

Stimulus:

A door swishes opens up and the alien leader walks in, laughing maniacally.

PRINCE NEBULON: Ho ho ho, game, set and match! You were in a simulation of a simulation inside a giant simulation! We never had the recipe for concentrated dark matter! BUT NOW WE DO! NOW WE DO!

Description: The extract is taken from the script of an episode of the television series, Rick and Morty. In this episode, the main characters are stuck in a simulation run by aliens who made the most advanced simulation technology. The aliens' aim was to deceive the scientist to receive the recipe for concentrated dark matter. In this part of the episode, the main characters believed they escaped the simulation chamber but the alien leader reveals that they were still in a simulation.

In the television episode, the characters who were stuck in the simulation did not realise that they were still in the simulation, which indicates that their senses were manipulated or unreliable. This is the main premise or assumption of Cartesian, or hyperbolic, doubt, which deems any sensory information as unreliable. In addition, the manipulation was done by a group of aliens that can be considered omnipotent in the simulation and intends to deceive the main characters. Hence, this situation is analogous to René Descartes' 'Evil Genius' thought experiment that assumes Cartesian doubt and has a being that intends to deceive, which supports the 'cogito ergo sum' argument. One of the resulting arguments that stems from the certainty of the existence of the mind is the substance dualism argument, which raises the question: 'To what extent does the 'cogito ergo sum' conclusion support the argument for substance dualism?' Descartes' 'cogito ergo sum' argument will be first presented with respect to substance dualism. A criticism of the method, presented by Hume, will be introduced, which aims to show how the method is not valid. Further, another segment of Descartes' argument will be discussed which regards the validity of global skepticism. This essay will also provide an argument by G.E. Moore for the proof of external objects, which will be used to demonstrate that the argument for substance dualism does not hold. Ultimately, this essay aims to show that the 'cogito ergo sum' argument does not provide a solid basis for substance dualism.

In Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*, he is convincing the reader that the mind and body are two distinct entities. He uses his 'method of doubt' to prove this. He asks himself what can be known for certain, ignoring anything that could have the smallest amount of doubt. Through personal experience, human senses could be deceived and inaccurate. For example, optical illusions can make us see something that is incorrect like the colour of something seems different from the colour of another thing even though they are the same colour. We can even be deceived in the general sense. The thought experiment Descartes provided in *Meditations* involved an evil genius. It is able to control all of our senses and his main goal is to deceive us. If this is the case, what could be absolutely certain? He considers himself as having 'no hands, no eyes, no flesh, no blood, nor any senses' due to the fact that his senses cannot be trusted. This scenario matches perfectly with the stimulus with the aliens being the evil genius. There must be a mind to be deceived so the existence of the mind is something that is absolutely certain; if one is able to doubt his knowledge due to the evil genius, the thought of doubt demonstrates the certainty of thought. He put it as 'cogito ergo sum' or 'I think, therefore I am'. To substantiate an argument for substance dualism, one must consider that the mind must exist and a body's existence, due to it being a physical object and, therefore, can only be empirically proven to exist, is doubtable. According to Leibniz's Identity of Indiscernibles, two entities are considered identical if their properties are completely identical. In this case, the certainty of existence of the mind and the body differs, making them separate entities. Thus, the mind and body are proven to be separate.

David Hume provides a criticism for the method of doubt in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Descartes initially states that he has to 'rid of any opinions (he) adopted' in order to find the basis of knowledge. However, Hume claims that even if some fundamental principle could be found, like 'cogito ergo sum', 'could we advance from it, but by the use of those very faculties, of which we are supposed to be already diffident'. This implies that any further deductions that come from a 'self-evident and convincing' principle would be fallacious since our faculties of deduction are already doubted. Thus, this makes the

argument for substance dualism doubtful at best. Hume put it as 'no reasoning could ever bring us to a state of self-assurance and conviction'. This criticism is in line with views from ancient skeptics who believe that knowledge creation is impossible due to the fact that everything can be doubted. However, Hume openly criticised ancient skepticism, thus he would only agree that the application of skepticism renders logical deduction unreliable. Thus, even if the fundamental principle of 'cogito ergo sum' is soundly proven by methodological doubt, an argument of substance dualism cannot be formed on firm ground since the reliability of the reasoning we use to arrive that the conclusion has already been dismissed due to the hyperbolic doubt premise.

The argument for substance dualism is merely derived from Descartes' views in *Meditations* and the main purpose of the book was epistemological. As said before, Descartes' purpose is to employ hyperbolic doubt to determine certainty of certain ideas. Following from the 'cogito ergo sum' argument, the idea of 'clear and distinct ideas' is explained. Descartes encapsulates this idea through a wax analogy. He obtains a fresh piece of wax that has distinct physical properties, such as smell, size and taste. After putting this piece of wax near a fire, all these properties alter in some sense: 'the smell evaporates, the color changes, its figure is destroyed, its size increases'. Yet, the wax is still wax; everyone would still recognise it as wax. Thus, the properties of an object does not necessarily determine its identity and, most importantly, something must be certain for our idea of the object to be so clear to us. Descartes also considers that God undoubtedly exists through his ontological argument based on the same concept of clearness and distinctness. If God, a supreme, perfect entity, is indeed perfect, He would not deceive a person, an entity of His creation, or his faculties. Thus, knowledge creation is possible and the knowledge produced is accurate.

However, one can consider this criticism: If God is indeed perfect, why would He let us doubt our own knowledge? Descartes does consider this when he says, 'if, however, it were repugnant to the goodness of Deity to have created me subject to constant deception, it would seem likewise to be contrary to his goodness to allow me to be occasionally deceived'. One of the faculties God has provided for humans are the 'intellect' and the 'will'. Since God is an all-perfect, all-good being, the faculties cannot possibly be faulty. Thus, the uncertainty and error in judgement can only be a result of fallacious use of our faculties, which is a valid argument. Hence, the argument still holds.

One of the key aspects of the substance dualism argument is the Identity of Indiscernibles. Thus, one may seek to prove that the body has identical properties, namely, the property of existence. In *Proof of an External World*, G.E. Moore came up with a famous thought experiment that proves the existence of an external world. This would demonstrate that physical objects cannot be doubted to exist. The thought experiment is rather simple: he raises his hands, does a gesture with them and proclaims, "Here is one hand, and here is another". This proves the existence of the two hands, which indicates that external objects, objects that are independent of thought and can be experienced using sensory information, exist. For Moore, this is a perfectly rigorous proof as it satisfies three criteria:

1. The proof does not beg the question.
2. The premise is factual and accurate.
3. The argument is coherent.

A skeptic would have a problem with the second criteria as they would suggest that the existence of the two hands can be doubted. However, Moore rejects this view due to its absurdity. He said, "how absurd it would be to suggest that I did not know it, and only believed in it, and perhaps it was not the case!" This refutation of the skeptical view can be seen as use of intuition and common sense. Also, this proof is simply a demonstration of the

existence of external objects, but it does not show, or seek to show, how we can know the external objects exist. One knows the existence of the hands, but not how one comes to know about the existence of their hands.

Considering the context of the skeptical perspective, Moore is using the mindset of *reductio ad absurdum* to disprove it, which suggests that the premise of an argument is incorrect if the argument leads to some absurd result or contradiction. As this argument is relatively simplistic, there have been many critics of Moore's reasoning. His evidence for satisfying the second criteria may not be convincing to some. Some posit that Moore's intuition may make it seem that a claim is true but other's intuition might think that the skeptical claim to be more intuitive.

However, if the existence of an external world has been proven with Moore's reasoning, substance dualism, as derived from Descartes' 'Cogito ergo sum' argument, does not hold. If the external world exists, that would suggest that a body's existence would be part of the external world, thus confirming its existence. This would mean that the property that distinguishes the mind and the body, which is their certainty of existence, would disappear. Thus, Leibniz's Identity of Indiscernibles would not conclude that the mind and the body are separate entities. In fact, if Descartes' argument follows, one can assume that since God is not a deceiver, he would not deceive us in the objects we perceive through our senses. Therefore, objects do exist under Descartes' reasoning and how it is known is also clear. Thus, substance dualism does not hold even if Descartes' reasoning, founded on the basis of hyperbolic doubt, is solely followed.

The argument for substance dualism, presented in this essay, is contingent on Leibniz's Identity of Indiscernibles. One can argue that the different properties of the mind and the body is not the certainty of their existence, but rather, their materiality; the mind is immaterial and the body is an external object. This is a convincing counter argument but the 'cogito ergo sum' argument does not attempt to demonstrate the materiality of the mind or the body, so one cannot use hyperbolic reasoning to distinguish the mind and the body. Another counter argument is, perhaps, that the way in which the mind and body's existences are proven demonstrate the difference between them. The mind is a fundamental entity, whilst the body is determined to exist through a rigorous path of reasoning. However, this defense does not seem very convincing since the conclusion of both lines of reasoning is the same: they exist.

In conclusion, to answer the question, 'To what extent does the 'cogito ergo sum' conclusion support the argument for substance dualism?', this essay shows that Descartes and his 'cogito ergo sum' argument does not provide a strong case for dualism. Hume's criticism of the 'Cogito ergo sum' argument indicates that even reasoning and logic cannot be used if global skepticism is assumed. Furthermore, Moore demonstrates that external objects exist, to which Descartes would also agree, which raises doubts on the existence property of the mind and the body, which are imperative in the line of argument for substance dualism.

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