

Candidate 6 evidence

Philosophy National 5 Resource Sheet

Candidate Name

Scottish Candidate Number

Descartes wondered about knowledge, how acquired & justified. So he aimed to create knowledge which could not be doubted, not proven by skeptics. Use of meditations. Opens MI with clear intentions, stated 'struck by large amount of falsehoods' he accepted during childhood. Basic knowledge to get true knowledge would have to destroy all... build from will. Aims to create 'foundations of knowledge'. led to no... not individual entities etc. sets foundations. example of workers, basket of apples in MI then 4 waves... WI the... cannot '100%' rely, may decide. Optical illusions, sizes distance decrease near not rest, but understand they are major source of knowledge. Should reject but not a 'madman' senses feel real. WI the... believe no true way tell diff between states. awake awake, asleep = under assumption. fireplace example. Believed in no good argument to prove state. looking for certainties. Shadows of reality. aspects of truth. faces. Conclusions 'in' not alone world outside dreams must exist... no world = no dreams. Brain in a vat. Cartesian + evil gen.²³ WI the... Aims find uncertainty principle know. After WI couldn't find anything = firm and lasting in the sciences²⁴ by senses. immediately after. I believe = God. knew up... full confidence. Omnipotent (powerful) omniscient (knowing). 2+3=5 necessary truth 1out. had would be decision. WI the... unlikely. Both similar but evil. Destroy everything. No truth. trick vs logical process math expansion. even little doubt troubled. Wakeness "Cogito ergo sum" I think... believe true knowledge. cannot doubt as he doubts. think that doubt. he can... body not exist ≠ mind does not. full quote.

Conclusion. successful extent in search for... strengthens scepticism. discourse cogito. never fully sceptical, high bar satisfying knowledge. finds self solution.

Assignment.

Explain and evaluate Descartes' arguments in Meditation I

Descartes often wondered what knowledge was, how it was acquired and justified. And so, Descartes aims to create a knowledge can cannot be doubted or proven wrong by sceptics. He does this by use of his meditations, he opens meditation 1 with clearly stating his intentions in which he states that he was stuck by the large number of falsehoods he just accepted as true during his childhood and how, from them, he based his current knowledge. To acquire true knowledge, he believed he would have to demolish all his current knowledge and build it back up from nothing.

Descartes aims to establish a foundation of knowledge that could not lead to mistakes or issues. He does not do this by individually going through all knowledge as that is endless and so he sets up his "foundations", anything that does not balance on the foundations will eventually crumble. He uses the basket of apples analogy to prove this. You have a basket of apples, and one is rotten, you would remove all the apples and not one by one to prevent the spread of the rot.

In meditation one there are 4 waves, the senses argument, the dream argument, the deceiving god argument and the evil genius argument.

Wave 1, the senses argument, Descartes accepts that the senses are a major source of knowledge. He also accepts that the senses give us false information regularly, for example, sticks look bent in water, towers look small in the distance. From this Descartes should reject all senses by class as he doubts them, but he does not as he feels the senses are so real, he would be a "mad man" to reject them.

Wave 2, The dream/awake argument. Descartes believed there was no true way to tell the difference between the dream state and the awake state, as you are aware you are awake but when asleep or dreaming you are under the assumption that you are also awake when this is not the case. Descartes uses the example of he may believe he is clothed in his dressing gown, sitting by the fire when in fact he is asleep "between the sheets" in bed. Descartes believes there is no compelling argument to prove that he is awake or asleep and as he was looking for some certainty. But it can be said that dreams are like shadows of reality which include aspects of the truth but are not THE truth. For example, every face we see in a dream is a face we have seen while awake, everything we experience in dreams are versions of reality that may just be slightly different like jumping high or teeth falling out. Descartes concludes that using his mind alone that the world outside our dreams must exist. This means that some portions of dreams are true, and some dream knowledge is correct. this shows that there must be a world outside our dreams to base our dreams upon as if there was no outside world there would be nothing to base our dreams on therefore no dreams would exist.

The brain in the vat thought experiment is used to illustrate Cartesian scepticism and the evil genius argument in meditation 1. You are nothing but a brain that had been placed in a vat with a virtual world plugged into you, and you are fully under the influence of what information is fed to you through this virtual world. The sceptical argument is you cannot be sure that you are not a brain in a vat and cannot rule out the possibility of all your beliefs about the external world being false.

In wave 3, the deceiving God argument Descartes aims to find any uncertainty in knowledge that is from a priori. After the dream argument Descartes concluded he could find anything "firm and lasting in the sciences" by relying on senses. However it is noted that a priori truths survived.

Immediately after his discussion about dreaming he mentions that during all Descartes arguments and theory's one thing remained certain and that was Descartes belief of God. At the time Descartes lives children were taught from an early age that god was all knowing and all powerful, also known as omniscient and omnipotent. And so, Descartes believed God was something he could have full confidence in as he is all good. He believed God wouldn't allow him to believe $2 + 3 = 5$ is a necessary truth when it in fact not.

Wave 4, The evil genius argument. Descartes believed the evil deceiver is the most unlikely possibility, the evil deceiver would also be omnipotent and omnipresent but evil. This evil deceiver would deceive Descartes on everything, allowing no chance for truth. But this is highly unlikely as this would mean it would be tricking us on the logical processes of all maths equations. Descartes method caused that even if there was the slightest doubt in knowledge then it must be thrown out and discarded.

The weakness to the evil deceiver argument is called "the cogito" ergo sum, I think therefore I am. He believed this is the true knowledge, something that cannot be doubted as he himself can doubt. He is a thing that can doubt, understand, affirm, deny, imagine and feel his senses. He believed that his physical body may not exist but there is no proof that his mind does not exist. I think therefor I am; I think therefor I exist.

Therefore, Descartes is successful to an extent in searching for a reliable foundation for knowledge as he strengthens his form of scepticism and it allows discovery of the cogito. However Descartes is never fully sceptical and sets the bar too high in redefining knowledge such that he can only ever discover an isolated self