# THE SKEPTICAL CHALLENGE: A CARTESIAN APPROACH

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To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

# ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the plausibility of the Cartesian skeptical challenge regarding perceptual knowledge – the presuppositions of the dream and deceiver arguments. It compares how different theories of perception lead to skepticism, and how the imaginative model of dream experiences bears affect on the plausibility of the dream skepticism. It offers a Cartesian response to the skeptical deceiver argument. On the basis of Descartes' trademark argument for the existence of God, which is defended as an argument from incomprehensibility of the idea of God, the deceiver error-possibility is ruled out. The main claim is that skeptical challenge can be answered.

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### CHAPTER I

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The goal of my dissertation is to propose an interpretation of the Cartesian skeptical challenge with respect to perceptual knowledge, and to propose a new defense of the theistic response developed in Descartes' *Meditations*. I hope that the answer will satisfy a pair of constraints that are rarely observed in recent attempts at answering. On the one hand, it should be persuasive by the standards of contemporary debate, on the other it should be guided by the religious tradition in which the original Cartesian challenge arises. My proposed answer reaches back to this original framework, and is at the same time tuned to the problems and methods of the contemporary debate. Let me briefly explain the historic development of skepticism and the importance of Descartes' project of *Meditations*.

The word "skepticism" comes from the Greek word OdbO? J & (*skepsis*) meaning "enquiry". As a philosophical position skepticism of course predates Descartes, having its origin in ancient Greece. Its teaching was established in two forms, famously known as Pyrrhonian skepticism and Academic skepticism.

The first school began with Pyrrho of Elis, c. 360–275 b.c.e., and was formulated by Aenesidemus c. 100–40 b.c.e. The main thesis of pyrrhonism was to suspend judgment on all propositions concerning how things really are, on the grounds that there is insufficient and inadequate evidence to determine whether this knowledge is possible. The teaching was famously defended by Sextus Empiricus (160-210 AD) in a series of "tropes", or ways by which the mind is lead toward suspension of judgment regarding things beyond appearances. Pyrrhonians would not commit themselves to any judgment beyond how things seem. They rather lived in accordance with nature and custom. The final goal of such a "practice" was to achieve *ataraxia*, quietude in which the mind remains undisturbed, and free from dogmatism. Academic skepticism started in the Platonic Academy by Arcesilas, c. 315–241 b.b.e., and Carneades, c. 213–129 b.c.e., who formulated arguments against Stoics, to show that nothing could be known. Unlike Pyrrhonians who suspended judgment on all matters, even on the issue of whether truths may be known, Academics positively asserted that nothing could be known. They formulated arguments to show that senses and reasoning were unreliable, and that there was no criterion for determining what is true or false. The best we can judge about things that refer beyond the immediately accessible content of our minds can be on the basis of probabilities. Academic skepticism became known in the Western world mainly through St. Augustine's treatment of it in *Contra Academicos*.

In the post-Hellenistic period skepticism was not a very influential view, and it reemerged in Renaissance and Early Modern Periods. The revival of Greek skepticism occurred during the intellectual crisis brought up by the Reformation in sixteenth century. However, at that time skeptical arguments had a different role than in ancient Greece, and this brings me to my main point. The historical context in which Descartes' (Cartesian) skepticism arose brings to the fore an important link between skepticism and religion, which will also serve as the framework for my Cartesian project and its theistic aims. The two topics that seem to be are merely historically related, are in fact also related methodologically. Let me expand on the notions following the lead of Popkin's (2003) perceptive analysis<sup>1</sup>.

It was the problem of the criterion of truth concerning faith that was raised in quarrels between the Reformation and the Church of Rome, that awoke an interest in ancient skepticism. Church rebels and the Reformation used the skeptical pyrrhonian arguments to undermine the authority of the pope and Church councils, and thereby opened up the skeptical Pandora's box in theological domain. That had an immense impact on the whole intellectual life of the West. Not only religious, but more general skepticism, could no longer

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> In the *History of Skepticism* (2003) Popkin discusses historical and religious background of the revival of skepticism in the sixteenth century, and he focuses on its development and impact from Savonarola to Bayle.

be stopped neither by Reformed thinkers nor by the Catholic Church. From its theological origins the early modern pyrrhonian skepticism expanded to philosophy and natural knowledge, and thereby generated the so called *crise pyrrhonienne* of the early sixteenth century. The quest for certainty was a natural reaction that dominated through next two centuries<sup>2</sup>.

Moved by the intellectual situation in Paris in which young minds were enthusiastic about the new trend (*nouveaux pyrrhoniens*), Descartes, at that time respected scientist and mathematician, encouraged by Cardinal Bérulle began his own search for philosophical means to solve the crisis. For that purpose he left Paris to meditate in Holland. Surprisingly and unexpectedly, instead of rebuking the skeptics at first, Descartes created a new battery of reinforced skeptical arguments - the dream and the deceiver argument - which disclosed the full force of the method of doubt. Thus, the Cartesian skepticism was born. Let me sketch the Cartesian project of the *Meditations* in the briefest outline.

In the *Meditations* Descartes introduced the possibility that the senses might be unreliable not only at times, like in cases of illusions and hallucinations, but always. In order to bring skepticism to its highest peak, he first points out the danger that he might be dreaming, and then introduces the possibility of being deceived by a powerful evil God, even about things that seem most certain - mathematical truths, or the existence of the material world. Popkin points out that "only when skepticism had been carried to this extreme, to engender a *crise pyrrhonienne* greater than that ever dreamed of by the *nouveaux pyrrhoniens*, could one overcome the force of skepticism" (2003, pp.148).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> As Popkin (2003) interestingly points out, the skeptical arguments gave rise to different reactions in intellectual circles of religious philosophers. While Catholic theologians offered historical evidence to justify the authority of the Church, Erasmus of Rotterdam proposed a strategy that seems outrageously paradoxical - a skeptical defense of faith - that dominated the French Counter-Reformation. Realizing that skepticism could not be defeated, he embraced it. Our inability to attain knowledge on our own, he argued, gives us reason to trust authority of the tradition (Church, Scripture). M. Montaigne further developed such an idea to its most radical form.

Whereas ancient skeptics presented doubtfulness of various beliefs and opinions stepby-step, each step separately followed by an act of suspension of the particular target judgment, Descartes famously begins his inquiry with rejecting all uncertain opinions as false<sup>3</sup>. Such process of radically emptying one's mind ultimately serves as a method of purgation by which the mind prepares itself to reach the indubitable truth. This is a difference between Cartesian and ancient Greek skepticism; the purpose of Cartesian skeptical arguments is neither to unsettle certainty nor to lead one to *ataraxia*, but to reach certainty.

The now already overworked path of *Meditations* leads the Meditator from the doubtful "outer" realm presented by the senses, inward to *cogito*, the very first truth that states "I think", and proceeds to "I think therefore I am", as a conclusion of doubt. Namely, the process of doubting enables Descartes to recognize his own existence as the one who doubts, and to reach awareness of oneself as essentially a thinking thing. Clearness and distinctness by which he has arrived to that first indubitable truth gives him subsequently the criterion of truth. However, the edge of Descartes' weapon against skepticism threatens to cut both ways: how can such an epistemic principle be certain if the powerful evil God can deceive the Meditator even about the most certain things? What guarantees that whatever that is clearly and distinctly perceived by the mind is true? What if the Meditator is - together with his cognitive habits and ways - merely a product of an evil God, fate or "cosmic accident"? Descartes needs to ensure that truth is the *telos* of our cognitive faculties, that the intellect is "tuned" to truth in the right way.

Descartes then proceeds to investigate the content of his mind, and finds the idea of God, an idea of an infinitely supreme being who is presented as the ultimate source of good, truth, and existence. By the *natural light*, as he sees it, he realizes that such an idea must have a cause that contains as much reality as the idea it represents, because *ex nihilo nihil fit*. The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> "Reason now leads me to think that I should hold back my assent from opinions which are not completely certain and indubitable just as carefully as I do from those which are patently false." (AT VII 18: CSM 17)

existence of God who left his "trademark" in the human mind secures reliability of the truthrule. Inner certitude of the *cogito* now receives objective support in God. Popkin poetically summarizes Descartes' path in *Meditations* in the following way:

Only by having walked through the valley of complete doubt could one be swept on to the peace and security of the world seen as a theodicy, our ideas and our truths seen as divine fiats, forever guaranteed by our realization that the Almighty cannot deceive. (2003, pp. 155)

Ultimately, Descartes' view is that all other knowledge proceeds after the existence of God is known:

I now have before me a road which will lead us from the contemplation of the true God . . . to the knowledge of the other objects of the universe. (AT VII 53: CSM 37)

The ontological and epistemological priority of God makes the Cartesian philosophical system essentially theistic in its outcome and its motivation. Instead of leaping into fideism or pure rationalism<sup>4</sup>, Descartes' answer to the *crise pyrrhonienne* shows how faith and reason converge.

Inspired by his admirable project, in this dissertation I present a version of the Cartesian answer to skepticism regarding perceptual knowledge. I defend the basic tenet of Cartesian (and theistic) epistemology, namely, that perceptual knowledge depends on (knowledge of) God. However, my aim here is not to argue against religious skepticism or skepticism concerning mathematical and intuitive knowledge, but is restricted to answering the problem concerning skeptical challenge that targets perceptual knowledge. I propose a defense of a Cartesian anti-skeptical strategy - since I know that all-perfect God exists then I know that I am not a victim of the deceiver. Hence, the existence of God guarantees perceptual knowledge. I propose a new defense of the so called "trademark argument" for the existence of God presented by Descartes in the *Third Meditation*. My argument takes a novel

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> By "pure rationalism" I mean "atheistic rationalism" that absolutely relies on our intellectual capacities, without acknowledging God as the source of our capacities, and truth itself.

approach: it does not proceed from what we can comprehend about God to the existence of God, it rather dissolves the mind-reality gap by way of dissimilitude – by what we do not comprehend about God. Hence, I propose an argument from incomprehensibility of the idea of God.

In method and to some extent in content the current project follows Descartes' *Meditations*. However, the Cartesian project is addressed and defended from the contemporary point of view, bringing up attempts to make a contribution in the area. Let me introduce a brief preview of the chapters.

In chapter II, I investigate the argumentative background of the skeptical threat, focusing on theories of perceptions that lead to, or are vulnerable to Cartesian skepticism. I discuss the plausibility of arguments from illusion and hallucination supporting sense-datum theory, which are traditionally regarded as "skeptic friendly". I present a thought experiment argument from hallucination that addresses some objections raised in the contemporary debate. I also take into account the intentionalist theory of perception. I conclude with McDowell (1982) that both sense-datum theory and intentionalism are open to the possibility of skepticism because they posit a "common factor" thesis which gives the skeptic a framework to formulate the possibility of a non-veridical experience that "phenomenally matches" genuine perception. However, I argue that the disjunctivist theory of perception that denies the "common factor" is also vulnerable to a less committing version of the skeptical argument. I conclude that the internalist conception of evidence and knowledge, coupled with an anti-epistemic luck requirement, renders the Cartesian skeptical challenge threatening.

In chapter III, I discuss the dream skeptical argument, analyzing it in two parts: Cartesian and non-Cartesian steps. In the first part I discuss a prominent reply to the dream argument defended by Ernest Sosa. I believe that the crux of the dream argument is the problem of establishing competence, and thereby *knowing* that the criterion of wakefulness is

satisfied, even when it is satisfied. In response to thus presented argument, I propose a destructive dilemma against the skeptic which is based on Sosa's view that dreaming is imagining. In the second part of the chapter II I extrapolate premises and presuppositions of the dream argument, and contrast two epistemological positions – internalism and externalism. I conclude that the anti-dream skepticism provided by Sosa's theory provides a promising prospect of a response that can (in principle) account for both epistemological intuitions.

In chapter IV, I discuss and defend Descartes' trademark argument for the existence of God, which aims at responding the deceiving God (*deus deceptor*) skeptical argument. I argue that the unity and incomprehensibility of the idea of God gives us reason to believe that the idea cannot originate in the human mind. Although the idea of God is incomprehensible, it is still clear, distinct and coherent. Such positive epistemic element balances its apparently negative counterpart, giving us enough understanding of God to know *that* He is, although we cannot know *what* He is. The argument I will defend is faithful to the religious tradition of Descartes', but it is also following the standards of the contemporary analytic approach in philosophy of religion.

## 1.1. Cartesian Skepticism: The Dream And The Deceiver Argument

The sketch of the Cartesian skeptical arguments I have presented has been extremely brief. Let me make good for this by presenting a slightly longer summary of the standard way in which the Cartesian skeptical arguments are usually<sup>5</sup> presented (the discussion of these arguments will occupy us throughout two chapters). There are two well-known Cartesian skeptical arguments that will be in our focus: the dream argument and the deceiver argument.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> I rely on reconstruction of the arguments originally introduced by Descartes, and contemporary interpretations of them within the "epistemic luck" framework, defended by Pritchard (2005), and Sosa (2005).

#### (i) The Dream Argument

At the beginning of the *First Meditation* Descartes observes that in the course of his life he had adopted a "large amount of falsehoods" (AT VII 18: CSM 17). Struck by that realization, Descartes begins to seek a firm foundation of knowledge. In order to achieve certainty, he believes that he has to closely examine the whole system of beliefs and re-build the edifice of knowledge from its very foundation. The principle leading him in this task is to suspend judgment from all things that are uncertain:

Reason now leads me to think I should hold back my assent from opinions which are not completely certain and indubitable just as carefully as I do from those which are apparently false" (AT VII 18: CSM 17).

But the system of beliefs is too large, examining one by one belief would be an endless task.

Given that Descartes believed that knowledge is structured like an edifice supported by its

foundations, the most efficient strategy that occurred to him was to question those very

foundations. Descartes observes that "whatever I have up till now accepted as most true I

have acquired either from the senses or through the senses" (AT VII 18: CSM 17). Then, for

the purpose of purging all opinions it suffices to find a reason to doubt sense-based beliefs.

Descartes mentions the phenomena of illusions at the beginning of his enquiry:

Yet although the senses occasionally deceive us with respect to objects which are very small or in the distance, there are many other beliefs which doubt is quite impossible, even though they are deceived from the senses – for example, that I am here, sitting by the fire, wearing a winter dressing-gown, holding this piece of paper in my hands, and so on. (AT VII 18: CSM 17)

Descartes admitted that the phenomena of illusions show that senses *occasionally* deceive us, but he didn't think that this is strong enough to lead us into radical skepticism. Fallibility of the senses is still not a good enough reason for universal doubt about the senses. That is why Descartes needed a stronger argument - the dream argument makes a step forward in extending the scope of doubt.

Descartes' starting point of the dream argument is provided by experiences of the kind we all have had. How often did you believe that the plot of the dream was real, until you woke up and realized that it was a mere dream? How do you know that your present experience is not a dream? Don't you think it is possible that you are about to wake up soon? You may try to appeal to your conviction that you are awake now. But how often have you had the same conviction while dreaming?

While dreaming we don't know that images we have are not about real objects, we believe that they are real, until we finally wake up and realize it was just a dream and our beliefs were false. Nobody denies that we can be deceived in dreams. However, the skeptic generalizes the conclusion; when reflecting upon the phenomenal character of dream experiences you may notice that vivid and distinct dreams are subjectively exactly like waking experiences. Perhaps now you can think of performing a test to check your wakefulness by pinching yourself, exercising the power of your will, asking other people whether they are awake, but all these things could happen in a dream; you may only dream that you pinched yourself, etc. As Descartes further says:

[E]very sensory experience I have ever thought I was having while awake I can also think of myself as sometimes having while asleep". (AT VII 77: CSM 53)

Descartes' conclusion is that there is no experiential criterion to distinguish waking from realistic and vivid dream experiences. From this it follows that on the basis of the senses you cannot tell whether you are dreaming or awake. If you are dreaming then the experience is not about the real chairs, fire, arms, etc., and consequently you have false perceptual beliefs. Since experience is not sufficient to distinguish a "good" from a "bad" epistemic situation,

senses cannot provide knowledge even about propositions that we find obviously true, e.g. that "I have two hands".

One question about the "Cartesian dream argument" as it is usually referred to, has to do with its scope. If I'm dreaming now then I don't know that I'm sitting by the fire, that I have two hands, that I'm holding a paper, and so on. But, is it possible that there is no external world? One passage<sup>6</sup> in the *First Meditation* suggests that the dream argument is not questioning the existence of the external world. Descartes says something in the following direction: even if I am dreaming now there has to be the external world "out there" with most general properties (extension, shape, number) which provided the basic "material" of my dreams, even though I can not be certain at this very moment whether I'm sitting by the fire and having two hands. Since dreams are made of "images" received from the senses, which the mind creatively "shuffles" into novel phantasms, there are limits to what the dream argument can question. The existence of the physical world with its most general properties and the truth of geometry and arithmetics are not within the scope of the dream skepticism. "For whether I am awake or asleep two and three added together are five…" (AT VII 20: CSM 14). Hence, Descartes will need a stronger argument to reach the peak of the hyperbolical doubt.

#### (ii) The Deus Deceptor Argument

In 1647 Leiden theologians accused Descartes of blasphemy for raising the following question<sup>7</sup>:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> AT VII 20: CSM 13

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Although this skeptical hypothesis was religiously inspired, Descartes' doubts whether God is a deceiver doesn't by any means imply that correctness of his faith in God was ever under question. Faith in God, throughout the "valley of skepticism", eventually lead him to indubitable knowledge of God. For this defense of Descartes' position see S. Menn (1998).

And yet firmly rooted in my mind is the long-standing opinion that there is an omnipotent God who made me the kind of creature that I am. How do I know that he has not brought it about that there is no earth, no sky, no extended thing, no shape, no size, no place, while at the same time ensuring that all these things appear to me to exist just as they do now? (AT VII 21: CSM 14)

His question has to do with the possibility that an omnipotent and creator God is a deceiver. Assuming the possibility that the deceiving God created him together with his cognitive faculties, the Meditator must concede that he might be deceived about things that seem most certain - even about mathematical truths.

...how do I know that God has not brought it about that I too go wrong every time I add two and three or count the sides of a square...?" (AT VII 21: CSM 14)

If we grant the existence of a powerful epistemic threat, personified as a deceiver, how can we know that things are the way they appear to the senses? How can we know anything? In this dissertation I will focus on the possibility (or impossibility) of perceptual knowledge in particular.

In order to get out of the depths of the deceiver skepticism<sup>8</sup> Descartes will need to prove that there is a benevolent omnipotent God who would not deceive, nor create us such that we are systematically deceived about things that seem to be most certain. In order to have epistemological guarantor that our cognitive faculties are trustworthy they have to be directed toward truth, not merely accidentally, but intentionally so. Thus, only God the intelligent *Creator* (*Nous*), a personal God, can secure us from the *deus deceptor* skeptical

<sup>8</sup> The so called *evil demon* hypothesis is often identified with *deus deceptor* hypothesis. But Richard M. Kennington (1987) argues that they actually differ. In order to avoid any further troubles with theologians, Kenny (1968, pp. 35) thinks that Descartes decides to introduce the evil genius hypothesis, a new version of the deceiver that is "less offensive" (AT VII 23: CSM 15). Z. Janowski (2000) pointed out that Descartes never refers to the evil demon as *omnipotens*, but rather as *summe potens*, thereby implying that there are some things that the *deus deceptor* could do, which evil genius could not. Although both hypotheses serve the skeptical method almost equally well, the difference between them is significant for Cartesian theodicy and the anti-skeptical strategy.

argument. The question of Meditator's origin is thus made crucial for Descartes' epistemological project<sup>9</sup>.

#### 1.2. The Structure Of The Cartesian Skeptical Arguments

Although significantly differing in the extent of doubt they raise and presuppositions of their formulations, both skeptical arguments question perceptual knowledge on a very universal level. Radical skepticism concerning senses is of my particular interest here.

Needless to elaborate much, radical skepticism is as counter-intuitive as it can get. The two skeptical hypotheses raise alternative explanations of everyday experiences, which radically contradict common sense. A natural reaction to this would be to ask "Why would we believe that any of them obtains? There is no such thing as evil god (deceiver), and I am quite sure that I woke up this morning. So why bother with skepticism at all?" To make clear the dialectical situation, the skeptic need not ague that skeptical hypotheses are actually going on. All the skeptic needs is a coherent error-possibility that *might*. The burden of proof is on the "dogmatic" to show that skeptical hypotheses can be ruled out (or are known to be false).

The Cartesian skeptical arguments share a common structure; they can be presented in a form of a paradox, consisting of two plausible premises that yield an unacceptable conclusion. (SH stands for "skeptical hypothesis", and p for the proposition "I am sitting by the fire").

**1.** I don't know that I'm not deceived /dreaming.  $(\neg K \neg SH)$ 

2. If I don't know that I'm not deceived /dreaming then I don't know that I am sitting by the fire.(¬K ¬SH (¬Kp)

<sup>9</sup> The *deus deceptor* hypothesis will ultimately lead Descartes to discuss theodicy in a way that bears direct impact upon his epistemology - the problem of the apparent discrepancy between the power of God and imperfection of creation with respect to human proneness to error.

**3.** Therefore, I don't know that I am sitting by the fire.  $(\neg Kp)$ 

Reactions of contemporary thinkers to this argument are divided. Some, like B. Stroud find

the arguments "gripping":

I think that when we first encounter the sceptical reasoning outlined in the previous chapter we find it immediately gripping. It appeals to something deep in our nature and seems to raise a real problem about the human condition. (1984, pp. 39)

Others would say "Aw, come on!". K. DeRose's opinion is that the appropriate reaction is to

be found "in the middle":

The reaction that the skeptical argument is weak is probably best refined to the claim that, however strong the argument may be, it's not strong enough to adequately support such a counter-intuitive conclusion. And the reaction that the skeptical argument is absurdly weak is probably best refined to the claim that, however strong the argument may be, it's nowhere near to being strong enough to support such a counter-intuitive conclusion. (1999, pp. 3)

Although Cartesian skepticism is a philosophical position that is in conflict with common sense, I would like to emphasize Pritchard's (2005) point that - paradoxically as it may seem - skepticism itself relies on a very sober intuition, namely, that knowledge excludes luck. Let me expand on the notion and introduce some necessary preliminary terminological clarifications.

There are many ways, theoretically more or less committing, in which the skeptical arguments can be presented. Instead of exploring all possible ways in which philosophers have put the argument, I will sketch one way of understanding its more general structure that I am going to bear in mind, which relies on the following presuppositions.

When empirical propositions (p) are concerned, e.g. the proposition "I'm sitting by the fire", justification that you apparently have for believing p is your sensory experience<sup>10</sup>. You believe that you are sitting by the fire *because* you feel the heat, your body, you see the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> There are epistemologists ("coherentists") who deny this claim, and argue that only *beliefs* about experience can be justifiers (BonJour, Davidson).

chair, and so on. On the traditional foundationalist account, such justification for believing p - sensory experience - is accessible by reflection alone. Here, the notion of justification on which the skeptic relies is of *internalist* kind; it is something that a subject would be able to state just by deploying reflective faculties<sup>11</sup>. When you have a perceptual experience of fire, it is only you who can report "what is it like" to have such an experience. The phenomenal aspect of the experience is essentially bound to subject's view. And this is the aspect of experience important for justification, and for the skeptical arguments. If you could have an experience phenomenally exactly like genuine perception in the deceiver's world, then at least on the basis of reflection you can not tell that you are not having such a non-veridical experience right now. Then, you don't have internalist justification to believe that you are not deceived. Therefore, the first premise of the skeptical deceiver argument follows: "I don't know that I'm not deceived".

The concept of knowledge at stake is of a particularly internalist sort, such that its justification component is accessible by reflection alone. Given that the required reflective method does not enable us to eliminate the skeptic's error possibilities for which we know that are incompatible with what we believe (e.g. if the deceiver skeptical possibilities obtain, it follows that there is no fire), the perceptual belief is opened to being undermined by bad luck. Let me elaborate on this point.

Pritchard (2005) argues that in the heart of the skeptical argument we find an anti-luck premise, which gets enfolded through the following closure principle: *If* S *knows* p, and *knows that* p *entails* q, then S *knows* q. The skeptic uses the *modus tollens* form of the closure principle. Hence, we are faced with the following disturbing argument:

1. I know that if I am sitting by the fire then I am not deceived.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> However, this is only one way of defining internalism about justification. For more options see Pappas, G. (2005). "Internalism". In the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

2. I don't know that I'm not deceived.

3. Therefore, I don't know that p.

Plausibility of such application of the closure principle in the skeptical argument is in Pritchard's view derived from the "epistemic luck platitude" (2005, pp. 1 *et passim*). He nicely formulates the point:

If knowledge is incompatible with luck, then it must also be incompatible with the possibility of error since to leave a possibility of error uneliminated is to leave one's belief open to being undermined by the bad epistemic luck that this possibility of error obtains" (2005, pp. 17).

In order for your belief that you express by "I'm sitting by the fire" to be free from bad luck you have to eliminate the skeptical hypotheses. However, the skeptic argues that this is impossible. From what you can tell about how things seem to you, which is *ex hypothesi* exactly the same as in the skeptical scenarios, you can't rule out the error-possibilities in question. You could be deceived by an evil god, as far as you know by reflection, but luckily you are not. And knowledge should not be left "open to chance". Hence, the skeptic points out that perceptual beliefs are contaminated by *reflective luck* (Pritchard 2005, pp.10) - even if you are sitting by the fire you cannot *know* that.

The skeptical point that we could be mistaken about our ordinary perceptual beliefs is illustrated by different skeptical scenarios that seem very far-fetched, and yet hard (if not impossible) to eliminate. In the face of such error-possibilities our perceptual beliefs are rendered merely lucky, from the subject's point of view. This explains why the skeptical arguments have some initial plausibility. However, the hard question to answer is which premise of the skeptical arguments (if any) is false?

There are two kinds of anti-skeptical strategies: a "direct" response that addresses which premise of the argument is false, and an "indirect" strategy that undermines presuppositions of the skeptical argument. Apart from a "direct" anti-skeptical response to

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deceiver skepticism that I am going to address in chapter IV, in which I present a Cartesian answer arguing that the first premise of the skeptical argument is false, in chapter II I am going to discuss how different theories of perception lead to, or are vulnerable to Cartesian skepticism, and see how exactly the non-veridical experience in the skeptical deceiver hypothesis "matches" genuine perceptual experience, which figures as an essential assumption in the skeptical argument. In chapter II I discuss an "indirect" approach in the context of discussing disjunctivism. In chapter III I propose a "direct" answer to dream skepticism which is based on Sosa's view, which undermines the first premise of the skeptical argument.

# CHAPTER II

## **CARTESIAN SKEPTICISM AND THE NATURE OF PERCEPTION**

Our main source of ordinary knowledge about the external world is perception. Thus it is expected that a theory of perception that one endorses has consequences on epistemology of perception, and epistemology in general, for good or bad. Many philosophers - Ayer, Putnam, McDowell, and recently Huemer - who gave shape to the "traditional"<sup>12</sup> criticism of the skeptical problem, thought that skepticism concerning perceptual knowledge is enabled by and presents a threat only for certain views of perception. For example, R. Rorty was convinced that "Descartes doctrine of representative perception was a sharp and perhaps disastrous, break with scholastic tradition of direct realism" (1980, 49 note, 45–51). McDowell (1982), the main figure of the "traditionalist", stresses that a consequence of indirect realism - the view that in perception we are directly aware of "mere" appearances ("sense ideas" or "sense datum") rather than physical objects - is that our perceptual knowledge is at best inferential<sup>13</sup> and defeasible. From this view it follows that we form beliefs about the world on the basis of inference from what is directly given to us in perception, i.e. from how things appear<sup>14</sup>. But there can be no certainty in such perceptual beliefs because nothing about the content of our mind, the sensory "directly given" which screens of its purported object, entails true propositions about the external world<sup>15</sup>. A consequence of such a view is that perceptual beliefs are open to be undermined by skeptical hypotheses. The indirect realist's gap between appearance and reality renders radical

<sup>12</sup> I take this term from D. Macarthur (2003).

<sup>13</sup> This inference is usually minimally conscious, and automatic.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> A similar view is often formulated as the problem of "epistemic priority" of sensory experience over independently existing objects. Stroud, Davidson, and Williams think that if we grant this thesis, skepticism is inevitable. For more on this view see Okasha's paper "Skepticism and its Sources" (2003).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Ludwig says that radical skepticism about the external world is founded on two assumptions about the mindworld relation:

<sup>(</sup>L) Propositions solely about the contents of the mind are logically independent of propositions solely about the nature of the external world.

<sup>(</sup>E) Facts solely about the contents of our minds are all our evidence for facts about the external world.

skepticism about perceptual knowledge a live option: as far as we can tell on the basis of our experience, we could be deceived by an evil deceiver who nourishes us with "false impressions", or we could be having dreams as of the external world. A quite different cause may be responsible for our experience. Then, the difficult question to answer is how do we know that we are not victims of such skeptical scenarios? Since it seems that certain theories of perception lead to skepticism, in this chapter I need to explore the relation between theories of perception and skepticism.

According to one theory that primarily stresses our directs perceptual awareness of "mere" appearances - sense datum theory defended by Price (1932), Foster (2000), and Robinson (1994) - in perception we are directly aware of a sense datum, a mind-dependent object which (at best<sup>16</sup>) mediates our perceptual awareness of the physical world. The main arguments supporting such view are the arguments from illusion and hallucination. Let me address them here, linking them directly with my main topic.

Given the phenomena of illusions in which we are aware of things that are not the way we see them, the puzzling question is how perception can be what it intuitively seems to be, a way of directly accessing external reality? Their answer to this so called "problem of perception"<sup>17</sup> is: perception is *not* what it intuitively seems to be because we don't have direct perceptual access to external reality. However, such a solution has a high price. If perceptual access is not directly putting us in touch with reality, we are placed behind the "veil of appearances", and our perceptual beliefs can always be undermined by the skeptical errorpossibilities. McDowell says that "the argument [from illusion and hallucination] effects a transition from sheer fallibility...to a 'veil of ideas' skepticism" (1982, pp. 472). According

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Some sense-datum theorists are *indirect realists*, they hold that perception is mediated by sense-data. For example, Foster and Robinson deny the existence of physical world, and they are known as a *phenomenalists* or *idealists* about perception. The difference between indirect realism and idealism is metaphysical. However, we will keep our focus on what is common to both views, namely, the thesis that in perception we are directly aware of appearances (the so called 'veil of perception').

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Crane's term is made explicit "The Problem of Perception" (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2005).

to Ayer, Putnam, McDowell, Bennett, and many others<sup>18</sup>, the arguments from illusion and hallucination inevitably lead to skepticism. Thus, I need to discuss their plausibility and role in making certain pre-conditions for Cartesian skepticism to arise.

Apart from the arguments from illusion and hallucination that create the "veil of perception", and have traditionally inspired the sense-datum theory, I am going to discuss two of its rivals - disjunctivism and intentionalism - and inquire whether these views are vulnerable to skeptical attack(s). Both of these views present themselves as compatible with or even defending so-called direct realism, the view that perception puts us in a direct contact with physical reality. I will consider intentionalism, the view defended by Anscombe, Armstrong, Dretske, Tye, Crane and others, as a view opposed to sense-datum theory and to the argument from illusion and hallucination. According to Tim Crane's (2001) version of the doctrine, the direct object of perception is the physical object itself. Crane denies the soundness of the argument from illusion, and promises to lift the corresponding "veil". I will also discuss disjunctivism about perception, a prominent view defended by Hinton, McDowell, Snowdon, Martin, and Neta, which also denies successfulness of the "skeptic friendly" arguments. Perception puts us in a direct contact with reality. Consequently, there is a chance to evade skepticism.

In this chapter I shall assess how the above mentioned three theories of perception lead to skepticism (or are at least vulnerable to it). If a certain theory leads to skepticism, then it is natural to think that certain assumptions in these theories enable the problem to arise.

- (i) Any experience of an object may be phenomenally indistinguishable from dreaming or hallucinating that object.
- (ii) In dreaming or hallucinating an object one is not aware of a real or existent object.
- (iii) In order to explain such phenomenal indistinguishability we must suppose that one is perceptually aware of something in common to perceiving an object and dreaming or hallucinating the same thing. Call this sensory idea of an object.
- (iv) Therefore, in experiencing an object one is directly aware of a sensory idea of that object, which forms a defeasible basis for judging that there is an object there.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Here is how David Macarthur (2003, pp. 177) presents the logical connection between the arguments from illusion and hallucination, and skeptic-friendly indirect realism:

Thus, my inquiry on theories of perception will help to diagnose if there are essential assumptions about the nature of perception that enable Cartesian skepticism concerning senses, and it will aim to estimate how compelling they are. The presupposition of the skeptical arguments, namely, the point that that sensory experience in the skeptical scenario *exactly matches* genuine perception, is going to be considered in various formulations carrying with them different degrees of logical strength, from more to less committing versions. This point will be especially important in connection with the argument from hallucination which carries such claim as a premise. In short, there are two important issues which are going to be in our focus throughout the present chapter: (i) how different theories of perception are susceptible to skepticism, and (ii) what is the "matching" relation between the experience in the "bad" case (skeptical scenario or in hallucination) and the "good" case, which is an assumption presupposed in the skeptical arguments.

The first two major sections discuss arguments to the effect that we are directly aware of (mere) appearances: the argument from illusion and hallucination, and the attendant sensedatum theory. The third section discusses intentionalism and its relation to skepticism, and the forth section is devoted to disjunctivism and its anti-skeptical strategy.

# 2.1. Arguments That We Are Aware Of (Mere) Appearances: The Argument From Illusion

In this section I discuss and analyze Howard Robinson's (1994) and Tim Crane's (2001, 2005) reconstruction of the argument from illusion, and attempt to offer interpretations that (to me at least) seem plausible. My approach will be pro-skeptical in method; I will try to make the most plausible defense of the argument, which is divided in two parts:

- (i) "Simple" version concluding that in cases of illusions we are aware of appearances.
- (ii) "Generalized" version concluding that in cases of veridical perception we are also aware of appearances.

A. D. Smith (2002, pp. 23) defines illusion as "any perceptual situation in which a physical object is actually perceived, but in which that object perceptually appears other than it really is". For example, a white wall appears red under red lights, or in the "moon illusion" the moon near the horizon looks larger than when the same object is high on the sky. Such and other cases of illusions figure as a good starting point for the so called "argument from illusion". Let me start with the following "simple" version of the argument from illusion:

- 1. A coin appears to be elliptical.
- 2. The coin is really round.
- If I'm appeared to something elliptical then I am directly aware of something having elipticalness.
- 4. If I'm directly aware of something having ellipticalness then there *is* something of which I'm directly aware that has the property of being elliptical, i.e. there *is* something that instantiates this property. (Instance of the *Phenomenal Principle*, PP)
- 5. The object of my awareness is elliptical and the coin is not elliptical.
- 6. If x has Fness and y does not have Fness then x is not identical to y. (*Lebniz's law*, LL)
- 7.  $\therefore$  The coin is not identical to the object of my direct awareness. From (5) and (6)
- 8. ∴ I'm directly aware of a non-physical object a sense-datum.

The conclusion of the argument is that in cases of illusions we are not aware of an ordinary object, as we would naturally though of to be (on the basis of how things seem). The crux of the argument is the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> premise, which many philosophers took as obvious, and many found controversial. For example, H.H. Price says that "When I say 'this table appears brown to me' it is quite plain that I am acquainted with an actual instance of brownness" (1932, pp. 63). H. Robinson gives a name to such intuition. His *phenomenal principle* (PP) states that "If there sensibly appears to a subject to be something which possesses a particular sensible quality then there is something of which the subject is aware which does possess that sensible quality" (1994, pp. 32). M. G. F. Martin explains plausibility of the principle in the following way:

While the principle is not self-evident, it is nonetheless *evident in the light of experience*. If all one has to go on is reflection on the proposition itself, then one cannot determine whether it is true or not. But the proposition in question concerns appearances, how things appear to one, and that one can test just by reflection on how things do appear to one. Hence, simple reflection on one's own case should show one whether the principle in question is true. (2004b, pp. 30)

Thus, if the coin appears to be elliptical and the PP is true, then *seems elliptical* implies that there *is* something elliptical which makes the application of LL legitimate. Since the coin cannot have incompatible properties of the same kind (roundness and elipticalness), it follows that one is not directly aware of the coin.

The first premise states that a coin *appears to be elliptical*, and the PP (the third and fourth premises) further extrapolates an ontological claim that there *is* something real that possesses this quality; there is some x which has F. But why would we be compelled to think that there is real elipticalness, rather than *illusionary* elipticalness? One might further object that *x has Fness and y doesn't have Fness then x is not identical to y* holds only if property F is of the same kind. But elipticalness is just apparent and roundness is real. These properties are of different kinds, and are compatible with each other.

Since the PP is essential for the argument, we need to see how plausible the principle is. This leads us to two further deeper questions about the nature of perception: how objects are given to the perceiver, and what can be concluded from the phenomenology of perceptual experience. I will compare Robinson's sense-datum theory and Crane's intentionalism.

A component of our ordinary conception of perceptual experience is the intuition that objects of perception appear to be "there". This is so called "presence to the mind" or "giveness" to the senses - *objects seem to be present*. Unlike thought, perception puts us "in touch" only with what is given at the present moment. Robinson argues that there are differences between perceptual experience and other intentional states. Emotions differ from perceptual experience. The nature of emotions "do not consist in any difference in the manner of the presence of the object, but in the manner of subject's response to the object" (1994, pp. 165). However, in sensory experience, objects have a different role: "Perception is experientially as it is because of the apparent presence of the empirical features of things in the experience itself" (Robinson 1994, pp. 166).

Furthermore, objects seem to be mind-independent. The red patch which appears to be before my mind doesn't seem to be "there" as if it were voluntarily brought up by my mind, whereas in case of thinking, I voluntarily control what I am going to think, at least to a degree.

The difference between perception and thought (or imagination) is also in the so called "order of experienced determination"; in perception it seems that the object determines the experience, whereas in the case of thinking it seems that I determine the object, e.g. I am the creator of the imagined scene. Take for example a thought about the table. My thought about it is not constrained in any way by how the table is at this moment. I could think of a table as being covered with flowers. On the contrary, how the table is now when I see it puts certain constraints on my experience. Namely, I cannot see it as being elephant-shape-like.

My perception intuitively seems to be an immediate response to how the object, table, appears now. So how what explains this difference between perception and thought? Within perceptual experience itself the apparent presence of objects to the mind seems to "shape" our experience. The feeling that I'm not the author of the perceived scene, according to sense datum theory, is explained by the fact that there *is* an object that determines the experience.

The last but not the least features of perceptual experience are vividness and immediacy. The table that I see is more vividly present to my mind than in my imagining or thinking about it. This vividness is derived from the fact that objects appear to be presented in the experience and seem to determine the nature of experience. The 3<sup>rd</sup> premise of the argument accounts for the *immediacy* of perceptual experiences, which is also a part of our ordinary conception of perception. E.g., ellipticalness seems to be directly before my mind, because nothing seems to be an epistemic mediator between my mind and the object.

Our ordinary conception of perception thus includes the following features: presence to the mind, mind-independency, the specific order of experienced determination, vividness and immediacy. These phenomenal and presentational features distinguish perceptual experiences from other intentional states.

So far, I have discussed the apparent features of objects, but now I am interested in the *nature* of perceptual experience, which brings us closer to the importance of the PP. The question is what is essential for perceptual experience? Since there are significant phenomenological differences between thinking and perceiving, it is expected that there should be a difference in their natures. According to the sense-datum view, the best explanation of such differences is the following: perceptual experience is essentially tailored by the real presence of its objects, whereas thinking is not. This view is encapsulated by the phenomenal principle. For example, if *something appears to be F* then *there is something F*. However, the PP implies infallibility of direct perceptual awareness, whenever one is

appeared to x and thereby aware of x, then one is aware of x as it is. How plausible is that implication? Intentionalists straightforwardly deny the principle. Let me use this chance to present the position in more detail.

The intentionalists - Armstrong, Anscombe, Dretske, Peacocke, Harman, Crane, and others - claim that thoughts and perceptual experiences exhibit intentionality. Since I will focus on Crane's (2001) version of intentionalism, let me start with his observation:

It is natural to say that a thought about Pegasus and a thought about Zeus are about different 'things' – Pegasus and Zeus, respectively – or alternatively that they have different 'objects'. The objects of thoughts are known as *intentional objects*. (2004)

Thoughts are always about something, even when they don't reach to real things. And we can say that we usually perceive something to be the case (e.g. I see people walking on the street). Intentional states thus exhibit directedness in virtue of having intentional objects. Such objects can be real objects (e.g. people, sun, trees), but sometimes they don't really exist (e.g. unicorns). According to Crane (2001, pp. 16) intentional objects don't have a nature of their own. They are not substantial things like sense data, they are real merely in a schematic sense.

Another feature of intentionality is *aspectual shape*. For example, when you think about Budapest you can think how good bean soup they have there, or you may think about how impressing the Hero's Square is. These are two aspects under which you may think about Budapest. Similarly, we always think or perceive something in some way, or *as* suchand-such. Insofar a mental state has aspectual shape, it has intentional content. In intentional states the intentional object is presented from a certain aspect. When we specify the content of a state, we thereby inevitably individuate its object, but by giving the content of a state we don't fully individuate the mental state. You may imagine Budapest or remember it. These are two *intentional modes*; they are ways by which you relate to intentional content. The phenomenal character of a mental state, like perception or pain, is thus exhausted both by its

content and mode. "What is it like" to be in a mental state is explained in terms of such an intentional structure.

Although some mental states like thinking about unicorns, phantom pain or hallucinations, don't have real objects (but merely intentional ones), the content must exist (Crane, 2001, pp.32). Similarly, perception always has content, rather than object. Crane explains the intentionality of perception in the following way:

We should deny that perception is a relation to real object. Rather, perception is an intentional state, a relation to intentional content...it is not essential to something's being an intentional state that it has an existing object. What is essential to something's being an intentional state is that it has an intentional structure: subject-mode-content. (2001, pp. 137)

Crane ties the relational structure of perceptual experience to its content rather than object. Therefore, the PP finds no place in the intentionalist theory. This being said, we may return to our main debate.

Intentionalists would typically argue that we are directly aware of a physical coin although in certain circumstances it may appear differently than it actually is. Crane would say that the coin appears to be elliptical, but he would deny the temptation to infer that there is something *really* elliptical. Elipticalness is an aspect of the misrepresented coin; illusions are simply misrepresentations. As Anscombe once pointed out, just as we can think of something non-existent, we can also have an experience of something non-existent. In the case of illusion, the property of being elliptical can be regarded as a non-existent property. Thus, the intentionalist blocks the argument from illusion by denying the PP, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> premise of the argument.

Although it might have seemed that the debate between the sense-datum theorist and intentionalist is merely about premises in the argument, the disagreement is much deeper, it is about the nature of perceptual experience and about theoretically interpreting our ordinary conception of it. If perceptual experience is like thought, an intentional state which is not bound for its real object, but rather to its content, then why should one insist on the claim that the PP is true? Why should one insist that perception is *unlike* thought, constituted by a relation to a real object? The burden of proof is on the intentionalist's opponent to show that there is something missing in the explanation.

Sense-datum theorists, Robinson in particular, take such a line of argument, insisting that intentionalism fails to adequately explain the difference in the phenomenology of thinking and perceiving. If perceiving is essentially like thought, an intentional state, then it is not clear what explains their phenomenological differences<sup>19</sup>. Phenomenological and presentational differences between those states make plausible the idea that we should treat them differently, and our ordinary conception of perceptual experience suggests that perceptual experience is a relation to a real object. From this vantage the sense-datum theory seems to be a more intuitive explanation of the apparent relation because perceptual experience is a relation. Since relation entails the existence of *relata*, then every perceptual experience has a real object. Presence to the mind, the order of experienced determination, and vividness, are best explained by the real presence of objects is perception. Such explanation seems to be the best because it is the most intuitive one, namely, it saves much of our ordinary conception of perceptual experience. Objects seem to be present because they are present, experience is vivid because objects are present to the mind, and it seems that the object determines the character of the experience because it actually does. Any view of perception has to accommodate for the common sense views, and denying reality of objects would certainly be contrary to it.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> For example, in the *Elements of Mind* (2001) Crane argues that the phenomenal difference between thinking and perceiving can be explained in terms of the difference in their kind of content. Thoughts have propositional content whereas perceptions have *non-conceptual* content. However, this view has some questions open. For more on this issue see "Crane on intentionality and consciousness: A few questions." *Croatian Journal of Philosophy* 4.11 (2004): 219-222.

However, the sense-datum theory won't give justice to all features of the ordinary conception. Crucially, sense-datum theory denies mind-dependence, which actually conflicts with how objects of perception are presented to us. The conclusion of the argument from illusion then seems to conflict the initial motivation for the PP. Let me say more about this point, and raise a potential difficulty concerning what sense data are for Robinson.

#### 2.1.1. A Few Thoughts On Robinson's Sense Datum Theory

The PP accounts for the intuition that we can see only what is actually "there" - it accounts for the presence of objects. The motto seems to be to "take appearance at face value". But, on the other hand, the theory contradicts common sense. The argument from illusion appeals to the PP in order to show that we are *not* aware of a mind-independent object. The outcome is that "taking appearances at face value" is misleading in this case: the objects appear to be mind-independent although they are not mind-independent. But then, there seems to be something problematic about arguing from the common sense in order to show that common sense is misleading. How can the motivation and outcome of the sensedatum theory be reconciled in a coherent way? The sense-datum theorist who argues that sense data are mind-independent (Moore) may be in a better position. The existence of mindindependent sense data explains our common sense intuition that objects appear to be mindindependent. Then, arguing from common sense doesn't end up in contradicting it. But, the sense-datum theorist like Robinson who argues that sense data are mind-dependent is in a more problematic position. Here is how the objection can be addressed. The sense-datum theory has to sacrifice some of its plausibility because it denies mind-independence of objects, but the phenomena of illusion and hallucination force us to make a compromise somewhere. Crane observes that:

The dominant approaches to the problem of perception accept the possibility of hallucination and illusion, and try instead to see how much of our conception of perception can be defended against the arguments from illusion and hallucination (Crane, 2005).

On the other hand, the intentionalists are charged of inadequately explaining the difference between perception and thought (Robinson), and preserving "openness to the world" (McDowell, Martin).The puzzle of perceptual experience does not have an easy solution, and the question is which theory of perception can "save phenomena" at the lowest price, so to say.

Now I want to pass to a different difficulty, which concerns the question of what role sense data have in Robinson's theory. According to Robinson, sense data meet five conditions (1994, pp. 1, 2):

- 1. Sense data are what we are aware of.
- 2. They are non-physical.
- 3. They are logically private occurrences to a single subject.
- 4. They possess sensible qualities (shape, color, etc.)
- They posses no intrinsic intentionality; their sensory qualities do not refer beyond themselves.

In Robinson's view, sensible qualities are qualities of a sense datum or a mental image. Usually, sensible qualities come accompanied with other qualities, e.g. color comes with shape. And this bundle of properties constitutes a real object of which we are aware of in perception - the sense datum. However, sense data also seem to play a different role. Take for example a thought about a non-existent, a unicorn. This thought is a thought about a nonexistent object, and yet the conscious episode is real in a psychological sense. Even though the thought is about a non-existent, an episode of thinking certainly is not non-existent. The psychological reality of such a thought needs to be explained. In Robinson's view, the psychological reality of a thought about a unicorn is explained by its psychological vehicle, i.e. by a mental image of a unicorn, or an episode of inner speech, by which one actually performs the thinking. Thus, psychological vehicles are means by which we are doing the thinking. Sense data, in Robinson's view play a role of psychological vehicles of perceptual experiences.

In cases of hallucinations (H), one is not seeing anything real, and yet, a hallucinatory experience is psychologically real. So, something has to explain in virtue of what H is psychologically real. Robinson says that:

... the element common to real perception and veridical hallucination –seems more similar to the psychologically real vehicle of thought-the words one says in one's heart-than like the logical object of thought. (1994, pp. 166). The psychologically real vehicle of the mental act is phenomenally realized object, and not a distinct vehicle at all.(1994, pp. 167)

The passage seems to suggest that the same psychological vehicle present in hallucinatory cases is also present in veridical cases. What is the argument for that claim? According to the so called *common factor analysis* which Robinson endorses, Hs and VPs belong to the same psychological type, or a kind of experiences. In case of a VP we have a sensory experience and there is a real object that we see, but in case of a H, we have the same kind of experience without being aware of a real object. Now, if H and VPs are of the same psychological kind then the same kind of thing explains their psychological reality. Given that in the case of hallucination sense datum is the psychological vehicle, the common factor analysis suggests that the same vehicle must be responsible for the psychological reality of veridical perception too. That is why the above quotation suggests that there is a common psychological vehicle of a H and VP, a phenomenally realized object - sense datum.

However, I think that conflating objects of perceptions with psychological vehicles is problematic, as Huemer (2001, pp. 85) points out. If one would identify sense data with the object *and* the psychological vehicle, the result would be the following implausible argument:

1. In perception, we are aware of sense data (object).

- 2. We are perceiving by means of having sense data (psychological vehicle).
- 3. Therefore, we are aware of the means by which we are perceiving.

Suppose that I think about a tree in front of my house. The object of my thinking is the tree itself, although when I actually think about it I entertain a mental image of a tree by which I think about the physical tree. Clearly, means by which I am doing the thinking in case of an existent object is distinct from the object of thought. Similarly, when I see a tree I see it by having a certain appearance or mental representation of the tree. But the appearance of the tree is not identical to the tree out there, that I'm aware of. Treating sense data as psychological vehicles of VP and H blurs the distinction between objects and psychological vehicles, and leads into a serious problem. The question is then how can Robinson appropriately account for the required distinction between psychological vehicles and objects.

In the previous section I have discussed the motivation and difficulties for the phenomenal principle which plays an essential role in the argument from illusion, and the sense-datum theory. If you find convincing the view which preserves a lot (but not the whole) of our ordinary conception of perception, you may be inclined to believe that in the cases of illusions we are directly aware of a sense datum. However, the sense-datum theorist has an ambition to generalize the argument, which is purported to show that we are not directly aware of physical objects in cases of illusions, but also in veridical cases. Let me now proceed from the "simple" to the "generalized" version of the argument from illusion.
## 2.1.2. The 'Generalized' Argument From Illusion

In perception it seems that nothing mediates our awareness of reality; we are not aware of the moon by being aware of the "image" of moon. At least, this is how it seems. The argument from illusion shows that that is an illusion. Apart from being metaphysically mediated by a causal process which includes stimulation of retina, brain state, etc., perception is *epistemically mediated*: we are (at best) aware of physical objects by being aware of a sense datum. The sense-datum theorist argues that if in illusions we perceive sense data, then we perceive them in veridical perception as well. The argument for this transition can be grounded on two considerations:

- (i) continuity thesis (Robinson)
- (ii) indistinguishability thesis (Crane)

Robinson (1994 pp.57, 58)<sup>20</sup> generalizes the argument by appeal to *continuity*. He says that there is no "absolute distinction" for example between seeing sharply and being slightly short sighted, and hence we cannot tell when seeing a bit blurry starts to be an illusion. Seeing veridically gradually changes into seeing very blurry, and we cannot tell how blurry we have to see in order to call it an illusion. The fact is that our vision almost never

<sup>20</sup> Here is Robinson's original formulation:

<sup>1.</sup> In some cases of perception, physical objects appear other than they actually are --that is, they appear to possess sensible qualities that they do not actually posses

<sup>2.</sup> Whenever something appears to a subject to possess a sensible quality, there is something of which the subject is aware which does possess the quality (the PP)

<sup>3. ∴</sup> In some cases of perception there is something of which the subject is aware which possesses sensible qualities which the physical object the subject is purportedly perceiving does not posses

<sup>4.</sup> If a possesses a sensible quality which b lacks, then a is not identical to b

<sup>5. ∴</sup> In some cases of perception that of which the subject is aware is something other than the physical object the subject is purportedly perceiving

<sup>6.</sup> There is such *continuity* between those cases in which objects appear other than they actually are and cases of veridical perception that the same analysis of perception must apply to both

<sup>7. ∴</sup> In all cases of perception that of which the subject is aware is other than the physical object the subject is purportedly perceiving

accurately presents things as they are. Physical surfaces are certainly finer than our eyes can possibly detect. So it is hard to tell what seeing *absolutely* sharply is at all. To further clarify the continuity thesis consider the following analogy. Suppose that S looses hairs gradually, one by one, until he becomes bald. Now, we are asked at which point S became bald, which hair is "bald making"? Does the question have a plausible answer? It seems that no nonarbitrary answer can be given here. I can say that loosing 100000 hairs makes one bald, and someone else may say "No, loosing 110000 makes a man bald". Who is right? It seems that it's not possible to tell who is right because there is no sharp distinction between being hairy and being bald. There is *continuity* between being hairy and being bald. Similarly, there is no sharp distinction between veridically perceiving and non-veridically perceiving. It is logically possible to set a sharp distinction, but it is hard to see how that can be done nonarbitrarily. Therefore, illusions and veridical cases should be analyzed in the same way. As Robinson argues, it is implausible to claim that in the case of veridical perception we directly see a physical object while in case of illusion we see a sense datum. As the picture becomes blurry there is no point where the object veridical perception is *replaced* by a sense datum. Therefore, the continuity thesis makes plausible the view that the same analysis must apply to both, illusions and veridical perceptions. In other words, the objects of direct awareness in both cases must be the same kind of thing. That is one interpretation of the continuity thesis and one strategy for generalizing the argument. Now, let me consider an alternative way.

Crane interprets the continuity claim in the following way:

There is no non-arbitrary way of distinguishing, from the point of view of the subject of an experience, between the phenomenology of perception and illusion (2005).

This interpretation seems to amount to indistinguishability thesis, namely, that one is not able to discriminate having an illusion from veridically seeing, merely on the basis of reflection. Of course, this doesn't have to be true for every case of illusion. As Austin pointed out,

seeing a bent stick in the water is different from seeing a straight stick which appears bent. Similarly, seeing an elliptical coin is different from seeing a round coin which only appears elliptical. So, it is not true that for every illusion there is an object of VP which has the same qualitative features. However, there is another way of interpreting Crane's thesis. The indistinguishability might not apply to qualitative properties presented in VPs and illusions, but rather to general phenomenological features of the experience. According to this interpretation, illusions may be after all distinguishable from VPs with respect to their object's qualitative aspect. E.g. apparent elipticalness of a coin and its "real" ellipticalness differ qualitatively, but experiences are indistinguishable in virtue of their general features. When I see a round coin it strikes me as the coin is actually immediately present to my mind, and seeing the elliptical thing strikes me in the same way, from the point of view of being a VP or not. When I see an elliptical thing, I cannot tell whether it is a VP or not. Thus, the phenomenology of all VPs and illusions is indistinguishable with respect vividness, immediacy, and giveness. So, perhaps the argument from illusion can be generalized by appeal to indistinguishability of these general features of perceptual experiences.

The argument from illusion can proceed in the following way. One can argue that if VP and illusions are indistinguishable in virtue of their general features then postulating the same kind of object of awareness explains their indistinguishability relation. Then the argument from illusion easily generalizes; since in cases of illusions the physical object is not the object of direct awareness then neither it is in the case of VP.

Consider the following reconstruction of the generalized argument from illusion which encompasses two discussed strategies:

1. In some actual cases of perceptions physical objects appear differently from the way they actually are; they appear to be F although they are not really F.

- 2. If an object appears to be F then I am directly aware of something having Fness.
- *3.* If I am directly aware of something having Fness then there *is* something which I am directly aware of which has Fness. (the *PP*)
- ∴ In some cases of perceptions I'm directly aware of something which possesses
  Fness while the physical object doesn't posses Fness.
- 5. If x has Fness and y doesn't have Fness then x is not identical to y. (Leibniz's law)
- ∴ In some cases of perceptions the object of my direct awareness is not identical to the physical object.
- 7. In some cases of perceptions I'm directly aware of a sense datum.
- 8. General phenomenological features of illusions and VP are *subjectively indistinguishable*, or 8\*: there is a *continuity* between VPs and cases of perception where things appear other than they actually are.
- 9. If general phenomenological features of illusions and VP are subjectively indistinguishable, then in both cases their direct objects are of the same kind, or 9\*: if there is a continuity between VPs and cases of perception where things appear other than they actually are, then their direct objects are of the same kind.
- 10. ∴ In both cases I'm directly aware of the same kind of direct object. From (8), (9) or (8\*), (9\*).
- 11.  $\therefore$  In all cases of perceptions I'm directly aware of a sense datum. From (7), (10).

I think that (8) and (8\*) and (9\*) are plausible premises. But, (9) is controversial. Isn't it possible that a hologram of a cat is subjectively indistinguishable from a real cat? Isn't it possible that different kinds of object give raise to equally vivid appearances? It seems that one can consistently accept the "subjective indistinguishability of appearances" and maintain that it doesn't follow that their direct objects are of the same kind. One might accept (8), and

accept that in cases of illusion we see a sense datum, since nothing physical instantiates sensible properties, but maintain that while having a VP the objects of awareness is a physical object. I will discuss this objection in more detail when I consider the generalized version of the argument from hallucination because that objection tends to undermine both arguments. For now I proceed with the argument from hallucination, which is purported to support the same conclusion as the argument from illusion - in all cases of VP we are directly aware of mere appearances or sense data.

# 2.2. Arguments That We Are Aware Of (Mere) Appearances: The Argument From Hallucination

In all cases of hallucinations one has a kind of a perceptual experience; one *seems* to see something although there is no physical object being present to visual senses. Such states are usually induced by drugs, alcohol, or abnormal neurological and psychological conditions. However, I am interested in phenomenology of not merely actual states of hallucinations, but also *possible* hallucinations which are for the subject phenomenologically exactly like veridical perception. Since my main interest here are necessary features of perception, it suffices to take into account such possible hallucinations. Robinson calls them "philosophers' hallucinations":

Philosophers are (mainly, at least) interested in what I shall call "philosophers' hallucinations". These are not, as far as we know, hallucinations as they actually occur, but they are, it is argued, the hallucinations that would occur if the perceptual system and brain were stimulated in the just the way it is stimulated in genuine perception, but directly and not by the usual external objects. This would give, it is supposed, a hallucination indistinguishable to the subject from the corresponding perception, which is not the case, at least in general, for hallucinations as they actually occur. (2008, pp. 1)

Suppose that you have a visual experience of fire burning in the fireplace. What does it mean that you could hallucinate it? It means that you could have an experience just like the present one - phenomenologically - without there being a fireplace<sup>21</sup>. This point ties the argument from hallucination directly to the skeptical hypothesis in which we are asked to conceive a possibility that we have phenomenally exactly the same, yet non-veridical experience in the deceiver world, where our perceptual beliefs are false. Both arguments converge at the point of formulating the "matching" relation between the veridical and non-veridical case. And this is why I will discuss this topic in great detail.

I propose an argument from hallucination based on the phenomenal principle, which is generalized through a thought experiment. The argument proceeds in two steps: (1) in H we are directly aware of a sense datum, (2) in VP we are directly aware of a sense datum. Here is a formulation of the first part of the argument:

- 1. While having a hallucination I'm appeared to something red.
- If I'm appeared by something red, then there *is* a direct object of my awareness which instantiates redness (an instance of the PP).
- 3. There is no physical object (no patch) which is red.
- ∴ When hallucinating I'm directly aware of a non-physical object (sense datum) which instantiates redness.

In order to be appeared by redness one has to be directly "in contact" with something red. A. D. Smith points out the following:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Now, a skeptical reader may wonder how do we know that such hallucinations are possible? After all, genuine perception is quite different than hallucination under the influence of drugs. So, the question is whether the skeptic's methodology is justified. However, there are empirical considerations suggesting that for every case of genuine perception, it is possible to produce the same phenomenological state by a different cause.

To say simply that our subject is not aware of anything is surely to under-describe this situation dramatically. Perhaps we can make sense of there being 'mock thoughts', but can there really be such a thing as mock sensory awareness? Perhaps there can be 'an illusion of understanding', but can there be an illusion of awareness?... The sensory features of the situation need to be accounted for... If we take as our example subjects who are fully attentive and focused, we need to do justice to the fact that such subjects in some sense take cognizance of, indeed fully attend to, sensory presentations. But if so, what else can we say other than that the subject is, as the Argument requires, aware of a non-normal object? (2002, pp. 224-5)

If nothing red really strikes me perceptually then what explains the quality of the experience? Since properties must be instantiated, and there is nothing red "outside", it follows that the direct object of my awareness which instantiates redness must be a non-physical object, a sense datum. However, this is not to say that the PP is based on grammatical considerations. Since much about it has been said in the section about illusions, I will elaborate more on the application of the PP in cases of hallucinations.

If the PP is justified as a principle that accounts for the phenomenology of perception – its presence, order of experienced determination, vividness and immediacy – then the same explanatory relation should hold for hallucinations which share the same phenomenology with genuine perception. Once one grants that hallucinations and VPs are alike phenomenologically, then the PP naturally generalizes – they same analysis should apply to both, to H and VP. Robinson confirms this point:

If there sensibly appears to a subject to be something which possesses a particular sensible quality then there is something of which the subject is aware which does possess that sensible quality." (1994, p. 32)

In hallucinations something certainly appears such-and-such, and hence the original formulation of the PP includes hallucinations too. I think that someone who affirms the PP in cases of VP, and denies it in the case of hallucinations, has to give reasons why the principle does *not* apply.

Now let me pass to the second part of the argument, toward generalizing the

conclusion that in cases of VP we are also aware of a sense datum. This topic will preoccupy us throughout the next few sections in which I will introduce the background and main positions involved in the debate.

Let me begin the second part of the argument from hallucination with the thesis that *it is possible that hallucinations are subjectively indistinguishable from VPs*, and let me discuss what subjective indistinguishability relation is, and why it has to be explained. For example, you are now veridically perceiving letters on a piece of paper. But you might be having a philosopher's hallucination; it is conceivable that you hallucinate reading these letters by being presented with an appearance which is phenomenologically just like the real object – subjectively indistinguishable from the appearance of real letters. A.D.Smith points out that:

The restriction that such discrimination should be solely on the basis of the experience itself, or 'what it is like' to have the experience, is obviously required, since hallucinations can certainly be discriminated from perceptions in other ways. I might, for example, learn that I am hallucinating by being informed of the fact by someone who knows; or I might infer that I am hallucinating because I regard the apparently presented scene as physically impossible. (2008, pp. 182)

Byrne and Logue define subjective indistinguishability as follows:

We may define a case  $\eta$  to be subjectively indistinguishable from the good case iff, in  $\eta$ , the subject is not in a position to know by 'introspection' alone that he is not in the good case. (2008, pp.58)

In such a perfect hallucination, you wouldn't be able to tell that you are not veridically seeing. Usually, things are subjectively indistinguishable in virtue of having something in common. For example, a real Easter egg and a plastic egg might easily be subjectively indistinguishable because they look very much alike. The "egg looking property" is something that both eggs share. Similarly, the question I want to raise now is in virtue of what shared property Hs and VPs are subjectively indistinguishable? The most simple and plausible explanation is that appearances share their properties. For example, seeing a red

patch and hallucinating a red patch have something in common – a red looking property. This way, by introducing a "common factor", it is possible to obtain a unified explanation of indistinguishable experiences. Thus, let me make a more general point: for every VP, it is conceivable to be in a mental state which is subjectively indistinguishable from a VP in virtue of its properties of appearance<sup>22</sup>, although there is no physical object that one is directly aware of. If it is conceivable that H appearance is subjectively indistinguishable from V appearance then it is possible that in both cases (properties of) appearances are the same. I proceed with the following formulation:

- 1. There are hallucinatory appearances that are subjectively indistinguishable from veridical appearances. *The thesis about "philosophers' hallucinations"*
- 2. If hallucinatory appearances are subjectively indistinguishable from veridical appearances then (properties of) appearances in both cases are the same.

I will refer to "(properties of) appearance" shared by H and VP because the term is theory neutral and non-committing; it screens how the purported object appears, "bracketing" the nature of the real object (if any). The 2<sup>nd</sup> premise figures as the best explanation of the possibility stated by the 1<sup>st</sup> premise. Since such a view is in a great length discussed and challenged in contemporary philosophy of perception, I will introduce the main issues and positions involved in the debate.

<sup>22</sup> By feature or "property of appearances" I mean "sensible qualities". I don't want to say that "properties of appearances" are "phenomenal properties", i.e. properties of experience.

# 2.2.1. Considerations Based On The Subjective Indistinguishability

### **Relation And The 'Common Factor'**

Let me begin with an example. A tiger looks very much like a big cat because they both belong to the same species – cats. Being alike or being indistinguishable is usually explained by something that things share in common. Similarly, indistinguishability of H and VP is explained in terms of their common kind. M. G. F. Martin says that:

I shall call The Common Kind Assumption: that whatever kind of mental episode it is that is occurring when I am veridically perceiving – say when I am seeing the orange as it is – that same kind of episode can occur when I am merely having an hallucination, as when my optic nerves are suitably artificially stimulated. For such a view, although there can be all the difference in the world between a situation in which I am seeing an orange and one in which I am merely hallucinating one, there need not be a difference in the kind of experience or mental episode which occurs in both cases. (2004b, pp. 7)

The so called "common factor view" (or "conjunctivism") posits a common factor, a kind

shared by an H and its corresponding VP which explains their subjective indistinguishability.

Such view is seriously questioned by the disjunctivists who (for one reason or another) deny

that H and VP share the common kind. Let me introduce the main theses of disjunctivism.

Disjunctivism - a version of direct realism - is the view according to which physical

objects are direct objects of perception and essentially constitute the experience. Consider an

example introduced by Bryan and Louge:

Imagine that you are looking at an ordinary lemon in good light. Your vision is good: you see the lemon, and it looks yellow and ovoid. Now suppose that, unbeknownst to you, some minor deity removes the lemon, while preserving its proximal neural effects. Your brain is in the same local physical states as it was in when the lemon was there: the neurons in your visual cortex, for instance, are firing in the same pattern. After the removal, you do not see the lemon, because the lemon is not around to be seen. Yet—we can all grant—you notice nothing amiss. (2009, pp. 1)

As Johnston (2004) says, you have undergone a "subjectively seamless transition". Now, the key question is whether your experience has changed after the lemon is removed? The

disjunctivist says "yes", because the lemon is essential for the experience. The lemon "out there" constitutes your lemon-perception. Once the lemon is removed, there is no lemonperception; there is a H of lemon. Your experience cannot be identified independently of its object. The common factor theorists argues the contrary - the experience didn't essentially change. By removing the lemon the object is changed, not the experience itself. What is essential for lemon-perception is not the lemon itself, but the perceptual experience or the mental kind shared by H and VP, which figures as the common factor and remains the same after the lemon is removed. They regard the subjective part, the internal component that did not change, to be essential for perception. On the other hand, the disjunctivists say that H and VP just subjectively seem to be the same experience, but this criterion is not telling us about the real nature of those experiences. They reject the "common kind assumption". According to McDowell "[A]n appearance that such-and-such is the case is either a mere appearance or the fact that such-and-such is the case making itself perceptually manifest to someone" (1982, pp. 472). Or, to use Neta's (2008) example, the difference between H and VP is not like that one between two kinds of tigers, e.g. between a Bengal and Siberian one. Similarities between H and VP are like similarities between a real tiger and a hologram of a tiger. Yet they do have something in common, they both fall under a *disjunctive description*: either an experience is VP or it is a H. They also share the epistemic fact that they are indistinguishable from each other, from a certain vantage point. Thus, the common factor (in case of disjunctivism) is usually at best epistemic rather than metaphysical. However, nowadays there are various ways in which the common factor view can be spelled out: for example the common factor can be individuated in terms of sameness of their contents (Robinson, Crane), and/or objects, appearances (Alston), introspectively detectable features (Neta). And the conjunctivist position can be sufficiently weakened in order to be compatible with some forms of disjuctivism.

The debate about the common factor is important because it directly links skepticism with theories of perception. The common factor shared by an H and VP explains - or exactly individuates - the "matching" relation between non-veridical and veridical sensory experience in the skeptical hypothesis. The discussion concerning the question of how to explain subjective indistinguishability then bears direct impact on the strength and plausibility of the formulation of the skeptical assumption. On the one hand there is the common factor view that provides the skeptic a framework for formulating the "matching" relation essential for the skeptical hypotheses. On the other hand, the disjunctivists try to undermine the claim that subjective indistinguishability implies that appearances in H and VP case are the same, and thereby indirectly undermine the skeptic's presupposition that there is a "matching" relation.

Although there are many arguments<sup>23</sup> challenging the inference from subjective indistinguishability to the common factor thesis, I will focus on only one argument. Putnam (1999, pp.130) presented an argument against conjunctivism which is partially based on empirical consideration about subjective indistinguishability - the so-called "phenomenal sorites argument" (PSA).

#### 2.2.2. Countering the Phenomenal Sorites Argument

The subject of the phenomenal sorites experiment is presented with two blue cards, A and B, and she judges that they look the same. Thus, if *subjectively indistinguishability implies sameness of appearances*, then A=B ("=" denotes sameness of appearances, and " $\approx$ " subjective indistinguishability). Then she is presented again with two blue cards, B and C, and she judges that they look the same. Therefore, from the above implication it follows that B=C. From the transitivity of identity it further follows that A=C. However, when presented

<sup>23</sup> For example, McDowell and Williamson argue that the argument relies on an erroneous theory of self-knowledge.

with A and C cards, she judges that they *don't* look the same. But, If A and C are distinguishable then the appearance of A card is *not* identical to the appearance of C card. Here is the paradox:

subjective indistinguishability ( $\approx$ )ãsameness of appearances<sup>24</sup> (=)

$$(A \approx B) \rightarrow (A=B)$$
 A=B

$$(B\approx C) \rightarrow (B=C) \qquad B=C$$

$$\neg (A \approx C) \rightarrow \neg (A = C) \qquad \qquad \therefore A = C$$

 $\approx$  is *not* transitive

= *is* transitive

 $\therefore$   $\neg$ (subjective indistinguishability  $\rightarrow$  sameness of appearances)

On the left side of the implication we are tracking subjective indistinguishability relation. Although  $A \approx B$  and  $B\approx C$ , the relation of "subjective indistinguishability" fails to be transitive; it is not the case that  $A\approx C$ . Consequently,  $\neg$  (A=C). In the experiment appearances change gradually so that one can't notice the change. Assuming that subjective

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Here one can substitute "sameness of appearance" with "sameness of objects" or "sameness of content", to make the PSA argument directed against more versions of conjunctivism.

indistinguishability implies sameness of appearance, and we trust our abilities to judge how things appear, we end up with a paradox; A=C, and yet  $\neg$ (A=C). The phenomenal sorites shows that indistinguishability is *not* a transitive relation, although identity is transitive. Therefore, it cannot be true that subjective indistinguishability implies sameness of appearances. The PSA at least threatens some versions of conjunctivism, those that affirm that subjective indistinguishability implies sameness of objects (Robinson) or contents (Crane).

Now, the question is how strong the PSA-based objection really is? The PSA shows that our judgments about how things appear to are not infallible in cases where appearances change gradually. However, it doesn't show that our judgments about how things appear are *generally unreliable*. In order to show such a strong point, namely, that we shouldn't rely on our judgments, or that our discriminative powers are not reliable indicators of how appearances are, one would have to prove that we make mistakes *systematically*.

There is also another answer available to the conjunctivists: there is a relevant disanalogy between phenomenal sorites case and Hs-VPs. Appearances in the PSA example change gradually; the change in blue color is too small to be detectable. But such change is a matter of *degree*. On the other hand, if the disjunctivist is right, then Hs and VPs are different *kinds* of states, there is no common factor shared by H and VP. And that difference might potentially weaken the PSA argument as an objection. If we make mistakes when appearances differ in *degree*, that doesn't show that we would miss the difference between two *kinds* of appearances - hallucinatory and veridical one. Let me give an example to make the point more clear. Suppose that I'm giving a talk at the prospectus seminar. Now, suppose that every 5 seconds of my veridical perception an evil colleague induces my brain to have the same perceptual experience that I would have anyway; if he were not controlling my brain I would have the same visual experience as I have when he induces it. Suppose that I

have a VP for 5 seconds, and then I have a hallucinatory experience for 5 seconds, then again 5 seconds of a VP followed by 5 seconds of a H. And, yet I don't notice any changes happening. My experience flows "smoothly". Wouldn't it be really surprising that the *kind* of experience changes, without me noticing any change? Neta argues that it is conceivable and possible not to notice a difference between two kinds of things, and he gives an example to illustrate the point.

If each of those two things [real tiger and holographic tiger] is composed of great many parts then there could be a gradual transition from one thing to the other thing by a temporal series of replacements of parts of one for parts of the other. We could replace one small part of the tiger with one small part of the hologram, and then continue this series of replacements one-by-one, and thereby make a gradual transition from the tiger to a hologram of the tiger. (2008, pp.138)

Although such an answer is respectable, my sympathies are more inclined toward the common factor view. Thus I will present a thought experiment (TE) argument that can potentially meet the objection raised by the PSA and close the gap between subjective indistinguishability and sameness of appearances. Before presenting the argument let me mention two more worries that are going to be addressed by the TE argument.

The first question is how can one imagine a *perfect* hallucination indistinguishable from VP? Can our imagination be so powerful? Isn't it possible that in our conceiving appearances merely at first *seem* to be the same? For example, if you try to close your eyes and imagine the perceptual scene that you have at this very moment, the imaginary scene certainly won't be rich as the real perceptual scene. The worry is that in the argument from hallucination there are two appearances in different modes of presentation – perception and imagination. Different modes normally make a difference in the phenomenology of the object presented, in vividness, colorfulness etc. In that case, the same content ("what is experienced") due to different modes of presentation should yield subjectively distinguishable states. Then, the objection is that H imagined appearance in thought would not be phenomenally exactly the same as perceived appearance. Consequently, we have good reasons to be skeptical of how the conceivability argument is supposed to work at all.

Another related worry is that two appearances may seem to be indistinguishable, and yet they might differ in how their objects really are. For example a chiliagon (a figure with 1000 sides) and circle are indistinguishable although they are different figures. Similarly, it is possible that appearances in the TE are indistinguishable although a hallucinatory appearance in our conceiving may have something that the veridical appearance lacks (or *vice versa*), although we may not able to spot a fine detail. Thus, the inference from subjective indistinguishability to sameness of appearances is thereby rendered questionable.

In what follows I will attempt to address the two worries, and the objection based on the PSA. I want to show through a thought experiment argument from hallucination that the gap between subjective indistinguishability and the sameness of appearances can be sufficiently narrowed to meet the three objections. This argument will also be important for showing how the skeptical "matching" relation can be defended.

#### 2.2.3. A Thought Experiment Argument

In the thought experiment (TE) you are asked to conceive a (hallucinatory) appearance which is indistinguishable from your present veridical experience of people sitting in front of you in a classroom, whereas there are really no people and no chairs in the external world. In Husserl's (1931) terminology, the skeptic demands the so called method of *epoche* or "bracketing", according to which phenomenological specification of what the experience is about in the TE must not rely on the correctness of any existence assumption of the object (if any). The content of experience, in the present usage, captures the phenomenal aspect of the experience, and is identical with how the purported object is presented,

"bracketing" the existence of its object (if any). An H appearance which is indistinguishable from a V one is an appearance which could be a V, as far as you can tell purely by reflection alone. So, what appearance do you imagine? The condition of the imagined scene is to imagine an appearance of people sitting in front of you, and add to it "there are no physical people in front of me, no physical walls, no chairs, etc. "However, this extra condition doesn't add, nor in any way change imagining the scene you are presently aware of, because in the phenomenological description of a V appearance the existence of a physical object is "bracketed" in the first place. It is not the case that you have to visually imagine an extra tiny detail or make the appearance slightly blurry. So, the H appearance that you imagine remains the same as the veridical scene before your consciousness. In imagining a hallucinatory appearance which is indistinguishable from the V one you actually imagine your present veridical scene. But, to imagine a veridical scene is to keep the same apparent features before your mind. Nothing changes. Therefore, imagining an H indistinguishable from VP is to imagine an appearance which is *exactly like* a veridical appearance. Thus, the TE bears direct impact on the Cartesian argument, by directly addressing how the "matching" relation between H and V appearance is conceived in the skeptical scenario.

Let me present the TE reconstructed in the following form of an argument: ('Ä' stands for 'subjectively indistinguishable', and '=' stands for 'identical')

- 1. To imagine an H appearance (Ä V appearance) is to imagine a H appearance such that it could be a V one, as far as you can tell by reflection alone.
- 2. To imagine an H appearance (Ä V appearance) is to imagine (a V appearance +"no real people in front of you, no real chairs, etc.")
- The "no real people in front of you, no real chairs, etc." condition makes no difference to the imagined scene.

- 4. ∴ To imagine an H appearance (Ä V appearance) is to imagine an H appearance (=V appearance)
- ∴ In the TE (or in imagining) there is no distinction between subjective indistinguishability and the sameness of appearance.

This argument shows that when you conceive an H appearance which is indistinguishable from a V you imagine an H appearance which is *the same* as a V appearance. However, the term "the same" is ambiguous here. Depending on interpreting the second step of the TE, it is possible to obtain two interpretations of the TE, and two corresponding conclusions:

a. *The narrowest type identity*<sup>25</sup> of H and V: in the TE there are two appearances,
 hallucinatory and veridical one, which are exactly alike with respect to all reflectively accessible features.

According to option a. imagining (V appearance +"no real people in front of me") happens in two stages. First, at ti you have a V appearance before your mind, and then at t2 you add the condition "no real people in front of me". At t2 you have imagined the required hallucination. If there are two mental episodes in the TE, then there are two appearances, H and V one. Therefore, a V appearance is qualitatively (or of the same narrowest type) identical with H appearance. Consequently, the identity claim ('=') in the fourth step of the TE amounts to the narrowest (or qualitative) type identity of H and V appearance. This would be one way to present how the skeptic can formulate the "matching" relation of veridical and non-veridical experience in the skeptical scenario.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> I took this term from M. G. F. Martin.

b. Co-referentiality: H and V appearance refer to the same purported object.

According to option b., imagining (V appearance +"no people in front of me") happens in one mental act. You imagine something that you actually see, but what you add in imagining does not affect the scene that is before your mind. Thus, the act of perceiving overlaps with the act of imagining both temporally and with respect to the purported object. Such object, which must be the same in both cases, is taken under two modes: perceiving and imagining. The relation between H and VP with respect to their purported object is somewhat similar to Frege's relation between morning star and evening star. The first star visible in the morning is the last star visible in the evening, and both aspects refer to the same thing. In the imagined reality, V and H appearance are co-referential; they share a purported object, while their difference is mode-individuated and remains unreflected in imagination.

The thought experiment argument establishes the following two premises of the argument from hallucination:

- It is conceivable (possible) that H appearance is subjective indistinguishable from the V appearance.
- Therefore, appearances of H and VP are co-referential/narrowest-type identical. From
  (1) and ((5) from the TE).

The two different interpretations of the TE give two conclusions that differ in logical strength, and have impact on the three objections that motivated introducing the TE argument in the first place. Let me address these issues now.

The latter interpretation (b) of the TE directly addresses the first worry - that two modes of presentation must yield a difference on the phenomenal level. The answer is that in the TE you need not imagine an H appearance subjectively indistinguishable from V appearance by imagining "something *like* V appearance, whereas there are no physical objects out of my mind". This would imply that we have to imagine a "mental copy" of the V appearance. In this case it would be hard to see how can you imagine an appearance with is exactly like the V one, perfectly vivid in every detail. However, the skeptic need not require such a strong claim. Instead, he asks you to imagine "a V appearance, whereas there are no physical objects out of the mind". Here, you don't need to make a "mental" copy but just add the condition "there are no physical objects out of the mind" to the veridical scene present to your consciousness. In this case, the imagination-mode does not make a difference on the phenomenal level to the purported object presented in the perceptual mode. Hence, the objection that imagination and perception (as two modes of presentation) would yield phenomenally different appearances can be answered.

The version (a) and (b) also offer a solution for the problem raised by PSA and the chilliagon counterexample. Both objections undermine a more general thesis, namely, that subjective indistinguishability of appearances doesn't imply sameness of appearances. However, the TE presents a special case for hallucinations. H and V appearances in the TE are either co-referential or narrowest type identical. From this it follows that *it is absolutely impossible that there is a difference in detail between appearance of H and VP which is undetected.* If there is no chance, in principle, that appearances are subjectively indistinguishable and their appearances differ, then despite conceding the PSA objection and the counterexample with the chiliagon, the thesis that subjective indistinguishability implies sameness of appearances in cases of H-VP does not seem to be directly undermined.

The gap between subjective indistinguishability and sameness of appearance in the TE is (at least) sufficiently narrowed to meet the three objections. However, the first interpretation (a) is much weaker than (b), and it would not be sufficiently strong for the

conclusion concerning sameness of *objects* in H and VP case. The (a) strategy gives the conclusion that H and V appearance are narrowest-type identical. But in this case there will still be room for the possibility that qualitatively identical appearances are instantiated in different kinds of objects. For example, a holographic image of a tiger might look the same as the real tiger, and yet those objects are different. Similarly, it may be argued that in the case of an H, properties of appearance may be instantiated in a sense datum, but not in the case of  $VP^{26}$ . Thus, the conjunctivist (sense-datum theorist) needs to offer an argument for the inference from the type identity to object identity. Before I proceed with that argument, let me address an objection<sup>27</sup> that concerns the conceivability argument.

#### 2.2.3.1. The Objection From Conceivability

Let me start with an example. If water is H2O then it is not metaphysically possible that water is H3O, and from this it follows that you cannot conceive that water is H3O. When you imagine that water is something else than H2O, let's say H3O, you are not imagining water but something *like* water. You can merely conceive that something looking like water is H3O, but not water itself. Similarly, my opponent can argue the following. The disjunctivist presupposes that the external object is constitutive of V appearance, as chemical structure of H2O is essential for water. Then, it is metaphysically impossible that the V appearance lacks physical objects. Consequently, the H that you imagine in the TE cannot be a V appearance that lacks a real object, but rather something *like* a V appearance without its real objects. From this it follows that only the weak version (a) of the TE is legitimate, but not the strong version (b).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> This kind of "mixture" of disjunctivism and conjunctivism is actually defended by W.P. Alston.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> I am very thankful to Howard Robinson for raising this objection.

In responding to this difficulty I want to draw your attention to the dialectics between the skeptic and the disjunctivist. In the very early stage (first premise) of the TE the skeptic demands to employ *epoche* and "bracket" the existence of perceptual object (if any). But the disjunctivist rejects the method because it does not reflect reality - it is metaphysically impossible that V appearance lacks a real object. What the skeptic asks is actually inconceivable for the disjunctivist. Now, the essential question here is whether the context in which the debate takes place makes the disjunctivist's answer dialectically appropriate. This debate is somewhat reminiscent of the one between Moore (1959) and the skeptic. In the context in which the epistemic status of ordinary beliefs are at stake, Moore asserts "I know that I have hands", *ergo* "I know that there is external world". Therefore, the skeptical hypotheses must be false. The problem is that Moore's response here simply begs the question against the skeptic, although in normal conversational context where Moore discusses epistemology with his dogmatic friends philosophers, such statements would be appropriate. The skeptical context however changes appropriateness of Moore's answer.

Similarly, in the context in which the skeptic raises the possibility of conceiving a V appearance which is "stripped" from the reality of its objects, the disjuctivist responds that this is not conceivable because one's present VP is essentially world-involving. My opinion is that there is something problematic about disjunctivist response here that very much resembles Moore's dialectical situation. In the context in which we try to determine whether VP have physical objects by employing philosophical reflection (TE), the disjunctivist rejects the possibility of even conceiving that his position is false because he believes that it is actually true. But if enter the debate by already deciding the nature of perception then why would we need to consider the thought experiment argument in the first place? The skeptic seems to be doing his job by demanding open-mindedness. All the skeptic asks us is to entertain the possibility that the V appearance can be "stripped" from its physical objects (if

any). As far as phenomenology of the experience is concerned, the scenario we imagine is possible.

Moreover, in the context where skepticism is at stake, the only non-question begging guide to real nature of perception is its phenomenological analysis. Since the argument from hallucination is all about inquiring the real nature and object of perception, then the TE actually should not presuppose any claim about what is constitutive of perception. The upshot is this: the disjunctivist should not raise an objection to the TE by appeal to what perception really is without deciding the matter at start. At the very least (or best), I think there is a stand-off between the disjunctivist and the skeptic's position here.

Let me now return to the main line of the TE argument. The sub-conclusion is that it is possible that appearances of Hs and VPs co-referrential/narrowest-type identical. Now I propose to move the argument one step forward. From "appearances of H and VP are coreferential/narrowest-type identical" I propose to argue that their purported objects must be the same because "what is experience about" cannot be individuated apart from how the purported object presents itself. Here is the final formulation of the argument from hallucination (based on the TE):

- 1. It is possible that H appearance exactly matches V appearance by being coreferential/narrowest-type identical with it.
- 2. If H appearance is co-referential/narrowest-type identical with V appearance, then as far as I can tell, in both cases I'm directly aware of the same purported object.
- 3. When hallucinating I'm directly aware of a non-physical object (sense datum), *conclusion of the simple version of the argument from hallucination.*
- 4.  $\therefore$  When having a VP I'm directly aware of sense datum. From (2) and (3).

Now, let me discuss how this part of the TE argument can be challenged. Consider the first possible objection which concerns the  $2^{nd}$  premise. For example, you are presented with two pictures, one with 10 dots and the other one with 11 dots. They appear to be the same, although you actually see two different pictures. The disjunctivist could say that this is a counter-example which shows that sameness of appearances doesn't imply sameness of direct objects.

Let me try to give an answer to the counterexample. One could say that appearances of dots are different although at first you are not able to detect their difference. If you would really try harder you would be able to spot the extra dot. There is a possibility to spot the difference between the two pictures, at least in principle. This is possible because the extra dot is reflected in the appearance, although it is undetectable for people who don't have excellent discriminative abilities. Similarly, it is possible to spot the difference between a hologram of a tiger and the real tiger. But no matter how hard you try there is no chance - in principle - to detect a difference between an appearance of a perfect H, and a veridical one. As I have already argued, a H which you conceive in the TE is perfect because in imagining a H indistinguishable from a VP you imagine a H appearance which is coreferential/narrowest-type identical to the veridical appearance. The additional condition of the imagined scene ("there are no physical objects") makes no change to the appearance that you imagine, whereas the extra dot in the above example ads something. And maybe this disanalogy can potentially meet the objection. An H and VP are *in principle* indiscriminable, namely, our epistemic situation with respect to their discrimination cannot be improved. Then, the dot-example is a counterexample to a more generalized version of (2): If xappearance is co-referential/narrowest-type identical with y appearance, then as far as I can tell, in both cases I'm directly aware of the same purported object. However, that does not

imply that an instantiation of it (referred by the premise (2)) is thereby undermined, because there is a relevant difference between the dot-example and the hallucination case.

Finally, I would like to remark that we have good justification for the thesis that objects of H and VP must be the same. Suppose that I did everything possible in order to spot the difference between an appearance of a perfect H and veridical appearance. And yet, I judge there is no difference. Am I not justified in claiming that their direct objects are the same? I believe that the premise (2) is plausible.

The strong interpretation of the TE, the co-referentiality thesis, is quite strong, and it yields the conclusion that objects of a H and VP must be the same. However, from the weaker interpretation of the TE, the narrowest-type identity thesis, it does not necessarily follow that objects of the two appearances (i.e. their properties) must be instantiated in the same kind of object. Namely, the disjunctivist's position is still viable. Such argument from hallucination, I agree with Robinson, is inconclusive.

However, the thought experiment argument makes a contribution in addressing important questions. The though experiment argument was motivated mainly by considerations that rendered questionable the claim that subjective indistinguishability implies sameness of appearances in the argument from hallucination. I introduced the discussion about the common factor and disjunctivism in order to place the TE argument in the context of contemporary discussion on philosophy of perception. However, there are many respectable views and objections to the argument from hallucinations that did not get our attention; I decided to focus on proposing a way how to narrow the gap between subjective indistinguishability and the sameness of appearances through a TE. I thereby non-intentionally helped the skeptic to defend the assumption that non-veridical experience exactly matches genuine perception. However, my motivation was *pro* common factor rather than *pro* skeptical. My goal throughout the discussion on hallucinations was to estimate how

compelling is the arguments that is traditionally labeled as "skeptic friendly". I conclude that it is a plausible argument. Let me now conclude the section on the arguments from illusion and hallucination.

#### Conclusion Of The Argument From Illusion And Hallucination

I postponed the final conclusion of the argument from illusion discussed in section 2.1. until now when the relation between subjective indistinguishability of H and VP and their objects is fully enfolded, and placed in the debate with disjunctivism. We have learned that if two experiences are indistinguishable, it doesn't necessarily follow that their direct objects are the same. As we have seen, two experiences might be indistinguishable and yet have a different nature, in virtue of having different kinds of direct objects. Since disjunctivism is a viable option, I must concede that the argument from illusion that generalizes through indistinguishability thesis (Crane) is inconclusive, although I believe that a proponent of such argument has good ground to believe that objects of illusions and VP are the same. The version of the argument that generalizes through continuity thesis (Robinson) is far more compelling. However, although I find both arguments (from illusion and hallucination) defensible, there are worries that both arguments inevitably leave. Sense-datum theory raises many problems that I cannot address here. In particular, philosophers find problematic the very nature of mind-dependent entities. If such theory is to be consistent with naturalism, then we need an explanation how these entities are brought by our experience, and how they are governed with physical laws. On the one hand, the PP seems intuitively very plausible, but its consequences are difficult to accept. The dilemma, from the sensedatum theorist's point of view seems to be the following: either (i) we endorse the PP and have a good explanation of the phenomenology of perception, but we have to deal with

metaphysical problems; or (ii) we have a less satisfactory explanation of phenomenology, and "neat" metaphysics. As Crane points out, the phenomena of illusion and hallucinations seem to force us to make a compromise with respect to our ordinary conception of perceptual experience. The remaining question is what the lesser sacrifice is.

Apart from metaphysical and explanatory problems for the sense-datum theory<sup>28</sup>, there is the epistemological worry we began with, namely, its vulnerability to skepticism enabled by sense-data (appearances) which interpose themselves between the perceiver and the world. This certainly counts as an objection against the theory, as the "traditionalists" suggest.

My final conclusion with respect to the sense-datum theory and skepticism is the following. The arguments from illusion and hallucination are plausible arguments that lead to the "veil of perception" and open perceptual knowledge to be subject to skeptical error-possibilities. If we are always aware of (mere) appearances, mind-dependent sense data, then it is possible that things seem the same way perceptually, whereas reality may be quite different. Therefore, skeptical hypotheses are possible. Then, as far as what we know on the basis of what is *given* to us in the experience, there is no way to rule them out.

The common factor that individuates the "matching" relation within the framework of the sense-datum theory can be cashed out in two ways, concerning (i) the common mental kind in a broader sense (perceptual experience, perceptual appearance); or more narrowly (ii) the common object. In the argument from hallucination it was argued from the thesis that H and VP appearances are phenomenally exactly the same, to the conclusion that their objects must be the same. Both common factors are thus related and can individuate the skeptic's "matching" relation. Thus the skeptical assumption, the "matching" relation spelled out in terms of the common factor does not merely follows as a conclusion of the arguments from

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> For more see Huemer (2001).

illusion and hallucination (sameness of objects), but also presupposes it as a premise (sameness of appearances), which confirms McDowell's (1982) point that the skeptical puzzle, and the puzzle of perception raised by the phenomena of illusion and hallucination have a "common cause" – the common factor view. In the rest of the present chapter I am going to assess whether intentionalism and disjunctivism are vulnerable to skepticism.

# 2.3. Intentionalism, The Common Factor, And The Possibility Of Skepticism

At first, intentionalism seems to be a theory that circumvents problems that affect sense-datum theory. According to intentionalism in perception we are aware of the external object. Thus nothing suggests that our perceptual epistemic access to the world is mediated. Since intentionalists deny that the arguments from illusion and hallucination are sound, then the problem of the "veil of perception", and consequently skeptic's error- possibilities do not (at least) immediately arise. In this respect, intentionalism seems to resist skepticism in the way sense-datum theory fails to. However, this is only a surface hiding a different problem. According to Crane's interpretation (2005), McDowell's objection (1987, pp. 250) is that by loosing genuine intentionality, intentionalism also gives rise to a "veil of perception" problem. Crane (2005) concedes that McDowell's criticism can be roughly put as follows: as far as the essence of perception does not involve a state of mind that is world-involving, we are left out with the threat of skepticism.

Let me first address the point that *perception is not essentially world involving*. In order to respond to the challenge raised by the argument from illusion and hallucination, and avoid the conclusion that posits obscure mind-dependent sense data as objects of perception,

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intentionalist deny the PP - the view that something real is immediately given in the perceptual experience. Although all intentional states have intentional objects, these objects sometimes need not be real. If you were asked "What is the object of your thought about an unicorn?", you would answer "the unicorn". Clearly, "the unicorn" is not real, but it still figures an object to which your thought is directed. Similarly, in hallucinating a pink rat, such object is merely intentional but not real. Thus, Crane (2001) argues the nature and phenomenology of perceptual experience is best explained as a form of intentionality where its nature is essentially bound to content, rather than object. The content amounts to the *way* in which intentional object is presented. Since being in a mental state with an intentional object doesn't imply that the state has a real object, like in cases of hallucinations, it follows that being in a state with perceptual content doesn't necessarily imply that the content captures the way in which a *real* object is presented. Crane obtains the following set of claims:

- a.  $\leftarrow$  (Perceptual content  $\rightarrow$  real perceptual object).
- b. Perceptual experience is best understood as relation to content.
- c. Reality of a perceptual object is not essentially determining the nature of experience.

Perceptual content is in Crane's view identified with *how the object seems* (2001, pp. 147), but such a notion does not imply that whenever things seems in a certain way, there *is* something seeming to be such-and-such. Intentionalist's conception of perceptual content "brackets" existence of its real object, although the view preserves directedness and aboutness of a state in virtue of positing an intentional object. The thesis stated by (c) means that the phenomenal character of perceptual experience is not explained by reference to its real object, since a phenomenologically identical state (a H) can occur in absence of its object. Moreover, according to strong intentionalism<sup>29</sup>, the phenomenal character is entirely<sup>30</sup> determined by its perceptual content. When we couple that thesis with (a), it follows that phenomenal character of a particular perceptual experience, e.g. seeing fire in a fireplace, can occur in the absence of its real object. It is possible that how things seem to you now may be the same, while reality might be radically different than your senses tell you. And that leads to skepticism. Perceptual content, the way in which the intentional object seems in the "good" and "bad" case is *ex hypothesi* the same, and explains the phenomenal "matching" between the veridical and non-veridical experience. Thus, it seems that perceptual content which figures as the common factor is sufficient to lift the "veil of content", which is as problematic as the "veil of appearances". For every genuine perception, it is possible to be in a state with the same perceptual content in the absence of physical objects. Again, skeptical scenarios are rendered possible.

Both theories - sense-datum and intentionalism - enable skeptical scenarios as genuine possibilities because they posit a common factor present in hallucinations and veridical perceptions, and give rise to the problem of the "veil of perception" in two ways:

Sense datum – common factor (sameness of objects) gives rise to the problem of the "veil of appearances".

Perceptual content – common factor (sameness of contents) gives rise to the problem of the "veil of content".

Since both theories lift the "veil of perception", they both enable skeptical error-possibilities to arise. From this it follows that the conclusion of the argument from illusion and hallucination - "in perception we are directly aware of appearances" - is not essential for the

<sup>29</sup> This view that denies existence of *qualia*, intrinsic, non-relational, irreducible properties of experience.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> However, Crane says that a phenomenal character of perceptual experience is entirely explained in terms of its content *and* mode.

possibility of skepticism, because intentionalism denies that claim and yet it is leaves open room for the possibility of skeptical scenarios. What is essential seems to be the assumption that H and VP have a common factor.

(CF): If H and VP share a common factor (perceptual content or object) then it is metaphysically possible to have the same perceptual experience as the one in the "good" world, in the absence of external objects.

If the skeptic is indeed committed to (CF), a way to evade the possibility of skepticism opens. According to Huemer (2001) and McDowell (1982) the best strategy to begin with is precisely to deny the common kind assumption. In what follows I will discuss whether this is sufficient to meet the skeptical challenge.

### 2.4. Disjunctivism And Skepticism

I have already indicated how the common factor figuring in sense-datum theory and intentionalism opens up perceptual knowledge to be undermined by skeptical errorpossibilities. Naturally then, the denial of a common factor emerges as a way to block skepticism in its very start. Disjunctivism, a theory that fundamentally denies the common kind assumption, seems to have the best chance to neutralize the skeptical threat. In this section I will discuss disjunctivism and its anti-skeptical implications.

Both the sense-datum theorist and the disjunctivist accept the conditional "same experience --> same object". The disjunctivist seems to reason in the following way: since the object of a H and VP is not the same, then experiences are not the same. He affirms

*modus tollens*, whereas his opponent affirms *modus ponens*. And here we have a typical stand-off between two positions. However, the disjunctivist brings a caveat that supposedly disables the possibility of skeptical scenarios to even arise as genuine possibilities. McDowell says that:

What shapes this scepticism is the thought that even in the best possible case, the most that perceptual experience can yield falls short of a subject's having an environmental state of affairs directly available to her. (2008, pp. 378)

If the external object is an essential, constitutive part of a VP, then it seems that it is not possible that in the "bad" world I could have the same experience that I have now, simply because in that world there is no corresponding external object. There is no such thing as perceptual experience, which in the case of VP has an object, and in case of H it doesn't. And then, it is not possible to have a non-veridical experience with the content that exactly matches the one in the "good" world. Once the "veil of perception" is lifted, and the skeptical presupposition about the common factor is removed, skepticism does not seem to have a chance to start off, if it essentially relies on the claim that all perceptual experiences we have in the "good" world could occur in the "bad" world.

In order to clearly see how the disjunctivist deals with the problems raised by illusions and hallucinations, which were discussed in the previous sections, let me roughly map the presuppositions (that I understand to be) of the "traditionalist" view concerning the relation between the arguments from illusion and hallucination, the "veil of perception" and skepticism:

- 1. There are phenomena of illusion, and "philosophers' hallucinations".
- Key assumption about the nature of perception and hallucination the common factor view.

- 3. Argument from illusion and hallucination leads to the conclusion that in all cases of VPs we are aware of appearances/mental representations/sense data ("Veil of Perception"). From (1), and (2). [This is the argument for the sense-datum theory].
- 4. Therefore, it is metaphysically possible to have the same perceptual experience as in the actual world and yet, reality is radically different (Deceiver Hypothesis).From (2) or from (3). [This sub-conclusion concerns both the intentionalist and the sense-datum theory].
- 5. Perceptual experience is S's evidence.
- Therefore, perceptual evidence in the "good" and "bad" case is the same. From (4) and (5)
- 7. Hence, S does not know that  $(\neg SH)$ , on the basis of experience. From (6)
- 8. The closure principle: If S knows p, and knows that p entails  $\neg$ SH, then S knows  $\neg$ SH. If S doesn't know ( $\neg$ SH), then S doesn't know that p.
- 9. =Skepticism. From (7) and (8).

The first three premises concern the sense-datum theory, whereas (2) and (4) are shared by the intentionalist and the sense-datum theorist. From (5) to (9) we have epistemological theses. In the previous sections we have seen how common factor is an assumption that enables skeptical hypothesis to arise in the framework of the intentionalist theory of perception – (4) follows from (2), which is encapsulated in CF: *If H and VP share perceptual content then it is metaphysically possible to have the perceptual content as the one in the "good" world, in the absence of external objects.* And in the first section we have seen how the sense-datum theory leads to the possibility of a skeptical scenario - (4) follows from (3). Now, we can clearly see that the disjunctivist denies (2), and consequently (3) and (4). As McDowell says, "without the 'highest common factor' conception of experience...the

traditional problems [including skepticism] lapse" (1982, pp. 479). The arguments from illusion and hallucination don't give raise to the "veil", and the skeptical scenarios are rendered impossible. I will discuss the disjunctivist strategy, but also the epistemological version of the doctrine, and expand our understanding of the theses from (4) - the possibility of skeptical scenarios - to the skeptical conclusion that proceeds from epistemological premises ((5) – (8)).

In (5) "experience" refers to what is "reflectively accessible about experience". If *how things seem* captures the "matching" relation that constitutes evidence which is the same in both worlds, then the conclusion skeptical conclusion will inevitably follow. From the thesis that all perceptual evidence that I have in the "good" world is *ex hypothesi* the same in the "bad" world, it follows that I cannot rule out SH on the basis of perceptual evidence. Therefore, I don't know that (¬SH).

Now the notion of evidence comes in the focus of the debate, suggesting that the *locus* of the skeptical problem is not entirely exhausted by the discussion on the common factor (up to the sub-conclusion (4)). According to McDowell (1995) the skeptical problem arises for a particular internalist conception of evidence. The key point then is to understand the 5<sup>th</sup> premise: "perceptual experience is S's evidence". If our sole evidence or justification that could count against the skeptic amounts to what is reflectively accessible to the subject - the *how it seems* - which is shared in both situations<sup>31</sup>, then it is impossible to rule out the skeptical hypotheses. The first premise of the skeptical argument, "I don't know that I am not deceived" inevitably leads from such a conception of evidence. The core claim then is (I shall call it) - the *evidential common factor* - which refers to evidence shared in the "good" and "bad" case (premise (6)). This claim is denied by the disjunctivist about evidence (*evidential* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Putnam points out that "…McDowell does indeed insist on the existence of this kind of common factor. Part of the content of a nonveridical experience can indeed be the same as part of the content of a veridical experience. Both experiences can 'tell one' (incorrectly, in the nonveridical case) that there is a yellow door in front of one, for example." (1999, pp. 154)

*disjunctivism*), which is an epistemological version of the doctrine concerning the nature of perception. As McDowell stresses, in the "good" case "when someone has a fact made manifest to him, the obtaining of the fact contributes to his *epistemic standing* on the question" (1982/1998, 390-1). If perception is constituted by the physical object, then it implies existence of its object. From this it follows that is not possible to have the same perceptual experience nor evidence in the actual world and in the deceiver world. This strategy most likely demands two theories to converge – disjunctivism about evidence and disjunctivism about perception<sup>32</sup>.

From this discussion we can learn something interesting about the skeptical argument; the common factor view leads to skepticism *insofar* it constitutes the evidential common factor. In case one would endorse the former view (common factor *simpliciter*), but deny that evidence in both cases is the same (disjunctivism about evidence), the skeptical argument would not carry; (6) would be false. But if one is disjunctivist about perception and conjunctivist about evidence, the skeptical argument will still carry. Thus, the evidential common factor seems to be *sufficient* condition for skepticism, whereas the common factor view plays a role as a presupposition in the skeptical argument insofar it offers an explanation for the thesis that in both cases evidence is the same. Although the common factor view makes the *skeptical hypothesis* possible, this is not enough for the *skeptical argument* – which needs additional epistemological premises.

However, I believe that the skeptic can weaken his position to make it less committing in terms of claims about the nature of perceptual experience and evidence, and undermine both disjunctivism about perception and disjunctivism about evidence. I think that the skeptical argument need not necessarily be reconstructed as to carry requirements specified in the above sketch that depicts the "traditional" understanding of the problem. In particular, the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Byrne and Logue (2009, pp. 68) argue that metaphysical disjunctivism (a theory of perception) naturally and if not inexorably lead to epistemological disjunctivism.

skeptic can say that he is not committed to something like (4). The skeptic doesn't have to say that *it is metaphysically possible to have the same experience as in the actual world and yet, reality is radically different*, where the "same" refers to the same type of experience. Instead, he can say that you might have a "subjectively indistinguishable" experience from the one in the actual world. The skeptic may even concede to the disjunctivist that the same type of experience one has in the actual world is not metaphysically possible in the "bad" world. Nevertheless, if one cannot tell that one's present experience is not a perfect hallucination, the skeptical argument will still carry: S does not know that (¬SH) on the basis of what is reflectively accessible about the experience. In other words, the skeptic may simply weaken CF, and merely state a weaker version, (CF\*):

It is metaphysically possible to have a *subjectively indistinguishable* experience from the one in the "good" world, in the absence of external objects.

Then, instead of (4),  $(4^*)$  can be formulated as follows:

Therefore, it is metaphysically possible to have *a subjectively indistinguishable experience from the one* in the actual world, and yet, reality is radically different (Deceiver Hypothesis).

Such skeptic's claims do not bear any commitments about what is the nature of perception, or what metaphysically constitutes the "matching" relation, which brings to the fore a suggestion that the skeptical argument does not arise only for a particular theories of perception that posit common factor. If a logically weaker epistemological claim pertaining to subjective indistinguishability suffices for the skeptical argument, then it seems that the skeptic need not be committed to any particular version of the common factor view. From
(4\*) it directly follows (7) S does not know that ( $\neg$ SH) on the basis of experience. If this is the case, then the role of the argument from illusion and hallucination in lifting the "veil of perception" is not necessary to generate the skeptical problem. The sense-datum view enables skeptical hypothesis to arise if the skeptic is committed to (4), but I stress that he need not rely on such a committing premise. Instead, (4\*) suffices.

Thus, the skeptic can object that the "traditional" diagnosis of skepticism presents his position in a very theory-committing way that he need not endorse. Note that the present reconstruction of the skeptical position is stronger because it does not depend on any assumptions about the nature of perception. The argument merely requires an *epistemic criterion* for the common factor: a perfect H is subjectively indistinguishable from VP. And even disjunctivists do not deny that claim. As far as one cannot rule out skeptical errorpossibilities on the basis of what is reflectively or introspectively accessible about one's experience, skepticism remains a threat. All three theories that I have discussed - sense datum theory, intentionalism, and disjunctivism - seem to be vulnerable to skepticism because of a more general (non-metaphysical) claim (CF\*), which presents an uneliminable *epistemic possibility*: as far as we know on the basis of the reflectively accessible content of experience, we could be deceived. If this diagnosis of the skeptical challenge is correct, the skeptical argument does not necessarily present a problem only for theories of perceptions that endorse the non-epistemic common factor view, since the crucial assumption of the skeptical argument is a weaker claim - subjective indistinguishability thesis. And this is the only claim, independent of any theory about perception that the skeptic should commit himself to. Then, the skeptic is not committed to the thesis that the same perceptual experience can occur in the "bad" world. All the skeptic needs is to argue that as far as I can tell, I could have subjectively indistinguishable experience from the one in the "good" world. It seems that both kinds of disjunctivism cannot counter skepticism. Disjunctivism simpliciter denies (4)

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whereas evidential disjunctivism denies (6), but the skeptic needs only something like (4\*) from which it directly follows that (7): S does not know that ( $\neg$ SH). Such diagnosis about is confirmed by Robinson who summarizes the point in the following way:

It is that the foundation for scepticism is not the 'veil of perception', but our inability to tell whether a perception is of a real object or not. The fact that an experience is in fact directly of a certain object is no help against the sceptic unless we are in a position to tell that it is a real external object of which we are aware. When Descartes sets out the sceptical challenge he does not invoke the internal status of appearances, but only that *we cannot tell* whether we are really perceiving, or are dreaming or are the victim of an evil demon. Inability to distinguish the states is the core issue, not their ontological status and disjunctivism does nothing to enable use to distinguish when we are directly perceiving and when we are not. (2008)

The disjunctivist about evidence says that if the fact about being in the "good" world gives the subject evidential advantage, from the premise that S has knowledge in virtue of having factive evidence, it follows that S knows that SHs are false. The first premise of the skeptical closure argument is then rendered false. However, as Robinson suggests, the skeptic will still have an argument left; he can say that S cannot tell on the basis of reflection whether one's experience is factive or not, which is the crucial point embedded in the subjective indistinguishability thesis. Therefore, reflective knowledge or internalist knowledge of the denials of skeptical hypotheses remains out of our reach.

## Conclusion Of Chapter II

In this chapter I have discussed whether and how the sense-datum theory,

intentionalism, and disjunctivism, lead to or (at least) are vulnerable to Cartesian skepticism. The essential assumption enabling skeptical hypothesis to arise is taken to be the possibility that one can have a non-veridical experience phenomenally exactly like veridical experience, accompanied with false perceptual beliefs. Hence, a presupposition was that the skeptical hypothesis must be spelled out in terms of some kind of "matching relation" between the non-veridical (hallucinatory) and veridical case. I have identified such relation with the common factor thesis. Throughout this chapter we have seen how the skeptic can formulate this thesis in various ways, from more to less committing ones. Let me remind you of the most important conclusions.

Arguments to the effect that we are aware of mere appearances (the arguments from illusion and hallucination) suggested that objects (and appearances) in both states are the same. Such a view lifts the problem of the "veil of perception", leaving the external object out of our direct scope of consciousness. The skeptical hypothesis is then rendered possible by the "matching" relation that refers to sameness of objects (or appearances) in both cases. The conclusion of the arguments from illusion and hallucination then makes plausible the possibility that one can have a non-veridical experience of the same kind of object (sensedatum) present in VP, whereas reality may be radically different. I concluded that the arguments that enable skeptical hypothesis to arise are plausible. However, the argument from illusion and hallucination are inconclusive because disjunctivism about perception is still left as a viable position.

Intentionalism postulates perceptual content as the common factor, and opens room for the possibility of skeptical hypothesis to arise because it makes it possible that the nonveridical experience matches its veridical counterpart in virtue of sharing *how things seem*. This view of perception gives the skeptic an explanation of how the skeptical hypothesis can be individuated in a less committing way than a formulation provided by the sense-datum theory. While the later postulates existence of mind-dependent objects, the former makes a weaker claim about the nature of experience. However, intentionalism still leaves us with the problem of the "veil of content".

The relation between disjunctivism and skepticism was discussed in the third part of this chapter. The theory analyses perception in disjunctive terms, thereby denying the

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common kind assumption which is "traditionally" thought of being responsible for skepticism. I have inquired whether this theory is vulnerable to a weaker version of the skeptical argument. I proposed a "matching relation" that can be formulated in a very weak way, neutral to any particular theory of perception. My thesis is that the subjective indistinguishability thesis is sufficiently strong for the skeptical argument. Consequently, the disjunctivist theory of perception (and the two other views) are vulnerable to this kind of skeptical argument.

After the survey on skepticism and the nature of perception I conclude that the skeptical argument appears to be much stronger than the "traditional" line suggests, since skepticism does not threat only theories of perception that posit a common factor, or theories that give rise to the "veil of perception". Insofar the skeptic requires reflectively available experiential evidence that we are not deceived, and requires eliminating epistemic luck, skepticism remains a challenge.

# CHAPTER III

### THE DREAM ARGUMENT

In the previous chapter I have discussed the Cartesian skepticism and its relation with issues in theories of perception. In particular I have focused on the question of how different views of perception have an impact on understanding the skeptical hypothetical scenarios in which our experience of the world is subjectively the same, whereas reality radically differs from what we ordinarily believe it to be. We have seen what different views say about what hallucinations are, in contrast with genuine perception. The relation was spelled either in discjunctive terms, or by reference to a common factor. This question was important because the skeptic raises an error-possibility which involves non-veridical experiences in the deceiver world. The dream argument, however, does not involve hallucinations, but rather non-veridical experiences that are subjectively alike waking perceptual experiences, namely, dreams. Again, the issue of some sort of common factor emerges here too, and this is how different views of "what are dreams made of" will enter the debate. Although dreams are sufficiently like hallucinations for the purposes of the skeptical argument targeted at perceptual knowledge - they are non-veridical experiences subjectively like veridical, there are still some issues that make the deceiver argument slightly different than the dream argument. Namely, the latter will also depend on how we understand dream experiences. And this is a question that will be addressed. In what follows I will also inquire into phenomenology and nature of dreams because the question "what are dreams made of" will ultimately have an impact on the force and plausibility of the skeptical argument. I will

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introduce two influential views of dreams: the orthodox view defended by Descartes and St. Augustine, and Sosa's imaginative model.

The chapter is divided in three parts: in the first part I focus on Descartes' exposition of the argument, and on issues concerning subjective indistinguishability, then I discuss Sosa's view as a response to the problem of dream skepticism. I will propose an argument against dream skepticism that relies on his model of dream experiences. Finally, I will address non-Cartesian premises of the argument that concern a deeper epistemological issue the distinction between internalism and externalism.

## 3.1. Cartesian Steps Of The Dream Argument

Descartes' starting point of the argument is based on experiences we all have had. While dreaming, we usually don't know that images in our mind do not correspond to reality. We believe that the plot of the experience is real, until we finally wake up and realize that it was just a dream and our beliefs were false. Well, nobody denies that we are deceived in dreams. So, how does the fact that we are deceived in dreams cast a doubt on our waking sensory experience? Descartes would say the following. If you were dreaming now, you would have the same conviction that you are reading this paper. So, how can you really rule out the possibility that you dreaming, solely on the basis of your experience? If you cannot tell that you are not dreaming now, then you don't *know* that you are reading this paper, although it might actually be the case that you are reading this paper. Again, the argument brings to the fore the epistemic luck platitude; even if you have true perceptual beliefs, the dream error-possibility makes your belief reflectively lucky. The skeptic's first premise is "I don't know that I am not dreaming", and again there is a premise that follows from the closure principle "If I don't know that I am not dreaming then I don't know that I'm sitting by the fire". Therefore, "I don't know that I'm sitting by the fire". These are the steps that the contemporary skeptic makes. However, Descartes was mainly concerned and explicitly addressed what could be interpreted as the first step (or question raised) of the argument: can we really tell how a waking experience differs from dream experience? That is the topic of the present section.

Austin (1962, pp. 48) convincingly said that being present in front of the Pope certainly doesn't feel the same as having a dream that one is seeing the Pope. That is an intuitive and simple answer, but on more reflection, can we precisely point out *how* being awake feels differently than being asleep? What exactly about our present experience indicates that we are awake, and not dreaming? This is the question that troubles Descartes. He observes that his present experience is vivid and distinct. But, given that he had such vivid and distinct dreams in which he was deceived, it seems that he cannot be entirely sure whether he's now awake or asleep, merely on the basis of the character of his experience. From this Descartes concludes that there is no experiential criterion of wakefulness.

Let us take a closer look on Descartes' passage where he introduces the dream argument:

How often, asleep at night, am I convinced of just similar events – that I am here in my dressing-gown, sitting by the fire – when in fact I am lying undressed in bed! Yet at this moment my eyes are certainly wide awake when I look at this piece of paper; I shake my head and it is not asleep; as I stretch out and feel my hand I do so deliberately, and I know what I am doing. All this would not happen with such distinctness to someone asleep. Indeed! As if I did not remember other occasions when I have been tricked by exactly similar thoughts while asleep! As I think about this more carefully, I see plainly that there are never any sure signs by means of which being awake can be distinguished from being asleep. The result is that I begin to feel dazed, and this very feeling only reinforces the notion that I may be asleep." (AT VII 19: CSM 13)

In the first sentence Descartes makes a statement about his past dream experiences. He observes that he had dreams in which he was tricked, i.e. the dream experience was not

veridical. So, how can he tell that he's not tricked *now*? Descartes wants to be sure that his present experience is not one of those dream experiences. He is looking for a "mark" of wakefulness, something that waking experiences have, but dream experiences lack. Descartes is looking for the "mark" of wakefulness by reflecting upon his experience: distinctness and vividness of the feeling of hands and head, he observes the relation between his deliberation and action. He is looking for the "mark" introspectively, in the experience itself. In other words, the "mark" that Descartes is trying to find is a property of the experience, a property that only waking experiences (Ws) have, but dreams (D) lack. However, Descartes reminds himself of being "tricked by exactly similar thoughts". Then, distinctness and vividness of his present experience apparently cannot be certain indicators of wakefulness, because he had such vivid and distinct dreams. Finally, after a careful investigation Descartes concludes by saying "there are never any sure signs by means of which being awake can be distinguished from being asleep". The conclusion is that there is no "mark" of wakefulness; there is no reflectively accessible property of his present experience which could indicate that he is awake now. The claim does not seem to be only that "I can not find a sign of wakefulness" although there may be one that I cannot detect at the moment. Descartes makes a stronger claim, "there are no sure signs"! He claims that being awake can never be distinguished from being asleep. Then, the question doesn't seem to be whether he is actually awake or not. Suppose that it is true that he is awake - how can he tell that he is awake? The skeptical conclusion is then, even if he is awake, he cannot *know* that he is awake. The dream argument doesn't question one's wakefulness, but one's knowledge of wakefulness.

Let me now make a few remarks about "properties of experience" which could potentially bear the mark of wakefulness that Descartes is looking for. In his thinking Descartes reflected upon the sensations he had, he reflected upon his self-awareness, the relation between his will and action. Hence, properties of experience include: vividness, distinctness, or "what it is like" to be in a mental state. However, properties of experience also include *coherency*. For example, Descartes observes how stretching of his body follows his conscious decision to stretch. The action is explained by his will to stretch. The experience is coherent in the following sense - I shall call it "internal coherency" - which amounts to explanatory relations that hold *within* the plot of the experience itself. The first sentence of the passage could be interpreted as if that is the first criterion of wakefulness that he takes into consideration. He says that he is now in his dressing-gown, sitting by the fire, in his room. Nothing in this scenario gives him any reason to doubt that he's awake. However, he points out that he had dreams with a coherent plot.

There is another kind of coherency important in this context. In order to find out whether my experience is coherent, I have to reflect not only upon my present experience itself, but I have to reflect upon other beliefs, and observe how the plot "matches" with the rest of my belief-system. "Being coherent" in this sense depends on the relation the dream experience has with other beliefs - let us call it "external coherency". If I believed that everything is made of cheese, and I had a dream that I live in a house made of cheese, my dream would be coherent. If I believe what all sane persons do, my dream would not be coherent. Hence, this kind of coherency depends on other beliefs that a subject has, not only on the experience itself.

Finally, "properties of experience" include "what it is like" properties, "internal" and "external" coherency. Since all such properties seem to be present both in dreams and waking experiences, they cannot be a mark that distinguishes them. From this it follows that Descartes cannot be certain that his present experience and beliefs really correspond to reality. The next question is whether such argument is consistent at all.

## **3. 1. 1. The Dream Argument Is Self-Defeating (Moore)**

In *Philosophical papers* (1959) Moore raised an objection regarding the consistency of the dream argument, which could be reconstructed in the following way:

- 1. My present experience of (p) sitting by the fire is subjectively indistinguishable from dream experiences of p I have had.
- 2. If a waking experience is qualitatively indistinguishable from a dream experience then I don't know that I'm not dreaming (based on my sensory experience).
- If I don't know that I'm not dreaming now then I don't know that my memory of having dreams is not just a part of the dream
- 4. If I don't know that my memory is not a part of a dream, then I don't know that I had dreams.
- 5. Therefore, I don't know if I have ever dreamed.

Moore accepts the first premise but he claims that if (1) is true then it is not compatible with the conclusion because:

For a philosopher who does use it as a premise [1] is, I think, in fact, implying, though he does not expressly say, that he himself knows it to be true. He is implying therefore that he himself knows that dreams have occurred [4]." (1959, pp. 259)

Thus, asserting (1) assumes (0) I **know that I have had dreams.** Hence, we have a contradiction ((0)&(5)).

The difficulty Moore stresses is that one does not know that dreams have occurred if one does not know that he is not dreaming. If one *is* dreaming his memory about having dreams could be just a dreamed memory. According to Moore's interpretation, the argument is self-defeating. Asserting (1) implies that I know I have had dreams, but the argument yields the conclusion that I don't know that I'm not dreaming now, and hence I don't know if I have ever had dreams.

However, it is not obvious that Descartes is committed to the claim that he actually *knows* that he had dreams. I think that the skeptic is entitled to ask Moore what are the grounds for claiming that asserting p implies knowing p? Asserting p implies *believing* p. But, knowing something is far from believing something. The statement about having dreams could be interpreted in a weaker sense as "I believe that I dreamed", and hence it is not contradicting "I don't know if I have ever dreamed". Believing something that I don't know is not contradictory. As M. Wilson (1978) argues, Descartes doesn't even need the strong "I know I had dreams" since the point of the argument is to cast a doubt, not to establish something with certainty. She says:

The point, intuitively, is that one does not need to know one has ever been deceived with respect to p (where one's "evidence" is similar to what one had in the past). It is sufficient that one is inclined to believe or to affirm that one has in the past been "taken in". (1978, pp. 26)

Then, the skeptic can just reformulate (1) as follows: (1\*) my present experience of sitting by the fire (p) is subjectively indistinguishable from dream experiences of p I *believe* I have had. Descartes does not need to claim that premises are certain in order to establish a reason for doubt. The point of the argument could also be stated by introducing a *possibility* that I am dreaming now, that my experience in not about the external world.

Therefore, Moore's objection is not undermining the strength of the argument. The dream argument seems to question consistently our certainty in particular judgments based on

sensory experience. However, at this point it is still not clear whether the argument establishes a more radical doubt, namely, in the existence of a mind-independent world. The next question is about the scope of the dream argument.

## 3. 1. 2. What Is The Scope Of The Cartesian Dream Argument?

If I'm dreaming now then I am not really seeing this piece of paper. My particular perceptual judgment that "here is a piece of paper" is rendered questionable by the dream possibility. But can such a "local" doubt make me doubt that there is no external world at all? The following passage from *Meditations* suggests that Descartes' dream argument is *not* questioning the belief about the existence of the external world:

Suppose then that I am dreaming, and that these particulars-that my eyes are open, that I am moving my head and stretching out my hands-are not true. Perhaps, indeed, I do not even have such hands or such a body at all. Nonetheless, it must surely be admitted that the vision which come in sleep are like paintings, which must have been fashioned in the likeness of things that are real, and hence that at least these general kinds of things-eyes, head, hands and the body as a whole-are things which are not imaginary but real and exist. For even when painters try to create sirens and satyrs with the most extraordinary bodies, they cannot give them natures which are new in all respects; they simply jumble up limbs of different animals. Or if perhaps they manage to think up something so new that nothing remotely similar has ever been seen before-something which is therefore completely fictitious and unreal - at least the colors used in composition must be real. By similar reasoning, although this general kinds of things - eyes, head, hands and so on-could be imaginary, it must at least be admitted that certain even simpler and more universal things are real. These are as it were the real colors from which we for all the images of things, whether true or false, that occur in thought. This class appears to include corporeal nature in general, and it's extension; he shape of extended things; the quantity, or size and number of these things, the place in which they may exist, time through which they may endure, and so on. (AT VII 20: CSM 13, 14)

This passage suggests that the dream argument is not questioning the existence of corporeal nature in general. Even if I am dreaming now there has to be the external world which provided the basic "dream material", even though I can not be certain at this very moment whether I'm looking at this piece of paper. Particular judgments based on sensory experience

are indeed doubtful. However, the question is whether Descartes can be consistently in doubting particular judgments about the external world, without doubting the very existence of a mind-independent world. The question of consistency thus re-emerges.

Here is a set of claims that generate tension in Descartes' argument:

- Even if I'm dreaming now the existence of simple and universal things are beyond doubt (I know that there is an external world with most general properties: shape, size, etc.).
- If I am dreaming now then I don't know that judgments about particular objects are true.
- 3. For any time t, if I'm dreaming, then I don't know that this particular object O is the way it seems.
- 4. The external world just is a "bundle" of particular mind-independent objects related to each other.
- 5. Therefore, at any time t, I don't know that there is an external world. From (2), (3), (4)
- 6. The conclusion in (5) contradicts (1).

This argument suggests that Descartes cannot consistently be confident that there is the external world, and at the same time doubt whether particular objects are the way he experiences them. If he doesn't know that he has hands, that there chairs, the sun, etc., how can he be confident that there is an external world at all? Here is what Descartes could answer. In the above passage Descartes indicates that the explanation of the content of dream experiences is based on the causal relation with the external world. The content of dream images is combined, so to say, from the "material" we get from senses. Then, his conclusion is that there must be an external world that supplies us with the "dream content".

Such argument ultimately hinges on an *externalist assumption about the mental content*. Externalism with regard to mental content can be (very roughly) put as follows: in order to have a certain intentional mental state, it is necessary to be related to the environment in the right way (Joe, 2004). For example, I can form a thought with certain content only if I have been directly or indirectly (through testimony) in a causal relation to the thing I am thinking about. To put it simply, if there were no water, I could not think about water.

However, this view brings Descartes in tension with his commitment to *content internalism* which is implicit in the evil demon hypothesis:

I will suppose therefore that not God, who is supremely good and the source of truth, but rather some malicious demon of the outmost power and cunning has employed all his energies in order to deceive me. I shall think that the sky, the air, the earth, colors, shapes,

sounds and all external things are merely the delusions..... (AT VII 23: CSM 15)

The evil demon hypothesis introduces a possibility that one *can* have thoughts and experiences of sky, of different sounds, shapes and so on, even though there is no external world which causes such experiences, and thereby supplies the mind with its content. Thus, it seems that Descartes implicitly denies content-externalism. But then, Descartes view is problematic. The evil demon argument assumes that content-externalism is false, whereas Descartes' passage about dreams implicitly affirms it; in order to have dream images there has to be something "out there" that brought about the content which the mind combines in dreams<sup>33</sup>.

Finally, the question of whether the dream argument casts doubt on the existence of the external world doesn't seem to have a simple answer. Nevertheless, there is at least one certain doubt, if I am dreaming then I don't know that particular everyday perceptual

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> I am thankful to Katalin Farkas for observing that Descartes' causal principle, rather than externalism about mental content, can figure as a presupposition implicit in the passage on dreams (AT VII 20: CSM 13). The point she makes is that what Descartes assumes is that there must be a *cause* of experience, rather than a more general (and more committing) claim about externalism. However, granting that point, there is still a tension in Descartes' view that remains: the dream passage implies that we cannot have dreams of external reality if there is no external reality, whereas the demon hypothesis implies the opposite – we can have experiences as of the external even though there is nothing real out there.

judgments are true<sup>34</sup>. Now, let us dwell deeper in what could be Descartes' notion of the criterion of wakefulness.

## 3. 1. 3. The Criteria Of Wakefulness

Let me begin with two possible accounts of the criterion of wakefulness:

- 1. Being able to tell *whether* I am awake or not.
- 2. Being able to tell *that* I am awake (when I am awake).

Let me consider the first option, I shall call it the symmetrical criterion of wakefulness

(SYM). The first criterion requires that I am in a position to tell which is which experience;

this means that for every situation I am in, I have to to be able to tell in which one I am.

"Being able to tell whether I am awake or not" implies:

- (a) When dreaming I can tell that I'm dreaming
- (b) When awake I can tell that I'm awake

Now, the question is how or on what grounds can I judge that I am awake or not? For example, I can ask scientists to tell me whether I'm awake or not by determining what is my brain activity. However, this kind of external criterion is not what Descartes had in mind. If I were dreaming then opinions of the scientists would be just dreamt opinions. So, the only

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup>Although the dream argument targets at particular judgments based on the senses, it definitely doesn't question mathematical truths: "So a reasonable conclusion from this might be that physics, astronomy, medicine and all other disciplines which depend on the study of composite things, are doubtful; while arithmetic, geometry and other subjects of this kind, which deal only with the simplest and most general things, regardless of whether they really exist in the nature or not, contain something certain and indubitable. For whether I am awake or sleep, two and three added together are five, and a square has no more than four sides."(AT VII 20: CSM 14)

non-question begging way of establishing a criterion in the debate with the skeptic is to employ reflection/introspection as a mean for discernment. Thus, the SYM criterion amounts to being able to subjectively (introspectively) distinguish waking (perceptual) experience (W) from dream experiences (D) on the basis of some property of the experience, *in each situation one is in.* For example, if I can tell which is which experience by reflection alone, then it must be that a dream experience has a detectable "dream property" that all dreams have, and perceptual experiences lack; and by the same token, there must be a detectable "waking property" which all waking (perceptual) experiences have and dreams lack. One interpretation of Descartes' criterion of wakefulness can be explained in terms of "subjective indistiguishability" understood in the following way:

(SYM) I can distinguish W from D iff there is an introspectively detectable property of my experience on the basis of which I can tell *whether* I'm awake or not. The criterion implies the following:

(a'): dreams have a certain "dream property" which can be reflectively detected, which indicates that I'm dreaming, and/or dreams lack the "waking property".(b'): Ws have a distinct detectable "waking property" which indicates that I am awake, a property that D do not have, and/or W lack a "dream property".

Let us see how Descartes' argument might be reconstructed with the SYM criterion:

1. Distinctness, coherency, and vividness, are properties of my present<sup>35</sup> experience.

2. I remember having distinct, coherent and vivid dreams.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Let me assume that present experience is waking experience.

- 3. Therefore, both Ds and my Ws have these properties. From (1) and (2)
- 4. [SYM] I can distinguish W from D iff there is a introspectively detectable property of experience on the basis of which I can tell *whether* I'm awake or not, implies:

(a): dreams have a certain "dream property" which can be reflectively detected, which indicates that I'm dreaming, and/or dreams lack the "waking property"

(b): Ws have a detectable "waking property" which indicates that I am awake, a property that Ds do not have, and/or W lacks a "dream property".

- There is no such detectable "waking property" of my experience on the basis of which I can judge that I am awake, not-(b).
- 6. Therefore, I cannot distinguish W from D, not-[SYM].

Sometimes (a) is true. Some dreams have a "dream property", which only dreams have. In dreams incoherent things usually happen, e.g. pigs can fly. So, it seems that sometimes we can know look back on our dream experience, and recognize a "dream property". However, not all dreams are incoherent. The difficulty is to distinguish waking perceptual experiences from such coherent and vivid dreams. Only if there is a property that *all* dreams have, that is absent in my present experience, I would be confident to say that my present experience is not a dream. Another reason why (a) is sometimes true has to do with lucid dreams. Some people claim that *while* dreaming they can actually tell that they are dreaming. Hence (a) is sometimes true; the "dream property" which only waking (perceptual) experiences have and dreams lack. Since Descartes had examined all properties of experience, and all of them

(distinctness, coherence, and vividness) that he can identify are present in D, the conclusion in (5) follows.

However, Descartes (AT VII 19: CSM 13) seems to affirm that there are never any sure signs by means of which he can distinguish W from D. That is a little bit stronger claim than "there are no *detectable* signs", as it is stressed in (5). So, one may object that if Descartes can't detect the "waking property" it doesn't follow that there is no such property. However, all the skeptic really needs is to establish that one can't detect such a property, even if there is one<sup>36</sup>. At the end of the day it doesn't matter whether there is a "waking property" which is hidden. The sub-conclusion : *there is no such detectable "waking property" of my experience on the basis of which I can judge that I am awake* is still consistent with the claim that "there is a hidden 'waking property" which is for some reason inaccessible to me at the moment. After this point has been clarified, let me take one step deeper in enfolding the options for the criterion of wakefulness.

Let us now consider another candidate for the criterion of wakefulness - I shall call it *asymmetrical* (ASY) criterion. Suppose that criterion of wakefulness amounts to the following: being in a position to tell *that* I am awake when I am awake. This criterion is less

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Let me briefly discuss one possible line of argument in Descartes' favor. Consider one analogy. You are looking in a box, your eyes are working normally, and conditions for vision are optimal. You see perfectly well that the box is empty. Suppose now that someone tells you that there is a chocolate in the box. What would you answer? Perhaps something like this: "I have no evidence that there is a chocolate in the box". But there is something more to this - the absence of evidence is the evidence for absence of the chocolate in the box. The box looking empty is good evidence that there is no chocolate in the box. Perhaps we can apply this analogy to our argument. If we grant Descartes' principle that mind is transparent - everything that there is in my mind is "seen" by the light of introspection - and I find no evidence that there is such a "waking property"; assuming that absence of evidence for there being a "waking property" is evidence that there is no sign of wakefulness. Here is the argument:

<sup>1.</sup> Transparency thesis: there can be nothing in my mind of which I am not aware of.

<sup>2.</sup> There is no evidence of a "waking property".

<sup>3.</sup> Absence of evidence is evidence of absence of such property.

<sup>4. ∴</sup> I'm justified in believing that there is *no* "waking property".

This is a way how Descartes could defend the claim that undetectable property of the experience implies that such property doesn't exist. But, even if this claim were false, the argument would still work; it suffices for the skeptic to claim that even if there is a "waking property", one is not able to detect it.

demanding than the symmetrical one (SYM) because I need not be able to tell that I'm dreaming when dreaming. Thus we obtain the following definition of the asymmetrical criterion:

# (ASY) I can distinguish W from D iff there is an introspectively detectable property of my waking experience on the basis of which I can tell *that* I am awake.

Here, I can distinguish W from D iff (b) Ws have a distinct detectable "waking property" which indicates that I am awake, a property that D do not have, and/or W lacks a "dream property".

After carefully examining his experience Descartes claims that there is no such property of experience on the basis of which he can judge that he is awake. Therefore, it follows, bearing in mind the argument reconstructed on the previous page, that from (5) which asserts not-(b), it follows not only ( $\neg$ SYM), but also ( $\neg$ ASY): I cannot distinguish W from D. So, Descartes' conclusion follows in both cases, whether he assumes the stronger symmetrical or the weaker asymmetrical version of the criterion of wakefulness (1: being able to tell *whether* I am awake or not, or 2: being able to tell *that* I am awake).

My intention here is to point out that W are indistinguishable from D because the truth of (b) *Ws have a distinct detectable "waking property"* cannot be established, not because one can't tell that we are dreaming while dreaming. There is no criterion of wakefulness because one is not able to tell *that* one is awake, when being awake. From now on, I will further discuss only ASY which is in my opinion essential for the dream argument.

So far I have talked about the criterion of wakefulness in terms of subjective indistinguishability. However, the former is a broader concept than the latter. There are

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different criteria of wakefulness that do not rely on reflection, as I already mentioned. For example, there is neuroscience, psychology, and so on. But these criteria are suspect to doubt in the context in which the skeptical scenario is at stake. If I am dreaming then scientific evidence is mere dreamt-evidence. To rely on such criteria would be question begging, because science relies on perceptual evidence which is (in this context) under question. Thus, Descartes is left out only with reflection upon his experience. The criterion of wakefulness in the present context has to be spelled out in terms of subjective indistinguishability relation.

However, there are several concepts of subjective indistinguishability. *Active discrimination*<sup>37</sup> is relative to a given mode of presentation. For example, in this way I can compare the taste of chocolate that I eat now, with the taste of it I experienced yesterday. But I cannot actively discriminate, let's say being in Budapest and being in Stockholm, because I have no presentation of the latter. K. Farkas says that:

....a claim that a subject can actively discriminate between two objects makes sense only relative to some presentation, and thus requires that there *is* such a presentation for *both objects* (2006, pp. 216).

On the other hand, "access" discrimination is not presentation-sensitive. For example, being in Budapest is in this way discriminable from being in Stockholm. What matters here is what one knows in case A and in case B, even if A and B are not in any way presented to the subject. Farkas explains the relation as follows:

Take all the propositions the subject knows in a certain situation A. If all these propositions are true in a situation B, then, for all she knows, the subject could be in B. It is a situation not ruled out by whatever she knows. (2006, pp. 216)

Let me now propose a formulation of ASY in terms of access discriminability: W is distinguishable from D iff for all I know, I could not be dreaming now. Here, it does not matter how both experiences are presented. Once knowledge in both situations is fixed; either

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> For more on this see Farkas, K. (2006). "Indiscriminability and the Sameness of Appearance", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Volume CVI Part II, pp. 205-25

experiences are distinguishable or not. However, only facts about phenomenology of mental states are going to be relevant to fix epistemic conditions in both cases because that is the only kind of non-question begging knowledge that can count against the skeptic. Thus the following formulation obtains:

(ASY) I can *access* distinguish W from D iff there is an introspectively detectable property of my waking experience on the basis of which I can tell *that* I am awake. This implies:

(b'): when being awake, as far as I know in virtue of detecting a "waking property" and/or absence of a "dream property", I could not be dreaming

After clarifying several possible options for the criteria of wakefulness we have a good background to discuss Sosa's response to the dream argument.

### 3. 2. Sosa On The Dream Argument

Let me begin with the Sosa's (2005) reconstruction of the dream argument. Suppose that you believe that you are sitting in a classroom. However, you could easily have such a belief while dreaming that you are sitting in the classroom. Your dream-belief would be grounded on a subjectively similar experience of sitting in a classroom, such that every feature of your present experience could be a feature of a dream experience. As far as you know, you could be dreaming. From your reflective/subjective point of view, you cannot rule out that error possibility. If you don't know that you are *not* dreaming, then you don't know that you are sitting in the classroom. The dream argument, as Sosa presents it, hinges upon two assumptions about the nature of dreams:

- 1. In dreams (Ds) we have beliefs
- 2. In Ds we have perceptual experiences

These two claims amount to the so called "orthodox view of dreams" (Descartes, St.

Augustine), according to which Ds are mental states like perceptions - they involve genuine perceptual experience and belief. Or, if you like, they belong to the same *kind* of experiences. In this view dreams resemble hallucinations. Like in hallucinations (Hs), while having Ds, we have perceptual experiences, whereas there is nothing in the external world which corresponds to what we seem to see.

VP (veridical perception)= perceptual experience + object

H (hallucination)= perceptual experience

D (dream)= perceptual experience

However, Sosa denies the orthodox conception of dreams upon which he thinks that the dream argument relies<sup>38</sup>. Dreams are not states like hallucinations. "To dream is to imagine, not to hallucinate" (2005). From this it follows that in dreams we don't have perceptual experiences ( $\neg$ 2), and we don't have beliefs *while* we dream ( $\neg$ 1).

When something happens in a dream, reality doesn't tend to follow it. You may dream that you are chased by a lion, but in actuality you are not. Whatever happens *in* a dream, doesn't mean that it happens *while* you dream. Similarly, in a dream you may believe that a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Similarly, we have seen that "traditionalists" have seen the source of skepticism in a particular theory of perception.

lion is chasing you, but actually you don't hold such a belief. Dreams are more like imagining: when we imagine, we don't really believe things we imagine. The following inference fails:

to believe in a dreamã to believe while you dream

From "to dream is to imagine", it also follows that dreams are not perceptual experiences. Consequently, Sosa's view of dreams gives him two possible anti-skeptical strategies:

### i. One strategy is assured by denying (1):

Sosa develops an anti-skeptical strategy which is linked with his discussion of safety. The (unqualified) *safety condition*<sup>39</sup> requires that an agent S knows that p iff in (almost) all nearby possible worlds where agent believes that p, p is true. Since in dreams S doesn't have beliefs, her ordinary beliefs are safe. In almost all nearby possible worlds which are just like ours in relevant aspects, where S believes that she is sitting in a class room, she is actually sitting in a class room. The dream world is not even in the realm of near-possible worlds where S has the same belief simply because in the dream-world S doesn't have beliefs at all. Therefore, ordinary perceptual beliefs are rendered safe, and it follows that it is possible to know some things about the world, despite of the dream-error possibility.

### ii. Another strategy is available by denying (2):

*To dream is to imagine*. "Dreams seem more like imaginings, or stories, or even day dreams, all fictions of a sort, or quazi fictions" (2005). If dreaming is not like perceptual kind of experience, then it follows that one can distinguish W from kind of imaginings (dreams).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> See, for example: Sosa, E. (2002) "Tracking, Competence, and Knowledge," in *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology*, ed. P. Moser, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 264-286. And Pritchard (2005).

Sosa's main point is that waking experiences are distinguishable from dreams because: a) in order to distinguish W from Ds, one has to be able to tell *that* one is awake, when being awake, and this criterion can be fulfilled because b) dreaming is not a kind of perceptual experience; to dream is to imagine.

I shall focus on Sosa's second strategy, on arguments against the skeptic which are put forward in *Dreams and philosophy* (2005), and in the lecture 1 of *John Locke's Lectures* (2004-5). Let me briefly sketch the structure of the forthcoming discussion.

I will raise a few questions for Sosa's thesis that dreaming is imagining. First, I put forward a *reductio ad absurdum* of his main thesis that to dream is to imagine. Second, I raise a question concerning the criterion according to which these mental states are type identical. Finally, I will discuss Sosa's criterion of wakefulness. Sosa claims, supposedly contra the skeptic, that the criterion of wakefulness is being able to tell *that* I am awake when I am, even though I am not able to tell that I am dreaming when dreaming. However, I think that the skeptic does not and need not argue that the criterion is symmetrical, namely that I have to be able to tell *whether* I am awake or not. At the end, I raise a doubt whether one is in position to tell that one is awake, by being able to tell that one is actually affirming and not merely dreaming to affirm. It seems that the point of the dream argument is that if you were dreaming you would have the same conviction that you affirm, whereas you wouldn't affirm anything. If this is so, then we are back to the beginning – we cannot tell that we are not dreaming, solely on the basis of reflection. After critically examining Sosa's theory, I shall propose a version of Sosa's response, and argue that the skeptic faces a destructive dilemma.

Let me first start with an obvious point about imagination. "What it is like" to imagine is different than "what it is like" to perceive. Imagining that you are being chased by a lion phenomenally differs from really being in such a position. The difference is in vividness and

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more importantly in the way the object is presented. One feature of how perceptual objects seem, which belongs to our ordinary conception of perception, is presence to the mind or giveness to the senses. This is a crucial feature that makes the phenomenal difference between imagination and perception. For example, imagining an icon in front of me is not constrained in any way by how the icon really is at this moment. I could imagine it as having an entirely different color or shape. However, this flexibility in presentedness is not the same in case of genuine perception. How the icon is at the moment I see it puts certain constraints on the experience; I cannot see it as being round-shaped, if it is square shaped. It seems to me that I see the icon in a certain way precisely in virtue of its appearing to be "there" as suchand-such. How the object is presented in perception differs from the way objects are presented in thought and imagination, and the way of presentedness explains their different phenomenology. "What it is like" to imagine is different than "what it is like" to see. The final upshot is the following: we are able to distinguish imagining from perceiving solely on the basis of their phenomenal properties. So far so good. But, the trouble comes when we consider dreams. Since imagining is distinguishable from waking (perceptual) experiences, and dreams are kind of imaginings, then shouldn't it follow that dreams are distinguishable from W? And yet, we are deceived in dreams. I find this puzzling. Consider the following inference:

- Dreams are subjectively indistinguishable from waking experiences. [The skeptic and Sosa agree on this premise]
- 2. To dream is to imagine. [Sosa's assumption]
- 3. ∴ Imagining is subjectively indistinguishable from waking experiences. From (1) and
  - (2)

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But (3) is false; there is a phenomenological (discriminable) difference between imagining and perceiving. As we see, the trouble for Sosa arises when we substitute "imaginings" for "dreams" in the premise (1). If dreams are kind of imaginings, then such a substitution should be legitimate. But in that case, there is an unacceptable consequence in (3). Thus, one has to deny either (1) or (2). But Sosa, and even the skeptic, or hardly anyone else, would deny (1) that we are deceived in dreams.

Now let me put the simple argument in a more elaborated form of a *reductio ad absurdum*.

- 1. Dreams are subjectively indistinguishable from perceptual experiences.
- ∴ "What it is like" to dream is the same as "what it is like" to be awake (inference to the best explanation of (1)).
- 3. Dreaming is *type* identical with imagining. [Assumption made by Sosa].
- 4. Two mental states are type identical in virtue of sharing the same *general* phenomenal properties (difference between mental state types is determined by the difference in their phenomenal properties, e.g. feeling depressed differs from perceiving something, thinking differs from seeing).
- 5. "What it is like" to dream is the same as "what it is like" to imagine. From (3) and (4)
- 6. If A=B, and B=C, then A=C. *Transitivity of identity relation*.
- ∴ "What it is like" to imagine is the same as "what it is like" to be awake (to perceive). From (2) and (5), (6).
- 8. Imagining is subjectively *in*distinguishable from perceptual experiences. From (7)

9. But, imagining is subjectively distinguishable from perceptual experiences.

10. ((8) &)9)) is contradictory.

11. .:.¬(3)

Let me now discuss possible replies on Sosa's behalf. First, Sosa could argue that the premise (5) is too strong. If the second premise *to dream is to imagine* means merely that dreaming is a subclass of imagining, then the objection can be answered.

For example, a cat might look similar to a dog with respect to furriness, but that doesn't mean that the cat looks exactly like the dog, otherwise we wouldn't be able to tell which is which. Similarly, Sosa need not argue that dreams are phenomenally *exactly* the same as imaginings. He can say that they are alike with respect to some phenomenal qualities, but not all of them. For example, joy is a kind of emotion just like depression is an emotion because they share certain general phenomenal qualities. However, there are vast differences between phenomenology of depression and joy. The same relation might hold between dreams and imagining (or day-dreaming); they might both belong to a class of imaginings, but still have considerable phenomenal differences. Hence, Sosa's position might simply be that (2) means "dreams are a *subclass* of imaginings". In that case, the *reductio* raises a question of clarification: in what way are dreams kind of imagining? What are the phenomenal qualities they share?

Second, Sosa could argue that the objection is not persuasive because subjective indistinguishability taken as active discriminability is not a transitive relation<sup>40</sup>. The phenomenal sorites argument makes the following scenario plausible ("~" stands for "indistinguishable", (I) for imagining): even if dreams may be indistinguishable from imaginings (D~ I) because they belong to the same mental kind and dreams are indistinguishable from W (D~W), it won't follow that imaginings are indistinguishable from waking experiences (I ~ W). The following transitivity fails:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> In the previous chapter we discussed the phenomenal sorites argument that precisely questions transitivity of subjective indistinguishability relation.

### $\mathbf{I} \sim \mathbf{D} \sim \mathbf{W} \mathbf{E}$

∴ I~ WE

Therefore, "(8) imagining is subjectively *in*distinguishable from (perceptual) waking experiences" won't necessarily follow because subjective indistinguishability is not transitive.

Which ever way Sosa would respond to the *reductio*, there is one remaining question: what is the relevant criterion for establishing type (sub-type) identity of dreams and imagining? According to the orthodox conception of dreams held by Descartes and St. Augustine, dreams are the same kind of states as perceptions because "what it is like" to dream is the same as "what it is like" to be awake, with the caveat that in the case of dreams the experiences are not veridical. Thus, what constitutes their difference is external to the mind. In such a view dreams resemble hallucinations. On the contrary, Sosa holds that dreams are not like hallucinations; dreams are kind of imaginings. Now, if we find plausible the view that general phenomenal character of a mental state determines its kind, then dreams should have the same "what it is like" as imaginings. But, I think that there is an important phenomenal and functional difference between them. Let me elaborate options for the relevant criteria:

<u>Subjective/internal</u>: we fix the kind of a state by its specific "feel" or "what is like". (E.g. from the point of view of the subject, feeling hunger differs from thirst, thinking is different than perceiving, etc.)

<u>Functional</u>: we fix the kind of a state by its *functional roles*, i.e. by its typical causes and effects.

Now, let us see whether dreams and imaginings fulfill the criteria I have specified. Regarding the subjective criterion, I emphasize a possibly relevant difference between dreams and imaginings. I think that the way in which an object appears in dreams is different from how it appears in imagination. Consequently, the phenomenology of dreams and imagination is different. First and foremost, the difference is in the order of *experienced* determination. When I imagine that I'm drinking cocktails in Dubrovnik it appears that I am adding details to the scene: two palms, wind, etc. But, in dreaming, it appears that the number of palms, and wind, are not details of the scene edited by me. It's not up to me whether there are two or three palms. In case of imagining, it is usually the case that I determine or "tailor" the object, e.g. I am the creator of the imagined scene. But, the order of experienced determination is reversed in dreams; the scene in my dream does not seem to be determined by me. The way of presentedness of a situation or object is crucial for and partially determines the phenomenal character of the experience. If dreams and imagining don't share the order of experienced determination it is difficult to see how they could be sufficiently subjectively alike. Consequently, the internal criterion for type (or sub-type) identity of mental states cannot be fulfilled, at least not fully. But then, the second question for Sosa branches into two sub questions: (i) is type (or sub-type) identity compatible with mutually opposite orders of experienced determination, and (ii) how much of phenomenal likeness is sufficient to establish the type (or sub-type) identity? Given that there are relevant subjective/internal differences between dreaming and imagining, Sosa needs to answer the question what is the criterion according to which dreams are a kind of imaginings.

Now I shall pass to Sosa's account of the criterion of wakefulness, and see how he further develops the argument against the skeptic. In Sosa's view (one reason why) waking experiences are distinguishable from dreams is because the criterion of wakefulness is to be

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in a position to tell *that* one is awake, when awake, and not to be in a position to tell *whether* one is awake. To remind you SYM implies that: (a) when dreaming I can tell that I'm dreaming, and (b) when awake I can tell that I'm awake. Sosa argues that although SYM can not be fulfilled, we shouldn't worry about it as far as the asymmetrical (ASY) criterion can be fulfilled, namely that one is able to tell *that* one is awake. Certainly, when dreaming we are deceived about our situation, i.e. we can't tell that we are not awake. But that doesn't imply that we cannot tell that we are awake when we are awake. To make his point stronger, Sosa introduces the following analogy:

Might the possibility that we dream not be like that of being dead, or unconscious? Even if one could never tell *that* one suffers such a fate, one can still tell that one does *not* suffer it when one does not. Why not say the same of dreams? (2005)

Sosa argues that being asleep is in a relevant aspect similar to being dead. We cannot distinguish being dead from being alive, by being able to tell to be dead when dead, because dead people have no beliefs. However, that doesn't mean that we can't distinguish being alive from being dead by being able to tell that we are alive, when we are alive. It seems that Sosa wants to ascribe the following kind of reasoning to the skeptic. The criterion of wakefulness is to be able to tell whether one is dreaming or not. Then, Sosa argues that of course that while dreaming one can't tell that one is dreaming -(a) is false. But, from this it doesn't follow that (b) is false, or that there is no criterion of wakefulness.

However, I think that Descartes had in mind the same asymmetrical criterion that Sosa and Williamson take to be legitimate. As I have previously argued, Descartes says that there is no criterion of wakefulness because one is never in position to tell *that* one is awake. Ws are indistinguishable from dreams *not* because I can't tell that (a'): *dreams have a certain "dream property" which can be reflectively detected, which indicates that I'm dreaming* is false, but because (b'): *Ws have a detectable "waking property" which indicates that I am* 

*awake, a property that Ds do not have, and/or W lacks a "dream property"* is false. I have argued that ASY is sufficient for skeptical purposes and logically weaker than SYM.

Now, if the skeptic actually takes the ASY criterion, it seems that Sosa doesn't essentially disagree with the skeptic about *what* is the required criterion of wakefulness. Rather, they disagree on the question whether the criterion is satisfied. On the one hand, we have Descartes who after carefully searching for the "waking properties" finds none. On the other hand, we have Sosa who affirms that W can be distinguished from Ds because dreams are imaginings. Now, we are curious to know what Sosa takes to be the "waking property"?

Sosa says that the difference between dreaming and being awake is in affirmatively believing. When we dream we don't affirm anything, whereas, in our waking life we do affirmatively believe. In his view, the property of affirming is sufficient for us to distinguish dream-quasi-thoughts from waking thoughts. So, when we are awake we do affirm, and we can tell that we affirm. Therefore, we can tell that we are awake, whenever we are awake.

What enables us to distinguish the two content-identical states is just the fact that in the dream state we do not affirm anything-not that we are veridically perceiving an external world, nor that we are not-whereas in waking life we do knowingly perceive our surroundings. This by our light sufficed to make the two states distinguishable." (Sosa, 2005)

Here it is puzzling to see how, or on what basis can we distinguish waking from dreaming thoughts *tokens*. Sosa says that in dreams we don't affirm anything, whereas in waking life we do. And this is what distinguishes their *types*. But, even if thought types are distinguishable in this way, it doesn't really help us against the skeptic, who might respond in the following way. You may know what distinguishes *real thought type* from *dreaming to think* type in the way Sosa points out, without being able to distinguish their tokens. The skeptic can say: "You are now supposedly thinking, but, can you be sure that you are not merely *dreaming* that you think?" If you were dreaming now you would have the same conviction that you affirm, whereas you would not affirm anything. Can you be sure that you

are not having a dream-quasi-belief right now, which merely seems as if you affirm it? The skeptic may grant that affirming may be the "waking property", but then raise a question of how to discriminate affirming from dreaming-to-affirm on the basis of reflection, which is required in order to distinguish token thoughts. And this question brings us again into the skeptic's pit: if we cannot know that we are not dreaming now, we cannot know that the criterion of wakefulness is satisfied. Even if our experience has a "waking property", we have a defeater that threatens *knowledge* that our present experience has such a property. Thus, the point of the skeptical dream argument is not all about whether there is a "waking property", but it is also about how do we know that our present experience has such property.

Nevertheless, I do not think that our epistemic situation and Sosa's solution is hopeless. I will present a destructive dilemma against the skeptic, and sketch a response to the dream argument that relies on Sosa's account of dreams.

## 3. 2. 1. A Response To The Dream Argument

Sosa maintained that the asymmetrical criterion is legitimate, and can be fulfilled because in dreams we don't affirm, whereas in waking life we do. As I already stressed, the problem that boosts the dream argument again is our inability to distinguish seeming to affirm from really affirming. So even if there is such a "waking property", as the friendly skeptic may grant, the possibility that one merely seems to affirm cannot be ruled out on the basis of the phenomenal properties of the (thinking) experience. I certainly acknowledge this difficulty but I don't think that this objection is fatal for Sosa's view. By coupling the asymmetrical criterion of wakefulness with denying the "orthodox conception" of dream experiences, Sosa can argue that all dream experiences have "imagination like" property which is not distinctive for normal perceptual experiences. Once we find the property that all

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dreams have - the "dream property" - it becomes possible to identify that waking experience *lacks* the "imagination like" property. The strategy I propose is reversed from Descartes': instead of looking for a "waking property", we should look for a "dream property". Consequently, the "waking property" is a *negative* one; it is the absence of the "dream property" that indicates that I am awake now. One disjunct of (b') *Ws have a detectable "waking property" which indicates that I am awake, a property that Ds do not have, and/or W lacks a "dream property"* is false, namely, the disjunct concerning the "waking property" as a positive property that Ws have and Ds lack. However, (b') is true after all because there is a negative "waking property" in the following sense - *Ws lack the "dream property"*.

However, there is another skeptical objection lurking here - the *problem of knowing that the criterion is satisfied.* The skeptic would certainly challenge our competence to judge because in dreams we are not capable of making rational judgments. So, if we are dreaming now then our competence is reduced. Then, the question is how do we know that our experience lacks the "imagination like" property? The skeptic can press the following point: if you don't know that you are not dreaming you cannot be confident that your experience satisfies the criterion. The dream defeater now threatens our *knowledge* that the criterion of wakefulness is satisfied.

I think that only one point has to be granted to the skeptic; we have to admit that in dreams we don't usually notice any incoherencies in the plot of the experience, simply because we are not competent to notice them. But, as we have learned so far, the skeptic cannot argue that consequently we are not competent when being awake. If we are awake now, assuming that the skeptic is willing to grant that, and rather focuses his attack on our knowledge that we are awake, then we can gain a significant dialectical advantage. I propose to formulate the strategy in a conditional way.

If I am awake then:

- (i) My experience has the "waking property", and yes, it also *seems* that it does.
- (ii) I am (after all) competent to tell that my experience has the "waking property", despite being incompetent when dreaming.

The belief that this experience has a "waking property" is true if I am awake, and it is also formed in a reliable way. This suffices for me to know that this experience is not a dream. Now, the skeptic may say "it seems to you that your experience has a 'waking property', and it would seem the same if you were dreaming. Hence, your true belief is just reflectively lucky." To this objection I would respond that the reflectively accessible evidence, the how it seems, might be the same in both cases. However, that kind of evidence is not entirely exhausting the description of my both epistemic situations. Remember that competence makes a huge difference - it is not the case that my dream situation would be epistemically symmetrical because I'm incompetent in dreams. And also, in dreams my experience has the "imagination like property". Consequently, this fact about my experience, plus my competence, are not the same in the dream case, although the how it seems is. If we take into account not merely the reflectively accessible epistemic state, but also the external epistemic conditions, it does not follow that both epistemic situations are the same. However, the skeptic can challenge this response by raising the question of whether one can tell that one is competent (by reflection alone), and generate the skeptical problem on a higher level, which concerns knowledge of competence. Let me briefly sum up the first stage of the response (the conditional part) in a form of a dilemma for the skeptic - and then address the latter problem

- 1. Suppose that I am dreaming now. Then, the skeptical dream argument is just a part of my dream it's a *dreamt argument*. In this case why should I take the argument seriously? For example, if I dreamt that I bought a new computer, I wouldn't look for the computer upon waking up. We normally don't take dreams seriously, and more importantly it would be *irrational* to do so. If I would spend months in looking for my alleged new computer, I would be considered completely irrational. Similarly, if this is a dream it would be irrational to treat the dream argument seriously. In addition, if I am dreaming the argument just seems to be sound but is not. Thus, I conclude the following: if I am dreaming now then (a) the skeptical argument is (very likely) unsound, and (b) it would be irrational from me to take the argument seriously and respond to it.
- 2. Suppose that I am awake now. In this case, my present experience is not "imagination like", and I am competent to judge that. Hence, I can competently judge that the criterion of wakefulness is satisfied. In addition, if I am competent then I am competent to judge that I am competent. My own reasoning and arguments that I make are objects of my higher order thought they are about my thinking. Now, if I am competent in making judgments about things, then I am also using the same faculty to judge my thinking about things. There is no higher-order faculty involved; it's the same reasoning that just takes a different object. Hence, if I am competent then I am competent to judge that I am competent. Or, to put it simply, *competence iterates*.

Let me further clarify points made about the second horn of the dilemma (the waking situation) in a form of an argument:

- 1. If I am awake then my belief about the external world is true, and I am competent in making judgments.
- 2. The "waking property" can be detected only while being awake and not dreaming.
- If I am awake then I am competent to judge that my present experience lacks
  "imagination like" property
- 4. Hence, if I am awake then the belief that this experience is not a dream is justified.
- 5. Therefore, if I am awake then I know that I am not dreaming.  $(K\neg D)$  from (4) and (1)
- Since competence iterates then I am also competent to *judge* that the criterion of wakefulness is satisfied.
- Therefore, from (1), (5) and (6) it follows that I know that I know that I am not dreaming. (K(K¬D))

Knowledge of the external world (Kp) is ensured in the following way: if awake, I have a true belief that p, *prima facie* justification for the belief that p<sup>41</sup>, and I know that I'm not dreaming. Knowledge that I know that I know p (KKp) is ensured by the thesis that competence iterates; I can make a competent higher order judgment about my competence, and hence I know that I know that I'm not dreaming.

Let me conclude this section. Through the discussion with Sosa and the skeptic, we have learned something new about the dream argument: the skeptical dream argument does not arise only for the "orthodox conception" of dreams. The essential problem the skeptic brings to the fore concerns our competence to judge that the criterion of wakefulness is satisfied. But that question remains a threat independently of the issue of what are dreams made of. As we see, even if dreams are "made of imaginings", the question is how do we

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> I don't think that the skeptic would deny that experience gives us *prima facie* justification. I think he would rather present a "dream defeater" to challenge it.
know that we are making a competent judgment about our experience, if we don't know that we are not dreaming? The answer I proposed was the following. The dream argument is either just a dreamt argument or we do know things about the world, and we know that we know. Finally, Ws are access discriminable from Ds - there is something in the waking case that is not known in the dream case. Once we have the "waking property", which is ensured by Sosa's view that to dream is to imagine, and competence, the asymmetrical criterion of wakefulness - when awake one is able to tell that one is awake - can be and is satisfied. When I am awake I have a true and justified belief that I'm not dreaming. Hence, it is false that, for all I know, I might be dreaming. In addition, competence extends to my ability to introspect coherency and competence in thinking and reasoning. Since I do not see any non-arbitrary reason for the skeptic to grant competence in one domain and then deny it in the other, I think we can pretty safely say that when awake I know that I am competent. The "dream defeater" which threatens the ability to tell that the criterion is satisfied is contra-posed to the claim that competence iterates, and the external epistemic and non-epistemic circumstances that undermine the skeptic's assumption about the symmetry of the dream and waking situation. I think that the proposed strategy based on Sosa's theory at least gives a prospect for a standoff position with the skeptic.

So far I have discussed Cartesian steps of the dream argument, which mainly concerned the criterion of wakefulness. In the rest of the chapter III I will discuss the non-Cartesian steps of the dream argument, premises that Descartes did not make explicit.

#### 3. 3. Non-Cartesian Steps Of The Dream Argument

The Cartesian conclusion is that W is indistinguishable from D. Descartes cannot tell that he is awake even if he is awake, because he doesn't know that he is not dreaming (on the basis of his experience). Namely, he doesn't have justification for the belief that he is not dreaming. Descartes' experience might give him *prima facie* justification that he is sitting by the fire, but that is not enough, he has to be able to neutralize the "dream defeater", because if he is dreaming he doesn't know that he is sitting by the fire. The justification at issue here is of internalist kind. Internalism about justification, defended in different versions by Chisholm, Ginet, Fumerton, BonJour, Conee and Feldman, is the view about what the knowledge basis is supposed to be. In Descartes' view knowledge is a justified true belief, where justification is accessible to the subject on the basis of reflection<sup>42</sup>. In virtue of having such a justified belief, it follows that one can, in principle, know that he knows by reflection alone. A version of the K-K thesis; which says that knowledge (in principle) iterates, KpãKKp, is often taken to be one way to define internalism about knowledge<sup>43</sup>. Descartes' argument can be interpreted within such an internalist framework in the following way:

- 1. My present experience of sitting by the fire (p) is indistinguishable from some dream experiences.
- If my experience is indistinguishable from some dreams then I don't have internalist justification for believing that I am not dreaming.
- 3. Internalist justification is a necessary condition for knowledge.
- 4. I don't know that I'm not dreaming.
- 5. If I don't know that I'm not dreaming then I don't know that (p) I'm sitting by the fire.
- 6.  $\therefore$  I don't know that p. From (4) and (5)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> However, there are three kinds of internalism about justification: (i) *access* internalism emphasizes subject's access to the knowledge basis, (ii) *mentalism* focuses on the nature of the basis itself, which is mental (experience or belief), and (iii) *deontological concept* of justification analyses justification in terms of fulfilling one's intellectual duties. For more see G. Pappas (2005).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> A famous proponent of this principle is H.A. Prichard, who says: "When we know something, we either do or can directly know that we are knowing it, and when we believe something we know or can know that we are believing and not knowing it, and in view of the former fact, we know that in certain instances of its use our intelligence is not defective..." (1950, pp. 94)

Now we can more clearly see ways in which one can resist the conclusion. The first way is to deny the 3<sup>rd</sup> assumption: *Internalist justification is a necessary condition for knowledge*. This is what externalists about justification like Goldman and Dretske would typically do. They say that *S' s justification for believing that p may be determined wholly by facts external to S* - *what justifies S's belief need not be cognitively accessible to S*. Externalists think that subjects need not have reflectively accessible ground for a belief. What decides the matter of knowledge is whether the experience is properly related to the external world, and not what we *believe* about that relation. Let us take for example Goldman's (1979) reliabilism. According to his view S knows that p iff:

- 1. p is true
- 2. Bp

3. Bp is justified iff Bp is formed by a reliable cognitive process

Justification, according to Goldman, is the *fact* that a given process is reliable. Thus, justification is a component which is external to the mind, and consequently, it can not be in principle accessible by reflection. For example, I cannot decide the matter whether my perception is reliable unless I am able to know the statistics about how often my perceptual beliefs formed on the basis of experience are true. I need to have third person access to reality to establish the matter of reliability. But most certainly I don't have armchair knowledge about it. The believer, says the externalist, doesn't need to know that she has a justified belief; it is enough that the belief is appropriately formed. Consequently, the reliabilist doesn't require that we know the skeptical hypothesis to be false in order to have knowledge that p. So, even if I don't know that I am not dreaming, I might still know that there is a window in

front of me because: (1) it is true that there is a window there, and (2) my belief about the window is formed via reliable cognitive process (e.g. vision). Hence:

*if* I am awake, my belief is true, and my sensory experience is veridical and reliable, then I know that p.

*if* I am dreaming then I don't know that p.

However, the externalist might even concede to the skeptic that one doesn't know which one is actually the case. But, according to externalism, that merely shows that one lacks *second order knowledge*; I don't know that I know that p since I don't know whether my experience is appropriately related to the external world. Nevertheless, the externalist would say that lack of knowledge about which situation one is (second order knowledge), cannot jeopardize one's knowledge about the external world (fist order knowledge). Here is how the externalist reasons:

Suppose that I am awake. If I'm awake then I do know things about the world. But, even if I don't know *that* I know that I am awake, it doesn't follow that I don't know that p. My state of knowing depends only on the situation I am in, i.e. on circumstances external to the mind. What I think about my situation is not relevant for first-order knowledge.

Suppose that I am dreaming. In this case I lack first and second order knowledge.

Does this kind of externalism give a convincing solution to the skeptical problem? Here is an example that might bring to the fore what is missing in the externalist's solution. Consider the well known cerebral lesion case. A subject has a brain damage due to a form of cancer or a

lesion, but he is unaware of it. However, the damage leads him to have, along with a number of false beliefs, a true belief that he has cerebral damage. Thus, the brain lesion belief forming process reliably produces beliefs about having cerebral damage. However, the subject doesn't seem to have justification to believe that he has cerebral damage. From the subjective point of view, it seems that those true beliefs just pop up with other irrational beliefs. Namely, the subject doesn't have any knowledge about the reliability of his belief forming process.

The example emphasizes the intuition that reliability and justification can come apart. Thus, it is questionable whether the person who is awake, who has reliably produced beliefs, has also justified beliefs. As far as one can tell on the basis of one's the experience, one could be dreaming. Given that the dreaming scenario is an open epistemic possibility, the "dream defeater" presents a problem for the justification of perceptual beliefs. Although the externalist may secure so called "brute" (Pritchard, 2005) knowledge of the external world, the question is whether it gives a satisfactory answer to the problem of reflective knowledge.

Now let us discuss the grounds for the 5<sup>th</sup> premise: *If I don't know that I'm not dreaming then I don't know that (p) I'm sitting by the fire.* This premise can be put in terms of necessary conditions for knowing p. If I don't know that I'm not dreaming then I don't know that p, and conversely, if I know that p then I know that I'm not dreaming. Barry Stroud, a contemporary skeptic, says that:

... knowing that one is not dreaming is a condition of knowing something about the world around us... (1984, pp. 14). As soon as we see that a certain possibility is incompatible with our knowing such-and-such, it is suggested, we immediately recognize that it is a possibility that must be known not to obtain if we are to know the such-and-such in question. (1984, pp. 18)

He further argues that the skeptic's demand to rule out the dream possibility is rooted in our everyday ascription of knowledge claims. Let's take for example a claim "I know there is a wolf there". If someone asked me "why do you think that it is a wolf that you see?", I would

say "it looks like a wolf, it has four legs, fur, tail and so on". However, everything I said is still compatible with seeing a dog. If I really know that is a wolf then I should be able to tell why it couldn't be a dog. To be more precise, I should be able to tell what distinguishes wolfs from dogs. And this seems to be a reasonable requirement; if I'm not able to tell that the animal is not a dog then I'm not entitled to claim that I know that there is a wolf in front of me. So, we have the following thought: if I know that being a wolf is not compatible with being a dog, that is (being a wolf (W)**ã** not being a dog ( $\neg$  d)), then, in order to know that it is a wolf, I have to rule out the possibility that it is a dog. In other words, K $\neg$ d is a necessary condition for Kw. Here we have to make explicit the closure principle, which is the thesis that knowledge is closed under *known* entailment: If S knows that *p*, and knows that *p* entails *q*, then S knows that *q*. Or, more formally:

1. Kp

2. K(pãq)

3. Therefore, Kq.

So, when we replace (p) with (W) and (q) with ( $\neg$ d), we get the following result: if I know that it is a wolf, and if I know that (Wã¬d), then I know that the animal is not a dog. However, since I don't know that the animal is not a dog ( $\neg$ K¬d), given that knowledge is closed under known entailment, it follows that I don't know that it is a wolf ( $\neg$ Kw). We have an instance of a *modus tollens*:

1.  $\neg K \neg q$ 

2. K(pãq)

3. Therefore,¬ Kp.

Now, let us see how the closure principle figures in the dream argument. Usually when we dream we form false beliefs. E.g. we may believe that we are running on a hill, while we are in fact lying in bed. But having false beliefs in dreams is not the only reason for saying that we lack knowledge in dreams. Actually, it is possible to have true beliefs in dreams. For example, Descartes could be sitting by the fire and dreaming that he is sitting by the fire. Therefore, the truth of p can be (after all) compatible with dreaming: p does not entail  $\neg D$ . In this respect the dreaming case is not parallel to the dog-wolf case. So what exactly is incompatible with dreaming? Consider again Descartes' veridical dream example. Descartes' belief that p does not satisfy the tripartite account of knowledge. Here is why. It is purely a coincidence that Descartes is sitting by the fire *and* dreaming that he is sitting by the fire. He could easily form a false belief because in dreams there is no systematic causal connection between the belief and the fact that makes it true. The "matching" of Descartes' dream-belief and the corresponding state of affairs is just a coincidence. And our anti-luck intuition tells us that accidentally true belief is not knowledge. That is why we don't have knowledge in dreams, even if we can have true beliefs. Therefore, *knowing* is incompatible with dreaming: if Kp then  $\neg D$ . If I know that knowing p and dreaming are incompatible (K(Kpã $\neg D$ ), then in order to know p I have to know that I'm not dreaming. At this stage, it seems that the skeptical argument involves the following premises:

- Dreaming is not compatible with knowing (I do not know that *p* if I am dreaming that
  *p*). Kpã¬D
- 2. I know that dreaming is not compatible with knowing. **K**(**Kpã¬D**)
- 3. I don't know that I'm not dreaming.  $\neg \mathbf{K} \neg \mathbf{D}$
- 4.  $\therefore$  I don't know that p.  $\neg$ **Kp**

However, the conclusion obviously doesn't follow without an additional principle. If  $\neg K \neg D$ , it only follows that one does not know that he knows p ( $\neg K(Kp)$ ). But then, the skeptic needs to argue that ( $\neg K(Kp)$ ) $\tilde{a} \neg Kp$ . The dream argument needs the KK principle: *If S knows that p, then S knows that she knows that p* (Kp  $\tilde{a}$  KKp). Then, the skeptic needs to obtain the following formulation of the argument:

- 1. K(Kp  $\tilde{a} \neg D$ ) (premise)
- 2.  $\neg K \neg D$  (premise)
- 3.  $\neg K \neg D \tilde{a} \neg KKp$ , from (1) and (2)
- 4. ¬KKp, from (2) and (3) MP
- 5.  $\neg$ KKp  $\tilde{a} \neg$  Kp (contraposition of the KK)
- 6.  $\neg$  Kp, from (4) and (5) MP

However, the externalist would challenge the third step of this argument, that  $\neg K(Kp)$  implies  $\neg Kp$ . If second order knowledge is a necessary condition for knowledge about the world, then the implication holds. But the externalist does not accept that. In order to Kp, we don't have to *know* that Kp. Since justification is not itself accessible by reflection, then one need not be aware of having justification in order to have first order knowledge. Thus, the externalist can block the dream argument by denying a premise of the non-Cartesian steps of the dream argument.

It seems that the externalist has a successful way to respond the skeptic, a strategy that preserves somewhat "brute", non-reflective knowledge. But such a response still concedes some victory to the skeptic. If we can't tell on the basis of reflection that we have a ground for perceptual belief, reflective perceptual knowledge remains unreachable.

#### Conclusion Of Chapter III

The discussion about the non-Cartesian steps of dream argument lead us into an important division between externalism and internalism. The question about the kind of justification and knowledge required, as you might expect, determines how is one going to estimate whether an anti-skeptical strategy is successful. My conclusion is that externalism is successful to a certain extent, insofar it secures "brute" knowledge which satisfies the external criterion. Nevertheless, the view does not manage to secure reflective knowledge.

However, there is a hope to meet the challenge raised by the skeptical dream argument at a different stage. I proposed a dilemma against the skeptic that concerns the Cartesian steps, and presented a possible response that is based on Sosa's theory of dreams which may preserve internalist knowledge that one is not dreaming. If one is competent to judge that one's experience has no "imagination like" property, then one has both externalist and internalist justification. The belief has externalist justification because when awake, one *de facto* forms the belief on the basis of a reliable cognitive process (introspection and reasoning). On the other hand, the view preserves internalism about justification because the ground on the basis of which one believes that one is not asleep - that there is no "imagination like" property - is accessible by reflection alone. The proposed response to the dream argument can potentially account for both epistemological intuitions.

### CHAPTER IV

## A DEFENSE OF THE TRADEMARK ARGUMENT

Descartes believed that without knowing God man cannot have true knowledge (*scientia*), but merely convictions (*pervasio*). If *deus deceptor* created us with cognitive faculties such that we are systematically deceived about the existence of things we seem to perceive, our perceptual beliefs can not be more than beliefs. That is why Descartes says that he "...must enquire whether there is a God, and, if there is, whether he can be a deceiver: for without knowledge on this matter, I do not seem to be able to be entirely certain about any other (AT VII 36, CSM 25)." In this chapter I will follow Descartes' inquiry on the question whether there is God. I will defend a version of the so called *trademark argument*, presented by Descartes in the *Meditation Three*<sup>44</sup>, which inquires about the source (and content) of the idea of God, to the conclusion that God exists.

The plan of the chapter is briefly as follows. In the first section I discuss whether an idea of God as the infinite is possible at all, and whether it can be both clear and incomprehensible. In the second section I raise the question of what is the origin of the idea of God? I will present Descartes' "argument from doubt" to the effect that the idea of a perfect mind must be prior to any humanly created idea of God. Then I will introduce a new defense of the trademark argument that rests on a logically weaker claim than priority thesis. It is rather the unity and incomprehensibility of the idea of God that indicates that no finite mind could be the cause of the idea of God.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> The argument is also stated in the *Discourse* and in the *Principles*.

#### 4.1. The Cartesian Idea Of God As The Actual Infinite

In this section I'm going to discuss how the idea of God as the infinite<sup>45</sup> moved Descartes' mind, who perceived the infinite most clearly and distinctly, and somewhat paradoxically admitted its incomprehensibility. Discussion of this apparent incompatibility will be centered around two objections to Descartes: (1) that the idea of the infinite is impossible (Gassendi), and (2) that the incomprehensibility of the idea is not compatible with its clearness and distinctness (Williams). I will defend the coherency of Descartes' conception of God as the *actual* infinite in contrast with the potential infinite (or the "indefinite"), stressing the "completeness" of the idea which contributes to its clarity. I conclude that clarity is reconcilable with incomprehensibility because to the human mind the idea of God has an indefinite dimension, which is nevertheless consistent with its "completeness".

Descartes begins his inquiry by stating that he has an idea or concept of God as an infinite and supremely perfect being:

By the term 'God' I understand a substance that is infinite, [eternal, immutable,]independent, supremely intelligent, supremely powerful, and which created both myself and everything else (if anything else there be) which exists. (AT VII 45: CSM 31)

Let me begin by terminological clarifications; what Descartes means by "idea"? Descartes explicitly points out the following distinction:

In this term *idea* there is equivocation: it may either be taken materially, as an act of my understanding...or objectively, as what is represented by this act. (AT VII 8, CSM 7)

The idea of God can stand for *what* is represented: (i) the content of a thought, or an (2) intentional object of thought. On the other hand, the idea of God can be also understood as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Historically, pioneers of the idea that infinity is an attribute of God are first-century Jewish philosopher Philo and the founder of neoplatonism Plotinus (c. 205–270 c.e.).

that *by* which we are aware of the object God – a psychological vehicle. The latter is called "material idea" whereas the former is called an "objective idea" of God. The material idea of God taken as an *act of thinking* is not infinite, either temporally, in extension, or perfection. The psychological episode of thinking takes certain time, it belongs to an individual, etc. But, the objective idea of God - that which the act of thinking is about - is not time nor subject indexed, it is infinite, at least *in* thought. The sense of "real" attributed to the objective idea should be understood in the following way. For example, the objective idea of a unicorn is *real in the mind* insofar it is the object of someone's thought. This sense of intentional reality should be distinguished from mind-independent reality, the sense in which horses, chairs, neural states, etc., are real. We can talk about the unicorn being white and being beautiful without assuming its existence. This is the way I'm going to talk about the infinity of God. I will sometimes use the term infinite-beinghood<sup>46</sup> in order to emphasize "bracketing" mind-independent reality of the infinite.

Descartes explicitly ties the concept of a material idea to a psychological state, to an *act* of understanding that can be placed in a specific time and attributed to a specific person, which can be described as being realized in a neural state, etc. However, I think that he also uses the distinction between the material and objective idea in a more abstract and subtle way that offers a better understanding of the trademark argument. He says:

In the case of infinity, even if we understand it to be positive in the highest degree, nevertheless our **way of understanding** it is negative, because it depends on our not noticing any limitation in the thing. [my emphasis] (AT VII 113, CSM 81)

The concept of material idea can be (or is) used in a more abstract way, referring to the *way* of understanding. In this sense the material idea involves the *aspect* under which we are thinking about an intentional object. For example, I can think about Venus as the last star visible in the morning, or as the first star visible in the evening. Although aspects (or material

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> This concept that I take from Thomas Vinci (1998, pp. 94) does not imply extra-mental reality of the infinite.

ideas) differ, their intentional object (objective idea) is the same. Thus, the material idea can also be identified with the content of a thought. I shall use the term "material idea" in this more abstract sense because it provides a framework for a fruitful interpretation of Descartes' conception of God, and a defense of the trademark argument. I shall use the term "objective idea" to pick out the intentional object. Throughout the proceeding discussion, I will dedicate special attention to this distinction and argue that in case of the idea of God there are features that belong to the objective idea but not to the material idea.

Usually there is no real distinction between the intentional object and the intentional content. *What* am I thinking when I'm thinking about a unicorn can be spelled out in terms how the unicorn (intentional object) is in my though: it looks a like a horse, but it has one horn on its head, and its shiny white. There is nothing that the intentional object has that is not in the content of my thought. I will argue that this is not the case with the idea of God. The intentional object is not in this way exhaustible in terms of its content (material idea). This puzzle will ultimately lead me to think that the objective idea of God is not a human construct.

Let me now pass to the next question: what does Descartes exactly mean by "infinite" and "supreme"? What is the content of such an idea? I will answer these questions by presenting a detailed discussion of the concept (or idea) of God as the infinite, which is held between Descartes and his objectors.

Descartes distinguishes two concepts that may be labeled by a single concept "infinity". To Caterus he writes:

Now I make a distinction here between the *indefinite* and the *infinite*. I apply the term 'infinite', in the strict sense, only to that in which no limits of any kind can be found; and in this sense God alone is infinite. But in cases like extension of imaginary space, or the set of number, or the divisibility of the parts of a quantity, there is merely some respect in which I do not recognize a limit; so here I use the term 'indefinite' rather than 'infinite', because these items are not limitless in every respect. (AT VII 113, CSM 81)

Both concepts share something in common - they are spelled out in terms of "limitlessness". However, there are three important criteria by which Descartes distinguishes them. "Indefinite" refers to divisibility of matter, extension of the world, and the series of numbers. But the infinity of God cannot be spelled out in terms of magnitude, spacio-temporal quantity, or mathematical concepts of infinity. God is greater than the world, not in extension (*ratione extensione*) but in perfection (*ratione perfectionis*). According to Margaret Wilson (1986), this is one metaphysical criterion that shapes Cartesian understanding of God as limitless in perfections.

Another metaphysical criterion that distinguishes "indefinite" and "infinite" is made by reference to "limitless in some respect" and "limitless in all respects". "Indefinite" applies only to some features of a thing, but not all of them. For example, an apple is infinitely divisible, and yet finite with respect to size. On the other hand, infinity is limitless in all respects. For Descartes properly speaking only God is infinite in this sense - limitless in all respects. Coupled with the first metaphysical criterion, which states that God is infinite in perfections, Descartes obtains the concept of God as limitless in all perfections.

In *Principia* Descartes further introduces an epistemological criterion that is of particular interest here:

We call these things indefinite rather than infinite in order to reserve for God alone the name of infinite, first because in Him alone we observe no limitation whatever, and because we are quite certain that He can have none; second because, in regard to other things, we do not in the same way positively understand them to be in every respect unlimited, but merely negatively admit that their limits, if they exist, cannot be discovered by us. (AT VIIIa 15, CSM 202)

Descartes emphasizes that he *positively understands* that God has no limits, whereas in the indefinite he admits that he *cannot conceive* limits. The problem is how to clearly understand this distinction; why is the inconceivability of limits in the indefinite not able to offer us a positive understanding (at least) of what is impossible about the indefinite? Some critics of

Descartes denied the epistemological criterion altogether, arguing that the concept of God is merely a negative, indefinite concept, and thereby reduced the infinite to some kind of indefinite. For example, Gassendi presents an objection of this sort:

You insist that your perception of the infinite is arrived at by means of 'a true idea'. †1 But if it were a true idea, it would represent the infinite as it is, and you would hence perceive its principal feature - the one we are dealing with here - namely its infinity. But in fact your thought always stops at something finite, and you call it 'infinite' only because you do not perceive what is beyond the reach of your perception; hence it is quite right to say that you perceive the infinite by a negation of the finite (AT VII 296: CSM 206)

I think that at least part of an explanation of the epistemological criterion, and the beginning of an answer to Gassendi's objection may be found in making a further distinction between the "infinite" and "indefinite" in terms of "potential infinity" and "actual infinity".

I think that "indefinite" fairly accurately corresponds to "potential infinity". For example, when you try to imagine an infinite series of numbers, you imagine that the process of adding numbers can continue without ever stopping. As Descartes says in the *Third Meditation*, imagining that starts from a finite state is constantly increasing, so that it never reaches complete intellectual grasp. Essentially, potential infinity is *compound*; it has parts, and it is *incomplete* (or open-ended) by definition. On the other hand, the idea of "actual infinity", which is the idea of God<sup>47</sup>, is *complete* - all perfections are contained in the idea of God in such a way that no further addition of perfection is conceivable, in the sense that I cannot come up with a new perfection that was not already contained in the idea of God, It is not that I'm thinking of God by adding perfections, one followed by another. They are all "there" already; I can only discover perfection explicit takes an inductive, step-by-step form of reasoning.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> We can however conceive of an idea of an actually infinite number. That would be a mathematical idea of actual infinity. But we have to bear in mind that the sense in which God is infinite is not entirely individuated by the actual-potential infinity distinction. Infinity of God is actual infinity in all respects – in all perfections.

The distinction between potential and actual infinity might help us to understand Descartes' epistemological criterion - that the idea of God is positively understood -because the idea is clearly and distinctly perceived as complete, while the indefinite is by definition open-ended, and may be understood in a mere negative sense, by reference to what it falls short of. (Namely, in understanding the indefinite we understand that we can always add more).

However, someone might object that the proposed distinction only helps us to more clearly articulate initial Gassendi's initial question: how can our finite mind even conceive or grasp the actual infinite in its completeness? It does not suffice to actually conceive the infinite without being aware of it *as* infinite. For example, someone who doesn't know much about electronics can see an iPOD without being aware of it as being an iPOD. This is the sense in which one has a *de re* grasp of it. When someone who is familiar with what iPODs are sees one, he has a *de dicto* awareness of the thing *as* being an iPOD. What is needed for Descartes' argument is an explanation of how can we conceive the infinite *as* infinite, by having a *de dicto* (rather than *de re*) understanding of it? Even if I can be aware of the infinite *de re*, how can it be a starting point of the argument if I don't even know whether and what I am aware of? The basic prerequisite of the trademark argument is a conscious, coherent, *de dicto* idea of God as the infinite. The possibility of having such an idea seems to be undermined by the inability to grasp the idea of God. In the *Third Meditation* Descartes admits that he cannot grasp the infinite:

It does not matter that I do not grasp the infinite, or that there are countless additional attributes of God which I cannot in any way grasp, and perhaps cannot even reach in my thought; for it is in the nature of the infinite not to be grasped by a finite being like myself. It is enough that I understand the infinite...(AT VII 46, CSM 32)

Descartes concedes that human intellect cannot grasp the infinite, but on the other hand he affirms that he *understands* the idea of God. So how does all this make sense? Descartes

seems to be pulled in two incompatible directions: not being able to grasp God as the object of his thought, and yet being able to grasp enough, clearly and distinctly, to ground an argument for the existence of God. In a letter to Mersenne (1630) Descartes paradoxically says that "we cannot comprehend the greatness of God although we know it" (AT I 145: CSC 23). Bernard Williams, not very much impressed by Descartes' somewhat mystical expression, presents the tension in Descartes view in the form of a dilemma:

On the one hand he has to claim (as he does) that he has a perfectly 'clear and distinct' idea of God as an actual infinite being combining infinite perfections in a real unity; if he does not claim this, he will be open to the objections that he does not really conceive of God as actually infinite, and so forth, and may merely have put together a hazy notion of some being indefinitely great. On the other hand, both his religious faith and the exigencies of his argument require that he cannot really conceive of God's infinity, since this must be inaccessible to a mind which is, as the argument itself insists, finite. (2005, pp. 129)

Descartes is pressed by two difficult questions; (1) how can the idea of God *as* infinite be clearly and distinctly perceived at all, and (2) how (1) is compatible with not being able to grasp the infinite?

In the *Fifth Replies* Descartes makes a distinction between "understanding" and "grasping" or "comprehending" by "having a full conception". He argues that we can understand infinity without having a full conception of it. Having a full conception would presumably require to know all about infinity: all attributes of God, their quality, etc. But that is impossible, Descartes admits. Nevertheless, understanding is less demanding that having a full conception (or grasping). To illustrate, instead of putting your arms around a tree and embracing it, you can merely touch it. In both cases, you have touched a tree. Similarly, instead of embracing (grasping) the infinite, human mind can touch (understand) the infinite clearly and distinctly. In the *First Set Of Replies* Descartes gives the following example:

When we look at the sea, our vision does not encompass its entirety, nor do we measure out its enormous vastness; but we are still said to 'see' it. In fact if we look from a distance so that our vision almost covers the entire sea at one time, we see it only in a confused manner, just as we have a confused picture of a chiliagon when we take in all its sides at once. But if we fix our gaze on some part of the sea at close quarters, then our view can be clear and distinct, just as our picture of a chiliagon can be, if it is confined to one or two of the sides. In the same way, God cannot be taken in by the human mind, and I admit this, along with all theologians. (AT VII 113, CSM 81)

Is this answer plausible at all? "It is", Gassendi would say, "as much as the tip of my hair is enough to make an authentic idea of Gassendi". Understanding a part of the infinite is not understanding the infinite itself. But if this point is right, if understanding or having a clear and distinct idea requires full grasp of the thing, then what do we understand? Alston insists that:

I don't have to perceive the whole X in order to perceive it. I rarely, *if ever*, perceive the whole of any physical object I see; but if I see enough of X under the right conditions, I am properly credited with seeing X (1993, pp. 60).

Thus, we can again reformulate Gassendi's question in the following way: what are the "right conditions" for understanding the infinite?

Descartes does not give an analytically rigorous answer consisting of a list of sufficient and necessary conditions that would satisfy Alston's requirement, instead he responds with an illustration:

...we do not doubt that a novice at geometry has an idea of a whole triangle when he understands that it is a figure bounded by three lines, even though geometers are capable of knowing and recognizing in this idea many more properties belonging to the same triangle, of which the novice is ignorant. Just as it suffices for the possession of an idea of the whole triangle to understand that it is a figure contained within three lines, so it suffices for the possession of a true and **complete idea** of the infinite in its entirety if we understand that it is a thing which is bounded by no limits. [my emphasis] (AT VII 368: CSM 253)

Here we meet the notion of "complete" that applies to the idea, which does not imply full or complete knowledge of what is contained in the idea. So what does "completeness" mean here? A plausible answer is that one has a complete idea of a thing when one is able to pick out the object, and differentiate it from others. For example, in order to have a complete idea of an iPOD, it is sufficient to know enough about the thing, to be able to recognize it and distinguish it among other electronic devices. However, someone who is having such basic knowledge of iPODs need not have engineer's knowledge of it. In this sense of having a complete idea, Descartes' answer to Gassendi can be stated as follows. Having a clear and distinct idea (or understanding) *that* God is limitless in all perfections suffices for a true and complete idea of God, although such idea does not encompass all perfections of God. Our understanding of the infinite need not extend infinitely. As St. Thomas Aquinas (*ST*, I. 12. 7) nicely points out, knowledge of the (idea of infinite) need not itself be infinite knowledge. In order to perceive something as it is, we need not have perfect knowledge. Consequently, let me formulate Descartes' answer to Williams as follows: knowledge comes in degrees, and little amount of knowledge can still be clear and distinct. Descartes can coherently maintain the view that God cannot be grasped by the intellect, although we can have a clear and distinct idea of God who is limitless in all perfections, whatever they may be. What is sufficient is that the idea is complete, clear and distinct.

Let me conclude this section with a few remarks. So far, I have defended the view that Descartes can meet Gassendi's challenge; (1) the idea of God as the actual infinite is possible insofar as the idea of God is present to the mind in its completeness; that is why I find interpreting the concept of God as the actual infinite illuminating. I also think that Descartes has a coherent answer to Williams; (2) Descartes criterion of truth - clearness and distinctness of an idea - can be reconciled with the impossibility to grasp all God's perfections. However, I believe that some truth has to be conceded to Gassendi - the idea of the infinity of God has an indefinite dimension *vis-à-vis* the human mind. Bearing in mind Descartes' distinction between material-objective idea, I would say that the object we are thinking about (the objective idea) is complete; the intentional object of the idea has all perfections, and nothing can be added nor taken away from it to make it "more" infinite. But our *way* of understanding, how we are thinking of God is indefinite with respect to inconceivable and

innumerable perfections of God that reach beyond our imagination. Descartes clearly acknowledges that:

In the case of infinity, even if we understand it to be positive in the highest degree, nevertheless our **way of understanding** it is negative, because it depends on our not noticing any limitation in the thing. [my emphasis] (AT VII 113, CSM 81)

Hence, there is an indefinite dimension of the idea of God as the infinite. My interpretation of the distinction between the material-objective idea, and the distinction between completeness and incompleteness, helps to understand how clearness of the objective idea of God due to its completeness, is still compatible with incomprehensibility due to indefiniteness of the material idea. Consequently, the epistemological criterion of the infinite and indefinite is less sharp than it seems on the surface because there is a sense in which the idea of infinity itself has sort of an indefinite dimension.

My conclusion is that the Cartesian idea of God thus presented is at least possible and coherent. But that is far from having an ambition to claim that the traditional conception of God is unproblematic. I am aware that theism defended by Descartes, St. Thomas, Duns Scotus, St. Anselm and others, faces a lot of questions, some of them quite obvious and quite threatening. At this stage of my work, I am not able to satisfactorily address all of them. Bearing in mind the goal of my project, the depth and extent of some theological and philosophical issues concerning God will remain untouched.

Let me now proceed with the crucial question: what is the origin of the idea of God? The most simple explanation that occurs to one's mind is that the idea of God is a human construct. I shall discuss whether this explanation is satisfactory.

#### 4.2. Is The Idea Of God A Human Construct?

A suggestion attributed to Gassendi (AT VII 287: CSM 300) is that a human mind can abstract finite perfections in infinitum, by amplifying goodness holiness, power, to perfection. A mere human mental capacity then could explain the origin of the idea of God without making reference to an extra-mental cause. I shall call this hypothesis via amplificatione, which makes the idea of the infinite relative and depended upon the finite. Another suggestion of how the human mind could self-invent the idea of the infinite is indirectly suggested by Gassendi (AT VII 296: CSM 206). It seems possible to generate the idea of actual infinity by negating limits to imperfections, and by conjoining them into an indefinite idea; God is not limited in knowledge, God is not limited in power, God is not limited in goodness, ..., for every relevant perfection p God is not limited in having p, etc. Hence, we can conceive of an unlimited amount of perfections (or indefinite set of perfections) that reach beyond our capacity to understand them, where each of them is in itself unlimited. I shall call this proposal *via negativa* because it reduces the infinite to a negative concept. While in *via amplificatione* the infinite is a positive concept constructed by abstraction and amplification, the idea of God constructed via negativa contains negations of finite perfections, and is thereby a negative concept. This is the main difference between the two ways, although there are similarities; both concepts of God ultimately depend on concepts of finite perfections.

Faced with the two non-theistic alternatives, Descartes has to tell us (1) why *via negativa* or *via amplificatione* are not sufficient to explain the idea of God in our mind? If such explanations are not sufficient, then Descartes needs to (2) offer an account of what he understands about actual infinity that is more and above his objector's amplified or negated concepts of infinity. The question whether the human mind could construct the idea of God

branches in the two above questions. With respect to the former question, Descartes is happily willing to concede to his objectors that we can arrive to the idea of God by amplification or negation. However, the very act of amplification necessarily presupposes a prior idea of God<sup>48</sup>. The "priority of the idea of God" is defended on the basis of the "argument from doubt", as Kenny (1997) calls it, which proceeds to the conclusion that *via amplificatione* and *negativa* cannot explain the origin of the prior idea of God. In what follows I shall present and further defend Descartes' position. Then I will address the question (2).

#### 4.2.1. The Argument From Doubt To The Priority Of The Idea Of God

In Wilson's interpretation (1986) of Descartes' letter to Regius (24 May 1640), Descartes concedes that we can arrive to the concept of God *via negativa*, but I think that such concession can be extended to *via amplificatione* as well, without detriment of his position. Descartes' answer to the question "Is the idea of God a human construct?" seems to be "yes". But the answer also seems to be "no". Descartes insists that constructing the idea of God in the two proposed ways is possible due to having a *prior* idea of the infinite. In the "argument from doubt" Descartes argues that the idea of a perfect mind is a necessary presupposition of honest self-reflection.

For how could I understand that I doubted or desired – that is, lacked something – and that I was not wholly perfect, unless there were in me some idea of a more perfect being which enabled me to recognize my own defects by comparison?" (AT VII 46: CSM 31)

The argument can be stated in the following way:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Also, the idea of the infinite explains human aspiration toward intellectual perfection, not the other way around. This argument proceeds from the fact that we desire intellectual perfection.

- 1. Obviously, I am an imperfect thinking thing. I doubt.
- 2. In order to be aware of myself *as* an imperfect thinking thing, I have to have a concept of an imperfect mind.
- 3. In order to have a concept of an imperfect mind, I need to have a concept of a perfect mind (*Nous*).
- 4. Therefore, the idea of God as *Nous* is prior to the idea of myself understood in (1).
- 5. Therefore, the idea of God cannot be constructed by amplifying or negating finite imperfections that I find in myself (e.g. power, knowledge, goodness, etc.)

The point of the argument is that we judge the degree of our own imperfection by measuring it (at least implicitly) against someone having all intellectual perfections by his essence<sup>49</sup>. Consequently, the standard by which we judge ourselves has to be prior than the concept of our intellectual imperfection. The twist in the dialectics that Descartes introduces is that we can have an idea of finite or imperfect mind only by (at least an implicit) comparison with the idea of perfect mind (*Nous*) - not the other way around as Gassendi proposes. The idea of God is thus prior to the idea of oneself. Now, the question is how plausible is Descartes' argument? Let me consider a few objections and discuss solutions.

First, it is not clear why - in order to be aware of myself as imperfect - would I need a concept of a perfect mind rather than a *more perfect* (yet imperfect) mind than my own? Perhaps comparing my knowledge with my teacher's knowledge is a sufficient standard by which I can measure my own imperfection. Thus, the "perfect mind" in the 3<sup>rd</sup> premise is replaceable by "my teacher's mind". The final upshot here is why do I have to compare myself with God? I think that Descartes could respond in the following way. Suppose that I replace "perfect mind" in the 3<sup>rd</sup> premise by "my teacher's mind". This would mean that the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> This is also Plotinus' and Augustine's crucial presupposition in the argument for the existence of God.

concept of my teachers mind is prior to the idea of my imperfect mind. But the point Descartes would raise here is that the concept of my teacher's mind is a concept of a finite mind, a mind that falls short of some greater degree of perfection, let's say angelic intellectual perfection. But then again, the angel's mind is still finite, and if I measure it (implicitly) against something more and more perfect, I will eventually end up with an infinite regress of more-and-more perfect minds. Then, in order to be aware of myself *as* an imperfect thinking thing, I would have to be at least implicitly aware of an infinite amount (or members) of finite minds. That would require *grasping* the infinite. Since I'm a finite mind, how can I even have infinite regress in Descartes' advantage. The best explanation of the concept of imperfect mind is made by reference to an idea of the perfect mind that provides a stopping point in the explanation. But this would be an idea *that* God has all perfections, without grasping all of them.

However, there is another potential difficulty with the argument. Kenny says that the argument from doubt at best shows that the idea of perfection must be *simultaneous* with the idea of imperfection because "the ability to use a predicate is not prior to, but identical with, the ability to use its negation" (1997, pp. 136). This point is legitimate, I concede, but it is relevant only for *via negativa*. At best, Kenny's objection makes plausible the view that the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> There is a worry, pointed out by Katalin Farkas, that such a concept of infinity which contains a potentially infinite amount of imperfect minds – the indefinite concept, could actually be the prior concept of God that one needs in order to be aware of oneself as imperfect. In order words, why the indefinite concept would not be sufficient? Descartes would probably say that such indefinite concept would presuppose the concept of ultimate intellectual perfection. The strategy could significantly resemble St. Thomas' argument that there can't be infinite regress of efficient causes:

<sup>&</sup>quot;But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God." (ST. I. 2.3.)

Similarly, Descartes could say that there can't be infinite regress in the objective cause of ideas. If my teacher's mind is a concept of intellectual perfection that presupposes a concept of a greater mind, then without the concept of ultimately perfect mind it wouldn't be possible to have intermediate concepts nor the concept of my imperfection.

idea of the infinite and finite in that case might be simultaneous. However, in *via amplificatione*, there is no such obvious simultaneity. When Gassendi amplifies finite perfections *in infinitum*, he raises them up to the infinite, step-by-step. If he had no concept of ultimate intellectual perfection, then how can there be "intermediate" concepts of intellectual perfections? And finally, how could Gassendi judge himself to be imperfect by comparison with "intermediate" minds, if he had no concept of *Nous*? Simultaneity of the idea of imperfection and perfection seems to be less plausible relation in case of *via amplificatione*.

Nevertheless, there is an important point that has to be made in the context of discussing priority. There seems to be a different argument for the same conclusion of the argument from doubt. The idea of *Nous* is the standard, and in this sense it is prior to the idea of imperfection because it contains the most objective reality in virtue of being about the infinite, or having infinite-beinghood<sup>51</sup>. Descartes says:

...I clearly understand that there is more reality in an infinite substance than in a finite one, and **hence** that my perception of the infinite, that is God, is in some way prior to my perception of the finite, that is myself. [my emphasis] (AT VII 46: CSM 31)

The term "objective reality" applies to intentional objects of ideas (objective ideas), whereas formal reality (or reality *simpliciter*) applies to ideas as mental acts (material ideas). The objective reality, contrasted with formal reality admits degrees. The idea of unicorn is formally real as a mode of thought - in virtue of being a mental, thought episode in the mind. But the unicorn is objectively (or intentionally) real in virtue of being an object of thought. While formal reality of the material idea is not scalar, that which the idea is about can have more or less objective reality<sup>52</sup>. The idea of God "…has certainly more objective reality than any other idea" (AT VII 41: CSM 28). It has more objective reality that the idea of an unicorn

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> The degree of objective reality is not vague but precisely ordered according to Descartes' metaphysical hierarchy, which ranges from the highest to the lowest degree; from infinite substance, to finite substances and modes (attributes).

because that which ideas are about exhibit different levels of independence<sup>53</sup>. In virtue of infinite-beinghood, the idea of a perfect mind - the source of all perfection - is the most objectively real idea. Therefore, the idea of God is prior to any idea of finite perfection, but not because it follows from the argument from doubt.

However, independently of the ways in which Descartes can argue for the priority, I think that the discussion of the argument from doubt brings to the fore an important point. I think that something has to be conceded to Gassendi; we necessarily *understand* the standard of the infinite intellectual perfection by reference to our finite perfections. However, Alston reminds us of an important point:

From the fact that we use a concept to pick out cabbages as vegetables it doesn't follow that cabbages are, have, or use concepts or judgments. (1993, pp. 41)

Similarly, if we need to understand the standard by reference to finite perfections, it doesn't mean that the standard itself is our construct. Our *understanding* of the standard (not the standard itself!) depends on finite perfections. If this is a plausible response, then let me propose the following thesis: the idea of imperfection is not simultaneous with the idea of perfection if that means *symmetrically dependent*. Such relation cannot hold because the standard itself is not dependent of us - this is the maximum objective reality thesis. However, our understanding of it does depend on reflection of finite perfections. Inter-dependence of the ideas of the infinite and finite is something that Descartes explicitly acknowledges. He admits that in our understanding of God - to a certain extent - we have to make reference to God by similitude, by reference to perfections that both God and we have.

For, according to the arguments I have just advanced, in order to know the nature of God, as far as my own nature is capable of knowing, I had only to consider, for each thing of which I found in myself some idea, whether or not it was a perfection to posses it. (AT VI 35: CSM II 128)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> This is of course not a real mind-independent notion of independence, but rather a mind-dependent one. Richness of objective reality doesn't have directly anything to do with reality of the thing thought of. For example, we can think that a unicorn that has 25 kilos is heavier that a unicorn having 50 kilos. "Being heavy" here is not a real relation, but is intentionally or objectively real one.

Descartes indirectly grants that we understand the idea of God by comparison (or similitude), by reference to perfections that we find in ourselves. This supports the following Beyssade's (1992) interpretation of Descartes'. To some extent *via amplificatione* and *negativa* are means by which we arrive to, in the sense of making explicit the idea of God in our understanding, which is already implicitly held as a standard.

Moreover, I think that our understanding of the idea of God by similitude of his attributes found in us is undeniable and indispensable. As St. Thomas says:

For we apprehend simple things by compound things; and hence we define a point to be, "what has no part," or "the beginning of a line (ST I. 11.4.).

If there were no common factor between God and Descartes, the comparison between the Meditator and God would not be possible, and consequently Descartes would not be able to affirm that he is an imperfect mind. Some concepts of this sort are certainly necessary for positive knowledge of the idea of God. Thus, understanding the idea of God is necessarily connected with Descartes' understanding of himself, and as the argument from doubt states, the idea of God as the standard is a presupposition of understanding himself. There is a mutual yet asymmetrical dependence between the idea of God and the idea of imperfect *res cogitans* that deepens throughout the *Meditations*. At some point Descartes even says that he perceives (the idea of) God by the same faculty he perceives himself (AT VII 51: CSM 35). This suggests that the argument from doubt is not merely based on considerations about the usage of predicates, as Kenny seems to suggest, but it has a richer meaning that can be found in the context of Descartes' whole project of the *Meditations*. There is much more to be said about the interdependence of the ideas. But for the time being, I have to summarize conclusions of the present section.

When Descartes agues against Gassendi's hypothesis that one can generate the idea of God by negating the concept of the finite, he says that it still must be true that one has a

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"prior perception of the infinite than of the finite, i.e. of God himself" (AT VII 45: CSM 31). The priority thesis defended on the basis of the argument from doubt gives a straightforward answer to the two non-theistic alternatives: if the idea of God is prior to the amplification or negation process, then such idea can not be human invention.

I believe that the distinction between the "standard" and "understanding the standard" helps us to meet Descartes' objector(s), by stressing that *understanding* of the standard depends on the concept of finite perfection, while the standard itself – the idea of an infinitely supreme and perfect being – is independent in the highest possible degree. According to Descartes, an idea of an infinite substance is an idea of an ultimately independent being because it is an idea of a self-sufficient *source* of perfections. However, Descartes does not (and should not) deny what seems to be obviously true - we arrive to (or make explicit) the idea of God *via negativa* and *amplificatione*. At the end, Descartes' final answer is fair to his objectors.

Nevertheless, I think that the priority thesis plays a secondary role in the trademark argument, it is not even indispensable for the argument for the existence of God. Yes, the idea of God perhaps must be prior, but Descartes needs more than that. Priority thesis gives (at best) priority of the *idea* of God in the mind, not the priority of God in reality. The argument from doubt itself does not suffice. Descartes still needs a causal premise that bridges the gap between the idea in the mind and the world, independently of the question whether the idea of God is prior or not. He needs the so called "causal principle of objective reality"<sup>54</sup> which states that there must be at least as much formal reality in the efficient and total cause of an idea as there is objective reality in the idea. Instead of relying on such a committing and controversial principle, I will propose a different defense of the Cartesian theistic conclusion made in the *Third Meditation*. I am going to proceed with a logically

weaker claim than priority thesis, namely I will argue that there is a distinction between the material and objective idea that is overlooked by Descartes' objectors. Descartes' trademark argument proceeds from the objective, rather than material idea which can be constructed by negation or amplification. The question that needs to be answered is the origin of the objective idea, rather than the material idea. Such distinction is implicit in the argument from priority, in the distinction between the standard and understanding the standard. In the next few sections I shall strengthen the material-objective idea distinction by articulating some features that are not shared by both ideas– the unity and incomprehensibility. This will help me to answer the question (2) "what Descartes positively understands about God, that is over and above the amplified or negated concept of God?", and it will set the ground for the argument for the existence of God.

# 4. 2. 2. The Argument For Distinctness Of The Material and Objective Idea Of God

Descartes uses the term "idea" very ambiguously. In the argument from doubt, "idea" stands for the standard of perfection, and sometimes he conflates it with the goal of our human aspiration toward intellectual perfection. As Beyssade (1992, pp.182) points out, sometimes it stands for the very faculty for producing the idea of God. However, in this section I would like to draw our attention to the distinction between the idea of God as the *way* in which we understand God, and *what* we understand, the intentional object. By introducing "material idea" and "content" on the one hand, and "objective idea" and "intentional object" on the other, understanding Descartes' position becomes more coherent. I believe that when Descartes' says that the idea of God exhibits infinity and unity he refers to the objective idea of God. And when he admits that we arrive to the idea of God by means of

amplification or negation, he means that our way of understanding God is by having a humanly invented idea – a material idea. While Descartes is able to transparently think *through* the material idea about the objective idea, his objectors focus their attention on the material idea.

In what follows I will explain in more detail how the distinction between the objective and material idea of God is preserved in virtue of their distinctive features – unity and incomprehensibility.

#### 4. 2. 2. 1. The Unity Of The Idea Of God

In order to take a further step in understanding Descartes' conception of God, we have to be reminiscent of his religious background. The so called *doctrine of divine simplicity* which states the simplicity of God is a very much discussed controversial doctrine in philosophical theology. The most important figures associated with its formulation are St Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and St. Anselm. Recently, the view was thoroughly criticized by Alvin Plantinga in "Does God Have a Nature?", and defended by W. F. Vallicela (1992). Since a proper discussion and defense of the controversial theological doctrine is not in the ambit of the present project, I will present the bare bones of the doctrine that I understand to be adopted by Descartes, and I will advance one interpretation and defense of the Cartesian argument, assuming that such a doctrine is defensible.

In St. Thomas' view simplicity implies lack of a real composition:

Perfections therefore which are diverse and opposed in themselves, pre-exist as one in God, without detriment to his simpleness" (*ST*. Ia. 4. 2.). In scholastic (thomistic) terminology, God is not composed of matter and form, he is not distinct from his nature; he is not composed of nature and existence. According to divine and who God is, is the same as what God is. Consequently, God's *esse* is identical with his *id quod est*. Descartes says that simplicity (or unity) is a special perfection of God.

On the contrary, the unity, simplicity, or the inseparability of all the attributes of God is one of the most important of the perfections which I understand him to have. (AT VII 50: CSM 34)

As we see, Descartes equates the "unity" with "simplicity"<sup>55</sup>. Thus, I will assume that Descartes adopts at least a weak version of the doctrine of divine simplicity which states that there is no real composition or parts in (the nature of) God. I will talk about God's unity and attributes in a neutral way with respect to their mind-independent existence, in the way I can talk about different attributes of unicorns.

The unity of perfections in God's infinite-beinghood is in Descartes' view essentially connected with the independence of the idea of God, and hence to its objective reality. God cannot be just one of beings that fit in the genus "perfect", nor in the genus "infinite". If that were the case, God would participate in those natures, and he would be in some way dependent on them. In "Does God have a nature?" Plantinga states:

...if God were good or blessed, or knowledgeable or wise by participation in the properties of goodness, knowledge, blessedness, or wisdom, then he would be subsequent to these properties; and if he had an essence (or nature), as opposed to identical with it, then that essence would be his cause. (1980, pp. 31)

Or, consider a more formal statement:

If the properties of x are constituents or ontological (proper) parts of x, then x will depend on them in the same way that any whole composed of parts depends on its parts. But if x is tied to its properties by the asymmetrical relation of instantiation, it is still the case that x will depend on them: if x is F in virtue of x's instantiation of F-ness, then F-ness is a logically prior condition of x's being F. (Vallicella, 2006)

If God had properties he would be dependent on them in the following way; if there were no goodness, God would not have goodness. Then, it would not be within God's control to have

<sup>55</sup> Actually, St. Thomas has an argument for the claim that simplicity implies absolute unity. For more see *ST*. I. 11. 1.

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(or not to have) certain properties. According to my interpretation which aligns with Scotus<sup>56</sup> argumentation, the maximal perfection or the infinity of God implies simplicity; it requires that God *be* rather than *have* or participate in his attributes.

However, the attributes of God are not merely quantitatively but also qualitatively different than attributes that belong to the finite. Attributes that we find in the finite belong to God's nature in a different way, because God is thought of as the uncreated source of perfections. The teaching of St. Thomas is that although reason can know *that* God must have such absolute and simple attributes, our mind can not comprehend *what* his attributes are. Because of the incommensurability of God's perfections, we consequently need different a different language to talk about God. St. Thomas (ST. I. 13.) famously proposed the so called *analogical predication*. The way we talk about God is to say that "God is good", "God is omniscient", "God has all perfections" etc. However, "God is good" properly speaking means "what we call goodness in creatures preexists in God and in a higher mode" (*ST* Ia.13.2.). Analogical predication doesn't perfectly represent God, although it predicates Him attributes substantively. Eleonore Stump nicely clarifies the view:

According to the doctrine of simplicity, what human beings call God's omnipotence or God's omniscience is the single eternal entity considered under descriptions they find variously illuminating, or recognized by them under different kinds of effects or manifestations of it. What the doctrine of simplicity requires one to understand about all the designations for the divine attributes is that they are all identical in reference but different in sense, referring in various ways to the one actual entity which is God himself or designating various manifestations of it. (In *God's Simplicity,* manuscript)

Bearing in mind the theological background of Descartes' idea of the unity of God, let me proceed toward the main point. As I have proposed, the infinity of God should be understood as actual infinity, which essentially has no parts. It is complete. Namely, nothing can be added nor taken away from it<sup>57</sup> (in order to make it "greater") without turning actual

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<sup>56</sup> Cross, R. (1999). Duns Scotus. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> But something can be added or taken away from our way of understanding God (the material idea).

infinity into a composition. In *De Fide Orthodoxa* St. Damascene compares God with an "infinite sea", which I understand as an indivisible *continuum* of God's perfections. Such unity, or simplicity, implies lack of composition, and that is a principal perfection in virtue of which the idea of God has the most objective reality.

Now I want take one step further, and argue that Descartes' idea of God has *more* objective reality than his objector's amplified idea. Let me begin by stating the following argument:

- 1. Unity implies lack of composition.
- Lack of composition is a perfection because it rules out any real relation of dependence.
- 3. The independence of God's attributes contributes to objective reality of the idea.
- 4. An idea that has unity is more perfect, and has more objective reality than the idea that lacks unity.
- 5. The idea of God held by Descartes' objectors is an idea composed of (or "containing") perfections. Hence, it lacks unity.
- Then, in virtue of exhibiting unity, Descartes' idea of God differs from his objector's idea, and has more objective reality.

This argument could be questioned by Descartes' objectors, who may simply add unity to the idea of God by negating real composition in God: God's goodness is not distinct from his wisdom, etc. In this case the objector's idea of God would seem to have everything it needs to have, everything that Descartes' idea has. Then, there is no reason to think that we couldn't invent it by relying on our own mental faculties. Alternatively, if one cannot construct unity in the proposed way that relates the idea of God to the ideas of finite perfections, then what is

unity? Is the doctrine intelligible at all? In short, either the idea of God is intelligible and then it might be our invention, or we can't make sense out of it. Descartes' opponent precisely demands the nature of God to be comprehended by raising the question what unity is, otherwise the argument won't work. But Descartes insists that infinity is such that it cannot be comprehended. So how can Descartes' position be defensible at all? This destructive dilemma will be subtly present throughout the rest of the chapter. For now, let me begin with indicating the direction of the Cartesian solution: it is enough to clearly and distinctly understand unity without grasping or comprehending it. As far as the finite mind allows to conceive the infinite, it can be said that unity is a positive attribute, rather than a mere negation of composition.

First of all, the doctrine of divine simplicity is stated in terms of identity relations, and identity statements are about the nature of a thing - they are informative more than negative statements. The statement that "water is H<sub>2</sub>O" tells us more about water than the statement that "water does not freeze when it reaches temperature higher that 0 Celsius". Nevertheless, Descartes still runs into the unfortunate dilemma again. If the unity of God can be stated in terms of negative statements or even in positive identity statements - God is identical with his goodness, goodness of God is identical to wisdom of God, etc. - then it seems that we could invent the idea of God. Now it begins to be really difficult to see in virtue of what feature of the idea can I defend the claim that Descartes' idea of God has more objective reality than the constructed idea? If such feature cannot be named, Descartes' assertion that the idea of God contains the most objective reality becomes more like dogmatic statement which is self-evident to Descartes only. This indeed difficult situation can find its resolution in my interpretation of the distinction between the objective and material idea of God.

The objective idea of God conceived along the doctrine of divine simplicity is essentially elusive; whenever we try to grasp the unity, we find ourselves with a complex idea

of simplicity consisting of negations or ideas of identity relations. It sleeps through our fingers, so to say. As St. Thomas points out, "we apprehend simple things by compound things". Our understanding of God, or the way in which we think of unity is complex. Once again, I have to emphasize what Descartes says: "In the case of infinity, even if we understand it to be positive in the highest degree, nevertheless our way of understanding it is negative.." (AT VII 113, CSM 81). In the constructed (material) idea of God held by Descartes' objector, there is a conjunction of perfections (e.g. omniscience, omnipotence, etc.), negation of their finitude, and/or or ideas of identity relations, whereas in Descartes' (objective idea) of God there is no composition whatsoever since actual infinity as (intentional object) has no parts. While the material idea of God is not infinite, the objective idea of God is infinite<sup>58</sup>. The feature of unity of perfections in God is thus a feature of the objective idea, not of the material idea, because our understanding of God is compositional, whereas the object of understanding has no parts. This is to say that human mind has an imperfect and composite idea of God as a way to understand infinitely supreme God. That how we are thinking of God - the material idea - is somewhat an imperfect way of reaching the unity. Infinity, unity, and all-perfections do not apply to our material idea; our way of understanding is defective and has an indefinite dimension, but it applies to the intentional object of thought that is by reflection known to be more perfect than one's understanding of the object. Descartes can become aware that there is something that the material idea falls short off only because such idea itself can become transparent or *diaphonus*, revealing the intentional object itself. I believe that Descartes' objector(s) don't fully appreciate the distinction between the material and objective idea - the way in which we think and what we think. They focus on the material idea and rightly conclude that it can easily be our construct.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> However, "is" should be taken in an (intentional) objective sense, not literally. Similarly, we can say that a unicorn *is* white.

Consequently, I believe that the trademark argument for the existence of God proceeds from the objective rather than the material idea of God. It is the infinity of the objective idea that needs to be explained, not the material idea; we know enough about the mind's potential to compose complex ideas. The interesting question is how to explain the origin of the simple objective idea. Although we cannot grasp what the unity is, we can still reach it by understanding that God must be thus simple. The mind is capable of thinking about God from a distance without embracing him, but rather by catching a glimpse.

Despite being elusive and incomprehensible, the little we can understand of the objective idea of God is enough to ground a coherent position. In Beyssade's view Descartes' idea of God – because of its incomprehensibility – is not a generative rule for constructing an idea, but it is more like a "filtering principle" that retains some attributes and excludes others in a coherent way (1992, pp. 194). If there were no such coherency incomprehensibility would amount to unintelligibility. In the next section I will discuss in which way the idea of God is incomprehensible.

#### 4. 2. 2. 2. The Incomprehensibility Of The Idea Of God

Incomprehensibility is of key importance because: (i) it helps us to see the distinction and irreducibility of the objective idea to the material and of God - the former is incomprehensible and the latter is not. Consequently, (ii) incomprehensibility grounds an answer to Descartes objectors; the objective idea of God could not be invented by human minds because it is incomprehensible. Now let me try to answer the question of what is incomprehensibility?

Incomprehensibility of the idea of God pertaining to his innumerable, inconceivable, and unified perfections creates the "cloud of unknowing" in the depths of the "queen among
ideas". While presence of the idea to the mind, in its completeness, impresses itself in the mind as clearness, incomprehensibility seems to veil mind's access to the idea. The notion of incomprehensibility thus presented has a negative function of *limiting* knowledge. It can be equated with "indefiniteness" or with "hiddenness of God". More generally, "incomprehensibility" can have a negative epistemic connotation, e.g. "non-sensical", "incoherent", "contradictory", etc. I will argue that all these suggested meanings do not capture the meaning in which (the idea of) God is incomprehensible. I think that (at least in part) the reason why "mystical" often has a negative connotation is precisely because incomprehensibility is understood negatively, as a concept that can potentially hide any incoherency, and we don't have any criterion of truth that can enlighten the way into that "dark territory". In what follows, I will defend Jean-Marie Beyssade's (1993) positive epistemic account of incomprehensibility by proposing criteria to distinguish it from its negative counterparts.

Let me begin with what was told about the incomprehensibility (of the idea) of God. It was argued that one can have a clear idea *that* God's perfections are in unity. But *what* the unity is, remains incomprehensible. St. Thomas says that "reason cannot reach up to simple form, so as to know "what it is"; but it can know "whether it is" such-and-such. Descartes claims that he has a clear and distinct understanding of the idea of God who is limitless in all perfections, whatever they are. How are these negative and positive epistemological claims compatible? In previous discussions (section 1) it was suggested that God is incomprehensible because of the indefiniteness of God's perfections vis-à-vis our mind, which concerns their amount and quality that outstrips our imagination. I have defended the Cartesian view that such (indefinite) imperfect knowledge of God's attributes is not sufficient to undermine *completeness* of the idea of God as the actual infinite - limitless in all perfections. However, indefiniteness does not bear impact on the sense in which God is

*positively* incomprehensible; it rather presents an instance of a *negative* incomprehensibility which limits knowledge. Let me explain the difference.

In case of indefiniteness (the idea of) God is negatively incomprehensible because of *us*; because of our cognitive limitations. For example, when I don't see something because I'm shortsighted, it is because of me that the object is out of my visual reach, not because of the nature of the thing itself. The sense in which God is positively incomprehensible is not parallel to shortsightedness<sup>59</sup>. The idea of God is incomprehensible because God's perfections are *incommensurable* with ours. It is because of God's attributes that the idea is incomprehensible, not solely because of our epistemic constraints. The metaphysical criterion by which we can distinguish positive and negative incomprehensibility (indefinitness) can be made by reference to attributes of the intentional object itself.

There is also a difference between positive incomprehensibility and its negative counterparts: "non-sensical", "incoherent", "contradictory", and so on. When an idea is non-sensical, incoherent, or contradictory there is not much that we can positively understand about it. What the mind clearly perceives is that such idea *cannot be true*. That's pretty much all that can be said. However, the idea of God is not only coherent, but *the most true* idea - it contains the most objective reality, as I have tried to explain in the previous sections. The account of negative incomprehensibility brings us back to the issue of epistemic criterion of distinguishing infinite and indefinite, i.e. positive understanding and not being able to conceive something. Such a distinction reflects in our present debate. In the case of positive incomprehensibility there is something coherent to understand, which is quite different from negative incomprehensibility in which there is nothing that can be positively understood.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> However, I don't deny that they are related.

The present issue can be addressed by reference to St. Thomas' distinction between something being "contrary to reason" and something being "beyond reason", and to Leibniz's conception of mystery in the *Theodicy* where he says:

If it happened that the Mystery was evidently contrary to an evident principle, it would not be an obscure Mystery, it would be a manifest absurdity. (1985, pp. 115)

Positive incomprehensibility concerns that which is above reason:

Something is above reason if we have some partial or analogical understanding of it, but we do not comprehend it. (Cave, 1995, pp. 464)

To comprehend, as far as I comprehend, for Leibniz, St. Thomas and Descartes, means to have a complete grasp, full conception or account of the thing (its nature). But not being able to comprehend something does not imply that its nature contradicts reason. Hence, positive incomprehensibility can be distinguished from contradiction.

Now, there is also another possible way in which God can be thought of as negatively incomprehensible, that can be called "hiddenness of God". But again, this is not the sense in which God is positively incomprehensible. If the idea were hidden it would not display itself as it is<sup>60</sup>. The idea of God *is* in its completeness<sup>61</sup> present to the mind of Descartes clearly. And that is why the idea of God is *not* incomprehensible in the sense of being "hidden". For example, someone who plays hide and seek hides from his seeker's perceptual range. "Hiddenness" here stands in contrast with "presence to the mind". But the idea of God is not hiding like someone who is playing hide and seek. While "hiddeness" marks absence, clarity marks presence, and incomprehensibility is somewhere in between. The "middle way", I believe, is the right way of understanding it.

Let me sum up what it was concluded so far. The idea of God is not positively incomprehensible because of (1) our own cognitive defect (it is not indefinite), or because of

<sup>60</sup> Beyssade (1993, pp. 87)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> This was explained is section 1 – it suffices to have an idea *that* God has all perfections.

(2) its absence to the mind (it is not hidden), or because (3) there is nothing positive to be understood about the idea (it is not incoherent). The idea of God is positively incomprehensible because of the nature of the intentional object – the incommensurability of God's perfections, and their unity.

Apart from such metaphysical criterion, there is an epistemic criterion too. One important thing that marks positive incomprehensibility is its relation with another positive epistemic feature. Clarity of the idea of God is the aspect that can't be neglected in this context. Namely, positive incomprehensibility comes with clarity, with the presence of the idea to the mind, whereas negative incomprehensibility (indefiniteness, hiddeness or incoherency) is opposed to clarity. The indefinite, which is by definition incomplete, cannot be present to the mind in its completeness as the actual infinite. Hiddeness, as I have pointed out, means opposite from presence to the mind. And finally, incoherence is not something that cannot be positively present to the mind.

Thus, the metaphysical criterion that distinguishes positive and negative comprehensibility, which makes reference to the attribute of the intentional object, and the epistemic criterion which emphasizes the bond between positive incomprehensibility and clarity, suffices to sustain the distinction. Let me now extend on the relation between positive incomprehensibility, clarity and distinctness, and bring the topic back to its original context of the *Meditations*.

Beyssade (1993) claims that clarity and incomprehensibility are not merely compatible but also positively (explanatory) related. The claim is that incomprehensibility reveals (rather than hides) the idea of God– its very *distinctness* (or differentiation). So let me begin with the question of what is distinctness? E. Curley puts it in a quite simple way; distinctness corresponds to negative knowledge, it is about what is *not* in the idea. Having a clear and distinct idea of a thing...is a matter of seeing what is and what is not involved in being that thing or a thing of that kind. (1986: 169-70)

For example, distinctness of the idea of God enables us to infer that God is not composed of matter and form, not created, etc. The reason why the idea is distinct to its highest degree is explained by reference to God's incommensurable attributes. I cannot compare my goodness with God's goodness, not only because of its quantity but also because of its *quality*. According to the doctrine of divine simplicity God has something like pre-properties; he is rather than has attributes. Thus, the idea of God is both distinct to the highest degree and incomprehensible because of incommensurable attributes contained in the idea of God.

On the one hand, distinctness gives us negative knowledge of the finite, for example, that God is not composed. On the other hand, distinctness gives us *knowledge of God's transcendence* - that God is (if he exists) beyond of what we can comprehend. To use an illustration that Beyssade mentions, incomprehensibility is actually a true representation of an incommensurable (infinite) distance of the king. "Distance is a mark of majesty", says Beyssade, "and to decrease familiarity is not to disclose knowledge but to disclose to a subject the true knowledge of his unequal relation to the king" (1993, pp. 88). *Positive incomprehensibility is a true apprehension of the incommensurable distance of the infinite.* Perhaps this distance is only real in the mind, and not in reality. Nevertheless, the idea of God can be coherent only if it is incomprehensible, only then the idea can truly be of the infinite-beinghood. Descartes says that:

'It is enough that I understand the infinite'. I mean, that it is sufficient for me to understand *the fact that God is not grasped by me* in order to understand God in very truth and as he is, provided I judge also that there are in him all perfections that I clearly understand, and also many more which I cannot grasp. (AT V 357: CSM III 379)

In order to be understood in its infinite-beinghood, the idea of God must be *both* clear and incomprehensible. As Beyssade (1993) concludes, the truth rule of ideas, namely their clarity

and distinctness is fulfilled not *in spite of* but precisely *because of* incomprehensibility. This explains how clarity and incomprehensibility are not merely compatible, but essentially explanatorily related, and it gives us a framework for understanding the positive epistemic role of incomprehensibility in the Cartesian system, which I will further use to ground the argument for the existence of God.

After clarifying the concept of positive incomprehensibility as coherent and meaningful for the Cartesian epistemic project, I have the background to articulate how the material idea and objective idea of God are distinct in this context. Positive incomprehensibility is a feature that belongs to the objective idea that one attends to by having a material idea of God. The latter, which may be constructed *via negativa* or *via amplificatione*, as Gassendi suggest, is comprehensible; I certainly know what is the idea about because I have made it up. However, when I shift my attention from my way of understanding to the object of my understanding, then merely by reflection I can tell that the object is having something that my material idea lacks – incomprehensibility and unity. Since these two features are not merely negations, unity is not merely a negation of composition, and positive incomprehensibility is not lack of any understanding, it follows that the objective idea is not reducible to or exhaustible by the material idea. Therefore, objector's explanation how we could have made up the material idea is not an explanation of the *origin* of the objective idea. We are left with an open question: what is the origin of the objective idea of God that lacks composition and cannot be mastered by the mind?

### 4.3. The Argument For The Existence Of God

The interpretation of the distinction between the material and objective idea is preserved in virtue of unity and positive incomprehensibility, which pertain to the objective rather than the material idea. The latter can be constructed by the human mind by negation or amplification, but the former cannot even be comprehended, although it is the most true idea of all. This demands an explanation. If the human mind invented it, it would be in principle comprehensible, unless it is incoherent or nonsensical. Given that the idea of God is coherent, and has the most objective reality, then a plausible explanation is that it doesn't originate in a human mind. Only the infinite being could have placed such idea in our minds.

The discussion in previous sections served to establish presuppositions of the argument from incomprehensibility. Let me deepen the connection between the most important points and the main argument.

Beyssade's interpretation is that the objective idea of God:

... is not a matrix which generates an infinite set of possible definitions of the divine nature, each starting from a given perfection which is augmented or raised up to the infinite. Instead it is a kind of sieve of filter which lets through anything which belong to our understanding *(intelligere)* of supreme perfection, and eliminates anything which is conceived *(concipere)* as a defect or limitation in that perfection. (1992, pp. 190)

What is available in making the unity *explicit* is induction - passing from one perfection to another. The method by which we intellectually understand perfections in the unity of the objective idea of God is by enumeration; we are able to be aware of God's perfections, although we can never master his nature in our thought. The way we understand the object (material idea) cannot exhaust everything there is in the objective idea itself – as much as we get closer to God in our thought, there is always more that escapes reason. The objective idea of God is ultimately elusive. When we think that we grasp it, all we find is a complex idea. As Beyssade (1992) points out, making the objective idea of God *explicit* by inductive

method (enumeration, negation, etc.), is not the same as *constructing* it. Like vastness of the sea, the unity of God is seen through the window of our mind somewhere "out there" in the distance, but it cannot be embraced by the mind. If we could "master" the nature of God in our thought, by fully understanding it, God's existence could not be proven because "my though does not impose any necessity on things" (AT VII 66: CSM II 46). I concede that being able to comprehend God and to construct or decompose the objective idea of God would certainly indicate that we could have made it up, which is the point made explicit in my destructive dilemma. Thus, the right way by which the proof needs to proceed is from positive incomprehensibility of the unity of God. However, I have to beware of the threat presented by the second horn of the dilemma: if the content of the idea of God is not exhausted in terms of relative (or negative) predicates, then what am I talking about? The idea of God then seems to be a hazy notion, as Williams (2005, pp. 129) points out. The "middle way" between the two horns of the dilemma is to maintain a sufficiently clear and distinct understanding of God, which aligns with Descartes' strategy discussed in section 1. The element of somewhat negative epistemology (positive incomprehensibility) has to be balanced with elements of positive epistemology. Knowledge of God's transcendence must be supported by some clear and distinct knowledge. It is necessary that incomprehensibility is thus balanced with a coherent intelligible idea of God. That is why I have invested effort to first show that Descartes' idea of God is coherent, and has positive content. Otherwise, positive incomprehensibility would collapse into negative incomprehensibility.

After (hopefully) showing that the idea of God as the infinite is not only possible but also coherent, and the most perfect ideas of all, the argument from incomprehensibility can be summarized in the following way:

- 1. The objective idea of God as the actual infinite-beinghood is a unity of perfections. [*Unity thesis*]
- 2. Such unity is elusive and positively incomprehensible. [*Positive incomprehensibility thesis*]
- 3. Therefore, the human intellect cannot be the source of the objective idea of the actual infinite.
- 4. The best explanation is that the objective idea of God is "the mark of the craftsmen stamped on his work". (AT VII 51:CSM II 35)

The conclusion in (3) is that the idea of God as the infinite cannot be invented by a human mind. If we were its authors we would be able to add or take something away from it, and finally, we would be able to comprehend the infinite-beinghood (at least in principle). There is also a plausible argument to rule out the possibility that the idea of God has many causes. Descartes argues the following:

And surely the idea of the unity of all his perfections could not have been placed in me by any cause which did not also provide me with the ideas of the other perfections; for no cause could have made me understand the interconnection and inseparability of the perfections without at the same time making me recognize what they were. (AT VII 50: CSM 34)

According to the present argument, from the unity it follows that no finite mind whatsoever can be the origin of the objective idea of God. Although Descartes actually doesn't put much importance on incomprehensibility as much as he emphasizes unity, its role in this version of the trademark argument is crucial. The "argument from completeness of the unity of the idea of God" is quite simple, Descartes says that the idea of God" was not invented by me either; for I am plainly unable either to take away anything from it or to add anything to it" (AT VII 51: CSM 35). But the simple argument implies a problematic and ambiguous assumption that whatever is constructed by the mind can be molded by the mind, e.g. by synthesis, analysis,

or addition, etc. However, it is conceivable that a drug experience might produce an idea to which nothing can be added or taken away, not because it's perfect (it actually may *seem* perfect at the time), but because it is negatively incomprehensible. And this is why the distinction between positive and negative incomprehensibility is indispensable. Otherwise, the argument could prove existence of too many hazy things, from the existence of any incomprehensible idea we could infer extra-mental existence of its object. Thus, I think that both unity *and* positive incomprehensibility of actual infinity are special features that enable us to argue for the existence of God.

Also, both clarity and positive incomprehensibility must come together, as it was already pointed out. If there were no distinctness of the attributes of God "we would be content to transfer them [our attributes], in amplified for into God, which would ensure the strict univocity of the attributes by turning God into a man writ large" (1993, pp. 90). The harmony between clarity and positive incomprehensibility enhances coherency of the Cartesian position, and grounds the version of the trademark argument.

The argument from positive incomprehensibility of God has a specific virtue; it satisfies Descartes' requirement that the right way of proving God's existence is when the object imposes itself on thought, not the other way around. The argument I have just presented is quite different from *a priori* proofs that look for clues in the mind that point to the existence of God outside the mind. For example, consider St. Anselm's argument. Existence is found as a perfection in the mind, which imposes its necessity on the thing outside of the mind. Also, Descartes' causal argument proceeding from the idea of God to the existence of God *via* causal principle that bridges the mind-reality gap is made by inference dependent on the premise about a certain *similitude* of what is in the mind and in reality. Both assumptions of the arguments are problematic. How do we justify the "bridging" principle? The only non-arbitrary ways will be ultimately circular. However, my approach circumvents

difficulties about the "bridging" premise. In the argument from incomprehensibility, I actually don't argue to bridge the mind-world gap by way of similitude of the idea and what it represents. The gap is rather circumvented by way of *dissimilitude*; it is not something that we comprehend about God (his perfection, or necessity in thought) that helps us infer his existence, it is rather something that we don't comprehend about the idea of God that makes the existence God the best explanation of the idea. Paradoxically as it may seem, the impossibility of grasping the idea of God implies that God exists. I believe that here lies the challenge and the force of the argument.

# Conclusion Of Chapter IV

In this chapter I have defended a version of the Cartesian trademark argument that proceeds from the idea of God as infinite. I have discussed whether such idea is coherent at all. I addressed Gassendi's objection that a clear and distinct idea of the infinite is at best negative, or indefinite. I presented a coherent answer that Descartes makes, and I emphasized the distinction between actual and potential infinite as an additional criterion for distinguishing indefinite and infinite because completeness of the actual infinity explains Descartes' epistemological criterion that infinity of God is positively understood. I have concluded together with Beyssade that clearness and distinctness of the idea of God is not merely consistent with incomprehensibility, but also explanatory related – it is actually fulfilling Descartes' criterion of truth. This, I believe, answered Williams' objection as well.

Furthermore, I have discussed the question whether the idea of God could be constructed by human mind, either *via negativa* or *amplificatione*, which were alternatives raised by Gassendi. I defended Descartes' argument from doubt to the effect that construction of an idea *via negativa* or *via amplificatione* presupposes a prior idea of a perfect being - a

standard that one needs to have in order to state "I am imperfect mind". However, I proposed a logically weaker claim to ground the trademark argument, namely, the distinction between the material and objective idea. I have argued that the trademark argument proceeds from Descartes' objective idea of God which is infinite and exhibits unity of perfections, which is thought of by way of having a material, imperfect and finite idea of God (possibly humanly constructed). I have emphasized Beyssade's distinction between making the idea explicit by reference to human perfections, and constructing the idea. My main argument was that the objective idea of God cannot be reduced to or exhausted by the material idea because of its unity and positive incomprehensibility. Our inability to comprehend the idea of God is ultimately the most legitimate reason to think that we could not invent it.

# CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I discussed the plausibility of the skeptical challenge regarding perceptual knowledge. I proposed a Cartesian response to the deceiver argument, and a response to the dream argument based on Sosa's theory of dreams.

In chapter two I considered the arguments from illusion and hallucination which were traditionally viewed as culpable for raising the skeptical threat. I concluded that they are quite plausible arguments that lead to the "veil of perception" problem. If there is a common factor shared by genuine perception and hallucination then it is metaphysically possible that everything seems the same perceptually, while reality is radically different. In this way, both sense-datum theory and intentionalism, enable the skeptical hypothesis as a genuine metaphysical possibility. However, the discussion on disjunctivism, the theory that denies the common factor, suggests that the skeptical argument is not necessarily committed to the common factor view or any theory of perception. This conclusion was supported by a logically weaker version of the skeptical argument, which relies on a mere epistemological subjective indistinguishability thesis. In this way all theories of perception are vulnerable to skepticism. Although the traditionalist diagnosis of the skeptical argument and the nature of perception is correct because the common factor view with additional epistemological premises leads to skepticism, I stress that the view does not entirely acknowledge the force of skepticism because it is not the case that *only* theories which posit a common factor are vulnerable to skepticism. Insofar we are required to rule out skeptical hypotheses on the basis of the reflectively accessible aspect of the perceptual experience, through the closure principle that finds its plausibility in the anti-luck requirement, skepticism follows. It remains a serious challenge for internalist conception of perceptual knowledge. These were my

findings concerning the relation of the Cartesian skeptical challenge and the nature of perception.

In the third chapter I discussed the dream skeptical argument and proposed an answer that is faithful to Sosa's view. Since the dream argument, in my understanding, targets our knowledge that the criterion is satisfied, rather than undermining the possibility of a criterion of wakefulness, I tried to use the asymmetry between the dreaming and waking case as externalists would typically do. If I'm dreaming then I don't have knowledge of ordinary propositions, but the dream argument is also rendered a mere dreamt argument. So, if I'm dreaming then why bother with it? If I'm awake then I can make competent judgments; I can tell that my presence experience lacks the "dream property". Of course, if I were dreaming everything I just said, it would seem the same, and I would be wrong. However, the overall epistemic situation in the waking case is not symmetrical with the dreaming case; although the *seeming* is the same, my competence and the fact that experience has the "mark" of wakefulness, outweighs the epistemic situation in the bad case. I believe that this view which combines both internalist and externalist elements is worth of further exploration because it promises a compromise between the two epistemological intuitions. Since I found such a response to the dream argument plausible, the argument for the existence of God in chapter four primarily aimed at responding the skeptical deceiver argument.

In the fourth chapter I defended the Cartesian trademark argument on somewhat weaker logical basis than Descartes himself did. He argued that the cause of a perfect idea must be perfect. However, I tried to take a different path. I didn't base the argument on some kind of resemblance of what is in the mind and what is in reality. Since the mind cannot impose necessity on things, as Descartes says, the somewhat paradoxical dialectics of the argument from comprehensibility seems more appropriate: we can know that God exists because we *cannot* comprehend God. This approach is reminiscent of a notoriously

controversial question both in philosophy and theology: if God is wholly transcendent then how can we know that He exists? I believe that the right answer has to balance the positive and apparently negative epistemological element. Descartes' distinction between grasping (comprehending) and positive understanding by having a clear and distinct idea of God, grounds the view that we have an idea *that* God is infinite without knowing *what* He is. I argue that positive incomprehensibility and elusiveness of the idea *that* God is infinite are puzzling and unique features that demand an explanation. I believe that the most plausible one is that the infinite mind is the source of such idea.

Finally, the trademark argument directly addresses the skeptical challenge concerning perceptual knowledge. The first premise of the closure based skeptical argument was the claim that "I don't know that I'm not deceived with respect to my senses". Lack of knowledge that the skeptical hypothesis is false renders every perceptual belief reflectively lucky. For example, it may seem to me that I'm writing a conclusion now, but as far as I know on the basis of my present experience, I might be deceived about it, I might be a victim of the *deus deceptor*. If I cannot rule this out then I don't have perceptual knowledge. However, if I know that God exists, then I know that the first premise of the skeptical argument is false. If I know that God exists, and that He is not a deceiver, then it is false that, for all I know, I might be a victim of the *deus deceptor*. Knowledge that God exists changes my epistemic situation. Although I am not able to rule out the skeptical error-possibility on the basis of perceptual experience alone, I can rule it out on the basis of something else that I know. The skeptical argument indeed poses a serious problem for perceptual knowledge if the sole criterion of truth is subjective, in the perceptual experience itself. This brings us back to the original context in which the Cartesian skepticism arose in the first place.

The skeptical deceiver argument that undermines perceptual knowledge is essentially religiously motivated. In the very beginning of the *Meditations* Descartes asked himself

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whether it could be that God created him in such a way that he goes wrong even about the most obvious and convincing things. And what can be more convincing than one's perceptual belief "I have two hands", or "I'm sitting by the fire"? Radical skepticism concerning senses is rendered conceivable only if God is a deceiver. But when the *deus deceptor* enters as a genuine epistemic possibility, what can cast him out? Such a religiously inspired destructive argument requires a religiously motivated response – God exists and He is not a deceiver. In the original historical and theological context in which Cartesian skepticism emerged, the only convincing argument that could end the Phyrrhonian crisis could be an argument that finds the criterion of truth external to the subjective experiential certainty of the believer.

In this dissertation I have revived the classical solution, and I am ready to confirm the same line of conclusion that some of my predecessors, religious thinkers like Erasmus of Rotterdam, have made. Skepticism about the senses teaches us that we cannot know things outside of our minds if we rely solely on our perceptual experience, on what is reflectively accessible to the subject. The skeptical paradox just confirms that the perceptual criterion of truth cannot be in our minds. If it were solely in our minds, that would be cause for worry; for then we would be able to know things about the world solely on the basis of the content of our minds. Thus, radical skepticism concerning senses is actually fruitful for epistemology to the extent that it confirms that the truth must be "out there". This is an optimistic way to think about skepticism, namely, as a mean which ultimately leads to truth – to recognizing our dependence on an extra-experiential criterion of truth. But given the nature of the skeptical deceiver challenge that aims at perceptual knowledge, this criterion cannot be anything less than God Himself, anything less than an intelligent benevolent mind creator who guarantees that our perceptual cognitive faculties lead to truth as their ultimate goal. If there were no benevolent God who created us with our perceptual cognitive faculties, then we wouldn't have any guarantee for their reliability, there would be no *telos*. Without God creating us, we

might have true reliably produced perceptual beliefs, but without a guarantee, only accidentally so. But knowledge doesn't allow room for luck. This is the point that the skeptical argument brings to the fore. And this is where the intuitive force of the skeptical argument lies. If we agree with the skeptic that knowledge cannot be lucky, then in order to attain knowledge, we need a guarantee, and an anti-luck condition. Skepticism ultimately suggests that without God perceptual knowledge seems unattainable. In a surprising way then, the Cartesian skeptical challenge leads to recognition of a truth – our epistemic dependence on God.

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