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Rene Descartes

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Rene Descartes was a French philosopher, physiologist, scientist and mathematician who considered to be a famous person in modern western history. In seventeenth century, there were many a man and philosophers asking the question and trying to find the answer whether mind and body can be separated or not. Moreover the question of real existing of things in the world had been asked by many philosophers. Descartes was one who wondered and found his answer about it and set up his thesis. The most interesting thing about Rene Descartes is that the Descartes' idea of material existing by considering from thought lead to the foundation of his mind-body dualism which said mind and body exist separately.

Descartes was born in 1596 in Paris. In his study life, he was interested in philosophy but he did not agree with the philosophy in his period, so he tried to find new idea. This idea effected next generation philosophers and we call this group of philosophers as a rationalism¹. When he was in adult, he decided to travel around many countries in Europe by hoping and desiring to know what is the truth or real and what is not. Descartes worked on many tasks including The Meditations on First Philosophy and Principle of philosophy. The story of existence of himself and gods was also describes in these work. He was doubting in everything. He wanted to answer the question and prove whether himself, material things and gods exist or not. Before he had the conclusion he had to have the premises and if the premises was true

¹Kenneth Shouler. "rationalism." Netplace. 17 Jan. 2013. <<http://www.netplaces.com/philosophy/rene-descartes-the-father-of-modern-philosophy/rationalism.htm>>

that means the argument is valid and his conclusion can be accepted. He believed that one thing he could be sure was he is thinking, namely when he knew he is doing thinking that means he must exist.² Also Descartes had proved the existence of gods. If he could prove that gods exist, he could begin to prove other truths. First of all, Descartes believed in gods and he argued that the idea which said the gods were powerful did not come from his own thought. So, this idea must originate from gods. From the reason above, he could say that god must exist. Since now, the existence of gods and gods made anything into existing were accepted, so the rest of material things in the world existed.

As the existence of material things were accepted, we can now look at the question can mind exist without body. The relationship between mind and body depended on the condition of the existence of body. Following Descartes, in meditation five and six from Descartes' work of Meditations on First Philosophy presented his argument of the existence of body by the belief that gods exist and if gods exist, material things also exist and that could imply that body also exists. Descartes knew that he had body by perceiving and that perception might deceive him, so the question whether he really had body could be asked. But he could not doubt that he has a mind because the example of mind is the thought of man. So he knew he exist even though he did not know if he had a body or not. This idea referred from the thesis as mention above that he claimed if he think, he will exist even though he was not sure if he had no body. From this conclusion of Descartes, It was possible to say that he exists without a body. Namely, He was considered to be essentially a mind, not a body. He claimed that having no body did not imply that you would cease to be yourself but instead, without mind yourself would be considered to cease. Also his

² Wikipedia contributors. "Cogito ergo sum." Wikipedia, The free Encyclopedia. 17 Jan. 2013. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cogito_ergo_sum>

idea of clear and distinct in his work of Principle of philosophy, stated that each of body and mind could exist alone without the other since he clearly and distinctly perceived that mind and body were are basically different.³ This claim could imply that mind can exist without body and this idea bring about carthesian dualism⁴. This leaded to basic philosophy of conventional medicine in biomedical model.⁵ When microorganism⁶ was discovered, this idea was more accepted.

Also In Descartes' work of Meditations on First Philosophy, he believed that mind and body were separate substances. He mentioned about substances that they could exist and do not have to relate with anything else. In meditation two and five He had talked about the nature of body and mind that they were different because they have different properties. We all know that the body is measurable and observable while the mind is not directly observed. Namely, body is extended into three dimensional space and can be measured in several sizes while mind does not have sizes and does not extend into any space. Moreover, the body can be divided into many parts such as appendage⁷ and internal organs but mind for example thought does not have any part and cannot be divided in to part. He said it was impossible that one thing which can be separated into parts like body will be composed to be part of the thing which cannot be separated into any part like mind.⁸ This implied that divisible body could be understood without indivisible mind. In addition to, following the idea of his work of Principle of philosophy as mention above, he stated that if the

³ Sparknotes contributors. "Principles of Philosophy." Sparknotes. 18 Jan. 2013. <<http://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/principles/section8.rhtml>>

⁴ Wikipedia contributors. "Dualism." Wikipedia, The free Encyclopedia. 18 Jan. 2013. < [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dualism_\(philosophy_of_mind\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dualism_(philosophy_of_mind))>

⁵ Neeta Mehta. "Mind-body Dualism: A critique from a Health Perspective." NCBI. 18 Jan. 2013. < <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3115289/>>

⁶ Wikipedia contributors. "Microorganism." Wikipedia, The free Encyclopedia. 18 Jan. 2013. < <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microorganism>>

⁷ Man anatomy contributors. "Skeletal system." Man anatomy. 20 Jan. 2013. < <http://www.mananatomy.com/body-systems/skeletal-system>>

⁸ IEP contributors. "René Descartes:The Mind-Body Distinction." Internet Encyclopedia of philosophy. 17 Jan. 2013. < <http://www.iep.utm.edu/descmind/>>

mind and body exist, it will exist as separated substances. These show that body and mind can exist separately.

According to the existence of material things which we can consider by gods existing idea was claimed, we can deduce that body must exist too. Then the question of mind exists without body had been answered by the Descartes' idea that If he think, he would exist. We can see that thought is very important that it can decide whether there was the existence by not necessary if there was body or not. This could imply us that mind was not necessary to be with body, so it could stay separately. In addition, Rene Descartes also concluded that mind and body exist separately by the reason of clear and distinct thought which claimed that body and mind were distinct type by judge from different perception of body and mind. So, the mind and body exist separately by all of these reasons which come from the idea of material existence thought.