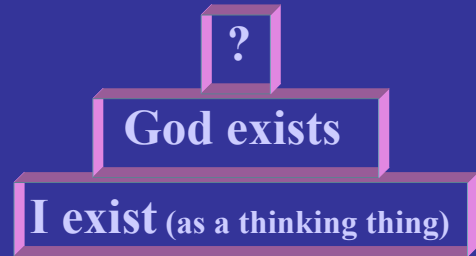


## Descartes' Meditations



## Descartes' Structure of Belief

- What does he know with *absolute certainty*?



## Why try to prove God exists?

- Intellectual interest.
- Divine *Epistemological* Certifier:
  - Are any of my beliefs accurate?
  - God wouldn't let me be *radically* deceived.

## Divine *Epistemological* Certifier

- If God wouldn't let me be radically deceived, then how come I make mistakes in my perceptions?
- The mistakes are my fault, not God's (p. 39).
- They are not mistakes of perception, but of jumping to a conclusion.

## Divine *Epistemological* Certifier

- God certifies my perceptions when I don't jump to conclusions:
- If I "clearly and distinctly perceive" that something is so, then it necessarily is so (pp. 46 & 24!).
- What does it mean to "clearly and distinctly perceive"?

## Descartes' *Second Proof* of God's Existence:

- Why a second proof?
- The concept of God includes all *perfections*.
- Existence is a perfection.
- ∴ God has existence.

## The “Ontological” Argument



St. Anselm  
(1033-1109)

## Descartes’ *Second Proof* of God’s Existence:

- The concept of God includes all *perfections*.
- Existence is a perfection.
- ∴ God has existence.

Is this a good argument?

## Descartes’ *Second Proof* of God’s Existence:

- The concept of God includes all *perfections*.
- Existence is a perfection.
- ∴ God has existence.

What does “perfections” mean?

A positive quality to a maximal degree.

## Descartes’ *Second Proof* of God’s Existence:

- The concept of God includes all *perfections*.
- Existence is a perfection.
- ∴ God has existence.

Is it a valid argument?

Are the premisses both true?

## Descartes’ *Second Proof* of God’s Existence:

- The concept of God includes all *perfections*.
- Existence is a perfection.
- ∴ God has existence.

The concept of God includes existence.

=

God exists?

## Descartes’ *Second Proof* of God’s Existence:

- The concept of God includes all *perfections*.
- Existence is a perfection.
- ∴ God has existence.

Does the concept of God include all perfections?

That’s what we mean by “God”.

## Descartes' *Second Proof* of God's Existence:

- The concept of God includes all *perfections*.
- Existence is a perfection.
- ∴ God has existence.

Is existence a perfection?

What does that mean?

## Perfect Vacation Spot

Warm, breezy  
Not crowded  
Inexpensive

It exists!

## Perfect Vacation Spot

- Does this prove the perfect vacation spot exists?
- **No:** Since the “perfect” vacation spot doesn't have *all* perfections.
- Only God has *all* perfections, so this only works to prove that *God* exists.
- **Rats!**

## Descartes' *Second Proof* of God's Existence:

- The concept of God includes all *perfections*.
- Existence is a perfection.
- ∴ God has existence.

A perfection is a positive quality to a maximal degree.

But is existence a *quality*?

## Perfect Vacation Spot

Warm, breezy  
Not crowded  
Inexpensive  
It exists

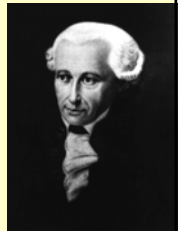
What does that  
add to the picture?

## Descartes' *Second Proof* of God's Existence:

- The concept of God includes all *perfections*.
- Existence is a perfection.
- ∴ God has existence.

Is existence a quality?

**No!** Immanuel Kant  
(1724-1804)



## Existence is not a quality:

- “There is a small, red ball.”
- In Logic:  $(\exists x)(Sx \ \& \ Rx \ \& \ Bx)$ .
- S (*small*), R (*red*), and B (*being a ball*) are all qualities, but not  $\exists$  (*existence*) is not.

## Descartes' *Second Proof* of God's Existence:

- The concept of God includes all *perfections*.
- Existence is a perfection.
- $\therefore$  God has existence.

### Is this a good argument?

Why did Descartes give this second proof?  
Doesn't need the Adequacy Hypothesis.

## Divine *Epistemological Certifier*

- Having established the existence of God, the divine epistemological certifier, we can then go on to establish the existence of other things that we clearly and distinctly perceive.
- Such as???
- Perhaps mathematics? Logic?
- What about the proofs of God's existence?

## Can we be confident of the proofs of God's existence?

- *The Problem of Evil:*
- God is all-powerful (Omnipotent)
- God is all-loving (Omnibenevolent)
- God is all-knowing (Omniscient)
- There is evil in the world.
- (Those can't all be true at the same time.)
- $\therefore$  A perfect (“Omni”) God does *not* exist!

## Can we be confident of the proofs of God's existence?

- Why should we be confident of the proofs?
- Because I can clearly and distinctly perceive that they are sound.
- But that is an assurance of their accuracy only once we've established that a perfect God exists.
- We don't know that a perfect God exists until we've given the proof.
- **The Cartesian Circle.**



## Can we be confident of the proofs of God's existence?

- We can be sure of the accuracy of our clear and distinct perceptions once we've proven God exists.
- But we can't prove that God exists without relying on the accuracy of our clear and distinct perceptions.
- Perhaps we really can't get beyond our own existence as a thinking thing when we set such stringent requirements for ourselves.

## Divine Epistemological Certifier

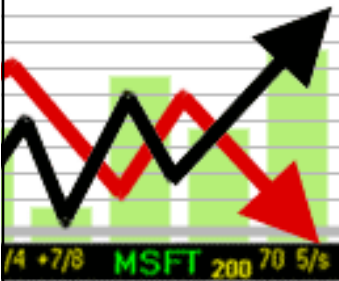
- You need a divine certifier to establish the proof that there is a divine certifier.
- It looks like we're spinning our wheels!



## Divine Epistemological Certifier

- If I “clearly and distinctly perceive” that something is so, then it necessarily is so (p. 46).
- More problems:
- Do I always know with absolute certainty *when* I have clearly and distinctly perceived something?
- Dow *Financial* Certifier:  
“Buy low and sell high!”

“Buy low and sell high!”



But...

How do I know  
when it's low,  
and when it's  
high?

Useless advice.

## Divine Epistemological Certifier

- If I “clearly and distinctly perceive” that something is so, then it necessarily is so (p. 46).
- More problems:
- Do I always know with absolute certainty *when* I have clearly and distinctly perceived something?
- No! Pp. 24-5, & 47.