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Rene Descartes's *Cogito* Argument Reconsidered

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ABSTRACT

Asking from the truth of *Cogito* as the basis of knowledge, this paper tries to analyze all possible answers in Descartes' philosophy. Inductively, four possible answers are open to consideration: either *Cogito* is true 1) based on argumentation, 2) because it is clear and distinct, 3) because of being innate, or, lastly, 4) because of intuition. All of these explanations either entail accepting some prior knowledge to *Cogito* or fall in a vicious circle. A proper way to explain *Cogito*'s truth is a new perspective to the meaning of intuition in Descartes' philosophy. Through this perspective *Cogito* is a presential experience. Lack of any gap, separation, and disjunction in this presential experience is the reason for the truth of *Cogito* because this lack is the lack of error's cause.

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Introduction

As Husserl points out, Descartes's *Meditations* is of great importance as the prototype of philosophical reflection in which Descartes rebuilds the idea of philosophy on a new and astounding ground which is *Cogito* (Husserl, 1982: 1-5). The meaning and nature of *Cogito* has long been discussed by philosophers. Is *Cogito* an inference or is it an insight? Some consider it as a proposition and advance new logical interpretations on it and some others accept it as an insight and try to understand *Cogito* from this perspective. However, all these views have been criticized and discussed and these discussions will not stop here. The special attention to *Cogito* is due to its importance and multiple aspects which are range from self-knowledge and philosophy of mind to epistemology.

We can divide discussions regarding the nature of *Cogito* in two groups; on the one hand, discussions focused on *Cogito* as an inference and on the other hand, discussions related to *Cogito* as an insight. One good analysis of both sides is Hintikka's work (1974) where he tries to find acceptable explanations for the *Cogito* dictum. Finally, he offers two acceptable logical forms for *Cogito* as an inference (proposition)[1] and then explains the second view on *Cogito* and calls it *performance*. There are some more works on *Cogito* like Nakhnikian's (1969) analysis and Rapaport's (1976) compliment on that in which they try to show three important properties of *Cogito*'s propositions. However, there are strong problems for both sides, especially when we notice that *Cogito* is the basis of knowledge in Descartes philosophy. Firstly, as we will show, it will be self-destructive to analyze *Cogito* as an inference, since for Descartes *Cogito* is the basis of knowledge and the basis of knowledge cannot be inferred from prior premises. On the other hand, if we accept it as an insight we should explain how we are going to justify this interpretation based on Descartes' philosophy. Besides, we should clarify what we mean by insight. Is it intuition or something else? If we say it is intuition, as we will see, it should be innate because of Descartes' definition of intuition and because accepting *Cogito* as an innate idea will result in a vicious circle, since innate ideas are put into our minds by God while proving God's existence in turn relies on the *Cogito*. Moreover, if we say that it is an insight but the insight is not an intuition then we should explain what it is.

In this paper I am not going to take this approach for analyzing the nature of *Cogito*, rather I am going to examine *Cogito* from another perspective, which is examination of the truth and certainty of *Cogito* as the basis of knowledge. Postulating *Cogito* as the basis of knowledge, I will try to investigate its truth based on Descartes's philosophy. Through this analysis I shall inspect all possible answers in Descartes's philosophy in which *Cogito* is true and certain. There are at least two advantages applicable on this analysis: the first is finding the condition in which *Cogito* is true and certain and through that we can understand which explanation for *Cogito* can be acceptable. The second advantage is opening a new perspective regarding the basis of knowledge in a general

1. In our way of analyzing, accepting *Cogito* as a proposition is same with accepting it as an inference. We will return to this point at the end of second section.

sense. Admittedly, we can have a new interpretation of Descartes's philosophy through this analysis but this is not my purpose, at least for now. Finally, I shall answer one possible refutation on my view which can be attained through Dretske's (2012) paper "Doubt about *Cogito*".

Two points should be noticed before our analysis; firstly, Descartes sees the system of epistemology as a foundation in which each part relies on the former one (Descartes, 1985: 122) and where this hierarchy rests on the first item of knowledge which is certain to the most and whose truth is transmitted everything else rests on it; hence, we postulate that Descartes is a foundationalist. Secondly, our method for analysis will be logical: in the sense of defining a dichotomous division and then inspecting all possible states in his philosophy to derive the consequence

1. Analyzing Cogito

Looking for the most certain knowledge, Descartes called into doubt all knowledge which was possible to call into doubt. In the second meditation he declares:

> Archimedes used to demand just one firm and immovable point in order to shift the entire earth; so I too can hope for great things if I manage to find just one thing, however slight, that is certain and unshakeable (Descartes, 1984a: 16).

His purpose is to find some certain and unshakeable ground of knowledge, however slight, and thereby shift the entirety of philosophy on its point. But what is his plan to achieve that knowledge? Descartes decided to destroy the foundation of prior knowledge to find something which is impossible to tear down. Hence, he started to call into doubt all knowledge in search of indubitable knowledge.

We can classify Descartes' doubt into four phases, with the fourth phase having three levels. In the first phase Descartes calls into doubt the reality of sensory input. In the second phase he calls into doubt the existence of the external world; in this stage he doubts in his own body because it is related to external world and his knowledge about that is attained via the senses. In the third phase, Descartes calls Mathematical knowledge into doubt and eventually he takes steps to doubt in God's existence. In this phase we find three levels; firstly, he doubts in God's being supremely good; secondly, he accepts that maybe God does not exist; finally, he proposes the hyperbolical hypothesis of an evil genius.

After this comprehensive and hyperbolical doubt, Descartes finally finds his base for knowledge:

> In rejecting – and even imagining to be false – everything which we can in any way doubt … we cannot for all that suppose that we, who are having such thoughts, are nothing. For it is a contradiction to suppose that what thinks does not, at the very time when it is thinking, exist. Accordingly, this piece of knowledge – I am thinking, therefore I exist – is the first and most certain of all

> to occur to anyone who philosophizes in an orderly way (Descartes, 1985: 194-195).

Thus, we can see that Descartes finds *Cogito* as the first and most reliable knowledge that is possible to achieve for anyone who philosophizes in an orderly way. Finally, he elicits "clarity" and "distinction" as the criterion of knowledge from *Cogito* to build his philosophical system on a mathematical order. As he states in *Discourse on Method*, because he has just one true and certain knowledge, i.e. *Cogito*, he should extract the general rules for truth and certainty from that (Descartes, 1985:127). In other words, Descartes presupposed the *Cogito*'s truth and certainty and then elicits criterion of truth and certainty from that. The question whose answer we are looking for then; what is Descartes's reason for the claim that *Cogito* is true and certain? Why should it be immune from all doubts? How does he demonstrate, that regarding *Cogito*, we are not deceived? In fact, we have two different phases here; firstly Descartes claims that *Cogito* is absolutely true and certain; for, it is the first and the basic knowledge which we can attain. Secondly, he extracts the criterion of knowledge from that because it is absolutely true and certain. Hence, we should know that our question concerns the first phase: why is Descartes's claim true and immune from doubt?

We can say, inductively, that justifying this claim i.e., that *Cogito* is true and certain, can be done in four ways[1]: either (A) it is true based on argumentation, (B) because it is clear and distinct, (C) because of being innate, or, lastly, (D) because of intuition.

Now we are going to analyze all four possible answers in the order state above.

A) Cogito is true and certain because of a strong argument

The first plausible answer is to say it is impossible for me to doubt without existing "*for it is a contradiction to suppose that what thinks does not exist"* (Descartes, 1985: 195). Owing to the fact that, my doubt is my attribute (or accident) and my attribute cannot be existent without me; therefore, I must already exist, if my attribute exists.

In criticizing this answer (and other similar answers) we should say this answer is a kind of syllogism and indeed a strong one at that because assertion of its major premise occurs just by its representation. However, this argument in all its firmness, even if its firmness is like mathematics *or in some even simpler matter, if that is imaginable* (Descartes, 1984a: 14), cannot remain immune from third and fourth phases of doubt where Descartes claims that it is possible for Mathematical truths to be false because of the following consideration; "*if it were inconsistent with his (God) goodness to have created me such that I am deceived all the time, it would seem equally foreign to his goodness to allow me to be deceived even occasionally; yet this last assertion cannot be made*" (Descartes, 1984a: 14). Why *this last assertion cannot be made*? Because we evidently assert that

1. We should notice these four ways are extracted from Cartesian philosophy. But we in fact can find more possible answers considering Kant's or Wittgenstein's philosophy or even Classic philosophy but it will be out of this article's subject and needs another paper.

we are sometimes deceived, at least about sensory inputs. Thus, if we are deceived, why can't such deception occur about Math and syllogism? And even if we consider logic simpler than mathematic, it nevertheless; cannot be immune from these phases of doubt even right now given the argument that I just proposed.

Besides, it is impossible to justify a basis of knowledge through an argument because any effort to prove it by argument requires accepting former knowledge and this is contrary to assumption of its being a basis. For instance, here Descartes should already accept the impossibility of contradiction. Thus, Descartes cannot prove truth and certainty of *Cogito* via argument.

There are some other logical forms which have been offered by philosophers to show the validity of *Cogito* dictum as an inference[1]; however, my analysis will be immune from all possible logical forms which can be offered because in a general sense it is contradictory to the assumption to infer the basis of knowledge through argumentation.

B) Cogito is true and certain because it is clear and distinct

The second plausible answer that we can extract from Descartes' system is to say *Cogito* is true and certain because it is clear and distinct.[2] In fact, for Descartes the criterions of knowledge are clarity and distinction; thus, everything which is clear and distinct is true and certain; equally, so is the *Cogito*.

In analyzing this answer we should remember that if we consider clarity and distinction as the criterion of truth and certainty of *Cogito* we will fall in vicious circle. On the one hand, clarity and distinction, as the criterion of knowledge, have been attained from *Cogito* (Descartes, 1985: 127); on the other, we consider those as the criterion for truth and certainty of *Cogito*. In fact, for extracting a criterion of knowledge being true and certain of *Cogito* have been assumed and by postulating its certainty we achieve a criterion of knowledge; hence, being the criterion for clarity and distinction is dependent upon accepting the certainty of *Cogito* and consequently they cannot be a criterion for the truth and certainty of *Cogito*. This is the circular fallacy which is well-known.

Here we can have two considerations; firstly, what does Descartes mean by "clarity and distinction"? In fact, these two are robust notions in Descartes philosophy and we can have different interpretations of their definition. The question is: do these different definitions make any difference in the above analysis? The answer is no, because logically we cannot use the criterion which has been inferred from *Cogito* to prove its own truth in any possible definition. Consider we have *X* and *Y* as the criterion of truth and we know *P* is true because it has these two criterions. Thus far there is no contradiction. Then we ask, how did we attain *X* and *Y*? The problem of vicious

1. To find more information see: Jaakko Hintikka, 1974, P 98- 126; Jaakko Hintikka, 1962, pp. 3-32; Nakhnikian, 1969, pp. 197-209; Rapaport, 1976, pp. 63-68.
2. We can see referring to this answer in Discourse; *I saw … that from the mere fact that I thought of doubting the truth of other things, it followed quite evidently and certainly that I existed.* (Descartes, 1985: P 127) Of course there can be other commentations about this quotation but we just want to consider all possible commentations and states.

circle will emerge, if we claim that we have attained *X* and *Y* from *P*. in fact, we have already postulated that *P* is true, then tried to extract the criterion of truth from that. Thus, we cannot use *X* and *Y* in this way, in any definition, to prove *P* is true.

Secondly, why cannot we postulate the clarity and distinction instead of acquiring them by means of *Cogito*? In fact, one can say that we have clarity and distinction independently of *Cogito* and then we apply them on *Cogito*; therefore, there is no vicious circle here.

For this possible consideration the point should be explained is why we postulate α -clarity and distinction- as the criterion of knowledge and not β -something other than the clarity and distinction-? Is there any criterion for this postulation? To avoid falling into infinite regress and vicious circle, it should be said that we detect α independently. Now two questions should be answered; firstly, what does it mean to say person S detects α independently? And the more important one is; is it possible for S to be wrong regarding α? Why should α be immune from errors? In other words, I want to look at this answer from the first meditation's perspective and say maybe the evil genius is deceiving me whenever I postulate α as the criterion of knowledge to make me consider wrong knowledge as the true one. Hence, the truth of criterion should be proved and proving that, based on Descartes' philosophy, can be done in four ways which we are analyzing in this paper. Therefore, again we are faced with these four possible ways.

C) Being innate

The third possible answer for truth and certainty of *Cogito* is to say that *Cogito* is true and certain because it is innate. But we should note that there are two kinds of innate matters in Descartes's philosophy. The first kind are innate ideas and the second are innate propositions. In fact, Descartes never refuted *Cogito* as an innate proposition. Anyhow, whether we accept *Cogito* as an innate idea or innate proposition, being innate for Descartes means that it has been engraved by God in my mind and "*God, in creating me, should have placed this idea in me to be, as it were, the mark of the craftsman stamped on his work*" (Descartes, 1984a: 35).

If Descartes declares *Cogito* as innate; then, it is true and certain because it has been placed by God in my mind and God cannot be a deceiver. The response to this answer would be referring to the problem of the vicious circle; due to the fact that, Descartes is subordinating truth and certainty of *Cogito* to God's Omni-benevolence; but in the fourth phase of his comprehensive doubt he firstly refutes that God is supremely good and then he denies God's existence and finally he proposes the hyperbolical hypothesis of evil genius. In fact, *Cogito* for Descartes is the first certain knowledge to defeat doubt and after achieving that by postulating its truth and certainty he tries to prove the existence of God and the external world. Hence, proving the existence of God is dependent on the certainty and truth of *Cogito* and cannot be the reason for its truth and certainty.

Besides, proposing being innate as the reason for the truth and certainty of *Cogito* means that Descartes should already accept some antecedent matters before *Cogito*. It means that at least he should accept some prior principles as innate principles which are true and certain beyond any

doubt; however, it is contradictory to his method of philosophy because he wants to find certainty through doubt and after destroying all his prior knowledge. In fact, *Cogito* is the first truth for Descartes.

D) Cogito is true and certain because it is attained via intuition

Finally Descartes can claim that *Cogito* is true and certain because it is attained via intuition. To better understand this option, we need to look at the definition of intuition in Descartes view. For Descartes intuition and deduction are two intrinsic potentials of the human mind. I grasp simple natures through intuition and by using deduction I move to more and more complicated cognitions. He states:

> By intuition I do not mean the fluctuating testimony of the senses or the deceptive judgment of imagination as it botches things together, but the conception of a clear and attentive mind, which is so easy and distinct that there can be no room for doubt about what we are understanding. Alternatively, intuition is the indubitable conception of clear and attentive mind which proceeds solely from the light of reason (Descartes, 1985: 14).

Thus, intuition is *the indubitable conception of clear and attentive mind*; hence, it is a kind of conception. On the other hand, each conception needs an object and a subject because conception is a two-place predicate which means it is always a conception of something for someone. Therefore, it always needs an object and a subject. However, do different objects of intuition make any difference in the meaning of intuition? Here we are going to analyze intuition in Descartes philosophy with regard to objects and through this analysis try to find the answer for the truth and certainty of *Cogito*. We can have two interpretations for intuition in Descartes philosophy with Consideration of the object in the intuition:

D-1. First: The objects of intuition are innate meanings

Based on Descartes method and its four steps we attain simple natures through the investigation and we can intuit these simple natures clearly and distinctly. On the other hand, all three kinds of simple natures are innate, which means they have been placed by God in our minds. There are several passages from Descartes which support this view. One noticeable passage is from the Discourse in which Descartes has a challenge with opponents of his argument for the existence of God. In answering one possible question Descartes clearly proposes that every clear and distinct conception, that we have, is placed in our souls by God:

> Everything we conceive very clearly and very distinctly is true, is assured only for the reason that God is or exists, that he is a perfect being, and that everything in us comes from him (Descartes, 1985: 130).

Thus, via intuition we grasp some clear and distinct and indubitable conceptions; on the other hand, we *know that everything real and true within us comes from a perfect and infinite being* (Descartes, 1985: 130). Hence, the subject matter of intuition is innate ideas or notions.

Regarding *Cogito*, if we accept this interpretation as the reason for its truth it will lead us to accept that *Cogito* as the object of intuition should be innate and therefore its truth and certainty *is assured only for the reason that God is or exists*. However, as we mentioned, being innate cannot be the reason for the truth and certainty of *Cogito* because we assumed that it is the first knowledge and thus the existence of God and its perfection depends on the truth of that and consequently the existence of a perfect God cannot be the reason for the truth of *Cogito*.

D-2. Second interpretation

In the opening of the third meditation Descartes expresses some noteworthy sentences. He says:

> I will now shut my eyes, stop my ears, and withdraw all my senses. I will eliminate from my thoughts all images of bodily things… I will converse with myself and scrutinize myself more deeply; and in this way I will attempt to achieve, little by little, more intimate knowledge of myself. I am a thing that thinks, that is, a thing that doubts[1] (Descartes, 1641: 34; 1984a: 24).

As it is clear, in the first step, Descartes suspends all senses and tries to refine his thought from corporeal images. In the second step Descartes commences to converse[2] with himself. Before continuing with his formulation, let me stop here and contemplate on the conception of "conversation". What does it mean when we start to converse with someone? Is it possible to converse with a mere body like a door which cannot answer? Of course not, because to have conversation means to have an informal talk in which people exchange news, feelings and thoughts; hence, a conversation needs two active sides. The Latin word that Descartes uses here is *alloquor*. This is a deponent transitive verb which means passive or middle in form but active in meaning. This word shows the act of speaking to someone and having a conversation with someone not solely mere speaking or speech; thus, for active conversation we need two sides. However, should these two sides be different or can they be the same? It seems for an active conversation we need two different sides; inasmuch as, an active conversation relies on an exchange and an exchange requires two different sides, otherwise to speak of and exchange would be nonsense. Besides, a conversation at least needs some senses; we cannot have an active conversation without hearing or at least seeing some actions. Now, what does it mean when I converse with myself? In the conversation with myself there are not two different sides because there is just me; on the other hand, there is no sense and sensory input too; due to the fact that I do not need to converse with

1. Claudam nunc oculos, aures obturabo, avocabo omnes fenfus, imagines etiam rerum corporalium omnes vel ex cogitatione meâ delebo, vel certe, quia hoc fieri vix potefl, illas ut inanes & falfas nihili pendam; meque folum alloquendo & penitius infpiciendo, meipfum paulatim mihi magis notum & familiarem reddere conabor. Ego fum res cogitans, id eft dubitans, aflirmans, negans, pauca intelligens, multa ignorans, Vol.ens, nolens, imaginans etiam & fentiens; ut enim. (Descartes, 1641, P 34)
2. alloquor

myself by language and hearing or seeing to understand my thoughts or feelings unless I am an insane individual who makes himself understand about, for instance his pain, by talking out loud; thus, what does it mean to converse with myself? And what does it mean to suspend the senses and their inputs while there is no need to sense for one to understand oneself?

All we mentioned concerning conversation is true; however, we still need to consider prior requirements for a conversation. There are some prior conditions on which a conversation commences. The first condition for having a conversation is *attention*. One cannot have a conversation without having any attention to the content and the other side of the conversation. By *attention* I mean mental presence and careful consideration of the topic and the other side of the conversation. *Understanding* is the second condition of an active conversation; I cannot start a conversation regarding a topic that I have no idea about. Maybe sometimes it is possible to have a question regarding matters that we have no idea about, but if we want to start a conversation we need to have, at least, a minimum comprehension of the subject of discussion. Equally, to have a conversation with someone that I cannot understand, or vice versa, is not possible. These two conditions are the foundation for a conversation and the linguistic act of talking comes after that.

It is clear that one does not need senses or linguistic dialogue to understand one's feelings and thoughts; therefore, Descartes does not look for the linguistic aspect of conversation. It seems that by using the word "conversation" Descartes refers to the conditions by which a conversation begins: *attention* and *understanding*. Accordingly, when he expresses "*converse with myself"* he refers to attention or awareness of himself, an attention in which he has a kind of understanding of himself. Otherwise, if there was nothing understandable it would be nonsense to have a conversation with himself.[1] On the other, as we already noticed, Descartes tries to suspend his senses. Alongside avoiding falling in simple meaning of the conversation by the suspension of his senses he wants to avoid using senses because they are not indubitable.

Eventually, I will read the passage in this way: I suspend all my senses and their inputs and devote all of my attention, as much as possible, to myself and scrutinize myself and still I can understand myself in which there is no doubtable sensory inputs.

But what does one understand by attention to oneself? Foremost, one understands that one exists and will utter "I am" or "I exist" and after that it comes to understanding one's attributes. Because my attributes cannot exist until I exist. This is the reason why I bolded and underlined some words in Descartes's passage; *I am a thing <u>that</u> thinks, that is, a thing <u>that</u> doubts*. Before thoughts *I am* a thing. that thing thinks and doubts.

Before continuing I need to bring another passage of Descartes which is his answer to one of the objections. In second sets of objections and replies Descartes has an answer which is of importance for us:

1. *Alloquor* means addressing and referring to something, too. But simple referring is not what Descartes is looking for because he says he achieves some intimate knowledge of himself and this not simple reference.

> When someone says, I am thinking, therefore I am, or exist, he is not deducing existence from thought by means of a syllogism, but recognizes it as known directly [*per se notam*] by a simple intuition of the mind. This is clear from the fact that, if he were deducing it by a syllogism, he would first have had to know the major premise, whatever thinks, is or exists. Whereas in fact he actually learns this truth from what he experiences in himself, that it cannot be that he should think, unless he exists. For such is the nature of our mind that it forms general propositions on the basis of the knowledge of particulars (Descartes, 2008: 92).

From this passage, we understand that *Cogito* is not deduced by a syllogism rather it is attained through an experience.[1] But, what kind of experience does Descartes mean? Firstly, let's contemplate on the meaning of experience. What is the experience? We all have different ways of becoming aware of different objects, one of which is experience. In fact, when we stand in a relation with an object (in a general sense) and we become aware, in a way, of that object (or aspect of it) we are experiencing that object. For instance, we can have visual relation to an object and become visually aware of that object (or aspect of it) then we are visually experiencing it; equally, auditory experiences etc. On the other hand, objects of our experiencing can be different types such as events (weddings, robberies, games), properties (colors, measures, quantities), states (fear, pain, pleasure) etc. Therefore, in an experience there is a subject who has a kind of access to an object. Now let us examine *Cogito* as the product of experience: firstly, it cannot be obtained from an experience which happens in sensory relation (external and internal senses) because for Descartes senses are not indubitable but *Cogito* is. Equally, it is not the product of experience of an idea or proposition because this Idea (or proposition) either is inferred from sensory inputs -through syllogism or induction or abstraction- or not. First state is not acceptable because senses are not trustworthy; besides, Descartes remarks *Cogito* is not deduced by a syllogism. On top of that, as we proved in alternative A, it is contrary to assumption to infer *Cogito* from any former knowledge or premises in any way because it is assumed as the basis of knowledge. If we take the latter state, either *Cogito* is innate or it is a mathematical concept[2] (Descartes, 1641: 140). As we already saw in alternative C, accepting *Cogito* as an innate meaning would be fallacious. On the other hand, *Cogito*, as the product of experience, cannot be obtained from mathematical concepts as well, because Descartes in the third phase of doubt calls into doubt mathematics.

If *Cogito*, as the product of experience, has been attained from none of the above states then why does Descartes say he learns it via experience? On the one hand, Descartes declares *he learns this truth from what he experiences in himself*; on the other, in an experience there is a subject who has a kind of access to an object. What can I experience in myself and to what do I have access in myself? When I refer to myself and have my attention concentrated on myself I can experience

1. Atquī profecto ipsam potius, ex eo quôd apud se experiatur (Descartes, 1641: 140).
2. In fact, regarding truth and certainty of *Cogito*, the only acceptable state is being innate; however, we analyzed all possible states. See alternative C.

some states, like a bit of pain that I have in my back due to my spending the whole day sitting in front of a laptop. Nevertheless, this pain is related to my body I am deceived and my senses do not work properly. What about other states like fear, pleasure or sorrow? When I think about my fears or pleasures I can see they are always attached to something. I have fear of something and I am happy or sad for something and I cannot find absolute fear or pleasure in myself. Thus, if I look at their reasons I will confess it is possible for me to be wrong in those states or maybe I am in a dream and all those reasons, which make me sad or happy or make me frightened, are in fact nothing. Yet, I cannot say my states are all over nothing. Maybe about reasons I am deceived but I feel something and I can understand some mood changes (or just changing) in myself and they cannot be nothing. Nonetheless, when I think about the fourth phase of Cartesian doubt I become skeptic even about my states in general meaning owing to maybe *not God, but rather some malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning has employed all his energies to deceive me* (Descartes, 1641: 140) even about my feelings and states to make me think that I feel something but in fact there is no state (or even changing) in me.

Therefore, *Cogito*, as the product of experience, cannot be the product of experiencing mental states too. Does anything else remain that I can experience in myself as the source of the truth? It seems yes. When I suspend all my senses and their inputs and devote all my attention, as much as possible, to myself and scrutinize myself I can go further than my mental states. It is all about attention. I can think about myself and forget my backache because I have no attention to that, like a baby who is crying because of an injury and her parents make her laugh by monkeying around. She is still in pain but she is laughing because she does not have her attention on the injury. Equally, I suppose that I am wrong in my pain and try to pay no attention to it. I try to concentrate more and more on myself and make my attention focused on myself, not on my mental states. What can I find beyond my attributes, accidents and states? I achieve a vague place and can have no concept and idea about it; yet, I can see a presence there and that is my presence. I am present to myself. There is no concept but my presence. I can say one thing which is transparent for me beyond any doubt. I can say: "I AM". I cannot say what I am rather the mere thing that I can say is: I am. I am present for myself. I experience it. I see it.

Now I can explain the meaning of intuition, as the reason for the truth and certainty of *Cogito*. Intuition will not mean conceiving innate meanings rather it will mean conceiving clearly and transparently that I exist. In other word, the meaning of intuition, when it comes to *Cogito*, is one's presence to oneself not one's conceiving innate ideas (or propositions). It is happening whenever the subject of intuition is the object of intuition himself.

This meaning of intuition expresses one's detecting and understanding oneself in a *presential experience*. In fact, what Descartes wants to show, in conceiving clearly and distinctly of *Cogito*, is detecting his existence and the existence of the thinker to himself. This knowledge is absolutely

true and certain because there is no disjunction or separation or differentiation to be the reason of unconformity or misidentification and error. Rather, there is only unity and oneness.[1]

In other words, when person *S* predicates *Y* on *X* he affirms to a kind of relation between X and Y in which X is Y. Sometimes this predication happens between two things other than oneself (The Rose is Red). It will be possible for *S* to be false or deceived in this predication; inasmuch as, assertion to this relation needs representing *X*'s being *Y* and it is possible for *S*'s cognitive system to be wrong in this representation. Some other times, *S* asserts to a relation between himself and something other than himself. For instance, *S* asserts that "I see a Rose" (at the moment of speaking). This assertion should be more certain because of more direct access that he has to the relation (his seeing). Yet, this assertion is debatable too. Because *S*'s seeing the Rose can be a mirage or illusion and if *S* is Descartes it will be even more debatable because of the hyperbolical hypothesis of evil genius; maybe he is in a dream and a malicious demon makes him have this delusion that he sees (or thinks).[2]

What about the following assertion? *S* asserts "I am". It seems that we have a different kind of assertion here. We cannot analyze this assertion like former cases. It means we cannot say *S*'s being is a predicate because, whenever *S* asserts that "I am", he does not represent his being other than himself or the relation between himself and his being (or being) rather he solely considers himself and in this consideration he asserts, intuitively, that "I am.". There is no relation between him and himself. He is present for himself. *S* itself as the subject of awareness is the object of awareness. There is unity and even more than unity because unity applies for two things which became one; whereas, in "I am" subject itself is the object. This is more than unity, it is oneness. How can *S* be wrong in this assertion while there is no disjunction or separation or differentiation?

To illustrate this notion let's assume *Cogito* as a proposition. We know every proposition has been made of a subject and a predicate which are in a relation together. Therefore, assertion to a proposition is dependent upon representing the subject and predicate in a way in which they are related together. Consequently, assertion comes after representation and is hinged on it, likewise is the proposition which has been made of a subject, predicate and the relation. Accordingly, if we consider *Cogito* as a proposition we should have a subject, a predicate and the relation between them and equally for assertion to *Cogito*, as a proposition, beforehand we should represent the subject, predicate and the relation. It means before assertion to *Cogito* we should have a representational (conceptual) knowledge of its components. However, it is contrary to assumption because we presumed *Cogito* as the basis of knowledge: the knowledge which is simple and certain

1. If we take this interpretation we should accept that clarity and distinction have two different meanings in Descartes philosophy; one where we use it for *Cogito* which means one detects clearly and transparently oneself and existence of oneself and distinction between oneself and others through difference between presence and absence. The second meaning is related to innate ideas and understanding them clearly and distinctly compared to other concepts. The former is non-conceptual awareness, which I call presential awareness, and the latter refers to conceptual knowledge. Yet, this idea needs an independent paper to be discussed.
2. What we are talking about is the invalidity of these propositions as the first knowledge. However, to explain more detailed we need an independent paper to show differences.

to most and is the Archamedian point on which Descartes should stablish his indubitable system of knowledge. Hence, *Cogito* cannot be accepted as a proposition.

To sum up, among all possible explanations for the truth and certainty of *Cogito* in Descartes' philosophy, solely the second interpretation of the fourth way is acceptable. All other ways either entail accepting some prior knowledge to *Cogito* or fall in a vicious circle; therefore, they are incapable of breaking skepticism. Overall, Descartes cannot consider *Cogito* as a proposition or an idea; rather, the sole way is to accept it as a presential experience which is one's being present to oneself and by logical analysis we revealed that this is the only knowledge which is immune from doubts and the only knowledge capable of serving as the first and basic foundation of knowledge. Presuming *Cogito* as the basis of knowledge and analyzing its truth, as the basis of knowledge, is a precise way to understand what the nature of it is.

2. Dialogue

Now I am going to bring one possible refutation of the current paper and provide a dialogue with it. By this dialogue I want to achieve two purposes: the first is to make my point more clear and show different aspects of it. The second is showing some of possible mistakes in the understanding of *Cogito* as a presential experience. Dretske in his (2012) paper "Doubt about *Cogito*" focuses on *Cogito* and advances an analysis through five steps to show that *although we enjoy privileged access to and authority about what we think, we depend on others for our knowledge that we think.* And finally he narrates a story of a three-year old girl to demonstrate his view. In the first step he demonstrates the difference between the way one knows what is λ and the way one knows that is λ through an example in which my way of knowing that the philosophical Gazette is going to publish my paper in the next issue (testimonial knowledge) is different from my way of knowing of what the Gazette will publish in the next issue (my perceptual knowledge of my paper). Based on this differentiation, he concludes that *authority about what one thinks is not the same as authority about the fact that one thinks it* (Dretske, 2012: 1-3). In the second step he posits a distinction between the two kinds of awareness: object-awareness (awareness of objects) and fact-awareness (awareness of facts). Dretske remarks despite of fact-awareness, object-awareness is epistemically neutral; you can be o-aware of a robbery (see, be visually aware) and not know it is a robbery. If the sound S hears is the signal to attack, then whether S knows it, he heard the signal to attack. He declares that it is possible for one to be o-aware of something without being f-aware of that. For instance, I can see Tom, a distant cousin I've never met before, in a bus station (being o-aware) without knowing that is my cousin (f-awareness) or reverse situation (I can know Tom is a doctor – being f-aware- without knowing – being o-aware- of him). Equally, this difference is applicable to our thoughts: our awareness of P that we are thinking about is different from our awareness of our thinking P. The first one is o-awareness of an object; the second one is f-awareness of a mental act. Hence, *awareness of what one thinks does not require knowledge (f-awareness) that one thinks it*.

In the third step Dretske expresses if one knows, one thinks in a way others cannot know, because one is o-aware of things others cannot be o-aware of and in the fourth step he claims that direct o-awareness of P (like seeing P) is not enough to know it is a P. One also has to be aware of P-indicating properties even if I am o-aware of my thoughts. Finally, he concludes *what one thinks never indicates that one is thinking it. O-awareness of what one thinks cannot, therefore, make one f-aware of the fact that one thinks* (Dretske, 2012: 11).

One obvious point in Dretske's paper that should be noticed is his definition of *Cogito*. As he mentions, *Cogito* in his view is *the knowledge that one thinks*. Then, he concentrates on *Cogito* from this perspective. If we take this definition it means that whenever one asserts "*Cogito ergo sum*", first of all one is aware of his act of thinking and then one concludes *sum*. Given this point, Dretske challenges one's being aware of one's act of thinking. However, this definition cannot be applicable –at least in some aspects- to the meaning of *Cogito*; inasmuch as, *sum* is not deduced from the act of thinking or "being aware of the act of thinking". In fact, to assert *sum* does not require my being aware of my act of thinking rather one's mere thinking to oneself and attention to oneself will present one's being. On the other hand, one's knowledge that *one thinks* presupposes one is aware of one's existence. One cannot be aware of one's thinking without knowing that one exists.

Secondly, it seems the distinction between object-awareness and fact-awareness relies on the distinction between the concept and its referent. It means that sometimes I am aware of an object (seeing my distant cousin) but I cannot apply a proper concept to it (failure to understand he is my cousin) and versus; I have a concept in my mind about an object –being -aware – and am unaware –object-awareness – of the referent of that concept. For instance, I have a distant cousin that I never saw before but I know he is a doctor and has a wife and two children. Now considering *Cogito*, is that distinction applicable to it? Is there any concept (thought) as a mediator? What does it mean to say one knows one's act of thinking through a concept? And how does one attain this concept? Dretske will express that one knows his act of thinking through a concept which has been attained from others. What would be the answer, if we ask about the truth and justification of that concept? Are you sure that, regarding this testimonial belief that you think, you are not deceived? Does the knowledge correspond to reality? The answer should be yes because we are discussing about the *way* of knowing my thinking and it means the truth of my *knowing my thinking* is assumed; otherwise, discussion would be nonsense. In other words, I know I think, it is granted, now I want to know; how do I know it? Besides, I can think about my thinking and assert that I think. Therefore, the truth of the knowledge that one thinks is presupposed. Now we should find the answer of the second question; why is it a true and justified belief? We cannot justify this concept through testimonial knowledge again. The source of the concept should not be the same with the reason of its truth. For illustration, consider my concept of my laptop. It is a true concept. What is the source of my concept? It is the external object which is in front of me and I use it for writing and reading.

How do I know that I am right in my concept of the laptop? I cannot repeat the same answer and bring the source of the concept as the reason for truth and justification. If I do, it will be repetition or vicious circle. Rather I will justify my concept by remarking "I see it". Take the same way for *Cogito*; I know I think and I have learned this from others. It is a true belief. Why is it true? I should have access to my thinking to know my concept of thinking is corresponded to that. This access either is a direct access (like my seeing my laptop) or it is an indirect access (through a concept). The second state will lead us to infinite regress and it means we can never know our thinking. Therefore, we should accept the first one and which means I know my thinking directly not through a concept. Knowing the act of thinking (seeing, hearing and etc.) happens simultaneously by thinking (seeing, hearing etc.) and that we do not need any concept to know it. I know I think about ЛI because I think about ЛI.[1] If I know my thinking directly why do I need others to know it? I can say, as an alternative, others remind me of the fact that I think. I already have this knowledge but I have no attention to it. They turn my face to this fact. For instance; I am looking for my car key, it is in front of my eyes and I am seeing the key but I am not able to recognize it. I have no attention to it because something haunts my mind. My mother tells me it is in front of you. She makes me attentive to the knowledge that I already had but I had no attention towards. She is not the source of my seeing the key; she solely reminds me and draws my attention to the key. Why do not we take the same way for my knowing my thinking by being told? In other words, testimonial knowledge can be a reminder which draws my attention to my prior knowledge of my thinking.

Thirdly, I want to make a distinction between two kinds of awareness: first-order awareness and second-order awareness. To illustrate consider seeing: when I am seeing P I do not need to understand my seeing P to see P. My seeing P is enough for me to see P. This is my first-order awareness of P; my direct awareness of P. On the other hand, sometimes I need to talk about my direct awareness of P and explain it, show it or justify it. Then, I will say "I saw P". I make a concept of my seeing P to transmit my way of knowing P; however, my awareness of my seeing P is not conceptual. I know I see P through my seeing P but the concept is a mediator to transmit my knowledge to your mind. This is the second-order awareness of P. now I am going to apply this division on *Cogito*. As I mentioned, *Cogito* is not a thought; rather, it is a presential experience. This is about the first-order awareness. It is an experience I have. But when I want to justify it I have to put it in a proposition and explain it through a concept. *Cogito* as a proposition is an indicator or mediator to that experience. It is a prevalent mistake in criticizing *Cogito* to focus merely on the proposition. Some philosophers analyse *Cogito* in the second-order and then deny it

1. Take the same analyze for indicator properties, if the object is one's existence.

in the first-order. Second-order awareness of *Cogito* is propositional and thereby it is conceptual; whereas, *Cogito* as first-order awareness is not conceptual.

Finally, regarding the condition of small children who, in Drestke's view, think but do not know their act of thinking we should consider the level in which they are unaware. They have the presential experience (first-order awareness of *Cogito*); however, they do not know that it is a presential experience (second-order awareness of *Cogito*). If they do not know that they exist why should they eat, drink or act. If Sarah does not know that she exists why does she hurry up to open the door after hearing the doorbell?

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