

Descartes, "On the nature of the mind"

Sixth Meditation: The existence of external things, and the real distinction between mind and body

- In the second meditation Descartes had put everything into doubt which made the existence of external things questionable.
- His goal on the sixth meditation is to prove the existence of external things and give the real distinction between mind and body.

AB1 There is no doubt that God is capable of creating everything that I am capable of perceiving and seeing.

AB2 I am able to perceive the external world

ABC So the material world is capable of existing.

- Descartes also uses the faculty of imagination which he uses while dealing with material things to prove that the external world exists.
- The difference between imagination and understanding as shown by the example of the triangle, and a chiliagon and myriagon.

DB1 I can understand that a triangle is a figure bounded by 3 sides at the same time I also envisage the three sides with mind's eye those lines, if they were present; and this is what is called "imagining"

DB2 On the other sides when I want to think of a chiliagon, I certainly understand that it is a figure with 1000 sides, but I cannot imagine those 1000 sides as they were present.

DB3 The power of imagination is essentially not part of me because if I lack it I still understand myself the same.

DBC So power of imagination depends on something distinct from me.

DBC Since there is no other equally suitable way of explain imagination that comes from the mind, I can make a probable conjecture that the body exists.(this is only a probability)

EB1 My sensory perceptions can receive and recognize ideas of sensory objects.

EB2 These ideas are certainly produced by something outside me because they are brought without my cooperation and sometimes against my will.

EB3 These ideas can certainly come from a body or it is God.

EBC God is not a deceiver so he makes me think that these things come from a corporeal thing so corporeal things exist.

- The ideas that I perceive through senses are more lively and vivid than the ones that come through my imagination so they could not have come from within me, so the other alternative is that it came from external objects

Descartes believes that the world might not all exist in a way we perceive it with our my sensory grasp but is certain that it exists.

Distinction of mind and body

FB1 I have a clear and distinct understanding of my mind, independent of my body.

FB2 I have a clear distinct understanding of my body, independent of my mind.

FB3 Whatever I can clearly and distinct conceive of as separate, can be separated by God, and so are really distinct.

FBC So, my mind is distinct from my body.

- Minds are conscious thinking things whilst bodies are mere machines
 - I am not present in my body as a sailor is present in a ship, but I am very closely joined, as it were, intermingled with it, so that I and the body form a unit.
 - “If this were so, I, who am nothing but a thinking thing, would not feel pain when the body was hurt, but would perceive the damage purely by intellect, just as a sailor perceives by sight if anything in his ship is broken”
 - The union between the body and the mind hinders the mind from understanding stuff. (body needs food instead of hunger)
 - “For these sensations of hunger, thirst, pain and so on are nothing but confused modes of thinking which arise from the union and, as it were, intermingling of the mind with the body.”
 - The proper purpose of the sensory perception given to me by nature is to inform the mind what is beneficial or harmful for the composition of which the mind is part of
 - But I misuse these senses by treating them as means by which I judge things outside me but in this regard they provide little information.
 - Man is not omniscient (infinitely wise) that is why sometimes he has errors.
- GB1** Whatever two things that have different properties are different objects
- GB2** The mind is indivisible
- GB3** The body is divisible
- GB4** So, the mind is not the body
- To support that the mind is indivisible Descartes write, “as for the faculties of willing, of understanding, of sensory perception and so on, these cannot be termed part of the mind since it is the same mind that wills, and understands and has sensory perceptions.”