

'doubt is the key to
knowledge' discuss.



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BUSTER**

People created proverbs and used to apply them when experiences similar to the one which resulted in the construction of the proverb reoccurred. The Persians had one of the most famous proverbs that are still used in our time; they used to say “doubt is the key to knowledge”, but to what extent is this phrase true? Through the areas and ways of knowledge, this proverb will be further studied to determine to which extent it is true. In this essay, I will be using the natural sciences and religion as areas of knowledge and linking them to the ways of knowledge; perception and reason or logic.

Doubt is one of the earliest ways the human beings started gaining knowledge from the world around them. It is known that doubt is when a person starts questioning a subject that confused him or has been on his mind for a time. It is then that this person starts asking questions in order to gain further knowledge about the subject he wishes to acquire. We can generally say that doubt is the origin of obtaining knowledge as human beings started questioning the world and everything in it; they were able to get the answers they wanted and increased their knowledge. The world famous French philosopher, writer, physicist and mathematician René Descartes believed that doubt could never be the key to knowledge and information from the world. He was considered one of the first thinkers ever to introduce philosophy to natural sciences. Descartes believed that one can gain truth without doubt; he introduced his method called “methodological skepticism” in which he rejects any ideas that can be doubted, then reestablishes them so that he can get genuine knowledge from these ideas. One of Descartes’ books is one called “Meditations on First Philosophy”. The book has six meditations in it in which Descartes banishes any belief that

contains, even if in small quantities, any kind of uncertainty, but then reestablishes the things that are known for sure. Each one of the six meditations were written as if in one day Descartes speculated and came up with the meditation; so the book was authored as if he meditated for six days and developed his meditations.

Three of Descartes' meditations are discussed. His first meditation is called "Meditation I: Concerning Those Things That Can Be Called into Doubt". In this meditation, Descartes remembers that he was once deceived by his senses and since that happened before, it can happen again. So he tells himself, if I am being deceived, then my beliefs are treacherous and uncertain. The second meditation called "Meditation II: Concerning the Nature of the Human Mind: That It Is Better Known Than the Body" is an acknowledgment to the first meditation. Descartes believed that since he is a "thinking thing", then he must exist. Since he is a thing that can be deceived and have thoughts and beliefs, he must exist. His third meditation "Meditation III: Concerning God, That He Exists" argues that God is present and he rejects the idea of God being invented. He proposed three types of ideas; Innate, Factitious and Adventitious. The innate ideas are the ones that are and always have been with us, whereas factitious ideas are from our imagination and lastly the adventitious ones come from our experiences from the world. Descartes believed that God is an innate idea and that he is not improvised. That was Descartes' beliefs when it comes to doubt, as he does not believe that doubt is the key knowledge.

Let us discuss the natural sciences at first. Ever since the break of dawn, the human being has been trying to know the truth about his origins and the

world around him; have we truly evolved from apes or were we simply created by God? These questions have always been present in the human's mind and this is the reason behind his doubt concerning this topic. This issue has raised many conflicts among people, but most importantly, created the Darwin theory of evolution. Darwin believed that all living organisms evolved from much simpler single-celled organisms. His doubt in the belief that God created us from nothing made him seek after the answers he wanted to get. He did not believe in what he was told and sought after the truth after questioning this topic, evidently coming up with his widely accepted theory from different people all over the world.

One too many facts from the sciences such as physics and biology were found based on doubt. Take the Arabic Muslim optical scientist, Ibn Al-Haitham. The people who lived in his era thought that the eye itself emitted light rays and causing our sight. Ibn Al-Haitham, on the other hand, did not believe in what these people used to say and doubted this fact, and so he started his own experiments to prove them wrong, and he was able to show that light was reflected off surfaces and became incident on the eye resulting in our sight.

People use the logic they have to reason with the things that go around them. And through the logic, they are able to realize that some things do not add up; and this leads them to questioning and trying to find answers if they are unsatisfied with the results in front of them. Through their journey of seeking the answers, these people can find them only by observing or experimenting and then find logical answers. Human beings find answers when in doubt by experimenting and when the results show up they use

reason and logic to interpret them, leading them to knowledge based on doubt.

However, a different area of knowledge that can be studied to show to what extent the “doubt is the key to knowledge” statement is true is religion. Let us take the religion for instance. Not all the people of the world believe in religion, but why is that? Why have the non-believers become what they are now? This is all because we, as human beings, doubt the things around us. We are curious beings and want to know more of everything. As time progresses, people doubt what had been told to them by God. Some do not believe that he created Adam and Eve and rather wanted to accept the evolution theories as true such as Darwin’s. Others do not believe that there is a judgment day, and therefore wish to explain what is happening to our world nowadays from a scientific point of view.

As for religion itself, talking about Christianity for example, doubt is not an option. You either believe in God or you do not. It is said in the Holy Bible that “Blessed are those who did not see and believe”. Through this, it is like God is telling us that there is no need for doubt, and that we only have to follow what our hearts tell us and how our soul guides into believing that there is a God even though we cannot see him. Religion is telling us that doubt has no place in God’s will and he is our source of knowledge on him not doubt. He is the one who will explain everything to believers and guide them through their lives and provide them with answers when they need them; therefore he is a person’s supply of knowledge and that person should gain it without having to doubt what God says.

All in all, the statement “doubt is the key to knowledge” is true to an extent as proven earlier by the areas and ways of knowledge. But it is to a certain extent true, not fully true because other areas of knowledge such as the ethics contradict what the Persian proverb says. Doubt can reveal the response of unanswered questions, but on other times, it can blind us from seeing the truth.

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