

# The Theory of Objectivity of Knowledge

— *An Original Philosophical Essay* —

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*A Critical Analysis of Cartesian Rationalism  
and an Experiential Alternative Vision*

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## **Preface**

In the history of Western philosophy, René Descartes is revered as the 'Father of Modern Philosophy.' His theories profoundly shaped Western thought, providing the foundations upon which modern science, mathematics, and epistemology were built. Yet when these theories are examined against the rigorous standard of direct experience and refined reasoning, certain half-truths and some outright errors become apparent.

This essay offers a critical analysis of Descartes' principal theories — not merely through the lens of Western philosophy, but equally through the rich tradition of Indian philosophical thought and the touchstone of personal experiential knowledge. This is not mere refutation. It is the articulation of an original, experiential, and independent philosophical vision.

Each principle presented here emerges from the intersection of observation, reasoning, and direct inner experience — the three pillars that alone can give philosophy its ground.

# I. The Theory of Objectivity of Knowledge

## Descartes' Position

Descartes held that true knowledge comes not from the senses but from pure reason and intellect. Mathematics was his ideal example — ' $2+2=4$ ' is always true, independent of any sensory experience. This became the cornerstone of Rationalism: the doctrine that reason alone is the supreme source of genuine knowledge.

## Our Theory

This is a half-truth. Every act of knowledge is necessarily bound to its object. Even in ' $2+2=4$ ' there is an object — when no external thing is present, the number itself becomes a mathematical abstraction and turns into an object of the mind. The mind acts upon it as object. Knowledge is never without an object.

***"Knowledge without an object is impossible. When there is no external object, the mind turns abstraction into its object and itself becomes the instrument of knowing."***

## Detailed Analysis

Every act of knowledge has three indispensable elements: the Object (vishaya), the Instrument (karana), and the Experience (anubhava). In external knowledge, a physical object is received through the five senses and becomes experience. In internal knowledge, abstraction itself becomes the object, and the mind — acting as a sixth sense — receives it.

Descartes observed that mathematics has no external object and concluded that knowledge can therefore be object-independent. What he failed to perceive was that when the external object is absent, abstraction itself assumes the role of object within the mind. The object does not disappear — it moves from outside to inside.

This principle aligns deeply with Husserl's concept of Intentionality — consciousness is always directed toward something, never without an object. In the Indian Nyaya

philosophical tradition, knowledge always arises from the relation between the knower and the known. The position here is original but resonant with both.

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## II. The Fatigue of Intellect and the Illusion of Certainty

### Descartes' Position

Descartes formulated his method of Methodic Doubt: accept nothing as true that has not survived all possible doubt. Whatever withstands doubt is certain — and certainty is the threshold of truth. This became the methodological foundation for modern scientific and rational inquiry.

### Our Theory

Here a subtle but crucial question arises. When doubt ceases, is it the arrival of truth — or the exhaustion of the intellect? When the mind stops questioning, this need not mean the matter is settled. It may mean only that the capacity for questioning has grown tired, or that curiosity has been abandoned.

***"The end of doubt is not truth — it may be the fatigue of the intellect. The moment you feel you have found the truth is precisely the moment to be most vigilant."***

Socrates declared: 'I know only that I know nothing.' Kant outlined the inherent limits of reason in the Critique of Pure Reason. But the formulation offered here is its own — it functions as an epistemological warning: the feeling of certainty can itself be a symptom of arrested inquiry rather than its completion.

This principle does not celebrate scepticism for its own sake. It cultivates intellectual humility as a permanent disposition — the recognition that the map is never the territory, and that the silence of doubt is not always the voice of truth.

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## III. The Origin of Thought — Innate or Acquired

### Descartes' Position

Descartes maintained that certain ideas are innate — present in the mind from birth. The idea of God, the concept of infinity, mathematical truths — these, he argued, cannot be derived from sensory experience because they exceed anything the senses could provide. They must therefore be implanted in the mind prior to all experience.

### Our Theory

No thought is innate. Without observation and impression (samskara), no thought arises. What appears innate is in truth the residue of impressions so deep and so early that their origin is no longer remembered. The sense of innateness is a failure of introspective memory, not evidence of pre-experiential content.

***"No thought is innate — without observation and impression, thought cannot arise. What seems original is only impression whose origin has been forgotten."***

John Locke's Tabula Rasa — the mind as a blank slate at birth — was a step in this direction. But it too is a half-truth. With birth come hunger and thirst as immediate experience. The instinct to live and the subtle anxiety of self-preservation are present from the first moment of life. These are not thoughts — they are biological impulses (jaivasvabhava).

The mind is neither a blank slate nor a pre-filled vessel. It is a living ground in which the seeds of biological impulse are already present, but the flowers of thought bloom only through the rain of observation and impression. Thought and impulse are not the same thing — and this distinction is critical.

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## IV. Jijiivisha — Not Evolution, but the Nature of Prana

### The Darwinian and Scientific Position

Darwin and modern evolutionary biology hold that the will to survive is a product of natural selection. Those organisms that did not tend toward survival were eliminated; those that did survive and reproduced. The will to live is thus the outcome of an evolutionary process — it was selected for because it was adaptive.

## **Our Theory**

Here a subtle but foundational distinction must be drawn: biological tendency (jaivika pravritti) and biological nature (jaivasvabhava) are not the same thing. Darwin explains the how — the mechanism of transmission across generations. He does not explain the what — the intrinsic nature of life as such.

***"Jiivisha — the will to live — is not the result of biological evolution. It is the very nature of Prana. Where there is Prana, Jiivisha is inevitable — as burning is the nature of fire."***

That which lacks the will to live is not life at all. Darwin explains the persistence and distribution of Jiivisha — he does not explain its essence. This is a question of Ontology — the deepest level of philosophical inquiry — not of biology.

The Indian Samkhya tradition holds that the vital force (Prana) has five forms, and the life-sustaining function is their natural property. The Upanishads declare: 'Prano vai jivanam' — Prana is life itself. To live is its nature, not its achievement. This is not mysticism — it is precise ontological description.

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## **V. Mind, Brain, and the Subtle Body**

### **Cartesian Dualism**

Descartes proposed that the mind (soul) is immaterial and the body material — two distinct substances. He located their interaction in the Pineal Gland. Modern neuroscience has largely rejected this anatomical claim, asserting instead that mind is a product of brain activity — that mental states are identical to or reducible to neural states.

### **Our Experiential Theory**

Direct experience of the subtle body (sukshma sharira) reveals that the mind is not necessarily dependent on the brain or nervous system. In the subtle body, experience occurs that is distinct from neural processing and independent of the brain. This is not inference — it is direct perception (pratyaksha).

***"In the subtle body, the mind has experiences independent of the brain and nervous system. This is the testimony of direct experience — the highest form of philosophical evidence."***

Neuroscience establishes correlation, not causation. When the television breaks, the broadcast ceases — but this does not mean the broadcast was located inside the television. Brain damage affects the mind — but this does not mean the mind is the brain. The instrument and the experiencer are not identical.

The Indian Panchakosha doctrine identifies five sheaths of the self, of which the Manomaya Kosha (mental sheath) has its own independent existence. In the Yoga tradition of Patanjali, Chitta is a subtle element — the nervous system is its reflection, not its cause. These frameworks, confirmed by direct experience, articulate a more accurate account than either Cartesian dualism or neuroscientific reductionism.

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## **VI. The 'I' — Not Experience, but Noise**

### **Descartes' Cogito Ergo Sum**

'Cogito, Ergo Sum' — I think, therefore I am. Descartes regarded this as the one certainty that survives all doubt. Even if one doubts everything, the very act of doubting proves that a doubter exists. The 'I' that thinks is therefore the indubitable foundation of all philosophy — the Archimedean point of knowledge.

### **Our Theory**

But this 'I' is not experiential — it is inferential. It is arrived at through anumana (inference) or upamana (analogy), not through pratyaksha (direct perception). An analysis of the chain of thought reveals that each subsequent thought has its prior knowledge as its cause. This chain is so complex, so multilayered, so dense with

accumulated impressions that its total effect becomes an undifferentiated background — a noise.

***"The 'I' is not a direct experience. It is the noise of the totality of accumulated knowledge — the reverberation of the thought-chain, not a witness standing apart from it."***

Descartes took the experience 'thinking is occurring' and converted it into the inference 'I am thinking.' He then converted this inference into the ontological claim 'I exist as a thinking thing.' The crucial distinction between experience and inference — between pratyaksha and anumana — escaped him entirely.

Hume's Bundle Theory approached this — the self is a bundle of perceptions, not a unified entity. But this theory goes further: not even a bundle — the 'I' is the aggregate resonance, the noise, of that bundle. Buddhist Anatman doctrine asserts the absence of a permanent self. This theory provides the explanation of its apparent origin — it does not merely deny, it accounts.

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## **VII. The World — Not a Machine, but a Mystery**

### **Descartes' Mechanistic Universe**

Descartes conceived the physical world as a machine operating according to mathematical laws. This vision was extraordinarily productive — it provided the philosophical foundations for classical mechanics, the mathematical sciences, and the entire project of modern scientific explanation. The universe, on this view, is in principle fully intelligible through mathematical reason.

### **Our Theory — Refutation on Two Levels**

First — at the epistemological level: the entirety of the physical world is not known. What is known is a small fraction; what remains unknown is immense; what may be unknowable is uncertain. To define the whole from a fragment is the logical fallacy of Hasty Generalisation. To pronounce upon the nature of the totality from the vantage point of partial knowledge is not science — it is the arrogance of incomplete understanding.

***"What is not fully known cannot be defined as a machine. To stand at the boundary of ignorance and pronounce upon the nature of the whole — this is not philosophy, it is presumption."***

Second — at the metaphysical level: if the world operates according to mathematical laws, then a maker and sustainer of those laws is equally necessary. A law does not make itself. Without a governing intelligence, laws would proliferate without coherence, systems would form without order, and the result would be disorder rather than the remarkable systematic consistency we actually observe.

The machine metaphor is misleading on its own terms: a machine is constructed, does not construct itself; it operates by rules it did not create; it generates no consciousness. The world, by contrast, develops spontaneously, generates life, and gives rise to consciousness. The analogy fails at the most fundamental level.

Newton himself believed that God was necessary as the sustainer of natural law. The Indian Nyaya-Vaisheshika school argues formally that the order observed in the world is evidence of an intelligent maker. Leibniz held that law implies mind behind it. The position here is convergent with these — but arrived at independently, through the logic of the argument itself.

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## **Conclusion — A Unified Philosophical Vision**

The principles presented in this essay belong neither entirely to Western philosophy nor to a mere repetition of Indian tradition. They constitute an experiential, reasoning-grounded, and original philosophical vision — one that treats direct experience as the highest form of evidence, and that examines every received doctrine on its own merits rather than accepting it by authority.

Descartes was a great thinker. His work opened new horizons in Western thought and made possible the scientific revolution that followed. But greatness does not entail completeness. When his doctrines are examined against experience and refined argument, their limits and half-truths become visible — and this examination is itself an act of philosophical respect.

## Summary of Principles

***I. Knowledge is always object-bound — objectless knowledge is impossible.***

***II. The end of doubt is not truth — it may be the fatigue of the intellect.***

***III. No thought is innate — thought arises only through observation and impression.***

***IV. The will to live is not evolution — it is the very nature of Prana.***

***V. In the subtle body, the mind has experiences independent of brain and nervous system.***

***VI. The 'I' is the noise of the thought-chain — not a direct experience.***

***VII. The world is not a machine — where there is law, a lawgiver is necessary.***

What makes this philosophy original is precisely that it follows no single tradition. It accepts or rejects each principle on the basis of experience and argument. It does not defer to authority — Western or Indian. It asks only: does this accord with what can be directly known and rigorously reasoned? This is what genuine philosophical freedom looks like.

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