
Plato's and Descartes' Perception on Certainty and Doubt

Have you ever wondered what it would be like for two of the world's most influential thinkers in the realm of philosophy, Plato and the sixteenth century's most prominent adherent for philosophy Rene Descartes to have a conversation? Both Descartes and Plato seemed to distrust their senses when it came to the ability to perceive what is right or rather what is real. Although these two great philosophers are separated by different age and time I think it is important to know that they have shared many parallel thoughts as well as conflicting views.

In this essay, I aim to definitively compare and contrast Descartes and Plato's ideologies as well as point out why contact with one another would be necessary for learning. I stand in contrast to the position that contact with one another is a hindrance to learning, this ideology disregards the concept of readers truly getting both sides of Descartes and Plato's great thesis and meditations, contact simply can not be considered a hindrance to learning or obtaining information, factors such as lack of focus would hinder learning not contact with one another. Contact with one another would show a much more practical aspect of things rather than hinder learning.

Contact with another would be both necessary and beneficial for learning due to the fact audience can be enabled to firmly grasp the concepts of these great deep thinkers, on this basis the readers and audience would be able to adequately familiarize themselves with the ideas and insights of Descartes and Plato. Comparing and contrasting Descartes and Plato's ideologies is necessary, by doing this one can easily depict differences and/or similarities within these great thinkers definitive concepts, It can also allow for readers to organize similar and contradicting ideas.

Rene Descartes was a French philosopher of the seventeenth century, his philosophical theory was that "I am, I exist, must be true whenever I assert it or think it" (Descartes pg 4). Descartes meditations of philosophies main idea was to subject all our beliefs to essentially doubt, and then try to see which of them can withstand such doubt and hence be accepted as absolute certain, Descartes in his First Meditations of Philosophy introduces this topic by adopting a sentimental tone of realization amongst readers, he enumerates how a few years ago he was astonished as to the abundance of fanciful things he perceived to be true(Pg 1), by introducing the topic this way he gets readers thinking, he captures their attention making the audience intrigued to learn more.

Descartes states 'I realized that if I wanted to establish anything in the sciences that was stable and likely to last, I needed—just once in my life—to demolish everything completely and start again from the foundations'(Pg 1). As the application of this method reveals, there is indeed a huge difference between the things that we, in fact, take ourselves to be certain about, and the things that we may justifiably do so. Take this for example you are absolutely certain that you are reading my essay right now, or that you brushed your teeth this morning, or that two plus two is four, yet are you really justified in being so certain, Descartes thinks that after having employed his method of doubt you will have to admit that you are not. Indeed there are only very few beliefs that pass Descartes test of doubt, can you be really certain you are reading my essay right now? No, you cannot, after all, you could just be as well be dreaming. In accordance

to Descartes ideologies the same holds about your belief that you brushed your teeth this morning, and most shockingly perhaps not even mathematical and scientific beliefs escape Descartes radical doubt for how can we be sure two plus two equals four what ensures that we did not commit an error every time we convinced ourselves of this, "So I shall suppose that some malicious, powerful, cunning demon has done all he can to deceive me—rather than this being done by God, who is supremely good and the source of truth" (Descartes second meditation pg 3). Perhaps there is an evil demon or wicked scientist, who constantly manipulates our thoughts by systematically distracting us when we try to verify our mathematical beliefs.

As these consideration show, Descartes method of doubt leaves hardly any belief unaffected but there is hope, Descartes argues that there is at least one thing that we cannot doubt and can be absolutely certain about, this is the fact that when we doubt we can not doubt that we doubt or think for doubting is just a form of thinking, furthermore, when we can be sure that we think we can be equally sure that we exist while thinking, for if indeed we can be sure that we are thinking, there has to be something that does the thinking. " I am, I exist—that is certain. But for how long? For as long as I am thinking. But perhaps no longer than that; for it might be that if I stopped thinking I would stop existing; and I have to treat that possibility as though it were actual, because my present policy is to reject everything that isn't necessarily true. Strictly speaking, then, I am simply a thing that thinks—a mind, or soul, or intellect, or reason, these being words whose meaning I have only just come to know. Still, I am a real, existing thing. What kind of a thing? I have answered that: a thinking thing"(Descartes second meditation pg 5). Descartes argument assures us of the fact that there is at least one thing that is impossible to doubt and is therefore absolutely certain. This is the fact that we exist while we think.

Plato was an Athenian philosopher during the Classical period in Ancient Greece. Plato was passionate in his defense of philosophy in the Allegory of the Cave he talks about a group of people residing in a cave, they've always lived there and known nothing about the outside world. There is no natural light in this cave, the walls are damp and dark, all the inhabitants can see comes from the shadows of the things thrown up on the wall by the light of a fire. The cave dwellers get fascinated by these reflections of animals, plants, and people, moreover, they assume these these shadows are real and if you pay a lot of attention to them you'll understand and succeed in life, and they don't, of course, realize that the things they are looking at are mere phantoms, they chat about shadowy things enthusiastically and take great pride for their sophistication and wisdom, then one day quite by chance, someone discovers a way out of the cave, out into the open air. At first, it's simply overwhelming. He is dazzled by the bright sunlight in which everything is, for the first time, properly illuminated, gradually his eyes adjust and he encounters the true nature of things, he encounters what is real.

Plato's ideology here is that we are all for much of our lives in shadow many of the things we get excited about, like fame, the perfect partner, a high status job are infinitely less real than we suppose they are for the most part phantoms projected by our culture onto the wall of our fragile and flawed minds, but because everyone around us is insisting that they are genuine we perceive them to be real which according to Plato is not the case.

I was able to perceive similar thoughts and concerns within these two quotes by Descartes and Plato. The first one coming from Plato in the Allegory of the cave states 'I understand that knowledge and being, which the science of dialectic contemplates are clearer than the notions of art, as they are termed, which proceed from hypothesis only: these are also contemplated by

understanding, and not by the senses'(Plato Pg 252). The second quote is from Descartes he states that ' Whatever I have accepted until now as most true has come to me through my senses. But occasionally I have found that they have deceived me, and it is unwise to trust completely those who have deceived us even once'. (Descartes Pg 1) Here it is clear to see how both Descartes and Plato doubt the reliability of the senses, however, I was able to see some differences in their ideologies.

In The Allegory of the Cave Plato enumerates that the prisoners in the cave cannot see the objects behind them, they can only see the shadows on the wall and echos the, therefore the prisoners would mistake appearance for reality such as them thinking the shadows were real without knowing the true causes of them (Plato pg 254) Plato believes that we are essentially prisoners seeing shadows and not knowing the true causes and forms of things,not knowing true knowledge and information, however, Descartes had a different approach to this idea, he believed the foundation of knowledge was based on one's self rather than Plato's idea that knowledge comes from a set of one's principals.

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