

# Shorton descartes first meditation assignment

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On the first meditation of Descartes' Meditations on First Philosophy, the author seemed initially very contradictory and confusing. First he shows himself skeptical about everything known by him before which were brought to him from or through deceptive senses. Then, he goes on saying " that are many other matters concerning which one simply cannot doubt, even though they are derived from the very same senses. " That which primarily I thought conflicting, I now, after further reading, think is just an attempt of Descartes in finding a clarification for the skepticism as he does throughout the whole first meditation.

Like in the example just showed before, Descartes seems to always use reasoning in justifying his doubts and I think this gives more credibility to what he is saying. Another example of this being applied is when he explains why at first he cannot deny his body as his without appearing mad, and mad he is not because otherwise he wouldn't have the rationality that triggers his doubt. (Had Descartes not used this rationalization I would really think he was crazy. ) The idea I found most interesting in the first meditation was the argument about dreams Descartes uses to explain why senses are not entirely reliable.

He mentions, and I agree, that things we do when we are awake, like extend our hand consciously and deliberated " would not be so distinct for someone who is asleep. " Is not unusual for me to wake up sweating and screaming because of a bad dream that feels so real. I then imagine how would I know I'm having a dream if it feels so real and palpable? In Descartes words: " I see so plainly that there are no definitive signs by which to distinguish being awake from being asleep. " At first reading the dream argument I started to

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suspect the dream Descartes was talking about was life, and there's no real physical world.

Reading a little further and carefully, he starts making an analogy with painting and how painters of the most bizarre creature use in them parts of already known animals, to explain that all dreaming elements are recollected from awaken experiences: " It surely must be admitted that the things seen during slumber are, as it were, like painted images, which could only have been produced in the likeness of true things... " Only then, it became clear to me that the whole dream argument was certainly about our universal concept of dreaming; the sequence of images that appear involuntary to the mind of a sleeping person.

And for sure that are moments when we are awake but our senses are so deceiving it is hard to recognizing when it is a dream. I found Descartes approach in the first meditation quite interesting and smart. As introduction of the other meditations he looks for explanation for skepticism, giving realistic and clear examples. I don't doubt everything I know to be true, but have not enough ways to prove they are not false, which agrees to what I thought was the main point of the first meditation. Descartes methods made even me, (who was skeptical myself about this reading) pay attention to what he was saying and make some " sense" out of it.