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Epistemology

René Descartes, a French philosopher, had some interesting ideas on the nature of knowledge and how it may be acquired, and I plan to talk about those ideas in this manuscript. Descartes is widely recognized for his epistemological tenet "Cogito, ergo sum," which translates to "I think, therefore I am" (Pecere, 2020). He held the view that doubting everything was necessary to arrive at certain knowledge, and that reason was the only way to acquire information.

In order to understand Descartes' views on knowledge, it is important to define several key terms. Firstly, "epistemology" refers to the branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge and belief (Pecere, 2020). "Reason" is the mental faculty of making judgments based on evidence and arguments. "Doubt" is a state of uncertainty or lack of confidence in one's beliefs. Finally, "certain knowledge" refers to beliefs that are indubitable or cannot be doubted.

Additionally, René Descartes came up with the idea of extreme doubt as a philosophical approach to establishing one's knowledge. He advocated casting serious doubt on anything, no matter how widely held or accepted it might appear to be. This includes questioning the veracity of the senses, the physical world, and even our very existence (Pecere, 2020). Descartes's goal in

questioning everything was to find an unquestionable truth upon which to establish his new body of knowledge.

Descartes' Views on Knowledge and How We Attain It

Knowledge, according to Descartes, may be gained solely by the use of one's reason. He contended that the only way to get absolute knowledge was to cast doubt on everything (Pecere, 2020). The term for this kind of questioning is "methodological skepticism." Descartes thought he could arrive at certain, unquestionable knowledge by doubting everything, even his own ideas and the information offered by his senses.

Descartes, in his quest for certainty, ultimately concluded that the only object about which he could have absolute certainty was his personal existence as a thinking individual. Descartes reasoned that he could use this to construct a system of knowledge which would give a sure and undeniable groundwork for all other understanding (Pecere, 2020). Descartes, however, had doubts about the usefulness of sensory experience in the learning process. He held the view that sensory information is often inaccurate and could lead someone astray. In its place, he put more faith in the ability of the mind and reason to arrive at definitive truths.

Concerns and Criticisms of Descartes' Views

Multiple arguments have been made against René Descartes's radical skepticism. Some of the most significant arguments against this outlook are as follows.

Critics of Descartes' approach to radical doubt claim that it is irrational because it seeks an absolute certainty that is unattainable. They argue that we can't help but have faith in certain things, such as our own consciousness and the veracity of our senses, and that this makes it hard to disbelieve everything.

Some have argued that Descartes' strategy of radical doubt is doomed to failure since it depends on the very assumptions it sets out to disprove. For Descartes to doubt anything, he must first believe in the existence of his own mind, a belief he justifies with the now-famous "I think, therefore I am" Critics of Descartes' approach of radical doubt point out that it can only be applied to specific fields of study, such as the hard sciences and mathematics. Disregards areas like ethics, morality, and religion that are founded on individual interpretations of the world.

Some critics of Descartes' radical doubt approach say it falls short because it ignores the possibility that something is true in favor of focusing on what we can rule out with absolute certainty. Therefore, it does not offer a whole picture of what it means to know and what is true. Descartes' radical doubt technique has been criticized for being ineffectual on the grounds that it does not take into account the real-world constraints on human perception and thought. For instance, Descartes' approach does not consider the possibility of having mistaken views due to cognitive biases or the limits of our perception and memory.

These objections indicate that Descartes' philosophy of extreme doubt is not without its defects, highlighting some of its limitations and difficulties. These critiques notwithstanding, Descartes' theories remain prominent and widely studied.

Personal Reflections

In my personal opinion, Descartes' views on knowledge and how we attain it have their strengths and weaknesses. On one hand, I appreciate the importance that he places on reason and the power of the mind to arrive at knowledge. However, I also believe that experience is necessary for knowledge and that reason must be informed by experience in order to arrive at knowledge.

Overall, I believe that Descartes' views are an important contribution to epistemology, but they are not without their limitations. While I do not necessarily agree with all of his views, I believe that his ideas provide a useful starting point for further discussions and debates in the field of epistemology.

References

Pecere, P. (2020). *Soul, Mind and Brain from Descartes to Cognitive Science*. Springer International Publishing.