

**ΤΕΣΤ ΓΛΩΣΣΟΜΑΘΕΙΑΣ\_11ος ΜΑΘΗΤΙΚΟΣ ΔΙΑΓΩΝΙΣΜΟΣ  
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cogito ergo sum: a brief introduction

We might as well know nothing about what surrounds us, about God, or the rules that form the universe; but since humans have the innate ability to think, we can be certain that we exist. Descartes believed in a dual representation of man: soul and body. The above mentioned argument about the relationship between existence and thought only ensures certainty for the soul. The body, on the other hand, could be a creation of the imagination, the deceit of an evil demon. The skepticist philosopher isn't persuaded by the idea that the physical form of humans is real solely because we can see it, or touch it. He refers to "perception", which is different than sensation, since it requires a deeply cognitive approach.

how do we achieve knowledge?

"We are still in doubt of many things". How can we escape doubt? According to Descartes, the human kind needs a very specific scientific method of reaching the truth, a process that remains constant notwithstanding the many different fields that knowledge has the lead in. Where does one start? The consecutive steps this task of revealing the truth entails can only start from one place: the "proof", the existing knowledge for which we can't find a rational, convincing way to rebut. There are some truths that the human mind deems necessary, undisputable, clear. This will form that basis of our research, and all else will be doubted. These vague interpretations of the truth will then be divided in smaller questions, according to their level of difficulty or the rational arguments that they require to be proven. The next step would be to attempt to answer the newly divided areas of interest by carefully researching them in a very specific order: starting from the most simple one and moving up towards the hardest one, thus ensuring stability and progress. The last step would be to return to our work and check the cognitive path we travelled through in order to detect flaws, slips of the mind. This simple yet elegant scientific approach will lead to the one and only truth, according to its creator. Through this deeply strict and mathematical procedure, Descartes aspires to reach a conclusion that is not human-centered. The truth doesn't affect- or more importantly- improve civilization; it merely exists on its own, it's free and stable.

Descarte's extreme skepticism

The dominant interpretation of how we reach knowledge today includes elements of both nativism and empiricism; we accept that the environment offers information and that the mind processes it. But does this modern way of thinking have a place for so much doubt? In order to fully comprehend the source of the different theories concerning gnosiology, one has to take into account the social background that helped synthesize them. Descartes lived in a time and place where religion guided science and the most important human achievements-such as democracy- were suffering. When this is put under the microscope, it is plausible that everything was perceived as a shadow of the truth. Doubt does shed a light to both the status quo and the constant in time truths, since it leads man into a cognitive search with few to no ways out. This extreme skepticism also protects man from errors concerning similarity. Plato depicts a famous socratic dialog, where the always trending philosopher explains how man understands things in the real world by comparing images to what he met in the word of ideas, by finding common characteristics and differences. Descartes on the other hand, believed that comparing objects leads us to false conclusions, since we deem completely different things as common, thus isolating ourselves from the truth.

**At what cost?**

The philosopher in hand thought upon the existence of the soul, the non-existence of the body, the presence of a deceiving demon, and then moving up towards the Sacred, he tried to prove that God exists by arguing that man is not capable of creating the idea of perfection, and that perfection must include existence. Although an admittedly very impressive way of understanding these complex ideas, one has to think about the psychological toll Descartes went through during this search: undermining everything that- at least- feels real in order to walk on unstable grounds to find something that might not be found. In a way, doubt promotes the opposite of growth, since it passionately aspires for stability. If we considered to expand this skepticism, make it dominant in the field of science, distrust and confusion would take the place of progress. As Noyrat once said, we are sailing in the sea of experience searching for the truth and our only tools are with us on the boat. Descartes tried to fly over the sea in order to reach the mountain of truth and found safe conclusions. Although, still the question lies: What is left, if we willfully lose everything?