UNIT 5: DESCARTES: COGITO-ERGO SUM

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.1. Learning Objectives

2.2. Introduction

2.3. Origination of Descartes Philosophical Method

2.4. Descartes Cogito-ergo-sum

2.5. Is Descartes a sceptic?

2.6. Significance of Descartes method of doubt

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2.9. Answer to check your progress

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5.1. LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- To acquire a knowledge about Descarte's philosophy
- To know about the origin of Descarte's philosophical method
- To know about what is cogito-ergo-sum
- To know about significance of Descartes method of doubt

5.2. INTRODUCTION

Rene Descartes (1596 -1650) was a French philosopher, mathematician, scientist and writer of the 'Age of Reason'. He has been called the "Father of Modern Philosophy", and much of subsequent Western philosophy can be seen as a response to his writings. He is responsible for one of the best-known quotations in philosophy: "Cogito, ergo sum" ("I think, therefore I am").

At the heart of Descartes' philosophical method was his refusal to accept the authority of previous philosophers, and even of the evidence of his own senses and to trust only that which was clearly and distinctly seen to be beyond any doubt (a process often referred to as methodological skepticism or Cartesian doubt). Only then did he allows himself to reconstruct

knowledge in order to acquire a firm foundation for genuine knowledge and to dispel any Skepticism.

Descartes attempted to narrow down, by what is sometimes called the method of doubt, what was certain and what contained even a shadow of a doubt. For example, he realized that he could doubt even something as apparently fundamental as whether he had a body (it could be that he was just dreaming of it or that it was an illusion created by an evil demon), but he could not, under any circumstances, doubt whether he had a mind or that he could think. He followed this up with a pure, abstract thought experiment. Having identified this single indubitable principle, that thought exists, he then argued that, if someone was wondering whether or not he existed, then the very act of thinking was, in and of itself, proof that he did in fact exist: the famous "I think, therefore I am" - the similar statement in Latin, "Cogito ergo sum" is found in his later "Principles of Philosophy". It is worth mentioning here that, by "thinking", Descartes did not just mean conceptual thought, but all forms of consciousness, experience, feelings, etc.

The way he achieved this was to argue that among the contents of our (certain) consciousness was the idea of God, which in itself he saw as proof of the existence of God. He then argued that, if we have the overwhelming impression of the existence of a concrete world around us, as we do, then an omnipotent, omniscient and Omni benevolent God would ensure that such a world does in fact exist for us. Furthermore, he asserted that the essence of this physical world was extension (that it takes up space), contrary to the extension less world of the mind.

This was an essential step forward in 17th Century science as it established a physical world which was of a mathematical character and permitted mathematical physics to be used to explain it. Also important is that, although God was indispensable to Descartes' method of arriving at a physical world, once such a world was accepted, it was no longer necessary to involve God in the description and measurement and explanation of how

things work. Thus, the process of science was freed from theological constraints and interference.

5.3. ORIGINATION OF DESCARTES PHILOSOPHICAL METHOD:

René Descartes (1596-1650) was a French philosopher and mathematician, credited as a foundational thinker in the development of Western notions of reason and science. His philosophy was built on the idea of radical doubt, in which nothing that is perceived or sensed is necessarily true. The only thing that remains true that there is a mind or consciousness doing the doubting and believing its perceptions, hence the famous formulation, 'I think therefore I am', or in Latin, the cogito-'Cogito ergo sum'. Descartes also proposed that the mind and body were two separate and distinct entities, but even the body was not so certain a thing as the mind, because, like everything else in the world, the body could only be sensed because there was a mind to sense it. In 1663, Descartes' writings were placed on a list of prohibited books by the Pope, because of the central place Descartes gave to reason and mind, rather than God, in his philosophy. Here is his explanation of the centrality of the reasoning mind in knowledge making.

René Descartes is often credited with being the "Father of Modern Philosophy." This title is justified due to both to his break with the traditional Scholastic-Aristotelian philosophy prevalent at his time and to his development and promotion of the new, mechanistic sciences. His fundamental break with Scholastic philosophy was twofolded. First, Descartes thought that the Scholastics' method was prove to doubt given by their reliance on sensation as the source for all knowledge. Secondly, he wanted to replace their final causal model of scientific explanation with the more modern, mechanistic model.

Descartes attempted to address the former issue via his method of doubt. His basic strategy was to consider false any belief that falls prey to

even the slightest doubt. This doubt then serves to clear the way for what Descartes considers to be an unprejudiced search for the truth. This clearing of his previously held beliefs then puts him at an epistemological ground-zero. From here Descartes sets out to find something that lies beyond all doubt. He eventually discovers that "I exist" is impossible to doubt and is, therefore, absolutely certain. It is from this point that Descartes proceeds to demonstrate God's existence and that God cannot be a deceiver. This, in turn, serves to fix the certainty of everything that is clearly and distinctly understood and provides the epistemological foundation Descartes set out to find.

Once this conclusion is reached, Descartes can proceed to rebuild his system of previously dubious beliefs on this absolutely certain foundation. These beliefs, which are re-established with absolute certainty, include the existence of a world of bodies external to the mind, the dualistic distinction of the immaterial mind from the body, and his mechanistic model of physics based on the clear and distinct ideas of geometry.

The choice of geometrical method was obvious for Descartes given his previous success in applying this method to other disciplines like optics. Yet his application of this method to philosophy was not unproblematic due to a revival of ancient arguments for global or radical skepticism based on the doubtfulness of human reasoning. But Descartes wanted to show that truths both intuitively grasped and deduced are beyond this possibility of doubt. His tactic was to show that, despite the best skeptical arguments, there is at least one intuitive truth that is beyond all doubt and from which the rest of human knowledge can be deduced. This is precisely the project of Descartes' seminal work, Meditations on First Philosophy.

Mathematical beliefs, since they are not based on sensation but on reason. For even though one is dreaming, for example, that, 2 + 3 = 5, the certainty of this proposition is not called into doubt, because 2 + 3 = 5 whether the one believing it is awake or dreaming. Descartes continues to wonder about whether or not God could make him believe there is an earth,

sky and other extended things when, in fact, these things do not exist at all. In fact, people sometimes make mistakes about things they think are most certain such as mathematical calculations. But maybe people are not mistaken just some of the time but all of the time such that believing that 2 + 3 = 5 is some kind of persistent and collective mistake, and so the sum of 2 + 3 is really something other than 5. However, such universal deception seems inconsistent with God's supreme goodness. Indeed, even the occasional deception of mathematical miscalculation also seems inconsistent with God's goodness, yet people do sometimes make mistakes. Then, in line with the skeptics, Descartes supposes, for the sake of his method, that God does not exist, but instead there is an evil demon with supreme power and cunning that puts all his efforts into deceiving him so that he is always mistaken about everything, including mathematics.

In this way, Descartes called all of his previous beliefs into doubt through some of the best skeptical arguments of his day but he was still not satisfied and decided to go a step further by considering false any belief that falls prey to even the slightest doubt. So, by the end of the First Meditation, Descartes finds himself in a whirlpool of false beliefs. However, it is important to realize that these doubts and the supposed falsehood of all his beliefs are for the sake of his method: he does not really believe that he is dreaming or is being deceived by an evil demon; he recognizes that his doubt is merely hyperbolic. But the point of this "methodological" doubt is to clear the mind of preconceived opinions that might obscure the truth. The goal then is to find something that cannot be doubted even though an evil demon is deceiving him and even though he is dreaming. This first indubitable truth will then serve as an intuitively grasped metaphysical "axiom" from which absolutely certain knowledge can be deduced.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Question 1: Fill up the blanks:

(a) Rene Descartes has been called the "..... of Modern Philosophy"

(b) Descartes "cogito-ergo-sum" has been seen in his later.....

(c) René Descartes (1596-1650) was a French philosopher and mathematician, credited as a foundational thinker in the development of Western notions of.....and.....

(d) According to Descartes, mathematical beliefs are based on.....

(e) Descartes discovers that "I exist" is impossible to doubt and is, therefore, absolutely .....

5.4. DESCARTES COGITO-ERGO-SUM

Cogito, ergo sum is a Latin philosophical proposition presented by René Descartes. It is usually translated into English as "I think, therefore I am". The phrase originally appeared in French in his Discourse on the Method, so as to reach a wider audience than Latin would have allowed. It appeared in Latin in his later Principles of Philosophy. As Descartes explained, "we cannot doubt of our existence while we doubt...." The concept is also sometimes known as the cogito. This proposition became a fundamental element of Western philosophy, as it purported to form a secure foundation for knowledge in the face of radical doubt. While other knowledge could be a figment of imagination, deception, or mistake, Descartes asserted that the very act of doubting one's own existence served as proof of the reality of one's own mind; there must be a thinking entity in this case the self for there to be a thought.

How do we proceed in mathematics, what is the method pursued? We begin with axioms, or principles which are self-evident, which everyone accepts who hears and understands them. From these principles as our starting-point we deduce other propositions which logically follow from them, and which are just as certain as the former, provided no mistake has been made in the reasoning. That is, we begin with simple propositions that are self-evident, and pass from these to more complex ones; our method is synthetic or deductive.

This method must be extended to philosophy. We should proceed from absolutely certain first principles, from propositions which are clear and self-evident, and pass on to new and unknown truths which are equally certain. We look in vain for such truths in the traditional scholastic systems, for in them we find nothing but a mass of divergent opinions. Besides, we cannot accept any truth on the authority of others alone; we must search after it ourselves, never receiving anything as true which we do not clearly and distinctly perceive to be so. We should be on our guard against being influenced by our prejudices, and by transmitted beliefs which have been impressed upon us in our childhood by our parents and teachers. Many of these opinions have been found by experience to be false; perhaps all of them are. Neither can we have faith in our sensations, for these often deceive us, and how do we know that they correspond to anything real? But can we not be sure that our own bodies and actions are realities? No, we cannot be certain even of theses for we are often deceived, we dream, and in our dreams we believe we have realities before us, whereas they are nothing but illusions. Perhaps we are dreaming now, at this present moment; we have no means by which we can with certainty distinguish between waking and dreaming. For all I know, an evil spirit may have made me in order to deceive me. His world which I picture to myself may exist only in my imagination; perhaps it has no existence outside my mind. Even the demonstrations of mathematics may be doubted, for we have sometimes seen men fall into error in such matter and admit as absolutely certain what to us appeared false.

There is no idea of which I can be entirely certain. "I suppose, accordingly, that all the things which I see are false; I believe that none of those things which my deceptive memory presents to me are true; I suppose that I have no senses; I believe that body, figure, extension, motion, and place are nothing but fictions of my mind. What is there then that can be thought true? Perhaps only that nothing in the world is certain."

But one thing is certain, and that is that I doubt, or think; of that there can be no doubt. It is, indeed, a contradiction to suppose that which thinks does not exist at the very time when it thinks. Descartes does not appeal to an empirical psychical fact, the mind's awareness of itself; but reasons logically that doubt implies a doubter, thinking a thinker, a thinking thing (res cogitans) or spiritual substance; thus he reaches what seems to him a rational, self-evident proposition. To doubt means to think, to think means to be; cogito ergo sum- I think; therefore I am. "It is the first and most certain knowledge that occurs to one who philosophizes in an orderly manner." Here is the principle we have been seeking--a certain, self-evident starting point for our metaphysics. This proposition also furnishes us with a criterion or test of truth. This one proposition is absolutely certain, true, clearly and distinctly perceived; hence, I can establish as a general rule that all things which are like it, clearly and distinctly perceived are true.

In the Second Meditation, Descartes tries to establish absolute certainty in his famous reasoning: Cogito, ergo sum or "I think, therefore I am." These Meditations are conducted from the first person perspective, from Descartes.' However, he expects his reader to meditate along with him to see how his conclusions were reached. This is especially important in the Second Meditation where the intuitively grasped truth of "I exist" occurs. So the discussion here of this truth will take place from the first person or "I" perspective. All sensory beliefs had been found doubtful in the previous meditation, and therefore all such beliefs are now considered false. This includes the belief that I have a body endowed with sense organs. But does the supposed falsehood of this belief mean that I do not exist? No, for

if I convinced myself that my beliefs are false, then surely there must be an "I" that was convinced. Moreover, even if I am being deceived by an evil demon, I must exist in order to be deceived at all. So "I must finally conclude that the proposition, 'I am,' 'I exist,' is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind". This just means that the mere fact that I am thinking, regardless of whether or not what I am thinking is true or false, implies that there must be something engaged in that activity, namely an "I." Hence, "I exist" is an indubitable and, therefore, absolutely certain belief that serves as an axiom from which other, absolutely certain truths can be deduced.

5.5. IS DESCARTES A SCEPTIC?

Rene Descartes was not a Skeptic. David Hume was the first famous Skeptic in modern philosophy. Rene Descartes, by comparison, was a True Believer. René Descartes was not a sceptic; in fact, it would be more correct to characterize him as an anti-sceptic. His philosophical method has been called methodological scepticism, as he sought to use (at least on a rhetorical level) sceptical doubt as a means to discover indubitable truths. As such, however, seeing that Descartes did find indubitable truths aplenty, his method is less a method of scepticism than a reductio ad absurdum of scepticism: a demonstration that even the most rigorous sceptical doubt terminates in truths that cannot be doubted. That is, scepticism is self-refuting.

Descartes believed in God, and he believed he prove the existence of God. Rene Descartes also believed in Absolute Truths (e.g. the Cartesian Cogito). Descartes also demonstrated his philosophy by inventing Analytical Geometry. Descartes is occasionally mistaken for a Skeptic because of his Method, which he called, the Method of Doubt. This was how he proved Anselm's Ontological Argument for the Existence of God. If we doubt everything that we can possibly doubt - God, World, Humanity - we are always left with one thing that we can never doubt, no matter how hard we

try, namely, "I think therefore I am." That single fact is beyond any doubt, even though we have no material evidence of the fact of thinking or self. If a person is a rigid, dogmatic, one-sided materialist, then he will insist that the "Self" does not exist, and even that "thinking" does not exist. One cannot put these under a microscope or see them with the naked eye - therefore, for such insensitive clods, "they don't exist." Yet in your invisible and metaphysical world of your mind, you are absolutely and indisputably aware that you are thinking, and therefore that you exist. That is beyond doubt for any rational being. Descartes was the inspiration for Spinoza, as well as for Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. The fact of the existence of self (which Descartes maintained that he proved) is the subject of much modern and so-called postmodern skepticism.

Descartes was, first and foremost, a foundationalist - indeed its modern inventor. Foundationalism is the philosophical view or attitude that all knowledge should be based on indubitable, certain foundations, some privileged truths from which all other truths can be derived (similarly to axioms in mathematics). Descartes used methodological scepticism to refute any piece of supposed knowledge that could be doubted, i.e. to discard truths that cannot be used in the foundation. After stripping them away, only one truth remained that he could not doubt: the very act of doubting itself proved that the doubter, Descartes himself, existed. This is captured in his famous slogan: I think, therefore I am (cogito ergo sum). Doubting one's own existence is not possible if one does not already exist and can thus doubt to begin with. It is in this way, as mentioned above, that scepticism proves self-refuting.

Descartes was not a sceptic. He used the method of scepticism to refute scepticism by landing on a truth that is demonstrated by the very act of doubting it: I think, therefore I am. In fact Descartes was a foundationalist, a believer in certain knowledge built on indubitable truths. Cartesian doubt is a form of methodological skepticism associated with the writings and methodology of René Descartes (1596-1650). Cartesian doubt is also known

as Cartesian skepticism, methodic doubt, methodological skepticism, universal doubt, systematic doubt or hyperbolic doubt.

Cartesian doubt is a systematic process of being skeptical about (or doubting) the truth of one's beliefs, which has become a characteristic method in philosophy. This method of doubt was largely popularized in Western philosophy by René Descartes, who sought to doubt the truth of all his beliefs in order to determine which beliefs he could be certain were true. It is the basis for Descartes' statement, "Cogito ergo sum" ("I think, therefore I am").

5.6. SIGNIFICANCE OF DESCARTES METHOD OF DOUBT :

Descartes' method was to search for an indefeasible truth that could function as a starting point for a series of deductions. The nature of a deductive inference is that it transfers the truth value of the premise to the conclusion. One thing that is known to be true can, via deduction, support definite knowledge of the truth of another thing. Using this method, Descartes hoped to develop a body of human knowledge that was necessarily true. Descartes discovered what he claimed was an indefeasibly true a priori proposition in his famous Cogito: "I think; therefore, I am." From that proposition he deduced the existence of the exterior world just as he had set out to do. Few people today think of Descartes' metaphysics as anything but a historical phenomenon, but his thought continues to influence mathematics, philosophy, and cognitive science, among other fields.

Descartes' application of systematic doubt is one of his most influential legacies. He conceived of it as breaking the dogmatic grip of Aristotle, on knowledge of the world around us. Descartes realized that dogmatic acceptance of any claims to authority was an impediment to the advancement of knowledge. And that is finally the most important aspect of Descartes' method.

Descartes' method is doubt. Descartes wants to become absolutely certain of what is real and true. He determines that the best way to do this is test every single thing that he believes to be real and true from his everyday life with doubt. If the thing he tests passes, then he can know absolutely that it is, no longer with any doubt, real and true. Doubt is the single most significant part of Descartes' philosophy as a whole, as it is what leads him to "I am. I exist."

This axiom becomes the basis for many future claims by Descartes, some of which might aren't seen as absolute truths by many philosophers (for example, Descartes' ontological argument for the existence of God depends first on the existence of 'self' as defined by 'cogito ergo sum', however Kant masterfully dismisses the ontological argument and thus takes down a massive part of Descartes' overall philosophy).

Descartes' method of doubt is a way of judging a clear and distinct idea and, as a consequence, forms a foundation of ideas for an entirely new philosophy. Moreover, he believed that if humans had the freedom to seek and find truth, then the clear and distinct ideas which we cannot doubt must be true. Otherwise, these ideas would lead us astray. The best way out of the prejudice of human mind, to him, was this method of doubt, where he would scrutinize every principle and accepted ideas with systematic scrutiny. He would only accept the ideas which he cannot doubt with any amount of mental effort. Through his method, he was able to bring belief in ideas such as the existence of mind, God and Corporeal world and their nature. His method is still used by philosophers to lay a metaphysical foundation to physics. But in the end, it is just one method. It does not, in any way, eliminate the need of the other methods of gaining knowledge. They stand firm in their place as always using his method of doubt Descartes demonstrated that anything and everything can be doubted but not the fact that he (Descartes) is doubting. So he reaches at his famous statement "I think therefore I am". Descartes method was used by Husserl in his phenomenology.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Question 2: Write short notes on:

(a) Descartes' method of doubt

(b) Descartes' cogito ergo sum.

Question 3: State whether true or false:

(a) Cogito, ergo sum is a Latin philosophical proposition by René Descartes usually translated into English as "I think, therefore I am".

(b) The phrase "cogito ergo sum" originally appeared in French in his Discourse on the Method according to Descartes.

(c) In the Second Meditation, Descartes tries to establish absolute certainty in his famous reasoning: Cogito, ergo sum or "I think, therefore I am."

(d) David Hume was the first famous Skeptic in modern philosophy.

(e) Cartesian doubt is a systematic process of being skeptical about (or doubting) the truth of one's beliefs, which has become a characteristic method in philosophy.



5.7. LET US SUM UP:

- Rene Descartes who is known as "the Father of Modern Philosophy" is responsible for one of the best-known quotations in philosophy: "Cogito, ergo sum" ("I think, therefore I am").

- Descartes attempted to narrow down, by what is sometimes called the method of doubt, what was certain and what contained even a shadow of a doubt. For example, he realized that he could doubt even something as apparently fundamental as whether he had a body (it could be that he was just dreaming of it or that it was an illusion created by an evil demon), but he could not, under any circumstances, doubt whether he had a mind or that he could think.

- The only thing that remains true that there is a mind or consciousness doing the doubting and believing its perceptions, hence the famous formulation, 'I think therefore I am', or in Latin, the cogito-'Cogito ergo sum'.

- Descartes also proposed that the mind and body were two separate and distinct entities, but even the body was not so certain a thing as the mind, because, like everything else in the world, the body could only be sensed because there was a mind to sense it.

- René Descartes is often credited with being the "Father of Modern Philosophy." This title is justified due both to his break with the traditional Scholastic-Aristotelian philosophy prevalent at his time and to his development and promotion of the new, mechanistic sciences.

- Descartes sets out to find something that lies beyond all doubt. He eventually discovers that "I exist" is impossible to doubt and is, therefore, absolutely certain. It is from this point that Descartes proceeds to demonstrate God's existence and that God cannot be a deceiver. This, in turn, serves to fix the certainty of everything that is clearly and distinctly understood and provides the epistemological foundation Descartes set out to find.

- Cogito, ergo sum is a Latin philosophical proposition by René Descartes usually translated into English as "I think, therefore I am". The phrase originally appeared in French in his Discourse on the Method, it appeared in Latin in his later Principles of Philosophy.

- René Descartes was not a sceptic; in fact, it would be more correct to characterize him as an anti-sceptic. His philosophical method has been called methodological scepticism.

- Descartes was not a sceptic: he used the method of scepticism to refute scepticism by landing on a truth that is demonstrated by the very act of doubting it: I think, therefore I am.

- Cartesian doubt is a systematic process of being skeptical about (or doubting) the truth of one's beliefs, which has become a characteristic method in philosophy. This method of doubt was largely popularized in Western philosophy by René Descartes, who sought to doubt the truth of all his beliefs in order to determine which beliefs he could be certain were true. It is the basis for Descartes' statement, "Cogito ergo sum" ("I think, therefore I am").

5.7. FURTHER READING:

1. Thilly, Frank, A History of Philosophy, Central Publishing House, Allahabad.

2. Masih, Y., A Critical History of Western Philosophy (Greek, Medieval, Modern), Motilal Banarsidass Publishers private limited, Delhi.

3. Wright, M.R., Introducing Greek Philosophy, Routledge.

4. Stace. W.T. A Critical History of Greek Philosophy, MacMillan and Co. limited, London.

5.8. ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

1. (a) ans. Father

(b) ans. Principles of Philosophy

(c) ans. Reason and science

(d) ans. reason

(e) ans. certain

(2) (a) Ans: Descartes' method was to search for an indefeasible truth that could function as a starting point for a series of deductions. The nature of a deductive inference is that it transfers the truth value of the premise to the conclusion. One thing that is known to be true can, via deduction, support

definite knowledge of the truth of another thing. Using this method, Descartes hoped to develop a body of human knowledge that was necessarily true. Descartes discovered what he claimed was an indefeasibly true a priori proposition in his famous Cogito: "I think; therefore, I am." From that proposition he deduced the existence of the exterior world just as he had set out to do. Few people today think of Descartes' metaphysics as anything but a historical phenomenon, but his thought continues to influence mathematics, philosophy, and cognitive science, among other fields.

Descartes' application of systematic doubt is one of his most influential legacies. He conceived of it as breaking the dogmatic grip of Aristotle, on knowledge of the world around us. Descartes realized that dogmatic acceptance of any claims to authority was an impediment to the advancement of knowledge. And that is finally the most important aspect of Descartes' method. Descartes' method is doubt. Descartes wants to become absolutely certain of what is real and true. He determines that the best way to do this is test every single thing that he believes to be real and true from his everyday life with doubt. If the thing he tests passes, then he can know absolutely that it is, no longer with any doubt, real and true. Doubt is the single most significant part of Descartes' philosophy as a whole, as it is what leads him to "I am. I exist."

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Descartes method was used by Husserl in his phenomenology.

(b) Ans: Cogito, ergo sum is a Latin philosophical proposition by René Descartes usually translated into English as "I think, therefore I am". The phrase originally appeared in French in his Discourse on the Method, so as to reach a wider audience than Latin would have allowed. It appeared in Latin in his later Principles of Philosophy. As Descartes explained, "we cannot doubt of our existence while we doubt...." The concept is also sometimes known as the cogito. This proposition became a fundamental element of Western philosophy, as it purported to form a secure foundation for knowledge in the face of radical doubt. While other knowledge could be a figment of imagination, deception, or mistake, Descartes asserted that the very act of doubting one's own existence served as proof of the reality of one's own mind; there must be a thinking entity in this case the self for there to be a thought.

This method must be extended to philosophy. We should proceed from absolutely certain first principles, from propositions which are clear and self-evident, and pass on to new and unknown truths which are equally certain. We look in vain for such truths in the traditional scholastic systems, for in them we find nothing but a mass of divergent opinions. Besides, we cannot accept any truth on the authority of others alone; we must search after it ourselves, never receiving anything as true which we do not clearly and distinctly perceive to be so.

In the Second Meditation, Descartes tries to establish absolute certainty in his famous reasoning: Cogito, ergo sum or "I think, therefore I am." These Meditations are conducted from the first person perspective, from Descartes.' However, he expects his reader to meditate along with him to see how his conclusions were reached. This is especially important in the Second Meditation where the intuitively grasped truth of "I exist" occurs. So the discussion here of this truth will take place from the first person or "I" perspective. All sensory beliefs had been found doubtful in the previous meditation, and therefore all such beliefs are now considered false. This includes the belief that I have a body endowed with sense organs. But does the supposed falsehood of this belief mean that I do not exist? No, for if I convinced myself that my beliefs are false, then surely there must be an "I" that was convinced. Moreover, even if I am being deceived by an evil demon, I must exist in order to be deceived at all. So "I must finally conclude that the proposition, 'I am,' 'I exist,' is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind". This just means that the mere fact that I am thinking, regardless of whether or not what I am thinking is true or false, implies that there must be something engaged in that activity, namely an "I." Hence, "I exist" is an indubitable and, therefore, absolutely certain belief that serves as an axiom from which other, absolutely certain truths can be deduced.

3. (a) Ans: true

(b)Ans: true

(c)Ans: true

(d)Ans: true

(e) Ans: true

5.10. MODEL QUESTIONS:

A. Very short questions:-

1. What is the meaning of "cogito ergo sum"?
2. Who is known as the "Father of Modern philosophy"?
3. Where did Descartes first discuss about "cogito ergo sum"?
4. What was Descartes method of investigating about the certainty of his knowledge?

B. Short questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

1. Descartes' cogito ergo sum
2. Descartes' method of doubt
3. Descartes' scepticism
4. Significance of Descartes' method of doubt

C. Short notes (Answer each question in about 150 words)

1. Descartes' method of doubt
2. Descartes' criterion of knowledge
3. Origin of Descartes' method of doubt

D. Long questions: (Answer each question within 300-500 words)

1. Analyze "cogito ergo sum"? Explain Descartes' criterion of knowledge.
2. Explain and examine significance of Descartes' method of Doubt.
3. Is Descartes a sceptic? Explain and examine.
4. Give a detailed account of Descartes' philosophy.
5. How did Descartes arrive at "cogito ergo sum", the certain knowledge through his method of doubt? Explain.

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