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## DESCARTES FOUNDATIONALISM

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### **Abstract:**

*Rene Descartes' foundationalist theory of knowledge is the most challenging issue in epistemology. His foundationalist's theory of knowledge is building a strong foundation in epistemology. This paper is an inquiry about Descartes' foundationalist's theory of knowledge and challenging scepticism who denied knowledge is not possible. Try to find out whether Descartes' foundationalist theory of knowledge is possible? If possible how did Descartes justify his foundationalist's theory of knowledge to counter scepticism?*

**Keywords:** Rene Descartes, method of doubt, Foundationalism, knowledge, Certainty.

### **1. INTRODUCTION:**

Epistemology is the core area of philosophy. A central concern of epistemology or theory of knowledge is the justification of beliefs. A question may be raised how do we justify our beliefs? How do we know the things around us? What are the methods of knowing the things? These are the basic questions raised in epistemology. This paper will concern Descartes epistemological and methodological inquiry about the nature of knowledge and justification. To counter the scepticism that denied knowledge is not possible, Descartes' started his epistemological inquiry from very beginning. From his methodological inquiry he found 'I' which is foundational and cannot be doubted even if we apply sceptical arguments. This paper discussed Rene Descartes foundationalism theory of knowledge. Let's discuss Descartes epistemological project, how did he construct the foundationalist position in epistemology.

### **2. Descartes Doubts:**

Descartes is a rationalist philosopher for him reason is the source of knowledge. As a rationalist philosopher, he sought clarity and certainty in knowledge. He saw that there is no clarity

and certainty in philosophy though it has been studied philosophy best of mind for long time. For that reason he was worried about certainty in philosophy. To bring out the certainty in philosophy, he thought I need to start philosophy from beginning. Therefore, he introduces a method that is called 'method of doubt'. The method of doubt is a tool to find out certainty in philosophy. Descartes in his first meditationsays, whatever I have been accepting as true from my childhood that can be highly doubtful in nature. Therefore, he pointed out that "from time to time I have found that the senses deceive, it is prudent never to trust completely those who have deceive us even once".

Descartes here found that our day-today experience is not certain about our knowledge. So he doubted our all sense experience, because it is not providing clear picture of knowledge about the world to us. He introduced methodological inquiry to get certainty philosophy in genera and epistemology in particular. His most important arguments are dream argument; evil demon argument and cogito ergo sum argument. These three arguments are the basis for the achieve certainty in philosophy. According to his dream argument he shows that it is very difficult to separate between awaking state and dreaming state. That means he found that if I say I am holding a paper in my hand I cannot mislead it. But at the same time we need to think that we can dream there is a paper in our hand. So our sensation do not give us adequate knowledge. When he tries to doubt the mathematical propositions like  $2+2=4$  he felt that it is very difficult to doubt mathematical propositions. So he fails to doubt mathematical propositions. He thought that God who made me think like that therefore, I am unable to doubt the mathematical propositions. Later he realized that God who is supremely good would not allow me to deceive. Descartes points out that "God would not allow me to be deceived in this way, since he is said to be supremely good."

According to his evil demon argument Descartes realized, that it is possible evil demon can deceive me any time. So it is the evil demon that deceived me. He says "that not God, who supremely good and source of truth, but rather some malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning has employed all his energies in order to deceive me." Descartes introduced cogito argument, according to him 'my thinking' is presupposes everything that is "I think therefore, I exist or I think, therefore, I am." Here Descartes identifies my thinking is a conscious being. I cannot be doubted even if we apply dream argument and evil demon argument. There must be doubter to doubt something. That doubter must exist. That is the foundational philosophy for Descartes, which is indubitable.

### 3. Descartes's Foundationalism:

Descartes foundationalism theory says that, there are some basic beliefs that beliefs justified the other non basic beliefs. In other words there are foundational beliefs, which supported to non-foundational beliefs. That non-foundational belief depends on the foundational beliefs and foundationalbeliefs do not depend on any other any beliefs for their justifications.

The Cartesian foundationalism is a very popular theory of foundationalism. This view holds that there is need for the deconstruction of epistemic superstructures, that is, every epistemic claim should be broken down until one gets to a solid base upon which one can build other forms of epistemic beliefs. What one can call Descartes basic belief is his claim of '*cogito ergo sum*', "I think therefore I am" while other beliefs which are derived inferentially from it are the non-basic beliefs. Descartes conceives beliefs as a superstructure with the basic beliefs serving as the foundation, while non-basic beliefs represent the structure itself. Descartes holds that those propositions which are directly evident for a person S have to do in some way with S's mental states- his thoughts, beliefs, feelings, perpetual experiences and others. The Cartesian foundationalists hold that basic propulsions report private psychological state.

Descartes foundational consists of basic beliefs that somehow provide the support to everything else, which we may be claimed to know. Our knowledge is built upon the Descartes foundational theory of knowledge. Descartes foundationalist theory of knowledge especially discussed in his meditation of first philosophy, have been regarded as foundational in nature.

Descartes foundationalism is about foundational knowledge claims. Descartes in his method of doubt discussed that there was no clear and certain foundation of knowledge. Though the best of mind has been studied philosophy for long time. To build a indubitable foundation he searched for the strong method which he build the foundation ok knowledge.

Descartes cogito argument, shows that there is a certain and clear foundation in epistemology. That foundation cannot be doubted. His argument is like this to doubt something there must be a doubter, without doubter nothings can be doubted. To think some things there must be a thinker without thinker thinking could not be possible. That thinker must exist. Therefore, he said "I think, therefore I am or I think therefore, I exist". That is the foundational claim in Descartes epistemology. Descartes cogito is something that whose truth is clearly and distinctly perceived. Once we are clear and certain about our cogito we can have truth about the other proposition clearly and distinctly. From this observation we derive clarity and a distinctness rule that is what is perceived clearly and distinctly must be true.

In relation to inferential knowledge or sensory experience our beliefs justified through foundational elements which is certain and indubitable. By the application of clarity and distinctness epistemic principle we will able to justify basic beliefs and transfer the justification basic to non-basic beliefs. The man concern clarity and distinctness principle is self-evident internal. It is not external which needs further justification. It is due to the basic nature of clarity and distinctness rule and its secure source of Cogito, which provides a doable solution to the infinite regress problem.

After that Descartes proved the existence of God and world. But I would not discuss detail his theory of knowledge here.

#### 4. Conclusion:

In this paper I have seen that Descartes Foudationalist theory of knowledge is built a solid foundation in epistemology. His discovery of foundation is certain and indubitable. His foundation of knowledge is bringing the certainty in philosophy. Though his Foudationalist theory of knowledge is built a strong foundation for knowledge, but there is some criticism to Descartes Foudationalist theory of knowledge. The main opponent to the Foudationalist theory of knowledge is Coherentism theory of knowledge but I would not discuss that part in this paper.

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