

Descartes'

Method of Inquiry: A process used by Descartes to find things out.

Four Rules:

1. Accept nothing which he does not clearly and distinctly know to be true.
2. Divide big problems into smaller parts.
3. Begin with the easiest things.
4. Make periodic reviews to ensure that he had left nothing out and had not made a mistake in his reasoning.

Method of Doubt: a process used to discover which propositions could be known for certain.

There is a difference between knowledge and belief or opinion. Knowledge implies certainty, whereas beliefs or opinions imply some degree of doubt.

Any statement about which there is any kind of doubt cannot be a statement that expresses knowledge. It may express a belief or opinion. If there is no way to bring doubt to bear on a given statement, then it passes the test and can be accepted as expressing knowledge.

The result of Descartes' Method of Inquiry and Doubt was a shift in philosophy called an "epistemological turn".

Focus shifted from "what is real?" (metaphysical question) to "What can be known?" (epistemological question).

Consequences of Descartes' Arguments.

1. Leads to Solipsism - only the individual exists; everything else is only an idea in his/her mind.
2. Shifts focus from the object of knowledge to the subject of knowledge - that is, to the "knower".

Two Questions from Descartes' Meditations.

1. What are the criteria of certainty for knowledge claims?
2. What are the sources of knowledge?

Two Groups answer the above

1. Claims based on experience (empiricism)
2. Claims based on general principles (rationalism)