

Welcome students. The paper is History of ideas I, the module is on Unit 2, title, rationalistic concept of substance, it's module number 9 which deals with the Descartes. I have split this module into two parts, Module 9 deals with Cogito Ergo Sum, part one and Module 10 deals with cogito ergo sum Part 2.

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What will you learn in this module is we will look into what is rationalism? We will look into the biography of Rene Descartes, the Cartesian method, Cogito ergo sum and proof for the existence of self.

The learning outcomes are you will develop an understanding of rationalism as a method of acquiring knowledge. You'll be able to compare between rationalism and empiricism has two ways of acquiring knowledge. You will be able to understand what was Descartes approach to philosophy. You will be able to appreciate the unique method which is employed by the Descartes. And how he proves the existence of self.

What is rationalism ? Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz are rationalists. According to rationalism, knowledge is derived by reason. Some of the common features of the rationalists are, belief in innate ideas and an application of mathematical reasoning to philosophy. Rationalism and empiricism are two ways of acquiring knowledge. Rationalism says it is through reason that knowledge is acquired. According to empiricism, we get knowledge by sense experience. Rationalism therefore upholds reason as the major source of knowledge and empiricism says it is through sense that one acquires knowledge.

The biography of Rene Descartes, the era was 1596 to 1650 C.E. He is also called as the father of modern philosophy. He was a philosopher, mathematician and a scientist. Some of the important books written by him, Discourse on Method, Meditations and Principles of philosophy to name a few.

Before Descartes was scholastic philosophy. He turned away from scholastic philosophy because he felt that they employed senses to acquire knowledge and whereas he was a rationalist.

What was Descartes approach to philosophy? He compares philosophy to a tree, so he uses the analogy of a tree. He says if you consider the whole of philosophy like a tree, the root of the tree is metaphysics, trunk is physics and the branches are other sciences. Philosophy for him is a practical activity. He chooses mathematics as the model of philosophical reasoning, and he wishes to construct a philosophical system which possesses the certainty of mathematics.

The aim philosophy was to reach certain and self evident truths, which would be acceptable to anyone with common sense and reasoning. He was quite dissatisfied with the scholastic philosophy, as there were contradictory opinions on similar issues. According to him, at that point of time, there was no clear and distinct knowledge in philosophy. As a result, there were lots of false opinions, errors and omissions.

To him model was mathematics, he says to reach mathematics like certainty, one must start anew in philosophy. So he comes up with a method which we which is known as the method of doubt. Now the starting point of this method looks at mathematics and says it is only through mathematics that we can get a clue on how we need to proceed in philosophy. Now what is the method which is taken in mathematics? You start with axioms, which are nothing but self evident truths. Every mathematician whenever they want to derive, they start with these axioms which they believe to be true. Nobody questions their validity. These are self evident truths. Starting from axioms, one deduces further steps. So from the axioms you derive the second truth from the second truth you lead to the third truth and eventually you reach the result. And if you look back what you have is one big system of truth in which every step is as certain as the other.

Now for him, he said the method to be followed is from simple truth, We must lead to complex truths. Such a method we need to apply also in philosophy. If you apply such a method in philosophy then truths in philosophy will be as certain as which are found in mathematics. Second, he rejects others opinions. Rejecting the authority of others makes way for a person to develop thinking on their own. So he says, reject authority of others. Reject whichever prejudices beliefs are present in the philosophical world and search for truth independently. Third, he rejects sensations. The question he asked is, how can we know that what we see is real? We often do realize that senses deceive as we suffer from dreams. Illusions now in the dream world, we believe that what we see in the dreams is true. However, it is only when we wake up that we realize that the dream world was a false world. Similarly, we also have illusions. We sometimes see things that are not there. For example a mirror.

So he believes he says to reach the to reach the truth. You also need to reject sensations. Then he says maybe there is an evil spirit that causes these illusions. There may be a devil that causes these sensations in us, so the world may be an illusion and we may all be deceived by this evil spirit.

Next, he doubted mathematics, which he had started with us, saying was a model of philosophy. He says that in mathematics people make errors all the time. We think sometimes that this is the as we solve problems. We think that we have reached the right answer, but later we realize that somewhere in the steps we have made a mistake. So what looks he says like certainty may turn out to be false, so it's possible, even in mathematics, to make mistakes. So he doubts that.

So far what he has doubted is, existing knowledge, sensations, mathematics. He comes now to the existence of Self. He says the external world, sensations mathematics can all be doubted. However, there is only one thing that is certain, is that that is I doubt or I think. That he says is beyond doubt. One who thinks exists surely at the time of thinking. It is contradictory to assume otherwise. So

when you are in the process of thinking one thing, you can be very sure of is that you are thinking, which means that you exist at that point of time.

So he does reach his first self-evident proposition, *Cogito Ergo sum*, which translates to, I think, therefore, I am existing. Because I am thinking, I know that I'm existing. As logically a doubt implies a doubter. There is no sense of speaking about a doubt if there is nobody who is carrying forward the action of doubting everything he says can be doubted, but one cannot doubt that the person is. Descartes says because I am thinking I know beyond any doubt that I am existing.

So in this module what we have looked into is we looked Descartes chose mathematics as a model of philosophy, To reach the kind of certainty in mathematics he chooses a method which we call as a method of doubt. He doubts, the senses, existence of physical world, even mathematics. However, there is one thing that he could not doubt, that is, he himself was doubting, so he reaches his first self-evident proposition, *Cogito ergo sum*, with this he proves the existence of self.

Glossary of terms *cogito, ergo sum*, empiricism, rationalism

Thank you.