Descartes and Epistemology (part three)
Cogito Ergo Sum

(I think, therefore I am)
Can I exist *only* in a dream?

Alice being dreamt by the Red King …
Can I exist *only* in a dream?

*Mais non!*

Alice being dreamt by the Red King …
I exist ... no matter what.

Even with bad hair, I still exist (as one with bad hair).

Even if I'm dreaming, I still exist as a dreamer.

Even if I’m being deceived, I still exist (as one deceived).

cogito ergo sum
The Cartesian Self
What am I?

I know **that** I am …
What am I?

I know *that* I am …

… but not *what* I am.
What am I?

Am I a body?
What am I?

Am I a body with a soul?
What am I?

But who knows what souls are?
What am I?

So I must just be a body...
What am I?

… except I’m not sure there are any bodies, even though I’m certain that I exist.
What am I?

The *soul* is what thinks, so I must be a *soul* …

… I must be a *soul* …

… a *res cogitans*.

et voila!
Rebuilding the World
Rebuilding the World

This is what I do in Meditations Three through Six.
What do I know exists?

I know that I exist …
(2nd Med.)

Latin
res: thing
cogitans: that thinks
What do I know exists?

And I have ideas, so they also exist (as attributes of my mind)…
(3rd Med.)
What do I know exists?

I have an idea of a dog, so that idea exists (even if the dog might not).
(3rd Med.)
What do I know exists?

I also have ideas of ideas, like my memory of the dog (these are more faint).
What do I know exists?

And I have ideas of numbers, unicorns, angels, God …. (3rd Med.)
What do I know exists?

And I have ideas of numbers, unicorns, angels, God ....
(3rd Med.)

But do I have reason to think that any of these also exist outside my mind?
Turn to your Neighbor

Can Descartes be certain that any of these things existing as ideas in his mind also exist outside his mind?

Why or why not?
Descartes’ Solution: God

I — as a *res cogitans* — am powerful enough to create all these ideas, except one…

Latin

*res*: thing

*cogitans*: that thinks
Descartes’ Solution: God

... my idea of God. (3rd Med.)
Descartes’ Solution: God

My idea of God is more perfect than me, so I cannot be its cause. The idea can’t come from me, so it has to came from God.

… my idea of God.
(3rd Med.)
Descartes’ Solution: God

So I’m not alone! God also exists!
(3rd Med.)

Farewell, solipsism

Latin
solus: alone
ipse: self
Descartes’ Solution: God

And, God causes not only my idea of God; God also causes me! (3rd Med.)
Problem of Human Error

But hold on…
If I’m the product of a perfect being, why am I imperfect? (4th Med.)
Problem of Human Error

I’ve made many mistakes in the past. How is this possible, if God made me? (4th Med.)

7+5=13!

No, I’m sorry René, but you are very wrong. Merde…
Perhaps I had jumped to conclusions: I chose to believe what was not yet “clear and distinct” to my understanding. (4th Med.)

Trés bon, Jacques!

Merde…

The answer is 12, Mademoiselle Pompidou!
If I restrain my will to believe only what is clear and distinct, I will not err.
(4th Med.)

So remember, René: Don’t answer until the numbers before you are “clear and distinct”!
Alors, I have clear and distinct ideas of objects outside my mind insofar as they are objects of mathematics. So they do exist. (5th Med.)
So: First, I prove that I exist, then God, then the physical universe. All in six days! Time for a nap … (5th-6th Med.)
Cartesian Dualism
What Exists

Other than God, there are two kinds of substance: mind and matter.

Substance ("what is real")

Mind: whose essence is to think.
Matter: whose essence is to be extended.
What Exists

Other than God, there are two kinds of substance: mind and matter.

Mind: whose essence is to think.

Matter: whose essence is to be extended.

And what am I? A strange combination of both mind and matter, soul and body.
What Exists Other than God,
there are two kinds of substance: mind and matter.

Mind: whose essence is to think.
Matter: whose essence is to be extended.

Human beings are souls attached to bodies; all other animals are only bodies.

(No one home)
Light strikes the retina on my eyes, causing a nervous excitation that travels to my brain, and from thence to my soul, whereupon I see you, dear Madame!
Mind-Body Interaction

Light strikes the retina on my eyes, causing a nervous excitation that travels to my brain and from thence to my soul, whereupon I see you, dear Madame!

Having seen you, Monsieur, my soul responds with a nervous excitation to my brain, which travels to my lips and vocal chords, such that I say what I’m saying right now: “Bonjour!” And my heart flutters ever so slightly.
Mind-Body Interaction

But how can an immaterial soul affect a material body, and *vice versa*?

Nice wig…
Other Minds?

Ah, another human being. Or, at least a human body…

I see the body of a sexy 17th century philosopher; but as for the mind…?