

Rationalism and Empiricism

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- Today's warm-up:
 - How does Descartes prove God's existence in Meditation 3?
 - (See if you can reconstruct the argument without looking at your notes...)

Meditation 5

- Now that Descartes has arrived at the CDP Rule, he next investigates what he knows in a clear and distinct way.
- The first candidate is mathematical truths.

- Next, Descartes considers God again.
- And at this point, he gives yet another proof for God's existence.
- Let's look at the text on this one...

- “Since in all other matters I have become accustomed to distinguishing existence from essence, I easily convince myself that it can even be separated from God’s essence, and hence that God can be thought of as not existing..”

- “But nevertheless, it is obvious to anyone who pays close attention that existence can no more be separated from God’s essence than its having three angles equal to two right angles can be separated from the essence of a triangle, or than that the idea of a valley can be separated from the idea of a mountain. Thus it is no less contradictory to think of God (that is, a supremely perfect being) lacking existence (that is, lacking some perfection) than it is to think of a mountain without a valley.”

- Is this proof of God's existence any better than the one we encountered in Meditation 3?
- (Hint: notice what Descartes says about trying to think of God without existing...)

- “For I am indeed of such a nature that, while I perceive something very clearly and distinctly, I cannot help believing it to be true. Nevertheless, my nature is also such that I cannot focus my mental gaze always on the same thing, so as to perceive it clearly.”

- ...“thus, other arguments can be brought forward that would easily make me change my opinion, were I ignorant of God. And thus I would never have true and certain knowledge about anything, but merely fickle and changeable opinions.”

Compare
Plato



- Descartes says that his knowledge of God's existence enables him to put trust in anything that he can clearly and distinctly perceive as true.
- And this will allow him to do a great many things.

- One question remains at the end of Meditation 5: has Descartes managed to get himself out of the circle?



Comparison with Spinoza

- One question I asked earlier is why do you think Descartes writes Meditations, rather than an essay?
- As it turns out, Spinoza thought that this was a mistake.

Spinoza

- <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/spinoza/>

- Spinoza prepared a text titled “The Principles of Cartesian Philosophy”
- <http://books.google.com/books?id=isKkltw4T2UC&printsec=frontcover&q=principles+of+cartesian+philosophy&hl=en&sa=X&ei=euoIT9u6CcciI2AVV87T3AQ&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=principles%20of%20cartesian%20philosophy&f=false>

- What does Meijer say about why Spinoza composed the Ethics strictly in Geometrical form?

- Let's look at Spinoza's proof of God's existence from the beginning of the Ethics
- <http://frank.mtsu.edu/~rbombard/RB/Spinoza/ethica-front.html>
- What do you notice about the way Spinoza sets out his argument?

- Now let's return to Descartes, who was aware of this issue.
- Notice what Descartes does in *Objections and Replies* (end of Second set)...