

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

The problem of certainty in human knowledge is not a new concept in the history of philosophy which was Rene Descartes focus of study. However, born on 31st March in 1596, in a small town called La Haye in France, he studied Mathematics, Logic, Law and Philosophy in La Fleche in France under the Jesuit college. Descartes witnessed the scientific breakthrough of the modern period. As a young man and lover of philosophy, he was disturbed by the problem of intellectual certainty in human knowledge. He therefore conceived the ambitious plan, to rebuild the structure of human knowledge based on the pattern of mathematics. Despite his academic attainment in one of the renowned schools in Europe, he was embarrassed with many doubts and errors existing in human knowledge.

His quest for certainty led him beyond empirical senses by embarking on a research journey where he met men of divided temperaments and conditions. He discovered different opinions among these professionals and learned philosophers. Descartes found it difficult to believe anything from customs and traditions as true. His major aim was to get to indubitable knowledge of every reality. To achieve his ambition, Descartes retired to solitude life to avoid glamour of social life.

On November 10, 1619, Descartes had three dreams which revealed the necessity to construct the system of true knowledge over the power of human mind, which means, giving philosophy a fresh start. Descartes do away with all the previous philosophers' ideas. He began his philosophical inquiry by doubting all existing thing without excluding his own existence. Nevertheless, his doubt was not an absolute doubt or scepticism, but a

systematic doubt which has a purpose. His act of doubting led to the confirmation of his own existence and that of God. He determined to discover the basis for intellectual certainty from his own reason.

His dream became real when he established a sound method for philosophical and scientific enquires. He desired to establish truth claims without presupposing such propositions to be certain or self-evident. Descartes posited that the certainty of the existence of God should have at least the same level of certainty as the truth of mathematics. The highest point of certainty is the existence of God. In his meditations, Descartes notes: “...*apart from God, there is nothing else of which I am capable of thinking such that existence belongs to its essence.*”¹

It therefore made it emphatically clear that the existence of God is more certain than that of mathematics, because the existence belongs to God's essence alone. The existence of God is ontologically certain while the truth of mathematics and geometry are ontologically contingent. On this Descartes states:“*thus I see plainly that the certainty and the truth of all knowledge depends entirely on my awareness of the true God; before knowing him, I could have no perfect knowledge of anything.*”²His certainty provides a kind of model for the rest of his philosophy.

1.2 Statement of Problem

One of the reasons why Human beings do epistemology is to jettison skepticism which claims knowledge is not possible. Aristotle in the beginning of his Metaphysics writes: “*All human beings by nature, desires to know*”.³

That is, the proper objective of this desire is truth. Every day, life shows how concerned each of us is to discover for ourselves beyond a mere opinion or how things really are. Man is the only creature who is not only endowed with the ability to know, but to know that he knows and is interested in the real truth of what he perceives. The study of philosophy boils down to the quest for absolute truth or ultimate reality of all realities. The quest for the truth re-echoed during the time of Pilate. Thus Guitar O. D comments;

*And Pilate said unto him, what is truth? And Echo answered – the prophet would not tell, his lips were sealed; no answer was forth coming.... But that the Lord for all these wise professors to whom the truth is there but to decry there are many who've given the doubting Roman a reply. But it's odd to me that truth the one and only, so magically changes shape and hue, what's called the truth in Berlin or in Jena, in a Heidelberg is anything but true.*⁴

The controversial problem among epistemologists on claim of knowledge is how certain knowledge claims gave rise to the two schools – the Rationalism and the Empiricism schools of thought. The former has it that one can get true knowledge through human reason, while the later says it is through the sense perception. The two schools tried to provide justification for the possibility of knowledge, and thus bring a new paradigm shift from denial of knowledge by the skeptics, to how one can know. Does one know through the sense of perception? is another question, If yes, how certain can one think that the senses will not be affected by what Francis Bacon calls Idols? Do the qualities one found in things really exist or are they the product of mind? How can one prove the existence of God? Does God really

exist? Is His existence self-evident ? Some philosophers said He exists, others deny it, while others neither affirmed nor denied His existence as an illusion, since the knowledge of God is unattainable by human reason. So the problem resides on the ability to apply the concept of Being to God, without subjecting it to radical modification. Rene Descartes, being one of the Seventeenth Century Continental rationalist philosophers, took the lead to discover a new method (Cartesian method) to get certain knowledge about God.

People actually misinterpreted Descartes' view and his epistemological acumen. This study therefore, deems it necessary to revitalize Descartes idea of "*clear and distinct*" as basis for his philosophy. Although his stand may appear abstruse, but the exposition of his enquiry will be a great help to those who are searching for certainty.

1.3 Purpose of Study

The principal aim of this study is to elicit conspicuously Descartes' ideas and his proof of God's existence. The study will x-ray the position of Descartes in the doctrine of innatism as the basis of proof, and evaluate whether Descartes succeeded in proving the existence of God with his doubting method.

This study will therefore gear towards uniting the two schools, which in their search for the best method to arrive at the truth. It will examine truth which is being dethroned in the contemporary time. The truth is the ultimate, its conscious denial is a self-contradictory just like a man who thank God every morning for making him an atheist, for even a harden skeptics believes his skepticism to be true.

1.4 Scope of Study

This study is designated to explore the work of Descartes on doubting, which later gives birth to certainty, and goes beyond it, including the method applied by Descartes to get at the certainty of knowledge. It covers a wide range of his epistemology.

The study basically concentrates on Rene Descartes' method and meditations on the first philosophy.

It will also examine the views of some philosophers and intellectuals who had contributed significantly on true knowledge and the proof of God's existence.

1.5 Significance of Study

Rene Descartes would always like to get rid of what is not “*clear and distinct*” as an object of knowledge. Since knowledge is not fixed and it cannot be exhausted. Emphasis must shift from one point to another in order to accommodate the authenticity and veracity of knowledge of reality. That was why Descartes says:

*And thus it is good to have examined all of these disciplines; even the most superstition-ridden and false of them, so that one might know their true worth and guard against being deceived.*⁵

In assessing Rene Descartes contribution to human knowledge. The study guiding questions can be; What contributions did Descartes makes that made him so important to be given the title as the “father of modern philosophy”. How was he able to formulate rules that set out ways of thinking and how can one identify true knowledge.

One can have clues to the above questions when one develops keen interest in Descartes' life and works on meditations on the first philosophy.

This study is designed to increase, update and expand the reader's knowledge and understanding about Rene Descartes' quest for certainty and how to direct one's mind at it, and drive his point to all levels and sundry. The importance of this study is to revitalize the work of Descartes on reason to grasp certainty of knowledge. His life and studies of mathematics, shaped and hampered his intellectual development of new methods and solution to some philosophical problems.. The major significance of this study, is to contribute to knowledge and further reflect on the subject matter which will serve as a foundation and essential solution to some contemporary problems.

1.6 Methodology

The method adopted in this work is analysis, which is one of the methods used in philosophy to resolve some complex propositions or ambiguous concepts to simpler parts. This method will help to evaluate Descartes position on human knowledge. The areas of concentration in this work epitomize Descartes position and main idea in order to understand what he meant by certainty. Special attention is given to *Discourse on Method and Meditations on the first philosophy* where Descartes gave an account of the journey of the mind towards truth. Thus, P. Edwards comment:

*This celebrated work is remarkable for a number of things, for its autobiographical tone, for its very compressed exposition of the foundation of the Cartesian system and for the fact that it was written in France.*⁶

The most effective instrument used in this study is human reason in order to understand Descartes work. Citation and Endnotes will be “Modern Language Association” style, with five chapters, having the endnotes at the end of each chapter.

Chapter one will embody the introductory part together with other preliminary remarks. The second Chapter will expose the related literature. Chapter three will x-ray his vision and mission, the criteria for Truth and error and his meditations. It will also explore doubting which is directly opposed to certainty. Chapter four will deal with paradigm case like innate idea, intuition and deduction and the proof of God's existence. Chapter five will critically evaluate the work with recommendations and conclusion.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1.7.1 Doubt

Doubt is a state of the mind in which assent is suspended with a regard to judgment due to inability of the mind to decide whether the judgment is true or false. Doubt is often associated with the philosophy of scepticism. Hence, Godfrey Ozumba and Mike Ukah notes;

his scepticism was not the same with that of the sceptics who doubt in order to remain in doubt. Descartes scepticism was a systematic one who aimed at helping him to find an absolutely certain starting point...of knowledge.⁷

The relation between Descartes scepticism and scepticism as a school of thought is complex. Moreover, some philosophers denied that sceptical arguments have any essential connection with doubt. Hence, Michael Williams sees doubts:

*as a state of indecision, of hesitancy with respect to accepting or rejecting given proposition. Thus, doubt is opposed to belief. But doubt is also contrasted with certainty. Since it seems intelligible to say that there are many things we believe without being completely certain about them, it appears that we may not have a unitary concept of doubt.*⁸

The first way that Descartes tries to undermine his belief is by considering the fact that his senses have deceived him earlier. If he has been misled by sensory information in the past, then he may be deceiving now. It is not proper to trust completely those who have deceived us even once.

Doubting: as a verb was employed by Descartes as a means to achieve certainty in human knowledge. He was filled with doubt. No veridical idea of any giving reality. He set out to demolish completely all his previous knowledge, either those he got from school or that of his tradition.

This process of pulling down his edifice of knowledge acquired from school was to enable him cross the bridge of doubt with, “*clear and distinct idea*” “as a tool to construct and reconstruct knowledge in a surer foundation”

1.7.2 Certainty:

Certainty is explicated in terms of indubitability. This has been done in various ways. In his second meditation, Descartes reviewed the extensive doubts of the first meditation before saying that even if there is a deceiver of supreme power and cunning who is deliberately and constantly deceiving him to believe what is false to be true. Peter Klein has it that:

Certainty is not a universal term. It is predicated of propositions. When certainty is predicated of a person, as in Sally, is certain that she parked her car in lot 359; we are ascribing an attitude to sally.⁹

For you to be certain of something means you believe without any doubt. Certainty refers to truth. It is an epistemic property of belief. For instance, 'S' is certain that 'P' is just the case, 'S' is belief that P is certain.

Certainty is either the highest form of knowledge or is the only epistemic property superior of knowledge. Certainty is divided into 3 kinds; psychological certainty, epistemic certainty and moral certainty. Some philosophers like Descartes made known to us about moral certainty. Descartes has it that things are considered as morally certain when it has sufficient certainty for application to ordinary life. For Descartes, moral certainty is certainty which is sufficient to regulate human conduct.

1.7.3 REASON

Reason as a concept in philosophy is referred to as rationality. It has to do with cognition or right thinking. Hence, Oxford Advanced learners Dictionary sees reason as; *"use of one's power to think, understand, form opinions, etc. Man's ability to reason"*.¹⁰ Thinking comes from ones idea to a related ideas. It can be identified with the ability of self-consciousness. Reason is the ability to use logic to present a sound argument.

Reason is the guiding principle of modern philosophy. It is the tool of man's understanding. It's a method of identifying entities and to present it as knowledge. It is the ability to make conscious of something by applying logic in order to establish and to verify facts. Simply put, reason is a process of thinking in a clear and organised way in order to achieve knowledge and

understanding. Reason is a tool that allows one to determine how to gather more information and what kind of information human need. Reason is used to compare and combine new information into the rest of our body of knowledge in order to acquire a more complete understanding.

Prior to Descartes philosophical *ecupois (acumen)*. The use of reason to probe into God's existence was considered a thing of faith, backed by religious authorities as unquestionable. With the advance of science, human knowledge was liberated from dogmatism and boundaries set up by religion to cage reason from operating. At the time Descartes mounted the stage, intellectual reason regained its power to investigate the existence of an absolute being. This aspect of investigation require the reasoning faculty not the empirical experience.

This enquiry of Descartes on human knowledge can be likened to what Nicholas Copernicus did in astronomy by changing the geocentric theory of Claudius Ptolemy to that of heliocentric theory of Copernicus.

1.7.4 RATIONALISM AND EMPIRICISM

Rationalism and Empiricism represent the modern Western traditional philosophy, with a response to the epistemic naivety of the epoch (era). Both of them are epistemological theories from a common origin, but differ in method. Their Origin is traceable to the ancient Greek and the earliest philosophical speculations about human mode of knowing, it's term and condition of knowledge. The two have their separate theme and nature of knowing. To look at their different background can help us identify where Rene Descartes falls into.

Rationalism: is a philosophical school of thought initiated by Rene Descartes. Other principal team are; Benedictus de Spinoza, and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Their doctrine is that knowledge about reality is gotten through reason alone without reference to sense experience. Philosophers who hold on to this doctrine are called rationalists. They accept *a priori* knowledge, which is knowledge that arise through reason. *A priori* is not about phenomena in the empirical sense of experience of things in the universe. This aspect of knowledge does not depend upon experience. Example of such is the knowledge of Mathematics and Logic. They do not depend on experience. It is a principle or habit of accepting reason as supreme authority in the matters of opinion, belief or conduct. Rationalism regards reason as criterion and test of knowledge.

Their claim is that knowledge is gained independent of sense experience. Rationalists have high confidence in reason. For rationalists, reality has an intrinsic logical structure. They asserts that certain rational principle exist in logic, mathematics and in reasoning that are so fundamental that if they are denied, one will fall into contradiction. They see reason as a unique way to knowledge.

In rationalism, high regard is given to reason. One's rational belief and our human knowledge come from innate concept.

Empiricism: It denies *a priori* knowledge. They hold that all knowledge arise through sense perception. They denied the fact that reason has a role to play in human acquisition of knowledge. On the contrary, it is the sense impressions that imprints the knowledge found in reason. In other words, sense experience supplies knowledge to the mind (reason). They distinguish sense data and Ideas. Sense data represent the basic information the senses could present to the mind through ones perception of objects.

Philosophers who hold on to this theme are called empiricists. The principal empiricist philosophers are John Locke, David Hume and George Berkeley.

1.7.5 INNATISM

It is a doctrine which holds that man is born with some ideas. Innatism as a concept asserts that human mind has ideas that are inborn in them. Innate is central to Descartes philosophical work. It affirms the identity and continuity of consciousness in space and time. Innate ideas relates to state of consciousness and inner experience.

Hence, to back the innate idea at birth, every child possesses language acquisition device which enable every child to learn languages.

It is an indication that people are born with a mind of universal idea. The oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defined innate as; "*quality, feeling etc in ones nature; possessed from birth.*"¹⁰ The concept of innate idea shows that, there are somethings inherent in man. Man is not empty from birth, he is endowed with the faculty to know and understand things.

ENDNOTES

1. Rene Descartes, *Descartes Philosophical Writings*, Elizabeth Anscombe & Peter Thomas Geach, (trans), (Middlesex: Nelson's University Paperbacks, 1954), p.107
2. Ibid., p.108
3. Aristotle, "Metaphysics", *The complete work of Aristotle*, R. Mckee ed., (New York: Random House, 1941), Bk. 1, ch. 1
4. Guitar Och Dragharmonika, quoted by F.P. Ramsey, *Belief and Truth*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.55
5. R. Descartes, *Discourse on method and meditations on the first philosophy*, D.A. Cress. Trans., (U.S.A: Hackett pub. Co., 1980), p.3
6. P. Edwards, ed., "Rene Descartes" in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan Pub. Co., 1980), p.3
7. G. O. Ozumba et al., *History of Modern Philosophy*, (Calabar: Norbert publisher, 2012). P. 13
8. Peter Klein, "Certainty" in Taylor & Francis group, *Concise Rutledge Encyclopaedia of philosophy*, (New York: Rutledge, 2002), 129
9. Michael Williams, "Doubt" in Taylor & Francis group, *Concise Rutledge Encyclopaedia of philosophy*, (New York: Rutledge, 2002), p.216
10. Hornby A. S, *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford university press, 1989), p 1046

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Literature Review

The question of the certainty of God's existence has over the years raised a lot of dust among philosophers. The psalmist in line with this claim has it that: "*The fool says in his heart, there is no God*"¹. One of the primary objectives of philosophy is the proof of God's existence. Does God really exist? If He exists, can the human faculty know Him? And by what means? In what ways can man come to the knowledge of God? Can His existence be proved? In an attempt to answer these questions, some philosophers have tried to prove the existence of God via rational and non-rational approach.

From the rational perspective, they argued that God can be known and His existence can be proved from the phenomena in the universe, such as motion, the existence of creatures and from man's sense of morality while the non-rational argues from the point of view of religious experience.

Rene Descartes, coming into the scene with a fresh idea of philosophy and his certainty about the reality of God's existence generates so much criticism, discussions, commentaries, expositions, analysis and debates. It is on this note that we wish to throw more light on some of those attempts, by many earlier philosophers like; Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Saint Augustine, Saint Anselm, Saint Bonaventure, Saint Thomas Aquinas, and later philosophers like; G.W Leibniz, Benedict Spinoza, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Ludwig Feuerbach, Fredrick Nietzsche and others.

We shall examine the nature of their arguments which are **for** or **against** the existence of God, and the age long saying which has not only led to the denial of God's existence but to a revolt against His being.

SOCRATES: (470-399 B.C.E)

Socrates in his dialectic method came up with surer way to attain certainty in human knowledge through conversation in different disciplines of knowing. He liken himself as an intellectual midwife, by applying the technique of question and answer as a means to bring to birth some ideas from individuals. He has the believe that through the process of “*Elenchus*”(Dialogue) one who engaged in an active participation in a conversation gains certain knowledge clearly.

In one of the dialogues of Plato called *Euthyphro*. Socrates claims ignorant about a subject of discussion, so as to draw from others the true knowledge of things through questions and corrections. He had that conviction in him that through questions and corrections of inconsistencies in any subject of discussion, one can arrive at certainty in intellectual knowledge of things. He always insist in examining our thought to know their true worth.

PLATO (427-347 B.C.E)

Plato in his *Republic* marks the true beginning of the cosmological argument. His proof of God’s existence is outlined as:

*Some things are in motion. There are two kinds of motion: communicated motion and self-motion. Things in motion imply a self-mover as their source of motion, otherwise there would be no starting point for the motion, because things moved by another imply a priori mover. If all things were at rest, only self-motion could arise directly from such a state; because a thing moved by another implies the presence of another moving thing.*²

Plato in his argument on motion, used the concept of change to investigate the cause of motion. Plato observed that the universe manifests order, purposefulness and series of bodies are in motion. He questions the origin of motion in the universe. Can a thing which is moved by another ever be the beginning of change? His argument has it that neither the world nor the contents of this world has the reason for its own existence. So, God must be the ultimate cause of things.

He established the fact that, for something that is motionless to be in motion, requires a self-moved Being, who set everything in the universe on motion while He remains unmoved .To affirm this assertion, J. Omoergbe notes; *“Things that are themselves moved cannot be originator of motion we can therefore not trace the origin of motion or the source of motion to anything that is also being moved by something else .”*³

From the above citation,a thing that is being moved cannot be the efficient beginner in motion. It sounds impossible that a being which is being moved by another could be a progenitor of movement .rather a self-motion being must be the efficient source of motion ,which Plato affirmed as God .Plato sees the self-moving principles as the propelling cause of motion to even existing substances in the universe.

Plato’s second argument is on the teleological arrangement of existing things, in an orderly or purposeful way in the universe. Who must have done this if not an intelligent being ,perfect and independent in nature .This intelligent being is as a result of the seasonal change in the existing things in the universe in a calculated terms and condition .

His next argument on Gods existence is that since every Greek and non-Greeks alike believes that a higher being exist, it therefore indicates that God exist.

On this Stumpf comments:

...Plato's answer to this question by saying that Forms are eternal patterns of which the objects that we see are only copies. A beautiful person is a copy of Beauty....Plato appears to be saying that beautiful things in their multiplicity point toward a Beauty from which everything else derives its beauty....Things come beautiful: but Beauty always is. Accordingly, Beauty has a separate existence from those changing things which move in and out of Beauty.⁴

The above quotation shows that the created things are beautiful but there is a source from where beautiful things derives their beauty. This is a clear indication that a higher being is responsible for the existence of both man and other sensible realities.

Hence. Steven M, quotes Meno:

I myself, Meno, am as poor as my fellow citizens in this matter and I blame myself for my complete ignorance about virtue. If I do not know what something is, how could I know what quality it possesses? Or do you think that someone who does not know at all who Meno is could know whether he is good looking or rich ...?⁵

In the above discussion between Socrates and Meno, he blamed himself of being ignorant of some virtues and things he needed to know. Socrates has it that " *An unexamined life is not what living*". Self-examination, subjecting some preconceptions, presuppositions, prejudices and traditions in doubt, so as to get the clear and distinct nature of things.

ARISTOTLE(384-322 B. C)

Aristotle posit that some things are known through sensory experience and are thought about by the use of reason.

On this, Brooke Noel Moore and Kenneth Bruder comments;

Aristotle sought to define things by determining how a thing is similar to other things (genus)and how it is specifically differentsuch that discursive reasoning defines things by way of their limitations, sameness and differences. Discursive reasoning is the basis of the natural sciences but also provides a way of understanding ourselves and our everyday lives. 6

In the created things ,one looks better than the other and another better than the previous two, .it continues that way until we get the best which he ascribed as divine. This divine is no other thing than God, the ultimate best Like his master Plato, Aristotle sees motion from the point of view of potency and act. For things to move from the state of potency to actuality, requires a first mover who cause the circular motion of things in the universe and the heavenly body but itself remain unmoved.

Brooke et. el note;

Change can therefore be viewed, according to Aristotle, as movement from potentiality to actuality. Because actuality is the source of change, pure actuality is the ultimate source of change. Pure actuality is the unchanged changer or unmoved mover or, in short, god.⁷

He affirms the concept of unmoved and uncaused cause from his dictum, “quid quid movetur ab alio movetur” meaning whatever that is being moved is being moved by another. William Craig outlines it as:

*Everything that is in motion is being moved by something. This something is itself either in motion or not in motion. If it is in motion, then it is either self-moved or moved by another ... This first mover must be utterly continuous and eternal.*⁸

There is a Being who is responsible for all the motions in the universe but He remains unmoved. Aristotle sees the unmoved mover as being perfectly beautiful, indivisible, and contemplating only perfections.

Brooke and Kenneth note:

*God's existence and nature can be roughly intimated as the cause of the natural world. But a deeper, more compelling comprehension of God requires intuition. Also, the highest principles of knowing must be known intuitively, as they can never be adequately known or proven via discursive reasoning.*⁹

In his theory of knowledge, Aristotle posits that some things are known through sensory experience, and are thought about by the use of reason.

ST. AUGUSTINE (354-430 A. C)

St. Augustine of Hippo started his argument with the mind's apprehension of necessary and changeless truths, of a truth which you cannot call yours or mine in any man, but which is presented to all and gives itself to all alike.

Brooke & Kenneth note:

St. Augustine thought that the capacity of the human mind to grasp eternal truth implied the existence of something infinite and eternal apart from the world of sensible objects, an essence that in some sense represented the source of ground of all reality and of all truth. This ultimate ground and highest being Augustine identified with God rather than with Platonic form.¹⁰

His prove of God's existence is from the idea of truth in man .Man cannot create truth,God is an absolute source of truth. Truth has an eternal nature and is superior to human mind .When man discovers it, he has no choice rather than to accept it .On this note, F. Copleston asserts .” *Hence if truth is neither inferior nor equal to our minds,nothing remains that should be superior and more excellent* ”¹¹The implication of the aforesaid quote is that, since truth is superior to our mind, it means it does not come from within, the source is eternal or an absolute reality which is God .

Augustine's major concern was how to justify the existence of God. For him, God transcends over man and He is eternal in nature.His proof of God's existence is that every effect has a cause. The universe is an effect, the cause must be God. If God does not exist, how does the human race came to the conviction that God exist.

In his moral philosophy, Augustine teaches that man has a natural desire for happiness. The human heart is restless until it finds rest in happiness that he craves for. The happiness which the human mind desires for is perfection, eternal and immutable. Mankind knows that happiness is not complete in human being. It is either giving in an incomplete form or is not given at all. Augustine's point of argument is that nothing in this world can provide us with perfect, immutable and eternal happiness. Only in God that we find happiness. It is only God that can satisfy man's desire of happiness in life. He also proves the existence of God from the eternal corporeal world, because of the dynamic nature of the soul towards God, which means proving the existence of God from "a posteriori"

Brooke & Kenneth comments:

Even those who do not believe in God are familiar with this concept of God's immateriality and are not inclined to dismiss it as blatant nonsense (though some, of course do) But careful reflection reveals that there is not much within experience that gives rise to this concept, for we seem to experience only concrete, physical things.¹²

He went further to consider the problem of evil in the world. God created all things and everything He created is good. Since God is infinite and perfect, can anything imperfect come from God? To answer this question, Augustine puts it that moral evil is from the free-will of man to make a choice. Man was given the free-will to come to God or to go away from God, to choose good or evil. The moral law is in every human being imprinted in the heart. Augustine did not say anything about the natural evil in the world such as earthquake, storm, volcanic eruption.

SAINT ANSELM: (1033- 1199 A. C)

St. Anselm of Canterbury uses different procedures to prove God's existence in his Monologion and the Proslogion. In Monologion, he applied the "*a posteriori*" method of working from concrete fact while in Proslogion he used "*a priori*" which means working from the definition of a thing in order to discover the existence of God. In his arguments, he used the traditional method on the contingency of finite beings and the grades of perfection. For Anselm, *God exists so truly that He cannot be thought of non-existent*. He believed that we cannot conceive God as a non-existing being. God is the being you cannot imagine not to exist. God is a being which none greater can be conceived (*aliquod quo nihil maius cogitari posit*). Thus J. Omoregbe comments: *St. Anselm defines God as "the greatest possible being, a being than which none greater can be thought of God ... is the greatest being that we can even think of."*¹³

The knowledge that St. Anselm communicates is that when the fools hear of the being as that which nothing greater can be conceived, he understands what he hears and what he understands is in his understanding, although he does not understand it to exist.

Hence, Donald C. Abel notes:

*Anselm observed that the fool nonetheless understands what it is whose existence he or she is denying. And since whatever someone understands exists in the understanding, God exists in the fool's understanding.*¹⁴

The atheist does not deny the existence of God as an idea in the mind, what they deny is that God exists objectively in reality outside the mind. It is greater for a thing to exist in the mind only. He will not be God because something greater could be conceived.

In line with this, Donald Abel notes;

And this is you, O Lord our God. You exist so truly, O Lord my God, that you cannot be thought not to exist. And rightly so, for if some mind could think something better than you, a creature would rise above the creator and sit in judgment upon him, which is completely absurd

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In his “prologion”, St. Anselm has it that we cannot conceive God as a non-existing being. For him, God is the being you cannot imagine not to exist.

ST. BONAVENTURE:

St. Bonaventure made his proof of the existence of God by drawing attention to the self-manifestation of God, whether in the material world or within the soul itself. On his proof from the external world, he shows that from the knowledge of finite, imperfect being like man can rise to the apprehension of the infinite, perfect being. He affirms that the existence of God is so evident to the soul through reflection on itself that extra mental creation serves mainly to remind us of it. For him, there are two kinds of knowledge which are not acquired through sense perception and which are innate. They are the knowledge of the existence of God and the knowledge of moral virtues. The human mind is able to see beyond the changing object so as to grasp the essence correctly.

Thomas Aquinas(1225- 1274)

Aquinas renders the ontological argument invalid. That no one can prove the existence of God by merely considering God’s existence from the point of view of Ontological argument. For one to say that “God exist”, implies the person presumes to know God’s essence. Human beings lack the capacity or the faculty to know the essence of God. What man can do is only to describe God. For Aquinas, the prove of God’s existence is not self-

evident to us, just as one conceives of “a square as having four sides”. He affirmed that there are other ways to prove God’s existence. Human beings cannot do it just by examining the concept ‘God’. You need to consider the nature of God, His original cause and His manifestation.

In question two of Aquinas Summa Theologiae and in chapters 10 – 13 of his Summa Contra Gentiles. For Aquinas, human reason can grasp the knowledge of the existence of God.

To affirm this assertion, Brooke and Kenneth note:

*Human reason, for Aquinas, could know of the existence of God and also that there can be but one God. However, other aspects of God’s being are less available to human reason.*¹⁶

There is only one God, one truth. Other attributes of God’s being are beyond human reason to comprehend. He proved the existence of God to refute some of his predecessors who held that the knowledge of God’s existence is innate and cannot be demonstrated. Aristotle had earlier commented:

*It seems self-evident that there is a God. For things are said to be self-evident to us when we are innately aware of them, as in the case of first principle*¹⁷

For Aquinas, it is possible to think that something exists whose non-existence cannot be thought. Clearly, we can assert that such a being is greater than the being whose non-existence can be thought. If we deny God’s existence, what it means is that something greater than God could be

thought of and that could be contrary to the name 'God'. It is not news that truth exists, for even when we deny it would amount its admittance.

Hence, Godfrey Ozumba comments on Aquinas:

*He talks of two forms of knowledge, through sensation (sense) and through intellect. Sensory knowledge is the most fundamental and primary of human knowledge... We cannot have the knowledge of God without having the knowledge of particular sensible things in the world.*¹⁸

This sharp critique of Aquinas on the Ontological argument, led to his introduction of five other ways.

The first was his idea of motion; As he looked around the world, he observed that everything in the universe is in motion. It is obviously clear that they did not place themselves into motion. If every moving thing were moved by another moving thing, there must be a first mover or an unmoved mover, who causes every other thing to be in motion. If first mover does not exist, there will be no other mover, and nothing will be in motion. Having seen that natural things in the universe are in motion, a first mover must therefore exist that is moved by no other which is called God. Conclusively on this, Aquinas meant that things do not bring themselves into existence. So, he concludes that God must exist in order for there to be, an unmoved or first mover of all things. If no ultimate mover then there is no motion.

His second argument is on Efficient cause: He observed that various kinds of effect which assign as an efficient cause to that effect. e.g, I dropped a pen on the table. The pen is an effect while the one who dropped it is the efficient cause. Another example is this; A mother is an efficient cause to a child which is the effect. No event can be its own cause. A cause is prior to

effect. Each prior cause must itself have its own effect. All the causes depend on the first efficient cause which every human being called God.

The third proof is on Necessary and Possible Being; Aquinas discovered that in the state of nature, he found things that are possible to be and not to be. Possible (contingent) beings are those things which come into existence and go out of existence. What he means is that there was a time when trees, human beings, animals, even the universe was not in existence. All possible beings at one time did not exist. They come into existence and pass out of existence. For Aquinas, there is need for man to admit that a Necessary being does exist which has its own existence and will remain in existence. This particular being everyone refers to as God.

The fourth proof is on the degree of perfection; In his radical thought, Aquinas came to understand that in nature, things are more good while some are less good. There are resemblance and difference in them. Every existing thing in nature has limitations and imperfect attributes. There must be a perfect being, best and noble in all time. This being Aquinas concludes as God.

The fifth proof is on the order of the universe; Aquinas observed that things move in an orderly way to achieve a best result. There is order in seasonal changes, in planting and harvesting. The universe has natural law and order in the arrangement of things. Hence, he concludes that some intelligent beings exist by whom all natural things are directed to their teleological end.

William of Ockham (1290-1341)

He was a critical specialist philosopher in Logic. His philosophical principle is widely referred to as Ockham's razor. His philosophical stand is that being should not be multiplied unnecessarily, if there is any possibility of doing your philosophical inquiry without reference to this hypothetical existence of being.

Hence, Omoregbe notes:

*We really have no knowledge of God says Ockham. All we know about him are the attributes we ascribe to him. But these attributes are only concepts and we cannot show that these concepts or attributes really belong to God's essence.*¹⁹

Ockham criticized the causal prove on the existence of God by previous philosophers, stating that efficient causality is not a valid argument. Why did he say so? It is actually because we did not experience one thing causing another being. For him, causality should not be viewed from *a priori* perspective rather than *a posteriori*.

He equally criticized the previous proves from motion. The idea of whatever moves is moved by some other being leads to an infinite regress and cannot be proven to an unmoved mover, in a series of movers in motion.

Thomas Hobbes (1588 -1679)

He was a contemporary to Descartes. He wrote with Descartes. After the Death of Descartes in 1650 he wrote *The Leviathan* in 1651. For him, all things were made of material particles and everything is reducible to motion. For Hobbes, " *all that exist is bodies in motion being a continual relinquishing of one place and acquiring of another* ".²⁰ . For Hobbes, there is a basic mental perception where all other phenomena derives theirs from. For him, perception with the senses is caused by motion. Motion in the external world causes motion within . This motion within is experienced by us as external object.

Benedict Spinoza (1632-1677), a contemporary of Descartes, reasons in line with Descartes on the essence of God. He developed his own idea of God which was unacceptable to the Jewish religious community. He saw reality as a substance, infinite, eternal, divine. It is to be called God or nature. He identified God as an absolute infinite Being with infinite attributes with eternal essence. He presents God as a unique and only substance that necessarily exists in an infinite way. Existence is in the nature of God. Whatever is, is either a substance or in a substance. Reality for him means what is, something unique. Everything exists within the nature of substance, and nature is God. He identified God as “*natura naturata*” – the naturing nature while other created things are - the natured nature both consisting of non- eternal, indivisible, infinite reality. Reality for him is non-dependent being subsisting or existing in itself and for itself. He defined substance as that which is in itself and is conceived through itself. Writing on God’s existence Spinoza acknowledges that substance does not require the knowledge of other things. A person can be certain that he has the knowledge of substance. For Spinoza to have the knowledge of something is to have the knowledge of its cause. He advocates for the principles of sufficient reason for everything. There must be a reason for existence and non-existence of anything. Spinoza has it that God’s essence is His existence. He draws his claim that by God he means substance consisting of infinite attributes. For Spinoza God necessarily exists and His existence involves His essence. God is a necessary being and besides Him, no substance can be conceived.

Anne Conway (1631-1679)

She developed a philosophy of monadology. A view which states that all things are reducible to a single substance that in itself not reducible. For her, all created things have the mental and physical substances. Every created substance depend on God's decision. On this, Brooke et. al comment;

“God, of course is another matter, Conway believed. God is non-material, non- physical; God is also all-perfect. Therefore the one thing God cannot do is to change his mind about being spiritual.”²¹

According to Anne, God is perfect and changeless. He exist outside the dimension of time. God has no reason to change from spiritual to physical. If He does, what that means is that He is not perfect before the change.

Gottfried Wilhelm, Baron von Leibnitz: (1646- 1716)

Another philosopher we deemed necessary to review is Leibnitz.

He based his argument on the idea of sufficient reason, just as the principle of cause and effect. Like Descartes, he said that the idea of infinite perfect being is intrinsically possible and involves no contradiction. According to him, to be absolutely perfect means to possess all perfections and since existence is perfection, it follows that being that has this privilege of being absolutely perfect wound not lack existence. God possess these qualities, He is a necessary being. His existence involves His essence.

Leibnitz argument is a repetition of Cartesian ontological argument. He said that the existence and the essence of a finite being could be separated but only in God that they are inseparable.

David Hume (1711-1776) vehemently rejected Descartes view as unrealistic. That our ideas reach no further than our experience would lead us to ask questions about the existence of God. Being an empiricist, Hume argued first that every simple idea was derived from some simple impression and that every complex idea was made up of simple impressions and ideas. Hence he opines:

*Now since nothing is ever present to the mind but perception and since all ideas are derived from something antecedently present to the mind; it follows that it is impossible for us as much as to conceive or form an idea of anything specifically different from idea and impression.*²²

Hume's argument is that the senses provide us with knowledge rather than reason. What it meant is that sense experience could not have concepts in the normal sense of the term. So with this position he destroyed innatism which is a stepping stone of Descartes proof Gods existence.

Another philosopher who was against the argument on the existence of God is **Ludwig Feuerbach**. He observed that man's primitive search for knowledge is a projection and objectification of his essence, as another being distinct from himself. In his exposition on the I- thou relationship, he demonstrated the need of the order which man links with the divine. For him, God is the projected image of man and this image involves man's infinite power and rationality. To create his image involves man's infinite power and rationality to create his material condition.

In his idea of quality, Feuerbach has it that the divine attributes are indeed human. God will not accept the attributes of human frailties, that one can only know God by the emancipation of human attributes. He negates the existence of God. Feuerbach notes: “*What was formally contemplated and worshiped as God is now perceived to be something human.*”²³ For Feuerbach, if man claims back the qualities he attributed to God, God ceases to exist because it is an absurdity, for Him to exist without qualities. Since man knows a being only through its qualities and God is without qualities, He cannot be known and man can forget about Him and be absorbed in the world.

Soren Kierkegaard(1813- 1855)

An existentialist philosopher objected to Descartes thought on *cogito ergo sum*. For him, he committed fallacy of begging the question in a way that “I” exists before he came to the conclusion. He posits that some other thing could have been doing the thinking. It could be through intuition rather than the “I” which is under critical verification. His position is that we cannot proof the existence of God by reason. We can have faith in God, but is irrational to believe in God because God is beyond reason.

In line with Kierkegaard is Bertrand Russell, who shares similar view on the thinking self. For him, Why must the thinking be done by the “I” which is the subject? What if the thought was not originally from Descartes but came to him intuitively. For that, Descartes prove was not a valid one as far as logic is concerned, because it lacks logical reasoning that leads to conclusion.

Fredrick Nietzsche is another philosopher we deemed fit to review. Nietzsche has the conviction in him that God is already dead. Hence Joseph Omoregbe comments. *“The death of God, according to Nietzsche, means man’s liberation. God was an obstacle to man’s progress, but now that he is dead man is liberated.”*² ⁴Nietzsche sees God as the greatest objection against human existence. A life lived subject to God is of necessity a rejection of man’s ingenuity and potentialities. For Nietzsche, God is dead and it is science and rationalism that killed God since they started subduing the earth without wasting their energies on God. The invention of God was a quest for man’s reward and revenge.

At the announcement of the death of God, man’s pre-history is finished. His main quarrel with philosophers is that they placed the emptiest concept which ought not to be as the first. He challenged the attributes which traditional theologians give to God as eternity, immutability and simplicity. It is the human mind itself which forgets that he fashions this principle and creator. He posited that all knowledge of God is nothing but the knowledge of man. To believe in God, for Nietzsche, is affirming that not being is and being is not or powerlessness has power and power is powerless.

Karl Marx(1818-1883)

Karl Marx is an atheist. He set man at the summit of cosmos. Man now becomes the supreme being because of his passion for man. With this in mind he decided to believe nothing as superior to man. With this in mind , Marx considers it necessary to destroy religion. In his judgement, religion is the opium, the drug, the substitute which prevent man from becoming aware of his dignity.

In his view, man is a creature, religion does not justify a real limitations of man rather its failure to reach his own greatness. Max considers religion as the groan of the oppressed, the sentiment of the heartless world deprived of spirituality. In his opinion, religion is an illusion. It gives reason to keep the society functioning as it is.

He liken religion as the function of capitalism which takes productive labour and alienates human from its value. Religion takes our highest ideas and aspirations, and alienate man from them, protecting them onto an alien and unknowable being called God.

Conclusively for Marx, man is the world, the state, the society. It is this state and society that produce religion. Man is seen as the supreme being. Religion overthrows man , degrades, enslaves man from getting too greatness. He sees religion as man's enemy, which creates an illusory fantasies for the poor.

Logical Positivism

In the modern era, the greatest concentration on the use of language, took place in response to logical positivism and to the latter work of Wittgenstein (1889–1951). Logical positivism promoted an empiricist principle of meaning. The following empiricist principle represent: the propositional claim (statement) to be meaningful, it must either be about the bare formal relations between ideas such as those in mathematics and analytic definitions (“A is A,” “triangles are three-sided”) or there must in principle be perceptual experience providing evidence of whether the claim is true or false. (The stronger version of positivism is that claims about the world must be verifiable at least in principle). Both the weaker view (with its more open ended reference to evidence) and the strict view (in principle confirmation) delimit meaningful discourse about the world. In line with this

form of positivism, A. J. Ayer(1910–1989) and others claimed that God's existence is meaningless. How might one empirically confirm that God is omnipresent or loving.

Krishna is an avatar of Vishnu? In an important debate in the 1950s and 1960s, philosophical arguments about God were likened to debates about the existence and habits of an unobservable gardener, based on a parable by John Wisdom in 1944–1945. The idea of a gardener who is not just invisible but who also cannot be detected by any sensory faculty seemed nonsense. It seemed like nonsense because they said there was no difference between an imperceptible gardener and no gardener at all. Using this garden analogy and others crafted with the same design, Anthony Flew (see his essay in Mitchell 1971) made the case that God's existence claims do not pass the empirical test of meaning. This concept of God's existence remains a philosophical or intellectual battlefield where the debates centered on whether God exists is meaningful or conceptually absurd.

Empirical verificationism is by no means dead. Some critics of the belief in an incorporeal God continue to advance the same critique as that of Flew and Ayer, albeit with further refinements.

The most radical charge was that positivism is self-refuting. The empiricist criterion of meaning itself does not seem to be a statement that expresses the formal relation of ideas, nor does it appear to be empirically verifiable. How might one empirically verify the principle? At best, the principle of verification seems to be commendation as to how one can describe those statements that Logical Positivists are prepared to accept as meaningful. But then, how might a dispute about which other statements are meaningful be settled in a non-arbitrary fashion? To religious believers for whom talk of "Brahman" and "God" is at the center stage of meaningful discourse, the

use of the principle of empirical verification will seem arbitrary and a kind of begging the question, If the positivist principle is tightened up too far, it seems to threaten various propositions that at least appear to be highly respectable.

The literature review evaluate sources of knowledge. It equally traced from antiquity, the prove of God's existence and those who denied His existence.

ENDNOTES

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CHAPTER THREE

3.1 FATHER OF MODERN PHILOSOPHICAL METHOD

While at Newburg on November 10 1619, Descartes discovered a new approach to philosophical problems which he called-method. It is the believe of Descartes that through reason one can get to objective certainty which is the ultimate reality and the knowledge of ourselves and that of the external world. For Descartes, certainty is independent, absolutely objective and complete. It is immutable, clear and distinct. One arrived at certainty through a rigorous process of reasoning, free from bias mind.

In his Cartesian method, effort is made to device a means by which human knowledge may be attained without doubt, but with certainty.

Acknowledging this Cartesian strength, Lisska writes:

Thus Descartes epistemological problem is over establishing the possibility of veridical knowledge. To do this, Descartes utilized a unique method in philosophy, one which will help determine his claim as the father of modern philosophy.¹

Descartes made use of his rational power to create or to put to birth an absolute system of knowledge that is free from error. Thus, Bonachristus Umeogu notes;

Modern rationalism stems from the work of Descartes. Cartesius after coming through mathematical reasoning and progression in his cogito ergo sum “I think therefore i exist”, therefrom went ahead to deduce the existence of the world and God.²

The above work from Umeogu shows that Descartes changed the philosophical view point from object to subject by subjecting his previous knowledge to doubt, until he got to the knowledge of his existence “I think, therefore i exist”. The above quotation shows that consciousness of the self is the highest point in Descartes philosophy.

In line with this, C. G. Prado comments;

...‘modern’ does not here mean current or up-to-date, ‘modern’ in ‘modern philosophy’ designates reason centered philosophizing as intimated by Descartes.³

Descartes shifts his philosophical inquiry from metaphysical speculation about reality and ethics to how we know. This shift of focus made Descartes to relocate certainty from authority and tradition to reason.

However, C. G. Prado comments;

The term ‘modern’ in philosophy and intellectual history has a broader meaning referring to the priority of reason in all forms of inquiry, and to the common objective of acquiring knowledge to subjugate nature to human understanding and control.⁴

Descartes distanced himself from language in his quest to understand ‘nature’; He started his philosophy by testing certainty of his previous knowledge with universal doubt to see which one will remain after the process. He was able to find certainty in his consciousness.

Hence, C. G. Prado comments;

Descartes profoundly believed that we can reason our way to objective truth and are able to acquire timeless and certain knowledge about ourselves and the world and to some extent about God.⁵

The aim of his inquiry was to establish the absolute truth and the reality of God and other external realities. Descartes was acclaimed the father of modern philosophy due to his approach to philosophy. He cast doubt on all his previous knowledge, preconception, presuppositions and his beliefs in order to get an indubitable knowledge of all realities. He got to the knowledge of God and other extended realities through the use of good reason. Hence, he turned traditional philosophy from the point of view of object to that of subject.

His programme initiated what is known as modern philosophy. He tried to present philosophy in a face of mathematics by placing emphasis upon the rational capacity of the human mind. For him, what he thinks clearly with his mind exists outside the mind.

3.2 DESCARTES METHOD OF APPROACH

In Descartes' tradition, only one method which is universal in nature yields clear and distinct result when carefully implemented in any type of problem. For him, the lack of method of approach to problems results in confused and sterile out-put in all fields. His success in the epistemological inquiry was due to the use of a good method.

The method gives clear and distinct knowledge unique in itself, and yields positive result when utilized systematically. Descartes then, is mainly concerned with the problem of establishing the method of attaining veridical knowledge in order to confirm his epistemological acumen.

This method of enquiry will help to determine the extent to which human knowledge can be attained and its certainty. Descartes resolved to use all the powers within his limits to attain the truth, the indubitable truth. He maintains that a state is better ruled when she has few laws, this will also help philosophy when some rules guiding the method are keenly observed. Thus Descartes notes

And as a multitude of laws often gives occasion for vices, so that the state is much better ruled when it has only a very few laws which are very strictly observed; in the same way, instead of the great number of rules that make up logic, I the following four would be enough, provided that I make a firm and constant resolution not to fail even once in the observance of them.⁶

To observe these rules well, Descartes began by trying to get rid of all prejudices or bias, all superficialities and all preconceived ideas base on old tradition in his mind. The reason for this is to get into unshakable knowledge of things. In that other, he formulated four rules guiding the new philosophical method.

On this, Stumpf comments;

Method consists therefore in those rules by which our powers of intuition and deduction are guided in an orderly way.⁷

The intention of Descartes was to make all knowledge a universal mathematics. This method will lead him to a constructive way of thinking (reasoning) which will give rise to mathematical certainty of knowledge.

- (a) **The Rule of Certainty:** Descartes strictly maintains that he will never accept as true anything he did not know with sufficient evidence.
- (b) **The Rule of Division:** he set out to break into simple parts all the problem and difficulties he was examining. He split complicated issues into smaller parts for easy handling.
- (c) **The Rule of Order:** Descartes began this by trying to conduct his thoughts in an orderly manner, starting from the simplest and easiest objects, moving gradually to the knowledge of the most complex ones. He resolved never to follow a chronological order of those object, but to start from their order of importance.
- (d) **The Rule of Enumeration and Review:** His approach here is to make a complete enumeration and exposition of everything, and thoroughly review them generally in such a way that nothing was omitted. Through these rules, Descartes realized that man's knowledge of things is not far-fetched. No matter how obscure they may seem, they are within our reach, to be in a scheduled environment in order to observe these rules. Descartes did not try to propose a general rule; the purpose is to show how the use of method helped him in conducting his reasons normally. It is not enough to have good mind, what counts is to use it judiciously.

Descartes used the rules to define what he meant by method. He says that if these rules are accurately observed, one shall no longer see what is false and call it truth. On this Copleston notes:

By method I understand (a set of) certain and easy rules such that if a man observes them exactly-he will never waste his mental effort to no purpose, but will gradually be increasing his knowledge step by stem and so arrive at a true understanding of all those things that do not surpass his power.⁸

Descartes sees his method as requiring clear and distinct idea based on evidence and certitude. The method is deductive in nature. He rejected the dialectic method of Socrates, the syllogistic method of Aristotle and Bacon's inductive method. Why he accepted deductive method is on the ground that it is developed as a paradigm of what is intelligible.

From this also he derives his method of intuition, an act of direct apprehension, by which we conceive certain term simple or complex. In his view, intuition is not a clouded conception in the mind which is clear and distinct and is free from doubt.

3.3 HIS VISION AND MISSION.

Descartes' vision is to find out a system of thought, which will be the foundation of the principles of absolute certainty. Descartes started by rejecting any idea as certain and tries to discover the basis of certainty. He uses the method of doubting in order to find principles, which cannot be doubted. He starts doubting every item of knowledge he previously believed in order to arrive at certain knowledge.

His mission was to prove that God exist and that he is not a deceiver in order to guarantee the certainty of our clear and distinct ideas. His purpose is to find indubitable truth and to build up his knowledge on this certain truth. At this point, he states his basic foundation; "I think, therefore I exist".

Descartes' main objective is to present three skeptical arguments to bring doubt upon what he considers his basic belief. Descartes believes this to be an intricate part of his complete epistemological argument. Descartes' skeptical arguments are not intended to be a denial of his basic beliefs. On the contrary, he uses these arguments to help prove one of his main theses, which is the existence of God. One of the main premises that Descartes uses in his proof for the existence of God comes from the evil demon argument, which he propose, in the first meditation. It is this demon argument, which will be the topic of the following discussion. The purpose of Descartes' evil demon argument is to establish doubt upon his belief that God is the sole figure who put thoughts into his mind. Thus, Husserl comments.

The aim of the meditations is a complete reforming of philosophy into a science grounded on an absolute foundation. That implies for Descartes a corresponding reformation of all the sciences, because in his opinion they are only non- self-sufficient members of the one all- inclusive science, and this is philosophy.⁹

Descartes believes that knowledge comes from within(the mind). It is an indisputable fact to build on, which can be gained through individual reflection. While seeking true knowledge, Descartes writes his six meditations. In these mediations, Descartes tries to develop a strong foundation, which all knowledge can be built upon. In the first meditation, Descartes begins developing this foundation through the method of doubt. He casts doubt upon all his previous beliefs.

Descartes notes;

*What I have so far accepted as true par excellence, I have got either from the senses or by means of the senses. Now I have sometimes caught the senses deceiving me; and a wise man never entirely trusts those who have once cheated him.*¹⁰

Once Descartes clears away all beliefs that can be called into doubt, he can then build a strong base for all true knowledge to stand upon. He attacks all his previous beliefs by going to the root of their origin, the senses and intellect. Descartes recognized that all his influence of false beliefs could impair his scientific investigations, producing possible false conclusion to his thinking. Therefore, he realized that it was necessary, once in a life time, to demolish everything completely and start again in a surer foundation.

3.4 THE DOCTRINE OF METHODIC DOUBT

It is a methodological form or systemic process adopted by Descartes in order to arrive at a truth claim. Method is a process that guide the thought from derailing. He likened his method to that of an architect who plans to build a house that will be stable on ground where there is sandy soil. It subjects all knowledge claims to critical scrutiny. For Descartes, knowledge starts from doubt. Skeptics' doubt merely for the sake of doubting but for Descartes, systematic doubt is the process of reaching certainty in knowledge. He started his philosophy by testing the certainty of his previous knowledge with universal doubt to see which one will remain after the process. His aim was to bulldoze everything completely and start to again right from the foundation. Descartes notes;

Not that I imitated the skeptics, who doubt just for the sake of doubting and effect to be always undecided; on the contrary, my whole aim was to reach security, and cast aside loose earth and sand so as to reach rock or clay.¹¹

Doubt is based on self manifestation of what is known. It looks for evidence which gives rise to certitude. On this ground then, doubt has become the chief weapon of Descartes philosophical enquiry. Everything appeared insecure and erroneous for him because his mind was filled with doubt. He advises that it is good to doubt at least once in one's life time, in order to discover whatever can resist the doubt process. Hence, Edmund Husserl has this to say;

Doubt is raised at least by the fact that the positive sciences, which were to experience an absolutely rational grounding by these meditations, have paid a little attention to them.¹²

He began by the process of elimination. Whatever we found the least doubt in, he rejected as knowledge. In this venture, Descartes invented a method that could lead him to certainty in knowledge. He comments;

...I rejected as absolutely false everything in which I could imagine the least doubt, so as to see whether after this process, anything in my set of belief remains that is entirely indubitable.¹³

This method is profitable, only what is resistant to it is taken as true. In order to put the methodic doubt into effective use, Descartes resolved to withdraw from the rest of the world. He liked to be alone so as to avoid errors. This marked the beginning of the philosophy of caution. In his

solitary life, he was able to reconstruct certainty into security which no doubt can assail.

When he noticed that not everything is false since himself exists which he cannot doubt, Descartes proclaimed “I think, therefore, I am”. Thus, the cogito ergo sum” is the end point of the methodic doubt. He could not doubt his own existence, as a thing that thinks. It was on this note that Marvin comments :

... ended when he reached the experience of doubting itself, for it appeared to be certain that the experience itself could not be doubted. That led him to conclude certainty for the realm of thought, certainty meaning indubitability.¹⁴

Descartes’ method requires a sincere doubt as opposed to a merely hypothetical doubt. Hypothetical doubt is in fact sufficient to induce recognition that one’s confidence is not unshakably firm as is required for the foundations or knowledge. His method emphasise on doubt rather than certainty. Descartes admits that the usefulness of such extensive doubt lies in freeing us from all our preconceived opinions. In this case, doubt is to be used as a sure route to certain knowledge.

3.5 CRITERIA FOR TRUTH AND ERROR

Many at times, we are confronted with the question – what is truth? In his attempt to answer this question, Descartes tried to set out some criteria for truth and error. He affirms that truth is not even found among the cleverest people of the world, rather it could be found among undistinguished minds. The notion of truth adopted by Descartes is a methodological approach which is unique in itself.

On this C. G. Prado comments;

*Descartes view of truth had Plato as its intellectual progenitor : It was his methodology for attaining truth that was new. Where Plato relied on dialectics, Descartes put his truth on analysis.*¹⁵

In Descartes use of language, truth as an objective reality referred to the object of thought. What is being thought about is the object while the investigator of the object becomes the subject. E.g portrait and someone. The someone is the subject of investigation while the portrait is the object.

Subsequently, he finds it reasonable to distinguish certainty from truth. And certainty according to epistemologists can be applied to a statement when the sense or the fact in which statement made is true. In other words, the object is the case.

But when opposite is the case, the statement is false. To say precisely that what we know is the case and that there is a criterion on which truth is to be based implies the definition of truth itself. In Its general usage, truth is the agreement of thought with its object, which is the conformity of knowledge with what is known. It involves simple appreciation and sensory/intuitive knowledge.

Descartes maintains that truth and its criterion is the clarity and distinctiveness of ideas. But when error or falsity is discovered, the knowledge claimed previously as true is refuted. Ayer affirms this position of Descartes that; *The discovery of error refutes the claims of knowledge; but it does not prove that the claim was not, in the circumstances legitimately made*¹⁵To say that something is true implies its assertion. For instance, to say that Rene Descartes is dead is true, means the assertion of his not being alive.

However, truth and falsity (error) function as marks of assertion or denial. For Descartes, the only way through which one can arrive at the knowledge of the criteria of truth and error is by the pursuit of clear and distinct reality. This is the fundamental criteria for the certainty Descartes is looking for in knowledge. The truth of the “cogito” is self-evident and indubitable. Descartes’ “*cogito ergo sum*” provided a sure criterion for truth. This is from the view that after investigating its certainty, Descartes was adequately convinced that he exists – “I think therefore I am”.

In that order Descartes saw that error is caused by the defective faculties in man-mainly, the intellect and will. Hence, error is not something real, but a defect or a lack in a being. Furthermore, Descartes writes: “*Error is not a pure negation, but a privation or a lack of some knowledge that somehow ought to be in me.*”¹⁶ It has become clear then that error is neither a negative nor a positive reality: rather, it is a privation or a lack of knowledge that we ought to have had. At times our senses confuse us with an illusion that seems to portray the real appearance of existing objects. To avoid this error in knowledge we require the mind’s disciplined attention to the attainment of truth that is self-evident. For him, truth is not relative, rather it is absolute

3.6 CERTAINTY IN HUMAN KNOWLEDGE

The problem that Descartes has been fighting is how to establish true and certain knowledge. He affirms that it is only when we are equipped with the intrinsic and extrinsic values of knowledge that we can proceed to know and study particular realities. The object of knowledge is precisely put in terms of its degree of certainty as something known that does not contradict itself. Hence, Blocker et al note; *The object of knowledge, is then defined in*

*terms of the degree of certainty with which it is known when we know something, it is such that it could not be otherwise*¹⁷

Furthermore, he says that even when formulated in a proposition, that statement must be true and correspond to our claim. It is when these conditions are satisfied, and the object known is indubitable, that certainty is obtained in human knowledge. Supporting this opinion of Descartes, Hamlyn writes:

*One condition of being said to know something is that, what one claims to know must be the case, if it is an object that we claim to know, this must exist, and if what one claims to know is formidable in a proposition this must be true*¹⁸

The First certainty that Descartes had ever met in human knowledge is the awareness of his own existence. Hence, he affirms that the seed of knowledge is based on subjectivity and common sense habits of the mind. Certainty then is within the reach of man since he is a being endowed with natural intellect or reason, capable of grasping or apprehending the simple truth. So the right order to certainty in human knowledge involves a gradual movement from simple truth to complex realities, with the aid of reason. The only right order to knowledge in the opinion of Descartes is the use of method. For Descartes, the only knowledge which one can doubt its certainty is that of the self and mathematics.

3.7 DESCARTES MEDIATIONS

In the Meditations, Descartes embarks upon what Bernard Williams has called the project of 'Pure Enquiry' to discover certain, indubitable foundations for knowledge. By subjecting everything to doubt Descartes hoped to discover whatever was immune to it.

Descartes meditations are based on the epistemological theory of rationalism: that is if someone truly knows something then they could not possibly be mistaken. He provides solid arguments for what his meditations stand for, and how he obtained a clear and distinct perception of “innate” ideas. In his meditations he comes to terms with three certainties: the existence of the mind as the thing that thinks the body as an extension, and God as the Supreme Being. Descartes is interested in the certainty of his existence and the existence of other people and things. Descartes argues that knowledge is acquired through awareness and experience. Using this approach, Descartes moves through doubt to certainty of his existence. He asks himself various questions about the certainty of his existence and solves them through clear thought and logic.

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CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 THE CARTESIAN QUEST FOR CERTAINTY

The quest for certainty in knowledge forms the core of Descartes epistemological posture. He is earnestly attempting to establish solid and reliable foundation for human knowledge. This intellectual voyage of his reposes much confidence upon human reason. Bearing this in the depth of his mind Descartes asks: what do I know? How do I know that I know? If there is doubt in my knowledge of things, what of my own existence and my own doubt?

Consequently, in the first part of his meditations, he exposes every aspect of our perceptive faculties. In this venture he observes that the ideas we perceive through seeing, hearing, feeling, testing and smelling involving the senses are non-veridical. For instance, a straight stick immersed into a cup of water appears bent to the viewer. Also, when the railway line is seen from a point, the farthest end converges. These and more are caused by optical illusions and defects of the sense organs, Descartes maintains.

Where can certainty be found then in human knowledge, since the sense organs deceive us? While some philosophers maintain that whatever is certain is known, others say that not all that is known may be certain. Therefore, certainty is not co-extensive with clarity. For Descartes, epistemology is a rational search for the indubitable. He contends that nothing can be known unless it is certain. And that when one claims to know anything at all, that which he or she knows must in fact be clear and distinct.

Being filled with this zeal to establish a sure route to knowledge, he hopefully writes that Archimedes looked for a point so as to move the earth;

but we should be assured of wonderful thing if Descartes finds an indubitable reality. For this reason Descartes comments:

Archimedes sought only a firm and immovable point in order to move the entire earth from one place to another. Surely, great things are to be hoped for if I am lucky enough to find at least one thing that is certain and indubitable.¹

Descartes made a firm resolution to look for this indubitable reality based on certainty. The criterion for his enquiry starts with the clarity and distinctness of ideas founded upon self-evident truth.

Another essential criterion is to base the enquiry on principles of rationality rid-of-doubt, prejudices and all bias. This is a right stride to the search for truth. Descartes strongly resolves to reject anything he could imagine the least doubt, as knowledge. He therefore began to make an evaluation of every reality before he accepts them as true objects of knowledge. This is done purposely because we assume so many things as true, but upon critical evaluation, they are found to be the opposite of truth. Affirming this assertion Russell writes.

In our daily life, we assume as certain many things which on a closer scrutiny are found to be so full of apparent contradictions that only a great amount of thought enables us to know what it is that we really may believe²

It is worthwhile then for one to subject one's belief to critical evaluation and scrutinization, in order to arrive at the proper knowledge of things with certainty. The basic element in this case is to find the link between the clear and distinct ideas, and examine how they are firmly connected. When this

link is grasped and effort is made to gather them together for final retouch and assimilation. In this indissoluble self-evident link can certainty be found and attained as a whole.

Hence, Rader comments:

*Certainty is attained only when every link is so firmly grasped and every connection has been so often reviewed, that the mind finally gathers together the links into an indissoluble, self-evident whole which it views at the same time.*³

Surely, the search for the indubitable and certain reality has to begin with what we claim to have known, by subjecting them to doubt, to see how they can resist this attack. If they resist and prove unshakeable, we can accept them as knowledge with certainty. He insists that we have to see how they are linked with each other, and how they can resist our doubtful attack.

4.2 THE CARTESIAN CIRCLE

Descartes documented many of his personal revelations which in turn influenced the world around him. As a modern philosophical genius, he posits that from birth, one is infused with Cartesian ideas of the existence of form, being, mind and God. Although written so long ago, Descartes' ideas are still taught, argued, and debated on many levels. Though Descartes broke through conventional society creating new ideas and revolutionizing the world through thought, he did much to contradict himself time and time again. The most taught, and most highly debated contradiction to speak of is the famous Cartesian Circle. Descartes' "Cartesian Circle" has come under fire from countless philosophers because it supposedly commits a logical fallacy with its circular reasoning. In his second Meditation, Descartes attempts to prove the existence of God. He states that clear and distinct

perception leads to knowledge, and that God's existence is apparent and obvious because of things we have come to perceive as knowledge.

Furthermore, he asserts that we cannot turn these perceptions into knowledge without the assurance that God exists. Especially, Descartes claims that God is a necessary condition for knowledge, which in turn requires the existence of God. This circular logic presents a problematic scenario similar to the "chicken or the egg" debate and has left philosophers pondering its legitimacy for decades. Embedded in the body of Descartes' Meditations, Descartes uses God to establish the Criterion of Truth, but also use the Criterion of Truth to prove that God exists. Thus, the Cartesian Circle is created. The first half of the circle is created by Descartes establishing the Criterion of Truth.

4.3 INTUITION AND DEDUCTION

Descartes formulated a method which according to him must be the basis of all scientific and philosophic research. For Descartes, intuition and deduction involve truth. Simple truth is acquired through intuition while deduction is the process of arriving at the truth without interruption. According to Stumpf,

Descartes placed the whole edifice of knowledge on the foundation of intuition and deduction, saying that these two methods are the most certain routes to knowledge, adding that any other approach should be rejected as suspect of error and dangerous.⁴

Witnessing to this view of Descartes, Samuel E. Stumpf tries to explain the mechanism:

*What makes intuition and deduction similar is that both involve truth; by intuition we grasp a simple truth completely and immediately: whereas by deduction we arrive at a truth by a process a continuous and uninterrupted action of the mind.*⁵

It is the process through which the human mind and the intellect attain self-evident proofs in mathematics. Intuition and deduction are two mental operations by which we are able to arrive at the knowledge of things without fear. Descartes declares:

*By intuition I understand not the fluctuating testimony of the senses, not the misleading judgment that proceeds from the blundering constructions of imagination, but the conception which an unclouded and attentive mind give us as readily and distinctly that we are wholly freed from doubt about that which we understand or what comes to the same thing. Intuition ...springs from the light of reason alone. It is more certain than deduction itself in that it is simpler. Thus each individual can mentally have intuition of the fact that he exists and that he thinks; that the triangle is bounded by three lines only; the sphere by a simple superficie.*⁶

Intuition gives us not only clear notions but also some truth about reality, such as, truth that are basic, simple and irreducible. Hence whatever the mind grasps by intuition is free from error, from the illusions of the senses, truth without any grounds for doubt.

To affirm this position, Ozumba and Ukah notes;

Descartes chose intuition and deduction as his method because according to him, intuition means intellectual activity or vision of clarity that leaves no doubt in the mind.... By intuition we grasp a simple truth completely and immediately as where by a process which involves a continuous and uninterrupted action of the mind.⁷

Thus, intuition which is the basic operation of the mind in its search for truth is clearly and distinctly grasped by the light of reason. By intuition we grasp the connection between one truth and another. For example, if A is equal to B, and B is equal to C, then A is equal to C, is made clear to us by intuition. When intuition has done its basic work of clearly and distinctly apprehending truth by the illuminating light of reason, then the second operation of the mind-deduction begins.

Deduction is simpler than intuition. It is the relation of truth to each other while intuition is a simple truth grasp independent of the senses. Descartes described it as all necessary inference from facts that are known with certainty by the continuous and uninterrupted action of a mind that has a clear vision (intuition) of each step in the process. The two are similar because both involve truth. Whereas by intuition we grasp a simple truth completely and immediately, by deduction we arrive at truth by a process- a continuous and uninterrupted action of the mind. With the truth apprehended, the mind now begins to make inferences and to discover new truths which necessarily follow from those already apprehended by intuition. In this way, the mind moves from the known to the unknown and thereby expands its field of knowledge.

By tying deduction so closely with intuition, Descartes gave a new interpretation of deduction which up to his time had been identified with a mode of reasoning called the syllogism, for whereas, a syllogism indicates the relationship of concepts to each other. Education for Descartes indicates the relationship of truths to each other. It is one thing to move from a fact that is known with certainty to a conclusion that that fact implies. But it is something different to go from premise to a conclusion as one does in syllogism; Descartes emphasized this difference between reasoning from a fact and a premise. The central point of this method was at stake here, Descartes was aware that one can reason consistently from a premise but argued that the value of the conclusion would depend upon whether the premise is true or not. Descartes wanted to rest knowledge upon a starting point that had absolute certainty in individual's own mind. Knowledge therefore requires the use of intuition and deduction, where the first principles are given by intuition alone while the remote conclusions are furnished only by deduction.

Intuition then is the most basic mental process in achieving knowledge. Specifically, it is the activity of reason devoid of emotion or desire, prejudices or imagination. The light of reason is the most certain route to knowledge and the mind should admit no other. All other mental processes such as induction, observation and imagination are merely auxiliaries to these. We can therefore say that Descartes' method lies purely on reason and self-reflection by which we can achieve transparent self-knowledge.

4.4 The Nature of Thinking (COGITO EROG SUM)

The concept of “*cogito ergo sum*” forms the summit of Descartes philosophy or more precisely his epistemology. As a rationalist, he observed that philosophy was founded on doubtful and shaky foundation. He saw sense experience as deceptive. Hence he made up his mind to build a philosophy from a new foundation based on clear and distinct idea. He decided to ‘epoche’ his previous knowledge and to tackle the problem step by step until he got to the simple base where he can no longer doubt his knowledge, he named it cogito ergo sum-I think, therefore I am. Hence, B. E. Nwaigwe writes;

Although Locke and Spinoza think, and I suppose rightly that material things could be endowed with the power of thinking. This is evident in modern computer technology, if we can take what the computer does as thinking.⁸

Seeing that our sense organs are deceitful and that they lead us to error, Descartes began to doubt everything and confessed that doubt filled his mind, such that no clear and distinct knowledge of reality was possible. Doubt is the method of Descartes philosophy which led him to certainty. He contended that only mathematics and logic are the paradigms of knowledge since their a priori truths are not indubitable. The doubts forms the characteristics of Descartes thought, in which he devoted efforts to ascertaining the unshakable truth.

A further development in his quest for certainty reveals that there is one thing he could not doubt its reality. It is the doubt of his own self, his own existence, the ego that things. Since he doubts all things, it means that he who doubts exists. He then wondered: “... *I noticed that during the time I wanted to think that everything was false, it was necessary that I, who*

*thought thus be something.*⁹ Confirming this opinion of Descartes, J. Marias proclaims “*Descartes prepared himself to think that everything is false, but he finds that there is one thing which cannot be false, his own existence.*”¹⁰

When one is aware of one’s own thought, he has attained the knowledge of his own existence which is indubitable. He then defines thought as all-embracing reality:

*Thought is a word that covers everything that exists in us in such a way that we are immediately conscious of it. Thus all the operations of the will, intellect, and imagination and of the senses are thoughts.*¹¹

Famously, Descartes holds that the occurrence of thought guarantees the existence of a thinker. As illustrated early in the Second Meditation, the purported insight has it that though the existence of my body is subject to doubt, the existence of me “qua thinker” looks to withstand even the most hyperbolic of doubts. The very attempt to doubt one’s own existence turns out self-stultifying: every such effort is an occurrence of thought; in turn, the occurrence of thought requires a thinker. Descartes regards the cogito as the first and most certain of all that will occur to anyone who philosophizes in an orderly way.

It is to be observed that for Descartes the validity of “Cogito ergo sum” rests in this, that the doubt presents intuitively to the mind the subject who doubts, that is, the thinking substance. In Descartes, “Cogito ergo sum” is assumed, not only in order to overcome the Sceptic position but as a foundation for the primary reality, from which the way to further research is to be taken.

Hence Silvanus Ifeanyi comments;

The first result of this personal independent reflection is seen in Descartes. He started his meditation by doubting everything but soon discovered that there was one thing he could not doubt-that he was doubting. If he was doubting, then he was thinking and thinking, and thinking is an affirmation of existence. Thus, he boldly affirmed, "I think, therefore I am" (Cogito ergo sum). This bold self-affirmation of Descartes undoubtedly gives man primacy and self- confidence. It makes him to be aware of his qualities and talents.¹²

With Descartes, philosophy ceases to be the science of being, and becomes the science of thought (epistemology). Whereas, at first, being conditioned thought, now it thought that conditions being. The "cogito" reveals the existence of the subject, limited and imperfect becomes liable to doubt. It is necessary to arrive at an objective and perfect reality.

4.5 INNATE IDEAS

Descartes commitment to innate idea placed him on the list of rationalist tradition. He upholds the innate origin of ideas in which he affirmed that the reality of knowledge is derived from the intellect. For him, ideas exist in the human mind before birth. These ideas according to him are not derived from the perceptive powers of the senses. In his meditations, Descartes contended that ideas mean images or representations which are not from the senses. They are in-born in us, just as the idea of me. Hence he puts it that:

I did not derive it from the senses, it did not at any time to me unexpectedly, as normally happens with the ideas of sensible objects when those objects affect the external sense organs; and it is not my own invention;... so it can only be innate in me, just as the idea of myself is.¹³

Following Plato's "reminiscence" or the analogous theory of "anamnesis", Descartes admits that innate idea has to do with one's memories which represent direct apprehension of reality formed in the mind before birth, but absorbed by the sense organs. The ideas thus stored are later recalled to mind at birth. So innate ideas express knowledge just as memory does.

Descartes conceives an idea as whatever the mind is aware of directly, without the mediation of the senses. This implies that the idea of God is innate or inborn in man. Here Descartes is not intending to say that infants and the foetus have actual notion of God, but that the potentiality of knowing God is inborn in everyman. To throw more light on this, Copleston maintains that:

He (Descartes) never intended to imply that infants in the womb have an actual notion of God, but only that there is in us by nature an innate potentiality whereby we know God.¹⁴

Nevertheless, Descartes made it emphatically clear that all ideas reside in the human mind. He confirms vigorously that an innate idea is one which the mind can produce by itself and out of its own capacity. For him, all clear and distinct ideas are innate. To add to these, knowledge of universal principles and the laws of physics, mathematics and logic are all in born in man. This is the bone of contention in Descartes' proof of the existence of God. He clearly writes that these innate ideas are distinct from adventitious and factitious ideas derived from experience.

According to Descartes, our minds come stocked with a variety of intellectual concepts – ideas whose content derives solely from the nature of the mind. This storehouse includes ideas in mathematics (e.g., number, line, triangle), logic (e.g, contradiction, necessity), and metaphysics (e.g., identity, substance, causality). Interestingly, Descartes holds that even our

sensory ideas involve innate content. On his understanding of the new mechanical physics, bodies have no real properties resembling our sensory ideas colors, sounds, tastes, and the like, thus implies that the content of such ideas draws from the mind itself. Unlike purely intellectual concepts, however, the formation of these sensory ideas depends on sensory stimulation.

4.6 THE EVIL GENIUS

Descartes employed two conjectures namely, the dream and the evil genius conjecture. Descartes asserts that there is a malevolent demon that deceives him to belief as true and certain what is false. On this, Rose and Haldane note;

I shall consider that the heavens, the earth, colors, figures, sound and all other external things are naught but the illusions and dreams of which this genius has availed himself in order to lay traps for my credulity: I shall consider myself as having no hand, no eyes, no flesh, no blood, nor any senses, yet falsely, believing myself to possess all these things....¹⁵

There was once an evil genius who promised the mother of us all that if she ate of the fruit of the tree, she would be like God, knowing good and evil. She did eat and she learned, but she was disappointed, for to know good and evil and not to be God is awful. There was a rumour of another evil genius. This evil genius promised no good, nor knowledge.

The most famous rendering of Descartes' most doubt takes the form of the Evil Genius Doubt. He asked himself, suppose I am the creation of a powerful but malicious being. This "evil genius" or deceiver has given me flawed cognitive faculties, such that he is in error even about impressive

matters that seem supremely evident. Descartes in the first meditation dreamed about doubt.

Though dreaming doubts do significant demolition work, they are light-duty bulldozers relating to Descartes' most powerful skeptical doubt. What further judgments are left to be undermined? Immediately following the First Meditation discussion of dreaming, Descartes tentatively concludes that dreaming motivated doubts undermine the results of empirical disciplines. Hence Descartes notes:

*What I have so far accepted as true par excellence, I have got either from the senses or by means of the senses. Now I have sometimes caught the senses deceiving me; and a wise man never entirely trusts those who have once cheated him.*¹⁶

Descartes' official position is that the Evil Genius Doubt is merely one among multiple hypotheses that can motivate the more general hyperbolic doubt. Fundamentally, the doubt is about my cognitive nature – about the possibility that my mind is flawed. Descartes consistently emphasizes this theme throughout the Meditations.

Having introduced the Evil Genius Doubt, the First Meditation programme of demolition is not only hyperbolic but universal. As Descartes remarks, “*I am obliged in the end to admit that none of my former ideas as beyond legitimate doubt*”.¹⁷ The early paragraphs of the Third Meditation clarify a further nuance of the Evil Genius Doubt—a nuance consistently observed thereafter. Descartes clarifies that Evil Genius Doubt operates in an indirect manner.

Many readers of Descartes assumed that the Evil Genius Doubt draws its skeptical force from the utmost power attributed to the deceiver. This is to misunderstand Descartes. He contends that an equally powerful doubt may be generated on the opposite supposition namely, the supposition that I am not the creature of an-powerful being:

Again, considering even more simple and fundamental ideas, like those of mathematics, how could Descartes Doubt that $2 + 3 = 5$ or that he exists? The only way is by considering that God may have given him a nature which could be deceived about such things. Descartes has a quite extraordinary conception of Omnipotence, even so, Descartes remarks:

*I will now shut my eyes, stop my eyes, stop my ears, withdraw all my senses; I will even blot out the image of corporeal objects from my consciousness... I am a conscious being; that is, a being that doubts, asserts, denies, understands few things, is ignorant of many, is willing or unwilling; and that has also imagination and sense...*¹⁸

How is Descartes going to remove this metaphysical or hyperbolic doubt? The answer is that he is going to prove that God exists and is not a deceiver. Another way of putting this is that in order to get rid of the Evil Genius, Descartes must show that such a being could not exist. The only way of doing this effectively, Descartes holds, is to prove that another being, namely a God who is not a deceiver, does exist. If such a God exists, then an omnipotent Evil Genius is not possible.

In the final analysis, Descartes holds that such transparent truths – along with demonstrable truth, and many judgments of internal sense – are indeed knowable. To become actually known, however, they must be unshakably

grounded in the face of the most powerful doubts. The stage is thus set for the introduction of this most powerful doubt. The stage is thus set for the introduction of this most powerful doubt. He notes:

The only doubtful point that remains here is that it seems to follow that therefore I can never go wrong. If I owe whatever is in me to God, and he has given me no faculty of going wrong, it seems that I never can go wrong. Certainly, so long as I think only of God, and turn my attention wholly to him, I can discern no cause of error or falsehood. ¹⁹

The framework of his arguments center on the great chains of being, in which God's perfect goodness is relative to His perfect being. On the extreme opposite end of the scale is complete nothingness, which is also the extreme of evil. Thus, humans are an intermediary between these two extremes, being less "real" or "good" than God, but more "real" or "good" than nothingness. Thus, error (as a part of evil) is not a positive reality; it is only the absence of what is correct. In this way, its existence is allowed within the context of a perfect God. Thus he notes:

Error is not a pure negation; it is a privation – the lack of some knowledge that in some way ought to be in me. And considering the nature of God, it seems impossible for him to have put in me a faculty not perfect of its kind... ²⁰

Descartes also concedes two points that might allow for the possibility of his ability to err. First, he notes that it is very possible that his limited knowledge prevents him from understanding why God chose to create him so he could make mistakes. If he could see the things that God could see,

with a complete and infinite scope, perhaps he would judge his ability to err as the best option. Descartes claims that because he is unable to completely comprehend the mind of God, it is impossible to completely understand the “why” through science. He knew that his nature is weak and limited and that God is limitless, incomprehensible, and infinite. From this, Descartes infers that God can do innumerable things whose reasons are unknown to him. The second is that, he realized that God has the ability to create a large number of things of which he would just be a part. Perhaps the error is only apparent when looking at the individual and is reconciled when looking at the whole.

Now when I do perceive clearly and distinctly enough what the truth is, it is clear that if I abstain from judgment I do right and am not deceived. But if I assert or deny, I am using my free will wrongly; if the side I take is falsehood, then clearly I shall be in error; if I embrace the other side, I shall by chance fall upon the truth, but nevertheless this decision will be blameworthy...²¹

To crown it all, the fourth Meditation attributes the source of error to a discrepancy between two divine gifts: namely, understanding and will. Understanding is given in an incomplete form, while will can only be either completely given or not given at all. When he is presented with a certain amount of understanding and then chooses to act outside or that, he is in error. Thus, the gifts of God (understanding and will) both remain good and only the incorrect usage by him remains as error.

4.7 DESCARTES PROOF OF GOD'S EXISTENCE

Many readers follow Descartes with fascination and pleasure as he descends into the pit of skepticism in the first two Mediations, defeats the skeptics by finding the a version of the cogito, his nature, and that of bodies, only to find themselves baffled and repulsed when they come to his proof for the existence of God in Meditation III.

In Meditation V of the Meditations of First Philosophy, Descartes considers a second argument for the existence of God. Descartes posits that the certainty of the existence of God should have “at least the same level of certainty” as the truths of mathematics.

This phrase could possibly be interpreted to mean either “certainly as certain as” or “more certain than”. A common view seems to be that since Descartes is reasoning from the Principle of Contradiction that he is arguing for the certainty of God to be equal to that of mathematics. That is, since it is both impossible that a triangle should have other than three sides, likewise it is equally impossible that existence not appertain to God, hence they are of equal logical certainty.

In *Medication V*, Descartes argued on the basis of the logical certainty of the principle of contradiction to the ontological certainty of God. As eternally true as mathematics and geometry may be, existence is not of their essence; God alone is ontologically certain. Thus the truths of mathematics are ontologically contingent on the existence of God, and the existence of God must necessarily be more certain than that of mathematics and geometry for the latter to be certain. We find that this is consistent with the conclusion of the first argument in Meditation III; in that argument, Descartes concluded that the objective reality of God was greater than anything else, hence more certain than any other thing, by ‘God’, I

understand, a substance which is infinite, independent, supremely intelligent, supremely powerful, and which created both myself and everything else (if else there be) that exists. All these attributes are such that, the more carefully I concentrate on them, the less possible it seems that they could have originated from me alone. So, from what has been said it must be concluded that God necessarily exists.

The proof of God's existence was a way to arrive at the knowledge of God's existence and reality as an indubitable truth. In this presentation, it is subdivided into four subheadings for easy apprehension.

4.7.1 PROOF OF OTHER EXISTING THINGS

Descartes method is rooted in doubting everything man could posit as knowledge of something. With his methodic doubt he even doubted the existence of his own body. Hence he maintains that: "... *I have already denied that I have any sense and anybody*".²² Descartes having established so far only that he exists as a thinking being, he must in order to prove the existence of anything else and in particular of an external physical world proceed entirely from the content of his own consciousness. Since he asserts that "*I am certain that I am a conscious being*"²³ As he notice some ideas in him, Descartes notes:

*Among these ideas, some seem to me to be innate some seem to be derived from external source, and some seem to be produced by me. I understand what a thing is, what truth, what thought is – I do not seem to have derived these from any source other than from my very own nature. But now I hear a noise, I see the sun, and I feel a fire; until this point I judged that these things proceeded from certain things existing outside me.*²⁴

Descartes was of the opinion that ideas coming from things existing outside him should be investigated upon, so that after the investigation, he could ascertain that it is true knowledge and then the existence of other things could as well be affirmed. Descartes sees nature as imposing on him the idea that things exist outside of him. And he thought if these ideas are similar to one other, it then means that they do not exist but are produced by his mind. Although these ideas do not depend on the will, it does not therefore follow that they necessarily proceed from things existing outside him. He argues that even if these ideas do proceed from things other than himself, it does not therefore follow that they must be similar to these objects. So he thought perhaps there is also in him some other faculty, one not yet sufficiently known to him, that produces these ideas. So Descartes went further to argue that insofar as one idea, represents one thing and another idea another thing, it is obvious that they are very different from one another. So he added that there is no question that those ideas that exhibit substances to him are something more and they contain more objective reality.

On the idea about God he then writes;

Again the idea that enable me to understand the highest God, one who is eternal infinite, Omniscient, Omnipotent, and creator of all things other than himself, has more objective reality in it than those ideas through which finite substance are exhibited.²⁵

4.7.2 PROOF FROM THE CAUSE OF THE IDEA OF GOD

After affirming the existence of self and other things outside the self, Descartes proceeds to demonstrate God's existence. He undertook this demonstration without limiting himself to reference of the sensory experience as a means to conclude the existence of God as Thomas Aquinas did in his own proof. The question is therefore, whether the idea of God could have been produced by myself – what is this idea? What is its source? By mere mention of the name of God, Descartes notes:

I understand by the word 'God' an infinite and independent substance intelligent and powerful in the highest degrees, who created me along with everything, else.²⁶

For Descartes to examine the attributes and characteristics of God, he will find out that the idea cannot have come from him. In as much as Descartes still remains a substance, he is limited because an infinite substance possesses infinite idea while finite substance possess finite idea. He argues that he cannot be the source of an infinite idea. An infinite idea cannot come from a finite being. Thus Descartes comments:

Now it is already clear by the light of nature that the complete efficient cause must contain at least as much as the effect of that cause. For where pray, could the effect get its reality if not from the cause? And would the cause supply it, without possessing it itself? So it follows both that what is more perfect, or certain in itself a greater amount of reality, cannot be made by what is, or has less. This is obvious not only as regards those effects that have actual or inherent reality; but also as regard ideas, in which only representative reality is to be considered.²⁷

The source of an infinite idea must be infinite. It follows therefore, Descartes concludes, that this idea of an infinite being which he has discovered in his mind came from an infinite being, and this shows that there is an infinite being, so concludes that God necessarily exists.

4.7.3 PROOF FROM PERCEPTION OF THE IDEA OF GOD

Descartes argument for the existence of God proceeds as his system demands, only from the contents of his own consciousness and indeed from one item. He claims to find in his consciousness an idea of God, a perfect and infinite Being.

But the problem is how could Descartes produce this idea in him which he perceived in his mind. According to Descartes, his idea of the infinite is not a mere negative idea, for he sees clearly that, there is more reality in infinite. For how could he recognize his finitude and limitations except by comparing himself with the idea of an infinite and perfect Being. So Descartes writes”

The perception of the infinite somehow exist in me prior to the perception of the finite, that is, the perception of God exists prior to the perception of myself. Why would I know that I doubt and I desire, that is, that I lack something and that I am not wholly perfect, if there were no idea in me of a more perfect being by comparism with which I might acknowledge my defects?²⁸

Descartes cannot deny as materially false the idea of God which he found in his mind because it is most clear and distinct of all ideas and because it contains more objective reality than any other idea, no idea is truer in its own right, and there is no idea in which less suspicion of falsify is to be found. He further maintains that this idea of a being most perfect and infinite is true in the highest degree. For whatever he clearly and distinctly

perceives that is real and true and that contains some perfection is wholly contained in that idea.

Descartes has an introspection of himself to see if the idea of God which he possess is as a result of potentials latent in him. He argues that of the potential for producing the perfections in me already, I see no reason why this potential does not suffice to produce the idea of these perfections. And again, he judged God to be infinite in act, with the result that nothing can be added to his perfection. He perceived that the objective being to an idea cannot be produced by a mere potential being, but only by an actual and formal being. For Descartes, the idea of himself is innate in him. One would ask assuming that I exist, and the cause of this idea which I perceive does not exist? Descartes concludes that:

From the simple fact that I exist and that an idea of a most perfect being, that is God, is in me, if it is most evidently demonstrated that God exist.²⁹

4.7.4 PROOF FORM GOD’S ESSENCE AND EXISTENCE

Descartes philosophical aim was to know things with certainty and clarity. This he discovers in his *cogito ergo sum*-“I think, therefore I exist.” And this knowledge he applied in his proof of God’s existence. He notes:

Nevertheless I have long had fixed in my mind the belief that an all powerful God existed by whom I have been created such as I am. But how do I know that He has not brought it to pass that there is no earth, ... how do I know that I am not deceived every time that I add two and three, or count the sides of a square, or judge of things yet simpler, if anything simpler can be imagined?³⁰

Descartes understood God as one who is not a deceiver the supremely perfect being, liable to no error or defect exists. It is manifest therefore that He cannot be a deceiver, since the light of nature teaches us that fraud and deception necessarily proceed from some defect. Since God is perfect, He cannot be deceptive. Hence those propositions which I see very clearly and distinctly must be true. He says that:

*all which I know clearly and distinctly is pertaining to this object really does belong to it, may I not derive from this an argument demonstrating the existence of God.*³¹

Descartes in the fifth Meditation argues on the perfection of God. According to him, God is an absolutely perfect being, and this means that God possesses all perfections. Since according to Descartes, existence is perfection and God is a Being that possesses all perfections, it follows that he possesses existence, that is, He exists. Descartes notes:

*Since in all other matter I am accustomed to distinguishing existence from essence, I easily persuade myself that the essence of God can be separated from his existence; thus God can be thought of as existing. Be that as it may, it still becomes obvious to a very diligently attentive person that the existence of God can no more be separated from his essence than the essence of a triangle can be separated from the fact that the its three internal angles equal to right angle, or the idea of valley can be separate from the idea of a mountain. So it is no less repugnant to think of God (this, a supremely perfect being) lacking existence (that is as lacking some perfection), than it is to think of a mountain lacking or valley.*³²

Descartes believes that he should be certain about the existence of God as he is totally certain about the truth of mathematics. He says that there is great difference between false belief in existence and true idea inborn in him. The first and principal of which is the idea of God. He maintains that the fact of existence is an essential aspect of God's nature as supremely perfect being. It is not possible to think of God without existence. Since it is also not within his power to think of God without existence, and to do so would in fact involve simply self-contradiction.

4.8 INTERFACE OF REASON AND SENSE PERCEPTION

One of the reasons why we do epistemology is to get out of skepticism. Rationalism and empiricism have the common origin of going in search of the reality of human knowledge and to provide a rational justification of the claim. Both systems were looking for certainty in knowledge. The Empiricists came up with sense experience while the Rationalists hold on to reason. For Descartes, any indubitable knowledge must be clear and distinct. The rationalist(Descartes) does not deny sense knowledge outrightly rather his claim is that for anything to be certain, it needs to be guaranteed by reason. Rationalists stressed the superiority of the human mind. They seek reality from the a priori viewpoint. The empiricists held sense perception as the gateway to knowledge. They believe that reason has no value to play . Their central point is that knowledge from experience is indubitable. Free from error. Error has no place in what is given; error only comes from imagination or from human judgment. Thus they hold the same view with the Scholastics that “Nihil est in intellectum quod non prius fueri in sensu”, which means there is nothing in the intellect that was not first in the senses.

To drive the point to our topic of study, Descartes believes that he has to prove that God exists and that he is not a deceiver in order to guarantee the certainty of our clear and distinct ideas. For example, to feel pain is impression and knowing the sensation of pain is an idea. Innate ideas belong to us and they are inside of us. His purpose is to find indubitable truth and build up his knowledge on this certain truth. At this point, he states his basic foundation: "I am, therefore I exist". Therefore, his essence is a thinking being that exists. This knowledge is far from certainty, for it is based on our perceptions only and is not demonstrably true. He investigates his different ideas and he discovers that his ideas differ from each other in their content and cause. For instance, the Sun will rise tomorrow. Hume suggests that this knowledge cannot be a priori because he can deny that claim. Hume holds that ideas are formed from impressions. Impressions are the direct experiences we have of the external world through the senses. Idea is a faint image of impression left in our mind. He went further to classify impression into simple and complex one.

Kant in his 'Critique of Pure Reason' came up with the project to reconcile the endless controversy between rationalism and empiricism. He played an excluded middle by neither supporting empiricists nor rationalists but achieved a synthesis of the two in his work; *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) which marked the end of enlightenment period. Kant claims that knowledge is not possible without accepting truth from both rationalists and empiricists schools of thought. He showed forth his Copernican revolution when he noticed from the Empiricists, that they center on sensation or impression which cannot lead to necessary and universal knowledge. How can the Empiricists draw a conclusion on scientific knowledge or to interpret cause and effect which enable the mind to grasp scientific truth. Kant gave an answer that bridge the two schools of thought. He believed that human

beings are active in knowing their world, him (Kant), also believed that there can be no doubt that all knowledge begins with experience, but it does not follow that all knowledge arises out of experience. He goes further to assert that knowledge from the experience object causes passive perceivers to have sensation or impressions. This led Kant to introduce the forms of intuition which the human mind imposes on experience in order to make sense out of the object of investigation. On the side of the rationalists which Rene Descartes happens to be the progenitor of this tradition. The mind acquires knowledge from experience by imposing some principles upon experience to generate knowledge. Kant strictly maintain that for the mind to acquire knowledge, it must set out some rules or guiding principles which can only be found in the faculty of the intellect (understanding). No knowledge could be conceived outside this reasoning faculty. The mind cannot experience anything without filtering the object from experience For Kant, the senses need the cooperation of the reason in order to get complete knowledge. Thus he saw both systems as having common origin, diverged in method and converged in mechanism. For Kant, rationalism failed to establish the transcendence of God over nature, thus he accused rationalists of ending up in the pantheism of Descartes. For Kant too, empiricism failed to prove the existence of the world distinct from thought. Empiricists ended up in scepticism.

Kant saw philosophical knowledge as having two elements, that of sensation and that of thought. Sensation has to do with passive intellect, while thought has to do with active intellect. In his analysis of Knowledge, the senses perceive the objects, e.g., the object of sight is colour. It is what the senses can afford to give, it is now the work of reason to interpret and give meaning to what the senses saw. Another example is the sense of

hearing; it can only perceive the sound but to give interpretation to the sound lies within the faculty of reason to do.

We can conclusively assert that the point of difference between the rationalists and the empiricists is on the method to arrive at the certainty of knowledge. They were influenced by science; they saw the problem with skepticism and were eager to establish indubitable knowledge.

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CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 EVALUATION

This argument on doubting the certainty of the human process of knowing cannot continue in infinite regress. Although, it is difficult to resolve but not impossible. It is highly essential to clear here that both traditions are not denying the fact of each having a knowledge claim. What they were fighting for, is supremacy. It is true that reason has some special role to play on knowledge acquisition over and above the knowledge that experience supplies or provides. The argument is that rational knowledge that human being possess allows us to manipulate and augment the knowledge which experience provides. The mere fact that some times our senses lead us to false judgement of things in nature, is not reasonable enough to suspect all our knowledge from experiences as wrong. What about the correct judgement we receive some times. Our experiences might not accurately describe a world that exists. If we doubt everything, we also must doubt whether we are truly doubting. But that gets us into an endless regress (doubting that we are really doubting, that we are really doubting and so on). So the effort to reach an indubitable principle through doubt is doomed from the outset. The only way to find out that we are correct in doubting is to appeal to a public understanding of what doubt means, and that means assuming that there is really an existing world.

Descartes' claims that we should limit our knowledge only to that about which we are absolutely certain. It makes perfect sense to say that we *know* things without having to guarantee that what we know is based on an indubitable foundation.

Descartes begins his Second Meditation wondering whether there is anything that we can know, that is, anything that survives his method of doubting. I can doubt whether there is an external world and whether I really have a body. We can doubt (through the device of the evil genius) whether our own reasoning abilities can be trusted.

But even if an evil genius deceives us about all other beliefs, there is one belief that we cannot be mistaken about, and that is, that we are thinking/doubting. Even to doubt this is to affirm that we are thinking. And since thinking cannot occur without being something that does the thinking (namely, me), "I" must be a thinking thing. Thinking proves that we exist, at least during those times that we think. And when we think, we are thinking things or minds, regardless of whether we have bodies. In fact, the body I experience as my own need not be an essential part of myself because I can doubt its existence in a way that I cannot doubt the existence of my mind.

A common objection at this point concerns whether Descartes is justified in saying that, just because thinking occurs, we can conclude that there is a thing that does the thinking. For Descartes, the "I think" seems to imply that there is a subject engaged in the activity of thinking. But (the objection goes) to conclude that there really is a subject who thinks is to be bewitched by the grammatical structure of the sentence. In response to this objection, Descartes implies that no action (e.g., thinking) can occur without something or someone doing the action. That someone is the self who does the thinking.

After the exposition of Descartes work especially his work on doubting and certainty. Personally, I am of the view that, he needs to be acknowledged for his ingenuity, creativity and his initiative in applying a method in search of truth. In the person of Rene Descartes, one sees a radical and critical

thinker who takes nothing for granted as long as establishing a philosophical system free from controversies and uncertainties associated with the traditional philosophy is concerned. The quest for certainty is a key point in Descartes' enquiry. Thus in his epistemology, Descartes analysed what he claims to know about God, ourselves, the world and other existing things. In the process of this analysis, he discovered ground for the trustworthiness of our knowledge of them.

There are several things we believe to be true, but upon critical evaluation based on Descartes doubting method, they have been proved false. So the doubting method of Descartes, was invented to criticize human modes of thought in a constructive manner, in order to be sure of what we claim to know. Thus, the new method is a test of reliability, a criterion for certainty. In the words of Descartes, "*certainty based on self-evident truth*".¹

There are so many loose ends, many inconsistent improvisations in Descartes thoughts. The claim that he is the father of the modern philosophy cannot be based on general acceptance of his views. They have been partially or totally rejected since new developments in philosophy tend to place older arguments and systems of thought in fresh perspective, inviting reconstruction and re-evaluation of the more influential areas of the past.

Some of his contemporaries have pointed out an apparent circularity in his attempt to establish an argument, the general reliability or reasoning. For instance, Antoine Arnauld argues:

*... I have ...an uncertainty as to how a circular reason can be avoided in saying the only secure reason we have for believing that what we clearly and distinctly perceive as true is the fact that God clearly exists. But we can be sure that God exists only because we clearly and distinctly perceive that. Therefore prior to being certain that God exists we would be certain that what we clearly and distinctly perceive is true.*²

Descartes emphasized that he never wished to deny that some propositions were beyond doubting, that there are clear and distinct propositions e.g. I exist, God exist. However, this reply appears to be inconsistent with various passages in the meditations in which Descartes says that even the simplest, most evident truths are subjects to doubt.

Descartes' argument was termed as infinite regress since the proof of God's existence and veracity leaves no room to doubt that my clear and distinct perception are reliable, it seems I can always doubt with respect to a given proposition whether or not I have really perceived it clearly and distinctly. Such a doubt could arise if there is a conflict among my clear and distinct perceptions is conceived, the evil genius or demon hypothesis will not be experienced. Thus, universal methodic doubt renders all demonstrations impossible and leads to universal skepticism. We do not dispute the fact that Descartes had laid down rules that helped him in his line of thought. What if we doubt the method of doubting itself? Is subjective certainty a reliable criterion for truth? Did not the movement of the earth around the Sun appear so clear and distinct to scientists up to Ptolemy, that they ridiculed the Copernican theory when it was formulated?

Descartes was accused of arguing from presupposition. If one should ask, why must the mathematical method be posed as the unique method for the acquisition of certitude in every field of human knowledge? Why must all knowledge conform to that of mathematics? That its criterion of truth, its method, its object, must be identical or similar with those found in the other sciences? Why must the method which proved fruitful in one field of investigation, prove equally fruitful in another? Descartes protested that he did not intend to impose one method. But why must Descartes think that knowledge could be extended only by intuition and deduction? At any rate

it is difficult to see how this method differs from that of purely deductive reasoning.

The Cartesian criterion of truth-clear and distinct idea is insufficient, in the sense that it presupposes that consciousness is for the main part of closed consciousness, and that the objective datum is largely inaccessible. In the deepest consciousness of Descartes, he was able to know that he exists which he then applied to other things around him especially, the idea of God's reality. But Descartes confused the idea of reality with reality itself. Even though it is true that a finite being cannot be the source of an infinite being or in other words, that an infinite being cannot come from a finite being. This does not negate the fact that the idea of an infinite being can come from a finite being. A finite being can be the source of the idea of infinite being. The source must not be an infinite being. Descartes himself could have been the source of his idea of an infinite being.

Another is that Descartes traced the order of causality from the universe to God and this makes God part of the series of causes and therefore part of the universe. He wished to hold that God was the efficient cause of Himself. His philosophy is said to be original in form rather than in content. His most worthy contribution to philosophy is his method for the acquisition of truth and certitude.

Descartes' search for a general criterion of acquiring knowledge with regard to certainty aroused the interest of many philosophers, such as the empiricists who hold on to knowledge as derived from the senses. But one should not run the risk of accepting this position without examining its possibility. For instance, our senses are full of illusions and deceptive at times. Some people have developed sense organ while some have less developed organ. A man born blind has no idea of colour, even when both

parents have sight and one born deaf cannot hear sound, even when their efficient cause does not have such deformity. How then can we account for the knowledge obtained through the sense? A straight stick put in water appears bent to even the eye of a normal man, how reliable then is our sense of sight? Can imperfect things come from a perfect being. Nevertheless, Can an imperfect being know the mind or the activities of a perfect being? Just as unclean water mixed with the clean water will invariably turn the clean water to become unclean. Can the imperfect nature of the self, other existing things in this sensible world change the perfect nature of God? Can our idea about God transform the thinking self from imperfect to perfect being? All these and more cause some people to run into '*Epistemic naivety*' to quickly rush to God as the solution, whenever we lack substantial answer to the questions raised.

If theists claim that God exist and that He is not a deceiver rather, He has perfection as His attributes. Why is there HIV? Why is there Cancer? Why do people die? Why do bad things happen to good people? Why is there inequality in creation? Why is there earthquake, storm, natural hazards, illness, war, hunger, rituals, man's inhumanity to man. etc. why do human run to God for protection whenever they face critical challenges relating to the aforementioned ones. Does it mean that man lack the knowledge of things that affect his existence in the world he find himself.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Though with the opposition of the empiricists, it is still relevant to have Descartes as the most influential French philosopher, whose influence has been felt throughout the world. Hegel made this more glaring in his '*History of Philosophy*', when Hegel salutes Descartes as the originator of modern philosophy who subjectivist without presupposition. In Descartes

philosophy, you will notice a philosophy that first starts with the meditation of reflecting on the ego. Husserl has it that Descartes meditations are a turning point in the history of philosophical method.

The work of Descartes constitutes a model point in the history of thought, for he gathered previous unconnected thoughts and gave new impetus and direction to subsequent inquiries. He set men thinking in different directions and in this sense, Descartes' thought has influenced most philosophers to some certain extent that it deems fit to give Descartes' philosophy the prolonged merit and influence in the varying emphases placed on it, in different aspects of thinkers. Descartes has been identified by various groups as a skeptic, a phenomenologist, a realist, a subjective idealist, etc. On a general influence, the *cogito* itself has been the subject of controversy and criticism, ranging from the atomistic views of David Hume and the Logical analysis, and to the criticism of Sartre and Kant.

The great protagonists of clear and distinct idea led many historians of philosophy to different and even opposed interpretations of his doctrine. However, one of the greatest characteristics of his philosophy is the close alliance between philosophical reflection and sciences. Descartes' pre-occupation with clear and distinct idea, fortified by his use of comparative simple language, and his formulation of specific rules for the treatment of modern philosophical problems achieved the vision and mission of shifting philosophy from the primacy of subject over object, of the interior over the exterior and of consciousness over being.

Philosophy has recorded tremendous growth since Descartes cast doubt upon human knowledge. Modern man has not stopped the quest for the ultimate basis for scientific reasoning. So, as it has been said that the history

of philosophy consists of footnote to Plato, on a similar note, Descartes is seen as the father of modern thought.

5.3 CONCLUSION

After the process of systematic doubt of everything, Descartes was able to reach the certainty he was looking for through self-awareness, the awareness of his own existence. While Descartes did not deny the fact that much of what we know comes from the senses, he strongly believes that we have ideas which are recalled to memory through the process of Plato's anamnesis (remembrance), this is where the sense organ helps us in knowledge.

He firmly admits that we derive our knowledge by the conscious mental activity involving thinking. This is expressed clearly in his "*cogito ergo sum*", (I think, therefore, I am), in this stand point, he takes what is clear and distinct as a basis for certainty in knowledge. The knowledge of one's self is clear, and thus it is the case, since the claim to knowledge is only true when the object claimed to have been known must be the case. tal activity involving thinking. This is expressed clearly in his "*cogito ergo sum*" (I think, therefore, I am). In his stand point, he takes what is clear and distinct as a basis for certainty in knowledge. The certainty of my own existence is indubitable because I am conscious of myself.

Descartes left an indelible mark in epistemology. His philosophical enterprise When looked back from a later stage of philosophical development, one can see connection between this innovation and later idealism. is thought provoking and his epistemology is a pivot on which modern thought rotates. He grounded his philosophy on an existential propositions and he was concerned to establish an objective interpretation

of reality which he did not regard as reducible to the activity of consciousness.

In Descartes idea of thought, we deduced a philosophy that is intensely personal, free from animation by a mere superficial intellectual curiosity, but by a passion for the attainment of certainty. He considered the possession of a true system of philosophy which will be of great importance for human life.

Conclusively, the result of this work can be summarized in few points. That doubting is not always negative. It can lead to assertion or true knowledge of things. brought to our consciousness that in life, what one consider to be true can turn to be false through a doubting process. What human being considers impossible, can become possible by using good method. His doubting process has truly demonstrated that appearance does not necessarily mean reality. Judging the external world from sense experience may turn out to be mistaken. For him, we don't need to anchor our trust on one who has once cheated us. It is necessary to examine a proposition before accepting it as true. Descartes proof of God's existence through reason without reference to religion was an eye opener to separate science from religion. He defeated scepticism through doubting, in conjunction with some rules to guide the mind from bias. The result of Descartes dream has testified that dream can turn to reality. How certain are we in this reality of life? Since our activities in the dream are indistinguishable from waking experience. How certain are we in the sensible world, since we do not know what happens after death. In his concept of evil genius; there appears to be have two powerful Omnipotent gods (deities) in conflict, one is devoted in deceit. while the other is perpetually good. With his doubting method, Descartes introduced new method of philosophizing.

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