

Philosophy 101: Introduction to Philosophy, Queens College, Fall 2004

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I. Continuing to discuss the three arguments for doubt.

1) Illusion

2) Dreaming

Can you dream of something that doesn't exist?

What could you know if you were dreaming?

The laws of science could be different.

The objects in your dream exist?

But you could just construct them in your dreams.

Still don't some object have to exist, in order for you to pattern the dreamed objects?

Or, if not, at least the 'building blocks', like shape and color, must exist.

These are what Descartes calls simple and universal.

And mathematical truths, which deal with these simples and universals:

color, shape, quantity, place, time

What do you know most surely?

Could anything make this false?

3) Demon deceiver.

The dream doubt didn't eliminate the basic building blocks of our ideas like color, shape, and extension, or mathematics and logic, which deal with these most generally.

But the certainty which convinces us not to doubt these things could itself be implanted by a demon deceiver.

Nothing, it seems, is certain.

There may be no knowledge not liable to doubt.