

# Descartes' Nature of Mind & View of Perception:

Everything in God's created universe that is not a body is a mind, or self. Since a person is a self, the nature of the mind is much better known than the nature of the body. Why? Because we "*observe many more qualities in our mind than in any other thing.*" All these qualities-willing, imagining, desiring, thinking, hoping, doubting, perceiving, & so on-are, however, modes of one of the other of 2 basic powers, "*one of which consists in ... the operation of the understanding (the power which men seek truth), and the other in volition (infinite free will), or the operation of the will.*" **Understanding** is distinguished between (1)**thinking**(which is cognition of the world as it is), namely, **a universe of unextended minds & of material substances possessing only "length, breadth, and depth,"** & (2) **sensing**, which is perception of a world of colored, sounding, & odorous bodies.

## Innate ideas:

Placed in mind by God at creation, they can be examined & set aside at will, but internal content can't be manipulated (e.g., triangle; idea of mind, & God).

## Substantive Dualism: How can the mind come to know its objects?

**The mind cannot go into the world to study, nor can the world, conceived of as matter in motion, come into the mind?**

The cognitive link between mind and the world is an idea, a state of the mind. Ideas are modes of thinking (not substances)

A true idea represents in the mind the object out there that is its cause.

Ideas represents things:

**AN IDEA IS THE COGNITIVE LINK.**

## Adventitious Ideas:

Produced by something external to the mind. They can't be examined, set aside, or be manipulated by the mind (e.g., sensory idea of heat if next to a fire).

Mind is a substance with properties of intellect & will

The world is matter in motion.

## What am I?

**Fabricated Ideas:** Mere inventions of the mind. The mind can control them so they can be examined & set aside at will; their internal content can be changed.

**Though mind & body are distinct substances, interaction occurs in the pineal gland since it is located between 2 hemispheres of brain.**

1. rational animal? No: uncertainty regarding meaning of "rational" & "animal"
2. Am I a bodied soul? No: indistinct apprehension of my bodily existence
3. I am (finite) substance: mind: principal attribute of mind: thinking; modes of thinking: doubting, understanding, affirming, denying, willing, refusing, imagining, sensing.

1. Our source of errors is our tendency to run into decisions without sufficient evidence to make appropriate judgment. If we would withhold judgment until we saw the conclusion clearly & distinctly, then we would never fall into error. Error is the disparity for knowledge & our limited human capacity for satisfying that thirst. The will is free (it is as perfect as God's will). So, our infinite will constantly takes us beyond the grasp of our finite intellect.

2. This is a radical new orientation in philosophy. Before Galilean mechanics and matter in motion appeared on science, there was no reason to assert a radical difference between minds and objects. In fact, it was assumed that the mind and its objects have an infinity for each other, and this affinity was precisely at the basis of all earlier accounts of knowledge.

Plato and Aristotle held that what the mind knows is reality itself whether this was understood as "form" or an essence". In this regard, Aristotle was as much a realist as Plato. Even though they did not agree that the universals are separate from particulars, even though they held that they had to be known in and through the particulars, he still held that what the mind knows is the universal itself; it is an idea of the universal.

## Descartes View on Perception: A Symbol of Signs (like signals on a RR track)

1. Real world is truly known in physics.
2. What physics knows is extension.
3. Objects of sense perception are less than real.
4. Objects of sense perception are only adventitious ideas in us-products of the action on our sense organs.
5. Main problem with perception is that we tend to take it at face value for they assume senses yield information about "the essence of the bodies which are outside" them.
6. If men learn not to expect more of perception that it can give, then for purposes of ordinary life, it is not a bad guide; we are not disembodied minds.
7. My perceptions tell us nothing about the real nature of an object but that do tell us an object is there & we must proceed with caution.
8. Adventitious ideas are products of corporeal nature (out there) acting on bodies; we may be mistaken, but never w/ innate ideas since they are implanted into our minds by God.