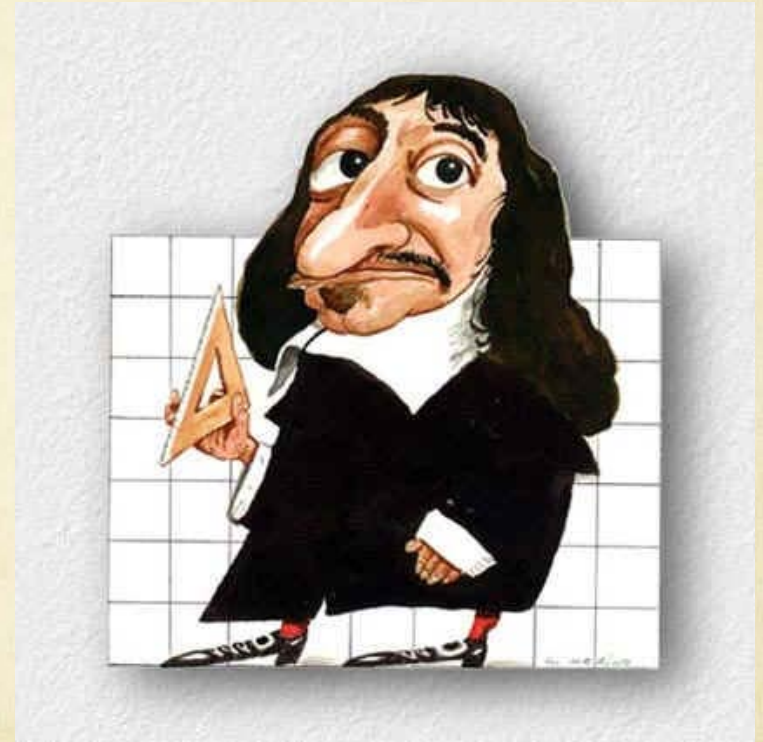


Arnauld and Descartes on the Mind

Arnauld vs. Dualism



Descartes' Theory of the Mind

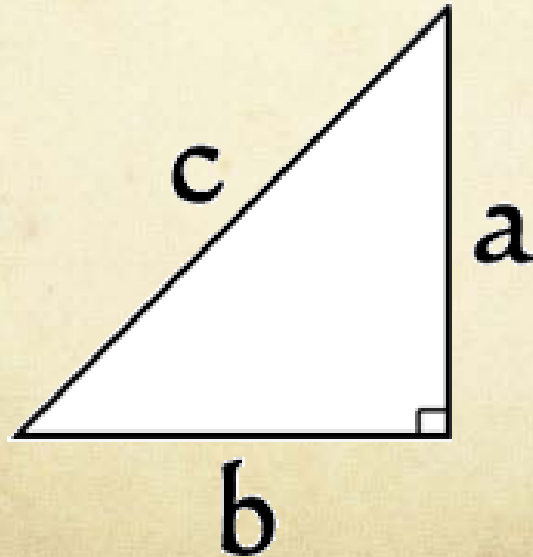
- The soul represents the mind
- He has knowledge of his mind and body separately from each other
- He exists without knowing his body exists
- The mind and body are separate things



Antoine Arnauld

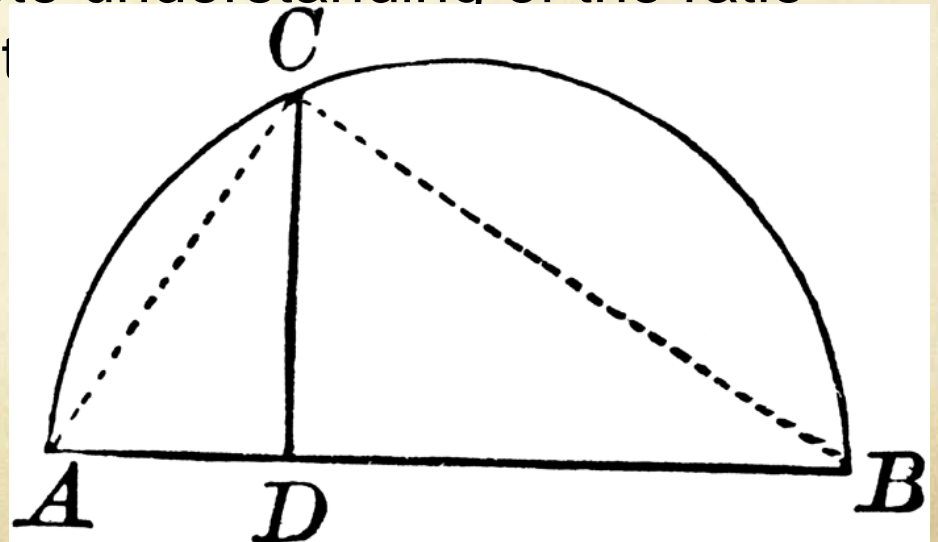
- Arnauld challenges Descartes theory using an example involving the Pythagorean Theorem

$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$



Arnauld's Triangle Example

- Someone is certain that the angle in a triangle within a semicircle is a right angle, but they doubt that the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the squares of the other sides
- They understand that it is a triangle and it is right-angled without a complete understanding of the ratio between the squares of the



Meaning

- “I do not see any possible reply here, except that the person in this example does not clearly and distinctly perceive that the triangle is right-angled. But how is my perception of the nature of my mind any clearer than his perception of the nature of the triangle? He is just as certain that the triangle has one right angle as I am certain that I exist because I am thinking.”
- Arnauld does not believe that this person’s claim about the triangle is justified
- This person represents Descartes

Arnauld's Issue with Dualism

- “Although I clearly and distinctly know my nature to be something that thinks, may I, too, not perhaps be wrong in thinking that nothing else belongs to my nature apart from the fact that I am a thinking thing? Perhaps the fact that I am an extended thing may also belong to my nature.”

Arnauld's Issue with Dualism

- Descartes conclusion about the self and existence is not justified
- He can not prove that the body is not essential to the self and the mind is immaterial

Descartes' Response

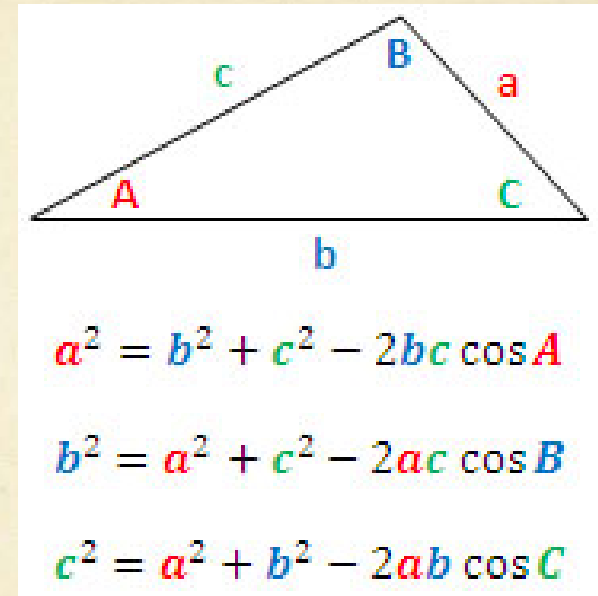
- 1) The triangle is a substance, but the Pythagorean Theorem is only a property
- 2) It can be understood that the triangle is right-angled without an awareness of the ratio between the sides, but the ratio can not be understood without an awareness of the right-angle
- 3) There has to be some understood ratio between the three sides of the triangle so the person in this example does not have a clear understanding of the triangle

Descartes' Response

- He agrees that the person does not have a clear understanding of the triangle
- However, this example does not accurately portray the relationship between the mind and body because the triangle and this property are not complete and separate things that can be understood apart from each other
- “In the case of the mind... not only do we understand it to exist without the body, but, what is more, all the attributes which belong to a body can be denied of it. For it is of the nature of the substances that they should mutually exclude one another”

Contradictions

- In his first point, Descartes considers the mind to be a “substance” so shouldn't it have bodily properties?
- Contradictory to his second point, we can prove that the Pythagorean Theorem holds independently of the knowledge that the triangle is right angled in some cases using the Law of Cosines



Questions

- Is Arnauld correct in arguing that Descartes does not have a complete understanding of the mind?
- Is there a link between the mind and body?
- Does the mind have material properties?
- Consider the effect that a physical change or damage to the brain can have on personality and consciousness (the mind). Is this relevant to the debate between Arnauld and



References

- “Arnauld and Descartes on the Mind” from *Objections and Replies*
- <http://www.google.com/imghp?hl=en&tab=wi>