

Descartes' Two Arguments for the Distinctness of Mind and Body

(From the Meditation VI in his *Meditations on First Philosophy*)

I.

1. If one has a clear and distinct idea of a thing A and a clear and distinct idea of a thing B, and one can coherently conceive of A existing without B existing, and vice versa, then A and B are distinct.
 2. I have a clear and distinct idea of my mind as a thinking thing. (From Meditation II)
 3. I have a clear and distinct idea of a physical object (body) as a thing that is extended. (From Meditation II)
 4. I can coherently conceive of myself as a disembodied spirit--a mind without a body. (From Meditation I)
 5. I can coherently conceive of my body as a mindless machine.
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6. Therefore, my mind is distinct from my body.

II.

1. If a thing A has an essential property that a thing B essentially lacks, then A and B are distinct.
 2. My body--being a physical object--is by its very nature, divisible: I can conceive of its being divided into parts that are themselves physical objects.
 3. My mind is essentially indivisible: I cannot conceive of its being divided into parts that are themselves minds. (My various mental faculties such as my Will, and my Senses, my Understanding etc., are not true parts of my mind; for it is one and the same mind that exercises its will, experiences sensations, understands ideas, etc.)
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4. Therefore, my mind is distinct from my body, and is not a physical thing at all.