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**The Cartesian
Cogito: A
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Challenges of
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Abstract

Every Philosophy is contextual within the circumstantialities that can be said to be summative condition of its development. Contextualization is a factor of relevance. The *cogito* is a timely response to the need to emphasize the priority of the application of reason in the systematic pursuit of the truth of the case. Descartes claims that the rational criterion is foundational to the further development of thought. A clear factor in the background is the Cartesian appreciation of mathematical precision, clarity and indubitability in establishing the case; a process transformed into a methodology for application in rational inquiry. The methodic doubt introduced utilitarian skepticism into the rational quest for the irreducible claim that would defy doubt or rather utilize doubt positively in the confirmation of its indubitability. The goal of rational inquiry here, beyond the mere identification of the *cogito* as the unpuncturable proof of the existence of the self is the utilitarian value of this discovery: systems of truths can be built with this trustworthy verity as its foundation. It is the existence of the self, first; and then, the universalization of this conceptual scheme to the whole of the epistemological and metaphysical edifice. The paper proffered critical insights into the *cogito* with a view to achieving hermeneutic simplicity. It also attempted insightful explorations into the challenges of rational inquiry for contemporary times. It concluded by proposing the Cartesian mode of truth as not only significant for rational inquiry but also as the bedrock upon which any development paradigm can seek to sit for any lasting gains expectations.

Key words: cogito, methodic doubt, utilitarian skepticism, rational inquiry, indubitability, certainty.

Introduction

Philosophy is historically the account of progress in the systematic, tenderly deep and critical reflective progress in the spheres of human thought and understanding. Characteristically, philosophy in each era endeavors to uncover new faces of reality as it provides novel perspectives, methodologies and systems facilitations for conquests in the domain of rational inquiry. Rational inquiry as a tool of the philosophic enterprise presupposes that the discipline deploys this faculty to the last consequence in the pursuit of the case or that which ought to follow within the rules in the logic domain. The criterion of truth is a substantial factor in any philosophical

development since the end of the latter is supposedly reality in its clearest form. The accession to this reality is always a logic of the criterion that is properly worked out and applied to the overall project. Rene Descartes epitomizes this vision. His perspective in philosophy is that of a unique radical variation in the criterion for the apprehension of reality. He understood quite well that the criterion is not necessarily the truth but an inexorable path to it; thus, the need to establish the criterion as pre-foundational to epistemological and metaphysical realities, the ultimate quests in these endeavors.

Broadly, Descartes had as his beacon the historical trajectories of philosophy. Thematic reassessment in realms of interest tends to give birth to new dimensions in the chosen area. In this way, the discipline has known jerks, stopovers and the gathering of momentum in the gains and enrichment of the pool of value-heritages to which it lays claim. The human mind too has had to explore, in the course of time, its capacities at providing alternative views to reality, or rather has been able to showcase the arrays of its complementary efforts at enriching this pool of value-heritage. This results in the expansion of the culture of the human intellect. It facilitates as well the relation with the non-human external world whose complexity has been reduced by the new visions of reality. Few illustrations may serve to buttress this issue. The critical understudy of Platonism by Aristotle did open further gains in philosophic insight; contributing thereby to complementary advance in the intellectual enterprise. Aquinas in the golden age of medieval critical thought undertook a comprehensive survey of Aristotle's ideas and there-from bequeathed philosophy enduring Christian perspectives on fundamental questions of human existence and the place of man in the overall scheme of things in the universe. In contemporary times, the existentialists – Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty – embarked on critical understudy of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology with diversities of insights and divergences of values culminating in the establishment of the humanistic existentialism of the contemporary era. Cartesian philosophy germinated from the bosom of scholasticism; although it has to be pointed out that this was more from its less significant remains than from substantial scholasticism whose gains would ever remain perennially valuable part of the value-heritages of philosophy.

Rene Descartes was born on March 31st, 1596 in Touraine, France. He was educated at the La Fleche College known for its pedagogical thoroughness. He thus enjoyed very good educational foundation early in life. Descartes distinguished himself in mathematics, science and philosophy with deep interest in mathematics. The influence and impression left on him by mathematics was so lasting and interwoven with his philosophical thoughts that he endeavored to find room for the enrichment of his new philosophy by the clarity of the mathematical method. Descartes died on 11th February, 1650 due to sudden change in his established personal culture coupled with a brief illness, in Stockholm, Sweden (Stumpf, 2003, p.223; Copleston, 2003, pp. 65 – 66; Critchley, 2009, pp. 121 – 122).

The new philosophy of Descartes was informed by the quest for clarity. He developed a criterion/methodology for ascendancy to the truth of things. He looked forward to escaping falsehood as he struggled to lay the foundation for clarity in identifying truth as the logical conclusion of any research undertaking. Although his methodology was not the truth fundamentally but nonetheless, it was the sure path to it. We shall underscore, subsequently that this truth was to be the foundation upon which further truths of significance to human existence would be discovered especially in the realms of epistemology and metaphysics.

The Path to the *Cogito*

The strength of Descartes' philosophy largely lays in its unique methodology. In his *First Meditations*, Descartes proposed both conventional and non-conventional methods of philosophizing. These methods have to be founded in intuition and deduction (Stumpf, 2003, pp. 226 – 227). Intuition could be referred to as a sudden dawning of reality to a wakeful human consciousness. It can be said to be gratuitous since the logical steps to the reaching of

such a truth is sidetracked in contradistinction to the Aristotelian type of syllogism (deduction). However, intuition does not defy logic as one can afterwards trace a logical path to it; or as it were, it can serve as foundational truth upon which further truth can be built. What is unique here is the 'return to the subject' project whereby reality is not necessarily a function of formalized external systems applications but from within; a disposition to and an expectation from values intrinsic to the human person. Heraclitus, in the pre-Socratic era, would emphasize that reality lies hidden within.

Secondly, substantial to Descartes' philosophy is his methodic doubt. This methodology opts for a clean sweep of inherited values both from the epistemological and the metaphysical viewpoints. Descartes distrusted the capacity of these values to deliver at the level of indubitability. The similarity between this and the Husserlian problematic is striking since both are moved by the same quest for substantial reality; both had to do away with conventional methods; and, both opted for rational scientific novelty that would culminate in unshakeable foundations. Descartes' methodic doubt is a universal epistemological phenomenon in that he had to doubt everything in which doubt becomes possible. The doubt is universal in so far as it spares nothing (Copleston, 2003, p. 85). The itemization of this principle to specificities would make for millions of such doubts; thus, for simplification purposes, Descartes would organize the doubtable taxonomically. The methodic doubt is thus said to be systematic. Knowledge through the senses is subjected to doubt and so is reason. Metaphysical knowledge is not spared since it is possible that 'an evil genius' could employ all his powers of deception in this (Velasquez, 1994, p. 313). This completes the universalism of the doubt.

In the midst of these uncertainties and doubts, however, there is reality beyond doubt. The fact that 'I think', cannot be doubted. The consciousness of this process translates to the consciousness of myself as existing. 'I think, therefore I am', is indubitable. At the foundation of my being is this reality, namely, this ability to think. Even if at the highest level, an evil genius chooses to deceive me, this deception is the confirmation that I exist. 'I think, therefore I am', expressed as *cogito* is the one reality beyond doubt. *Cogito ergo sum*: I think, therefore I am (Beardsley, 2002, p. 34; Stumpf, 2003, pp. 229 – 230; Copleston, 2003, p. 91). At last, I can fall back on a discovery that is foundational, stable and unpuncturable. If this can be trusted, then other truths can be built from this to make for systematization and logical formidability. The re-derivation of truths from the *cogito* allows for the construction of the Cartesian epistemological and metaphysical edifice. With the *cogito* as sure foundation, Descartes could prove the existence of other bodies besides the self as well as God's existence. The latter had become necessary because without it, he would not be able to do away with the 'evil genius' capable of the highest deception. God's existence guarantees non-deceptibility for which reason the ideas can be trusted. The non-deceptibility of God stems from the fact that God cannot deceive; nor be deceived. This gives assurance, for instance that the principles of mathematics, the axioms of geometry and the deductive process are all true.

Descartes does not stop solely with cogitation. It appears that cogitation for him is a technical concept. What is it that thinks? 'It is a thing which doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, refuses and which also imagines and feels' (Stumpf, 2003, p. 230). Beardsley, rendering this in Descartes' own words, put it this way:

What then is it that I am? A thinking thing. What is a thinking thing? It is a thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, abstains from willing, that can also be aware of images and sensations' (Beardsley, 2002, p. 36).

From the above, it is clear that the 'think' in 'I think, therefore I am', has expansive reaches. It is more complex than its simple presentation suggests.

Further Perspectives to the *Cogito*

A further consideration to the *cogito* that is of interest is the *cogito* itself. Descartes thought with deep philosophical insight. What does he really mean by the *cogito*? How are we to comprehend meaning here? Do we take Descartes on the face value of his propositions or do we need a sort of hermeneutical approach to unravel the full implications of his logic? Undoubtedly, there is novelty in the Cartesian logic that needs explication. 'I think, therefore I am', is the cogitational process upon which further truths can be derived, from the Cartesian stand point, without an iota of doubt. Is this cogitational process simply a thinking process generally understood? Even from Descartes himself, it is clear that this is not meant to be conceived as a simple thinking process. This informs the Cartesian technicality around this otherwise simple conception. If this were to be pure cogitation, then, it would appear that the 'I am' would suffer temporalized dislocations: I would exist in so far as I think (Russell, 2002, p. 548); and, perhaps, who knows what in those times I am not able to think? What of children? Do they exist? If existence is a function of the cogitational process, then, in all fairness, children would have to wait till such and such a time. What of while asleep? Thinking here is not a self-conscious exercise unless hazily in dream. For the period that one is not involved in dreaming, what becomes of him? What of those in confused state or even in coma for how long? Has trauma done away with their existences since they cannot think self-consciously? Descartes seems to be aware of the problematic that his proposition throws up on the existential plane. This informs his technicalization of the cogitational process to include expansively: doubting, understanding, affirming, denying, willing, refusing, imagining and feeling. There may, for instance, exist conditions of deep coma devoid of feeling: what else can be brought in to account for perceived capacity to 'think'? 'Feeling', for instance, is definitely more of a psychologic than philosophic notion. All that can be surmised here is that the Cartesian *cogito* is overloaded. It is as well tottering under the weight of the overload. It is pertinent to point out that Descartes, in spite of the obvious formidability of 'the return to the self' logic, does have problem with making general assumptions and applying such to specificities. Let us return to 'feeling, sensations' – psychological operable (s) – which he has lumped together as belonging to the capacity for thought. Are these not general terms that are shared alike by humans and non-human brutes? According to Aristotle, 'the primary form of sense is touch, which belongs to all animals (De Anima 413b5). Are these capable of affirming their existence by the fact that they feel? While the human can affirmatively say, 'I feel, therefore I am'; can the brute that shares the same 'feeling', affirm; 'I feel, therefore I am'? The more obvious difficulty here is the undercurrent of unintended proof. Is this position proving the existence of these non-human beings prior to embarking on the task of proffering proof for the existence of realities external to the human self?

It is the view of this paper that Descartes could have achieved same result by not projecting the sheer complexities in the thinking concept. This work intends to limit the thinking process to the purely cogitational; which remains a simplification of the reflective intellect. This is because the thinking process is unique to the human conscious being; but this can be extended, in its immediate non-perceptible existence to all human states of being. Humans at the subconscious or even unconscious level of being still do think, even if in the most residualized state of that intellectual function which remains the only reason for their being human. Whether as an actuality, potentiality or potentiated by any external factors, the cogitational process properly defines man adequately. 'I think, therefore I am'; should be the principle of indubitable truth where the operational concept 'think', must have to be synonymous with 'pure cogitation', and any other term brought under it would be regarded as disposable encrustation upon this simple notion.

Critique of the *Cogito*

The critique would be in two main areas: the methodology and *cogito* activity. In terms of methodology, Descartes starts with an empty hand having put aside the erstwhile intellectual arsenal at his disposal. Everything is suspect and the tainted could not be worthy ally in the intellectual journey. The premier end is the discovery of his existence which is fascinatingly showcased. The unpuncturability of the Cartesian logic is the intrinsic value in

it. It seems, as far as humans remain the questioner, that the indubitability of this logic is a factorial component of human existence. Yet, this strength is part, in the corollary, of the issue. Since personal existence is the fundamental truth upon which the whole epistemological edifice has to be built, we are here faced with the fractionalization or fragmentation of existents on the spatiotemporal order. The logic is fascinating even if it conceals a fundamental truth of the Cartesian process. Does putting values in abeyance detract from their existence in reality? Did Descartes himself cease to exist until the discovery of the *cogito*? Did the external world fizzle out of being till their existence was proved? We appear to be dealing with two planes of existential realities or two logical existential levels. The one is the Cartesian logical level that delivers on promise; and, the other is the logical level of truth in silhouette; each of which tends to be real, although one mattered more to Cartesian philosophy while the other remained a truth in need of systematization.

The implication here is that Descartes knows that his universal doubt is a solely utilitarian epistemological project. It was meant to serve an end. It is not rational fiction but arises from a substantial issue seriously agitating the mind. Descartes must have gone through personal intellectual struggles to have come thus far. This seals any questions of fictionalization. The arduous rational inquiry being the case, yet there is the need to grasp the methodological utility of the exercise. Descartes knows that he exists; and that the other realities external to him do exist, but it is obvious he does not know this with the form of logical clarity and certainty which he seeks in his new methodology. The question here is the criterion for clarity. The issue does not border so much on a case of suspended acosmicism than on clear thought and its positive fruits. Perhaps the best answer to accusations of fictionalization of rational inquiry here is to demonstrate that following the Cartesian method to its logical conclusion; one comes out better informed about new dimensions of reality of what one used to know about the self and the world as an external reality. Thus, upper most in the intellectual quests of Descartes are such concepts as clarity of thought, truth, certainty, indubitability; that is, that which is true and abides or conquers the odds as it were. These remain the positive contributions of the methodic doubt. The second area of critical input is much more foundational in that it has to do with another analysis of the *cogito*. The *cogito* is a thinking enterprise in the Cartesian mode. 'I think, therefore I am', makes my being defined by thought. The *cogito* is an enterprise, an activity of mine. It is even synonymous with my existence. Thinking remains an intrinsic operation which I must have to engage in. The issue here is whether in actuality I do think. Is it not a huge claim to appropriate the thinking process for the human intellect? Are we engaged actively in the generation of ideas as we tend to suppose? Do all we apportion to the human subject in this area really belong to it? The position of this paper is that the discovery-statement: 'I think, therefore I am'; is a philosophical overstatement. The true position, I think, remains that humans predispose themselves to receive ideas. The conscious awareness of the human intellectual operation points more to the certainty of intellectual predisposition whereby we as humans become aware of certain thoughts or ideas. The human contribution seems to be this intellectual predisposition while thoughts are consequently actively received. Although too much is taken for granted in our linguistic diction, the appropriate Cartesian statement of the novel discovery would have tended towards awareness of thought and the existence of certain ideas in the context of attentive concentration. It appears as a philosophical enigma to pin-point how it is that we think; but may be not so enigmatic to describe how ideas can be received with intentional intellectual dispositions.

Current Challenges of Rational Inquiry

Purely rational inquiry as distinguished from empirical investigations or experimentations pertains to rational science, that is, the pursuit of truth and its criterion by the application of systematic reflections of a critical nature. Rational inquiry is that other side of scientific interrogation that exists mainly to take care of the vast array of questions about reality that cannot be taken care of satisfactorily by the domain of experimental science since such questions lie outside of the empirical domain of inquiry. These are questions tied to human existence, the meaning of life, values and culture and other such realities whose considerations tend to present a comprehensive grasp of reality. This perspective gives complementary and foundational explication and resolutions of vital

aspects of the more observable scientific quests. This sums up the Cartesian project in its reaching for the core, at the level common to science strictly speaking, be it purely rational or experimentally prone, where epistemological certainty would provide the foundation upon which further principles could be constructed for successful application. A methodological criterion, full-proof from error, has become critical to getting to the truth of things. From the outset, the end has revolved around reliability, dependability and certainty of the product and the need to build scientific confidence on this foundation going forward. Since rational inquiry is prior in the domain of quests, this section of the paper would have to critically examine the challenges that currently confront it. What are the problems that lie on the path of rational inquiry? What are the obstacles and needs that press on this intellectual project? How do we classify and make them clear? How then can rational inquiry benefit from their resolutions?

The current challenges of rational inquiry, as suggests by the Cartesian vision and by the tradition of philosophic quests itself, can be broadly characterized into three. The first has to do with the challenges that are intrinsic to the subject; the second relates immediately to the inquiry and the third has got to do with factors external, less mediate or more remote to the subject and the inquiry in the strict sense.

The Challenges Intrinsic to the Subject

The subject refers to the inquirer, the seeker after truth. The inquirer is the fundamental factor in the search for truth. Descartes agrees no less for in putting in abeyance all that were considered valuable in his search for indubitability, there is something he could not put aside or put in bracket in the interim. It is the subjective element, the self that was the foundation to return to after a so called long sojourn outside. If the self is the starting point, then everything must be harnessed towards a proper disposition of the self to the truth within. The Cartesian modality presupposes truth within; therefore, all that is needed is to try to uncover the value within, given the proper context. The first factor that would need to be highlighted is that of an amenable subjective environment. This is the milieu proper to thought, reflective insight and evaluative process of a critical nature. An amenable subjective environment is one that is ready-fecundation for thought and its products. Put in another perspective, by this internal culture, conscious awareness of the thought process becomes a positive phenomenon since truth tends to hold on to its existence. We can as well substitute truth for ideas, questions for understanding, questions for reflection and methodologies that would guarantee the right course to irreducible principles upon which we can operate with certainty and in scientific confidence.

The subjective factors can be termed the infrastructures of the mind. These would consist mainly in the positive contributions towards the proper dispositions for research referred to above by both the subject knowledge-seeker and any other factor. Any other factor as adumbrated here would bring into the subjective domain immix of the not purely subjective. This perhaps points to an external base though inextricably interwoven in the whole subjective process. This permits the inclusion here of tendencies to socio-psychologic tendencies that would impinge on value concentrations for quality rational inquiry goals. In summation, a fundamental challenge is that of intellectual security. Rational inquiry benefits principally from an intellectual culture amenable to its course. It believes in a culture that is distinguishably scientific; not necessarily removed from the normality of human existence, but truly proper to scientific pursuit, a necessary criterion to the possibility of uncovering the new faces of reality fundamentally.

Challenges that Pertain in the Immediate to Rational Inquiry

Perhaps, the greatest challenge posed to rational inquiry in contemporary times is the rational inquiry itself. This is because the inquiry is the in-thing. The challenge here is real, tasking fundamentally and in need of positive redress. The challenges in this characterization would have to be approached from three main perspectives: from the point of view of *relevance*; *originality* and *expression*. First, there is the urgent need to address relevance. *Relevance* is a phenomenon of value. Value here has to be construed in terms of the value-positives or additives

accruable from the rational inquiry. Topicality constitutes a central problem of consequent value attribution from thematic development. The topic of the rational inquiry has to be properly formulated with a view to satisfying intellectual and social needs. Descartes was in nowhere as clear as in this regard. From the beginning, he makes clear his discourse trajectory in the conscious effort at encapsulation of intended values topically. It is there in the grand doubt in which by sweeping aside accumulated values, the audience is awake to the expectations of what comes next. Notwithstanding the successes or failures in this projection, the issue of immediate concern is that of *relevance*. Each topic for rational inquiry must be shown to be of relevance to the times. The world is suffused in values from which arise problems and challenges for continued functionality of individuals and groups from the social, political, economic and intellectual arena. Topics therefore tend to abound; and even, multiply, in relation to human developmental strides. There would never be a dearth of varied areas of human endeavor in which rational inquiry can be directed towards new frontiers for human understanding. The problem seems to be the need to catch up with opportunities provided for the course of human development in these alternatives and challenges. Themes must always evolve in line with human growth in all spheres of existence. Yet, each theme or topic must have to look forward to features that ought to make it unique. The factorial elements of each topic is in terms of the elicitation of intellectual appeal, the attraction as to value addition, the promise of insights and new visions in the face of critical examinations of the values before us. Topicality involves the themes that appeal to the intellect which should remain value quite intrinsic to its scientific formulation whose unfolding in the course of the research would validate the promises and expectations from the inquiry.

The second part to this characterization is the campaign for *originality*. Rational inquiry so qualifies in its in-built feature of uncovering something new. Each rational inquiry project ought to take mankind a step ahead scientifically; opening the vistas of new horizons to reality whereby the human mind is re-directed to the non-conventional path; the sudden unlocking to principles capable of transforming the human condition; all derivable from existing values actual or potential but always possible values. *Originality* would again be seen in terms of value addition, positive augmentation of existing realities such as conceptual schemes, criteria or modalities for breakthroughs in epistemological or metaphysical insights.

A fundamental account of *originality* must not overlook the thematic question. This definitely is more urgent. The question has to be asked about the originality of topic development, that is, on what? This is where philosophic originality becomes a tasking challenge in contemporary times. Descartes, doubtless, researched on problems that bothered the Western mind: the criterion for truth. In the campaign for *originality* in rational inquiry, does the African, for instance, have to follow the western model? What are the issues that originally agitate the African mind? Must originality be a function of geo-cultural locus or can it be defined otherwise? This problem must have to be properly contextualized for rational inquiry if its scientific status must continue to be guaranteed. *Originality* does not have to exclude geo-cultural locus although it needs not be confined to it. Philosophy as a meta-project of fundamental reality is always philosophy first and foremost before it becomes compartmentalized in cultures. Therefore, it is fundamentally human. Theme development has to cut across cultures according to relevancies in time, with the assurance that in discussing truth as a theme in Western modes of thought, one is in a sense developing a discourse in that area for the human intellectual heritage. As a corollary, a discourse on African or oriental questions, ought to benefit the human intellectual world, irrespective of geo-cultural locus or origination.

Another dimension of the challenge concerns the body of the research. Rational inquiry must be seen as an independent project that concentrates on establishing its own identity and uniqueness. Every rational inquiry ought to seek coherence with preceding authorities as may be the case. This is with a view to establishing its unique scientific identity. Preceding gains can be augmented in current research and the complementarities become a fruit of current rational inquiry. The rational inquirer is supposed to be an authority in the chosen area of knowledge seeking. A problem to refer to here will be that of the 'spirit of the times', whereby due to similarity

of experiences, researchers working from places separated by long distance and have no other means of reaching out to each other, nevertheless, embark on similar research, with striking similarity in dictum and results. Which researcher depended on the other in this regard? This it must be observed is not a common feature although it ought to pose serious challenge where it becomes the case.

Another fundamental challenge has to do with *expression*: how is the result of rational inquiry to be communicated? The generation of philosophic ideas is one thing, (if indeed from the radical sense understanding philosophic ideas can be generated actively from the attentive intellect); but then, the dissemination of that idea is another. Here we are confronted with the mode of idea spread. Although in contemporary period, there have emerged variations and alternatives to information dissemination; in rational inquiry, as in all scientifically based communication of results the modes most suited are the written and the verbal communications. Philosophic ideas tend to be openings to new realities, therefore, sometimes, the existing conventional vocabulary is not adequate to fully express the truth uncovered. If reality grips the rational inquirer at an overwhelmingly deeper level, the latter may not be able to find averagely comprehensible dictum to disseminate ideas emanating from such a grip. The inquirer is here involved in the quagmire of evidently existing new ideas and their clear communication. This may lead to obscurantism in philosophic theme development. Heraclitus in Greek antiquity was accused of burying his thoughts in the obviously obscure, beyond the reach of even the intelligent. Socrates, for instance, observed that what he understood about Heraclitus is splendid, and so too is what he did not understand, therefore, one needed to be a diver to reach through to the full grasp of his thought (Early Greek Philosophy, p. 48). In modern and contemporary times, the likes of Kant, Heidegger and Whitehead are credited with originality but difficulty in communicating their ideas to others. Whitehead's metaphysical depth is quintessentially obscure. This paper settles for a campaign of simplicity of thought and communication. Philosophic ideas must be communicated in as much simple a language as possible. Difficulties of linguistic expression do not attribute extra-value to originality of thought. Substantial philosophic ideas that are expressed in simplicity of language-demands do not make the philosophy simplistic; it rather grounds the philosophy in *originality*. It does not pretend to take away any complexities but rather does away with complications and tasks the mind in the true sense rather than the presenting of challenges clouded in obfuscation. This approach demands that 'foreign' terms/concepts be explained or that at least a cue is provided as to meaning in the use of such technical terms. A challenge of rational inquiry is the need to heed the awareness campaign whereby its results are disseminated in conceptually simple dictum.

External Challenges to the Subject and the Rational Inquiry

The third characterization of the challenges of rational inquiry concerns those factors external to the subject and the investigative project. These can be said to have less immediate or more remote relation relatively to the preceding challenges. The third characterization is no less real or problematic to the rational enterprise. As against the infrastructure of the mind, this could be referred to as physical infrastructure or material value requirements for the rational enterprise. Aristotle remarked that not all conditions are germane to the springing of philosophy. Philosophy emerges where certain conditions suitable for the enterprise exist. Success in any rational inquiry would presuppose these conditions. The material infrastructural presuppositions continue to expand with the passage of time. In times past, perhaps the inventory would include not only immediate basic physical-human infrastructural needs but also such items as stationery, type-writer and books; but today, the category of basic requirements widens to include energy source and the values of information technology. Although one can do without some of the modern heritage of scientific and technological values; however, it remains a question for reflection how one can compete effectively without them. These challenges, it is expected will continue to undergo modifications as progress is made in the realms of science and technology.

Evaluation

The Cartesian *cogito*, despite its challenges, is ground-breaking in the rational inquiry for the criterion of truth in philosophy. Its methodology is a phenomenon in the search for the undoubtably irreducible principle for the ascendancy to truth and the establishment of further principles for scientific investigations. Once again, skepticism is challenged successfully beyond doubt. Is knowledge of anything impossible? This question would not have arisen if one doubted the principle of human existence: the fact that one thinks. It appears that with the Cartesian *cogito*, radical epistemological skepticism has been done in, fundamentally. The methodic doubt brought clarity into rational inquiry. It turned philosophy towards the gains and visions of mathematics. Here, some of the values for philosophy include clarity of thought; the guarantee of irreducibility of values in the claims to truth; the logical derivation of further truths from a fundamentally guaranteed certainty; the vital connection of principles that go into building of systems of knowledge and the struggle for unpuncturability of knowledge claims consequent on the Cartesian project.

The challenges of rational inquiry are the challenges of all times not only for progress in research but also for human development in the remote sense. This is because where the conditions for the philosophic enterprise have been met, such may suffice for human development going forward. Take for instance, the security problematic on the national scale: neither philosophy nor development can thrive in such an atmosphere. Scientific progress is progress in real terms since the intellectual grounding is always prior to any physical development that may occur as the fruit of rational inquiry.

Conclusion

The history of thought is basically that of rational inquiry which is basically prior to any scientific development. This is more so in the area of philosophy. The Cartesian *cogito* took rational inquiry to new heights in the drama of its insights and discoveries. Descartes redefined the path to rational inquiry. It has to be the painstaking search for truth and its criterion. In Descartes, it is clear that the truth is no less important than the criterion to it. The methodology shows the dimensions of the deep foundation wherein its result is firmly supported. The *cogito* defies doubt since to doubt the intellectual activity successfully confirms it. It is the fundamental negation of radicalization of doubt and the affirmation of fundamental epistemological claims. Descartes seems to be saying that the criterion of truth is the main business of philosophy. This criterion took a new dimension of in-searching in the Cartesian modes of thought. The search for truth is consequently the search for development. All development ought to stand on truth as the foundation if such looks forward to be lasting. This paper therefore looks forward to sustainable rational inquiry that can contribute to issues of lasting developmental endeavors.

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