

Descartes methods of doubt assignment

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Descartes methods of doubt BY alexi01080 In this paper, I will be examining Ren?? Descartes' reasons for doubting all of his beliefs. I will begin with Descartes' first meditation, showing how he argues his reasons of doubt. Followed with Descartes' second meditation, presenting the one piece of knowledge that Descartes finds irrefutable and explaining why he believes it to be so. Descartes formulates three different skepticisms while reflecting on a number of falsehoods he was led to believe throughout his life.

Upon reflection, Descartes decides that he must establish a new foundation of beliefs, he declares, " I must once for all seriously undertake to rid myself of all the opinions which I formally accepted" (Descartes, p. 17). Descartes decides that if there is any reason to doubt one of his present beliefs, then the belief as a whole must be rejected. Descartes starts with his beliefs, which he has come to through his own senses.

It is hard to doubt one's own senses but Descartes acknowledges that even the most trusted senses have the ability to be deceitful. For example, when I look up at the sun it appears to be relatively small, but in reality the sun is much larger than I perceive it to be. Therefore, my sense of sight is not completely accurate, which then causes me to doubt my sense of sight. Unless the object in view is close at hand, then how could I possibly doubt that the object exists? Descartes finds reason for doubt even with objects up close.

To argue this claim he formulates his dream hypothesis to prove that our senses can still be misleading even in cases like this, he states " I have in sleep deceived by similar illusions, and in dwelling carefully on this reflection I

see so manifestly that there are no certain indications by which we may clearly distinguish wakefulness from sleep” (Descartes, p. 18). When Descartes’ senses fail in separating the two states, his trust in his senses are doubted because his senses cannot differentiate dreams from reality.

It is this doubt that leads Descartes to the realization that beliefs derived from senses cannot be fully trusted, and in fact roves that there may not be any physical matter as all. Descartes dives even deeper into the role of senses in dreams, as well as art; stating “ Things which are represented to us in sleep are like painted representations which can only have been formed as the counterpart of something real and true” (Descartes, p. 18).

This shows that what we perceive to be real is the driving force behind our imagination. Furthermore, our dreams spawn from our imaginations’, which means that our dreams consist of only thing that we perceive to be real. Now looking back to what I previously stated, if our senses cannot be trusted to differentiate dreams from reality then how can I be sure that I’m not asleep at this very moment and that I am only dreaming of typing on a laptop.

Aside from Descartes disbelief in his own senses, Descartes doubts the validity in sciences. Descartes Justifies this uncertainty with his evil genius hypothesis; he says, “ Some evil genius not less powerful than deceitful, has employed his whole energies in deceiving me” (Descartes, p. 19). This quote uggests, it is possible that our foundations of math and science are false, and that all beliefs may be deceptions. This skeptical hypothesis is arguably the most powerful of all skeptical hypothesizes.

With this premise, doubt can be found in any belief that can be conceived and Descartes concludes that nothing has ever existed. After Descartes attempts to rid himself of all belief that he considers to be false he is left with too many doubts to forget, Descartes expresses his emotions by saying, “ I had all of the sudden fallen into very deep water, I am so disconnected that I can either make certain of setting my feet on the bottom, nor can I swim and so support myself on the surface. (Descartes, p. 133). We can see the mixed emotions Descartes experiences with this statement. I believe that this disconcert stems from the fact that Descartes now doubts everything he knew and once believed to have validity. I also believe that it is this distress that led him to unearth the one piece of knowledge that he is unable to deny. After much thought, Descartes realizes that the only belief he cannot deny is that he himself exists.

Descartes then states, “ But there is some deceiver or other, very powerful and very cunning, who ever employs his ingenuity in deceiving me. Then without doubt I exist also if he deceives me” (Descartes, p. 134). This quote displays to me that Descartes knows that if he is able to be deceived, by whom ever it may be, then in fact he must exist because if he did not exist then he would not be able to be deceived. Therefore, Descartes finally finds validity in a belief, which he vitally needs at this time of conflicting thought upon all of his former beliefs.

In conclusion, Descartes' doubt in all of his beliefs is formed through his skeptical hypotheses, beginning with senses are deceiving at a distance, which doubts sizes and shapes at a distance when perceived, but not up close. Following with his dream hypothesis, which can doubt things up close

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facilitated by the imagination, but cannot doubt truths of mathematics and sciences. Closing with the evil genius hypothesis, which is able to doubt mathematical facts such as a square having four sides, but this final hypothesis brings the one undisputable belief of existence.