

A momentous step is taken: He *solves* (or at least he thinks he solves) the problem of the criterion! **Here are the steps.**

1. He is certain that he exists as a **thinking thing**.
2. He asks himself, What is it about this proposition that accounts for my certainty that it is true?
3. He answers, The fact that I grasp it so clearly and distinctly that I perceive it could not possibly be false.
4. He concludes, Let this then be a general principle (a *criterion*): Whatever I grasp with *like clarity and distinctness* must also be true.

He then reviews (yet again) the things he had at one time thought were true and reminds himself that no matter how sure he feels about them, he can't be absolutely certain.

- Q17. Why does he feel a need to inquire about the existence and nature of God?

Descartes now tries to make clear a crucial distinction between **ideas** on the one hand and **volitions, emotions, and judgments** on the other (pp. 330–331). This distinction is embedded in an inventory of the varied contents of the mind (which is all that we can so far be certain of). You will find a schematic representation of that inventory below.

- Q18. What is the key difference between ideas and judgments?
- Q19. What is the key difference between judgments on the one hand, and volitions and emotions on the other?

- Q20. What question arises with respect to the ideas that seem to be acquired from outside myself?
- Q21. What (provisional) examples does Descartes give of each class of ideas?

We need to comment on the notion of **innate ideas**. In calling them "innate," Descartes does not mean to imply that they are to be found in babies and mentally defective adults, as some of his critics suppose. He merely means that **there are some ideas we would have even if nothing existed but ourselves**. These ideas do not require external causes for their existence in us; every developed rational mind will possess them from its own resources. Thus, the idea of a *thing* can originate with the *cogito*, which gives me the certainty that I exist as a thing that thinks—even if nothing else exists. Perhaps my idea of an antelope is caused in me by seeing antelopes in a zoo (though this remains to be proved). But we would have the ideas of thing, thought, and truth in any case.

- Q22. Why do you think Descartes believes that the ideas of truth and thought are innate?
- Q23. Why is he inclined to believe that some ideas do originate from objects outside himself? He gives two reasons (p. 330).
- Q24. Are these two reasons conclusive?
- Q25. What is the difference between being taught "by nature" and being taught "by the light of nature"? (See p. 331.) What is the **light of nature**?

We come now to a point of terminology. Descartes distinguishes **subjective reality** on the one hand from **formal and eminent reality** on the

