

# Cartesian Method of Doubt: A Critique

Author(s), SERAPHINE C.S KOMU

## Abstract:

Since ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, there have immersed a good number of thinkers who have been in trouble with epistemological problems. Pre-Socratic thinkers were mainly dealing with cosmological questions; the origin of the universe. The question of epistemology started by sophists who tried to speculate whether human mind can know things as they are or not.

The discussion went on through many centuries up to modern era, where Descartes is seen as the main character, who held a discussion in rationalistic school of thought. He wanted to boast himself of finding the truth from where the whole philosophy finds its ground. Moreover, in methodical doubt, he shows how rationality provides the answer of everything, such as the knowledge of God, triangle, trigonometry and many of the like with exception of sense

**IJOBAS**

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experience.

Descartes rejects all sources of knowledge, which grounds from sense experience, tradition and religion. But when we look carefully, we will discover that, though he doubted on them, still was sure that not all of them were false. That is why his doubt was termed methodical, meaning doubting for the sake of knowing, unlike skeptics who end up with despair.

In this treatment of methodical doubt, I aimed at exploring his knowledge, researching to whether his method is absolute in so far as knowledge is concerned. 'Cogito Ergo Sum' I think therefore I am, is his summation of his knowledge after weighing between man and God and other living creatures, which one can think critically? He came with his answer that in God we can't criticize his existence and thinking, for from him we are able to think. Man as an ideal thing, a thinking thing is aware of present, past and the future. Man cannot accept everything for granted, he doubts and after doubt he affirm or negate.



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About Author

**Author(s), DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
ST. AUGUSTINE UNIVERSITY OF TANZANIA**

**(Corresponding Author)** Email: seraphinekomu@gmail.com ,  
seraphinekomu@yahoo.com



## Introduction

Rene Descartes was a French philosopher, scientist as well as mathematician, known as father of modern philosophy. He wrote many books and among them is the Discourse on Method. In this book he wanted to show that he had discovered a method in which everyone if follows clearly, would be able to arrive to the true knowledge. His work was published together with an essay on optics, geometry and meteorology. Meteorology and Geometry deals mostly with scientific problems. Mathematics being the base of these two concepts, Descartes was able to lay the foundation of analytical geometry.

After passing to so many schools of thought, Descartes' would not be satisfied because there was no common ground for their knowledge. He then decided to provide a certain and universally accepted foundation for philosophy after the example of mathematics. During his lifetime, there was the doctrinal skepticism, which was spread by Montaigne and Charon through traditional philosophy and metaphysics.<sup>1</sup> For this reason he desired indubitable and unquestionable intellectual certainty about the nature of reality.

Through mathematics, Descartes could explain and show the certainty and clarity through the use of intuition and deduction. Intuition being a mathematical method, it is self-evident principle, for example the axioms of geometry. A straight line is the shortest distance between two points. The statement is self-evident in that; it proves itself to reason. In mathematical sciences certainty and clarity are not attained from tradition, authority or observation but through scientific method and rational application of laws.

By deduction he meant orderly logical reasoning or influence from self-evident proportion. Any valid logical conclusion should be derived from two premises. For example, major premise and minor premise, otherwise it will be invalid.

## 0.1 Objectives of the Study

### 0.1.1 Main objective

i) The major objective of the study is to explore the critique on the Cartesian Method of Doubt.

#### 0.1.1.1 Specific Objectives

- a) To explain the meaning of Cartesian method
- b) To Differentiate Cartesian Method of doubt from Skepticism
- c) To explore the Criterion of innate ideas
- d) To elucidate the problem of the bridge
- e) To discuss on the Critique from Descartes' opponents

<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. J. WALSH, A history of, 221

## 0.2 Methodology

This research is analytical by nature, where both qualitative and analytical methods have been implemented throughout the work. Findings invented from library have been critically discussed, compared and where there were similar ideas everything were clearly elucidated.

## 0.3 Limitations of the Study

Despite the successful research conducted, there were some difficulties the researchers faced while doing his work. Among them is finance. The area data obtained is geographically far which actually requires some funds to facilitate the activity. Researcher through his efforts and the efforts of his family was able to do his work. The other difficult is weather. The environment in terms of weather is so dry, so hot that sometimes bound researchers from doing their works properly and especially high temperature in library. A researcher had some interviews with some community members on the same issue, some them refused to give out ideas about the rationalism and this also is counted to be among the difficulties researcher faced. Moreover, the accessibility of books is among the difficulties the researcher faced where he decided to buy his own books for references.

## 1. THE CARTESIAN METHODS

### 1.1 Cartesian Method of Doubt

The background of Cartesian Method of doubt is from the first rule, that we should accept in our judgments nothing that is not clearly and distinctly understood that we can have no occasion to doubt it. By following that principal Descartes drew from the supplied arguments heaped up by the skeptics from antiquity till his own time. Why then did Descartes decide to doubt previous knowledge he acquired since childhood? Was there a necessity of doubting everything or only things seemed uncertain?

To explain the rationality of his universal doubt, Descartes gave an example of a basket full of apples, with the fear that some apples are rotten. He says: would you not first turn all apples out of the basket and look them over one by one then place them again in the basket and leave out the rotten one? With this, he wanted to show the importance of his methodical doubt. By doubting, he was certain that there are good values within the knowledge he acquired when he was young, but at the same selecting apples outside the basket, so that he may be accurate in separating the rotten and the fresh ones, as Stumpf states; 'Descartes wanted to sweep away all his former opinions so that they might later on be replaced either by others, which are better or by the same, when he had made them conform to the uniformity of a rational scheme.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> S. E. STUMPF, A history of, 255

### 1.2 The uncertainty of sensation

Let us ask ourselves, can sensation give us a starting point? The answer according to Descartes' is on the negative side. Starting point cannot be found in the realm of sense experience because of the deception as discussed earlier. Let us take some more examples on the sun, stars and other distant objects. By our naked eyes, a tower can be seen round, stars appear very small and the sun being small than the earth, pain seems to be felt in an amputated limb and tall statues afar to be tiny. Suppose someone proves that a tower is square, will he be deceived again when he goes far from it? Descartes' thinks what has deceived him once may deceive him again. So all things he perceived are nothing but illusion and dreams.

Though Descartes' turns all realities into doubt, mathematics seems to be somehow better than sense experiences. From mathematical point of view, two and three make up five. Again square will never have more than four equal sides or less than four equal sides. The same applies to two and three. Therefore, these answers are so clear and apparent, can never be suspected of any falsity. To such extent, mathematics was seen more certain than sense perception.

But can necessary truth and eternal truth provide us with starting point? Mathematics itself cannot provide us with unshakable starting point though it is not directly concerned with the sensible objects and not tied up with sense experience. The reason behind is that, there is a devil, who deceives us, who is constantly corrupting and disturbing our thinking process in such a way, he actually makes us to think that eternal and necessary truths are true, while they actually are false.

### 1.3 Universality of Cartesian Doubt

The major aim of Descartes' philosophy was to search for the foundation or starting point from where other sciences would lay down their foundations. Thus, his theory should be methodical and universal so that whoever wants to apply it should follow proper procedure in order to reach in the same conclusion. In this way then is Descartes' theory of knowledge is universal and methodical?

His theory is universal in the sense that; "it is applied to all that can be doubted, that is to every proposition about whose truth is possible."<sup>3</sup> Cartesian method of doubt is methodical for "it is practiced not for the sake of doubting, but as a preliminary stages in the attainment of certainty and sifting the truth from false, the certain from the probable, the indubitable from the doubtful"<sup>4</sup>

Descartes' doubt does not involve more than merely following up the consequences that a thing does not really exist. He says, "no one of sound mind has ever doubted that really is a world and that men have bodies."<sup>5</sup> By such statement like life is a dream and omnipotent deceiver, are very improbable suppositions.

<sup>3</sup> F. COPLESTON, A history of, 85

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, .... 85

<sup>5</sup> A. KENNY, Descartes: A study, 23

## 2. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CARTESIAN DOUBT AND SKEPTICISM

### 2.1 Cartesian Doubt

Cartesian doubt is not merely an illicit doubt. It is methodical doubt, a doubt that relies on the use of intellect. Descartes' doubts in order to know unlike skeptics who are driven by despair. Moreover, this methodical doubt is part of philosophizing. But one thing to be noted is that it should remain in the theoretical order and not to be put in practice.

### 2.2 Skepticism

Skepticism is a mental attitude, which opposes appearances in whatsoever. It signifies doubting of what is generally accepted as true. The skeptical tradition questions our ability to obtain knowledge. Their historical claim is that human mind cannot know things, as they are rather only the outlooks. Skeptics have in their minds that all statements concerning reality are false and even if true, their truth cannot be proved. In one way or another they do not agree with Descartes' on the affirmation of his existence.

Thinking according to skepticism cannot prove the existence, for there are things which do not think but they exist. Moreover skepticism claims that "what anybody perceives is relative to the state of his sense organs and secondly, that the sense organs vary from one species, from individual to individual within any species and even from movement to movement for any individual."<sup>6</sup>

Skeptical considerations had a role in the development of a new approach to science in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, for example John Locke and David Hume, who were very much contrary to Descartes' theory. Skeptics had never given answers for the fear that any evidence suggesting otherwise would automatically be discredited for conflicting with such an obvious truth. Though skeptics deny the knowledge of the mind, in one way or another they affirm it because by saying mind cannot know, already they know that it cannot know.

### 2.3 Cogito Ergo Sum

Cogito Ergo Sum means that, I think therefore I exist. Descartes' theory of doubting led him to come into this conclusion. When he was trying to think everything false, one thing he noticed was, he could not doubt if he existed. Doubting as an act of thinking needed a doubter as an existing being. So it was really true that he existed, for he was able to doubt. Following such trend of thought, Cogito Ergo Sum, became the first principle or ground of his philosophy.

In Cogito Ergo Sum, Descartes' falls in one trouble that by saying, I think therefore I exist, he did not use a syllogism to deduce his existence from his thought. Many philosophers suggested that he was supposed to start with major premise, followed by minor and then concludes with Sum. For example, all thinking being exist. But I am a thinking being, therefore I exist. Descartes' came directly to the conclusion after minor premise by recognizing this as something self-evident, in a simple mental intuition. Moreover, Descartes' assumed that it is so logical that everyone is aware of the major premise. He said, the sentence I exist verifies itself whenever it is uttered or otherwise put forward. In the same way, the sentence I don't

<sup>6</sup> W. T. JONES, The classical mind, 349

exist is self-defeating since it is impossible to think or to talk of your non-existence while existing.<sup>7</sup>

### 2.4 Relationship between Cogito and Sum

The relation between Cogito and Sum is not that of premise to conclusion, rather it is indubitable of his own existence resulted from his thinking of it, somewhat as the sound of music may result from his playing. "Cogito in Descartes' dictum is to refer to the thought act through which the existential self-variability of I exist manifest itself."<sup>8</sup>

### 2.5 Distinction between Cogito and Sum

Cogito is more superfluous because it refers to the use of mind while Sum is reached directly and not through Cogito. Each one is independent for the proof, but Descartes used both Cogito and Sum to support his theory from empirical and rational as well.

#### 2.5.1 Definition of thought and existence

The word thought means that which covers everything that exists in us, in such a way that we are immediately aware of it. Thought is the power of reasoning or conceiving ideas. It is also self-evident, that there is nothing more evident, which can be used to explain it. Descartes' believed that the idea of thought was innate. But he did not rely on this in his Methodical Doubt, so that he may show clearly the foundation of his knowledge. On the other hand, existence is the act of being. It is the actualization of potency. Hence to be is to exist.

Doubting according to Descartes' is only restricted to sense experience. He affirms this by questioning: "can you doubt of your doubt and remain uncertain whether you doubt or not?"<sup>9</sup> The answer is clear that, one cannot doubt of his doubt, for when he doubts of his doubt, then he knows that he knows. For this reason, there is no any possibility of doubting the doubt, because one cannot doubt what he knows. There were "critics objected that Cogito could not be the first principle of philosophy since it presupposed the knowledge of what thought, existence and were."<sup>10</sup> Descartes' agrees, but with the defense that his aim was not just treating about the past, but a new knowledge which is clear and distinct. Through his methodical doubt, he shows us that he had acquired some knowledge before starting reasoning on his own and hence by the act of doubting he checks the validity of such knowledge.

#### 2.5.2 Structure of Cogito

As far as syllogisms are concerned, Cogito would have been preceded by the major premise, which Descartes' seemed not to mind about it. From the major premise, Cogito as minor premise would be given room to stand so that in turn Sum may be a necessary conclusion. If he would have started with the major premise, his knowledge would be general and this would lead him not to attain a starting point of every science.

<sup>7</sup> A. KENNY, Descartes: A study, 43

<sup>8</sup> A. KENNY, Descartes: A study, 43

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 48

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 49



Therefore, Cogito is a subjective knowledge and it does not say anything about other things, which exist, but not thinking. See how he defends his theory: “at any moment when I am engaging in a conscious activity say, when I am thinking, doubting, willing or sensing, the proposition Cogito is true.”<sup>11</sup> This is indubitable because what is known cannot be doubted. Having shown his existence through thinking, Descartes’ continued proving his existence rationally as he says; I persuaded myself there was nothing, so I existed. An omniscience deceiver deceives me, so I exist. I think that I am something, so I am not nothing. I conceive the proposition ‘I’, so “I am” is true.<sup>12</sup> So wherever he has a thought “I exist”, he proves that the thought is true, for he has no any reason of doubting because he cannot think of his being false.

### **2.6 The validity of the method**

Objection to the presence of a word ‘I’ in the premise ‘I am thinking’. Many philosophers since Leibniz onwards have been speculating whether the word ‘I’ refers to Descartes’ or not. Russel, for example would say that: “the word ‘I’ grammatically is convenient, but does not describe a datum.”<sup>13</sup> With such objection, Descartes’ acknowledge in the second meditation as he said; I do not understand what is this ‘I’ that necessarily exist. I must take care then, that I don’t rashly take something else for the ‘I’ and thus go wrong even in the knowledge that I am maintaining to be the most certain and evident of all.<sup>14</sup>

Then the word ‘I’ does not belong or refer only to man Descartes’. It is used as the first person pronoun in order to stress what is to be talked. If he was talking of himself, why then should he use ‘I’ as if he wanted people to pay attention to his talk? The word ‘I’ has some other more intangible thing to refer to. As the thought is an attribute of the substance, then the word ‘I’ also should be the attribute of something else other than Descartes’. That is why sometimes in his writings he concludes I am thinking being or I am something.

## **3. CRITERION OF INNATE IDEAS**

### **3.1 The criterion of Truth**

“Descartes asserted that he was fortunate enough to find a single truth which is certain and indubitable.”<sup>15</sup> This single truth is Cogito Ergo Sum (Je pense donc je suis) in French language, meaning that I am aware therefore I exist. Descartes was now sure that nobody can shake or destroy a principle unless someone is not thinking, something which is contrary. It is a truth, which is indubitable. The more one thinks of it, the more he becomes aware of the reality of one’s conscious. He said, certainty of my own existence obtains only when I am thinking, when I am conscious. I am, I exist that is certain. If I had ceased from thinking, even if all the

<sup>11</sup> Cf. A. KENNY, Descartes: A study, 51

<sup>12</sup> A. KENNY, Descartes: A study, 57

<sup>13</sup> A. KENNY, Descartes: A study, 58

<sup>14</sup> A. KENNY, Descartes: A study, 58

<sup>15</sup> M. J. WALSH, A history of, 224

rest of what I had ever imagining I had really existed, I should have no reason for thinking that I had existed.<sup>16</sup>

According to Descartes', criterion of truth is twofold system. It must be self-evident, clear and distinct. What does he mean by clear and distinct? According to him a thing is clear when we can tell what it is. On the other hand, a thing become distinct only when we can tell it apart from other things. Much more things we perceive very clear and distinctly are all true. The clarity and distinctness of the conception renders it indubitable. Hence, clarity and distinctness became for Descartes' the principle or criterion of truth.<sup>17</sup>

### 3.2 Innate ideas

Ideas are regarded as the mental links between the mind and the world. Ideas are the reference to something not present at that moment in sensation. Some philosophers in different researches have come out with conclusion that an idea is a reflection of what you perceived in the previous time. When you see something you saw at the beginning, the mind tends to compare between the two.

If the idea conforms to the reality outside the mind, it is when we say that the knowledge is valid. But where is the idea of triangle, God, existence, square or number come from? How can we affirm that the mentioned above is real, since there is no conformity between the mind and the outside reality? Before answering some of such questions, let us see the division of ideas;

#### 3.2.1 Division of ideas

There are three main categories of ideas, following their origin such as adventitious, factitious, and inborn ideas.

##### 3.2.1.1 Adventitious ideas

By adventitious ideas I mean those ideas which come to us from outside of ourselves. They are acquired through the process of learning. For instance, the idea of man, sun, sky and earth are not within us but we get them through learning.

##### 3.2.1.2 Factitious ideas

Factitious ideas on the other hand are those ideas, which we fabricate. They are resulted from combination of two adventitious ideas let us say, flying and horse, or gold and mountain. When you combine them you get flying horse and golden mountain. It is through reasoning process that we can be able to formulate such ideas.

##### 3.2.1.3 Innate Ideas

The most interesting type of ideas is an innate one. Everybody is born with already the idea of God or extension. Innate ideas from etymological point of view are those ideas which are coming from the nature of human reason itself, and are natural to all human beings.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. M. J. WALSH, A history of, 224

<sup>17</sup> Cf. F. COPLESTON, A history of, 91

Descartes said, the idea of God is so imprinted on the human mind that there is no one who does not have himself the faculty of knowing Him, but this does not prevent people from being able to pass their whole lives without ever distinctly representing this idea to themselves.<sup>18</sup>

Innate ideas are different from adventitious and factitious ideas in the sense that, they are formless neither do they conform to outside realities. A man may have the idea of an angel, but without any form. Though sometimes may figure it as a young child with wings or with a beautiful figure. Yet in his mind he is sure that, that is the proper image of an angel. Down to ourselves, we have the idea that we have souls in our bodies but we do not know their forms unlike seen the tree and formulate its image in our minds.

Everybody been born with such innate ideas as suggested by Descartes', especially the idea of God, there was a question on how could there be atheists in the world if man has an innate idea of God. In replying to such objection, Descartes answers what he really meant is that man has a certain disposition or propensity to form such ideas. An atheist is the one who has not actuated this potentiality. But if it is a mere capacity or disposition, why then did he call it an idea? Here, Descartes' failed to distinguish between Idea and Disposition.

### 3.3 The idea of God

The idea of God according to Descartes', first proof of existence of God implies a substance, which is infinity, independent, all-knowing, supreme, perfect, eternal, omniscient, almighty and creator.<sup>19</sup> Descartes' started his proof of existence of God from his own mind and its idea unlike St. Thomas Aquinas.

How did he come to the idea of God? From his mental investigation, Descartes' was able to differentiate between himself and God. From physiological point of view, he discovered that he lacked many things. For instance, he did not create himself, he had no wings, he was not omnipotent and he was not a triangle or a square. Thus he understood that at least he lacks something. He went on describing, "If I was myself the author of my being, I would have given myself various perfections such as omniscience and omnipotence which I lack."<sup>20</sup> Descartes' draws a conclusion that we cannot be our own cause.

Descartes' used three ways of affirming the existence of the idea of God. He first proves from within himself as he says: I am able to form an idea of God wholly from within and on the basis of myself consciousness without any reference to created reality outside me. Here he refers to the idea implanted by God in his mind.<sup>21</sup>

The second proof is through our idea of the perfect being. Descartes' supposed himself as imperfect being, by the fact of doubting, because doubting means insufficient knowledge. Though he was imperfect, still in his mind had the idea of perfect being. In order to have the idea of perfection, there should exist a perfect being that puts the idea of perfection into imperfect being's mind. For this reason, the idea of perfection cannot be produced by imperfect being.

<sup>18</sup> A. KENNY, Descartes: A study, 100

<sup>19</sup> Cf. A. KENNY, Descartes: A study, 126

<sup>20</sup> A. KENNY, Descartes: A study, 142

<sup>21</sup> Cf. W. T. JONES, A history of, 182

The argument is mostly given in the principle of philosophy, it runs that a being which is capable of both forming the idea of the most perfect being as well as producing itself, would make itself perfect. For this reason, we are not the cause of ourselves but that God is, and consequently there is a God.<sup>22</sup>

Descartes' really added nothing new to the ontological argument of Anselm, except that he called the idea of the greatest conceivable being an innate one. Moreover, he added, we couldn't separate the valley from the mountain. Thus God cannot be conceived unless as existing like unconceivable of the mountain without a valley. In other words, God and existence are inseparable, as it is the case of mountain and valley.

#### 4. THE PROBLEM OF THE BRIDGE

Descartes' faced very severe problems when he was enquired to show some connections between the idea and outside reality and the soul and the body. These two problems were leading to the destruction of his whole theory of knowledge. Though he tried to answer such problems, but in both cases there were no sufficient reasons he gave as far as rationality is concerned.

In his third meditation, Descartes' raises an important question. Are the ideas which I find myself similar or conformable to things, which are outside myself?<sup>23</sup> This was the foundation of the famous problem of bridge as the later thinkers call it. The problem is how does one bridge the gap between the world of ideas within me and the external world. For example, to have the idea of the house is quite different with the concrete house.

Descartes' without any fear, appeals to God. "By studying the idea of God, Descartes' comes to the conclusion that God cannot be a deceiver, since the light of nature teaches us that, fraud and deception necessarily proceed from some defect."<sup>24</sup> Descartes' still refers to the proof of God's existence, for he commented that God is a perfect being. So, deception never exist in him, since the desire to deceive testifies to malice or weakness and such accordingly cannot be found in God.

The so called problem of the bridge is really a pseudo problem, a bogus or artificial one that does not exist at all. It is based on the blind assumption that what we know directly and immediately isn't real, but our idea. But such assumption is hardly warranted by experience. It would seem much more consistent with the fact of experience to hold that what we know immediately and directly are things, and not our ideas of them. Ideas are not the sources of our knowledge rather the means by which we know. It is only by subsequent reflection on my act of knowing, say a tree, that I come to realize that I have an idea of a tree.

##### 4.1 The body and soul

A substance is that by which we can conceive nothing else than a thing which exists in such a way as to stand in need of nothing beyond itself in order for it to exist. Following such definition, human being according to Descartes' is composed of two separate substances. He

<sup>22</sup> Cf. R. DESCARTES', The philosophy of work, 227

<sup>23</sup> Cf. DESCARTES', Discourse on methods, 94

<sup>24</sup> A. KENNY, Descartes': A study, 142

regards himself, as a soul lodged in a body. The soul acts as a mover of the body while the body to the soul as an instrument to agent.<sup>25</sup> Hence when we talk of man we only refer to soul, which is thinking thing. Material body is just a vehicle used by the soul, which is immaterial. But if the soul and body are two complete different substances, how are they connected to each other? This question is more important, for it is necessary for the soul to be joined and united closely to the body in order to have sensation or appetite. How do we explain the high degree of intimacy between the two while denying any substantial unity? Descartes' thought that the point of interaction couldn't be in the heart or in the whole brain. But his focusing point was in the most inward of the brain's part, from where a certain very small gland known as pineal gland is situated.<sup>26</sup>

## 5. CRITIQUE FROM DESCARTES' OPPONENT THINKERS

### 5.1 From Empiricism

As for empiricists that that knowledge is obtain through sense experiences, it is obvious for them that Cartesian method of doubt is useless because it refers to the use of abstract concepts which do not pass through any of the five senses. Hence the method is not known. So it is in this way that empiricism and rationalism take different ways. Descartes' rejects empirical knowledge because of the deception of the senses he encountered. That is why he calls perception as illusion and dreams.

### 5.2 On the side of idealism

Emmanuel Kant and Plato are the prominent idealists of the time. Kant held that, it is impossible to attain knowledge independent of sense experience and intellect. It is only by the united action of the two that knowledge can arise, unlike Descartes' theory of knowledge. Therefore, the only valid use of the understanding consists of its thinking the data supplied to it by the sensation. Idealists and rationalists agree in one aspect that mind or spirit is prior to matter.<sup>27</sup> Idealists rejected empiricism for it does not ascend to ideas. At the same time they rejected the age of rationalism as being too dull, but proposed that each individual may confidently rely on his own intuition and may avail himself of limitless powers once he places his trust in the infinite that streams through his own personality.<sup>28</sup>

### 5.3 Existentialists had their standing

Having considered these few philosophers such as Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Jean Paul Sartre, one thing, which is common to all is that existence is prior to essence. One has to exist first so that he may be able to think. You cannot think of anything unless you exist. Cogito according to them is the secondary reflection that depends very much on the primary

<sup>25</sup> Cf. F. COPLESTON, A history of, 131

<sup>26</sup> Cf. F. COPLESTON, A history of, 131

<sup>27</sup> Cf. M. J. WALSH, A history of, 396

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 392

reflective. Consciousness is always a consciousness of something. For this reason, that something should exist first, otherwise you cannot be conscious of it.

#### **5.4 From phenomenologist point of view**

Martin Heidegger stands as both existentialist and phenomenologist, others are Edmund Husserl and William James. As far as Descartes' idea of existence is concerned, Heidegger would say that, Dasein is the only being who exist by the fact that he can come out of being and beings while being among beings. Other beings such as cows, trees, angels and even God, do not exist, according to Heidegger, for they cannot come out of beings and understand being and beings while being among beings. In one way or another, Heidegger goes back to the idea of existence as formulated by Descartes'. Descartes' existence depended on his thinking process. Dasein then exists because of its ability to think of himself and of others.

### **6. FINDINGS AND RESULTS**

#### **6.1 Findings**

Researcher has been assisted to obtain rich data from library. Although researcher involved various discussion from some varieties of clusters, but much of the data have been derived from library. Both primary and secondary sources have been visited in the library. From the primary means works written by Descartes' himself and secondary sources means those who wrote on Descartes' on the same issue.

#### **6.2 Results**

The whole of my paper was a critique of Rene Descartes'. Researcher successful obtained data where he applied them on exploring various ideas while writing the paper. Though there was a great problem while discussing about ideas, knowledge and method of attaining knowledge, researcher successful was able to show proper link from various scholars on the proper method of attaining knowledge. Various challenges appeared while discussing about human knowledge, but on the knowledge of God no criticism made. This shows that God is the source of each and everything in the world, he is all knower.

## 7. Recommendations

Despite the successful research on Cartesian philosophy, the researcher would suggest some view which would be appropriate academically.

- i) The discussion on Cartesian has been appropriate. Apart from some critiques given by various thinkers, I would recommend the harmonious ways of thinking which would reduce bias and prejudices in philosophical arena.
- ii) It is possible that mind knows, but it cannot know independent of sense experience. Therefore, perfect knowledge requires both abstract and empirical sources of knowledge for absolute knowledge, because if limited to abstract knowledge would fail to prove the knowledge of God.
- iii) Self-knowing or innate knowledge as posited by Descartes is possible, but also we learn from the environment as we advance in growth from childhood to adulthood.
- iv) It becomes difficult to me to know the place of numbers, triangle, rectangle and the idea of circle if we alienate ourselves from sense experience.
- v) On one hand I concur with Descartes' on independent knowledge, but I am also against him to some matters such as the idea of for example body and soul on man. If knowledge is innate, what about the body? This led Descartes fallen to Dualism of which he actually failed to tell the connection between soul and body. I recommend the idea of spirituality also to interfere this that there is voice of God in creation of man where we get body and soul.
- vi) Sticking ourselves to Descartes would make us reject the sensible world which is absolute impossible, for we occupy the environment and time as well. We need to walk, sit, sleep, eat and even interacting with others in the environment. Idea of independent knowledge to sense experience leads to individualism and even lack of self-awareness and awareness of others.

## Conclusion

Most part of the paper lies on Cogito Ergo Sum. This being the main ground for Cartesian philosophy, I would like to indicate some negative and positive elements in general. The act of doubting doesn't guarantee the existence of anything. It only reveals to us that things exist, but does not cause them to exist.

Phenomenologism being rooted from rationalism goes beyond rationalists by revealing that, thinking does not precede consciousness. Thinking is grouped in the second realm of reflection while consciousness is in the primary reflection.

Existentialists also came with their theory, emphasizing on the existence as primacy to thinking. Hence, to think as Descartes' did, you have to exist first. Thanks to Emmanuel Kant as far as transcendental idealism is concerned. He tried to connect empiricist and rationalists schools of thought, which oppose each other as far as the ground of obtaining knowledge is concerned.

I agree with Kant that knowledge depends on the use of sense experience and intellect, but I question on the impossibility of arriving to pure reason. On my views, not every reality has the access of passing through our senses. Moreover, what we perceive are just the attributes of things. Things in themselves can't be perceived but this does not mean they are not there. So, by following Kant's idealism, I find myself been engulfed as a result, I will be rejecting whatever doesn't pass through my senses.

I appraise Descartes' for one thing, that he was able to provoke different thinkers, to think on Cogito Ergo Sum. Though he faced a lot of challenges in defending his methodical doubt, still was able to provide different answers even if some of them were not correct. For instance, the denial of material body as part of human. Again, an appeal to God, I consider it as a weakness to Descartes' for if God prevent him from being deceived by senses and dreams, why then should he doubt?

Thus, up to now I found in this discussion that, no school of thought that can claim of possessing the whole truth concerning the attainment of knowledge. Therefore, the question is thrown to whoever reads this paper to give the opinion in order to enrich more this work.



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