



The Philosophical and Economic Methodology Between ‘Cartesian Method of Doubt’ and ‘Observation Method in the Inspiration Economy’: A Comparative Study

Dunya Ahmed ^{1*}, El Habib Choubani ², Mohamed Buheji ³

¹ Assistant Professor, University of Bahrain, Bahrain

² Vice President, Makine Center for Strategic Intelligence, Rabat, Morocco

³ Founder, International Institute of Inspiration Economy, Bahrain

* Corresponding Author: **Dunya Ahmed**

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Abstract

This paper presents a comprehensive comparative study between the philosophy of René Descartes (1596–1650), based on "methodological doubt" as a tool for reaching epistemic certainty, and the philosophy of "Inspiration Economy" which relies on "observation" and "learning through practice" as fundamental mechanisms for exploring latent human capacities and transforming them into economic and social value. The comparison goes beyond mere doubt and observation to encompass broader methodological dimensions: from the Cartesian "Cogito" to "inspiration" as a foundation for human existence, from analytical reductionism to engagement with complexity, from the solitary knower to the collective practitioner, and from absolute certainty to contextual probability.

Despite a temporal gap of more than four centuries and the difference in epistemic fields (pure philosophy versus applied social economics), the comparison reveals deep methodological intersections, most notably the principled rejection of untested postulates, reliance on the human mind as a central tool of knowledge, and the pursuit of transcending immediate material givens. Conversely, fundamental differences emerge in the purpose of knowledge (theoretical certainty in Descartes versus practical change in Buheji), the tool of knowledge (abstract mental contemplation versus field observation and experimentation), the view of the self (the isolated thinking self-versus the socially interactive self), and the nature of certainty (absolute and final versus relative and adaptive).

The paper concludes that the Cartesian method of doubt nourishes the Inspiration Economy (IE) by providing a critical ground for reviewing traditional economic assumptions, while the IE nourishes Cartesian philosophy by offering a practical model for applying rationality to complex social problem-solving and testing its concepts in the field of application. The paper recommends building a hybrid methodological framework that integrates critical doubt with applied observation, developing quantitative and qualitative indicators for measuring inspiration, and expanding the applications of Inspiration Labs to include philosophical and educational domains.

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Keywords: Cartesian method of doubt, Inspiration Economy, field observation, Inspiration Labs, applied philosophy, wicked problems, comparative epistemology, hermeneutics, complexity theory

1. Introduction

The world today is witnessing accelerated economic and social transformations that necessitate a reconsideration of prevailing economic models that have proven incapable of addressing escalating crises, from class disparity to environmental and health crises. In this context, the concept of the "Inspiration Economy" emerged as an alternative vision seeking to invest in latent human energies, transcending reliance on depleting material resources (Buheji, 2016). This concept is almost—in its essence—a practical extension of those philosophies that placed the mind and the human being at the center of epistemic existence,

foremost among them the philosophy of René Descartes. René Descartes (1596–1650) represents a milestone in the history of Western philosophy, as he established a method based on "methodological doubt" as a means to reach absolute epistemic certainty, culminating in his famous statement: "I think, therefore I am" (*Cogito, ergo sum*) (Descartes, 1637/2006). Descartes liberated the human mind

from the dominance of tradition and deceptive senses, making it the sole criterion for truth. However, his philosophy did not stop at doubt; it extended to include a theory of knowledge, metaphysics, a scientific method based on mathematical reductionism, and a vision of the human self as a thinking substance independent of the material body (Descartes, 1641/1996). This is illustrated in Figure (1).

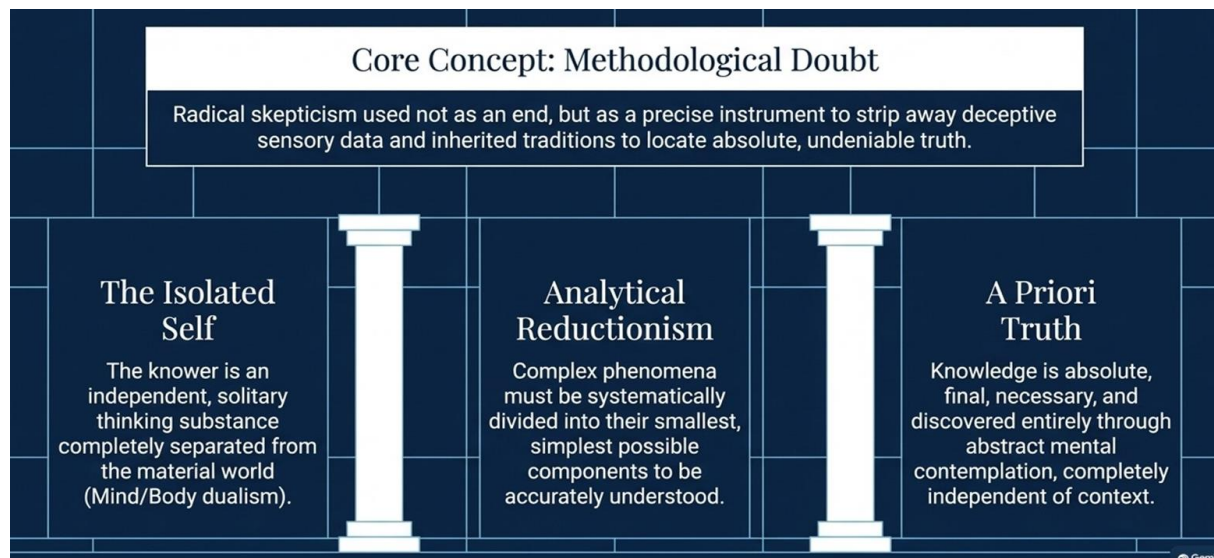


Fig 1

The Inspiration Economy, as articulated by Buheji (2026a), represents a comprehensive philosophical and methodological framework that transcends traditional economic models by prioritizing human capacity, meaning-making, and intrinsic motivation over material accumulation and market competition. Drawing upon the three foundational philosophical dimensions—ontology, epistemology, and axiology—the Inspiration Economy operationalizes Edgar Morin's philosophy of complexity through practical methodologies, including exploratory visits, multidisciplinary thinking, hermeneutic interpretation, and the concept of "influencing without power" (Buheji, 2026a; Choubani & Buheji, 2026).

Hence, this paper poses a central question: Can a comparison between the Cartesian method (in its multiple dimensions: doubt, the *Cogito* "I think," reductionism, absolute certainty, the isolated self) and the observation method in the Inspiration Economy (in its dimensions: field observation, Inspiration Labs, dealing with complex and chronic problems, hermeneutic interpretation, and ontological capitalisation) reveal points of intersection and mutual enrichment that enrich both fields and open new horizons for thinking about the relationship between philosophy and behavioral economics?

The paper seeks to achieve four main objectives. The first is to analyze Descartes' method of doubt and the observation method in the Inspiration Economy in an expanded critical analysis. The second is to explore the points of similarity and difference between them at multiple levels, including the epistemological, ontological, methodological, and social levels. The third is to study the mutual enrichment between the two methods and how each can enrich the other. The fourth is to present an integrative vision combining rationalist philosophy and economic practice, with practical

recommendations for developing research practice in both fields.

2. Research Methodology

This paper relies on the Comparative Analytical Method, which combines several methodological approaches. The first is philosophical analysis, through deconstructing Descartes' foundational texts, especially "Discourse on the Method," "Meditations on First Philosophy," and "Principles of Philosophy," and extracting the essential methodological principles of his thought. These principles include methodological doubt with its three stages of sensory doubt, dream doubt, and the deceptive God doubt (Descartes, 1641/1996); the criterion of clarity and distinctness as a condition for truth (Descartes, 1637/2006); his four rules of certainty, analysis, synthesis, and enumeration (Descartes, 1637/2006); the *Cogito* as the first foundational certainty (Descartes, 1641/1996); the Cartesian dualism between material substance and immaterial substance (Descartes, 1644/1991); and the concept of the isolated thinking self.

The second approach is theoretical and applied analysis, through reviewing the foundational writings of the Inspiration Economy, including the recent philosophical and methodological framework (Buheji, 2026a), the work on engineering consciousness and the architecture of meaning (Buheji, 2026b), and the application of hermeneutics in Inspiration Labs (Buheji, 2026c). The third approach is the integrative method, which draws on previous studies that combined philosophy and practical practice, including the work of Choubani and Buheji (2026) on Edgar Morin's complex thought and the Inspiration Economy methodology, and Buheji (2026d) on capitalising on ontology for complex problem-solving.

The fourth approach is deductive analysis, to reach points of

similarity, difference, and mutual enrichment, by comparing objectives, tools, the nature of knowledge, the role of the self, the concept of certainty, the approach to dealing with complexity, and the ontological foundations in each method. The fifth approach is the critical comparative method, which does not stop at description but goes beyond to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each method and reveal the integrative possibilities between them.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Descartes' Method of Doubt: Rationality Established in Its Multiple Dimensions

Methodological doubt in Descartes represents the fundamental tool for reaching epistemic certainty. Descartes starts from a radical position of doubting everything that can be doubted, passing through three gradual stages (Descartes, 1641/1996). The first stage is sensory doubt, in which the senses may sometimes deceive us, and it is wise not to trust completely those who have deceived us even once. The second stage is dream doubt, in which there is no definitive criterion by which we can distinguish between wakefulness and dream, for how often have we thought we were waking from a dream only to discover that we were still in it. The third stage is the deceptive God doubt, which is the utmost degree of doubt, as there could be a powerful deceptive God who plants false knowledge in our minds, even in the simplest mathematical propositions such as $2+3=5$.

However, this doubt is not an end in itself, but a methodological means to reach a truth that cannot be doubted. This doubting path ends at the first certainty: "I think, therefore I am" (Cogito, ergo sum), which is the truth that establishes rational knowledge based on intuition and clarity (Descartes, 1637/2006). For in order to doubt, I must be a thinker, and in order to be a thinker, I must exist. This first certainty is not inferential but intuitive and self-evident. From this first certainty, Descartes derives a general criterion

for truth: "Everything I perceive clearly and distinctly is true" (Descartes, 1641/1996). Clarity and distinctness are the characteristics of intuitive ideas that cannot be erroneous. He then proceeds to prove the existence of God through the idea of perfection in his mind, for the finite mind cannot produce the idea of perfection on its own; its source must be a perfect being, which is God. And since God is not deceptive but truthful, this guarantees the correctness of clear and distinct knowledge and establishes the possibility of scientific knowledge about the external world (Descartes, 1641/1996). Hence, Descartes establishes four rules for the method (Descartes, 1637/2006). The first rule is certainty, which means not accepting anything unless it is known with certainty, and avoiding haste and prejudice. The second rule is analysis, which means dividing every problem into as many small parts as possible to facilitate its solution. The third rule is synthesis, which means graduating from simple to complex ideas and building knowledge step by step. The fourth rule is enumeration, which means conducting a comprehensive review to ensure that nothing is omitted and reconsidering every step of analysis and synthesis.

These rules, as shown in Figure (2), together form a cognitive tool that relies on reason rather than the senses, and establishes the Cartesian dualism that separates material substance, which is the body whose essence is extension in space, from immaterial substance, which is the mind or soul whose essence is thinking (Descartes, 1644/1991). This dualism has profound epistemic implications, as the senses and the body belong to the changing material world, while the mind belongs to the unchanging immaterial world, making mental knowledge superior and more reliable than sensory knowledge. Descartes also believes that natural phenomena can be explained by mathematical and mechanical laws, a vision that deeply influenced the development of modern science and the emergence of reductionism in the scientific method.

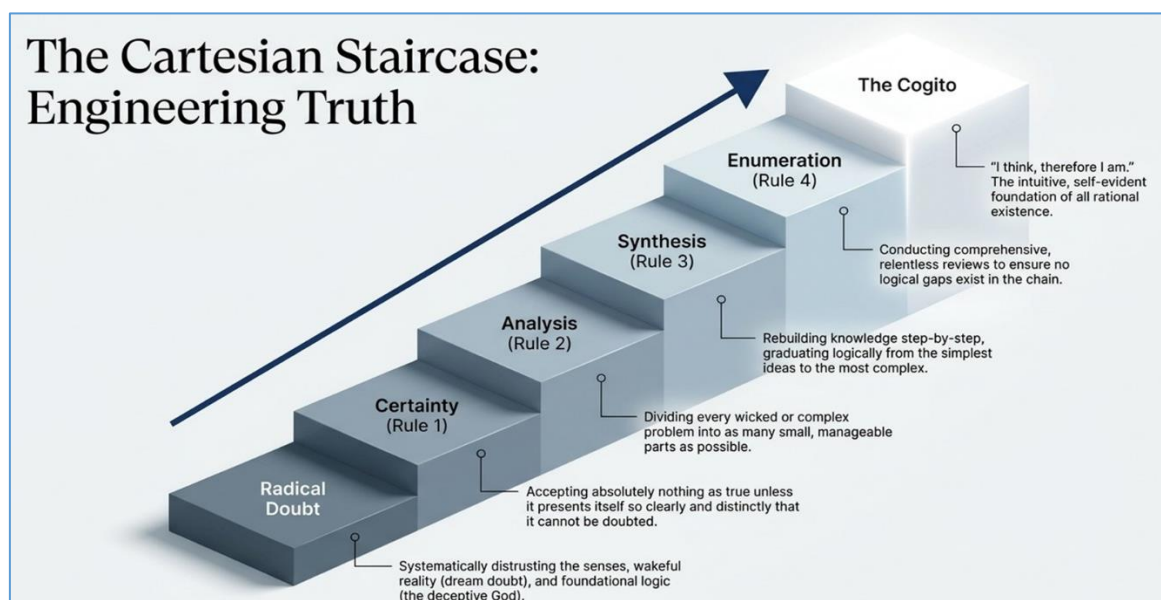


Fig 2

The strength of Descartes' method lies in its establishment of modern rationalism and its liberation of thought from the dominance of tradition and religious authority. Its weaknesses lie in the assumption of an isolated thinking self,

which later philosophies such as pragmatism and phenomenology questioned; the metaphysical dualism that created a crisis in explaining the relationship between mind and body; excessive optimism about the mind's ability to

reach absolute certainty; and its neglect of the social and linguistic dimension in the formation of knowledge (Rorty, 1979; Taylor, 1989).

3.2. The Observation Method in the Inspiration Economy: From Theorizing to Practice in Its Multiple Dimensions

3.2.1. The Inspiration Economy as a Comprehensive Philosophical and Methodological Framework

The Inspiration Economy (IE) is defined as "a mix of inspirational practices that contribute to exploring new and renewed paths in social and economic development" (Buheji, 2016, p. 12). In this definition, it is not merely an economic theory, but a comprehensive methodology aimed at transforming inspiration from an abstract concept into an investable economic currency. It is describe as "that economy which mobilizes societies and institutions to be more inspired, persistent, and renewed in achieving a difference in impact" (Buheji, 2016, p. 15). This economy is based on the "inspiration currency" which rests on the possibilities of inspiration, including its sources, spirit, and opportunities, and seeks to reduce disparities between people and liberate institutional and societal work models from dependence on non-renewable resources (Buheji & Ahmed, 2017).

More recently, Buheji (2026a) has articulated the Inspiration Economy as a comprehensive philosophical and methodological framework constituted by three foundational philosophical dimensions: ontological, epistemological, and axiological. This framework transcends traditional economic models by prioritizing human capacity, meaning-making, and intrinsic motivation over material accumulation and market competition, representing a significant epistemological shift from economies based on "supply vs. demand" to those grounded in "capacity vs. demand" (Buheji, 2026a).

3.2.2. Inspiration Labs as the Operational Mechanism of Observation

Observation as a method in the Inspiration Economy is manifested in the concept of "Inspiration Economy Labs" (Inspiration Labs), which are defined as laboratories based on "learning through practice to explore the forces of inspiration and use them as a currency in institutional development" (Buheji, 2020, p. 12). These labs are characterized by working on development "without authorities or power and without reliance on resources, through building a sound and accurate vision of a bright future with an impact supported by successful models" (Buheji, 2020, p. 15).

The methodology of Inspiration Labs includes several key elements (Buheji, 2020; Choubani and Buheji, 2026). The first is diagnosis, which involves analyzing the problem from multiple angles and branching out potential causes. The second is field exploration, which involves direct observation and interaction with stakeholders and beneficiaries. The third is practical experimentation, which involves testing solutions in limited real contexts before generalization. The fourth is learning, which involves modifying hypotheses and solutions

based on field results. The fifth is action, which involves involving various stakeholders in the process of diagnosis and searching for solutions through practical reflection.

Figure (3) illustrates the methodology of Inspiration Labs, conceptualized as a continuous, iterative process called a "Hermeneutic Infinite Loop." It depicts how solving complex socio-economic problems is not a linear path but a cyclical journey of interpretation, action, and reflection. At the center of the loop is "Surfacing Pre-understanding," which establishes the philosophical foundation of the method. It states that a researcher's or practitioner's inherent biases and prior knowledge are not obstacles to be eliminated, but rather necessary conditions for understanding. This aligns with hermeneutic philosophy, where one must acknowledge their starting point to engage in a deeper dialogue with the problem.

The right-side loop (The Immersion Phase) takes us through first step, Diagnosis (Differential). Here the problem is analyzed from multiple, diverse angles to understand its full complexity without reducing it. Then, Field Exploration: This involves direct immersion into the environment and engaging in "hermeneutic dialogue" with the stakeholders (the people actually experiencing the problem). Then, Practical Experimentation takes place. It is based on testing potential interventions in small-scale, limited real-world contexts to see how they perform. In the fourth step Learning and Adaptation can happen based on the feedback from the experiments, the initial hypotheses are iteratively modified. This ensures the solution evolves with the system.

The left-side loop (The Transformation Phase) happens after passing through the learning stage on the right, the loop crosses over to the left side for implementation and reflection. Here action & capitalisation occurs. This step is about moving from theory and experimentation to tangible, real-world impact. As the text states, it involves "Engaging the community to transform latent capacity into economic value."

This is where the "Inspiration Economy" concept truly manifests. Latent capacity refers to the hidden, underutilized skills, resources, and social capital within a community (e.g., unemployed youth, neglected local resources, traditional knowledge). In this step, the lab doesn't just hand out aid; it activates these hidden assets. By converting them into economic value, the intervention creates sustainable income, builds self-sufficiency, and fosters local ownership of the solution. This prevents the project from being a temporary fix and turns it into a permanent, community-driven economic engine.

On the last, step 6, the community would be engaged to reflect on the systemic environment. To ensure that the socioeconomic value created are sustained. This reflection is what makes it a "hermeneutic" loop. Without it, the action is just a transaction. By reflecting, the participants gain new insights (new pre-understandings), which prepares them to re-enter the right side of the loop (Step 1: Diagnosis) with a deeper, more informed perspective.



Fig 3

3.2.3. Behavioral Economics and the Treatment of Wicked Problems

The Inspiration Economy is based on behavioral economics, using "the intrinsic forces of individuals, institutions, and communities to address social and economic needs" (Buheji & Ahmed, 2017, p. 238). Its applications have proven effective in addressing what is known as "wicked problems," which are complex problems that do not lend themselves to linear or reductionist solutions, such as youth unemployment, pandemic recovery, geopolitical conflicts, and extreme poverty (Buheji, 2018; Rittel & Webber, 1973).

If Descartes starts from "I think" as a foundation for existence, the Inspiration Economy starts from "inspiration" as a foundation for human and economic value. Inspiration is viewed not as a fleeting emotion, but as a source of motivational energy that generates persistence in achieving goals despite difficulties, creativity and renewal in facing challenges, positive impact on the lives of individuals and communities, and qualitative difference in institutional performance (Thrash & Elliot, 2003; Buheji, 2016). Buheji (2026b) extends this foundation through the concept of "engineering consciousness and the architecture of meaning," arguing that the Inspiration Economy is fundamentally concerned with how meaning is constructed, negotiated, and operationalized in socioeconomic life. This aligns with the ontological dimension of the Inspiration Economy, which views problems as "unexplored opportunities that carry deep significance about community needs and lost meaning" (Buheji, 2026a).

While the Cartesian method relies on reductionism, which involves dividing the problem into its simplest elements, the Inspiration Economy deals with "wicked problems" characterized by several features (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Buheji, 2018). These problems have no definitive formulation, no final solution or absolute right or wrong, interconnected dimensions such that no dimension can be solved in isolation from others, and the problem changes with changing attempts to solve it. This type of problem requires a methodology that transcends reductionism to what is known as "systems thinking" or "complex thinking," which

intersects with the philosophy of Edgar Morin (Morin, 2008; Buheji & Choubani, 2026). Choubani and Buheji (2026) argue that "Buheji's methodological innovations—particularly Inspiration Labs, Differential Diagnosis, and the concept of 'influencing without power'—operationalise Morin's complex thought principles in the domain of socio-economic problem-solving."

3.2.4. Inspiration as a Foundation for Human and Economic Value

If Descartes starts from "I think" as a foundation for existence, the Inspiration Economy starts from "inspiration" as a foundation for human and economic value. Inspiration is viewed not as a fleeting emotion, but as a source of motivational energy that generates persistence in achieving goals despite difficulties, creativity and renewal in facing challenges, positive impact on the lives of individuals and communities, and qualitative difference in institutional performance (Thrash & Elliot, 2003; Buheji, 2016). Buheji (2026b) extends this foundation through the concept of "engineering consciousness and the architecture of meaning," arguing that the Inspiration Economy is fundamentally concerned with how meaning is constructed, negotiated, and operationalized in socioeconomic life. This aligns with the ontological dimension of the Inspiration Economy, which views problems as "unexplored opportunities that carry deep significance about community needs and lost meaning" (Buheji, 2026a).

3.2.5. Collective Practice and the Rejection of the Isolated Knower

In contrast to the isolated thinking self in Descartes, the Inspiration Economy relies on participatory collective work and the multiplicity of disciplines and levels (Buheji, 2020). This involves involving various stakeholders in Inspiration Labs, benefiting from the diversity of disciplines and experiences, building knowledge through social interaction and shared practice, and recognizing that effective solutions are born from the synergy of multiple efforts, not from an isolated individual.

3.2.6. Contextual Probability and the Nature of Knowledge

The Inspiration Economy also differs radically from the Cartesian method in its view of the nature of knowledge and truth (Buheji & Ahmed, 2017; Buheji, 2020). Knowledge in the Inspiration Economy is contextual, not total, meaning that what works in one context may not work in another. Knowledge is probabilistic, not absolutely certain, meaning that solutions are subject to modification and improvement. Knowledge is adaptive, not final, meaning that as circumstances change, solutions change. The certainty of practice is practical certainty, which is utilitarian, not theoretical certainty, meaning that truth is what succeeds in solving the problem.

3.2.7. The Hermeneutic Dimension of Inspiration Labs

Buheji (2026c) has recently articulated the hermeneutic foundations of Inspiration Lab methodology, demonstrating how hermeneutic principles—the hermeneutic circle, fusion of horizons, and the role of pre-understanding—are operationalized within Inspiration Labs. This work makes explicit the interpretive principles implicit in Inspiration Labs' methodology, showing how processes of codification, classification, and stratification constitute a hermeneutic approach to problem-solving. The hermeneutic circle operates through iterative movement between problem parts and whole context, while the fusion of horizons manifests when diverse stakeholders, including economists, sociologists, artists, and community members, engage in dialogical meaning-making. Pre-understandings are systematically surfaced and suspended through techniques including "reverse thinking" and "making the familiar strange" (Buheji, 2026c; Gadamer, 1975). This hermeneutic dimension adds a crucial epistemological layer to the

Inspiration Economy that resonates with—and yet fundamentally differs from—the Cartesian emphasis on clear and distinct ideas. While Descartes sought to eliminate all prejudice and pre-understanding to reach pure, objective truth, the hermeneutic approach recognizes pre-understanding as a condition of understanding rather than an obstacle (Gadamer, 1975; Buheji, 2026c).

3.2.8. The Ontological Dimension and the Capitalisation on Ontology

Buheji (2026d) has further developed the ontological dimension of the Inspiration Economy through the concept of "capitalising on ontology for complex problem solving." This work demonstrates how the ontological framing of problems—viewing them not as obstacles but as opportunities, not as isolated failures but as interconnected phenomena—shapes the entire problem-solving methodology. The ontological dimension of the Inspiration Economy addresses fundamental questions about the nature of socioeconomic problems, wealth, and human existence. In conventional thinking, a problem is an obstacle to be removed. In the Inspiration Economy, however, problems are viewed as unexplored opportunities that carry deep significance about community needs and lost meaning (Buheji, 2026a, 2026d). This ontological shift is foundational to the entire Inspiration Economy methodology and represents a significant departure from the Cartesian ontological framework. While Descartes' ontology posits a fundamental dualism between thinking substance and extended substance, the Inspiration Economy's ontology is relational, processual, and meaning-oriented. See Figure (4) to appreciate the relation drawn by the influence of Inspiration Economy.

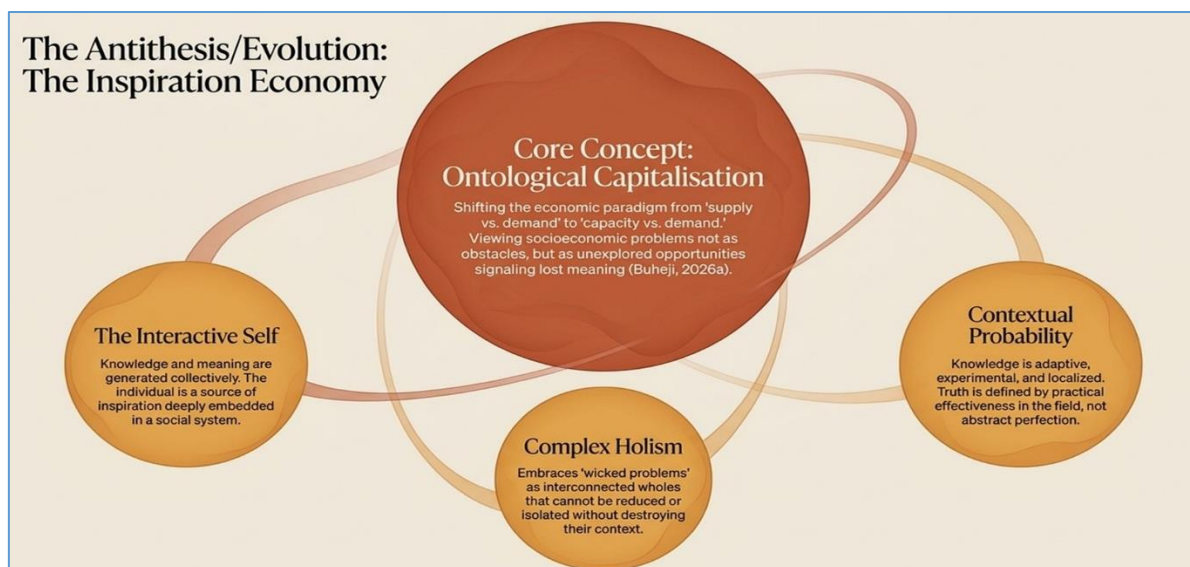


Fig 4

3.3. Intellectual Complexity and Methodological Integration: The Relationship between Morin, Hermeneutics, and the Inspiration Economy

The comparison between philosophy and practice in the Inspiration Economy gains additional depth when considering the methodological relationship between Edgar Morin's complex thought, Gadamerian hermeneutics, and the methodology of Inspiration Labs. Choubani and Buheji

(2026) demonstrate that the Inspiration Economy methodology represents a significant contribution to making complex thought actionable in real-world settings, addressing "wicked problems" ranging from youth unemployment to post-pandemic recovery and geopolitical conflict. The study proposes the concept of "latent potential" as an intermediary link between complexity and value production, allowing for a rethinking of the relationship between knowledge and

development in contemporary societies.

Buheji (2026c) further extends this integration by demonstrating how hermeneutic principles are operationalized within Inspiration Labs. This hermeneutic dimension adds depth to the epistemological foundations of the Inspiration Economy, showing how understanding emerges through iterative interpretation rather than through the application of pre-packaged solutions. Aspects of integration between Morin's thought, hermeneutics, and the Inspiration Economy include the principle of open systems, the principle of feedback, the hermeneutic circle, the fusion of horizons, and the principle of multiple solutions (Buheji & Choubani, 2026; Buheji, 2026c; Morin, 2008). Just as Morin sees living systems as open and not closed, the Inspiration Economy sees societies and institutions as capable of continuous renewal through inspiration. Both Morin and Inspiration Labs emphasize learning from results and continuous adaptation. The iterative movement between parts and whole in interpretation mirrors the complex thought principle of moving between local and global understanding.

The dialogical encounter between diverse stakeholders in Inspiration Labs operationalizes Gadamer's concept of the fusion of horizons. The combination of cognitive diversity and integration in Inspiration Labs reflects the complex principle of combining plurality and unity.

This integrative reading reveals an important methodological dimension: the Inspiration Economy does not stop at field observation but integrates it with complex theoretical frameworks, giving it philosophical depth and the ability to deal with the complexities of social and economic reality. Notably, this reading highlights the concept of "latent potentials" as a link between philosophical complexity and the production of economic value, which approximates the Cartesian tendency to search for "essence" behind "appearance," with the difference that the essence in Descartes is purely mental, while the essence in Buheji is a latent human energy that appears in practice. Figure (5) Show the philosophical glue between Morin's complex thought theory and Gadamer hermeneutic theory.

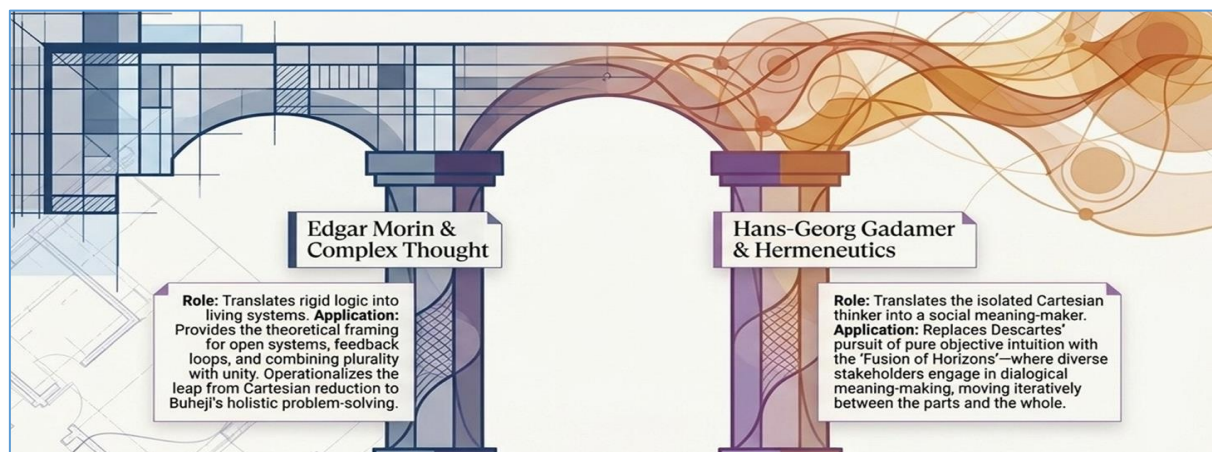


Fig 5

4. Points of Similarity, Difference, and Mutual Enrichment

4.1. Points of Similarity

The two methods agree in their rejection of direct givens and untested postulates. Just as Descartes doubts the senses and previous knowledge, the Inspiration Economy doubts the adequacy of traditional economic models based on depleting resources. They also meet in making the human element the center of knowledge and change, although the language differs, with Descartes speaking of the mind and Buheji speaking of inspiration. Both seek to transcend materiality: Descartes toward mental certainty, and Buheji toward inspiration as immaterial value.

Both methods also begin with doubting all previous knowledge and established traditions (Descartes, 1637/2006), while the Inspiration Economy rejects reliance on depleting resources and rigid traditional models (Buheji, 2016). In both, the mind or human capacities are the source of true knowledge, with Descartes viewing the human being as a thinking being (Descartes, 1641/1996) and Buheji viewing latent human energies as the currency of the new economy and the human being as the source of change (Buheji, 2016). Both transcend the senses and the body to mental and psychological certainty and the abstract (Descartes, 1644/1991), while the Inspiration Economy transcends depleting material resources to inspiration as

immaterial value (Buheji & Ahmed, 2017).

Both methods establish an organized methodology, with Descartes offering four rules of certainty, analysis, synthesis, and enumeration (Descartes, 1637/2006), and the Inspiration Economy offering an organized methodology of diagnosis, field observation, experimentation, and learning (Buheji, 2020). Both are humanistic in tendency, with Descartes viewing the human being as a thinking being above all, whose dignity is in their mind, and Buheji viewing the human being as the source of inspiration and change, whose dignity is in their latent energies (Buheji, 2016).

Both methods also use doubt or observation as a means to build new knowledge, with Descartes using doubt to build new certain knowledge (Descartes, 1637/2006) and the Inspiration Economy using observation and experimentation to discover new developmental paths (Buheji, 2020). Both critique the familiar, with Descartes critiquing cognitive traditions and intellectual authorities, and the Inspiration Economy critiquing prevailing economic models and capitalism (Buheji & Ahmed, 2017). Both have a liberational dimension, with Descartes liberating the mind from the constraints of the senses and traditions (Descartes, 1641/1996) and the Inspiration Economy liberating societies from dependence on limited resources (Buheji, 2016). Both search for hidden depths, with Descartes searching for the "essence" behind "appearance" and the Inspiration Economy

searching for "latent potentials" behind visible problems (Buheji, 2026a). Both employ interpretive methodology, with Descartes using the hermeneutic circle in textual interpretation and the Inspiration Economy using the hermeneutic circle in problem interpretation (Buheji, 2026c). The recent articulation of the hermeneutic foundations of Inspiration Labs (Buheji, 2026c) adds a further point of similarity: both Descartes and the Inspiration Economy are concerned with the interpretation of phenomena—Descartes with the interpretation of ideas to reach clear and distinct knowledge, and the Inspiration Economy with the interpretation of socioeconomic problems to reach deep understanding and effective solutions.

4.2 Points of Difference

The fundamental difference lies in the purpose of knowledge: Descartes seeks absolute theoretical certainty, while Buheji seeks practical solutions to social problems. They also differ in the tool of knowledge: mental contemplation in Descartes versus field observation through Inspiration Labs in Buheji. This reflects a deeper difference in epistemology itself: idealistic rationalism in Descartes versus applied pragmatism in Buheji. They also differ in their approach to dealing with problems: analytical reductionism in Descartes versus complex holism in Buheji, which places each of them before different types of cognitive and practical challenges.

As shown in Figure (6), Descartes seeks to reach absolute theoretical certainty and knowledge of truth in itself (Descartes, 1641/1996), while the Inspiration Economy seeks to bring about tangible practical change in societies and knowledge for solving problems (Buheji, 2020). Descartes uses abstract mental contemplation and introspective isolation (Descartes, 1637/2006), while the Inspiration Economy uses field observation and experimentation through labs and participatory collective work (Buheji, 2020).

Descartes views knowledge as certain, total, a priori, necessary, and eternal (Descartes, 1641/1996), while the Inspiration Economy views knowledge as probabilistic, contextual, experimental, changeable, and relative (Buheji & Ahmed, 2017). Descartes views the self as an isolated thinking self, a substance separate from the body and the world (Descartes, 1644/1991), while the Inspiration Economy views the self as socially interactive and influential, part of a complex social system (Buheji, 2020). Descartes adopts idealistic rationalism with primacy of reason over the senses and experience (Descartes, 1637/2006), while the Inspiration Economy adopts applied pragmatism with

primacy of practice and experience over abstract theorizing (Buheji, 2020).

Descartes uses reductionism by dividing the problem into small parts and solving each part separately (Descartes, 1637/2006), while the Inspiration Economy uses holism and complexity by dealing with the problem as an interconnected whole, addressing wicked problems (Buheji, 2018; Rittel & Webber, 1973). Descartes seeks absolute and final certainty and one fixed truth (Descartes, 1641/1996), while the Inspiration Economy seeks practical and relative certainty and multiple truths according to context, time, and place (Buheji & Ahmed, 2017). The ontological foundation in Descartes is the knowing self, the Cogito, and the mind (Descartes, 1641/1996), while in the Inspiration Economy it is latent human energies and inspiration (Buheji, 2016).

Descartes views truth as existing pre-existing in the mind and discovered through contemplation (Descartes, 1637/2006), while the Inspiration Economy views truth as built and produced in practice and tested by its effectiveness (Buheji, 2020). Descartes views cognitive progress as occurring through the accumulation of certain facts, while the Inspiration Economy views practical progress as occurring through improving societies' lives and solving their problems (Buheji, 2016). Descartes gives primacy to the thinking individual, with society being a source of doubts (Descartes, 1641/1996), while the Inspiration Economy gives primacy to society, with the individual being a source of inspiration in their collective context (Buheji, 2020).

Descartes views pre-understanding as an obstacle to be eliminated, while the Inspiration Economy views pre-understanding as a condition of understanding to be surfaced and suspended (Buheji, 2026c; Gadamer, 1975). Descartes engages in monological interpretation by the solitary thinker, while the Inspiration Economy engages in dialogical interpretation through fusion of horizons (Buheji, 2026c). Descartes' ontological framework is dualistic, opposing mind and body, while the Inspiration Economy's ontological framework is relational, viewing existence as interconnected and complex (Buheji, 2026a, 2026d).

The hermeneutic dimension adds a further crucial difference: while Descartes sought to eliminate all pre-understanding and prejudice to reach pure, objective truth, the hermeneutic approach of Inspiration Labs recognizes pre-understanding as a condition of understanding that must be surfaced and suspended rather than eliminated (Buheji, 2026c; Gadamer, 1975).

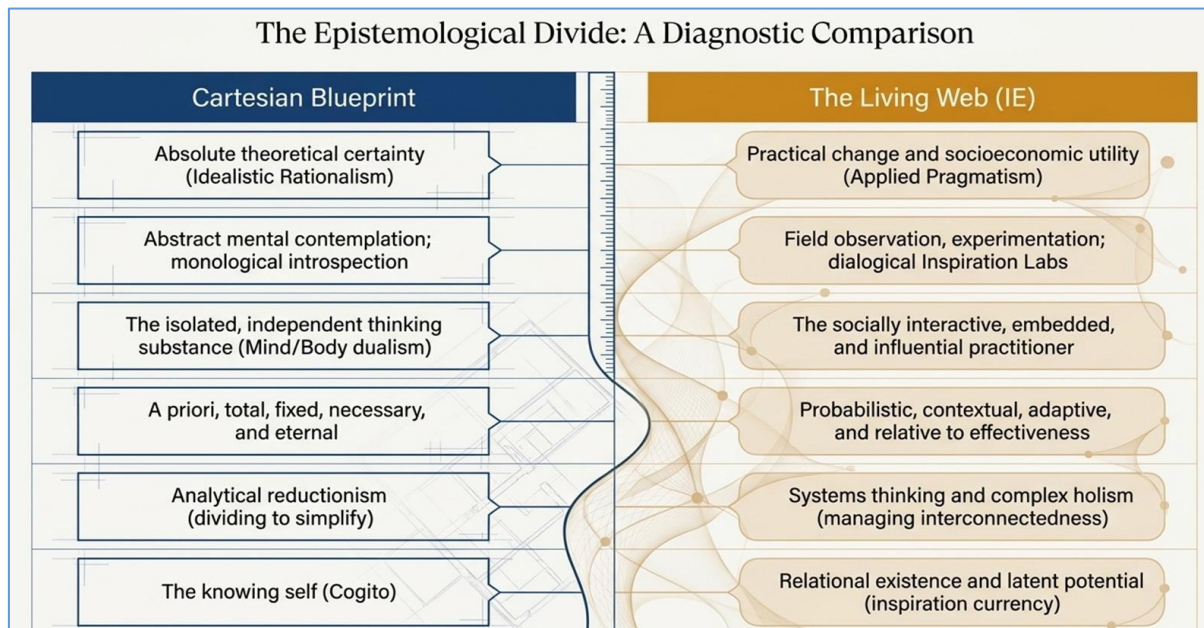


Fig 6

4.3. Mutual Enrichment

4.3.1. The Impact of Cartesian Method

The Cartesian method of doubt nourishes the Inspiration Economy in several ways, as shown in Figure (7). First, it provides a critical foundation, granting the Inspiration Economy a philosophical ground for a radical critical review of prevailing economic assumptions, just as Descartes doubted previous knowledge (Descartes, 1637/2006). The Inspiration Economy needs "methodological doubt" in the adequacy of traditional economic models, the assumptions of growth based on depleting resources, the postulates about the human relationship to work and production, and the feasibility of imported solutions in different contexts.

Second, it provides methodological control, as Descartes' rules of analysis, synthesis, and enumeration remind of the importance of methodological organization in the applications of Inspiration Labs, so that observation is not merely spontaneous but subject to mental and methodological control (Descartes, 1637/2006). This includes the necessity of accurate analysis of problems before proposing solutions, the importance of gradualism from simple to complex in building solutions, and the necessity of comprehensive review and enumeration to ensure that no important aspects are omitted.

Third, it encourages transcending the senses, as Descartes reminds us that the senses may deceive, and this motivates the Inspiration Economy to develop tools that transcend surface observation to explore the "intrinsic forces" latent in

individuals and communities, and not to settle for surface appearances of economic problems (Descartes, 1641/1996; Buheji, 2016). This resonates with the hermeneutic emphasis in Inspiration Labs on penetrating surface symptoms to reach deeper layers of meaning (Buheji, 2026c).

Fourth, it provides the criterion of clarity and distinctness, which offers a critical tool for evaluating the quality of ideas and solutions in Inspiration Labs, and distinguishing substantive solutions from superficial or illusory ones (Descartes, 1641/1996).

Fifth, it emphasizes proving latent potentials, as the Cartesian method based on searching for a primary certainty reminds the Inspiration Economy of the importance of proving "latent potentials" in individuals and communities, and not settling for apparent data or surface statistics (Descartes, 1637/2006; Buheji, 2016, 2026a).

Sixth, it reinforces critical rationality, as Cartesian rationality reinforces in the Inspiration Economy the tendency not to accept any solution or policy without mental scrutiny, and to maintain a critical spirit toward all ideas and solutions presented (Descartes, 1641/1996).

Seventh, it supports the search for essence behind appearance, as Descartes' search for the essence behind appearance resonates with the Inspiration Economy's search for "latent potentials" behind visible problems. While Descartes sought the essence in the purity of thought, the Inspiration Economy seeks it in the unexplored capacities of individuals and communities (Buheji, 2026a).

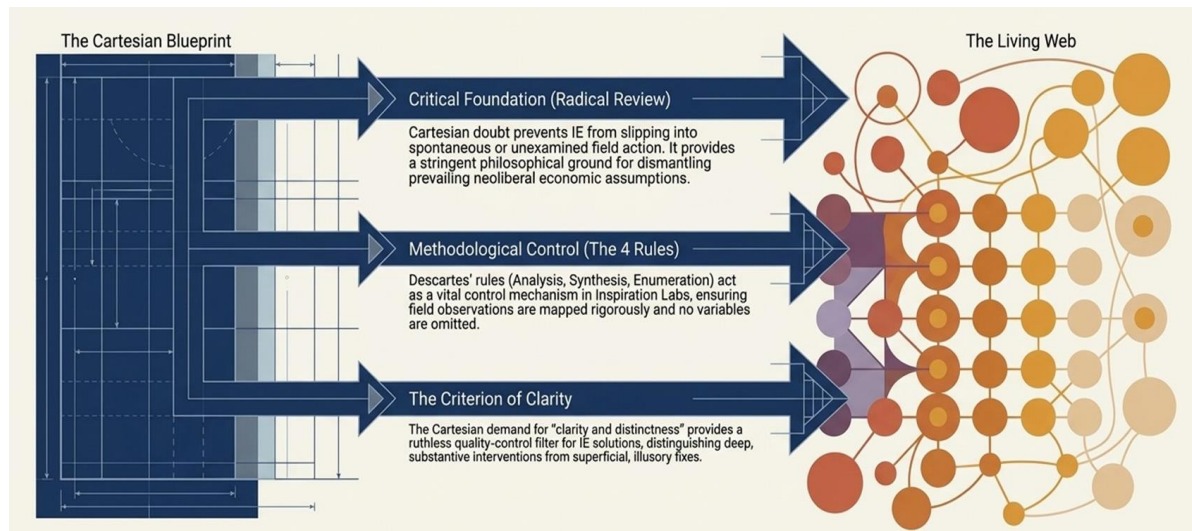


Fig 7: represent the Cartesian (Descartes) Impact on Inspiration Economy

4.3.2. The Impact of Inspiration Economy Theory

The Inspiration Economy (IE), in turn, renews the Cartesian method in several ways, as shown in Figure (8). First, it applies rationality to solving complex social problems, offering a practical model for applying rationality to solving complex social problems, thereby restoring philosophy's status as a tool for change and not just contemplation (Buheji, 2020). Cartesian rationality, which remained confined to theoretical contemplation, finds in Inspiration Labs a field for its application in a complex social reality.

Second, IE theory transcends Cartesian individualism, moving beyond the isolated thinking self in Descartes to a socially interactive self, enriching philosophy with collective cognitive models that recognize that knowledge and solutions are born from social interaction and not from contemplative isolation (Buheji, 2020). This offers a practical critique of Cartesian dualism and the view of the isolated self. The hermeneutic concept of the "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer, 1975; Buheji, 2026c) provides a philosophical articulation of how understanding emerges from dialogue rather than from solitary contemplation.

Third, IE theory tests certainty in the field, testing Cartesian "certainty" in the field and transforming it from a theoretical truth into a practical tool for improving the lives of communities (Buheji & Ahmed, 2017). Instead of seeking absolute theoretical certainty, it seeks practical certainty achieved by solving problems and improving conditions.

Fourth, IE theory deals with complexity and transcends reductionism. While Descartes seeks to simplify knowledge through analytical reduction, the Inspiration Economy offers a model for dealing with "complex problems" that do not lend themselves to simple solutions, enriching philosophy with cognitive models that are more flexible and capable of adapting to complex reality (Buheji, 2018; Rittel & Webber, 1973; Choubani & Buheji, 2026). This constitutes a practical critique of Cartesian reductionism.

Fifth, IE theory introduces the concept of multiple truths, revealing the limits of the concept of a single fixed truth in Cartesian philosophy and highlighting that truth in the social and economic domains is multiple, contextual, and

changeable, opening new horizons in epistemology that transcend absolutism (Buheji & Ahmed, 2017). Sixth, it restores consideration to the body and practice, as the methodology of Inspiration Labs restores consideration to the body, practice, and the senses in the process of knowledge, in contrast to Cartesian philosophy which neglected the senses and the body and gave absolute priority to the abstract mind (Buheji, 2020). This offers an alternative cognitive model that transcends Cartesian dualism.

Seventh, IE theory offers an integrative method, as the Inspiration Economy offers a methodological model that combines theorizing and application, philosophy and economics, and scientific knowledge and practical knowledge, forming a model of applied philosophy whose theories are tested in reality and modified according to field results (Buheji & Choubani, 2026).

Eighth, IE theory provides the hermeneutic dimension, as the hermeneutic articulation of Inspiration Lab methodology (Buheji, 2026c) offers Cartesian philosophy a sophisticated theory of interpretation that goes beyond the mere application of clear and distinct ideas. While Descartes sought to eliminate interpretation in favor of direct intuition of clear and distinct ideas, the hermeneutic approach recognizes that all understanding involves interpretation, and that pre-understanding is a condition rather than an obstacle to knowledge. This offers a profound critique of Cartesian epistemology and opens new avenues for philosophical reflection on the nature of understanding itself.

Ninth, IE theory offers ontological capitalisation, as the ontological dimension of the Inspiration Economy (Buheji, 2026a, 2026d) offers Cartesian philosophy a relational and processual ontology that transcends the dualism of thinking substance and extended substance. By viewing problems as opportunities and wealth as multi-dimensional, including moral, social, knowledge, symbolic, and inspirational capital, the Inspiration Economy provides a richer ontological framework for understanding human existence and socioeconomic reality.

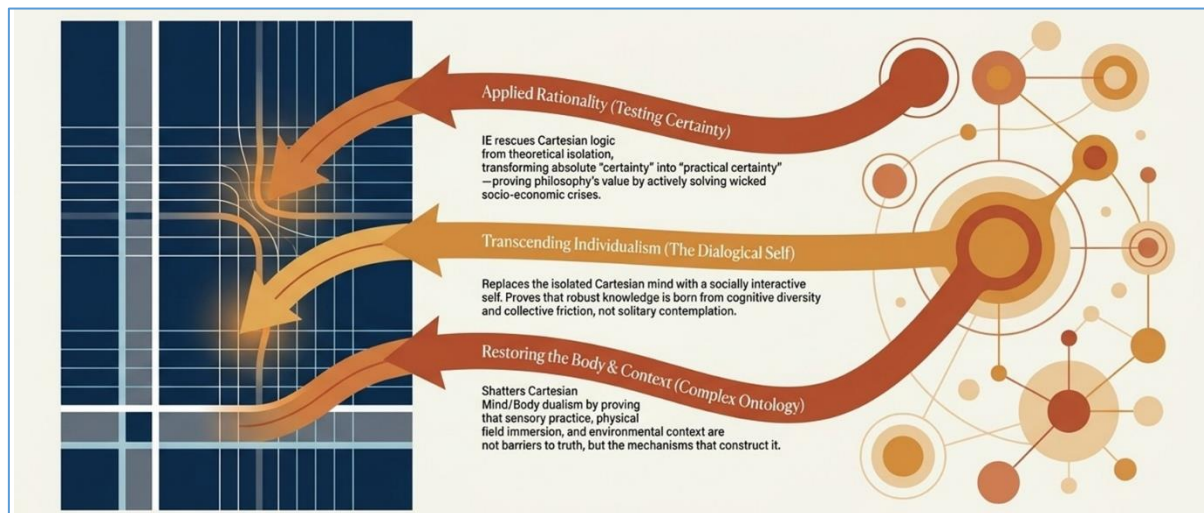


Fig 8: represent the Inspiration Economy Impact on Cartesian (Descartes) theory

4.4. Advanced Critical Analysis: Points of Conflict and Integration

In addition to the points of similarity and difference, four main areas of tension emerge between the two methods that can be transformed into points of integration, as shown in Figure (9).

The first area of tension is between absolute certainty and contextual probability. The Inspiration Economy appears to abandon the concept of certainty entirely, which may expose it to the risk of excessive relativism where everything becomes acceptable or justifiable. Here, Cartesian philosophy can provide a critical criterion, albeit less stringent, that enables distinguishing the most effective solutions in their contexts, without abandoning the required flexibility. The Inspiration Economy can also offer Cartesianism a concept of "practical certainty" manifested in the effectiveness of solutions and their ability to change reality, a certainty different from theoretical certainty but no less valuable (Buheji & Ahmed, 2017; Descartes, 1641/1996). The hermeneutic dimension offers a mediation between these extremes: while hermeneutics recognizes that all understanding is situated and perspectival, thus rejecting absolute certainty, it also insists on disciplined interpretation and the possibility of distinguishing better from worse interpretations (Gadamer, 1975; Buheji, 2026c). This provides a middle path between Cartesian absolutism and relativistic indeterminacy.

The second area of tension is between methodological reduction and complex holism. The Cartesian reductionist tendency simplifies reality and makes analysis possible, but it may lose the essential complexity of social problems. Conversely, holism in the Inspiration Economy appreciates complexity but may lead to difficulty in analysis. The possible integration lies in using reduction as a preliminary analytical tool, such as differential diagnosis, while continuing to look at the interactions between parts, which intersects with the approach of Inspiration Labs that begins with analyzing the problem and then moves to a comprehensive vision of solutions (Buheji, 2020; Descartes, 1637/2006). The hermeneutic approach offers a sophisticated integration: the hermeneutic circle involves moving between parts and whole, recognizing that understanding requires both

analytical decomposition and holistic synthesis. The codification, classification, and stratification processes in Inspiration Labs (Buheji, 2026c) exemplify this integration, combining analytical rigor with holistic understanding.

The third area of tension is between the solitary knower and multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary practice. Cartesian individualism establishes the independence and impartiality of the mind, but it may ignore the social dimension of knowledge. Collectivism in the Inspiration Economy benefits from collective intelligence but may lose the voice of the critical individual. The possible integration lies in recognizing that knowledge needs a "thinking self" capable of criticism and review, and that this self flourishes in a nurturing collective context, which can be represented in the role of the "facilitator" in Inspiration Labs (Buheji, 2020; Descartes, 1641/1996). The hermeneutic concept of the "fusion of horizons" offers a philosophical articulation of this integration: genuine understanding emerges neither from the solitary thinker nor from the undifferentiated collective, but from the dialogical encounter between distinct perspectives that maintain their individuality while creating new meaning together (Gadamer, 1975; Buheji, 2026c).

The fourth area of tension is between the elimination of pre-understanding and the surfacing of pre-understanding. Descartes sought to eliminate all pre-understanding through radical doubt, aiming to reach a foundation of pure, presuppositionless knowledge. The hermeneutic approach of Inspiration Labs, by contrast, recognizes pre-understanding as a condition of understanding that must be surfaced and suspended rather than eliminated (Buheji, 2026c; Gadamer, 1975). This difference reflects a fundamental disagreement about the nature of knowledge and the possibility of presuppositionless thought. The integration lies in recognizing that while pre-understanding cannot be eliminated, it can be made explicit and subjected to critical scrutiny. The Cartesian demand for clarity and distinctness can be reframed as a demand for reflexive awareness of one's own pre-understandings and their influence on interpretation—a demand that aligns with the hermeneutic emphasis on reflexivity and the "surfacing" of hidden assumptions.

These four tensions are represented in Figure (9)

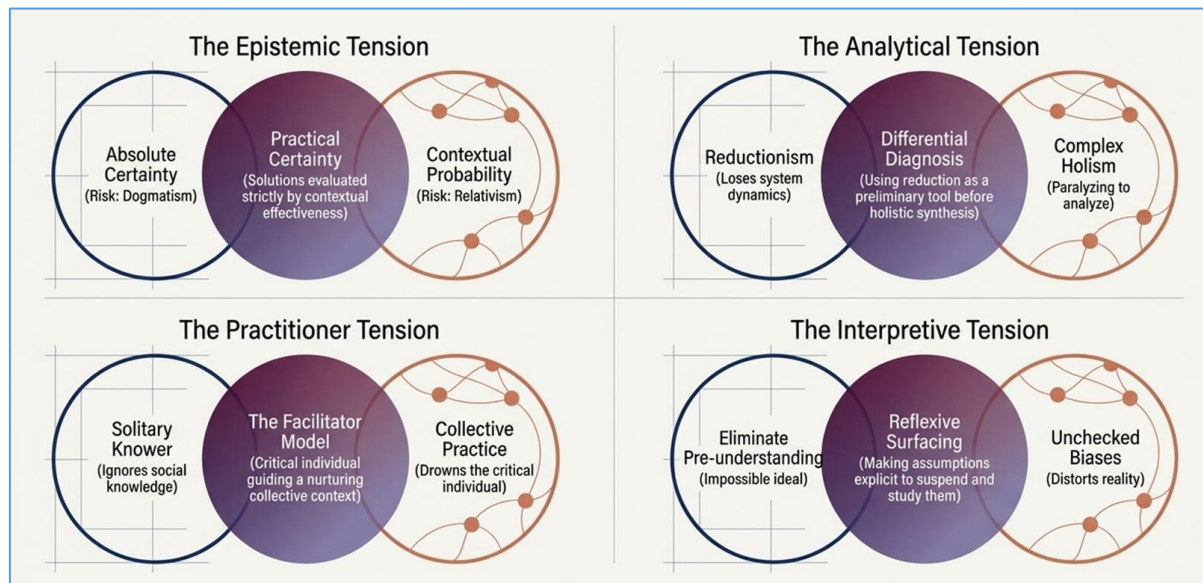


Fig 9

5. Conclusion

This paper concluded that the expanded comparison between the Cartesian method, including doubt, the Cogito, reductionism, absolute certainty, and the solitary knower, and the observation method in the Inspiration Economy, including field observation, Inspiration Labs, dealing with complex problems, collective practice, contextual probability, hermeneutic interpretation, and ontological capitalisation, reveals a complex relationship combining similarity, difference, and mutual enrichment.

The two methods agree on several fundamental points: their rejection of untested postulates, their focus on the human element as the center of knowledge and change, their pursuit of transcending materiality, their critique of the familiar, their establishment of an organized methodology for building knowledge, and their search for hidden depths behind surface appearances. However, they differ fundamentally in the purpose of knowledge, which is theoretical versus practical; its tool, which is contemplation versus field observation; their view of the self, which is isolated versus interactive; the concept of certainty, which is absolute versus relative and contextual; the approach to dealing with problems, which is reductionist versus complex and holistic; the ontological foundation, which is the Cogito and the mind versus inspiration and latent potentials; and the role of pre-understanding, which is an obstacle versus a condition.

The comparison also revealed nine aspects of mutual enrichment from Descartes to the Inspiration Economy, and nine aspects from the Inspiration Economy to Cartesian philosophy, in addition to four main areas of tension that can be transformed into points of integration.

The importance of this comparison lies in the fact that it presents a model for the possible relationship between philosophy and economics, where philosophy can provide economics with a critical and methodological foundation, and economics can provide philosophy with practical applications that test its theories in reality and modify them. This integration opens new horizons for thinking about a knowledge economy that combines the depth of philosophical contemplation with the effectiveness of economic application, and confirms that philosophy is not merely theoretical contemplation, and economics is not

merely numerical calculations, but they are two faces of one human process: the quest to understand reality and change it for the better (Buheji & Choubani, 2026).

The comparison also confirms that the methodology of Inspiration Labs represents a practical model of applied philosophy, integrating theorizing and experimentation, analysis and holism, individualism and collectivism, and certainty and probability, in an integrated framework aimed at improving the lives of individuals and communities (Buheji, 2020).

The recent philosophical and methodological articulations of the Inspiration Economy (Buheji, 2026a, 2026b, 2026c, 2026d) add significant depth to this comparison, demonstrating that the Inspiration Economy is not merely an economic methodology but a comprehensive philosophical framework addressing fundamental questions of ontology, epistemology, and axiology. The hermeneutic dimension (Buheji, 2026c) is particularly significant, as it provides a sophisticated theory of interpretation that offers a profound critique of Cartesian epistemology while also offering resources for its renewal. The ontological dimension (Buheji, 2026a, 2026d) offers a relational and processual ontology that transcends Cartesian dualism. The work on engineering consciousness and the architecture of meaning (Buheji, 2026b) provides a phenomenological account of how meaning is constructed and operationalized in socioeconomic life, offering a rich alternative to Cartesian rationalism.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this paper, we recommend the following.

6.1. At the Methodological Level

We recommend building a hybrid methodological framework that integrates Cartesian critical doubt with applied observation in Inspiration Labs, allowing for continuous critical review of assumptions during field application, while maintaining the necessary flexibility to deal with the complexities of reality.

We also recommend developing the "diagnosis" methodology in Inspiration Labs to include a preliminary "methodological doubt" stage, ensuring that no solution or

assumption is accepted without mental scrutiny, while retaining the ability to deal with different contexts.

Furthermore, we recommend designing a methodological tool that combines analytical reduction, to dissect the problem, and holistic synthesis, to see total interactions, benefiting from the strength of both methods at different stages of the problem-solving process.

We also recommend developing criteria for "practical certainty" based on the effectiveness of solutions and their ability to achieve tangible change, while maintaining a spirit of criticism and continuous review. Additionally, we recommend integrating hermeneutic principles into the methodological framework of Inspiration Labs, recognizing the role of pre-understanding, the hermeneutic circle, and the fusion of horizons in interpretation (Buheji, 2026c). Finally, we recommend developing ontological frameworks that capitalize on the relational and processual nature of socioeconomic problems (Buheji, 2026d).

6.2. At the Level of Scientific Research

we recommend conducting experimental studies that measure the impact of applying the principles of methodological doubt and the criterion of clarity and distinctness in Inspiration Labs on the quality of proposed solutions and their applicability. We also recommend building quantitative and qualitative indicators for measuring inspiration, based on clear rational criteria, combining mathematical precision, as Descartes called for, with contextual flexibility and the ability to capture qualitative aspects.

Furthermore, we recommend expanding the base of comparative studies between the Inspiration Economy and other philosophies, such as Edgar Morin's philosophy, pragmatism, phenomenology, and Marx's critical philosophy, to enrich the theoretical framework and expand the horizons of cognitive integration. We also recommend conducting field research that tests the effectiveness of the Inspiration Labs methodology in different cultural and social contexts, to test its generalizability and adaptability. Additionally, we recommend studying the impact of applying the Inspiration Labs methodology in philosophical and educational fields, and measuring its contribution to developing critical thinking and problem-solving. We also recommend developing further research on the hermeneutic foundations of Inspiration Labs, exploring how hermeneutic principles operate in different problem domains and cultural contexts (Buheji, 2026c). Finally, we recommend investigating the relationship between ontological capitalisation and complex problem-solving, exploring how different ontological framings shape problem-solving methodologies and outcomes (Buheji, 2026d).

6.3. At the Level of Practical Application

We recommend expanding the applications of Inspiration Labs to include philosophical and educational fields, through establishing "applied philosophy labs" that use the inspiration methodology to address contemporary philosophical problems, such as social justice, human rights, and environmental ethics. We also recommend developing training programs and labs for practitioners in the Inspiration Economy, including modules in critical philosophy, logic, epistemology, and hermeneutics, to enhance their capabilities in methodological doubt, deep analysis, and distinguishing

between substantive and superficial solutions. Furthermore, we recommend establishing dialogue platforms that bring together philosophers, Inspiration Economy experts, and behavioral economics experts, to discuss the ethical and cognitive challenges posed by practical applications, and to develop shared theoretical frameworks.

We also recommend developing applied models for Inspiration Labs that benefit from the principles of systems thinking, complex approaches, and hermeneutic interpretation, while maintaining a spirit of criticism and continuous review. Additionally, we recommend designing evaluation indicators for development projects and impact measurement based on both the criteria of theoretical certainty, which is internal logic, and the criteria of practical certainty, which is effectiveness in solving problems. Finally, we recommend applying hermeneutic principles in the training of Inspiration Lab facilitators, emphasizing the skills of surfacing pre-understandings, facilitating the fusion of horizons, and moving between parts and whole in interpretation (Buheji, 2026c).

6.4. At the Political and Institutional Level

We recommend incorporating the principles of the Inspiration Economy into national development strategies, including "constructive doubt" as an institutional value that encourages continuous review of policies and avoids adherence to rigid models. We also recommend supporting the establishment of specialized research centers in "philosophy of economics" and "knowledge economy" that bring together philosophical, economic, and behavioral expertise, to keep pace with contemporary challenges and develop innovative solutions to wicked problems. Furthermore, we recommend encouraging educational and research institutions to adopt the Inspiration Labs methodology in addressing societal problems, and providing financial and technical support for establishing Inspiration Labs in universities and research centers. We also recommend developing national policies that encourage "learning through practice" and integrate theorizing and application, and combat intellectual stagnation and consumed economic models. Finally, we recommend supporting the development of "semantic sovereignty" as a condition for strategic independence, enabling communities to produce their own meaning rather than consuming imported frameworks (Buheji, 2026a).

6.5. Final Comparative Learning Outcome

Figure () depicts a three-phase model of knowledge creation that blends the theoretical rigor of rationalist philosophy with the field-tested agility of Inspiration Economy. The Phase I: Constructive Doubt (The Cartesian Gate) involves systematically doubting imported frameworks before taking action. The diagram transitions into Phase II: Ontological Capitalisation (The Paradigm Shift), visualized through a fluid, purple, organic network, where identified failures are redefined as indicators of untapped social and moral capital. Finally, it culminates in Phase III: Hermeneutic Experimentation (The Field Engine) which depicted as an expansive, interconnected web of warm orange and yellow nodes, representing iterative field interventions where truth is negotiated with the community and measured by tangible socio-economic improvement.

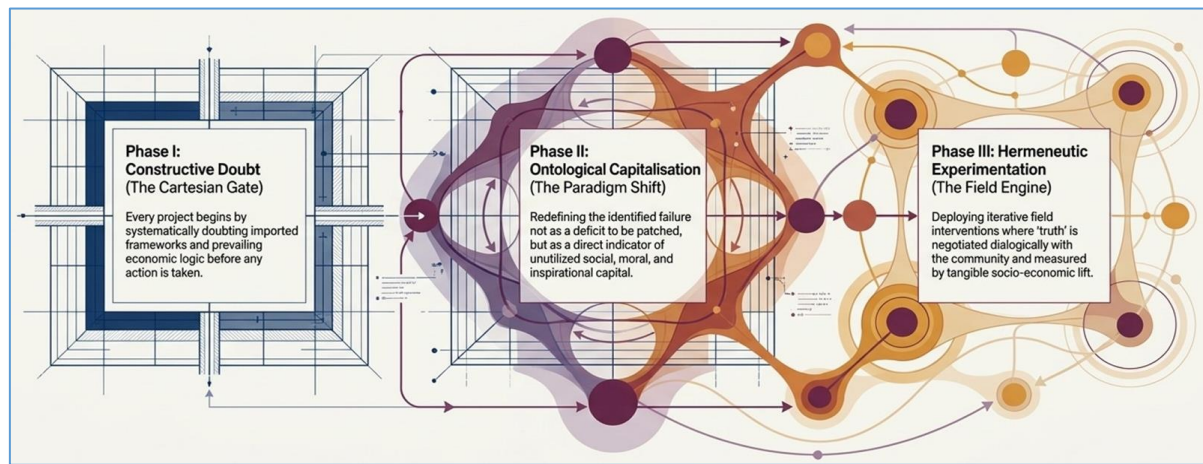


Fig 10

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