

Skepticism

Skepticism is a school of thought that asserts all beliefs can be proved false. All other philosophies, apart from skepticism, are either false or irrelevant to human needs. Skeptics believed to avoid the frustration of being wrong, believe nothing, or at least suspend your belief in anything. Skeptics didn't affirm or deny other philosophies, they just weren't aware of any reliable criteria that proved the various claims of truth. They also often questioned whether it was possible to actually know anything. Rene Descartes realized that a lot of the beliefs he had while growing up were false.

For example, when we used to believe in Santa, we never thought it was false, but apparently, it turned out to be false. However, what is to say that the beliefs we still hold today are not false? We have been wrong about our beliefs before, so what is to say our beliefs right now don't have the chance of being false as well? This is how Skepticism evolved: instead of holding false beliefs, simply do not believe in anything.

According to the Skeptics, anything you believe in could be false, and therefore instead of being frustrated about being wrong, you could simply not believe anything. This led to the Skeptics living a much more tranquil life as they weren't burdened with any of this frustration.

Contrary to Skeptics, Dogmatists were those who believed way too strongly and simply refused to believe anything other than what they thought was true. Now imagine for these Dogmatists, if they've spent so much effort and a large part of themselves believing in a certain way of life or ideology that they have also refused to even acknowledge other perspectives. What if they were proven wrong and all the facts and evidence lined up against what they had spent so much of their time believing, wouldn't that be frustrating? The Skeptics wanted to avoid this and instead led a much more tranquil life contrary to the agitated lifestyle that these dogmatists would have encountered.

"Cogito Ergo Sum" Descartes began to doubt everything because he didn't know what beliefs were true. But there was one thing that he didn't and couldn't doubt.

If he was doubting everything, his doubting was a thought. This means that the only thing he was truly certain of was that he existed because he was thinking and you cannot think without existing. Maybe even his body didn't exist, but he knew for sure his mind did because that's where his thoughts came from. Hence this very famous line of "Cogito Ergo Sum", translated from Latin to "I think, therefore I am" indicates that **because** he was thinking, it meant he existed.

Almost every era of philosophy has had its skeptics. These skeptics really questioned whether it's possible to have any knowledge at all, and if any of the beliefs we had could be true. However, Rene Descartes was certain of one thing, and that is through this very famous quote, "Cogito Ergo Sum", translated from Latin to "I think, therefore I am". Despite not believing anything and questioning whether we can have knowledge, there was one thing he knew for sure, which is the fact that he was thinking. The fact that he was thinking because of his doubting implied that he existed. Hence, he thought, therefore he was.

However, an interesting thing was that Descartes didn't believe his body existed. He believed that you didn't need a body to think, so since he could only be sure that his thoughts existed, only his mind and brain were the ones that he was certain existed. After all, he was a skeptic, **he doubted everything.**

Descartes said and believed in a lot of his work that in order to formulate a belief that is true and can be considered knowledge, you must first demolish all your other initial beliefs and start from the foundation. He realized that even our senses can deceive us, so why should we continue to trust something that has deceived us once? "stable and likely to last" he must demolish all his ordinary opinions, and start right from the foundations. For he has found that even his senses deceive him, and it is "prudent never to trust completely those who have deceived us even once"

Skepticism can be overwhelming if you don't know what to believe, or whether to believe at all because of the deception that previously surrounded you. However, one thing that Descartes was sure about was that he existed. Even if nothing else made sense, his thinking and doubting these beliefs proved that he existed. How can you think but not exist right? Even if there was a

supreme power messing with him (like he thought there was), it undeniably reaffirmed his existence, because after all they were messing with HIM.

What Descartes believed in, and what a large chunk of Skepticism inculcates is:

“The senses sometimes deceive us. So for all we know, they always deceive us”

I'm sure you can find some flaws in that logic because well, just because one student sometimes fails a test, doesn't mean that they always fail or that all students always fail. Needless to say, what this tried to tell us was that if our senses deceive us once, what is to say that we can trust or believe anything else that our senses indicate?

Philosophical Jargon: This is also known as an instance where the premise is correct, but the conclusion derived is not. Sure, that one student sometimes failing a test is correct, but the conclusions derived from it were not correct as you cannot actually jump to that conclusion due to its lack of any evidence of justification to vaguely make such a statement.