

Searching for the soul Unit 6 Essay

Sixth meditation for the distinction between mind and body

Q1.

In the case of the mind-brain identity theory and the mind-body dualism, each assertion must be able to obtain on the correspondence to the reality of its grounds and resulting consequences. I propose to conceptually work through Descartes' argument outlined in the 6th meditation in Unit 4.

In the opening lines of this meditation, Descartes is speaking for himself and God as to his ability to think clearly and distinctly, therefore the reader needs to be equally convinced of the reality of the deity and the attendant omnipotence in the way of clear and distinct thought processes. The belief in God will provide the believer with a measure of certainty as to his beliefs that are on his agenda. By the accredited omnipotence ascribed to the deity, the mind and body are able to be separated and exist side by side. Thus we have established the foundations for the assertion of a mind and body dualism which is firmly based on the omnipotence of God.

Our initial objection to this hypothesis would be the indubitable existence of a God who is omnipotent and omniscient, and able to arrange thought processes in the minds of individuals that contain precise qualities of omnipotence and omniscience. That is not to say that such a scenario is not possible though also not proven.

This assertion by Descartes may be seen to flout the judgment principle of not being entitled to speak for other people should God qualify as another person. The certainty that Descartes gains from the omnipotence of the precise thinking of God enables him to be confident of his (Descartes') existence as a thinking person or thing. Descartes' thinking stature in accuracy and surety also seem bound up in the ability of God to produce, precisely, an identical line of thought.

The grounds for Descartes' assertion seem, by now, to be well laid and totally dependent on the existence of a deity. We will, presently, be made aware of the consequences of the grounds in the conclusion to Descartes' hypothesis of the case for a mind-body dualism.

Having established the grounds for this thinking, Descartes now addresses the second half of this dualism, the body. He acknowledges the close unity between mind and body, not a particularly profound observation, and allows for the extended thing, the body, to be an unthinking part of the duality.

Finally the consequences of these grounds, in total, are laid bare "I am what I am, a mind-body dualism". A further extrapolation of this consequence is that the mind is truly distinct from the body and they may exist side by side. The conclusion that Descartes asserts appears to rest on a precisely exact line of thinking shared by himself and God.

"I think therefore I am".

It may be that individuals can think without a body, however, any thoughts pertaining to a physical activity may be, by necessity, moribund.

Whilst Descartes is able to mount a plausible case based on God for the existence of a mind-body duality, it may be that the consequences are somewhat more far reaching than can be claimed in the light of reason. The weak link is perhaps the appeal to the existence of an omnipotent and omniscient deity.

However, since I am neither omnipotent nor omniscient my judgment may just as well be an assertion concluded from the best possible evidence of which I am currently cognizant. Perhaps Descartes has placed his assertion on a belief or faith he has adopted. I, too, share a like faith and my prayer is that I may meet up with God one day, however, I do not see this possible event as an altruism.

I believe this section of the sixth meditation is a superbly crafted analysis of the possibility of a mind-body dualism, however the premise of the undoubted existence of an omnipotent and omniscient Deity leaves those not having that faith, looking for a more substantially reasoned base.

