

# CAN GOHUM DOUBT

## EVERYTHING?

—Usage of Doubts—

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**(p.2) GOHUM APPEARS**

Gohum came to a town.

He built a hut on the outskirts of the town,  
and put up a signboard, on which we can read:

“GOHUM THE EXPERT OF DOUBTING

I can doubt everything that you think it is without doubt. Try  
to solve my doubt! 1000 tael will be yours if you succeeded.  
But you must pay 10 tael when blocked in answering.”

**(p.3)**

People of the town thought:

“It is natural to doubt mysterious or improbable things. But it is strange  
to say that he can doubt anything that is without doubt, isn't it?”

Thus many visited Gohum's hut to discuss with him, but all lost the  
game.

A lot of 10 tael gold coins were gathered on Gohum's desk.

**(p.4) DOUBT ABOUT THE PRESENT**

Thus no adults would visit Gohum any longer.

And, Gohum began to invite children and teach them to doubt.

“Hey you! Look at this! What do you think it is?”

“It is a chestnut tree. I know it, for I have seen it in a picture book on  
trees.”

“Is it actually? Why can you say that the book is correct? And why can  
you say that this thing is the same tree as you saw in the book?”

“Hum. Because ....”

“OK, boys and girls! Why can you say that here is a tree, or even that  
here is really something?”

“Of course here is! We are seeing it with our eyes and touching it with  
our hands.”

“No, it is not of course, nor certain. I wonder if you have only a feeling of  
seeing and touching it but actually there is nothing here. I suspect that you  
have been deceived to think that there are many things, but that actually  
there is no tree, nor anything. Yes, everything in this world may not be  
real.”

“Eh! you say so!”

Children turned interesting in Gohum's challenge and began asking the question to the people in the town. So all have been embarrassed.

#### **(p.6) GOHUM CHALLENGES YOU THE READERS**

Gohum is now asking you something,too.

“What are you doing now? You may answer that you are reading the book, “*Can Gohum Doubt Everything?*” But really? Is this actually a book? I wonder if here is truly a book. You might be only thinking that you are now reading the book. And in reality all might be nothing like a dream. Why can you say that it is not like a dream? ”

How would you answer him?

#### **(p.8) SORTES APPEARS**

Well, one day an old man came to meet Gohum.

“Hello, Gohum! I am Sortes. I have heard that you have been letting the children doubt everything and suspect that their world might really be a world of nothing or that they might not be reading this book now. Haven't you been doing thus? ”

“Truly yes. They are really doubtful that here is a chestnut tree and that here is a book, aren't they?”

“You thinks quite well, but seeing that your aim is only people's embarrassment, you seem not to know the usage of doubts yet.

“Do I not know the usage of doubts? Would you mean that you know better than I?”

“Absolutely not. I only know that I don't know things, when actually I don't know them. But I think I can solve your questions.”

“OK, try it! But if you meet a block, you must pay 10 talel. Do you agree?”

“Yes,yes, I agree.”

#### **(p.10) NAMES OF THINGS**

“Now, let's start, Gohum! Well, boys and girls, the readers of this book! This is certainly the book of which title is ‘Can Gohum Doubt Everything?’. You think so, and so do I. Everyman certainly thinks so.”

“Wait, Sortes! You don't understand anything. What you have stated is just what I doubt. So you must show me the reason why you can state thus.”

“It is you who don’t understand anything. What do you understand by ‘a book’? Aren’t you understand by ‘a book’ something which are papers bound together like this and on which papers are written something?”

“But why can you say that a book is a thing which are papers bound together like this and on which papers are written something?”

“Because we by ourselves have decided together to call such a thing ‘a book’, distinguishing it from other things. It is based on this decision that it is correct to call this ‘a book’. ”

“Have you said that all we have decided together.....?”

“Yes. therefore, if every one agrees that this is a book, then we can determine that this is a book and it is certain that this is a book.”

#### **(p.12) THAT THERE IS A THING**

“Ah....Hum....But Gohum, you have not answered the question: ‘Is it true that here is actually a book?’ I mean, even if we see it, touch it, and read it, it may be only a feeling of seeing, touching and reading, and in reality there is not a book.”

“You are actually seeing, touching, turning over, and reading the book, aren’t you? The situation you are now in is what we describe as ‘there is a book’. If you insist on that it might not be the situation that is appropriately described as ‘there is a book’, then please explain what sort of situation you understand to which the expression ‘there is a book’ is suitable!”

“I have no idea for it.”

“No idea? you are right. That is, it is difficult for you to doubt that there is a book, when you are just reading the book. If you suspected that there is not, then you would become not to understand what is the situation for which ‘there is a book’ is appropriate. Gohum, even you can’t rightly doubt this. Now, can you still recommend readers to doubt this?”

“.....”

#### **(p.15) THAT I AM HERE IS BEYOND DOUBT**

“By the way Gohum, don’t you doubt that you really are here?”

“What? You have said, ‘Don’t I doubt if I am here’, haven’t you? All right! Now I try to doubt it. Am I here actually? Probably I am deceived in thinking that I am here. Wait! Wait! If I am not here, then who in the world am I, who is doubting that I am? Aha! Thus this doubt cannot be consistent.”

“Well, well, you have done it very well. Now you would agree that you cannot suspect that you are not actually here. For if you doubt that you are here, the doubt itself is the evidence of your presence. Thus, Gohum, we have found out at least one thing that you cannot doubt among things that people think it is without doubt.”

“Hu...um”

Gohum becomes silent.

“OK, let’s finish the today’s talk! Gohum, consider the usage of doubts! Doubt in order to know that you don’t know things when actually you don’t know them! Doubt yourself, who finds joy only in making embarrassment in people!”

Thus said Sortes and left there.

#### **(p.17) DOUBT ABOUT THE PAST**

The next morning, however, Gohum began to make another doubt again. He doubted thus:

“People believe that this world have been continuing since long time ago, but it is very much doubtful. This world might have started at the moment only five minutes before the moment of my birth. There is no evidence that denies this suspect. All right, I will insist on: ‘This world has started at the moment only five minutes before the moment of my birth.’ Is anyone able to answer me and show me that the world had been since long long time ago?”

Oh it is a drastic doubt, isn’t it! How can we make him certain that the world has been since long long time ago; that it had been for long long time before the moment of grandfather’s grandfather’s birth?

OK. Let’s to ask scholars to help who are researching things of the past.

#### **(p.18) NO EVIDENCE IS USEFUL**

An archaeologist came.

“Mr.Gohum, this is a fossil, which is an evidence that such and such animal was on the earth in great antiquity.”

“No, it cannot be an evidence, for I think it has appeared when the world had appeared five minutes before my birth.”

A professor of history came.

“Mr.Gohum, this is an old document which people made in ancient time. We can get much information from it about them and their life. There are many other evidences besides this document.”

“No,no! I insist on that those things appeared all at once five minutes before my birth.”

Hu...m. We see that the evidences are useless for him. Now, let's call Gohum's mother! She must remember the things before Gohum's birth.

### **(p.20) MEMORY CANNOT PERSUADE GOHUM**

“Hello, I am Gohum's mother. What? Oh no! Is it true that Gohum is insisting such a thing? OK, OK. I think I can persuade him, for I am his mother.”

“Listen to me, Gohum! I am your mother, who bore you. I have been living for much longer time than you. I remember what happened five minutes before your birth. and I can state that at that moment this world had been for long long time already.”

“No, you can't persuade me with such memory. Your memory is useless in this context. For I can think that you, as well as others, suddenly began to live with such memory 5 minutes before my birth.”

Now we are at alas in persuading Gohum. Moreover, if things that we have been thinking to be an evidence for world's having been for long long time, then why can we judge that Gohum's thinking is not correct and state that the world has been for long long time?

Do you have any idea about this problem?

### **(p.22) TIME TRAVEL**

If I had a time machine, which is a machine to travel into the past and the future. Nobody has invented it yet.

But if I had a time machine, I could confirm the facts in the past or the future just like as the present facts.

Travelling along the stream of time into the past, to reach the period when dinosaurs lived, I could confirm the fact, saying:

“Look at that huge moving thing! That is a dinosaur.” or “Hay Gohum, look at the world! It is long long before your birth”

And, Travelling to the future, I could say: “Here we are in the world 1000 years after our time.” or “Oh, there is no world any longer.”

Wait, wait. Even if I had a time machine and even if I travelled by it to the past world, Gohum would say: “Why can we tell that this is the world of the past? Where is an evidence for your idea that we have travelled through the stream of time back to the past?”

### **(p.25) FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS**

Sortes visited Gohum again.

“Gohum, you are doubting, I’ve heard, that the world has been since long long time ago. aren’t you?”

“Yes. For there is no evidence for that and we cannot confirm such fact. You, Sortes, cannot but agree with me.”

“You are right, I think.”

“OK. You have lost the game. Please give me 10 tale!”

“Why? I’ve not said that you are appropriately doubting.”

“But, haven’t you agreed with me about that there is no evidence for it nor can we confirm it?”

“Is it appropriate to doubt everything if only there is no evidence for it nor we can confirm it?”

“Of course!”

“No, not of course, I would like to say. On the contrary, we human beings believe the most fundamental ideas without doubt, even though with no evidence nor confirmation, and live depending on such ideas”

### **(p.26) CAN WE SERIOUSLY DOUBT?**

“Gohum, it is much difficult to doubt seriously fundamental ideas in our life. Though you say that you are doubting, I think, you are believing that the world is of so old origin.”

“No, I am really doubting.”

“Really? But your reply to the archaeologist and historian is based on such sentence as:

5 minutes before your birth, the world and all the thing in it were appeared at one stroke, having the appearance as if the world were much and much old.”

“Yes. But are there any problems with it?”

“Yes, I think there is. For you cannot but use words which are based on the idea that the world is much and much old, when you describe the world’s appearance. You cannot but talk in such a way.”

### **(p.28) LANGUAGE IS BASED ON THE BELIEF**

“When you were born, Gohum, there were old men and women as well as children, weren’t there!”

“Certainly.”

“Then, what do you mean by ‘an old man’ and what by ‘a child’?”

“An old man is a man who has been living in the world for fairly long period already, and a child has been living for very short time yet.”

“But, according to your doubt, when you were born, both old men and children had been living for 5 minutes only.”

“??!!”

“Thus, Gohum, if you would like seriously to maintain your doubt, you must give up using such terms as ‘old men and women’ and ‘children’ or you must use them with some different meaning from ours. There are a lot of terms like these.”

“Hum.”

“If you doubt seriously, then you must begin thinking, not taking into account the idea that the world is very much old. So you have to make another language. Your language cannot be understood by others. And it becomes difficult for you to live among others.”

Gohum become silent, thinking deeply.

### **(p.30) THE STREAM OF TIME**

“By the way, Gohum, have you ever considered about the stream of time?”

“The stream of time? Yes, I have. For instance, though we confirm a present fact, we cannot confirm past facts, which have been passed by and aren’t present any longer, nor can we confirm future facts, which have not come and aren’t present yet.”

“Thus you considered the stream of the past, the present and the future. How long do you think, Gohum, the moment which are present to us continues to be? ”

“It doesn’t continue at all. It is only a moment and we cannot even say it is here.”

“You may think of such a thing: when I utter ‘wonderful’, I utter firstly ‘won’, and then ‘der’ and lastly ‘ful’. Now when I utter ‘der’, ‘won’ has diminished already and ‘ful’ hasn’t come yet.

If the present is the moment at which I am uttering ‘der’, then ‘won’ belongs to the past, and ‘ful’ to the future.”

“You are right, Sortes. And the moment at which I utter ‘der’ can be divided further into the past, the present, and the future. And this smaller present moment also can be divided.... At last we reach the conclusion that the present is only the point which divides the past and the future.”



**(p.32) THE PRESENT HAS THE WIDTH**

“That’s right. On the other hand, Gohum, though ‘won’, ‘der’ and ‘ful’ are uttered one after another and passed by, we human beings hear them altogether as one word, don’t we?”

“Yes, we do.”

“Then ‘won’, ‘der’ and ‘ful’ are at once present before us. Thus we grasp as the present the width of time in which these three vocal sounds are uttered and diminished one after another.”

“The width of time?”

“Yes. The present for us isn’t actually an instant, but has a certain width. We need actually such present, without which we cannot know that a thing is moving nor can do anything.”

**(p.35) OVER THE STREAM OF TIME**

“But, Sortes, if we grasp the present in such a way as you have said, we don’t think correctly of the fact, do we?”

“Yes, we do. That is, human beings are not only in the stream of time, but also a bit over the stream.”

“I see.”

“Now, have you ever think of the ‘eternity’? It does not mean the ‘infinitely long stream of time’, but ‘infinitely over the stream of time’. ”

“.....”

“We can grasp only a bit width of time as the present. By contrast for the eternity from the beginning of time to its end is the present.”

**(p.36-37) OUR PASSING LIFE AND THE ETERNITY**

“We were born, have grown up, shall become old and die. That is, we are passing beings. But it is from our point of view that we are passing; from the eternal point of view, we are not passing by but remaining un moved, no matter how small and short life is. I feel a sense of wonder every time I think of the eternity. It is really wonderful that our passing life is not passing by in view of the eternity, isn’t it?”

**(p.38) WHAT GOHUM HAS UNDERSTOOD**

Gohum replied,

“I don’t say that I have completely understood, but the one thing I think I understand is that I should seek for what and how I should doubt. To doubt is to inspect oneself and not for the sake of finding pleasure in embarrassing others.”

“That’s right, that’s right, Gohum! Now that you understand such point, your doubts are much important and worth considering so that my solutions may further be under your inspection.

“OK, I will consider further. Thank you so much, Gohum!”

Gohum offered Sortes the money he has got from people by now (it amounts over 1000 talel).

**(p.40)**

Sortes, however, replied,

“No, I am not deserved to get the money, for I only know that I don’t know, when I actually don’t know.”

And he left there, saying goodbye.