

Comparative Perspective on Dualism: Descartes and Samkhaya

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Abstract

The present paper attempts to bring about the point of comparison between aspects of Cartesian and Sankhayan dualism. In order to arrive at this, first I shall discuss what ontology and metaphysics is and what is the difference between these two. Secondly, In brief I shall discuss what the various theories of "reality" are. And finally I shall compare the dualistic aspect of both Cartesian and Sankhayan Philosophy and present its brief analysis.

Comparative philosophy—sometimes called cross-cultural philosophy—is a subfield of philosophy in which philosophers work on problems by intentionally setting into dialogue sources from across cultural, linguistic, and philosophical streams. Comparative philosophers most frequently engage topics in dialogue between modern Western and Classical Asian traditions, but work has been done using materials and approaches from Islamic and African philosophical traditions as well as from classical Western traditions. It is important to note here that scholars have warned of three basic difficulties while doing comparative philosophy i.e. 1) *Descriptive chauvinism*: a fault which consists in recreating the other tradition in the image of one's own. This is reading a text from another tradition and assuming that it asks the same questions or constructs responses or answers in a similar manner as that one with which one is most familiar. 2) *Normative skepticism*: it consists of narrating the views of different philosophers and traditions and suspending all judgment about their adequacy. When teaching the history of Western philosophy, some philosophers never really offer any critical view that puts aside a thinker's claims. 3) *Incommensurability*: it was David Wong (1989) who has offered a view of the ways in which philosophical traditions may be incommensurable. One kind of incommensurability involves the inability to translate some concepts in one tradition into meaning and reference in some other tradition. A second sort is that some philosophical models differ from others in such fundamental ways as to make it impossible for the advocates to understand each other. Wong thinks that some forms of life may be so far from a person's experience and philosophical tradition that she is unable to see the merits in another view. The third version of incommensurability is that the traditions differ on what counts as evidence and grounds for decidability, thus making it impossible to make a judgment between them. Nonetheless comparative philosophy is a growing field of study for it helps in generating better knowledge about and across cultures.¹

It is in this background of comparative philosophy that, here in this paper it is my attempt to bring about the point of comparison between aspects of Cartesian and Sankhayan dualism. In order to arrive at this, first I shall discuss what ontology and

¹ Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, *Comparative Philosophy*.

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