

EDIT: Descartes' main point of this exploration is to assign some type of categorization or label to everything in existence.

There are two types of substance according to Descartes: Mental and Material

Descartes must respond to the following question: "What separates Mental substances from Material substances?"

His answer is that each substance has a different essential property:

- A. Material substances have the essential property of extension. By extension he means takes-up-space. Examples of material substances: my physical body, an apple, the senate building, the sun.
- B. Mental substances have the essential property of thinking. By thinking he means producing thoughts. Examples of thinking substances: my mind, God.

So we know there are two types of substances which are distinct from each other in that they have different essential properties.

MODES:

The thing about these substances is that they take on many different characteristics (or aspects). These characteristics are what he refers to as modes. Modes depend upon substances. For example, modes of a material substance would be its size, shape, weight, color etc... Modes of a mental substance would be having an idea, affirming, denying, judging, imagining etc...

REALITY:

The main point of reality for Descartes is that different things have different levels of reality. That is to say, they exist at higher and lower degrees.

There are three main tiers of reality according to Descartes: Modes are the lowest form of reality, finite substances are the middle form of reality, infinite substances are the highest form of reality.

An apple would be an example of a finite substance. But an apple is also a finite material substance. If it is a green apple, then we would say it is a finite material substance and has the mode of being green. God is really the only example Descartes gives of an infinite substance.

OBJECTIVE/FORMAL REALITY:

Ideas are modes of mental substances. They are also special modes because they possess what he calls Objective Reality. Now by "Objective" Descartes doesn't mean truth or anything along those lines. What he means is that Ideas represent some object. This act of representing

an object gives ideas objective reality. *Only ideas have objective reality.* Further, the objects of my ideas are not outside of me. ***The object of my idea is always contained within my mind.***

Formal Reality can be seen as the reality a thing possesses based upon its ranking. Therefore modes have a low level of formal reality, finite substances have a medium level of formal reality, and infinite substances have a high level of formal reality.

So the crucial thing to note is that Ideas have both formal reality AND objective reality. The objective reality of an idea is its object's level of reality if that thing were to exist. Thus, ideas of Pegasus have objective reality even-though pegasus doesn't exist. Ideas of pegasus also have formal reality because they are ideas which are modes.

So an apple has medium formal reality but no objective reality. The idea of an apple has low formal reality because it is a mode AND medium objective reality because we assign the level of reality the object *would* have if it existed.

We can also have ideas of mental objects. I.E. I can have an idea of a thinking thing. The idea has a low form of formal reality because it is a mode. The objective reality of this idea would be medium, since a thinking thing is a finite substance.

TYPES OF IDEAS:

Descartes also believes there is a differentiation amongst the types of ideas I have. This difference is based upon the object of my ideas.

If I am having an idea whose object finds its source in something outside of me, then we call the idea "Adventitious". An example of this would be an idea of an apple sitting on the desk in front of me. The senses which come into contact with the apple - sight in this case - is the source of my idea of an apple. So Adventitious ideas are ones which come to me from something outside of my mind.

If I have an idea whose object finds its source in something inside of me - I.E. ideas of perfection, ideas of God, Ideas of perception - then we call these things "innate" ideas. They don't require sensation as the source of their object.

I can also have ideas which use other ideas. These ideas are called "Inventive" ideas. The object of inventive ideas are assembled by the use of other ideas. This is how I come to have ideas of hippogriffs and unicorns.