

The importance of god in descartes' philosophy essay sample



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God, in all of his/her perfection, is very important in Descartes' philosophy. Reality and deception are big parts of Descartes philosophy, and to verify what reality is, God needs to be considered. God needs to be taken out of a religious context and be proven to exist in a way that we cannot be deceived into only thinking he's real. Religion had to be discarded completely during this proof so that Descartes can undoubtedly state that God does exist and that religious teaching had no influence in the proof. Descartes uses this proof to establish the legitimacy and validity of his future principles. Once Descartes establishes the existence of God, he leads on to 'rank' us within the hierarchy of living and non-living creatures. Descartes 'ranked' us between God, being the greatest, and nothing, being the least.

When Descartes philosophy deals with reality and what is deception, God enters the picture. God, being an all powerful being is considered when the idea of something perfect is thought of. Since every idea must have some relevance to reality, the thought of perfection must have come from somewhere (Ex nihilo nihil fit; nothing comes from nothing). The idea of perfection must have been placed in our minds by a perfect being. Therefore God exists. The proof of God's existence is explained in different terms because the translation cannot always be correct. The main components of the proof are always present.

In Descartes meditation III, Descartes uses the idea of perfection to prove that God exists. This is one interpretation of Descartes proof of the existence of God.

1) I think, therefore I am.

2) I cannot be mistaken about the ideas that I have.

3) There can never be more objective reality in the effect (i. e., the idea) than there is formal reality in the cause (i. e., object of the idea).

4) I have an idea of perfection or infinite substance.

5) My idea of perfection is the most objectively real idea that I have.

6) The only possible formal cause of that idea is infinite substance. [...]

Premises 1 and 2 are incorrigible. That is, they cannot be doubted. Premise number 3 rests upon the principle of sufficient reason. [...] Premise number 4 is Descartes' fourth innate idea. The idea is already there, for it is innate. [...]

Premise number 5 is not quite as easy. [...] my idea of an infinite substance has more objective reality than my idea of a finite substance, and these are the only possible things that can cause an idea to emerge in my mind.[...]

Premise 6 says that this idea could only have come from God. Since I cannot derive the more perfect from the less perfect, then the idea had to have come from God because everything else in the world is imperfect.

[...]Therefore, God exists. (<http://csunx4.bsc.edu/bmyers/3MEDPRF.htm>)

Descartes uses this proof to finalize the existence of God.

From Descartes' Meditation III, Descartes concludes that God exists.

Descartes knows that he has an idea of perfection. Thoughts cannot be deceived and therefore, according to Ex nihilo nihil fit, he attempts to determine the cause of his idea of perfection. He does this by relating the idea of perfection to what could be the cause of that idea.

There only remains, therefore, the idea of God, in which I must consider whether there is anything that cannot be supposed to originate with myself. By the name God, I understand a substance infinite, [eternal, immutable], independent, all-knowing, all-powerful, and by which I myself, and every other thing that exists, if any such there be, were created. But these properties are so great and excellent, that the more attentively I consider them the less I feel persuaded that the idea I have of them owes its origin to myself alone. And thus it is absolutely necessary to conclude, from all that I have before said, that God exists.

The perfection of God allows Descartes to establish the validity of his principle that what we perceive clearly and distinctively as being true. Descartes uses God to ensure that the thought of a malicious demon is false. Using the information that there is a perfect being out there, we can suggest that this perfect being will not allow a malicious demon to deceive his creations.

When speaking of confusion and error, we must consider that God, as a perfect being, wouldn't allow a malicious demon or anything to deceive us. God, being a perfect being, means there must be some force out there which has the complete opposite qualities of perfection. The opposite of perfect is nothing, and somewhere between nothing and God is where us humans are placed. Descartes clearly states this in his Meditations IV

And there would remain no doubt on this head, did it not seem to follow from this, that I can never therefore be deceived; for if all I possess be from God, and if he planted in me no faculty that is deceitful, it seems to follow that I

can never fall into error. Accordingly, it is true that when I think only of God (when I look upon myself as coming from God, Fr.), and turn wholly to him, I discover [in myself] no cause of error or falsity: but immediately thereafter, recurring to myself, experience assures me that I am nevertheless subject to innumerable errors. When I come to inquire into the cause of these, I observe that there is not only present to my consciousness a real and positive idea of God, or of a being supremely perfect, but also, so to speak, a certain negative idea of nothing, in other words, of that which is at an infinite distance from every sort of perfection, and that I am, as it were, a mean between God and nothing, or placed in such a way between absolute existence and non-existence, that there is in truth nothing in me to lead me into error, in so far as an absolute being is my creator; but that, on the other hand, as I thus likewise participate in some degree of nothing or of nonbeing, in other words, as I am not myself the supreme Being, and as I am wanting in many perfections, it is not surprising I should fall into error.

And I hence discern that error, so far as error is not something real, which depends for its existence on God, but is simply defect; and therefore that, in order to fall into it, it is not necessary God should have given me a faculty expressly for this end, but that my being deceived arises from the circumstance that the power which God has given me of discerning truth from error is not infinite. (<http://www.wright.edu/cola/descartes/meditation4.html>, #4)

God is seen as being infinitely perfect and not a deceiver according to Descartes' philosophy. Descartes postulated that God could not have allowed deception into the minds of his creation. Therefore man's mind should be <https://assignbuster.com/the-importance-of-god-in-descartes-philosophy-essay-sample/>

trustworthy if we look at the clear and distinct and not the obscure and confused.

In the next place, I am conscious that I possess a certain faculty of judging [or discerning truth from error], which I doubtless received from God, along with whatever else is mine; and since it is impossible that he should will to deceive me, it is likewise certain that he has not given me a faculty that will ever lead me into error, provided I use it aright. (<http://www.wright.edu/cola/descartes/meditation4.html>, #3)

Descartes needed God initially to explain where the idea of perfection had come from, thus proving God's existence. After proving God's existence he uses the perfection of God to assume that since we are creations of something perfect, the idea of deception would be impossible. In conclusion, God is a very important aspect in Descartes' philosophy.

Bibliography

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