

# Minds and Machines

spring 2003

## Dualism

**mr. snowman says:**



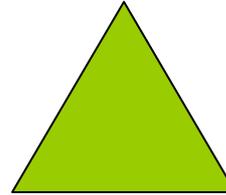
# Dualism

- *Meditations* (1642)  
“Wherein are demonstrated the existence of God and the Distinction of Soul from Body”
- *Principles of Philosophy* (1644)
- *Passions of the Soul* (1649)

René Descartes (1596-1650)

# from the philosophical toolkit:

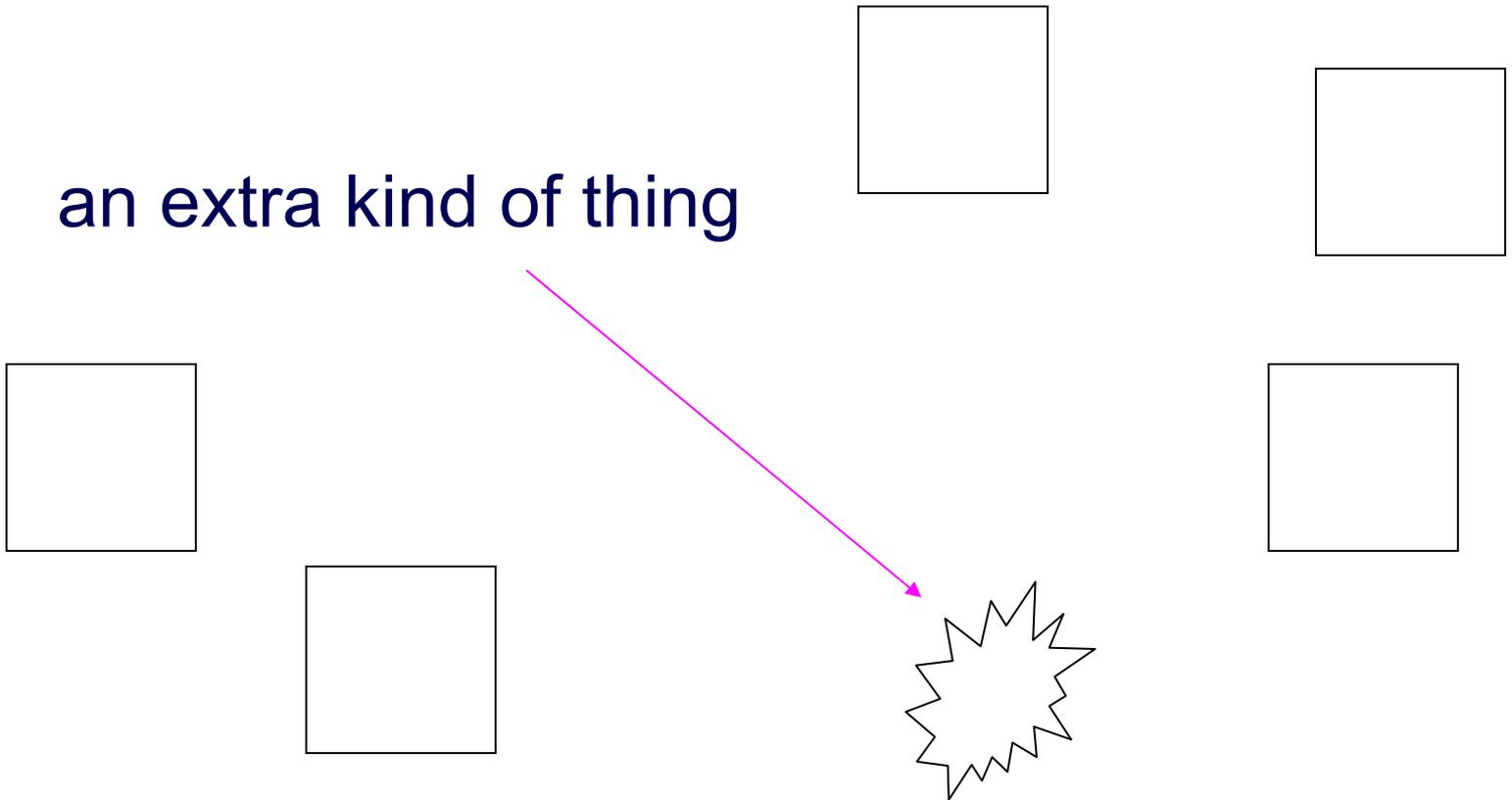
- properties and particulars



- see the handout on properties and particulars

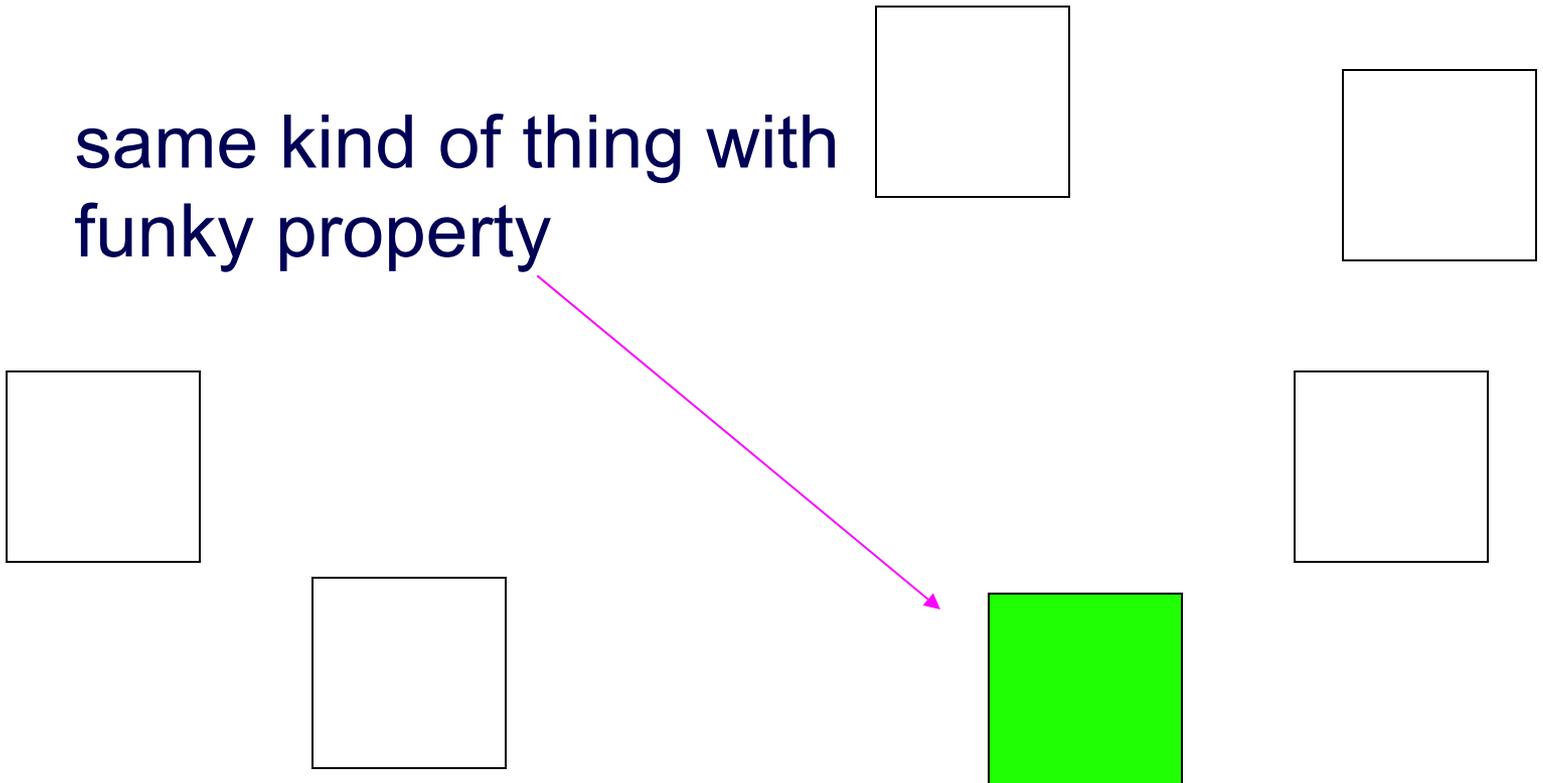
# substance dualism

an extra kind of thing



# property/attribute dualism

same kind of thing with  
funky property



## from the philosophical toolkit:

- propositions -- the things believed (desired, etc.) and asserted: that snow is white, that Cambridge is a city, that the earth is flat,...
- propositions can be true or false
- propositions are pieces of information (or misinformation)

# argument A

1. I cannot doubt that my mind exists.
2. I can doubt that my brain exists [or that anything physical exists, come to that].

Therefore:

3. My mind is not my brain.

(An argument like this is suggested in the passage on p. 11 that begins “I am not that structure of limbs...” and ends “for all that I am still something”. But the next few sentences seem to take it back.)

# argument B

1. I cannot doubt that the masked man is before me.
2. I can doubt that my father is before me.

Therefore:

3. The masked man is not my father.

The problem is that expressions like 'I cannot doubt that \_\_\_\_' create *intensional contexts*.

An intensional context is a sentence S containing a referring expression N such that replacing N with a co-referring expression M does not necessarily yield a sentence that has the same truth value as S. So even if 'My mind is my brain' is true, and 'I cannot doubt that my mind exists' is true, it does not follow that 'I cannot doubt that my brain exists' is true.

- Example 1: 'Lois believes Superman will save the world' is an intensional context, because replacing 'Superman' with 'the bespectacled Daily Planet reporter' takes a truth to a falsehood.

- NB: Do not confuse 'intensional'/'intensionality' with 'intentional'/'intentionality'. Verbs for “propositional attitudes”, like 'believes', 'hopes', and so on, create intensional contexts, and of course the propositional attitudes are representational mental states and so are intentional. But there are intensional contexts that have nothing to do with intentionality -- as in example 2.
- Example 2: 'It is necessary that nine is nine' is an intensional context, because replacing the first occurrence of 'nine' with 'the number of planets' takes a truth to a falsehood (the number of planets might have been eight).

# argument C

1. I cannot truly think: I am not thinking.

Therefore:

2. I cannot exist without thinking, i.e. the property of thinking is one of my *essential properties* (see the [handout](#) on properties and particulars).

3. The property of thinking is not an essential property of any *physical* thing.

Therefore:

4. I am not a physical thing (a brain, for example).

## from the philosophical toolkit:

- necessity and possibility
- see [handout](#)

# necessity and possibility

- nomological possibility/necessity vs. metaphysical possibility/necessity
- a proposition is necessary iff ('if and only if') it could not have been false
- a proposition is possible iff it could have been true

there might have been a talking donkey

the proposition that there  
is a talking donkey is  
possible

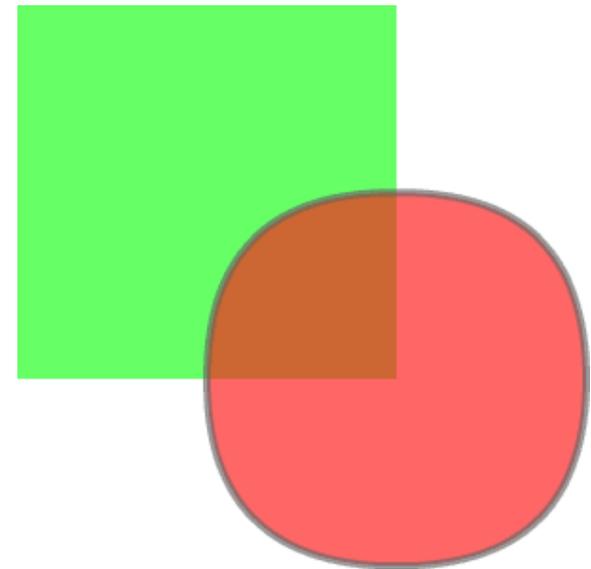
there might have been blue swans

the proposition that there  
are blue swans is  
possible

there could not be a square circle

the proposition that there  
is a square circle is not  
possible (impossible)

the proposition that there is  
*not* a square circle is *necessary*

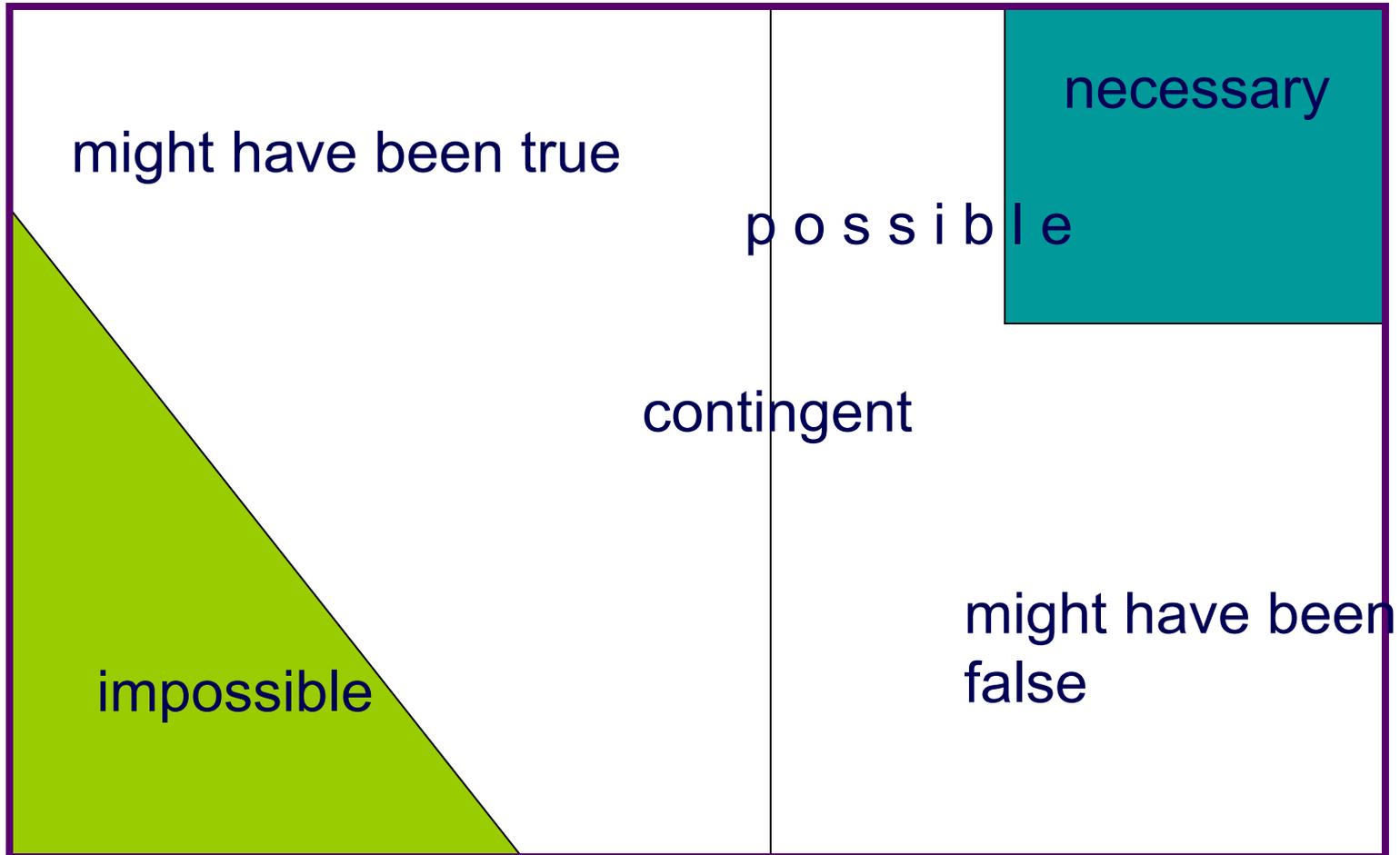


# (not implausible) examples of necessary truths

- mathematical truths: there is no highest prime, there are uncomputable functions,  $e$  is irrational,...
- logical truths: either it's snowing or it isn't, if Fred is rich and unhappy then he's unhappy,...
- “analytic” truths: bachelors are unmarried, vixens are foxes, if something is red it's colored,...

propositions

false : true



# argument D

1. If I can clearly and distinctly conceive a proposition **p** to be true, then **p** is possible. ("[E]verything which I clearly and distinctly understand is capable of being created by God so as to correspond exactly with my understanding of it" (p. 16).)
2. I can clearly and distinctly conceive that the proposition that my mind is not identical to my brain is true.

Therefore:

3. It is possible that my mind is not my brain (there is a "possible world" in which my mind is not my brain).

Therefore:

4. My mind is not my brain.

# Minds and Machines

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- hand in problem set 1
- Rylein class #7
- read Place
- read the suggested sections from Crane