

Doubt is the beginning of wisdom

1. Introduction:

2. How Doubt Hinders Wisdom: A Counter Perspective

2.1 Adds to the complexity of reality

2.2 Keeps from arriving at conclusions

3. Manifestations of Doubt as the Beginning of Wisdom:

3.1 It is the thinking - being that exists.

Case in point: Descartes' cogito argument

3.2 Doubt is the first step towards knowledge

Case in point: Socrates' claim that the first thing to know is to know that I know nothing

3.3 Aids in exploring other choices

Case in point: Evaluating opportunity cost

3.4 Leads to better understanding

Case in point: Development of science

3.5 Breeds rationality and stimulates intellectual growth

Case in point: Dark Ages giving way to Enlightenment

3.6 A check on authoritarian tendencies

Case in point: Bangladesh student movement 2024

3.7 Assists in avoiding hasty decisions

Case in point: Prevented nuclear contest in Cold War era

3.8 Doubt leads to questioning stereotypes and status quo

Case in point: The waves of feminism

3.9 Helps in changing opinions as new knowledge emerges
Case in point: Ludwig Wittgenstein shifting his stance.

3.10 Holistic considerations make for sustainable policies

Case in point: Rachel Carson's 'The Silent Spring' and doubt translating into research on environment

4. Conclusion

"I doubt, therefore I think,
therefore I am." (Rene Descartes)

Waking up as the only human on distant island, the first thing a human has is questions. It is the why, how and when which captures their uncertainty and consequently breeding doubt. Likewise, the progression of humanity on earth, be it philosophical, political, scientific, legal or social, has been marked with complexities. Having found themselves on earth with nothing but questions and doubts, humans have been able to navigate their way by uncovering many of the forces at play in the universe. Beginning with doubt, and using reason as a tool, humans gained knowledge about themselves and universe, made huge strides in sciences and built intellectual capacity. In addition, they have been able to ground decision-making in reality, avoid rash decisions and achieve holistic understanding of myriad concepts. Despite the view that doubt leads to complexity and delays, it is the force of doubt that opened the avenues of wisdom, rationality, knowledge, and scientific progress for the humanity at large.