

Descartes on colors assignment

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In this paper, I will dissect Descartes current and former beliefs about his-self and the world. I will then argue his belief that he is merely “ a thing that thinks” and why that is a flawed belief. Descartes once thought of himself as a man. He was a body that could taste, smell, see, move, and most of all; perceive. To achieve his goal of obtaining true knowledge, however, Descartes decided to rid his mind of all doubt and trust only reason. Descartes purports that most of his knowledge was obtained from his senses, which can be deceiving.

Descartes believes that although he can feel himself stretching and moving around, he feels the same sensations in his dreams. Descartes states, “ I see plainly that there are never any sure signs by means of which being awake can be distinguished from sleep. ” (Page 77) From this he deduces that everything achieved by the senses is doubtful (astronomy, medicine, physics), with exception of mathematics “ for whether I am awake or asleep, two and three added together are five”(AT page 78). He retains his belief in an all-perfect and mighty god, as he refuses to believe that he came to his state of being through a random chain of events.

Descartes reasons that there must be an evil demon that deceives us (even in mathematics), because god would not create beings with such imperfections. (AT79-80) From these beliefs, Descartes concludes that the only thing he can prove that actually exists is the concept of By thinking and by being deceived by an evil demon, Descartes rationalizes that he must, therefore exist. This “ I” however is not his body, for the body and its senses could be an illusion or dream. This “ I” Descartes argues, is the soul. He

attributes nutrition, motion, sense, and thinking to the soul. However, this belief is in my opinion false.

Descartes is convinced that he is a thinking thing with a body and not a body with a thinking thing. But from where did he reason that he was a soul? In the first meditation Descartes admits that the things in his dreams are similar to those when he is awake. He states " For even when painters try to create sirens and satyrs with the most extraordinary bodies, they cannot give them natures which are new in all respects... or perhaps they manage to think up something so new that nothing remotely similar has ever been seen before- something which is therefore completely fictitious and unreal" (AT 77).

With his own reasoning, he has questioned the soul. He has formed the concept of the soul on things that are not known to him (AT 82). The soul was not something Descartes had seen (sense) or reasoned logically from, like in mathematics, which indicates that the concept of the soul came from Descartes' imagination. Imagination is something that causes doubt; it is the same as being deceived by dreams. Descartes has taken things he does not know nor understand and created the concept of the soul to fit the needs of his argument.

He admits that " It would indeed be the case of fictitious invention if I used my imagination to establish that I was something or other; for imagining is simply contemplating the shape or image of a corporal thing. "(AT 82).

Descartes does not know what he is. His logic allows him to reason that he is not a body, due to the senses, but his logic also prevents him from concluding to be a soul or simply " a thing that thinks" The imagination, using

Descartes logic, cannot be used as a tool for reason. Descartes may be able to conclude that he is not a body, but he cannot conclude that he is simply “a thing that thinks”.