

Philosophical Paper

"Jalal Khawaldeh's Theory of the Philosophical Standard Test":

**Descartes' Meditations in an Isolated World
Devoid of Epistemic Accumulation**

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NourScene

2024

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This paper contributes to the literature by proposing a novel framework for exploring pure cognition and self-awareness through isolated epistemic experimentation. By placing Descartes' rationalist inquiries in a hypothetical, knowledge-free laboratory, it challenges traditional assumptions about accumulated knowledge and introduces a fresh perspective on the autonomy of thought. The "Jalal Y A Khawaldeh" Theory of the Philosophical Standard Test offers a unique approach to testing inherent cognitive capacities, advancing philosophical discussions on mind-body dualism, rationalism, and the limits of self-derived knowledge

Abstract

Philosophers are granted the liberty to envision René Descartes presenting his questions and meditations in a controlled philosophical environment devoid of human and intellectual epistemic accumulation. In this conceptual experiment, Descartes is assumed to operate from a purely abstract mind, uninhabited by any knowledge of existence, regardless of its simplicity. Additionally, the controlled environment mandates that no interpretation, explanation, or validation of concepts or metaphysical terms is permitted until those ideas are substantiated independently.

This paper posits that "René Descartes" existed in a hypothetical setting approximately 5,000 years ago. Discovering his self-awareness between the ages of three and four, he perceives his existence in solitude, eventually hypothesizing that his parents might have abandoned or passed away, leaving him within the natural surroundings of Earth, with various living and non-living entities.

In this isolated setting, the paper discusses essential elements of Descartes' meditations, particularly existence and the concept of a complete deity, while deliberately circumventing any of Descartes' discussions that involve metaphysical constructs such as time or soul. The purpose is to explore whether human cognition can engage in reflection and contemplation without reverting to humanity's epistemic repository or ambiguous terms, possibly demonstrating the mind's intrinsic capacity to comprehend and recognize phenomena potentially deemed metaphysical, thereby deducing their essence, purpose, and mode of operation.

Key words: Epistemology, Metaphysics, Philosophy of Mind, Rationalism vs. Empiricism, Cognitive Science, Philosophical Psychology, History of Philosophy, Dualism, Self-Awareness, Phenomenology, Knowledge Accumulation, Pure Cognition, Metaphysical Theories, Ontology, Hermeneutics, Philosophical Methodology, Existentialism, Moral Psychology, Philosophical Standard Tests, Isolation Thought Experiments,

Introduction:

To begin, one could assert that "everything that exists does so because of awareness and perception—processes that reside in a physically existing entity, the mind" (Descartes, 1641). Furthermore, the primary purpose of the mind is to serve as a repository of accumulated knowledge, both external—from sources like books—and internal, through thought generation based on sensory perception, the storage of these perceptions, and abstract, progressive thinking. Such thinking employs the juxtaposition or alignment of two or more ideas to produce new insights or further intellectual developments.

This study postulates that, while human minds may resemble one another in size, weight, and composition, they differentiate naturally, genetically, or otherwise, and that these variations occur independently of sensory perception or external factors. The nature of one's cognitive processes varies from person to person. By placing a given mind in "Jalal's Philosophical Standard Laboratory"—a hypothetical setting stripped of external influences or epistemic accumulation—we assess its manner of thinking based on its inherent reasoning abilities and previously formed ideas. Epistemic accumulation here refers to the cumulative body of knowledge that humans gain over time, either through personal experience, education, or inherited cultural knowledge. Removing this accumulated knowledge allows the study to isolate unique intellectual capabilities and propose new theories or insights that emerge solely from pure cognition—a term denoting thought processes unconditioned by prior learning or external context.

Dualism becomes a focal point in this study, as it explores Descartes' separation of mind and body, two distinct substances that operate independently, yet coexist. In this context, self-awareness, the ability to recognize oneself as a distinct, thinking entity, is pivotal to the isolated mind's understanding of itself. In isolation thought experiments like this, Descartes' mind is analyzed within an environment devoid of pre-existing knowledge to test the core principles of independent reasoning, focusing on the mind's internal dialogue without sensory interactions or cultural knowledge.

“Descartes' Meditations on First Philosophy” (1641) serves as a foundation for this exploration. Published initially in Latin in 1641 and translated into French in 1647 as “Meditations Metaphysiques”, this seminal philosophical work has continued to shape philosophical discourse even after Descartes' passing. It has spurred extensive debates, as seen in Kant's “Critique of Pure Reason” (Kant, 1781), Chomsky's “Cartesian Linguistics” (Chomsky, 1966), Bachelard's epistemological critiques, Piaget's constructivism, and Husserl's phenomenology, among others. Consequently, this research seeks significant philosophical value in introducing Descartes' mind and method into the proposed philosophical standard laboratory, where foundational ideas such as the existence of the self, body, and God can be examined without the influence of historical or cultural epistemic layers.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Isolated Thought Experiment

In this isolated thought experiment, certain metaphysical concepts, such as time and the soul, are intentionally excluded. The aim is to create a setting where Descartes' mind operates without reliance on inherited cultural or philosophical constructs, allowing the

examination of cognition in its most fundamental state. By removing external sources of knowledge or assumptions about metaphysical ideas, the experiment isolates Descartes' innate reasoning capacity and sensory perceptions, creating a "blank slate" upon which pure cognitive processes can unfold.

This exclusion is based on the assumption that metaphysical constructs, like the soul or the nature of time, inherently rely on accumulated knowledge and are not intuitively derived from raw perception or basic cognitive function. For instance, while Descartes later contemplates the existence of the soul and temporal continuity in his meditations, such ideas are not presumed here, as they would introduce complex, culturally inherited concepts that could influence the purity of reasoning tested within this hypothetical setting.

This controlled environment provides a stringent framework for exploring the potential of pure thought. It enables the study to focus on self-awareness, cognition, and basic logical reasoning without interference from previously established knowledge or metaphysical speculation. In doing so, it emphasizes the mind's autonomous capacity to reach fundamental truths solely through internal reflection and sensory input, shedding light on the foundational aspects of knowledge and self without the influence of epistemic accumulation.

Descartes' Isolated World Devoid of Epistemic Accumulation

This research presumes that René Descartes finds himself isolated, around 5,000 years ago, within a familiar earthly environment, as a young child approximately 3-4 years old. In this scenario, he grows up in complete seclusion, devoid of access to any repository of human epistemic accumulation. What follows in his cognitive development could be described in stages:

Initially, Descartes begins by perceiving the objects around him, adapting them to serve his basic instincts and needs—such as food, water, shelter, and sleep. Notably, he lacks a formal language, a significant aspect in understanding the development of thought processes. Based on current understandings of the human mind, however, we can assume an internal dialogue within Descartes' mind, where he engages in self-dialogue in a language only he comprehends. This internal dialogue is confined to his awareness alone, as he has no capacity to record his observations or share them with others—even with animals that might pass by.

A considerable period might elapse before Descartes' mind begins to inquire about existence itself. Initially, his focus remains on the components of existence that he can perceive with his senses. At some point, he may question his own existence, though his contemplation of existence as a whole might arise later.

In alignment with his first meditation, Descartes encounters a dilemma: how can he dismiss the reliability of sensory perceptions and reject sensory cognition itself as a source of knowledge when he has no foundational knowledge to reference? How can he distrust his senses, given the notion that "it is wise not to trust one who has deceived us even once" (Descartes, 1641)?

Should he overcome this predicament, he could indeed transcend it all. As we know from this research perspective, Descartes at this stage possesses only sensory perception, awareness, and thought. Hypothetically, he might concede to the necessity of using his senses, thereby suspending the criterion of sensory skepticism as essential for survival. This notion parallels the idea that necessity permits exceptions (Ricœur, 1984).

Subsequently, Descartes might begin to affirm his existence due to his doubts about it. He may have had a dream the previous night, though he would not understand its significance. He ponders the existence of two parallel realities. At this moment, he is in a state of doubt and thought, striving to affirm his existence—"I think, therefore I am" (Descartes, 1641). This self-reflection might further stimulate an awareness of contradiction, a concept of considerable philosophical significance. If Descartes were to contemplate this contradiction, he might conclude, "It is contradictory to believe that one who thinks does not exist while thinking" (Bachelard, 1938).

At this point, he realizes that the objects around him do not engage in thought as he does—or at all. He distinguishes between three types of entities: living organisms (plants and animals), inanimate objects, and another form that he could not readily comprehend, such as the components of his environment—oxygen, carbon dioxide, atmospheric pressure, water composition, and gases. Additionally, he would struggle to distinguish between metals he might observe without understanding their specific purpose or reason for existence.

Descartes would begin by developing self-awareness, then gradually constructing a self-sustained body of knowledge from scratch. Initially, he would need to comprehend the nature of his assured existence. He might perceive himself as a body, possessing specific sensations, desires, and emotions. Although sensory experiences could be doubted as mere illusions, the awareness of sensations themselves is undeniable; this awareness is real and cannot be mere illusion (Descartes, 1641). From this, Descartes could deduce that bodily awareness originates in thought, as sensations, desires, and emotions are elements understood through intellect. This reasoning might lead him to conclude that the self exists as a "thinking thing" (Bachelard, 1938).

Observing phenomena like a burning object, such as a leaf transforming into ash, Descartes would reflect on the nature of his awareness, intellect, and body. This might evoke the concept of extension: he would ponder, "Do I possess self-awareness because I have an extended body, with dimensions occupying space?" He might answer negatively, reasoning that perceiving an extended thing, including the human body, does not rely on senses but on thought alone. The burning leaf, though altered in shape, texture, and color, continues to exist in thought as an extended entity. Thus, neither shape, color, nor texture can uphold the identity of a thing in thought; only extension can. He may conclude that extension is perceived through thought alone, not through sensory attributes such as color or texture. Accordingly, thought discerns the essence of matter based on the concept of extension, not the sensory impressions it receives (Ricoeur, 1984).

Due to his lack of epistemic accumulation, Descartes would likely overlook mathematical and geometrical truths or engage with them in rudimentary terms. For instance, he might recognize that he requires three apples but has gathered only two, prompting him to conclude, "three minus two is one," indicating a need for one additional apple. However, he would not advance to the contemplation of deceptive forces, such as the "evil demon" hypothesis—an idea suggesting that some malevolent power might deceive him into believing in falsehoods. Nor would he entertain the notion that "nothing previously believed to be true could escape doubt for significant reasons," an idea that might arise in more advanced stages of thought (Descartes, 1641).

Regardless of whether Descartes found himself in lush greenery or a barren desert, he would be captivated by the sun, moon, planets, and stars. Attempting to understand them, he might initially theorize that

all celestial bodies revolve around the Earth, assuming Earth as the universe's center. This rudimentary view could emerge from observing the harmonious design of the heavenly bodies, arranged in a way that appears logically consistent to his limited understanding.

During this period, from approximately age three until around 18 to 21, Descartes' accumulated knowledge would be limited to his earlier realizations, with no capacity for significant expansion. The most profound insight he might attain, according to his third meditation, would be a spark of understanding enabling him to contemplate existence in a broader sense: Where did he come from, and where is he going? He might question why he, specifically as a rational being, exists while other things and creatures around him do not share this rationality. This could lead him to consider that he, like other animals, may have originated from a blind chance, with a fortunate mutation granting him the ability to think—or, conversely, to a notion of a force beyond his perception that created him and everything else around him. This force might still be present, watching over and caring for him, or it might have completed its work long ago and departed (Descartes, 1641).

Descartes would inevitably return to doubt, as anticipated by his cognitive tendencies. He might begin to suspect that some other entity placed him in this predicament—the dilemma of existence. He would wonder, “If I can doubt the existence of an entity greater than myself that brought me into this world, and continue in this doubt even after proving my thinking self, then I must assume that the self obtains its certainty through some form of guidance, an innate light from within, that does not originate in the external world” (Chomsky, 1966).

Upon reaching this stage of supposing an internal guide or innate light, Descartes would—true to his method—return to question this very “innate light” or insight that he has received. His doubt would focus

on this internal light itself, as it has only confirmed truths received from the external world. Thus, the “innate light” could be merely a supportive factor, reliant on external reality, rather than an independent source of certainty. Consequently, it is subject to the same level of doubt; its role would be passive, not active, and reactive rather than initiatory. Descartes would reflect, “The innate light is merely a confirmation of the self’s grasp of worldly truths based on the clarity and distinctness of our ideas of it.” This clarity, in turn, remains vulnerable to doubt as it could ultimately prove to be a form of deception.

Following this reasoning, in line with Descartes' approach and his intellectual resilience in confronting the insufficiency of the initial certainty—that is, the existence of the self—Descartes would likely embark on an advanced philosophical journey. This inquiry mirrors the essence of Socrates' apology, considered by many to be “the most beautiful work of philosophy.” When the oracle at Delphi was asked if anyone was wiser than Socrates, it responded in the negative. Socrates humbly admitted that “I am only wiser because I know that I know nothing, while others do not even recognize this lack; they believe they know something” (Plato, *Apology*). Thus, in essence: “I know that I almost know nothing.”

Through this lens, Descartes—without any knowledge of Socrates' apology, yet with a comparable intellectual rigor—would doubt his self-assurance, suspecting that his own consciousness could be deceived. Descartes might then initiate a search for a second foundation of certainty, one capable of establishing an unshakable basis for understanding the world. In examining his ideas with clarity and distinction, he may contemplate a hidden entity or a complete deity. However, he would reject the notion of an innate light, as he remains skeptical of it; it offers no certainty apart from the sensory

knowledge he has accumulated on his own. Consequently, Descartes might conclude that the concept of God could be the sole idea capable of releasing him from his doubts, as without this concept, he would be unable to attain certainty in anything or dispel deceptive notions (Descartes, 1641).

In this hypothetical reflection, Descartes might tell himself, “I must investigate whether a God exists whenever the opportunity arises; if I discover such a God, I must also consider whether this God could be a deceiver.” For the first time, he might entertain the notion of another force: the deceiving demon. In this moment, he could ponder that if God were a deceiver, He would not be the true God but rather a malevolent demon. Without these two certainties—namely, the existence of a benevolent God and His lack of deceit—Descartes could be certain of nothing, except his own existence as a thinking entity (Chomsky, 1966).

In a scenario closely resembling the Descartes we know, his reasoning would naturally lead him to affirm the existence of a perfect God as the entity that created him and everything around him, one that continuously watches over and cares for him. This understanding would simplify Descartes’ comprehension of his place in the world and his surrounding environment. According to this research, the ability to grasp the mechanisms of things within ourselves and in the world—even if the understanding is flawed or doubtful—often empowers us to ascend to a higher level of thought and awareness. However, this requires that whenever we realize that our initial perception of a mechanism does not consistently operate in all times and places, we must pause, reflect, and attempt to correct our understanding of that mechanism. This reflection allows us to maintain a more elevated level of thinking.

It is essential to note that the mind's propensity to deceive itself is significant, as it is naturally inclined to assure itself of correctness, consistent with Descartes' fourth meditation. He stubbornly persists in his conviction, even though he might be mistaken (Descartes, 1641).

Here, it is essential to observe that Descartes conducted his meditations independently of metaphysical concepts—he did not contemplate the soul, spirit, or time, nor did such ideas occur to him. He relied on two fundamental components: sensory perception and thought, with no external source of knowledge. At some point, Descartes might feel the need to clarify that a perfect God is not merely a mental construct but possesses actual existence. This would drive him to develop rational evidence and logical arguments to affirm the reality of a perfect deity. For Descartes, this necessitates finding intellectual support for insights he arrives at through inner intuition and vision. This aligns with the path of intuition, later fortified by reason and presented as arguments. This internal vision reflects the approach Descartes used to conceive of God: he did not arrive at this notion solely through reasoning, but rather through an intuitive internal insight, perceiving God not initially as a deity but as a force that created him. He might then tell himself, “If a true, complete force exists (the true perfect deity), it must be proven through logical arguments and evidence” (Descartes, 1641).

In these reflections, Descartes would notice for the first time two types of existence: objective existence and actual, or concrete, existence. He might conclude that "actual existence is the existence of sensory objects present before him in the world, whereas the other type of existence is that which is defined by attributes of perfection." He might reason internally, in a dialogue with his own mind: “I can imagine a flying cat, even though it does not exist, and I can think of the two apples before me and recognize their existence. I can also contemplate

a perfect God” (Ricœur, 1984). He would then proceed, “Among these thoughts, I see that the idea of a flying cat exists only in my mind without actual presence, while the two apples are before me, thus possessing actual existence besides their presence in my mind. Although God is not physically before me, His existence is objective, for that which embodies attributes of perfection has a more objective reality than things that exist physically, as they are, ultimately, imperfect and created. The idea of the Creator is inherently more objective than the idea of the created, even if this Creator is not tangibly present before the senses, as the existence of an eternal, infinite, all-knowing, all-powerful, and creator of everything beyond itself possesses a reality more profound than these finite elements.”

Based on his sensory perceptions and reasoning, Descartes would infer that "the Creator is more real than the created, the perfect more real than the imperfect, the omniscient more real than the limited in knowledge, and the infinite more real than the finite." He would further contemplate that all these attributes associated with the idea of God must have a reason for their existence. Given his own awareness of his limitations, he would realize that he could not be the source of this idea of perfection. These attributes, therefore, must originate from a sufficient and necessary cause—God Himself, who possesses actual existence. Since one attribute of perfection is existence, if the idea of perfection did not refer to a being that truly exists, it would be an incomplete notion, which would be a contradiction. Thus, a perfect being must exist because, if it lacked existence, it would not be truly perfect and would remain a mere concept in the mind (Bachelard, 1938).

Descartes establishes the existence of God by reflecting on his own existence. He reasons that he is not the cause of his own being; therefore, there must be a force or a “creator being” responsible for

his existence. He might then question himself, “Where does my existence originate? Could it be from myself, or perhaps from some source less perfect than God?” Realizing that an imperfect or deficient cause cannot be the reason for his existence, he concludes that the perfect God must be the source of his existence. Since he himself exists, so too must God exist (Descartes, 1641).

Hypothetically, Descartes might consider another explanation for his existence—that he was somehow placed in this frightening, isolated environment by some lesser cause, perhaps merely as a physical entity. However, he sees himself as a thinking being, distinct from the physical body. In this moment of reflection, Descartes’ thoughts make a 180-degree shift. He realizes that while parents might be responsible for his physical form, they could not account for the mind or soul. This shift illustrates the divide between his actual philosophical meditations and this hypothetical scenario in the philosophical laboratory. Descartes, in his genuine meditations, attributes his distinct existence from his parents to a metaphysical cause—the soul or spirit. He has previously validated the existence of the self as a thinking entity composed of mental faculties and physical neural structures rather than a purely metaphysical self.

Ideally, he would continue examining his independent existence, distinct from his parents, based on his unique thought processes, intrinsic guidance, and sensory abilities, rather than simply acknowledging the existence of sensory perception. The philosophical standard test in this isolated laboratory would bypass Descartes’ references to the soul or spirit, deeming them confused data. Instead, the test would continue analyzing Descartes’ reasoning in a setting devoid of epistemic accumulation and free from any metaphysical elements. Even if he could imagine fantastical concepts, such as a flying cat, he would ultimately confront the question of whether his

existence could be attributed to something more complete than his parents but less complete than God, like nature itself. Of course, Descartes would dismiss this idea, reasoning that anything less perfect than God would lack the capacity to create from nothing.

Continuing his line of reasoning, Descartes would arrive at the conclusion that, as a thinking being, he exists, but he has not always existed; his existence is finite, coming into being after non-existence. The commencement of something implies that it emerged from nothing—that it was created. To create something from nothing demands a power beyond mere understanding of things. Since created beings, particularly humans, possess only the ability to comprehend and perceive things, without the capacity to bring them into existence from nothing, a created being cannot be the cause of its own existence. Therefore, the cause of existence must be something far more potent than the created. If a being could create itself from nothing, it would also have to be capable of achieving perfection. However, as a created entity, it is inherently limited and imperfect, thus it cannot be the cause of its own existence. Consequently, only the perfect God can be the reason for existence (Bachelard, 1938).

In his third meditation and the third argument for the existence of a perfect God, Descartes presents an idea he formulates as follows: "Existence entails passing through moments of time, and this continuity implies an ability to make what exists in one moment endure across all moments of time." Since humans cannot create anything that endures indefinitely, they cannot be the cause of their continued existence over time. Therefore, a sustaining power must maintain things in existence across time—a power that humans lack. This concept implies that God is this sustaining force, enabling his

existence and that of all things to persist continuously through time (Descartes, 1641).

However, in this isolated, non-metaphysical laboratory scenario, Descartes knows nothing about time, has not contemplated it, and the concept never arises. Even if we hypothetically granted him an understanding of time, for this paper's integrity, he would need to prove the existence of time himself. Yet in real life, Descartes bypassed this proof, taking time as a given.

Nevertheless, to continue his meditation, we must temporarily “borrow” Descartes from his isolated world and return him to a more realistic context. Here, the argument that “something existing in one moment endures across all moments” serves not only as evidence for the existence of a perfect God, according to Descartes, but also as proof of continual creation and divine providence. Descartes maintained that God did not create humanity and the world in a singular moment, only to cease action afterward; instead, he believed in continuous creation and divine care.

Descartes’s position between the isolated hypothetical and the real world makes discussing his third argument easier. All previous experiences in the isolated world without epistemic accumulation have contributed significantly to his awareness and his personal epistemic development, as shaped by his pure intellect and sensory perception. He concludes that logically, what is conceivable and logically acceptable can exist in reality. In other words, if he can conceive of concept A containing concept B, then it follows that entity A entails entity B. The logical relationship, perceived clearly and distinctly in thought, can exist in reality outside the mind.

This ontological argument allows him to infer God’s existence from the concept of a perfect being. Descartes asserts that he has “a clear and

distinct idea of a perfect being, which cannot lack any attribute, including existence.” It would be contradictory to conceive of a perfect being without conceiving of its existence, as a non-existent perfect being represents a contradiction and a deficiency in the very notion of perfection. Thus, existence is a necessary component of the concept of God, meaning that God exists (Descartes, 1641; Bachelard, 1938).

Returning to the hypothetical laboratory, Descartes would not use the concept of time as understood today but would instead draw upon his mental observations of recurring phenomena, much like the Babylonians. For instance, the rising and setting of the sun, the alternation of darkness and moonlight, and the appearance and disappearance of stars and planets would suggest a form of continuity in existence, confirming the persistence he had already established. This line of thought would bring him back to his third proof, where he would arrive at similar conclusions.

In this isolated world, Descartes could also explore the nature of right and wrong and the role of will, though not as philosophical concepts. Right, wrong, and will are metaphysical constructs. Instead, he would comprehend them through the lens of trial and error in an environment devoid of human epistemic accumulation. He might come to realize when and how he errs and how to avoid repeating mistakes by engaging in careful thought and focus. Descartes would reason that “the sources of error lie in the discrepancy between two elements—between will and perception. Truth exists when they align, and error arises from their mismatch. We can recognize our mistakes by distinguishing judgments confined to the limits of perception from those that overreach. Judgments that exceed perceptual boundaries result in error. Following the path of truth requires exercising free will

in making judgments within the scope that perception dictates” (Descartes, 1641; Chomsky, 1966).

In this isolated context, Descartes would also reflect on material objects, pondering whether things in his mind truly exist outside himself. He might state, “The first thing I find is the idea of extension, which denotes the dimensions of material objects in terms of length, breadth, and depth. I also possess many ideas about things that cannot simply be regarded as nonexistence.” Imagining, for example, the drawing of a circle resembling the sun, he would observe, “This drawing, as I envision it, has a specific nature or form, and these properties are not of my own making. Therefore, all the ideas in my mind that are clear and distinct are not related to my will. This notion points to something that exists, connecting to the idea of a Creator God. When I envision God as an absolutely perfect existence, I recognize that this idea serves as a proof and a logical argument for the existence of a perfect God. His existence in my mind differs from other things, as God’s existence is inseparable from His essence, unlike other things. I cannot conceive of God’s existence without conceiving of Him as absolutely perfect, for the importance of God’s existence lies in His role as the guarantor of my knowledge, my existence, and the existence of other things. The reality of everything depends entirely on the existence of the perfect God” (Descartes, 1641).

Thus, Descartes does not provide a logical or sensory-based proof of the existence of things in the surrounding world; instead, he offers the perfect God as the guarantor of this existence and the means by which he validates it—namely, through the senses (Bachelard, 1938; Ricœur, 1984)

This research paper, committed to examining Descartes’ meditations within an isolated setting devoid of epistemic accumulation, refrains from exploring any unproven metaphysical concepts, particularly

those discussed in his sixth meditation. In this meditation, Descartes seeks to distinguish between acts of perception and acts of imagination, probing the differences between them. He also investigates the relationship between the soul (distinct from the thinking self) and the body, questioning whether the soul resides within the body as a unified whole, yet remains distinct from it. He argues that evidence for the existence of things does not attain the same level of certainty as the evidence that reveals the perfect God and the soul. In contrast, this research contends that there is no physical entity called the "soul" as described by Descartes. Instead, there exists a "thinking self," grounded in the physical structures of the brain, brainstem, cerebellum, neurons, and other physical components, all of which collectively perform thinking, store information, and create memories. According to cognitive psychology, human and animal emotions do not originate from the metaphysical entity once referred to as the soul. Rather, emotions are complex chemical processes involving neurons, glands, and brain cortex functions, affecting heart rate and other bodily functions. The so-called "soul" has no alternative repository within the human or animal body.

Conclusion: Descartes' mind and pure method of reasoning, without relying on accumulated human knowledge, allowed him to discern that "the human being is composed of two distinct and separate substances: a thinking substance, or mind, and an extended substance, or body." He concludes that one can think of the mind as independent of the body and can also think of the body as separate from the mind, as each substance is governed by its own laws, distinct from the other. This constitutes his dualistic theory of mind and body—substantialist dualism. In this isolated laboratory setting, Descartes was able to

establish that mind and body are separate but coexistent and that their coexistence is incidental rather than essential. Part of this theory holds that the body can exist without the mind, as observed in children, the mentally ill, and animals. However, the notion that the mind could exist independently of the body, as in states of sleep or after death when the body perishes and the soul endures, remains unproven. Therefore, this research acknowledges the mind's separability from the body only in cases like sleep, albeit to a reasonable degree within scientific limits.

We observe that Descartes does not fully substantiate the will in his meditations, particularly within the standard philosophical laboratory of this isolated world. Consequently, his theory that “the mind pervades the entire body because the mind is the source of the will that moves all parts of the body and the source of the sensations experienced throughout the body” remains unestablished philosophically. For instance, after Descartes, Spinoza proposed that “mind and body are one entity, based on the existence of a single substance bearing both the attributes of thought and extension” (Spinoza, 1677). According to Spinoza, mind and body are merely two modes of the same substance, where every bodily event corresponds to an equivalent mental event. Thus, every sensation in the body, such as hunger, is experienced by the mind as desire or a mental inclination toward food. Just as the body feels hunger, the mind feels the urge—a mental drive—to search for sustenance (Spinoza, *Ethics*, 1677)

Final Findings:

Upon analyzing *Descartes' Meditations in an Isolated World Devoid of Epistemic Accumulation*, we conclude the following:

1. **The Mind's Capacity for Self-Awareness:** The human mind demonstrates an ability to build independent self-awareness without relying on prior knowledge accumulation. This process is based on sensory perception and abstract thinking, enabling essential insights into existence and selfhood.
2. **The Concept of Dualism Between Mind and Body:** Descartes concluded that mind and body are two separate substances; the mind is capable of thought, while the body occupies space. Therefore, one can consider the mind independently of the body, and vice versa.
3. **Proving God's Existence Through the Concept of Perfection:** Using the principle of perfection, Descartes reasoned that a perfect God is responsible for creating existence and ensuring its continuity, as a perfect being must possess actual existence rather than merely a mental concept.
4. **The Mind's Limitations in the Absence of Accumulated Knowledge:** In the isolated world, Descartes realizes that his understanding is limited to his sensory experiences, constraining his grasp of metaphysical concepts, such as the soul, time, or the deceiving demon.
5. **Rejection of Unverified Metaphysics:** This research considers Descartes' thought process in the virtual laboratory as avoiding engagement with any unscientifically verified metaphysical concepts, including the soul, spirit, and time, focusing solely on facts that can be substantiated through pure sensory perception and rational contemplation.

Jalal Khawaldeh's Theory of the Philosophical Standard Test originates from the notion of a thought experiment conducted in an environment isolated from accumulated knowledge. This theory outlines the following principles:

1. **Assessing the Authenticity of Mental Thought:** An individual unexposed to prior accumulated knowledge can rely purely on innate intellect. In doing so, it becomes possible to gauge the extent of external influence on personal ideas and identify original thoughts generated independently of prior cultural and intellectual influences.
2. **Discovering the Natural Limits of Self-Knowledge:** This theory provides a framework for validating thoughts and self-awareness without relying on pre-existing knowledge. The test seeks to determine the minimum concepts that a self can reach independently, such as existence and perception.
3. **Defining the Mind as an Independent Substance:** The theory asserts the dualistic nature of mind and body, suggesting that the mind can operate independently in perception and thought, while the body relies on sensory interaction.
4. **Rational Inference as a Tool for Truth Verification:** The Philosophical Standard Test emphasizes that the mind can deduce certain truths, such as self-certainty and the notion of a perfect being (God), without referencing prior knowledge, establishing pure thought as a central tool for confirming fundamental concepts of existence.

Philosophical Discussion

"Descartes' Meditations in an Isolated World Devoid of Epistemic Accumulation"

"Jalal Khawaldeh's Theory of the Philosophical Standard Test"

1. Hume's Empiricism vs. Khawaldeh's Rationalism: David Hume's empiricism offers a major counterpoint to Khawaldeh's rationalist approach. In "**An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding**", Hume argues that knowledge originates from sensory experiences rather than from innate ideas or rational deduction. For Hume, ideas form through impressions—immediate sensory experiences—processed into complex ideas by the mind. This stands in direct contrast to Khawaldeh's theory, which isolates Descartes' mind from all sensory and cultural inputs to examine the nature of cognition and innate reasoning. Where Khawaldeh's framework seeks truths that emerge independently of external influence, Hume would argue that knowledge without experience is unattainable; he viewed the mind as a passive recipient that cannot produce substantive knowledge without sensory input. This underscores a fundamental divide between Hume's empiricism, which places sensory experience at the heart of knowledge, and Khawaldeh's rationalism, which assumes that certain foundational ideas, such as self-awareness and the concept of a perfect being, arise purely from cognitive processes.

2. Socrates and the Primacy of Self-Knowledge: Socrates, as expressed in the "**Apology**", valued self-awareness through introspective questioning and the acknowledgment of personal limitations. Khawaldeh's theory aligns with Socratic thought by focusing on removing pre-existing knowledge to explore inherent reasoning capacities. The methodical self-inquiry practiced in the isolation experiment echoes Socratic self-questioning, where

Descartes, like Socrates, explores knowledge independently of inherited beliefs.

3. Aristotle and Empiricism: Aristotle emphasized sensory experience as foundational to knowledge acquisition, sharply contrasting with the premise of epistemic isolation. In “**De Anima**”, he argued for an interdependence between soul and body, where thought is deeply intertwined with sensory perception. Descartes’ isolated experience emphasizes rationalist introspection over sensory-based learning, diverging from Aristotelian empiricism and leaning toward the rationalism that Descartes became known for.

4. Kant and the Boundaries of Knowledge: Immanuel Kant’s “**Critique of Pure Reason**” asserts that human understanding is shaped by innate categories of perception, such as time and space, imposing natural epistemic limitations. Descartes’ isolated experiment bypasses these categories, operating on the premise of pure cognition without sensory-derived frameworks. While Khawaldeh’s theory parallels Kant’s emphasis on “pure reason,” it diverges by attempting to completely disconnect the mind from even innate or sensory structuring—a notion Kant might find problematic, as perception fundamentally shapes cognition.

5. Spinoza’s Monism vs. Descartes’ Dualism: Baruch Spinoza proposed in “**Ethics**” that mind and body are two aspects of a single substance, countering Cartesian dualism. Spinoza’s view that body and mind operate in parallel as unified attributes of one substance contrasts with Descartes’ dualism, which separates thinking (*res cogitans*) from extension (*res extensa*). Khawaldeh’s isolated setting

emphasizes Descartes' dualism by focusing on a mind largely detached from sensory interaction, an approach Spinoza might critique for artificially separating elements he saw as inseparable aspects of reality.

6. Heidegger and Being-in-the-World: In "**Being and Time**", Martin Heidegger explores the concept of "being-in-the-world," suggesting that human existence gains meaning through interactions within a surrounding environment. Heidegger would likely challenge the concept of an isolated epistemic laboratory, seeing it as an abstraction that overlooks the intrinsic interconnectedness of being and world. Khawaldeh's theory, by isolating the mind, may neglect the relational aspects of existence that Heidegger views as essential for authentic understanding.

7. Modern Cognitive Science and Embodied Cognition: Contemporary cognitive science, especially embodied cognition theories, could critique the experiment's assumption that the mind operates independently of the body and external stimuli. Neuroscientists argue that cognition is significantly influenced by the body's interactions with the environment. While Khawaldeh's theory envisions a pure, isolated mind, cognitive science posits that removing sensory and motor interactions constrains understanding, as thought processes are inextricably tied to physical embodiment.

Reflection on “Jalal Khawaldeh’s Theory of the Philosophical Standard Test”:

Khawaldeh’s theory offers a unique philosophical exploration by isolating the mind in order to test its pure reasoning capacities. This idea, while hypothetical, provides a thought experiment that aligns with Descartes’ original meditations and raises questions about the foundations of knowledge. By negating epistemic accumulation, it probes the extent of self-derived insights and the potential limits of unconditioned cognition. This framework aligns closely with Cartesian doubt and rationalist traditions while challenging empiricist and materialist perspectives by prioritizing the mind’s inherent capabilities.

This isolated laboratory experiment provides a lens for re-evaluating Descartes’ dualistic claims, affirming the mind’s independence while highlighting the limits imposed by complete sensory isolation. Nonetheless, philosophers like Kant, Spinoza, and Heidegger would remind us of the complexities involved in separating cognition from embodiment and the social context, hinting that absolute epistemic isolation might oversimplify the richness of human experience and knowledge formation.

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