

# The Applications of Causality in the Philosophy of Descartes

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**Abstract**— Rene Descartes, the founder of a new philosophy in the west since the seventeenth century, founded his philosophy based on commanding skepticism and abandoning all his former beliefs, and gradually tried, by relying on an undeniable witness as “ I think”, to establish a philosophy to be a positivism from the beginning to the end.

It will be shown, in this article, that though Descartes did not specifically make a discussion concerning causality in his works, he made use of causality in some parts of his philosophy. In this article, the principle of causality and its application will be initially analyzed in the Descartes principles of philosophy and then some logics will be presented for proving the ontology of God, and it will be seen that he had never been ignorant of the principle of causality.

**Index Terms**— Descartes, Causality, Commanding skepticism, Clarity, Differentiation, God.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Rene Descartes is a seventeenth century French philosopher and is the founder of west new philosophy and is one of the followers of the originality of intellect and his philosophical sect requires to believe in causality and its terms; however he did not specifically discuss about causality in his philosophical works, but he made use of causality within his views and comments. In the current article, it is tried to consider in all applications and aspects of causality in the philosophy of Descartes.

## 2 COMMANDING SKEPTICISM

Commanding skepticism is the first step in establishing new west philosophy by Descartes. Descartes firstly asked himself in achieving to positivistic wisdom that whether there is a fundamental principle by which all the philosophies and knowledge be founded upon and no skepticism would be within there? The only way Descartes found was to doubt in everything, he was going to start from the beginning, hence it was seemingly required for him to reconsider in all his knowledge, including feelings, reasons and what is heard. As he said: “ I accepted much false beliefs as incontrovertible ideas and what I founded on such shaky principles was quite doubtful and indefinite, and therefore I had to decisively make up my mind and freed myself from all the beliefs I had accepted before, and if a strong and stable foundation was to be established in sciences, it would be required to have a new start.” ( Descartes, 1982, 35). According to Descartes, skepticism is the condition for certainty. He put his own knowledge in artificial doubt to real things be recognized from what is unreal by estimating it. His aim is just to get the steady foundation to ensure himself. However, he would not easily achieve to this

aim, because humans are bounded up with their beliefs and setting them aside may bring to feelings of emptiness and fear.

## 3 MAINTAINING THE PRINCIPLE OF CAUSALITY WITHIN COMMANDING SKEPTICISM

It must be pointed out that because the skepticism of Descartes is not real, he believed in propositions, though he mentioned that he was freed himself from all the ideas and beliefs he had had before, and he said in continuous that he freely casted away all his previous beliefs. However, some instances can be seen by adverting in his expressions that contradict his own remarks, as he was so confused about the errors before making up his mind concerning commanding skepticism and said that how it is possible that a God who is an absolute beneficence is contented to be replete with various errors. (Descartes, 1982, 33). However, he makes himself satisfied with this quite non-serious justification and appears to be convinced that “ not a real God- who is the supreme goodness and the source of truth-but a satanic and cunning evil that do His best to tempt me” (34).

But then he accepts this probability that “ heaven, earth, air, colors, forms, sounds and all the external things we can see are illusions and dreams that this devil uses it to catch my optimistic view.” (ibid). He says, in continuous, that, “ I will toughly stand on this belief to avoid believing to any false idea and makes ready my mind to deal with this great cunning being in order not to overcome me though He is so adept and cunning” (ibid).

It can be seen that adherence to the principle of causality, whether natural or supernatural, that this adherence is more justifiable than commanding, but it is so surprising that Descartes doubted and based on he himself mentioned, he is going to free himself from all the ideas he accepted before. He apparently still believes in the principle of causality and is not in doubt to this principle. But the question risen here is that how it is possible someone doubt in the ontology of objects but he certainly believes in their relations? The ultimate justification may be explained here that he accepted the causal rela-

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tionships as a conditional theorem; that is, if this issue is correct, there are certainly some relationships between these things.

#### 4 THE FIRST CERTAINTY: " I THINK, SO AM"

Now it can be seen that how it is possible to reach certainty after this skepticism and whether there is any way to indicate this doubt. As he said, " I supposed that all that enters my mind are untrue, as the illusions that people see in their sleep, however, I came across then that I supposed that all things are illusionary, when this issue came to my mind, I reluctantly must be someone, and I noted that this issue (I think, so I am) is real; so stable and firm that all the skeptic's strange assumptions cannot make it unstable, so I made believe that it can be hurriedly assumed as the first principle in the philosophy I'm seeking for". (Descartes, 1965: 207).

As many theorists mentioned, this thought can be considered as the ultimate Descartes' thinking. He says, in another situation, that " I can doubt in everything, but I cannot vacillate in the issue that I can doubt in everything. Therefore, my skepticism is a certain issue, and because skepticism is a state of thinking, then the reality is that I think; because of the fact that I doubt, so I have thought; and because I think, then I am the one who can think" (Descartes, 1982: 45).

Therefore, an undoubted principle was invented which can never be doubted, and Descartes founded his philosophy based on this principle. Descartes' theory has a significant station in the west philosophy, because he responded to the doubts created in his mind. In fact, he is going to say, by his remarks, that we cannot doubt in perception though doubt in everything. It cannot be doubted in the thinking itself though as much as we doubt or the cunning devil do his best to mislead us or all the mathematics being doubted. In fact, it is tried to say that the skepticism is a science, thinking or perception by itself, but a perception that we doubt in adapting with reality.

#### 5 THE INTUITION OF CAUSALITY IN KEZHITOV

Descartes believes that he has the capability of perception and thinking and one who think and percept is promptly recognized that he himself is a being and is perception and this is identified by intuition. However, it should be said that intuition is only necessary and certain for the one who has intuition and Descartes adheres to for this reason. There are two possibility here: one is that Kezhitov indicates a mere intuition ( I think, so there is a thinking), the other thing is that according to the second possibility it is a manifestation of causality relationship ( there is a thinking, so there is a thinker). Therefore, it seems that in the theory of " I think, so I am" an impromptu reasoning is made from the thinking intuition to the subject that think in a way that a reasoning is made from the object intuition, that is thinking, to the ontology of a cause, that is thinker in this issue. As Descartes confirms this issue in his remark that " it can be concluded from this issue that I doubt, so I am" (Descartes, 1982, 61), Or " I am sure that this these thoughts predominates on me". (62)

Therefore, according to this interpretation, which is compatible with the final sentence of Descartes, it is clear that the

proposition of " I think, so I am" is based on the principle of causality. How is it possible that Descartes, who believes that he doubts in everything, achieved to such belief? However, the question is that where originated the certainty to the principle of causality and its validity from?.

#### 6 THE SECOND PRINCIPLE OF CERTAINTY: " EVERYTHING THAT IS OBVIOUS AND CLEAR IS TRUE"

Having found this undoubted truth that " I think, so I am", Descartes' researches focused on this issue that what needs a theory to be true and incontrovertible. He says that " I've recently found a theory that I had known it had been true and certain, therefore I decided to know what kind of basis this certainty on". ( Descartes, 1965: 219). In other words, he hopes to find a general criterion through considering a theory that he identified as valid and certain and obtain this conclusion that in the theory of " I think, so I am", there is nothing to be sure of its certainty except that what this theory proves is comprehended so clearly and distinctly by him, he says " hence, I concluded that I suppose, as a general criteria, that all that are so clearly and vividly imagined are true" ( Descartes, 1965: 207). He mentioned, in another place, that " all that are so clearly and vividly imagined is true". (Descartes, 1982: 62).

What is meant by vivid and perception and distinct perception? In the 45th principle, Descartes says that: " the vivid thing is what clear and present to the discerning eyes, and have influences on with a sufficient power; that is, they can be seen vividly, but a distinct thing is so accurate and different from other things that involves what is vivid". (Descartes, 1997 : 71).

Undoubtedly, this criterion of truth is induced to Descartes by mathematics. The truthful mathematical theory imposes itself to the mind, that is, when it is comprehended vividly and distinctly by the mind, there is no way but to accept it.

#### 7 THE MANIFESTATION OF CAUSALITY IN THE SECOND THEORY OF CERTAINTY:

It may seems that having found this criterion for the truth, Descartes promptly applied it, but he reckons that the matter is not as simple as it likes. " it was another matter I was sure of, and because I got used to admit it, I thought that I can comprehend it so clearly, though I did not really comprehend it. Another things was that there were things out of my control which these concepts were originated from and is so similar to them, here was I made mistake". (Descartes, 1982: 63). Here Descartes thinks that it is the external senses errors by implicitly accepting the possibility of errors though having a clear and distinct perception, and in fact he thinks that this problem is related to external sense scopes. Then, he recourses some ways to find a support for vivid and distinct perceptions concerning the external senses and the outside world. Hence, he believes that our support to the lack of God's deception is a proper support for our vivid and distinct perceptions against the senses. " I seemingly found a way to reach us from reflecting about the real God-which all the sciences and wisdom are within him- to identifying other world's creatures" (Descartes, 1982: 88).

According to Descartes, because all the world affairs, including the causality of causes and effect and the relations within them are God's, then the relations among the facts and perceptions are also Gods and when Descartes says that God supports perceptions validity, he means that the facts and the real relations within them are the causes for creating our imaginations and verifications, and God is the final cause for supporting their ontology. As the final cause and is free from deception in nature and act, the causes also plays their natural role which are assigned to from the final cause.

The problem appeared in this Descartes' view is that he entangled in a two-way that can be called intellect and the will, and he is reluctantly forced to choose one while he chooses one way, the other one will be left forgotten, but he insists that both ways to be remained. To explain this issue, it must be said that the principle of causality is an intellectual principle, which brings necessity in every system it enters, and necessity is one of the issues which is not compromised with being forged and obedient to the will of forger, because as the will is came arise, the real necessity will be negated and is turned into something like a joke. Therefore, saying that God- or any stature-is the forger of causality and, subsequently the necessity, is contradictory, for the necessity of the forged is not a necessity.

For example, Descartes initially indicated the necessary relation of  $4 * 2=8$  and mentioned that it can be contradicted by God. Then he generally said that " there is no cause that cannot be similar to God" (Descartes, 2005, 502).

Accordingly, it seems difficult to find a way to be an average and general way between casualty's intellectual principle and absolute originality of the will while Descartes tries to maintain both ways and follow the philosophical and intellectual process to God through both ways.

## 8 THE ARGUMENTS TO PROVE GOD IN DESCARTES' PHILOSOPHY

However, Descartes believes that identifying God is more obvious than other matters; on the other hand, he mentions that the causes and arguments for existing God should be clearly and neatly expressed. " no matter is more beneficial in philosophy to consider the causes once and for all and express them with such clear and exact ways that it can be clear to all that they are appropriate arguments" (17). He mentioned three arguments for proving God ( based on what he mentioned in his book). The arguments can said as:

- 1.The trade mark argument.
- 2.Creating and maintaining cause argument.
- 3.Ontological argument.

Each Descartes' arguments will be discussed here and the applications of causality will be explored. The causes Descartes mentioned to prove God are related with the principle of causality though they are different in terms of content.

### 1.The Trade Mark Argument

The first argument for proving God is so named. This argument was initially mentioned in the book " reflections" and then explicated by Descartes in the book " objections" after having objected.

And now expressing introducing remarks and the result of argument:

Introduction 1: there is a concept of God or an absolute perfection in the mind.

" By the word of God, I mean an infinite and supreme being, immutable, natural, an absolute creator and able that creates me and everything, if there is really something else. ( Descartes, 1982: 76).

Introduction 2: this concepts needs an ontological cause as a concept and regardless of content.

This kind of being, by which something is created in perception through a conceptual thing, it cannot be accepted without doubt though incomplete, and therefore it cannot be said that this concept is derived from nonentity. (Descartes, 1982:71).

Introduction 3: the cause must be an objective thing, whether the effect be objective or subjective.

" this fact is obvious and clear not only for effect which philosophically has a formal or actual reality but for the concepts which are considered only as a subjective reality. For instance, a rock which has not yet been created, it is impossible to be created now, unless through a thing that have all the components of rock as it is or higher than it. Accordingly, it is impossible that heat created in a thing that has not heat before, unless a thing that has a kind of heat in though in a less amount...in addition, it is impossible that heat or rock is created in the mind, unless by a cause that have the same reality that I imagine in rock or heat". (Descartes, 1982: 70-71).

Introduction 4: it is necessary that the cause has the required richness in comparison with the effect.

" it is so clear that the subjective cause and the objective one must be equipped with reality at least the same as its effect, because the effect is acquired its reality from none but the cause. And it is not possible for the reality to be transmitted to the effect if the cause has not the reality within itself. (Descartes, 1982: 70).

Introduction 5: the richness of objective cause is required in comparison with the subjective cause.

" in order to a reality have such and such subjective reality not the other one, it must undoubtedly get this reality from a cause, which its objective reality should have at least the same subjective reality. (Descartes, 1982: 71).

## 9 CONCLUSION

" there is a God, though the concept of substance is within me, because I myself am a substance; however, because of the fact that I am a finite creature cannot have a concept of an infinite substance, unless a substance that is really infinite placed it within me. (Descartes, 1982: 76).

Therefore, Descartes intends to prove the ontology of God through roaming in mental concepts based on the philosophical concept, because he is acquired with nothing but the mental concepts in the course of philosophical thoughts.

The consideration of causality:

this argument of Descartes has a direct relationship with the principle of causality, and its first and basic evidence is about the causality rule, the relations between the causes and effect and the significant minutiae of the principle of causality. For example, according to the principle of congruity (the general congruity, not the specified one), the concept of absolute perfection as an entity requires an ontological cause, because according to the contents of this introduction, although the concept of the absolute perfection in the mind is mental, it is an entity that requires a cause and its cause must be an ontological being based on the causality rule which always exists between the two. He mentioned in an introductory remark that the real perfection of causality should be an objective entity than the effect one, whether the effect is a subjective or objective. Or he mentioned in an introduction that "the cause of creating a mental concept should be acquired with all the realities and perfections within the related concept formally and actually". Therefore, because the concept of absolute perfection cannot be made in the mind or is derived from an objective cause, therefore the effect of a cause is superior than nature and universe and is placed within human through that cause.

This argument also indicates that in Descartes' view, the criterion for effect's need to the cause, the superiority of cause (the concept of God) to the effect (Descartes), the vividness of the principle of causality, and the existing of cause in all matters, which can be inferred by paying attention to the introductions. Now, a critical point can be mentioned by considering all the arguments and their introductions, and it is the fact that adhering to the principle of causality and its requirements is conducted without casting it aside from the scope of skepticism after the commanding skepticism.

#### "The cause of creation and maintenance" argument

In the second alternative, Descartes mentioned three causes entitled as "the trade mark", "the need for the cause of creation" and "the need for the cause of maintenance". However, because it is the same in the cause of creation role and the cause of maintenance in what is required the cause, these two caused can simply be assumed as one cause. As Descartes himself mentioned: "the difference between maintenance and creation is only related our point of view" (Descartes, 1982: 81). Therefore, the argument entitled as "the cause of creation and maintenance" will be considered.

Descartes initially starts from this introduction that "the concept of God is an innate concept and is placed within His mind through a real source which has the features of absolute perfection, and He can derive it without any recourse from a possible source" (Descartes, 1982: 76). He then says that: "I want to find out that if there was no God, I was possibly not created who have this concept of God? Then I asked that who my origin was, possibly myself or my parents or other causes that are not compatible with God in perfection, for it is not imaginable that something is more perfect than God or even the same as His. However, if I was a dependent one or was created by myself, then I would doubt in nothing, I would desire nothing else and, in sum, I have all the characteristics of perfection, for I would provide for myself every perfection I'd acquire with its concept, and therefore I was a God" (80)

These sentences are in fact the central core of Descartes' second argument concerning proving God. Descartes passed more higher than the cause of creation and paid more attention on the cause of maintenance. Therefore, he gives strengths to his arguments by this comment that not only God is the cause of our ontology, but he creates us once again and rehabilitates us; that is, our stability and maintenance requires moment-by-moment creation. As Descartes himself mentioned: "God necessarily created me, because all my living days can be divided into infinite components, in which all of them are independent from each other. Therefore, because I was a living one shortly before, it is not necessary that I be a living one now, unless I am created by a cause and renovated me now, that is am maintained" (81).

Descartes gives more explanation in contiguous regarding this issue that and eventually concluded that "I conclude, by the vividness of science, that I believe a creature other than me" (82).

#### The consideration of causality

This argument has a direct relationship with the principle of causality, as the trade mark argument, as from the beginning of the argument, when Descartes mentioned his cause-which he himself, his parents or any other causes cannot be his cause-in fact, he proposes the discussion of the criterion for effect's need to a cause, and because he believes that the origin of this notion (absolute perfection) is a creature that involves all the perfections of this mental notion in a higher amount, he actually discusses the cause of perfection principle than the effect (the subject of a thing is not the lack of the thing itself).

Although Descartes declares, in his argument to prove God, that he did not make use the sequence argument, he adhered to making use of sequence argument in indicating this issue that his real cause is God's perfect substance: "therefore, for I have known that I am the one who thinks and a concept of God within myself, I reluctantly forced to finally accept the cause attributed to me, in which that cause must be a thing that thinks and have all the perfections that I attribute to God's nature, then I can also be experimented once more that whether this cause is derived from within itself or not. If it derives its cause other than itself, the second cause should be investigated once more for the same causes... in order to reach step-by-step to the final cause namely God". (Descartes, 1982: PP 82-83).

It seems that the sequence argument is doubted in Descartes' view.

#### Ontological Argument

The second argument Descartes mentions for proving God is the ontological argument or the argument from essence to essence. In this argument, Descartes proves this issue that it is resulted from definition of an absolute and perfect being that it must necessarily be a creature. Descartes independently accepted this argument in his three works with expository and intuition, but his expressions in reflections are more detailed and clear. For this reason, the arguments in reflections are mentioned.

He initially pointed out an introduction to access the majors of the cause and make ready the mind of the reader. The con-

tents of the majors is that " when human's mind identifies an independent and stable nature not created by the mind itself, what it identifies as natures or the tools for nature, it is invariable for the kinds of its ontology, including subjective and objective ones as well as its nature. He recurses to two mathematical examples, one is length or line and another a so-called triangle shape. He mentioned, concerning triangle, that " the equality of the three angles of a triangle with two right angles" is, for instance, one of the natural tools of a triangle, which all its curves should be approved as well as its nature. ( Descartes, 1982: PP 102-103). Following this introduction, by adhering to his considered minors, which he considers as the evidences of the above-mentioned majors, Descartes argues that: " is it possible to find an argument to prove God through this way?" I certainly know that his concept, as an absolute perfect being, is no less than the concept of any geometrical shape or any number, and my knowledge is no less the fact that a potential or superior being dedicates to His nature than that of I can do as much as possible to prove a shape or a number that in fact dedicates to that shape or number in terms of distinction or vividness. Therefore, if all the results I achieved in the previous reflections are invalid, the certainty to the existence of God must at least be the same as that I have had to all mathematical realities concerning numbers and shapes" (PP. 104-105).

The contents of the argument is clear; but because it is mixed with some examples and the introductions are intermingled, it is better to have a synopsis with a logical order. Descartes mentioned that:

- 1.I have a concept of the absolute perfect in my mind.
- 2.An objective entity- with a complete clarity as a supreme perfection- is tantamount to absolute perfection and is the same as the absolute perfect nature.
- 3.Every characteristic identified distinctly and clearly and indicates with necessary and perfect clarity on a specific, stable, and true nature or concept, its nature, concepts and the subjective and objective evidences should be absolutely accepted.

Result: there is a God objectively.

The consideration of causality

It has been known, in the principle of " the perfection of the absolute cause than the effect", that cause has always superior perfections than those of effect, and the weaker station is not the cause of more stronger cause creation, but the relations is from stronger to the weaker, if the relationship is a causality one, and this reality is reflected in this Descartes' argument.

## 10 CONCLUSION/DISCUSSION

As is mentioned, it is concluded that Descartes made some use of causality in all his philosophy, and it can even be said that he has put the principle of causality underlying the principle of causality, for as it was seen, he doubted in everything except from the principle of causality, and also he made use of causality in the basic principles of his philosophy and in all the arguments for proving God, and he was practically aware of the principle of causality, though he made no separate discussion on causality.

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