
- “Solipsism” (solus=alone + ipsi=self).
- The Problem of “Other Minds”.
- You have to prove *your own* existence.
- Who/What else can prove their own existence?



Evaluating Descartes' Argument:

- Are *you* absolutely certain that *he* exists?
- What kind of *proof* is that?
- Doesn't a proof have to convince *everyone*?
- A proof has to be *objective*.
- Descartes' proof is *subjective*.

Evaluating Descartes' Argument:

- “I doubt” and “I think”:
- Where did the “I” come from?
- Is it a metaphysical entity or is it just a grammatical convenience?

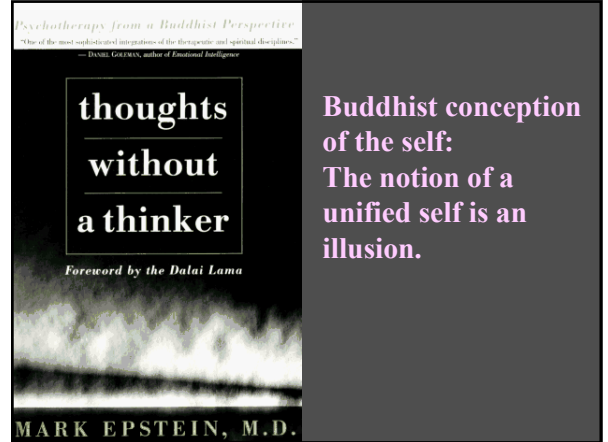
Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742-1799)



“We should say ‘it thinks’, just as we say ‘it rains.’ To say ‘I think’ already assumes too much.”

Evaluating Descartes' Argument:

- We know with absolute certainty that there is doubting and thinking.
- But do we know with absolute certainty that there is a unified consciousness that is doing the thinking?



Buddhist conception of the self:
The notion of a unified self is an illusion.

David Hume:
Scottish Philosopher
(1711-1776)



The self is:
"nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions."

Descartes' Meditations



Has Descartes found an absolutely solid foundation to build on?

His own existence as a thinking thing.