

Descartes' sensory mistake argument and evil demon argument



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The famous philosopher, Rene Descartes (1596-1650), has proposed two important arguments in the field of philosophy and logic, particularly the (1) argument of mistaken sensorium, and (2) the evil demon argument. Rene Descartes is undoubtedly one of the great contributors in the field of skeptical philosophy wherein he questions the reality of experience and the actual occurrence of the event by arguing against body's perceptions through sensations. The famous argument of sensory mistake, also considered as the Dreaming Doubt, relates to the skeptic approach towards the actual existence of the external world.

According to the statements of Pettigrew, Thomas and Whittington (2002), Descartes has argued that the foundation of the external world only relies on how the people perceives it; hence, the truth and the actual existence of external world might only be existing in a dream made by the sensations and logical imaginations of the mind. The idea of Descartes exclaims the thin line separating imagination or minds' thoughts from the idea of reality and actual existence, thus forming a skeptical-derived philosophical argument.

Meanwhile, due to the skeptical ideologies of Descartes in sensations versus the truth in reality, Descartes has created the thoughts of an Evil Demon that might be manipulating the minds of men in order to create such illusionary sensorium. Descartes has utilized the figure of an evil demon or (in some text) evil genius in order to create a figurative comparison between the skeptical nature of mind, and the cunning and powerful manipulation of the evil being. Following the discussion, the study emphasized on the argument and relationship of these two propositions. Discussion Sensory Mistake

Argument

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In the field of science, sensory perception provides the actual awareness or understanding on what is actually occurring both internal and external to the body. However, in the case of Descartes skepticism, he considers sensorium as a tool instinctively embedded to human minds that possesses the capacity to create illusions, which resemble the existing reality. According to Pettigrew, Thomas and Whittington (2002), human cognition consists of two different stages: (1) the gathering of sensations and (2) the drawing of inferences (thinking) on the basis of those sensations (p. 424).

For Descartes, sensory is not a reliable source in determining the actual reality since it is only a mere dictation of what the body perceives and of mind. As supported by the statements of Reed (1996), Descartes has derived his proposition from the algebraic equations and applied it the brain-sensory interactions formulating that the brain absorbs every sensory input that are derived from sensory unknowns. With perception and its frequent interaction to the external world, mind has already established the idea of relying on perceptions based from sensations.

Descartes proposes that sensory is not a dependable source of truth since this is only obtained from various bodily mechanisms that can still deceive human mind from the truth. There is still a possibility that one is dreaming or just being played by the mind itself; hence, creating an artificial perception. Pettigrew, Thomas and Whittington (2002) have mentioned that Descartes considered the value of relying on reason than on sensations in obtaining and determining true knowledge. In order for the true knowledge to be obtained, sensory experience needs to be purified through critical

scrutinization of reason. Evil Demon Argument

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Meanwhile, in the Evil Demon Argument, Descartes has proposed the idea of an evil manipulator in the figure of a demon that deceives the mind from the true reality or true happening. According to Morton (1996), the demon has control of the mind's memory, sensory perceptions and faculty of reasoning; hence, everything that the mind sees, remembers, or deduces is simply an illusion the demon creates (p. 66). In the skepticisms of Descartes towards the relationship of sensation and the external world, he has arrived to the conclusion that an evil demon is the cause of the false perceptions and thoughts sensed the physical sensorium.

According to Hausman and Hausman (1996), Descartes has utilized the figure of an evil demon to show the figurative character of infinite cunningness and power that create the illusion or deceptions of perceived reality. The role of the demon is to create an illusion of material world in order to deceive the human mind. In the idea of the existence of an evil demon, Descartes has arrived in the logical argument of correlation between thinking (reason) and physical existence.

In his famous argument, "I think, therefore I am", Descartes has introduced the idea of self-existence as the solely non-doubtable truth. Despite of the skeptical existence of material external world and the deception of the evil demon, self-existence is the sole truth founded at the beginning of knowledge of oneself. Furthermore, Descartes has introduced his next statement, "I exist as a thinking thing", in order to give more emphasis to the proposed correlation of thinking and existence.

According to Morton (1996), the inference from his own existence to any further knowledge must pass the evil demon test (p. 67). Descartes believes that knowledge is the essence of existence and as long as thinking is present, man is granted to favor of living. The Conflicts of the Argument From the two proposed theories, Descartes is obviously skeptical in the existence of the outside world and even regarded these as an illusion created by falsely perceived sensations dictated by a deceiving force intrinsic to human minds, the evil demon.

However, to counter the arguments, if Descartes consider thinking as the sole basis of existence, the probable conflict lies now to the basis of this thinking. Human mind still base the conditions of thinking both external happenings of the environment and cannot only be on self-alone. Evidently, he has identified the ideologies of being cunning and deceptive of the demon; however, the very idea of this figure and its characteristics actually derive from the concept of materialistic dictations sensed from actual ideologies of the outside realm.

Hence, the idea of considering sensation as false foundation of truth also negates the idea of evil demon as well as thinking since these two terms are founded in the ability of human mind to perceived both internal and external realms of their being. Conclusion In the correlations of the two arguments of Descartes, Sensory Mistake and Evil Demon, the most commonly cited concept is the skeptical approach towards the idea of prevailing material existence wherein he mention unreliability of sensory and perception in determining the actual truth of the external world.

Furthermore, the presence of a cunning and deceptive evil demon enables the illusion of unknown sensations perceived by the mind in order to induce a dictation of what mind considers as the material world. Meanwhile, thinking and rationalization are the sole components that can free the mind from the bondage of these deceptions; hence, he considered self as the solely genuine existence in the basis of its thinking capacity. He further correlates this idea to the essence of living wherein he thought that thinking fuels that realities of living, and in its absence, also ends the physical existence.