

First Meditation

The Dreaming Argument

1. I regularly have dreams which, while I am having them, seem to be veridical. [That is, I am compelled to affirm my sensory experiences in those dreams. If I were to deny those realistic dream experiences, while I am having them, I would be like a madman, denying that which appears self-evident.]
2. In this way, my experience in these realistic dreams is not unlike that of my waking sensory experience.
3. However, while those realistic dream experiences seem to be veridical, I am in fact asleep while I am having them. But my waking sensory experience not only seems to be veridical but is so.
4. Thus, if I were dreaming now, I would be compelled to affirm by sensory experience, but I would be wrong to do so. On the other hand, if I were awake, I would be right to affirm my sensory experience.
5. If I could find a criterion, or set of criteria, through which to distinguish waking from dreaming then I could deny the truth of my dream experiences while affirming that of my waking sense experiences.
6. I cannot find such a criterion, or set of criteria.
7. I cannot tell whether I am now waking or dreaming realistically.
8. Thus, I cannot tell whether my sensory experiences are veridical, or conveying of truth.

Argument from the Cause of Human Nature

1. I am created by something other than myself, either by God or a continuous chain of events.
2. If God created me, then as an all powerful being he could also have made it that what I seem to sense does not exist, and equally, that what I take to be self-evidently true is false.
3. In this case, my senses could be misleading me, and equally I could be going wrong all the time just when I think I am absolutely right.
4. In this case, then, I would *by nature* be unable to know when I have knowledge.
 5. If God intended things in this way, then he would be a deceiver.
 6. Being a deceiver seems contrary to God's goodness.
 7. However, it is clearly the case that I am wrong some of the time, so it does seem that God, in his goodness, can allow for me to make mistakes.
8. Thus, it does seem possible that God could have created me such that it is impossible for me to have knowledge, even of the most self-evident things.
9. If I were created by a continuous chain of events rather than by God, then whatever caused me is more imperfect than God.
10. An imperfect cause is more likely to produce an imperfect effect.
11. Deception and error are imperfections.
12. If I were created by a chain of events, it is even more likely that I am by nature incapable of having knowledge.
13. Thus, no matter what caused me, I have no grounds for taking any of beliefs as true.