

James A. Blatt
4/16/2019
PHIL-201

REACTION #9

In meditations #5 and #6 Rene Descartes dives into issues concerning the nature of God, suppositions of reality, and presupposing there is *any* certainty what it means to “exist”. Descartes is a dualist. He believes that the body without the soul is not enough to exist. He uses the example of the metaphysical construction of the mind to perceive electrical impulses conveyed by the nervous system in an amputee who may experience phantom pains in an absent limb.

Descartes speaks to me when he talks about nature versus nurture in the sense of having an instinctual drive such as hunger or thirst producing an internal sensation such as dryness that is sensed by the mind as needing quenched. I’m a perpetually parched person, even though I know to a mathematical certainty I push to the brink of water intoxication and thus I stop drinking despite thirst.

In class, I raised the point of a true sociopath who may learn to be *only* obdurate because his biological condition is worse: absolute indifference or apathy to the wants, needs, and desires of others. The true sociopath is a victim of his nature and by nurture he may be raised in a physically and emotionally abusive household (without nurture) and in turn develop into being accepting of abuse as a norm. This is a typical framework for premeditated violent sociopathy and psychopathy.

Also in class I discussed with Alex that the imagination results in things less certain than our physical reality presents. Descartes speaks of the example of a triangle or color which is visible in our field of vision when our eyes are closed, or of a winged horse flying across the sky, as more to less certain respectively, than we may be able to prove or perceive them in knowledge with our senses. Descartes does seem to have some contradiction in explicating away from “cogito ergo sum” to presupposing we who must therefore exist sense from a perspective of certainty into a less certain physical (substantive) reality.

I find it odd that DesCartes has no new spin on virtue in our readings.