
Doubt And Descartes Cartesian Project

I chose to write my paper on Descartes Cartesian Project. I thought his thinking process was very interesting and also very confusing at the same time. Although he left a mess behind, he is known as the “father of modern philosophy.” One of those reasons is of course because of his Cartesian method. Descartes Cartesian method had four steps: (1) accept as true only what is undoubtable, (2) divide every question into manageable parts, (3) begin with the simplest issues and ascend to the more complex and (4) review frequently enough to retain the whole argument at once (Kemerling, 2011).

Descartes found it necessary to include this first rule as an association to knowledge. Everybody has knowledge and is believed to be beyond doubt, but when we think about it again, there isn't a single subject that people haven't debated about. It is difficult to learn and debate about something when there is no true right or wrong answer so it is very easy to believe what is doubted. If there is a doubt within knowledge it can not be accepted as true, it must be known to be true in which doubt is not even considered. That is when it can be accepted as knowledge (Aarya, 2010).

After the first rule, he then found it necessary for the second rule to break up the question into parts to work them out individually. Things that are known can only be known when compared to the unknown. But nothing is ever actually unknown, because if that were true, then nothing would be known. That is why we must break up the problem and find its truth. To find the truth within a question, there has to be a component within that question that is not known, or else there would be no point in the question. You must then lay out the unknown so there is no risk for deviating away from the main point at hand. Lastly, the unknown can only be accepted as known if it is compared to something that is already known. (Aarya, 2010) In this way, it allows us to know that it is unknown and allows us to figure it out.

The third rule is to help distinguish between the simple issues and the more complex ones to find the truth in a structured manner. This also allows us to see how each of the truths contributes to one another and distinguish between the two different relations which include the absolute and the relative. (Aarya, 2010)

The fourth and final rule was included so that nothing would be missed. Knowledge is difficult and in a lot of cases, it is hard to remember how you got to your conclusion. That is why you must keep running it over and over in your mind to compensate for memory. This must be repeated until you can run it through your mind smoothly and uninterrupted because if you miss one detail from the original, you can lose the truth. (Aarya, 2010)

Moving on from the Cartesian method, we find ourselves now at the Descartes project of doubt, known as the Cartesian Project. There were three steps he went through during this project: (1) doubt senses, (2) doubt dreams, and (3) the evil genius (Newman, 2019). He first went through doubting his senses because who is to say that what he is seeing in front of him is real because in the past his senses have deceived him and is not sure if he can trust them. Although his senses have deceived him in the past, there seemed to be many other beliefs that would make it difficult to doubt. Such as holding a piece of paper in his hands or sitting by the fire. Even if his

senses deceive him, something is being deceived, therefore, he exists.

Descartes then started to doubt his dreams and started to wonder if he is awake right now or if he is ever even awake. He started to have these doubts because he noticed that in dreams, we would have similar experiences to if we were awake. He called these the “Now Dreaming Doubt” and the “Always Dreaming Doubt,” which are parasitic of each other because he kept finding reasons to doubt the other (Newman, 2019). But he then turned to math and realized that math is always correct. Whether he is awake or asleep, two plus three will always equal five. He decided that since Something is dreaming, he must exist.

Lastly, he started to believe that maybe there is an evil genius that is controlling and deceiving him. Descartes has always believed that there was a creator who was all-powerful and good. But then started to doubt this because a creator who had these traits would not allow his creations to ever be deceived. Leading him to believe that maybe the creator is an evil genius instead who is operating in an indirect manner against him. Although maybe he is being deceived, something is being deceived, therefore, he does exist. Descartes Cartesian Project is known as “Radical Doubt” because Descartes would refuse to accept anything as the truth unless it was clearly true in itself.

Going through his project of doubt and his innate ideas led him to discover that knowledge of the nature of reality derives from ideas and not the external senses. He believes that ideas are innate if their content is derived from the nature of the mind alone such as mathematics, logic, and metaphysics instead of experiences. This is because what we see can deceive what we know but if we are to dig out the innate truths from our own minds, it is our own native intelligence (Newman, 2019).

At the end of the second meditation, he devastatingly realized, “I think, therefore I am” or also known as “cogito, ergo sum.” He does not admit that there is anything inside of him except for his own mind. He realized that objects and even the body are not strictly perceived by the senses or by imagination, but by the intellect. Not by being able to touch or see something, but from being able to understand them. Coming to this realization, he could achieve a better and easier understanding of his own mind than anything else.