

**Philosophy and Critical Thinking**  
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**Lecture 11: Rene Descartes**

Welcome in lecture 11. Today we are going to talk about Rene Descartes. Today we will be discussing mind-body problem from Rene Descartes philosophy and also, we are going to talk about the proofs of existence of God. As we have discussed in the last class that how Rene Descartes used the method of doubt and concluded that the “I” is different from the body. Before that as I even I have in last class raised the question that a very important question not only in the Indian philosophy as well the Western philosophy notion of I, who am I. Philosopher has addressed this question by in a different way. Some of them is arguing that there are two things is called mind and body and maybe there are other philosopher there are argument is there is a no mind there is only body. So idea is who am I? This is the question. The idea is what if I am saying that I is different from my body then what is I and how you are going to define this I? What are the attributes of I? So, in Rene Descartes what he did in Western philosophy used the mathematical method in philosophical world in philosophy. Now he concluded that there is I which is a different from the body. Now he used this a method and started doubting everything because he believed that if you going to doubt the maximum limit the push this doubt and maximum limit in you will be getting something which is the beyond doubt certain knowledge and this is what he did. He started doubting each and everything and then finally realized that there is something which is beyond the doubt and concluded by saying that “I think therefore I am.” Now he is arguing that I is different from body. Now what is I? He says mind. Mind and body the two different things. Even in Indian philosophy we have the same concept where the philosopher has argued that mind is different from body. However, there are different way to use this word called mind. In Rene Descartes mind or soul has used saying that this is a different from body. Now today what we are going to see we are going to discuss about what is mind and what is body in Rene Descartes philosophy. So, Descartes argued that mind is diametrically opposed to the body. Now if you see this argument and conclusion of Rene Descartes, Rene Descartes arguing that mind is a different kind and body is a different kind. Now in the last class as we have discussed that mind is something which is not material right. Descartes argued that the mind is a thinking thing but body is a different thing. So mind and body is the two different type, two different thing, two different logical type which is a diametrically opposed to each other right. So, mind is completely different type and body is completely different type. So, body is not like mind, mind is not like body. I hope that this is not clear that if they are talking about the mind, mind is something which is let us say the two things. Even we in Plato we have discussed the idea, the concept of idea and then particular for example the tableless and

then table. So, table is a material, tableless is idea, two different things. One is material, another is immaterial. It is not material. Now what does it mean? Even in Rene Descartes when I say this body is material it only means that it has extension. We can locate this body in space but mind we cannot locate this mind in space and therefore this mind and body is two different thing and this is a very important point. Later on, there are a philosopher who argued against Descartes philosophy and then argued that how this mind and body relation is possible. Is it any way to possible to establish the relation between mind and body because mind and body is two different things. We will be taking this discussion in maybe next class but here you need to understand that how Descartes has argued that how mind is different from body right. Now he is arguing that attributes of the body are extension. Bodies are passive. The attributes of mind is thinking. As in the last class I said that when he said that I think therefore I am and then he said I am essentially thinking thing. So, mind can think right. So mind is thinking thing. Mind is active free. Descartes argued that I have clear and distinct idea of myself in so far as I am only a thinking and unextended thing. When he used this method of doubt when he started doubting everything and then he went on saying that there is more than one possibility. For example, maybe this is a dream, maybe this is not dream or surreal or maybe someone is like deceiving right. A demon who is controlling my mind and so on. So, there are possibilities but in all the possibilities I is common and even Descartes realized that I am trying my hard right best to doubt everything but I am not able to doubt myself. So, I is beyond doubt and that is the reason that he is arguing that I have a very clear and distinct idea of myself. You remember this in last class we were discussing that how Rene Descartes used the mathematical method. You start with one simple proposition axioms right and then go for the complex one but make sure that you are not going to make any mistake in the reasoning and this is how Descartes has done in his philosophy. So, he said that I have I am claiming that but I think therefore I am because I have a very clear and distinct idea of myself. I mean through this radical doubt this is how he realized that I is even he tried but he could not doubt himself. So, I the concept of I is very clear and distant idea which is a thinking thing and which is an extended thing. If I were a merely thinking being Descartes arguing if my soul were not somehow intimately conjoined with my body I should for example know that I am hungry but not feel hungry. Now there is just to make this explanation more clearly, I just one raising one question so that it will be easy to understand. Now understand for example mind is what he is saying is thinking being. Now this is a nice conjoined with this body. So, I should know that I am hungry but this is not the case that even I am feeling hungry. This point is basically raising a question that how mind can feel the transition if the sensation is belongs to suppose a body, then how the mind is able to feel that. Descartes is arguing that thought can be troubled by the organs without being the product of them. Sensation, feeling, appetite, are disturbance in the soul resulting from its union with the body. Mind when is coming contact with the body I mean then they have a union so these are the effects. The sensation, feeling and appetites. The soul though united with the whole

body has its principles in the pineal gland of the brain. Now there is an argument question that how this body and mind is related or how is it possible to establish a relation between mind and body and where is this mind? How the mind communicates the body? So there is two things mind and body and mind is completely different from the body. The question arises that how this both of them coming together and working.

Now Descartes argued that mind there is a proper place in the body and that is a pineal gland of the brain where mind resides. So, what happens like if any kind of sensation is going to the pineal gland and there is going to the mind. There is a communication. So, mind and body relation are conceived as a causal and through the meditation of pineal gland a certain interaction between mind and body takes place. So, the interaction this is what the problem of the interaction. So interaction takes place where? In the pineal gland because that is the place of the mind. Descartes maintained that the human intellect is generally reliable because God created it. Now here the mind and body while discussing this mind and body Descartes is arguing that how the God created this mind and body. Therefore, the human intellect is reliable. Then we are talking about the senses and the knowledge and the genuine knowledge. So, our intellects are reliable because it is by a God. God created this intellect and God has arranged this mind body interaction so that our sensation generally is conducive to the good of the body. As we ask that how the mind and body is interacting. How and why is there a possibility to that interact the mind and body? Can body interact with the mind and if the mind and body is two different things then how and why we are feeling this hungry, supposing anything, any sensation right. He argues that God provides human being with a will and wills are intrinsically free. Now maybe this line is confused for you. A will there is a concept of whether we have a free will or not free will. That our will is free or not free. Now question is what is will? So, for example there any situation there are more than one options. Now what we are doing we are thinking. Before taking any decision what we do we think. And there are two choices called X and Y and what we are doing with thinking which one is good first. Or suppose you have two choices and you are going to choose among these two, two or more than two, that which one is good. For example, in terms of action there are two choices or three choices or four choices. Now you are going for the choice number three because right now your will is very strong in terms of choice number three. For example you have a free time. Now you wanted to perform action 1, 2 and 3 and 4 right? You have choices like 1, 2, 3 or 4. All the actions you can perform. You are capable enough to perform all the actions. But what you are doing you are going for one action. I mean obviously yes not all four together but one I mean any of the action you are capable enough to perform that. For example, go for walking and walk. You go for anything watching TV or sleeping or going for snacks with friends, party. Any kind of choices. So, you have free time, you have many choices. Now when you are like going to choose one like for example the option C because your will is very strong in terms of option C. For example games. Now the question arises that when you are talking about the weak will and strong will, is will is free? There are in Indian

philosophy as well we have a discussion that whether we have free will or not or is it everything in this world is determined. So, in Indian philosophy we talk a lot about action, karma, theory of karma and so on. And there is an argument that everything is determined by your past karmas. So, you have to face the impression of the past karma. So, if you have done anything good action or bad action you have to face the impression of the good action and bad action. Now so there is a concept whether if I am going to face the reaction of my good action and bad action it means everything is determined. We do not have a free will or perform any action. So, there are argument that says that no we have free will. So, when we are saying that everything is determined is called determinism. Where we are arguing that we are not free. But there is argument that no we are completely free. So, that Indian philosophy has an own way to discuss this idea. However, this discussion also is in western philosophy and if you come back to Rene Descartes. Let us come back to Rene Descartes. Descartes is arguing that God provides human beings with a will and this will is intrinsically free. If human beings restricted their acts of will to cases of maximum clear and distinct perception there will be no possibility of error. In the last slide as we have discussed that when Rene Descartes claiming that I think therefore I am or I am thinking thing because he has a very clear and distinct perception, very clear and distinct idea. So, Rene Descartes believed that through this will we can do that and if you want to avoid this error then you have to restrict yourself the act of will to cases of the maximum clear and distinct perception.

Now Rene Descartes is arguing at about the body that how body is different from the mind. We were discussing about the mind. Now let us understand how he has argued that what is body. So he has argued that bodies exist independently of our thinking. They do not need our existence in order to exist. Such independent thing is called a substance. So, the existence of body is not dependent on the existence of I. There is two different thing and such independent thing is called a substance and that is a reason that the Descartes philosophy is called Substance dualism where he talked about there are two kind of substance mind and body. Again, he also argued that absolute substance is God and relative substances are mind and body. So God is on the top in the sense that God has created everything. So, if you ask for the what is absolute substance Descartes will argue that it is a God but, relative substances are mind and body and the two relative substances exist independently of one another but both mind and body depend on God. Now again there is a definition of the attributes. The essential property of substance that which necessarily in it is called attributes. The attribute is the quality without which the substance cannot consistently exist but the attribute can manifest itself in different ways or modes or modifications. Substance and attributes can consist without modes but modes cannot be considered without substance and attributes. We cannot conceive figure without extension nor motion except in excellent space nor imagination or will except in a thinking thing. So, this is how he is arguing about the substance and an attribute. He argued that we can conceive this extension without figure or motion and thought without imagination or

sensation. Substance cannot change its attribute but it can change its modes. Again he argued that sound, color, taste, smell, heat and cold are not attributes of the body. The attributes of body is extension.

Now let us talk about understand Cartesian arguments for the existence of God. One thing first is argued that we have an idea of God. Now some of our idea appears to be in it, some are own invention. Most of them seems to have been received from without. Certain ideas are we regards as effect or copies of an external world. Nothing can come from nothing. The idea is the I myself cannot be cause of the idea of God. The idea is Descartes is arguing that we have an idea of God. Now, if you try to understand what is the idea of God. For us idea of God means something which is a perfect being. There is a being which is perfect. Nothing is lacking. Now the idea of perfect. What is the cause of this perfect being? Now you need to understand even it is important to understand that what is the idea of perfect being. Even in the last philosopher, when we were discussing this class, Aristotle, talked about God actual means, Potentiality and actuality. Descartes also have an idea that the God is just something perfect. Perfect means if you think anything. You think means any kind of attributes or anything which is in a perfect sense. Now the question is I have idea of perfect being or God. Now what is the cause of this idea? Because in external world, we are experiencing only imperfect thing. So this world is full of imperfect thing. We are experiencing. So, there is an, we can say that okay fine this is a copy or an idea of external world. This is an effect. But this imperfect things cannot be cause of this idea of perfect thing. The first argument. Second argument, we cannot argue that this idea is coming from nothing. Only nothing can come from nothing. So, nothing cannot produce something. So you have some idea and we cannot argue that the cause of this idea is nothing. So, is there is something? It means the cause of something is something. Therefore, we cannot argue that this idea of God or the cause of this idea of God is nothing. Now third argument is even myself cannot be cause of this idea of God. So, first is what this world and external world is, it is not possible for that external world is cause of this idea of perfect being. One possibility, it is not possible. Second, we cannot argue that this idea of God is coming from nothing. So, if we have idea of God, it means there is something cause and cause not to be nothing because nothing can only produce nothing. We cannot say that nothing is producing something. Now third, is even I myself cannot be cause of this idea of God. So still, we have idea of God. What does it mean? It means the cause of this idea is God Himself and therefore there is a God. Now we have this idea of God. So then what is the cause? Then He rejected all the possibilities, external world but nothing and then I. And then He seems that the cause of this idea of God is the God Himself. There is a perfect being, the idea of perfect being and what is the cause? God Himself. And therefore, He argued that there is God. So I am finite, imperfect being while the idea of God is the idea of perfect infinite being. It must have been placed in me by infinite being and our God and hence God must exist. Descartes is arguing that it is in us, it is with me this idea of God. It is in a place by whom this infinite being because I am not cause of this idea. The world

cannot and nothing cannot. And therefore, it means that if we have this idea of God, it means this is replaced by someone who is, someone is only it can be infinite being or God. So, we can see that how Descartes is giving a causal proof of the existence of God is based from basically two assumptions. First is individual consciousness know itself to be finite, and second the consciousness to God derived only from the conception of an absolute perfect being. This is how Descartes argued for the existence of God and this is a very important argument in Descartes philosophy. Now we are talking about in this slide if you see that God has, it must have been placed in me by infinite being. What does it mean? It means that this is not product of this experience. I mean we cannot argue that we have an idea of God and that is an effect of this external world. That is not there. If this is the case then we may not be able to argue that it must have been placed in me by infinite being or God. Placing means that this idea is with us by birth. So, when we are coming all of us in this world, we are coming with this idea. Which idea? The idea of perfect being, idea of infinite being. And this idea is called innate idea. Innate idea is something which is we are coming in this world with this idea. So, certainty is the property of truths which are clearly and distinctly perceived through the proper method. One cannot derive true knowledge from sense experience. Again, Descartes has argued that how the sense experience is not the cause of the genuine knowledge or true knowledge. So, he argued that through sense perception it is difficult to derive any true knowledge. So genuine knowledge is the result of reasoning from certain basal concept of principles. So, there is a possibility of genuine knowledge but it can be known through this result of reasoning. I mean genuine knowledge is result of reasoning. So, you have to apply the intellect and then you can get the true knowledge, the genuine knowledge. It must be inherent in the mind. If something is inherent in the mind that is an innate and apriori. Now Descartes is arguing that when we are talking about the genuine knowledge which is a result of reasoning and reasoning is from certain basal concept and the principles. And this concept and principles is inherent in the mind and this idea is called innate idea. Now Descartes argued that purely intellectual content arises from innate ideas without any accompanying brain process. Now the innate ideas supply the active formative principle of knowledge. So, Descartes argued that if you see this argument, first is one, the genuine knowledge is result of reasoning from certain basal concept and principles and it must be inherent in the mind itself. It is called innate or apriori. Now again he argued purely intellectual content arises from innate ideas without any accompanying brain process. Now innate ideas supply the active formative principle of knowledge. So innate idea is a basis of where we are and then we are getting this genuine knowledge.

So, thank you for the references in these two books which we have been discussing. Even today lecture was based on these two books and then one later in the chat for Encyclopedia. So thank you so much for your kind attention.