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Philosophy 303

Assignment 13

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Descartes begins his evaluation of the traditional view of infallibility be exploring what is now known as the “Dream Argument”. In this argument Descartes is brings up the common experience of “waking up for the second time”. The feeling that while still asleep you may feel that you have already awoke and began your normal morning routine. While still asleep your mind was tricked into believing that you had already began to do other things. One way to label these experiences is veridical or non-veridical. The first being experiences that are an accurate representation of reality, waking up the second time, and the second being the opposite of the first, waking up the first time. The “Dream Argument” uses this concept to explore the consequences of experiences like this.

Descartes’ “Dream Argument” starts with the premise that perceptual beliefs are justified by appealing to ones experiences. He continues stating that every veridical experience has an identical non-veridical experience with the same content. The last premise of the argument is that an individual cannot distinguish veridical and non-veridical experiences. Descartes conclude that one cannot know their perceptual beliefs to be true if the traditional definition of infallibles is held as the measuring metric.