

Metaphysics & Descartes' Substance Dualism

Lecture 17

Outline: Metaphysics & Substance Dualism

Part One: Shift from Epistemology to Metaphysics

- Recall: Epistemology Concerns the Theory of Knowledge
- Metaphysics Concerns Ultimate Existence
- Examples of Metaphysical Questions
- Descartes' Substance Dualism

Outline: Metaphysics & Substance Dualism

Part Two: Descartes' Arguments For Substance Dualism

- Argument 1: There Are External Things
- Objection: The Dream Sensations Objection
- Possible Counter Objection
- Argument 2: The External Things are Material Things
- Objection: Difficulty in Explaining Human Error
- Possible Counter Objection
- Major Objection: Mind-Body Interaction Problem

Part 1: Shift from Epistemology to Metaphysics

- Recall: Epistemology Concerns the Theory of Knowledge

Characteristic of Epistemological Questions: How do we know that P ?

-*Def.* Knowledge \leftrightarrow Belief & Truth & Justification

-Analysis of Truth: 1) Correspondence Account

2) Coherence Account

3) Pragmatic Account

- Metaphysics Concerns Ultimate Existence

Two Main Senses (or Meanings) of Existence:

a) Commonsensical Sense of Existence

-Everyday use of 'existence'

b) Ultimate Sense of Existence

-Metaphysician's use of 'existence'

- Examples of Some Metaphysical Questions

- Do colours exist?

- Does time exist?

- Do natural numbers exist?

Note: These questions are asked in the ultimate sense of the word 'existence' and not in the everyday sense of the word.

- The General Metaphysical Question

-Q. What exists in the world?

-A. Everything.

-Q. What are the basic constituents of everything?

-A. Descartes: Substance Dualism: Every thing (or entity) is either

a) Thinking Substance (Mind/Soul):

-Essence = {Thinking, Unextended, No Parts}

b) Material Substance (Bodies)

-Essence = {Extended, Unthinking}

Part 2: Descartes' Arguments For Substance Dualism

- Argument 1: Argument From Involuntary Ideas

P1. Ideas from sensory experience are either voluntary or involuntary.

P2. If sensory ideas are involuntary, then they arise from things external to minds.

P3. Sensory ideas are involuntary.

C. ∴ (Therefore), ideas from sensory experience arise from things external to minds.

Result: Things external to the thinking substance exist.

Note: We have yet to show that these things are

material things and not some other kind of entities.

- Objection: The Dream Sensations Objection

- Ideas from dreams arise from the thinking substance.

- Yet, it seems we do not have control over these ideas.

- Result: We seem to have ideas from within us that are

- involuntary. Yikes!

- Possible Counter:

-Relevant Disanalogy: Ideas from dreams can sometimes be voluntary while ideas from external things are always involuntary. (E.g. lucid dreams)

Result: Ideas from dreams are *really* (or essentially) in our control.

- Argument 2: Argument From A Non-Deceiving God

P1. Ideas from sensory experience are caused from either a) God, b) material substances, or c) some other substance.

P2. God is not a deceiver.

P3. Neither a) nor c) can be the case.

C. ∴ (Therefore), Ideas from Sensations are caused by material substances.

Result: The external things are material things.

- Objection: Humans Seem to have great Propensity to Error

-If God is not a deceiver, it seems implausible that God would propel us to belief in some falsities.

- Counter Objection: Error Can Always In Principle be Corrected

-God has given us sufficient power to fix our mistaken beliefs. So God *really* is not a deceiver.

- Major Objection:

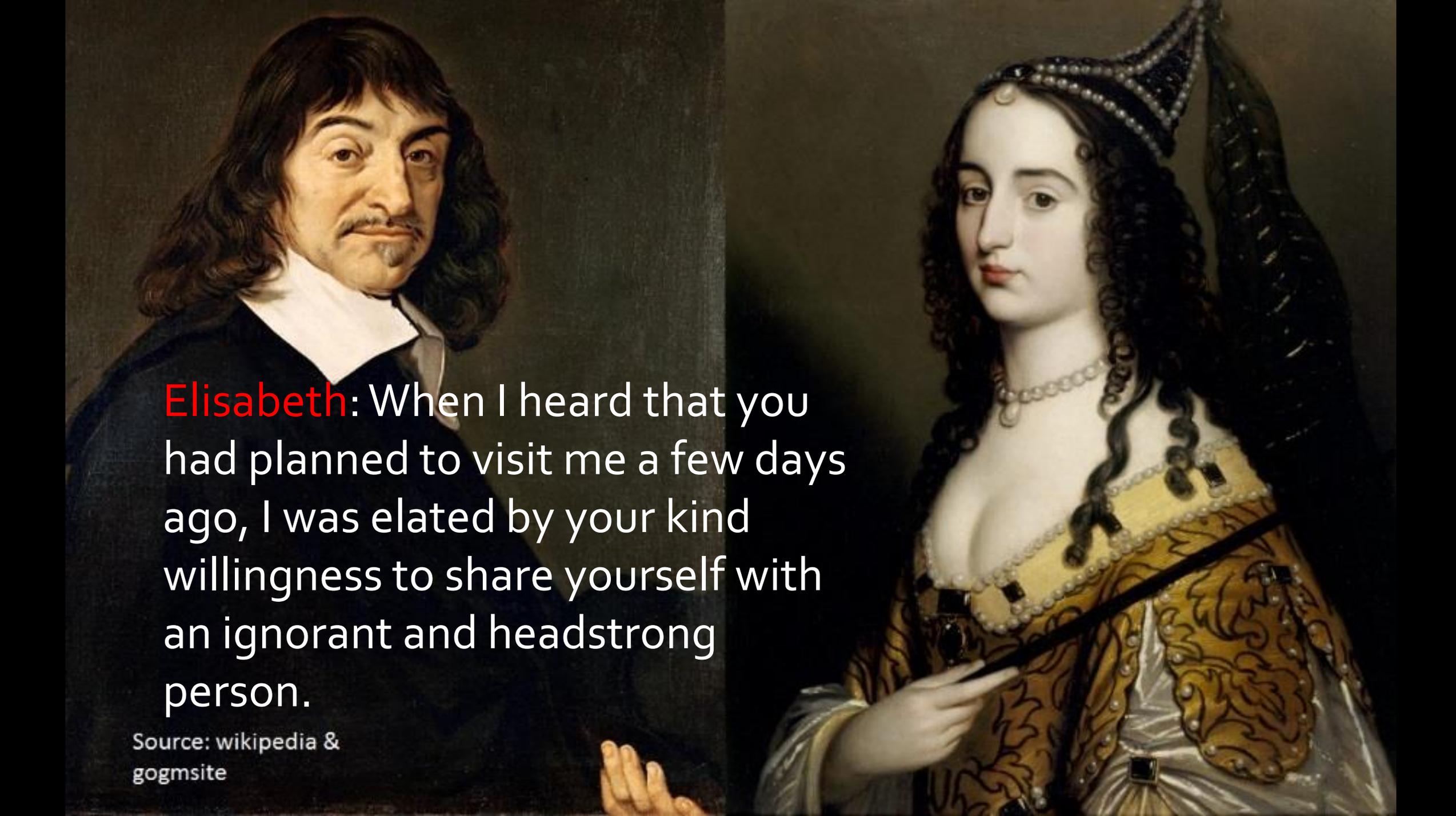
Mind-Body Interaction Problem

by Princess Elizabeth



Source: wikipedia &
gogmsite





Elisabeth: When I heard that you had planned to visit me a few days ago, I was elated by your kind willingness to share yourself with an ignorant and headstrong person.

Source: wikipedia &
gogmsite



Elisabeth: Your notion of the soul entirely excludes extension, and it appears to me that an immaterial thing can't possibly *touch* anything else.

Source: wikipedia &
gogmsite



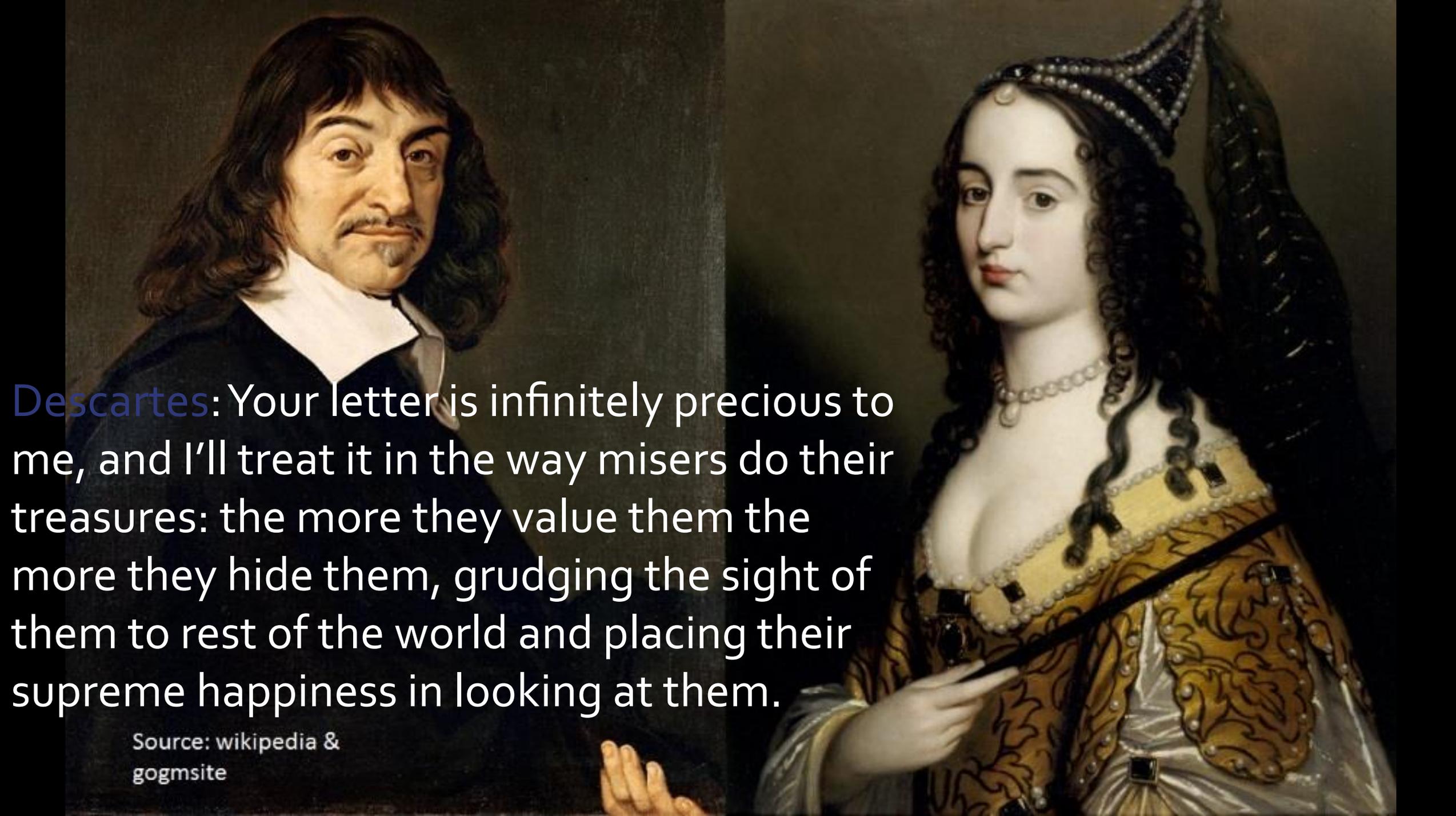
Elisabeth: I am freely exposing to you the weaknesses of my soul's speculations; but I know that you are the best physician for my soul.

Source: wikipedia &
gogmsite



Descartes: [He praises her and tries to sidestep her objection]

Source: wikipedia &
gogmsite



Descartes: Your letter is infinitely precious to me, and I'll treat it in the way misers do their treasures: the more they value them the more they hide them, grudging the sight of them to rest of the world and placing their supreme happiness in looking at them.

Source: wikipedia &
gogmsite

The End