

# Dualism

Rene Descartes, *Meditations*, VI

# Philosophy of Mind

- What is the mind (soul)?
- What kind of things are mental happenings?
- How is the mind/mental events related to the brain and the physical world?

# The Mind

- **Mind** and synonyms: “soul”, “psyche”, “self”, “consciousness”
- The mind consists of **mental events**
  - E.g. thinking, desiring, wanting, expressing joy, grieving, ...
- Some Puzzling Features of the mind
  - **Representational**: concepts are about external objects and events; thoughts represent the world as being one way or another
  - **Privacy**: mental events are immediately and privately known; not observable
  - **Self-Consciousness**: we are aware of some of own mental events and ourselves
  - **Qualia**: the raw feel, phenomenal experience of a mental event

# Rene Descartes (1596-1650)

- Lawyer
- Mathematician: we get the Cartesian coordinate system from Descartes
- ‘Founder of Modern Philosophy’; influenced closer engagement in epistemology



# Two Views

- **Materialism (Physicalism):** There is only one kind of substance: physical (material)
  - Everything that exists is physical: cars, classrooms, ... and minds
- **Dualism:** There are two kinds of substances: mental and physical
  - Everything that exists is either mental or physical
- **Dualism appears to be the common-sense view**
  - the soul in Abrahamic Religions
  - Soul continuing to exist after death (heaven, hell, purgatory)
  - 'Out of body' experiences
  - separation of the soul and body

# Descartes' Dualism

- **Descartes' definition of mental and physical substances**
  - **Mental thing:** A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, and also imagines and has sense perceptions (*Meditations II*)
  - **Physical thing:** A thing that is extended, has shape, size, mass (*Meditations II*)
- Descartes gives an argument for Dualism

# Descartes Argument for Dualism

1. We can conceive of the mind and body as being separate
2. The mind and body can exist apart from one another
3. We can conceive of a separation of mind and body
4. Therefore, it is possible that they are apart.
5. Therefore, they are not **NECESSARILY** the same.
6. Therefore, the mind and body are distinct substances

# Objection 1: Interaction between Mind and Body

- Mental events cause physical events
  - My wanting to lift a cup causes the physical cup to move up
- Physical events cause mental events
  - Brewing of coffee causes the mental event of smelling coffee
- How can there be causal interaction between mental and physical substances, when mental substances are not in space-time?



# Parallelism

- A response to the interaction problem was to bite the bullet
- Minds and bodies do not causally influence one another; they run in parallel, like a car that shadows a train on the highway
- There is an illusion that they do because the mental and physical events run in parallel from the beginning of time
- Objection: How is this possible? Isn't this a fantastic coincidence?
  - Parallelism – Yes, it's improbable but it's a brute fact
  - Occasionalism – God synchronizes the mental and physical

# Problem 2: Problem of Other Minds

- Mental events (desires, hopes, etc) are not publicly observable; compare to behavior, brain matter
- How do we know that other people have minds and mental experience?
- The existence of minds other than our own must be inferred from behavior, but this inference is from one instance to many