

1

(Reading material: Brain wise: Chapter 2: Introduction to Metaphysics. Page 37-58)

It may be urged that one's feeling of having made progress in supra- scientific metaphysics should count for something, and the conviction that such progress has been made does indeed exist. More exactly, feelings of certainty may be cited as the benchmark for having discovered a Beyond-Science Metaphysical Truth. For example, feelings of unshakeable conviction or absolute certainty may accompany consideration of the hypothesis that the mind is a nonphysical substance. Descartes seems to have enjoyed such certainty and to have believed it warranted a specific conclusion. Feelings of certainty, however, are no guarantee of truth.

Comment

2

(Reading material: Brain wise: Chapter 3: Self and self Knowledge. Page 59-90)

Descartes proposed that the self is not identical with one's body, or indeed, with any physical thing. Instead, he concluded that the essential self—the self one means when one thinks “I exist”—is obviously a nonphysical, conscious thing. To the eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher David Hume, however, Descartes' answer was anything but obvious. Hume proceeded to examine whether there is evidence for something that is the self apart from the body. He came to realize that if you monitor experience, there does not seem to be any self thing there to perceive. What one can introspect is a continuously changing flux of visual perceptions, sounds, smells, emotions, memories, thoughts, and so forth.

Comment