

Descartes' Conception of the First Principles

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Summary

In this Master's thesis, seven interpretations of Descartes' *Cogito* are reviewed. The introductory chapter presents a brief explanation of the origin and development of Descartes' views on the role of the first philosophical principles, in fact, the principles of certain knowledge, that is, principles understood by him as the necessary and indispensable starting point for laying the foundations of all science. First – naturally – Descartes' own diverse formulations of *Cogito* are reproduced. Then, based on relevant text and (their) broader context, all Descartes' necessary concepts and terms concerning *Cogito* are systematically explained. The second chapter, which is the core of the entire study, contains short reviews of seven interpretations of Descartes' *Cogito* as presented in a number of established academic publications as well as in more recent papers. Every review is then briefly commented on. The authors of the seven interpretations were chosen to show the differences in understanding and explaining Descartes' first principle, as established on the European continent by the philosophical traditions of German-speaking countries, beginning with Hegel's attitude towards Descartes, on the one hand, and points of view in more recent works, particularly in the Anglo Saxon environment, on the other. The various arguments upon which proponents of these different views on Descartes' principal thoughts about overcoming his preliminary total epistemological scepticism rely, are briefly analysed, considering their adequacy and plausibility.

The short closing chapter brings summarized commentaries to the reviewed interpretations, and also some rather roughly drawn ideas regarding another deep problem, namely Descartes' hasty transition from (*Ego*) *sum* to *res cogitans sum*.

Key Words:

Descartes, first principles, traditional and newer interpretation of Descartes, the position of Descartes in the history of philosophy, reading and understanding Descartes on the European continent and in English-speaking countries, Descartes' arguments and arguments about Descartes.