



Fikrah: Jurnal Ilmu Aqidah dan Studi Keagamaan
issn 2354-6174 eissn 2476-9649
Tersedia online di: journal.iainkudus.ac.id/index.php/fikrah
Volume 13 Nomor 1 2025, (97-114)
DOI: 10.21043/fikrah.v13i1.30632

The Legacy of Descartes Philosophy: Rational Doubt and Modern Thought

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Abstract

Rene Descartes, through his concept of universal doubt and the famous phrase “cogito ergo sum,” deepened the understanding of epistemology and is still central to both philosophical and scientific discussions. It presents a problem and hence questions examining how relevant Descartes philosophy holds in the current world relationships, such as drifting towards the subjectivity-objectivity theme in epistemology. This study employs qualitative features showcasing the interpretative nature of the analysis using texts of Descartes, including *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia*, *Discours de la Methode*, and multiple contemporary critiques. Moreover, distinct conclusions are reached on the various implications of Descartes subjectivism and dualism, functioning towards a more comprehensive epistemology. It turns out that Descartes method and rationalism were equally significant factors that contributed to the emergence of several modern scientific paradigms and epistemological frameworks. Criticism is, however, received, especially on the paradox of error and solipsism. The final analysis of the silico experiment shows Descartes exclusion of nonargumentative elements from epistemological cores. It enables a considerable degree of understanding of the radicalism of the stance towards knowledge validity, the object, and its definition as meaning of consciousness and issues of conscience; several of these indeed require an interdisciplinary approach.

Keywords: Cogito ergo sum, dualism, epistemology, universal doubt.

Abstrak

Rene Descartes, melalui konsep keragu-raguan universal dan ungkapan masyhurnya “*cogito ergo sum*” telah memperdalam pemahaman tentang epistemologi serta menjadi bahan diskusi dalam bidang filsafat maupun ilmu pengetahuan. Hal ini menghadirkan permasalahan sekaligus mempertanyakan relevansi filsafat Descartes dalam konteks hubungan dunia saat ini yang cenderung mengarah pada tema subjektivitas-objektivitas dalam epistemologi. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis interpretatif analisis menggunakan teks-teks Descartes, termasuk *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia*, *Discours de la Methode*, serta berbagai kritik kontemporer terkait. Selain itu, kesimpulan yang berbeda dicapai mengenai berbagai implikasi subjektivisme dan dualisme Descartes, yang berfungsi menuju epistemologi yang lebih komprehensif. Metode dan rasionalisme Descartes merupakan faktor penting yang berkontribusi pada munculnya beberapa paradigma ilmiah modern dan kerangka epistemologis. Namun, kritik terutama diarahkan pada paradoks kesalahan dan solipsisme. Analisis ini menunjukkan pengecualian Descartes terhadap elemen non-argumentatif dari inti epistemologi. Hal ini memungkinkan pemahaman yang cukup mendalam terhadap radikalisme sikap terhadap validitas pengetahuan, objek, serta definisinya sebagai makna kesadaran dan isu-isu kesadaran yang beberapa di antaranya memang memerlukan pendekatan interdisipliner.

Katakunci: Cogito ergo sum, dualisme, epistemology, keraguan universal.

Introduction

Descartes impact on the evolution of philosophy and science is multifaceted, most notably through his articulation of mind-body dualism, which becomes a cornerstone of modern metaphysical discourse by distinguishing the mind as a non-material thinking substance and the body as a material entity occupying space (Bayne, 2024; Galadí, 2023; Hasker, 2024; Kim, 2024; Swinburne, 2024). This dualistic framework not only influences existentialism and positivism—emphasizing subjective awareness and empirical validation, respectively—but also invites criticism regarding the epistemological divide it creates between the thinking subject and external reality (Alanen, 1989; Freitas, 2024a).

Despite such critiques, Descartes method of doubt established the groundwork for modern idealism by positioning reason as the primary instrument for comprehending the world (Peretti, 2022; Sousa, 2023), thereby

catalyzing the paradigm shift toward modern scientific inquiry. Contemporary scholars, however, suggest that Descartes legacy extends beyond the confines of bare rationalism centered on “cogito ergo sum” (Astore, 2021; Lee, 2022; Noreika, 2000). Recent interpretations propose that the cogito is less a product of argumentation or intuition and more an immediate, indivisible act of consciousness—a pre-reflective experience immune to doubt (Astore, 2021; Cabrera, 2022; Hintikka, 1962).

This embodied perspective resonates with the view that Descartes philosophy is profoundly shaped by personal, cultural, and historical contexts (Freitas, 2024b; Sousa, 2023; Tweyman, 2022). Furthermore, Descartes notion of objective truth in ideas, where the idea of the sun is equated with the sun itself in the mind, challenges the boundaries between direct and indirect realism, while Sinokki (2024) introduces “Cartesian sortalism” to elucidate issues of identity and persistence, portraying Descartes as navigating a middle path between metaphysical extremes. Comparative analyses, such as Popovic (2024), which contrasts Descartes and Spinoza, reveal that while both philosophers ground their metaphysics in epistemologically privileged ideas, they diverge in their treatment of form and content, yet remain united in their adherence to the classical definition of truth. Even within the context of Soviet Marxism, Descartes thought was reinterpreted by Valentin Asmus as contributing to dialectical materialism, underscoring the enduring philosophical depth and adaptability of his work beyond simplistic idealist or mechanistic interpretations (Fokine, 2019; Hernandez, 2024; Knezic, 2023; Maidansky & Maidansky, 2023; Nadler, 2022).

This article advances the existing studies on Descartes by offering a systematic and nuanced examination of central concepts such as “cogito ergo sum” and substance dualism while critically engaging with their critiques and tracing their impact on modern philosophical discourse. Unlike prior studies, which primarily provide descriptive accounts of Descartes philosophy (Charland, 2021; Kattsoff, 2004; Peretti, 2022; Russell, 2004), this work explicates these foundational ideas within ongoing epistemological debates, exemplified by Gallagher's (1999) interpretation of Descartes subjectivism as a challenge in reconciling subjective and objective knowledge domains. By integrating these critiques with contemporary epistemological issues, the article not only revisits Descartes as a classical figure but also underscores his enduring relevance to current philosophical challenges (Ahmadizade, 2020; Alanen, 1989; Allinson, 2020; Charland, 2021; Nadler, 2022). Furthermore,

adopting an interdisciplinary lens, the study highlights Descartes influence on the modern scientific paradigm, particularly in shaping mechanistic science through his mind-body dualism (Buron, 2024; Hasker, 2024; Knezic, 2023; Swinburne, 2024), and extends this by demonstrating how his method of universal doubt (Cabrera, 2022) can be applied to contemporary epistemological concerns, including the validation of knowledge in the digital era (Buchdahl, 1963; Juhansar, 2021; Peretti, 2022). While Guerlac (2017) and Savchuk (2024) acknowledge Descartes role in the tradition of idealism, this article further explores his potential to reconstruct a more inclusive epistemology, thereby updating existing discourse and providing a philosophical foundation applicable across diverse modern contexts.

This current research unlocks a rigorous and systematic analysis of Rene Descartes epistemological framework, focusing on his methodical doubt and the foundational proposition “cogito ergo sum,” to assess their enduring significance and applicability in contemporary philosophical discourse. It first investigates Descartes methodological skepticisms as a critical response to the epistemic constraints of Scholastic and Renaissance thought, evaluating its role in establishing certainty within modern epistemology. Subsequently, the research explores cogito as the cornerstone of self-awareness, critically engaging with philosophical debates concerning the relationship between subjective consciousness and external reality. Furthermore, it also discovers Descartes emphasis on thinking as central to human existence, highlighting how this focus on individual certainty and subjective experience distinguishes modern metaphysics and influences later philosophical developments such as existentialism. Finally, it critically assesses Descartes mind-body dualism by analyzing the ontological separation between the immaterial, indivisible mind and the extended, divisible body, alongside the challenges posed by their interaction. Throughout, the study addresses key epistemological critiques related to dualism, including issues of subjective consciousness, mind-body causality, and the implications of Cartesian doubt for the limits of human knowledge.

This current research employs a qualitative approach with a comprehensive literature review selected from “Publish or Perish (PoP)—software application.” It analyzes primary and secondary sources related to Rene Descartes philosophy. The primary sources focus on Descartes major works, such as *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia* and *Discours de la Methode*. Meanwhile, secondary sources are other scholars’ works on Cartesian

philosophy. It synthesizes various critiques and interpretations of Descartes ideas, incorporating contemporary discussions in epistemology, philosophy of science, and digital knowledge systems. The research method also includes a comparative analysis of Descartes ideas with modern epistemological frameworks, particularly examining how his method of universal doubt and substance dualism can be applied to current philosophical and modern challenges. This interdisciplinary method allows for a deeper understanding of Descartes ongoing influence and potential for addressing contemporary issues of modern thought.

Methodical Doubt

The concept of “methodical doubt” is deeply rooted in the uncertainty that characterized the intellectual climate of the time. The authority of Aristotle, as conveyed through Scholasticism, was seen as obstructing the development of knowledge. In this context, Scholastic thought, which had been traditionally accepted, was no longer functional in addressing the needs of positive science (Guerlac, 2017; Hatfield, 2020; Otaiku, 2018). Additionally, the diverse and often contradictory nature of Renaissance philosophy failed to accommodate the advancements of scientific knowledge (McMullin, 2018). Philosophy during this period was regarded as lacking systematic structure and a scientific method (Fine, 2000). The idea of “methodical doubt” emerged as a suitable approach for revitalizing philosophy. This method involved doubting everything in order to uncover that which could be certain (Hatfield, 2020). Philosophy was to adopt a system akin to the exact sciences, relying on axioms and logically structured steps (Kenny, 2019). Descartes observed that people’s thoughts at the time were still overly influenced by fantasies, which prompted him to seek a new beginning. To begin anew, he sought certainty in the foundations of thought, believing that such certainty could be achieved through doubt (Blay, 2021; Dancy, 2022; Freitas, 2024b; Knezic, 2023; Maidansky & Maidansky, 2023; Wilkerson, 2022).

Descartes argued that everything must be doubted to determine what could be known for sure (Guerlac, 2017; Supandi et al., 2024). For instance, one might doubt the reality of sitting in a chair, facing a table, and being fully dressed, since such an experience could have been a dream (Dancy, 2022). In this case, he recalled having dreamed of such a scenario while actually being in bed, in sleepwear. Another example is the dream of a winged horse, which could be formed by combining elements of a horse and wings that had been seen

separately (Kenny, 2019). By systematically doubting as much knowledge as possible until only the indubitable remained, knowledge could then be built upon absolute certainty (McMullin, 2018). This doubt is universal because it extends without limitation, only ceasing once it reaches its own boundaries. The nature of this doubt is not one of prolonged confusion, but rather a rational process of questioning, serving as the first step towards achieving certainty (Guerlac, 2017). Hence, it is referred to as the “method of universal doubt” or “Cartesian doubt” (Descartes, 1637).

Cogito Ergo Sum

The expression “Cogito ergo sum” literally means “I think, therefore I am.” However, two important points need to be considered. First, Descartes uses the term “thinking” in a broad sense, not limited to reasoning but encompassing other conscious activities such as doubting, understanding, imagining, willing, dreaming, and feeling. Second, Descartes statement of “Cogito ergo sum” is not merely understood literally; he also interprets “Cogito” as “I am aware.” Therefore, the statement also implies, “I am aware, therefore I am.” The “I” refers to an existence that is conscious of itself. Consciousness, or “the aware,” is the “I” that directly knows itself. Everything outside the self falls into the realm of doubt.

The certainty of truth lies in the self that doubts. From this, the first principle in philosophy must be to discover individual consciousness. The fact that one’s self exists, despite doubt, cannot be transcended. In the act of doubting, I am aware that I am the one doubting. There is only one thing that cannot be doubted, which is the thinking process itself, and because I think, I exist. Although everything thought may be imagined, thinking itself is not an illusion but a certainty. No one can deceive me about my thinking, and for that reason, in thinking, I am certain of my existence. This is a direct knowledge called the first philosophical truth (*primum philosophicum*). I exist because I think. If I am a thinking being, my essence consists entirely of thought, and I do not need a physical place or material to exist. “Cogito” (I think) is certain because it is clear and distinct, which are characteristics of truth that can be verified.

The “I” that is proven to exist is deduced from the fact that I think, and I exist only when I think. If I cease thinking, there is no proof of my existence. I exist because I am a thinking being, and the essence of my being is thought. Therefore, the soul is entirely different from the body (Astore, 2021; Noreika,

2000; Roberts, 2023; Shahraki, 2023; Smith, 2021; Juhansar, 2022). It is easier to know the soul than the body, so it seems as though the body does not exist. Thinking is the essence of thought, and thought always thinks, even while sleeping. The statement “Cogito ergo sum” is “clear” and “distinct” and is thus self-evident. Anything that is “clear and distinct” is truth. The key concept of “clear and distinct” is the understanding of “God” as the perfect, infinite, and omnipresent creator. For Descartes, the idea or concept of something that is perfectly limitless resides in our soul. Since, in essence, we are finite beings, it is impossible for the idea of the infinite to be the result of our own thinking. The cause of the idea of the infinite is the infinite itself. Therefore, the infinite clearly exists and is distinct from other concepts.

According to Descartes, God is the infinite. The concept of God is that of a perfect, boundless creator who contains all perfections, including existence itself. Therefore, the truth regarding God is that He truly exists. The idea of God is placed in the context of knowing, and if the perfect God truly exists, He would not deceive us in matters that reason shows to be clear and distinct. Sensory perception only provides practical value, not knowledge of the essence and properties of the world outside of us (Descartes, 1641; Noreika, 2000; Sajjad et al., 2023). External objects only provide vague ideas, which tell us about the feelings of the observing subject. Only clear and distinct thinking can perfectly teach the nature or properties of something through direct, clear ideas. The mind knows itself directly, without mediation. External objects are known indirectly or through intermediaries. Ideas are initially known in their own reality. In itself, the mind finds ideas as reflections of objects or targets outside of us. Hence, ideas also become tools for knowing things outside the mind. The mind does not obey external things, but rather the laws that exist within itself. The mind does not depend on the external world but on itself. Its clarity is something subjective.

The criticisms surrounding the concept of “Cogito, ergo sum” reveal persistent philosophical concerns, especially regarding the gap between the subject and external reality. Critics contend that Descartes cogito presupposes a unified, thinking subject without sufficient justification, leading to accusations of circular reasoning—where the existence of the “I” is assumed to prove the existence of the “I” itself (Astore, 2021; Noreika, 2000). This inward focus, which privileges self-awareness as the only indubitable truth, has been challenged for neglecting the existence and knowledge of the external world, thus exposing the cogito to the risks of solipsism and skepticism about other

minds and external reality (Astore, 2021; Hintikka, 1962). Philosophers such as Hume and Nietzsche have argued that Descartes method fails to bridge the epistemological gap between subjective consciousness and objective reality, questioning whether clear and distinct ideas within the mind can genuinely correspond to the world beyond it (Hintikka, 1962; Noreika, 2000). These critiques underscore a fundamental tension in Cartesian philosophy: while the cogito secures the certainty of the thinking subject, it leaves unresolved the problem of how, or even if, the mind can access and verify the existence of anything external to itself (Astore, 2021; Hintikka, 1962; Nolan, 2022; Noreika, 2000).

The Subject as the Center

Rene Descartes philosophical thought emphasizes the fundamental importance of thought itself, asserting that the act of thinking is the most critical aspect of human existence. According to Descartes, the process of thinking determines the nature of human reality, which he views as a unified experience of consciousness and presence. In his famous dictum *Cogito, ergo sum* (“I think, therefore I am”), Descartes proved the idea that existence is validated by the very act of thought, making consciousness central to the understanding of being. His emphasis on subjective experience and individual certainty contributed significantly to the development of modern philosophy, particularly in the context of epistemology and metaphysics. Descartes notion that truth and certainty must be grounded in personal and subjective belief, rather than external or objective reality, set him apart from earlier philosophers who prioritized objective knowledge and empirical verification. His exploration of the “Ego” or self as the foundation of knowledge represents a pivotal moment in philosophical thought, marking a departure from medieval scholasticism and influencing subsequent philosophical movements, particularly existentialism. Descartes assertion that the “ego” or self, is the starting point for understanding reality had profound implications, as it positioned the individual as central to the process of knowledge acquisition and truth discovery (Buron, 2024; Freitas, 2024b; MacKinnon, 2022).

Descartes focus on subjectivity and personal certainty stands as a fundamental distinction between modern metaphysics and the metaphysical traditions of the past. While earlier philosophical schools of thought, such as scholasticism, emphasized the importance of external, objective sources of knowledge, Descartes philosophy emphasized the internal, subjective

experience of the individual as the foundation for understanding truth. His emphasis on the cogito and the certainty of one's existence based on the act of thought itself initiated a new era in metaphysics, where the individual's consciousness became the primary source of reality. This subjective turn in Descartes thinking laid the groundwork for 20th-century existentialism, particularly in the works of philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger, who further explored the implications of subjective existence and individual freedom. Descartes influence extended beyond philosophy into psychology, where the concept of the self, or "Ego," became central to understanding human cognition and behavior. His contribution to modern thought can be seen in the ways in which later philosophers and scholars framed the individual as both the subject and the object of knowledge (Kenny, 2012). Descartes focus on the subjectivity of existence, therefore, is not only a turning point in metaphysical thought but also a foundational aspect of the modern understanding of the human condition.

Mind-Body Dualism

Descartes dualism is rooted in the differentiation between two distinct substances: the mind (or soul) and the body (Tokic, 2024). According to Descartes, substances are entities that exist independently, needing nothing else to exist. God, as the ultimate substance, is the only entity that requires no other for its existence; all other substances exist only through God's will (Fine, 2000). Descartes conceptualizes attributes as essential qualities inherent in each substance, qualities that cannot be denied or altered. For instance, the attribute of extension (the capacity for physical space) is intrinsic to all material substances, which have their forms, size, movement, and cessation as their modes or contingent properties (Descartes, 1641). In contrast, the attribute of thought is essential to the soul, where modes include individual thoughts, ideas, and other consciousness phenomena (Ahmadizade, 2020; Allinson, 2020; Charland, 2021; Fokine, 2019; Freitas, 2024b; Knezic, 2023; Kopania, 2019).

This framework creates a stark division between the soul and matter, with each defined by fundamentally different properties—extension and thought—and unable to influence one another directly, even though they appear to affect each other in practice (Hasker, 2024; Swinburne, 2024; Juhansar, 2022). Descartes further asserts that the soul is an indivisible, immaterial substance that is not subject to decay, unlike the body, which is

governed by mechanical causes and can be studied through physical sciences. The body, characterized by its extension, interacts with the soul but remains separate and distinct. The mind influences the body indirectly through the breath of life, indicating that while the soul and body may not converge at a metaphysical level, they can affect each other in practical terms (Descartes, 1641).

This dualistic view upholds that human essence lies within the soul, with the body serving merely as a vehicle for the soul's activities, including perception, imagination, intellect, and will. Thought, which encompasses all mental activity, is seen as the essence of the soul, while the body remains an object of mechanical interaction in the world (Fine, 2000). Thus, Descartes dualism frames the human being as a combination of two fundamentally different substances that, despite their distinct natures, interact in human experience.

Descartes philosophy has been questioned by Clatterbaugh (1980) through the lens of what he refers to as the paradox of error or the paradox of mistakes. Modern epistemology only reaches the threshold of philosophical inquiry when absolute skepticism is dismissed. The argument is that while we cannot doubt human reason's capacity to reach truth, this does not mean we cannot question what is commonly assumed to be certain. Clatterbaugh (1980) suggests that moderate skepticism is required as a first step for fruitful reflection. In reality, errors can occur, meaning that one datum about human knowledge can coexist with mistakes. Not all human knowledge rests on the same foundation. Therefore, epistemological efforts are necessary to critically examine our everyday knowledge to distinguish between robust knowledge and false or fragile beliefs. By using doubt to address doubt, Descartes provides a radical and clever solution.

The method to determine something certain and indubitable is to examine how far it can be doubted. Knowledge can be constructed on the foundation of absolute certainty by systematically doubting as much knowledge as possible. Epistemology does not question how we know but why we can make errors. Errors do not lie in failing to perceive something but in assuming we know something unknown or assuming we do not know something known. In other words, errors are identical to insufficient attention. Descartes emphasizes the importance of attentiveness in the quest for knowledge. The core issue is how far one can succeed in doubting.

“Cogito ergo sum” is the first certainty in the process of doubt. Philosophy, in essence, is an endeavor to find certainty, which can only be achieved if based on evidence that must be accepted and acknowledged. Reason must be an absolute necessity in philosophical struggle. “Cogito ergo sum” serves as the solid foundation upon which Descartes overcomes his doubt. In this way, knowledge must be based on its own existence—the existence of the doubting person. However, Clatterbaugh (1980) contends that Descartes “cogito ergo sum” idea requires critique. The concept is subjectively ambitious, as the subject in Descartes cogito is truly isolated and private. Apart from the thinking subject, nothing else exists. Clatterbaugh (1980) argues that Descartes establishes a permanent separation between the “inner world” and the “outer world,” which needs finding a way through to a world different from the self. Descartes deliberately separates the subjective from the objective. Clatterbaugh (1980) aligns Descartes subjective consciousness with the views of epistemological idealism, contrasting it with epistemological realism.

According to epistemological realism, consciousness connects the self to what is other than the self, whereas in epistemological idealism, every act of knowing ends in an idea, a purely subjective event. The question then becomes, how can I know a reality other than myself? Clatterbaugh (1980) proposes solipsism as one possible answer, where only the self exists or, at least, one can only be certain of their own existence while the existence of other things remains problematic. However, Russell (2004) finds this answer unsatisfactory. If no adequate response exists, one is trapped in their own individual soul forever. Clatterbaugh (1980) sees another potential answer in Descartes clear and distinct ideas. Descartes focuses on what he calls the “simple or singular,” which is clear in itself, evident, and reasonable. His emphasis is on the intuitive nature of knowledge: what I see, I see. The clear and distinct is something that shines with its own light. Yet, the issue remains unresolved: do I possess another understanding, directly, positively, and clearly, aside from my own existence? Descartes responds with the idea of an infinite being, namely God. The idea of God is clear and distinct, thus an unconditional reality.

Clatterbaugh (1980) argues that Descartes attention to the external world is limited and does not apply to all that is typically considered part of the “world.” Descartes only considers extension and motion as the clear and distinct properties of real, objective things (Porto, 2024; Strazzoni, 2024). Consequently, the answer to the problem of subjectivity remains unresolved.

Sensory perception does not have an adequate place. Through comparison to dreams, Descartes underscores the intensely private nature of sensory consciousness. The objectivity of what is sensed is fundamentally blurred. Consciousness of the reality of things and people is merely the work of the mind. From an epistemological perspective, Clatterbaugh (1980) believes Descartes philosophical thinking remains open to critical scrutiny.

Rene Descartes has significantly influenced modern thought, laying the foundation for the development of idealism and positivism. As Kattsoff (2004) asserts, we must recognize that Descartes philosophical contributions place a central emphasis on epistemology, which concerns the nature of knowledge. Before addressing the philosophical questions within epistemology, it is crucial to consider how knowledge can be acquired and through which means. The limits of knowledge must be understood to avoid futile efforts to comprehend things that are ultimately unknowable. Epistemological inquiries allow us to assume that knowledge is indeed attainable. Descartes, through his method, arrived at the certainty of knowledge, as opposed to the mere possibility of knowledge. He astutely distinguished between domains where absolute certainty is achievable and those where it is not, presenting a profound insight into the nature of human understanding.

Epistemologically, Descartes conception of knowledge is derived from reason, pursued through a structured process beginning with the simplest concepts and progressing to the more complex. His notion of doubt serves as a foundation for certainty, embodying an epistemological character that cannot be denied. Descartes method of arriving at truth is rationalistic, with the mind as the primary source of knowledge. While rationalism is central to his thinking, it does not suggest the disregard of sensory experience, which Descartes saw as a mere stimulus for thought. His method involves a deductive process to derive all knowledge. According to Descartes (1641; 1644), truth is defined as having ideas that correspond to or refer to reality, and he argued that such truth can only exist within the mind and can only be attained through reason. This truth, once discovered, is recognized through intellectual insight, an understanding that is beyond doubt.

The famous phrase “Cogito ergo sum” (I think, therefore I am) serves as the basis for achieving this certainty, opening the possibility for knowing sensory knowledge through the guarantee of absolute existence. Furthermore, Descartes universal method of doubt reflects his perspective on the distinction between impressions and reality, as illustrated by his concept of dreams. In this

concept, Descartes explores the deeply subjective nature of sensory consciousness, claiming that knowledge about others and objects is a product of the mind's activity. This leads to the critique of subjectivism, as Descartes prioritizes intellectual perception over sensory perception. For him, intellectual apprehension is clear and distinct, whereas sensory perceptions are often vague and confused. His idea of the absolute being, God, is inherently integrated into his conception of reason, suggesting a metaphysical framework that can be interpreted through the lens of transcendental immanence. Descartes approach to human reason reveals a connection to Plato's theory of forms, yet he aimed to create a completely novel system of philosophy. Ultimately, Descartes work reveals the unavoidable "open-ended" nature of epistemology, a process that spirals toward greater understanding. Through his rationalistic framework, Descartes concluded that the soul is immortal, an insight made possible through the interplay of reason and the absolute being.

Conclusion

Rene Descartes contributions to modern philosophy, particularly in the areas of epistemology and metaphysics, have had a profound and lasting impact. His methodical doubt, encapsulated in the famous phrase "Cogito ergo sum," revolutionized the pursuit of knowledge by asserting that certainty begins with the thinking subject. Descartes emphasis on the primacy of reason over sensory perception laid the groundwork for rationalism, positioning the mind as the ultimate source of knowledge. Through his method of universal doubt, Descartes sought to strip away uncertainties and reach indubitable truths, a process that set a new standard for philosophical inquiry. Descartes dualism, which distinguishes between the mind and body, further reinforced the central role of thought in human existence. The mind, for Descartes, is an indivisible, immaterial substance, while the body is a material entity governed by mechanical laws. This radical distinction between mind and body challenges previous philosophical paradigms and continues to influence contemporary discussions in both philosophy and psychology.

The subjectivity emphasized in Descartes philosophy, particularly his focus on individual consciousness, marked a pivotal shift from the objective, external focus of previous traditions. Descartes work anticipates modern epistemological debates, particularly regarding the limits and nature of human knowledge. His insistence on clarity and distinctness as criteria for truth remains central to ongoing philosophical discussions about the nature of

certainty and the reliability of knowledge. While his method and conclusions have been critiqued, particularly regarding the subjective nature of his epistemology and the problem of external reality, Descartes emphasis on rational inquiry continues to shape philosophical and scientific approaches to knowledge acquisition. Ultimately, Descartes legacy is one of profound influences, providing a foundational framework for modern philosophy that emphasizes reason, the subjectivity of consciousness, and the continuous quest for certain knowledge.

This study advances modern epistemological discussion by revisiting Descartes philosophy, specifically his concepts of cogito ergo sum, universal doubt, subjectivism, and dualism, via a qualitative and interpretive analysis of Descartes original texts and contemporary critiques of him. This contributes a more thorough account of how Cartesian rationalism has influenced present scientific paradigms and epistemological constructs while stressing Descartes continuous relevance to contemporary philosophy, contemporary scientific practices, and contemporary technological developments. Nonetheless, the study is constrained by its very emphasis on textual analysis as a means of understanding knowledge that misses out on empirical or interdisciplinary perspectives, such as those derived from cognitive science and sociology. Additionally, while the study does address criticisms including solipsism and the paradox of error, it does not wholly resolve such issues, implying a need for future research that explores nonargumentative and experiential aspects of knowledge.

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