

Minds and Machines

Lecture 4

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Admin

- Filming in class today
- Office hours this week: 5-6pm today
- Next Thursday 9/12: Meeting over Zoom
- Syllabus access: Use Brightspace for now

Last Time

- Knowledge vs. skepticism
- Do we know we're not in a simulation?
- Do we know anything at all?

René Descartes



René Descartes

- 1596-1650
- Mathematician, scientist, and philosopher
- A founder of modern philosophy

Descartes' *Meditations*

- *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 1641.
- Tries to provide a foundation for all knowledge.

RENATI
DES-CARTES,
MEDITATIONES
DE PRIMA
PHILOSOPHIA.
IN QVA DEI EXISTENTIA
ET ANIMÆ IMMORTALITAS
DEMONSTRATVÆ.



PARISIIS,
Apud MICHAELM SOLY, vid. Iacobæ, sub
figno Phœnicis.

M. DC. XLI.

Cum Privilegio, & Approbatione Doctorum.

First Meditation: Demolition

- “I need to demolish everything completely and start again from the foundations”.
- “I should withhold assent from all propositions that are not completely certain.”

Sensory Knowledge

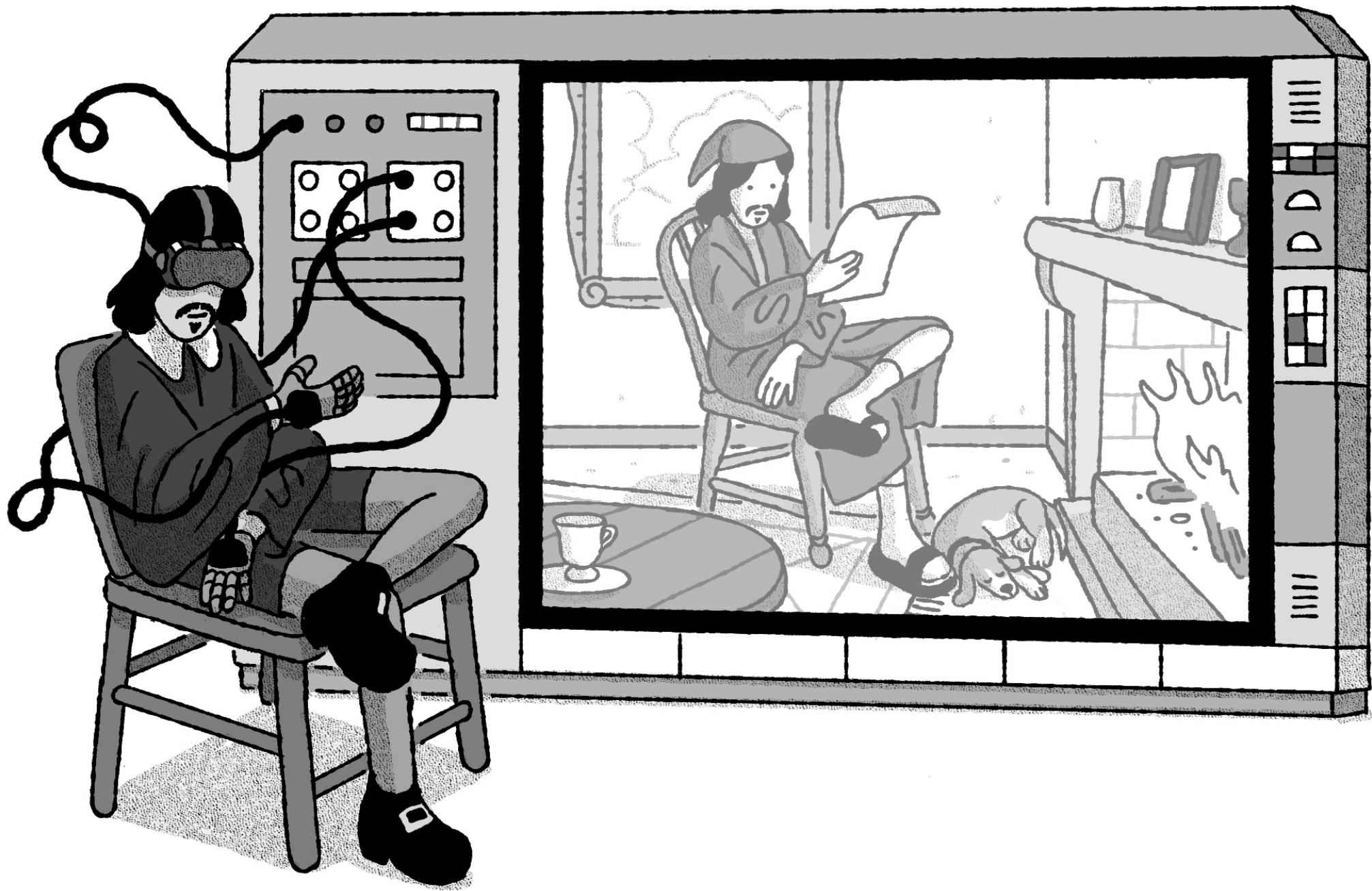
- “What I have accepted until now has come through the senses. But the senses have sometimes deceived me, and it is unwise to trust those who have deceived us.”

The Argument from Deception

1. The senses sometimes deceive me.
 2. If the senses sometimes deceive me, sensory beliefs aren't knowledge.
-
3. Sensory beliefs aren't knowledge.

Reply I: Sensory Deception is Limited

- “Yet although the senses occasionally deceive us with respect to objects which are very small or in the distance, there are many other beliefs about which doubt is quite impossible, even though they are derived from the senses— for example, that I am here, sitting by the fire, wearing a winter dressing- gown, holding this piece of paper in my hands, and so on.”



Dreaming

- “In my dreams I am often convinced that I am sitting by the fire when in fact I am lying in bed.”
- “There is never any reliable way of distinguishing being awake from being asleep.”

LEONARDO DICAPRIO

WATANABE GORDON-LEVITT COTILLARD PAGE HARDY MURPHY BERENGER AND CAINE



YOUR MIND IS THE SCENE OF THE CRIME.

A FILM BY CHRISTOPHER NOLAN

INCEPTION

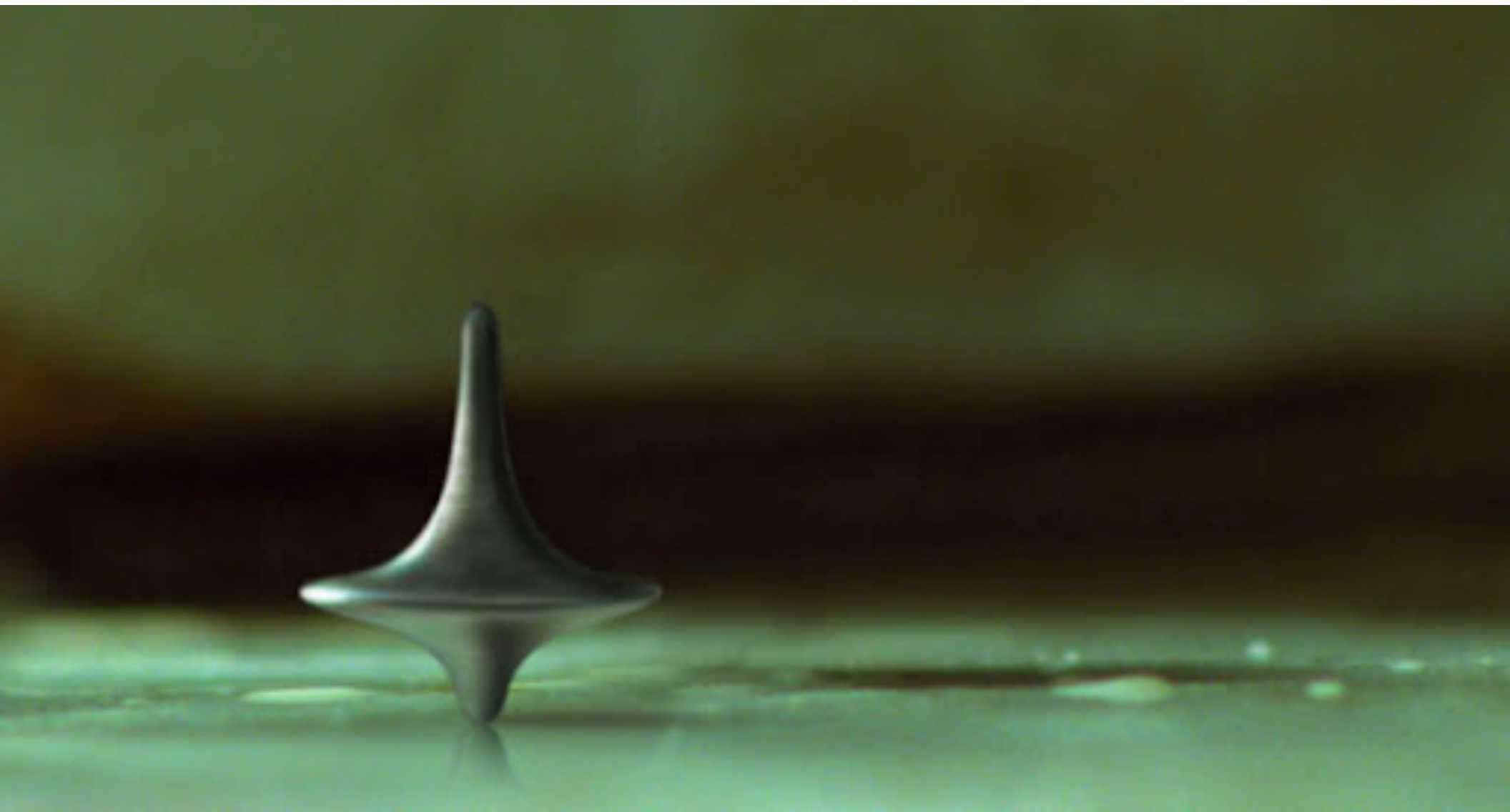
FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE DARK KNIGHT

WARNER BROS. PICTURES PRESENTS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH LEGENDARY PICTURES A SYNCOPY PRODUCTION A FILM BY CHRISTOPHER NOLAN LEONARDO DICAPRIO "INCEPTION" KEN WATANABE JOSEPH GORDON-LEVITT MARION COTILLARD ELLEN PAGE TOM HARDY CILLIAN MURPHY TOM BERENGER AND MICHAEL CAINE MUSIC BY HANS ZIMMER EDITED BY LEE SMITH A.C.E. PRODUCTION DESIGNER GUY HENDRIX OYAS DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY WALLY PFISTER A.S.C. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CHRIS BRIGHAM THOMAS TULL PRODUCED BY EMMA THOMAS CHRISTOPHER NOLAN

PG-13 Parents Strongly Cautioned Suggests Some Material May Be Inappropriate for Children Under 13
LEGENDARY PICTURES
WARNER BROS. PICTURES
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY CHRISTOPHER NOLAN
inceptionmovie.com
WARNER BROS. PICTURES

EXPERIENCE IT IN IMAX



The Argument from Dreaming

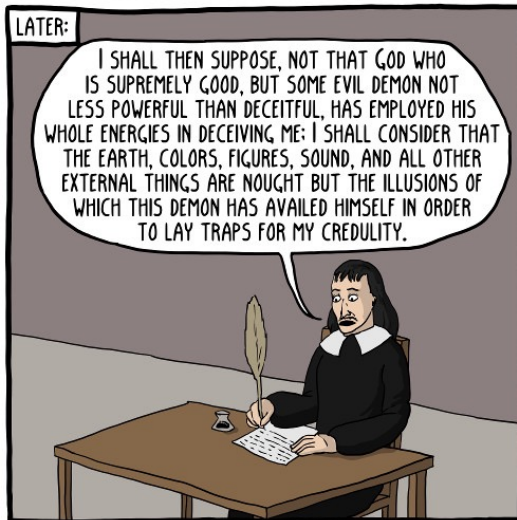
1. I can't distinguish waking from dreaming.
 2. If I can't distinguish waking from dreaming, I don't know I'm not dreaming.
 3. If I don't know I'm not dreaming, my sensory beliefs aren't knowledge.
-
4. My sensory beliefs aren't knowledge.

Arithmetic and Geometry

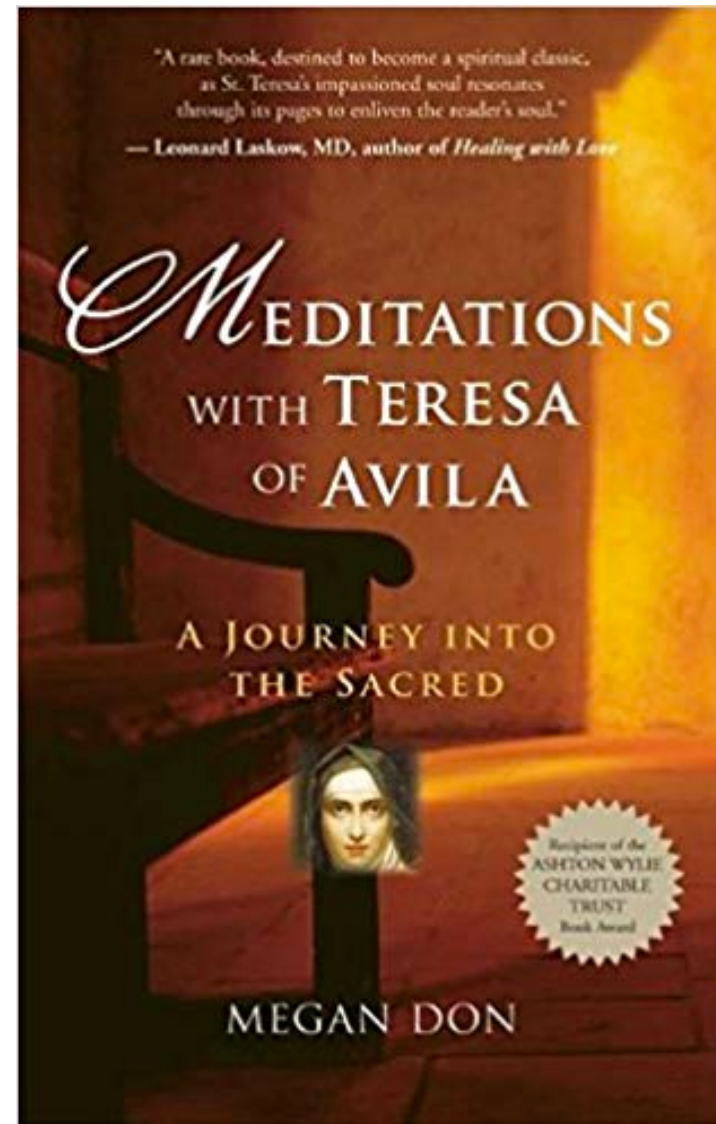
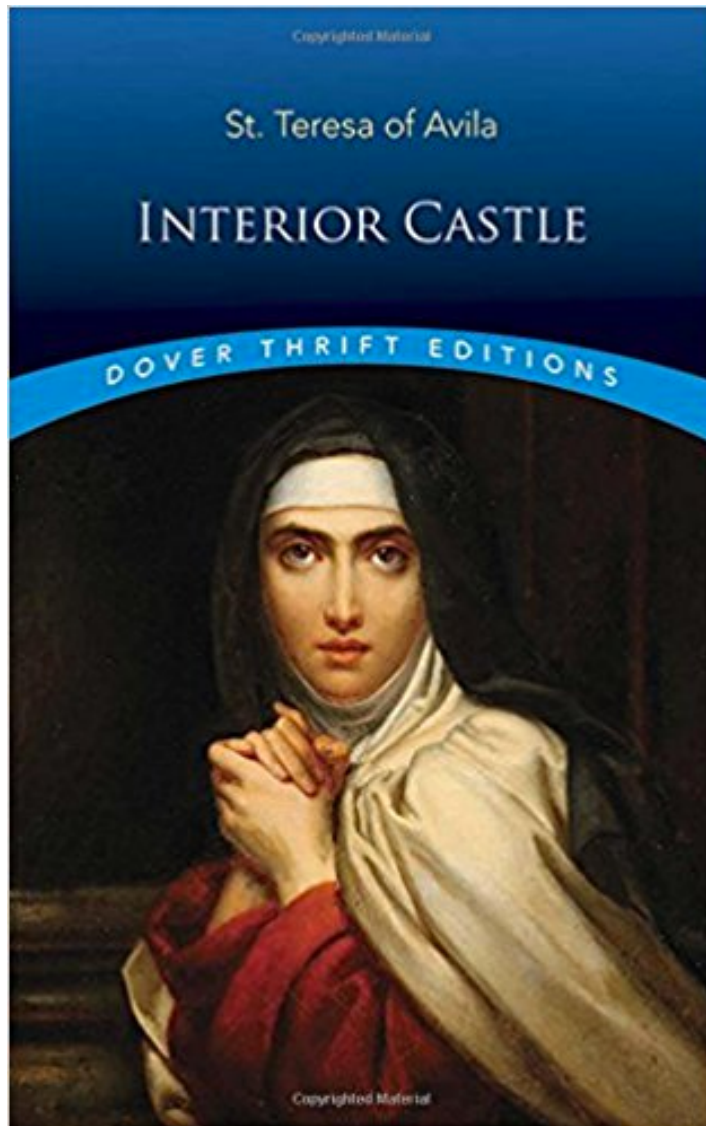
- “Physics and astronomy are doubtful, but arithmetic and geometry are secure. Whether I am awake or asleep, two plus three makes five.”
- But: couldn't an all-powerful God make me go wrong even about that?

The Evil Demon

- “Suppose that a malicious, powerful, cunning demon has done all that he can to deceive me. All external things are merely dreams that the demon has contrived.”



Teresa of Avila



The devil will try to upset you by accusing you of being unworthy of the blessings that you have received. Simply remain cheerful and do your best to ignore the devil's nagging. If need be even laugh at the absurdity of the situation. Satan, the epitome of sin itself, **accuses you of unworthiness!** **When the devil reminds you of your past, remind him of his future!** ~St. Theresa of Avila



catholic.com

Evil Demon Argument

1. I don't know that I'm not in an evil demon scenario.
 2. If I don't know that I'm not in an evil demon scenario, I don't know anything about the external world.
-
3. I don't know anything about the external world.

Simulation Argument

1. I don't know that I'm not in a simulation.
 2. If I don't know that I'm not in a simulation, I don't know anything about the external world.
-
3. I don't know anything about the external world.

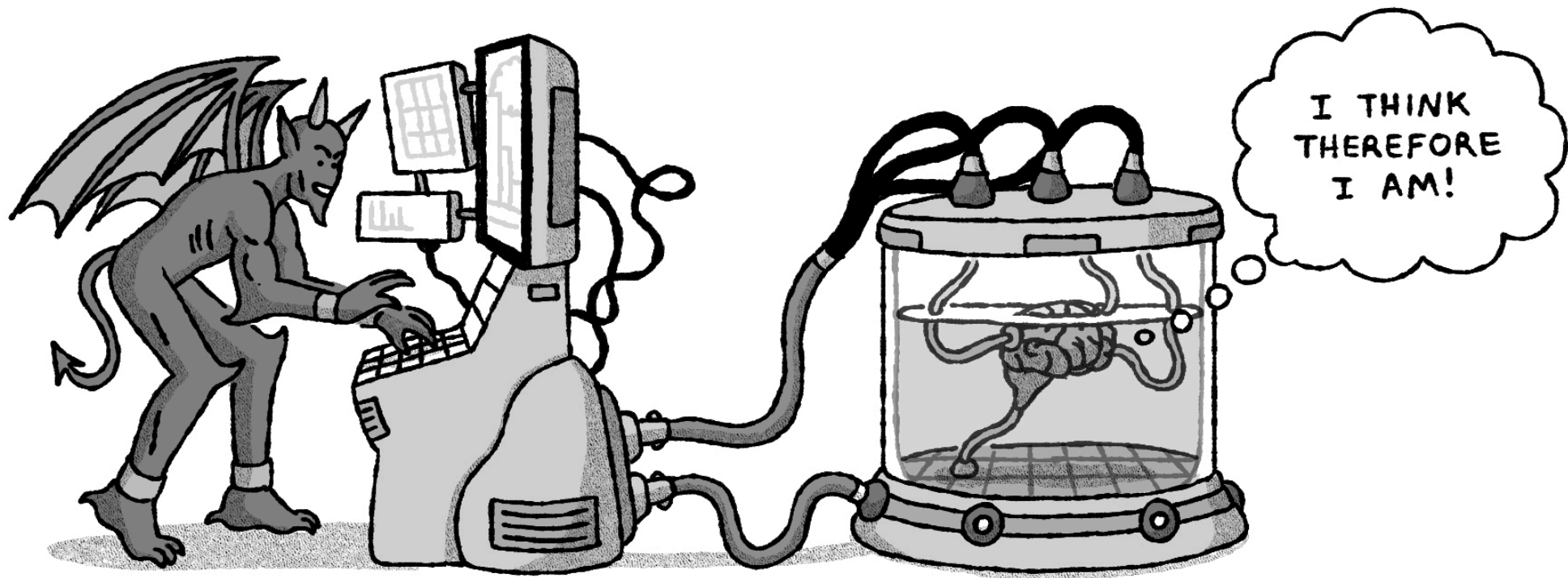


Second Meditation: Foundation

- My senses and memory may completely deceive me. Is there anything of which I'm certain?

Existence

- Perhaps I can be certain of my own existence?
- Even if I'm doubting all other beliefs — if I am doubting, then I certainly exist.
- The proposition “I am, I exist” must be true whenever I assert or think it.



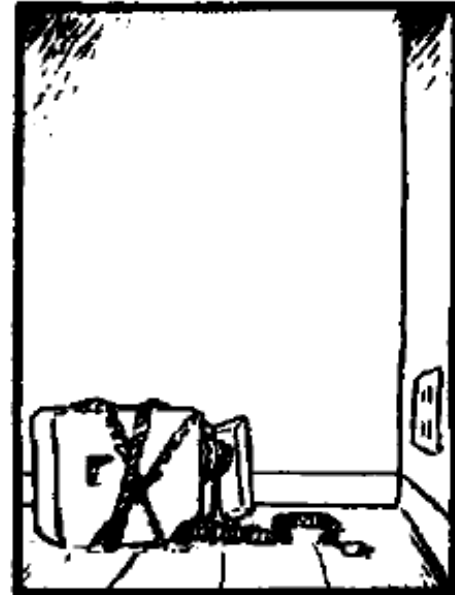
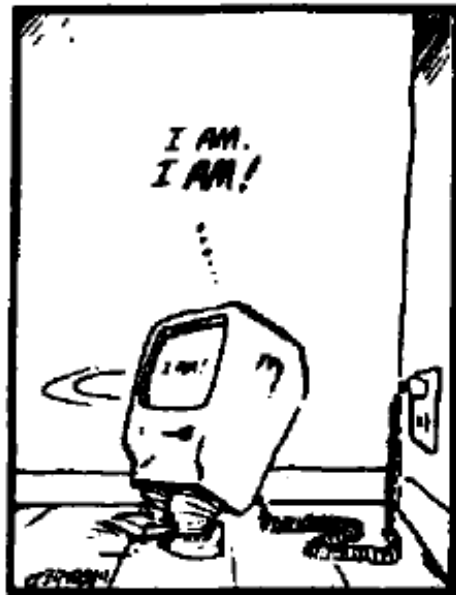
I THINK
THEREFORE
I AM!

Cogito Ergo Sum

- In the Latin: cogito, ergo sum.
- In French: Je pense, donc je suis.
- In English: I think, therefore I am.

Cogito Argument

1. I'm certain that I'm thinking.
 2. If I'm thinking, then I exist.
-
3. I'm certain that I exist.



What am I?

- I can doubt what I perceive.
- I can doubt that I have a body.
- But I can't doubt that I am thinking.
- So I am, essentially, a *thing that thinks*.

Building from the Foundations

- So far, Descartes has just establish that he thinks and he exists. How to build up from there?

Next Meeting

- Tuesday 9/17: Responses to skepticism