

Bernard Vincavage
Mr. Larson
Essay #1 Truth and Dualism

Truth and Dualism
How does the individual relate to truth?

According to the Webster dictionary on the internet, truth is defined as “The body of being real things, events, and facts.” Today, truth behind scientific theories, catastrophic weather conditions, and known facts of mathematics just display a small array of truths that a typical person can feel confident in believing. However, with this definition alone, a person is left with questioning what determines something to be real and is what is actually being experienced a part of a reality. Truth as a thought between Plato and Descartes leaves many students with these questions because nothing is fully supported, or evident to accept for reason. Except that everyone’s way of reasoning is different because of the style, in which an answer or a solution is created.

Because of the undertaking to understand and relate to truth, both philosophers created an understanding of the view of human existence; this view can be referred to as a concept of dualism. In essence, dualism is the two ideas or matters of understanding a higher knowledge. For Plato, he believes that there is a world of forms and there is the world in which every human being exists. Descartes believes that the mind and the body are ideas of understanding the truth or the reality that is evident around him. These two concepts, truth and dualism expand on and initially answers how an individual relates to truth, and Plato and Descartes teaches the same concept, but uses different terminology to decipher their own understanding.

Plato, a student of Socrates, effectively sets the pace for the question, how does the individual relate to truth, to be answered by defining a philosophical life through the acts of Socrates in one of his works, *The Apology*. The connection between how a person can relate to truth and understanding what it means to live a philosophical life is demonstrated when a person is at the point of obtaining higher

knowledge and that knowledge would be considered the ultimate truth. "...if he does not seem to possess virtue, and yet says he does, I shall rebuke him for counting of more important things which by comparison are worthless." (93) The virtue that Plato refers to is the knowledge of the truth, which is inside of the individual. Plato, instead of using mind and body, uses the idea that there have been set ideas or forms of every piece of matter that exists.

Similarly, René Descartes places his own understanding on this by claiming that there is one definite and distinct truth and that is his infamous saying "I am, I exist" (Cottingham 17), which states that if the individual has the ability to think then they must exist. The relation between an individual and the truth is that there are clear and distinct ideas that are the truth because they are clear and distinct accusations of fact. This concept of thinking and actually existing is the underlying foundation of certainty. Therefore, truth and certainty parallel the same understating of real knowledge. As oppose to Plato, Descartes breaks this understanding down into two parts, mind and body that emphasizes on the idea of dualism. The concept is very similar to Plato. For example, the mind mentioned by Descartes is similar to Plato's idea of the world of forms, and alternately the body is similar to the actual world that humans are living in. The body would be the experiences that the senses may experience and the only truth or understanding would be based on what is seen, heard, or felt in the world in which an individual is living. However, the mind represents the world of ideas or forms that Plato explains. The mind is able to think of perfect forms or has the ability to think of something higher than what actually is observed in the observing world. This causes the question to arise, from where did such ideas come from, and Descartes explains this to declare or prove the existence from God.

All in all the question of how an individual relates to truth is proven because they are capable to think and to seek knowledge from the world. As Plato and Descartes explains in their philosophies about truth, more so certainty, and their organization through the concept of dualism. With the ability to

think, there is existence. Because of existence, there must be a higher knowledge or power. That was initially instilled within the minds and based from a world of forms or perfect ideas.

Work Cited

Allen, R. E, ed. The Dialogues of Plato: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Gorgias, Menexenus. Vol 1.

Binghamton: Vail-Ballou Press, 1984, 92-93. Print.

Descartes, René. *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies*. Ed.

John Cottingham. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Print.

"truth." Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. Merriam-Webster Online, 2009. Web. 19 Oct. 2009.