

Rene descartes

Philosophy



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Rene Descartes Rene Descartes was one of the most prominent minds of the early modern age who has laid foundations of Cartesian philosophy and rationalism. Being a graduate of the Jesuit college; he got into the Bohemian environment of Paris, but soon distanced himself from worldly amusements and cloistered himself from the society in the Parisian faubourg. As the society had moved from late Middle Ages to the new historical period marked by all the more dynamic social and intellectual life which made medieval scholastics powerless, the educational background acquired in Jesuit college encouraged Descartes to meditations over basic worldview conceptions. France was becoming one of the main players in the European arena, a unitary state with strong monarchical power. Absolutism didn't only provide favorable conditions for the domestic market, but also broadened the gap between social strata. Whereas Catholicism strengthened its position in French spiritual and cultural life, scientific progress driven by the development of productive capacities was the key factor that sparked Descarte's worldview formation.

In his pursuit of new philosophical methods Descartes was initially motivated by the need to find a way of defining certain knowledge and the way of acquiring it for he thought knowledge acquired with help of sense perception to be inaccurate. Moreover, he was fond of science which wasn't well organized system in that period, thus he wanted to find a solution that would systematize scientific knowledge. In fact, Descartes laid the basics of science in its modern meaning and inquiry, made an immense contribution to development of algebra, geometry, philosophy, physics and reflexology.

Considering philosophy to be the source of all natural sciences' development, Descartes tried to find a firm set of rules that would help one

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to acquire certain knowledge. The basic work dealing with the foundations of Cartesian methodology is Discourse on Method focusing on the application of the main Descartes' method, hyperbolical doubt or methodological skepticism. At the same time, the philosopher preferred to neglect empirical method in constructing knowledge, and thus used a method of deduction and argumentation. Thinking was considered by him to be the source of cognition, not senses. Along with that, Descartes philosophical doctrine was dualistic as he admitted existence of two entities that, mind and body, that are in the relations of mutual dependence and interconnection.

To illustrate the unreliability and limitation of sense perception, Descartes constructed a set of arguments. Dream argument is the one proving that our sense perceptions are often deceitful that is demonstrated by dreaming.

Descartes stated that things one perceives while dreaming seem real, but it isn't so in reality. Deceiving God and Evil Demon are the arguments suggesting that a human might be controlled by an almighty divine being intended to deceive him/her. In this case one might have no body at all with all he/she knows (perceives) being imposed by this God or Demon

(SparkNotes). Thus, this means that conclusions made based on information obtained empirically cannot be always relied upon. In his arguments concerning mind and body, Descartes sought to prove that these are different things stating that 1) existence of mind is undoubtable while existence of body is uncertain; 2) the body is extended and mind is not.

Therefore, Descartes promoted the idea of radical split between mind and body (Important Arguments from Descartes' 'Meditations'). However, such ideas come across certain criticism as controversial in a way: if mind and body are two radically different entities, it is unclear how they can interact if

they can at all, for example, how unextended mind interacts with extended body. Moreover, critics state that body and mind interact in an intermutual way with mind controlling and directing the body in its actions. At the same time, body can also affect mind: for example, under the effect of drugs our body can transmit the effect and change our mind.

Works Cited:

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