

# Rationalism and Empiricism

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# Quiz: True or False?

(if false, explain why)

- 1. Descartes investigates whether there is a God because he needs to rule out a source for his doubts concerning what he knows.
- 2. Descartes believes that we know the Sun best of all by means of the senses.
- 3. Part of Descartes' proof of God's existence is that there must be at least as much reality in the cause of his idea, as there is in what the idea represents.
- 4. Descartes thinks it is possible he could come to the conclusion that he is in fact God, and thus the source of his idea of God.
- 5. Descartes concludes that the idea he has of God is innate (something he was born with).
- 6. Descartes thinks the source of his errors is his limited intellect.

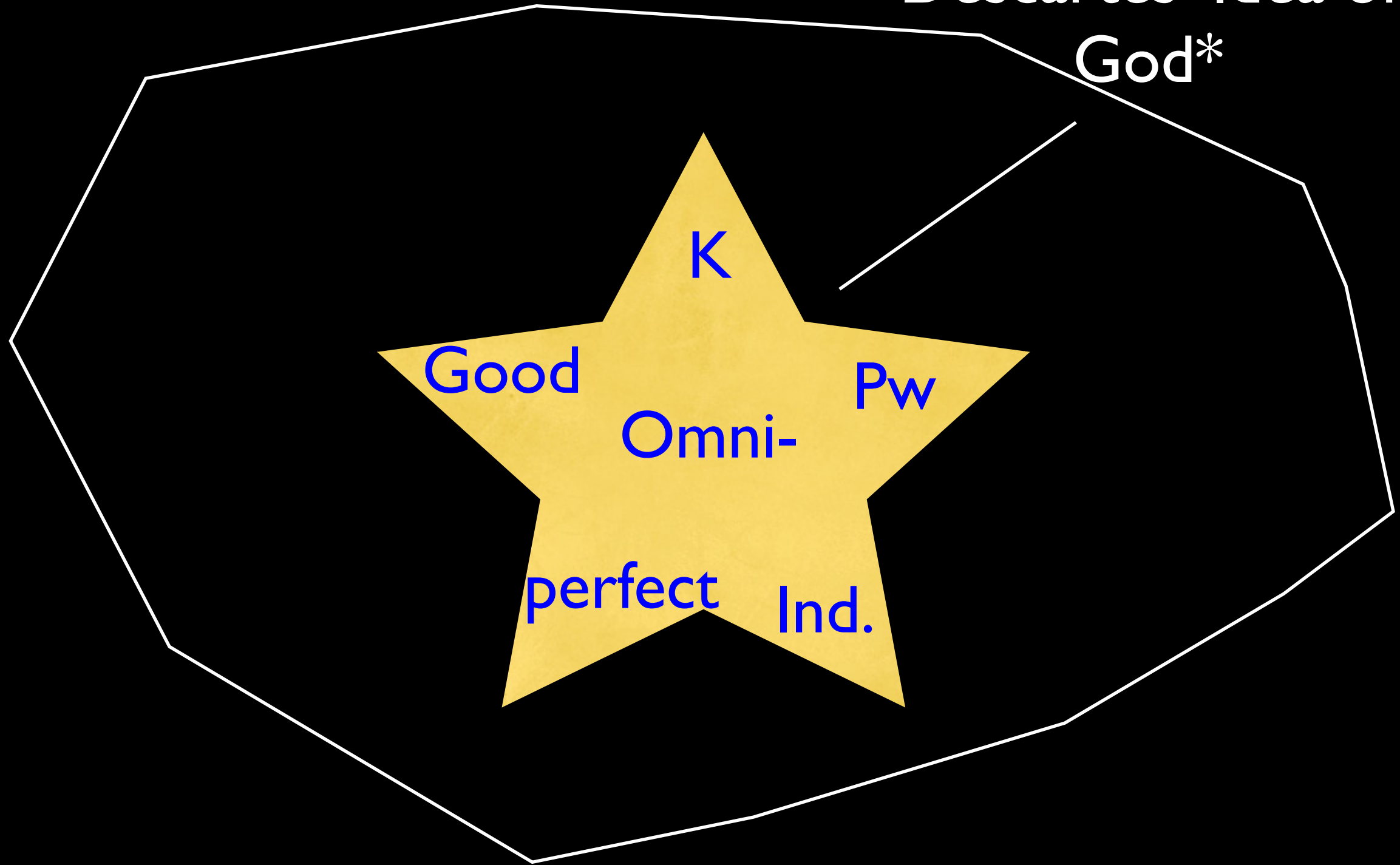
# Opening task:

- Try to put together the argument from Meditation 3, conclusion: God necessarily exists.
- Put the pieces together in the way that you might try to write a recipe: ingredients, then steps.

What are we supposed to  
take away from reading  
Descartes?

# Meditation 4

# Descartes' Idea of God\*



\*When clearly and distinctly perceived

- Descartes reminds himself that God is not the sort of being who would deceive him (in fact, this is impossible, he thinks)
- Descartes also has a faculty for judgment that he received from God
- Then a new problem arises, how is it possible for Descartes to make mistakes?

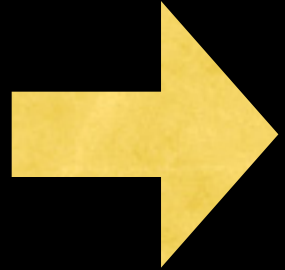
What is the source of  
error?



- When Descartes looks at his mistakes, he sees two candidates:
  - His Intellect
  - His Will

- Error comes from a defect. Thus, error arises not from a faculty, but from a lack. In this case, my capacity for grasping the truth is not infinite.

- “But from these considerations I perceive that the power of willing, which I got from God, is not, taken by itself, the cause of my errors, for it is most ample as well as perfect in its kind. Nor is my power of understanding the cause of my errors. For since I got my power of understanding from God, whatever I understand I doubtless understand rightly, and it is impossible for me to be deceived in this...”



- ...“What then is the source of my errors? They are owing simply to the fact that, since the will extends further than the intellect, I do not contain the will within the same boundaries; rather, I also extend it to things I do not understand. Because the will is indifferent with regard to such matters, it easily turns away from the true and the good, and in this way I am deceived and I sin.”



**Will**

**Intellect**

**Will**

- How should Descartes use his Will and Understanding together in the correct way?
- Answer: I should affirm something as true only when I clearly and distinctly perceive it to be true. (The CDP Rule)

Do you think it's a good rule?

If you were going to build your own rule,  
What would it look like?

- Thus far, has Descartes happened upon any candidates for things he has clearly and distinctly perceived as true?
- Are there any things that he thought he knew, but turned out to be confused and foggy?



# A Potential Problem...

- How does Descartes know that God exists?
- Answer: because Descartes clearly and distinctly perceives that God exists. And whatever he clearly and distinctly perceives is true.
- But then how does Descartes know that whatever he clearly and distinctly perceives is true?

# Bonus

- True or false?
  - Descartes concludes that the idea he has of God is innate (something he was born with).
  - The idea that Descartes has of God is very similar to the Greek conception of Zeus.