

Meditations on First Philosophy

Translator's preface

Descartes' most celebrated philosophical work was written in Latin during the period 1638–40, when the philosopher was living, for the most part, at Santpoort. This 'corner of north Holland', he wrote to Mersenne on 17 May 1638, was much more suitable for his work than the 'air of Paris' with its 'vast number of inevitable distractions'. The work was completed by April 1640, and was first published in Paris in 1641 by Michel Soly under the title *Meditationes de Prima Philosophiae* (*Meditations on First Philosophy*); the subtitle adds 'in which are demonstrated the existence of God and the immortality of the soul'. In earlier correspondence Descartes had referred to his work as the *Metaphysics*, but he eventually decided that 'the most suitable title is *Meditations on First Philosophy*, because the discussion is not confined to God and the soul but treats in general of all the first things to be discovered by philosophizing' (letter to Mersenne, 11 November 1640).

Descartes was not entirely satisfied with Soly as a publisher, and he arranged for a second edition of the *Meditations* to be brought out in Holland, by the house of Elzevir of Amsterdam. This second edition appeared in 1642, with a new and more appropriate subtitle, *viz.* 'in which are demonstrated the existence of God and the distinction between the human soul and the body'. The second edition contains a number of minor corrections to the text¹ (though in practice the sense is seldom affected), and except where indicated it is this edition that is followed in the present translation.

A French translation of the *Meditations* by Louis-Charles d'Albert, Duc de Luynes (1620–90) appeared in 1647. This is a tolerably accurate version which was published with Descartes' approval; Adrien Baillet, in his biography of Descartes, goes so far as to claim that the philosopher took advantage of the French edition to 'retouch his original work'.² In fact, however, the French version generally stays fairly close to the Latin.

¹ But the strictures in AT against the first edition are not always well founded; for a full discussion see F. Alquié (ed.), *Oeuvres philosophiques de Descartes* (Paris: Garnier, 1963–73), vol. II, pp. 377ff. See also General Introduction, above p. ix.

² A. Baillet, *Vie de Monsieur Des-Cartes* (1691), vol. II, p. 172.

There are a number of places where phrases in the original are paraphrased or expanded somewhat, but it is impossible to say which of these modifications, if any, were directly initiated by Descartes (some are certainly too clumsy to be his work). There is thus no good case for giving the French version greater authority than the original Latin text, which we know that Descartes himself composed; and the present translation therefore always provides, in the first instance, a direct rendering of the original Latin. But where expansions or modifications to be found in the French version offer useful glosses on, or additions to, the original, these are also translated, but always in diamond brackets, or in footnotes, to avoid confusion.¹ For details of the *Objections and Replies*, which were published together with the *Meditations* in the 1641 and 1642 editions, see below, p. 63.

J.C.

¹ For detailed comparison between the French and Latin versions see G. Rodis Lewis (ed.), *Descartes, Méditations: texte Latin et traduction du Duc de Luynes* (Paris: Vrin, 1946).

*To those most learned and distinguished men, the Dean and Doctors of
the sacred Faculty of Theology at Paris, from René Descartes.* 1

I have a very good reason for offering this book to you, and I am confident that you will have an equally good reason for giving it your protection once you understand the principle behind my undertaking; so much so, that my best way of commending it to you will be to tell you briefly of the goal which I shall be aiming at in the book.

I have always thought that two topics – namely God and the soul – are prime examples of subjects where demonstrative proofs ought to be given with the aid of philosophy rather than theology. For us who are believers, it is enough to accept on faith that the human soul does not die with the body, and that God exists; but in the case of unbelievers, it seems that there is no religion, and practically no moral virtue, that they can be persuaded to adopt until these two truths are proved to them by natural reason. And since in this life the rewards offered to vice are often greater than the rewards of virtue, few people would prefer what is right to what is expedient if they did not fear God or have the expectation of an after-life. It is of course quite true that we must believe in the existence of God because it is a doctrine of Holy Scripture, and conversely, that we must believe Holy Scripture because it comes from God; for since faith is the gift of God, he who gives us grace to believe other things can also give us grace to believe that he exists. But this argument cannot be put to unbelievers because they would judge it to be circular. Moreover, I have noticed both that you and all other theologians assert that the existence of God is capable of proof by natural reason, and also that the inference from Holy Scripture is that the knowledge of God is easier to acquire than the knowledge we have of many created things – so easy, indeed, that those who do not acquire it are at fault. This is clear from a passage in the Book of Wisdom, Chapter 13: ‘Howbeit they are not to be excused; for if their knowledge was so great that they could value this world, why did they not rather find out the Lord thereof?’ And in Romans, Chapter 1 it is said that they are ‘without excuse’. And in the same place, in the passage ‘that which is known of God is manifest in them’, we seem to be told that everything that may be known of God can be demonstrated by reasoning which has no other source but our own mind. Hence I thought it was 2

quite proper for me to inquire how this may be, and how God may be more easily and more certainly known than the things of this world.

- 3 As regards the soul, many people have considered that it is not easy to discover its nature, and some have even had the audacity to assert that, as far as human reasoning goes, there are persuasive grounds for holding that the soul dies along with the body and that the opposite view is based on faith alone. But in its eighth session the Lateran Council held under Leo X condemned those who take this position,¹ and expressly enjoined Christian philosophers to refute their arguments and use all their powers to establish the truth; so I have not hesitated to attempt this task as well.

In addition, I know that the only reason why many irreligious people are unwilling to believe that God exists and that the human mind is distinct from the body is the alleged fact that no one has hitherto been able to demonstrate these points. Now I completely disagree with this: I think that when properly understood almost all the arguments that have been put forward on these issues by the great men have the force of demonstrations, and I am convinced that it is scarcely possible to provide any arguments which have not already been produced by someone else. Nevertheless, I think there can be no more useful service to be rendered in philosophy than to conduct a careful search, once and for all, for the best of these arguments, and to set them out so precisely and clearly as to produce for the future a general agreement that they amount to demonstrative proofs. And finally, I was strongly pressed to undertake this task by several people who knew that I had developed a method for resolving certain difficulties in the sciences – not a new method (for nothing is older than the truth), but one which they had seen me use with some success in other areas; and I therefore thought it my duty to make some attempt to apply it to the matter in hand.

- 4 The present treatise contains everything that I have been able to accomplish in this area. Not that I have attempted to collect here all the different arguments that could be put forward to establish the same results, for this does not seem worthwhile except in cases where no single argument is regarded as sufficiently reliable. What I have done is to take merely the principal and most important arguments and develop them in such a way that I would now venture to put them forward as very certain and evident demonstrations. I will add that these proofs are of such a kind that I reckon they leave no room for the possibility that the human mind will ever discover better ones. The vital importance of the cause and the glory of God, to which the entire undertaking is directed, here compel me to speak somewhat more freely about my own achievements

¹ The Lateran Council of 1513 condemned the Averroist heresy which denied personal immortality.

than is my custom. But although I regard the proofs as quite certain and evident, I cannot therefore persuade myself that they are suitable to be grasped by everyone. In geometry there are many writings left by Archimedes, Apollonius, Pappus and others which are accepted by everyone as evident and certain because they contain absolutely nothing that is not very easy to understand when considered on its own, and each step fits in precisely with what has gone before; yet because they are somewhat long, and demand a very attentive reader, it is only comparatively few people who understand them. In the same way, although the proofs I employ here are in my view as certain and evident as the proofs of geometry, if not more so, it will, I fear, be impossible for many people to achieve an adequate perception of them, both because they are rather long and some depend on others, and also, above all, because they require a mind which is completely free from preconceived opinions and which can easily detach itself from involvement with the senses. Moreover, people who have an aptitude for metaphysical studies are certainly not to be found in the world in any greater numbers than those who have an aptitude for geometry. What is more, there is the difference that in geometry everyone has been taught to accept that as a rule no proposition is put forward in a book without there being a conclusive demonstration available; so inexperienced students make the mistake of accepting what is false, in their desire to appear to understand it, more often than they make the mistake of rejecting what is true. In philosophy, by contrast, the belief is that everything can be argued either way; so few people pursue the truth, while the great majority build up their reputation for ingenuity by boldly attacking whatever is most sound.

Hence, whatever the quality of my arguments may be, because they have to do with philosophy I do not expect they will enable me to achieve any very worthwhile results unless you come to my aid by granting me your patronage.¹ The reputation of your Faculty is so firmly fixed in the minds of all, and the name of the Sorbonne has such authority that, with the exception of the Sacred Councils, no institution carries more weight than yours in matters of faith; while as regards human philosophy, you are thought of as second to none, both for insight and soundness and also for the integrity and wisdom of your pronouncements. Because of this, the results of your careful attention to this book, if you deigned to give it, would be threefold. First, the errors in it would be corrected – for when I remember not only that I am a human being, but above all that I am an ignorant one, I cannot claim it is free of mistakes. Secondly, any passages

1 Although the title page of the first edition of the *Meditations* carries the words 'with the approval of the learned doctors', Descartes never in fact obtained the endorsement from the Sorbonne which he sought.

- which are defective, or insufficiently developed or requiring further explanation, would be supplemented, completed and clarified, either by yourselves or by me after you have given me your advice. And lastly, once the arguments in the book proving that God exists and that the mind is distinct from the body have been brought, as I am sure they can be, to
- 6 such a pitch of clarity that they are fit to be regarded as very exact demonstrations, you may be willing to declare as much, and make a public statement to that effect. If all this were to happen, I do not doubt that all the errors which have ever existed on these subjects would soon be eradicated from the minds of men. In the case of all those who share your intelligence and learning, the truth itself will readily ensure that they subscribe to your opinion. As for the atheists, who are generally posers rather than people of real intelligence or learning, your authority will induce them to lay aside the spirit of contradiction; and, since they know that the arguments are regarded as demonstrations by all who are intellectually gifted, they may even go so far as to defend them, rather than appear not to understand them. And finally, everyone else will confidently go along with so many declarations of assent, and there will be no one left in the world who will dare to call into doubt either the existence of God or the real distinction between the human soul and body. The great advantage that this would bring is something which you, in your singular wisdom, are in a better position to evaluate than anyone;¹ and it would ill become me to spend any more time commending the cause of God and religion to you, who have always been the greatest tower of strength to the Catholic Church.

7 *Preface to the reader*²

I briefly touched on the topics of God and the human mind in my *Discourse on the method of rightly conducting reason and seeking the truth in the sciences*, which was published in French in 1637. My purpose there was not to provide a full treatment, but merely to offer a sample, and learn from the views of my readers how I should handle these topics at a later date. The issues seemed to me of such great importance that I considered they ought to be dealt with more than once; and the route which I follow in explaining them is so untrodden and so remote from the normal way, that I thought it would not be helpful to give a full

1 'It is for you to judge the advantage that would come from establishing these beliefs firmly, since you see all the disorders which come from their being doubted' (French version).

2 The French version of 1647 does not translate this preface, but substitutes a brief foreword, *Le Libraire au Lecteur* ('The Publisher to the Reader'), which is probably not by Descartes.

account of it in a book written in French and designed to be read by all and sundry, in case weaker intellects might believe that they ought to set out on the same path.

In the *Discourse* I asked anyone who found anything worth criticizing in what I had written to be kind enough to point it out to me.¹ In the case of my remarks concerning God and the soul, only two objections worth mentioning were put to me, which I shall now briefly answer before embarking on a more precise elucidation of these topics.

The first objection is this. From the fact that the human mind, when directed towards itself, does not perceive itself to be anything other than a thinking thing, it does not follow that its nature or essence consists only in its being a thinking thing, where the word 'only' excludes everything else that could be said to belong to the nature of the soul. My answer to this objection is that in that passage it was not my intention to make those exclusions in an order corresponding to the actual truth of the matter (which I was not dealing with at that stage) but merely in an order corresponding to my own perception. So the sense of the passage was that I was aware of nothing at all that I knew belonged to my essence, except that I was a thinking thing, or a thing possessing within itself the faculty of thinking.² I shall, however, show below how it follows from the fact that I am aware of nothing else belonging to my essence, that nothing else does in fact belong to it. 8

The second objection is this. From the fact that I have within me an idea of a thing more perfect than myself, it does not follow that the idea itself is more perfect than me, still less that what is represented by the idea exists. My reply is that there is an ambiguity here in the word 'idea'. 'Idea' can be taken materially, as an operation of the intellect, in which case it cannot be said to be more perfect than me. Alternatively, it can be taken objectively, as the thing represented by that operation; and this thing, even if it is not regarded as existing outside the intellect, can still, in virtue of its essence, be more perfect than myself. As to how, from the mere fact that there is within me an idea of something more perfect than me, it follows that this thing really exists, this is something which will be fully explained below.

Apart from these objections, there are two fairly lengthy essays which I have looked at,³ but these did not attack my reasoning on these matters so much as my conclusions, and employed arguments lifted from the standard sources of the atheists. But arguments of this sort can carry no 9

1 See *Discourse*, part 6: vol. 1, p. 149.

2 See *Discourse*, part 4: vol. 1, p. 127.

3 One of the critics referred to here is Petit: see letter to Mersenne of 17 May 1638. The other is unknown.

weight with those who understand my reasoning. Moreover, the judgement of many people is so silly and weak that, once they have accepted a view, they continue to believe it, however false and irrational it may be, in preference to a true and well-grounded refutation which they hear subsequently. So I do not wish to reply to such arguments here, if only to avoid having to state them. I will only make the general point that all the objections commonly tossed around by atheists to attack the existence of God invariably depend either on attributing human feelings to God or on arrogantly supposing our own minds to be so powerful and wise that we can attempt to grasp and set limits to what God can or should perform. So, provided only that we remember that our minds must be regarded as finite, while God is infinite and beyond our comprehension, such objections will not cause us any difficulty.

But now that I have, after a fashion, taken an initial sample of people's opinions, I am again tackling the same questions concerning God and the human mind; and this time I am also going to deal with the foundations of First Philosophy in its entirety. But I do not expect any popular approval, or indeed any wide audience. On the contrary I would not urge anyone to read this book except those who are able and willing to meditate seriously with me, and to withdraw their minds from the senses and from all preconceived opinions. Such readers, as I well know, are few and far between. Those who do not bother to grasp the proper order of my arguments and the connection between them, but merely try to carp
 10 at individual sentences, as is the fashion, will not get much benefit from reading this book. They may well find an opportunity to quibble in many places, but it will not be easy for them to produce objections which are telling or worth replying to.

But I certainly do not promise to satisfy my other readers straightaway on all points, and I am not so presumptuous as to believe that I am capable of foreseeing all the difficulties which anyone may find. So first of all, in the *Meditations*, I will set out the very thoughts which have enabled me, in my view, to arrive at a certain and evident knowledge of the truth, so that I can find out whether the same arguments which have convinced me will enable me to convince others. Next, I will reply to the objections of various men of outstanding intellect and scholarship who had these *Meditations* sent to them for scrutiny before they went to press. For the objections they raised were so many and so varied that I would venture to hope that it will be hard for anyone else to think of any point – at least of any importance – which these critics have not touched on. I therefore ask my readers not to pass judgement on the *Meditations* until they have been kind enough to read through all these objections and my replies to them.

Synopsis of the following six Meditations

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In the First Meditation reasons are provided which give us possible grounds for doubt about all things, especially material things, so long as we have no foundations for the sciences other than those which we have had up till now. Although the usefulness of such extensive doubt is not apparent at first sight, its greatest benefit lies in freeing us from all our preconceived opinions, and providing the easiest route by which the mind may be led away from the senses. The eventual result of this doubt is to make it impossible for us to have any further doubts about what we subsequently discover to be true.

In the Second Meditation, the mind uses its own freedom and supposes the non-existence of all the things about whose existence it can have even the slightest doubt; and in so doing the mind notices that it is impossible that it should not itself exist during this time. This exercise is also of the greatest benefit, since it enables the mind to distinguish without difficulty what belongs to itself, i.e. to an intellectual nature, from what belongs to the body. But since some people may perhaps expect arguments for the immortality of the soul in this section, I think they should be warned here and now that I have tried not to put down anything which I could not precisely demonstrate. Hence the only order which I could follow was that normally employed by geometers, namely to set out all the premisses on which a desired proposition depends, before drawing any conclusions about it. Now the first and most important prerequisite for knowledge of the immortality of the soul is for us to form a concept of the soul which is as clear as possible and is also quite distinct from every concept of body; and that is just what has been done in this section. A further requirement is that we should know that everything that we clearly and distinctly understand is true in a way which corresponds exactly to our understanding of it; but it was not possible to prove this before the Fourth Meditation. In addition we need to have a distinct concept of corporeal nature, and this is developed partly in the Second Meditation itself, and partly in the Fifth and Sixth Meditations. The inference to be drawn from these results is that all the things that we clearly and distinctly conceive of as different substances (as we do in the case of mind and body) are in fact substances which are really distinct one from the other; and this conclusion is drawn in the Sixth Meditation. This conclusion is confirmed in the same Meditation by the fact that we cannot understand a body except as being divisible, while by contrast we cannot understand a mind except as being indivisible. For we cannot conceive of half of a mind, while we can always conceive of half of a body, however small; and this leads us to recognize that the natures of

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mind and body are not only different, but in some way opposite. But I have not pursued this topic any further in this book, first because these arguments are enough to show that the decay of the body does not imply the destruction of the mind, and are hence enough to give mortals the hope of an after-life, and secondly because the premisses which lead to the conclusion that the soul is immortal depend on an account of the whole of physics. This is required for two reasons. First, we need to know that absolutely all substances, or things which must be created by God in order to exist, are by their nature incorruptible and cannot ever cease to exist unless they are reduced to nothingness by God's denying his concurrence¹ to them. Secondly, we need to recognize that body, taken in the general sense, is a substance, so that it too never perishes. But the human body, in so far as it differs from other bodies, is simply made up of a certain configuration of limbs and other accidents² of this sort; whereas the human mind is not made up of any accidents in this way, but is a pure substance. For even if all the accidents of the mind change, so that it has different objects of the understanding and different desires and sensations, it does not on that account become a different mind; whereas a human body loses its identity merely as a result of a change in the shape of some of its parts. And it follows from this that while the body can very easily perish, the mind³ is immortal by its very nature.

In the Third Meditation I have explained quite fully enough, I think, my principal argument for proving the existence of God. But in order to draw my readers' minds away from the senses as far as possible, I was not willing to use any comparison taken from bodily things. So it may be that many obscurities remain; but I hope they will be completely removed later, in my Replies to the Objections. One such problem, among others, is how the idea of a supremely perfect being, which is in us, possesses so much objective⁴ reality that it can come only from a cause which is supremely perfect. In the Replies this is illustrated by the comparison of a very perfect machine, the idea of which is in the mind of some engineer.⁵ Just as the objective intricacy belonging to the idea must have some

1 The continuous divine action necessary to maintain things in existence; see below, Fifth Replies pp. 254f.

2 Descartes here uses this scholastic term to refer to those features of a thing which may alter, e.g. the particular size, shape etc. of a body, or the particular thoughts, desires etc. of a mind.

3 '... or the soul of man, for I make no distinction between them' (added in French version).

4 For Descartes' use of this term, see Med. III, below p. 28.

5 First Replies, below p. 75.

cause, namely the scientific knowledge of the engineer, or of someone else who passed the idea on to him, so the idea of God which is in us must have God himself as its cause. 15

In the Fourth Meditation it is proved that everything that we clearly and distinctly perceive is true, and I also explain what the nature of falsity consists in. These results need to be known both in order to confirm what has gone before and also to make intelligible what is to come later. (But here it should be noted in passing that I do not deal at all with sin, i.e. the error which is committed in pursuing good and evil, but only with the error that occurs in distinguishing truth from falsehood. And there is no discussion of matters pertaining to faith or the conduct of life, but simply of speculative truths which are known solely by means of the natural light.)¹

In the Fifth Meditation, besides an account of corporeal nature taken in general, there is a new argument demonstrating the existence of God. Again, several difficulties may arise here, but these are resolved later in the Replies to the Objections. Finally I explain the sense in which it is true that the certainty even of geometrical demonstrations depends on the knowledge of God.

Lastly, in the Sixth Meditation, the intellect is distinguished from the imagination; the criteria for this distinction are explained; the mind is proved to be really distinct from the body, but is shown, notwithstanding, to be so closely joined to it that the mind and the body make up a kind of unit; there is a survey of all the errors which commonly come from the senses, and an explanation of how they may be avoided; and, lastly, there is a presentation of all the arguments which enable the existence of material things to be inferred. The great benefit of these arguments is not, in my view, that they prove what they establish — namely that there really is a world, and that human beings have bodies and so on — since no sane person has ever seriously doubted these things. 16
The point is that in considering these arguments we come to realize that they are not as solid or as transparent as the arguments which lead us to knowledge of our own minds and of God, so that the latter are the most certain and evident of all possible objects of knowledge for the human intellect. Indeed, this is the one thing that I set myself to prove in these Meditations. And for that reason I will not now go over the various other issues in the book which are dealt with as they come up.

¹ Descartes added this passage after reading the Fourth Set of Objections (see below pp. 151–2). He told Mersenne 'please put the words in brackets so that it can be seen that they have been added' (letter of 18 March 1641).

*in which are demonstrated the existence of God and the
distinction between the human soul and the body*

FIRST MEDITATION

What can be called into doubt

Some years ago I was struck by the large number of falsehoods that I had accepted as true in my childhood, and by the highly doubtful nature of the whole edifice that I had subsequently based on them. I realized that it was necessary, once in the course of my life, to demolish everything completely and start again right from the foundations if I wanted to establish anything at all in the sciences that was stable and likely to last. But the task looked an enormous one, and I began to wait until I should reach a mature enough age to ensure that no subsequent time of life would be more suitable for tackling such inquiries. This led me to put the project off for so long that I would now be to blame if by pondering over it any further I wasted the time still left for carrying it out. So today I
18 have expressly rid my mind of all worries and arranged for myself a clear stretch of free time. I am here quite alone, and at last I will devote myself sincerely and without reservation to the general demolition of my opinions.

But to accomplish this, it will not be necessary for me to show that all my opinions are false, which is something I could perhaps never manage. Reason now leads me to think that I should hold back my assent from opinions which are not completely certain and indubitable just as carefully as I do from those which are patently false. So, for the purpose of rejecting all my opinions, it will be enough if I find in each of them at least some reason for doubt. And to do this I will not need to run through them all individually, which would be an endless task. Once the foundations of a building are undermined, anything built on them collapses of its own accord; so I will go straight for the basic principles on which all my former beliefs rested.

Whatever I have up till now accepted as most true I have acquired either from the senses or through the senses. But from time to time I have found that the senses deceive, and it is prudent never to trust completely those who have deceived us even once.

Yet although the senses occasionally deceive us with respect to objects which are very small or in the distance, there are many other beliefs about

which doubt is quite impossible, even though they are derived from the senses – for example, that I am here, sitting by the fire, wearing a winter dressing-gown, holding this piece of paper in my hands, and so on. Again, how could it be denied that these hands or this whole body are mine? Unless perhaps I were to liken myself to madmen, whose brains are so damaged by the persistent vapours of melancholia that they firmly maintain they are kings when they are paupers, or say they are dressed in purple when they are naked, or that their heads are made of earthenware, or that they are pumpkins, or made of glass. But such people are insane, and I would be thought equally mad if I took anything from them as a model for myself. 19

A brilliant piece of reasoning! As if I were not a man who sleeps at night, and regularly has all the same experiences¹ while asleep as madmen do when awake – indeed sometimes even more improbable ones. How often, asleep at night, am I convinced of just such familiar events – that I am here in my dressing-gown, sitting by the fire – when in fact I am lying undressed in bed! Yet at the moment my eyes are certainly wide awake when I look at this piece of paper; I shake my head and it is not asleep; as I stretch out and feel my hand I do so deliberately, and I know what I am doing. All this would not happen with such distinctness to someone asleep. Indeed! As if I did not remember other occasions when I have been tricked by exactly similar thoughts while asleep! As I think about this more carefully, I see plainly that there are never any sure signs by means of which being awake can be distinguished from being asleep. The result is that I begin to feel dazed, and this very feeling only reinforces the notion that I may be asleep.

Suppose then that I am dreaming, and that these particulars – that my eyes are open, that I am moving my head and stretching out my hands – are not true. Perhaps, indeed, I do not even have such hands or such a body at all. Nonetheless, it must surely be admitted that the visions which come in sleep are like paintings, which must have been fashioned in the likeness of things that are real, and hence that at least these general kinds of things – eyes, head, hands and the body as a whole – are things which are not imaginary but are real and exist. For even when painters try to create sirens and satyrs with the most extraordinary bodies, they cannot give them natures which are new in all respects; they simply jumble up the limbs of different animals. Or if perhaps they manage to think up something so new that nothing remotely similar has ever been seen before – something which is therefore completely fictitious and unreal – at least the colours used in the composition must be real. By similar reasoning, although these general kinds of things – eyes, head, 20

1 '... and in my dreams regularly represent to myself the same things' (French version).

hands and so on – could be imaginary, it must at least be admitted that certain other even simpler and more universal things are real. These are as it were the real colours from which we form all the images of things, whether true or false, that occur in our thought.

This class appears to include corporeal nature in general, and its extension; the shape of extended things; the quantity, or size and number of these things; the place in which they may exist, the time through which they may endure,¹ and so on.

So a reasonable conclusion from this might be that physics, astronomy, medicine, and all other disciplines which depend on the study of composite things, are doubtful; while arithmetic, geometry and other subjects of this kind, which deal only with the simplest and most general things, regardless of whether they really exist in nature or not, contain something certain and indubitable. For whether I am awake or asleep, two and three added together are five, and a square has no more than four sides. It seems impossible that such transparent truths should incur any suspicion of being false.

- 21 And yet firmly rooted in my mind is the long-standing opinion that there is an omnipotent God who made me the kind of creature that I am. How do I know that he has not brought it about that there is no earth, no sky, no extended thing, no shape, no size, no place, while at the same time ensuring that all these things appear to me to exist just as they do now? What is more, since I sometimes believe that others go astray in cases where they think they have the most perfect knowledge, may I not similarly go wrong every time I add two and three or count the sides of a square, or in some even simpler matter, if that is imaginable? But perhaps God would not have allowed me to be deceived in this way, since he is said to be supremely good. But if it were inconsistent with his goodness to have created me such that I am deceived all the time, it would seem equally foreign to his goodness to allow me to be deceived even occasionally; yet this last assertion cannot be made.²

Perhaps there may be some who would prefer to deny the existence of so powerful a God rather than believe that everything else is uncertain. Let us not argue with them, but grant them that everything said about God is a fiction. According to their supposition, then, I have arrived at my present state by fate or chance or a continuous chain of events, or by some other means; yet since deception and error seem to be imperfections, the less powerful they make my original cause, the more likely it is that I am so imperfect as to be deceived all the time. I have no answer to these arguments, but am finally compelled to admit that there is not one of my former beliefs about which a doubt may not properly be

1 '... the place where they are, the time which measures their duration' (French version).

2 '... yet I cannot doubt that he does allow this' (French version).

raised; and this is not a flippant or ill-considered conclusion, but is based on powerful and well thought-out reasons. So in future I must withhold my assent from these former beliefs just as carefully as I would from obvious falsehoods, if I want to discover any certainty.¹ 22

But it is not enough merely to have noticed this; I must make an effort to remember it. My habitual opinions keep coming back, and, despite my wishes, they capture my belief, which is as it were bound over to them as a result of long occupation and the law of custom. I shall never get out of the habit of confidently assenting to these opinions, so long as I suppose them to be what in fact they are, namely highly probable opinions – opinions which, despite the fact that they are in a sense doubtful, as has just been shown, it is still much more reasonable to believe than to deny. In view of this, I think it will be a good plan to turn my will in completely the opposite direction and deceive myself, by pretending for a time that these former opinions are utterly false and imaginary. I shall do this until the weight of preconceived opinion is counter-balanced and the distorting influence of habit no longer prevents my judgement from perceiving things correctly. In the meantime, I know that no danger or error will result from my plan, and that I cannot possibly go too far in my distrustful attitude. This is because the task now in hand does not involve action but merely the acquisition of knowledge.

I will suppose therefore that not God, who is supremely good and the source of truth, but rather some malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning has employed all his energies in order to deceive me. I shall think that the sky, the air, the earth, colours, shapes, sounds and all external things are merely the delusions of dreams which he has devised to ensnare my judgement. I shall consider myself as not having hands or eyes, or flesh, or blood or senses, but as falsely believing that I have all these things. I shall stubbornly and firmly persist in this meditation; and, even if it is not in my power to know any truth, I shall at least do what is in my power,² that is, resolutely guard against assenting to any falsehoods, so that the deceiver, however powerful and cunning he may be, will be unable to impose on me in the slightest degree. But this is an arduous undertaking, and a kind of laziness brings me back to normal life. I am like a prisoner who is enjoying an imaginary freedom while asleep; as he begins to suspect that he is asleep, he dreads being woken up, and goes along with the pleasant illusion as long as he can. In the same way, I happily slide back into my old opinions and dread being shaken out of them, for fear that my peaceful sleep may be followed by hard labour when I wake, and that I shall have to toil not in the light, but amid the inextricable darkness of the problems I have now raised. 23

1 '... in the sciences' (added in French version).

2 '... nevertheless it is in my power to suspend my judgement' (French version).

SECOND MEDITATION

The nature of the human mind, and how it is better known than the body

So serious are the doubts into which I have been thrown as a result of yesterday's meditation that I can neither put them out of my mind nor
24 see any way of resolving them. It feels as if I have fallen unexpectedly into a deep whirlpool which tumbles me around so that I can neither stand on the bottom nor swim up to the top. Nevertheless I will make an effort and once more attempt the same path which I started on yesterday. Anything which admits of the slightest doubt I will set aside just as if I had found it to be wholly false; and I will proceed in this way until I recognize something certain, or, if nothing else, until I at least recognize for certain that there is no certainty. Archimedes used to demand just one firm and immovable point in order to shift the entire earth; so I too can hope for great things if I manage to find just one thing, however slight, that is certain and unshakeable.

I will suppose then, that everything I see is spurious. I will believe that my memory tells me lies, and that none of the things that it reports ever happened. I have no senses. Body, shape, extension, movement and place are chimeras. So what remains true? Perhaps just the one fact that nothing is certain.

Yet apart from everything I have just listed, how do I know that there is not something else which does not allow even the slightest occasion for doubt? Is there not a God, or whatever I may call him, who puts into me¹ the thoughts I am now having? But why do I think this, since I myself may perhaps be the author of these thoughts? In that case am not I, at least, something? But I have just said that I have no senses and no body.
25 This is the sticking point: what follows from this? Am I not so bound up with a body and with senses that I cannot exist without them? But I have convinced myself that there is absolutely nothing in the world, no sky, no earth, no minds, no bodies. Does it now follow that I too do not exist?

1 '... puts into my mind' (French version).

No: if I convinced myself of something¹ then I certainly existed. But there is a deceiver of supreme power and cunning who is deliberately and constantly deceiving me. In that case I too undoubtedly exist, if he is deceiving me; and let him deceive me as much as he can, he will never bring it about that I am nothing so long as I think that I am something. So after considering everything very thoroughly, I must finally conclude that this proposition, *I am, I exist*, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind.

But I do not yet have a sufficient understanding of what this 'I' is, that now necessarily exists. So I must be on my guard against carelessly taking something else to be this 'I', and so making a mistake in the very item of knowledge that I maintain is the most certain and evident of all. I will therefore go back and meditate on what I originally believed myself to be, before I embarked on this present train of thought. I will then subtract anything capable of being weakened, even minimally, by the arguments now introduced, so that what is left at the end may be exactly and only what is certain and unshakeable.

What then did I formerly think I was? A man. But what is a man? Shall I say 'a rational animal'? No; for then I should have to inquire what an animal is, what rationality is, and in this way one question would lead me down the slope to other harder ones, and I do not now have the time to waste on subtleties of this kind. Instead I propose to concentrate on what came into my thoughts spontaneously and quite naturally whenever I used to consider what I was. Well, the first thought to come to mind was that I had a face, hands, arms and the whole mechanical structure of limbs which can be seen in a corpse, and which I called the body. The next thought was that I was nourished, that I moved about, and that I engaged in sense-perception and thinking; and these actions I attributed to the soul. But as to the nature of this soul, either I did not think about this or else I imagined it to be something tenuous, like a wind or fire or ether, which permeated my more solid parts. As to the body, however, I had no doubts about it, but thought I knew its nature distinctly. If I had tried to describe the mental conception I had of it, I would have expressed it as follows: by a body I understand whatever has a determinable shape and a definable location and can occupy a space in such a way as to exclude any other body; it can be perceived by touch, sight, hearing, taste or smell, and can be moved in various ways, not by itself but by whatever else comes into contact with it. For, according to my judgement, the power of self-movement, like the power of sensation or of thought, was quite foreign to the nature of a body; indeed, it was a

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1 '... or thought anything at all' (French version).

source of wonder to me that certain bodies were found to contain faculties of this kind.

27 But what shall I now say that I am, when I am supposing that there is some supremely powerful and, if it is permissible to say so, malicious deceiver, who is deliberately trying to trick me in every way he can? Can I now assert that I possess even the most insignificant of all the attributes which I have just said belong to the nature of a body? I scrutinize them, think about them, go over them again, but nothing suggests itself; it is tiresome and pointless to go through the list once more. But what about the attributes I assigned to the soul? Nutrition or movement? Since now I do not have a body, these are mere fabrications. Sense-perception? This surely does not occur without a body, and besides, when asleep I have appeared to perceive through the senses many things which I afterwards realized I did not perceive through the senses at all. Thinking? At last I have discovered it – thought; this alone is inseparable from me. I am, I exist – that is certain. But for how long? For as long as I am thinking. For it could be that were I totally to cease from thinking, I should totally cease to exist. At present I am not admitting anything except what is necessarily true. I am, then, in the strict sense only a thing that thinks;¹ that is, I am a mind, or intelligence, or intellect, or reason – words whose meaning I have been ignorant of until now. But for all that I am a thing which is real and which truly exists. But what kind of a thing? As I have just said – a thinking thing.

What else am I? I will use my imagination.² I am not that structure of limbs which is called a human body. I am not even some thin vapour which permeates the limbs – a wind, fire, air, breath, or whatever I depict in my imagination; for these are things which I have supposed to be nothing. Let this supposition stand;³ for all that I am still something. And yet may it not perhaps be the case that these very things which I am supposing to be nothing, because they are unknown to me, are in reality identical with the 'I' of which I am aware? I do not know, and for the moment I shall not argue the point, since I can make judgements only about things which are known to me. I know that I exist; the question is, what is this 'I' that I know? If the 'I' is understood strictly as we have been taking it, then it is quite certain that knowledge of it does not

1 The word 'only' is most naturally taken as going with 'a thing that thinks', and this interpretation is followed in the French version. When discussing this passage with Gassendi, however, Descartes suggests that he meant the 'only' to govern 'in the strict sense'; see below p. 276.

2 '... to see if I am not something more' (added in French version).

3 Lat. *maneat* ('let it stand'), first edition. The second edition has the indicative *manet*: 'The proposition still stands, viz. that I am nonetheless something.' The French version reads: 'without changing this supposition, I find that I am still certain that I am something'.

depend on things of whose existence I am as yet unaware; so it cannot depend on any of the things which I invent in my imagination. And this very word 'invent' shows me my mistake. It would indeed be a case of fictitious invention if I used my imagination to establish that I was something or other; for imagining is simply contemplating the shape or image of a corporeal thing. Yet now I know for certain both that I exist and at the same time that all such images and, in general, everything relating to the nature of body, could be mere dreams <and chimeras>. Once this point has been grasped, to say 'I will use my imagination to get to know more distinctly what I am' would seem to be as silly as saying 'I am now awake, and see some truth; but since my vision is not yet clear enough, I will deliberately fall asleep so that my dreams may provide a truer and clearer representation.' I thus realize that none of the things that the imagination enables me to grasp is at all relevant to this knowledge of myself which I possess, and that the mind must therefore be most carefully diverted from such things¹ if it is to perceive its own nature as distinctly as possible.

But what then am I? A thing that thinks. What is that? A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, and also imagines and has sensory perceptions.

This is a considerable list, if everything on it belongs to me. But does it? Is it not one and the same 'I' who is now doubting almost everything, who nonetheless understands some things, who affirms that this one thing is true, denies everything else, desires to know more, is unwilling to be deceived, imagines many things even involuntarily, and is aware of many things which apparently come from the senses? Are not all these things just as true as the fact that I exist, even if I am asleep all the time, and even if he who created me is doing all he can to deceive me? Which of all these activities is distinct from my thinking? Which of them can be said to be separate from myself? The fact that it is I who am doubting and understanding and willing is so evident that I see no way of making it any clearer. But it is also the case that the 'I' who imagines is the same 'I'. For even if, as I have supposed, none of the objects of imagination are real, the power of imagination is something which really exists and is part of my thinking. Lastly, it is also the same 'I' who has sensory perceptions, or is aware of bodily things as it were through the senses. For example, I am now seeing light, hearing a noise, feeling heat. But I am asleep, so all this is false. Yet I certainly *seem* to see, to hear, and to be warmed. This cannot be false; what is called 'having a sensory perception' is strictly just this, and in this restricted sense of the term it is simply thinking.

¹ '... from this manner of conceiving things' (French version).

From all this I am beginning to have a rather better understanding of what I am. But it still appears – and I cannot stop thinking this – that the corporeal things of which images are formed in my thought, and which the senses investigate, are known with much more distinctness than this puzzling ‘I’ which cannot be pictured in the imagination. And yet it is surely surprising that I should have a more distinct grasp of things which I realize are doubtful, unknown and foreign to me, than I have of that which is true and known – my own self. But I see what it is: my mind enjoys wandering off and will not yet submit to being restrained within
30 the bounds of truth. Very well then; just this once let us give it a completely free rein, so that after a while, when it is time to tighten the reins, it may more readily submit to being curbed.

Let us consider the things which people commonly think they understand most distinctly of all; that is, the bodies which we touch and see. I do not mean bodies in general – for general perceptions are apt to be somewhat more confused – but one particular body. Let us take, for example, this piece of wax. It has just been taken from the honeycomb; it has not yet quite lost the taste of the honey; it retains some of the scent of the flowers from which it was gathered; its colour, shape and size are plain to see; it is hard, cold and can be handled without difficulty; if you rap it with your knuckle it makes a sound. In short, it has everything which appears necessary to enable a body to be known as distinctly as possible. But even as I speak, I put the wax by the fire, and look: the residual taste is eliminated, the smell goes away, the colour changes, the shape is lost, the size increases; it becomes liquid and hot; you can hardly touch it, and if you strike it, it no longer makes a sound. But does the same wax remain? It must be admitted that it does; no one denies it, no one thinks otherwise. So what was it in the wax that I understood with such distinctness? Evidently none of the features which I arrived at by means of the senses; for whatever came under taste, smell, sight, touch or hearing has now altered – yet the wax remains.

Perhaps the answer lies in the thought which now comes to my mind; namely, the wax was not after all the sweetness of the honey, or the fragrance of the flowers, or the whiteness, or the shape, or the sound, but was rather a body which presented itself to me in these various forms a little while ago, but which now exhibits different ones. But what exactly
31 is it that I am now imagining? Let us concentrate, take away everything which does not belong to the wax, and see what is left: merely something extended, flexible and changeable. But what is meant here by ‘flexible’ and ‘changeable’? Is it what I picture in my imagination: that this piece of wax is capable of changing from a round shape to a square shape, or from a square shape to a triangular shape? Not at all; for I can grasp that

the wax is capable of countless changes of this kind, yet I am unable to run through this immeasurable number of changes in my imagination, from which it follows that it is not the faculty of imagination that gives me my grasp of the wax as flexible and changeable. And what is meant by 'extended'? Is the extension of the wax also unknown? For it increases if the wax melts, increases again if it boils, and is greater still if the heat is increased. I would not be making a correct judgement about the nature of wax unless I believed it capable of being extended in many more different ways than I will ever encompass in my imagination. I must therefore admit that the nature of this piece of wax is in no way revealed by my imagination, but is perceived by the mind alone. (I am speaking of this particular piece of wax; the point is even clearer with regard to wax in general.) But what is this wax which is perceived by the mind alone?¹ It is of course the same wax which I see, which I touch, which I picture in my imagination, in short the same wax which I thought it to be from the start. And yet, and here is the point, the perception I have of it² is a case not of vision or touch or imagination – nor has it ever been, despite previous appearances – but of purely mental scrutiny; and this can be imperfect and confused, as it was before, or clear and distinct as it is now, depending on how carefully I concentrate on what the wax consists in.

But as I reach this conclusion I am amazed at how <weak and> prone to error my mind is. For although I am thinking about these matters within myself, silently and without speaking, nonetheless the actual words bring me up short, and I am almost tricked by ordinary ways of talking. We say that we see the wax itself, if it is there before us, not that we judge it to be there from its colour or shape; and this might lead me to conclude without more ado that knowledge of the wax comes from what the eye sees, and not from the scrutiny of the mind alone. But then if I look out of the window and see men crossing the square, as I just happen to have done, I normally say that I see the men themselves, just as I say that I see the wax. Yet do I see any more than hats and coats which could conceal automatons? I *judge* that they are men. And so something which I thought I was seeing with my eyes is in fact grasped solely by the faculty of judgement which is in my mind. 32

However, one who wants to achieve knowledge above the ordinary level should feel ashamed at having taken ordinary ways of talking as a basis for doubt. So let us proceed, and consider on which occasion my perception of the nature of the wax was more perfect and evident. Was it when I first looked at it, and believed I knew it by my external senses, or

1 '... which can be conceived only by the understanding or the mind' (French version).

2 '... or rather the act whereby it is perceived' (added in French version).

at least by what they call the 'common' sense¹ – that is, the power of imagination? Or is my knowledge more perfect now, after a more careful investigation of the nature of the wax and of the means by which it is known? Any doubt on this issue would clearly be foolish; for what distinctness was there in my earlier perception? Was there anything in it which an animal could not possess? But when I distinguish the wax from its outward forms – take the clothes off, as it were, and consider it naked – then although my judgement may still contain errors, at least my perception now requires a human mind.

33 But what am I to say about this mind, or about myself? (So far, remember, I am not admitting that there is anything else in me except a mind.) What, I ask, is this 'I' which seems to perceive the wax so distinctly? Surely my awareness of my own self is not merely much truer and more certain than my awareness of the wax, but also much more distinct and evident. For if I judge that the wax exists from the fact that I see it, clearly this same fact entails much more evidently that I myself also exist. It is possible that what I see is not really the wax; it is possible that I do not even have eyes with which to see anything. But when I see, or think I see (I am not here distinguishing the two), it is simply not possible that I who am now thinking am not something. By the same token, if I judge that the wax exists from the fact that I touch it, the same result follows, namely that I exist. If I judge that it exists from the fact that I imagine it, or for any other reason, exactly the same thing follows. And the result that I have grasped in the case of the wax may be applied to everything else located outside me. Moreover, if my perception of the wax seemed more distinct² after it was established not just by sight or touch but by many other considerations, it must be admitted that I now know myself even more distinctly. This is because every consideration whatsoever which contributes to my perception of the wax, or of any other body, cannot but establish even more effectively the nature of my own mind. But besides this, there is so much else in the mind itself which can serve to make my knowledge of it more distinct, that it scarcely seems worth going through the contributions made by considering bodily things.

34 I see that without any effort I have now finally got back to where I wanted. I now know that even bodies are not strictly perceived by the senses or the faculty of imagination but by the intellect alone, and that this perception derives not from their being touched or seen but from their being understood; and in view of this I know plainly that I can

1 See note p. 59 below.

2 The French version has 'more clear and distinct' and, at the end of this sentence, 'more evidently, distinctly and clearly'.

achieve an easier and more evident perception of my own mind than of anything else. But since the habit of holding on to old opinions cannot be set aside so quickly, I should like to stop here and meditate for some time on this new knowledge I have gained, so as to fix it more deeply in my memory.

THIRD MEDITATION

The existence of God

I will now shut my eyes, stop my ears, and withdraw all my senses. I will eliminate from my thoughts all images of bodily things, or rather, since this is hardly possible, I will regard all such images as vacuous, false and worthless. I will converse with myself and scrutinize myself more deeply; and in this way I will attempt to achieve, little by little, a more intimate knowledge of myself. I am a thing that thinks: that is, a thing that doubts, affirms, denies, understands a few things, is ignorant of many things,¹ is willing, is unwilling, and also which imagines and has sensory perceptions; for as I have noted before, even though the objects of my sensory experience and imagination may have no existence outside me, nonetheless the modes of thinking which I refer to as cases of sensory
35 perception and imagination, in so far as they are simply modes of thinking, do exist within me – of that I am certain.

In this brief list I have gone through everything I truly know, or at least everything I have so far discovered that I know. Now I will cast around more carefully to see whether there may be other things within me which I have not yet noticed. I am certain that I am a thinking thing. Do I not therefore also know what is required for my being certain about anything? In this first item of knowledge there is simply a clear and distinct perception of what I am asserting; this would not be enough to make me certain of the truth of the matter if it could ever turn out that something which I perceived with such clarity and distinctness was false. So I now seem to be able to lay it down as a general rule that whatever I perceive very clearly and distinctly is true.²

Yet I previously accepted as wholly certain and evident many things which I afterwards realized were doubtful. What were these? The earth, sky, stars, and everything else that I apprehended with the senses. But what was it about them that I perceived clearly? Just that the ideas, or thoughts, of such things appeared before my mind. Yet even now I am

¹ The French version here inserts 'loves, hates'.

² '... all the things which we conceive very clearly and very distinctly are true' (French version).

not denying that these ideas occur within me. But there was something else which I used to assert, and which through habitual belief I thought I perceived clearly, although I did not in fact do so. This was that there were things outside me which were the sources of my ideas and which resembled them in all respects. Here was my mistake; or at any rate, if my judgement was true, it was not thanks to the strength of my perception.¹

But what about when I was considering something very simple and straightforward in arithmetic or geometry, for example that two and three added together make five, and so on? Did I not see at least these things clearly enough to affirm their truth? Indeed, the only reason for my later judgement that they were open to doubt was that it occurred to me that perhaps some God could have given me a nature such that I was deceived even in matters which seemed most evident. And whenever my preconceived belief in the supreme power of God comes to mind, I cannot but admit that it would be easy for him, if he so desired, to bring it about that I go wrong even in those matters which I think I see utterly clearly with my mind's eye. Yet when I turn to the things themselves which I think I perceive very clearly, I am so convinced by them that I spontaneously declare: let whoever can do so deceive me, he will never bring it about that I am nothing, so long as I continue to think I am something; or make it true at some future time that I have never existed, since it is now true that I exist; or bring it about that two and three added together are more or less than five, or anything of this kind in which I see a manifest contradiction. And since I have no cause to think that there is a deceiving God, and I do not yet even know for sure whether there is a God at all, any reason for doubt which depends simply on this supposition is a very slight and, so to speak, metaphysical one. But in order to remove even this slight reason for doubt, as soon as the opportunity arises I must examine whether there is a God, and, if there is, whether he can be a deceiver. For if I do not know this, it seems that I can never be quite certain about anything else.

First, however, considerations of order appear to dictate that I now classify my thoughts into definite kinds,² and ask which of them can properly be said to be the bearers of truth and falsity. Some of my thoughts are as it were the images of things, and it is only in these cases that the term 'idea' is strictly appropriate – for example, when I think of a man, or a chimera, or the sky, or an angel, or God. Other thoughts have

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¹ '... it was not because of any knowledge I possessed' (French version).

² The opening of this sentence is greatly expanded in the French version: 'In order that I may have the opportunity of examining this without interrupting the order of meditating which I have decided upon, which is to start only from those notions which I find first of all in my mind and pass gradually to those which I may find later on, I must here divide my thoughts ...'

various additional forms: thus when I will, or am afraid, or affirm, or deny, there is always a particular thing which I take as the object of my thought, but my thought includes something more than the likeness of that thing. Some thoughts in this category are called volitions or emotions, while others are called judgements.

Now as far as ideas are concerned, provided they are considered solely in themselves and I do not refer them to anything else, they cannot strictly speaking be false; for whether it is a goat or a chimera that I am imagining, it is just as true that I imagine the former as the latter. As for the will and the emotions, here too one need not worry about falsity; for even if the things which I may desire are wicked or even non-existent, that does not make it any less true that I desire them. Thus the only remaining thoughts where I must be on my guard against making a mistake are judgements. And the chief and most common mistake which is to be found here consists in my judging that the ideas which are in me resemble, or conform to, things located outside me. Of course, if I considered just the ideas themselves simply as modes of my thought, without referring them to anything else, they could scarcely give me any material for error.

38 Among my ideas, some appear to be innate, some to be adventitious,¹ and others to have been invented by me. My understanding of what a thing is, what truth is, and what thought is, seems to derive simply from my own nature. But my hearing a noise, as I do now, or seeing the sun, or feeling the fire, comes from things which are located outside me, or so I have hitherto judged. Lastly, sirens, hippogriffs and the like are my own invention. But perhaps all my ideas may be thought of as adventitious, or they may all be innate, or all made up; for as yet I have not clearly perceived their true origin.

But the chief question at this point concerns the ideas which I take to be derived from things existing outside me: what is my reason for thinking that they resemble these things? Nature has apparently taught me to think this. But in addition I know by experience that these ideas do not depend on my will, and hence that they do not depend simply on me. Frequently I notice them even when I do not want to: now, for example, I feel the heat whether I want to or not, and this is why I think that this sensation or idea of heat comes to me from something other than myself, namely the heat of the fire by which I am sitting. And the most obvious judgement for me to make is that the thing in question transmits to me its own likeness rather than something else.

I will now see if these arguments are strong enough. When I say 'Nature taught me to think this', all I mean is that a spontaneous impulse leads

1 '... foreign to me and coming from outside' (French version).

me to believe it, not that its truth has been revealed to me by some natural light. There is a big difference here. Whatever is revealed to me by the natural light – for example that from the fact that I am doubting it follows that I exist, and so on – cannot in any way be open to doubt. This is because there cannot be another faculty¹ both as trustworthy as the natural light and also capable of showing me that such things are not true. But as for my natural impulses, I have often judged in the past that they were pushing me in the wrong direction when it was a question of choosing the good, and I do not see why I should place any greater confidence in them in other matters.² 39

Then again, although these ideas do not depend on my will, it does not follow that they must come from things located outside me. Just as the impulses which I was speaking of a moment ago seem opposed to my will even though they are within me, so there may be some other faculty not yet fully known to me, which produces these ideas without any assistance from external things; this is, after all, just how I have always thought ideas are produced in me when I am dreaming.

And finally, even if these ideas did come from things other than myself, it would not follow that they must resemble those things. Indeed, I think I have often discovered a great disparity <between an object and its idea> in many cases. For example, there are two different ideas of the sun which I find within me. One of them, which is acquired as it were from the senses and which is a prime example of an idea which I reckon to come from an external source, makes the sun appear very small. The other idea is based on astronomical reasoning, that is, it is derived from certain notions which are innate in me (or else it is constructed by me in some other way), and this idea shows the sun to be several times larger than the earth. Obviously both these ideas cannot resemble the sun which exists outside me; and reason persuades me that the idea which seems to have emanated most directly from the sun itself has in fact no resemblance to it at all.

All these considerations are enough to establish that it is not reliable judgement but merely some blind impulse that has made me believe up till now that there exist things distinct from myself which transmit to me ideas or images of themselves through the sense organs or in some other way. 40

But it now occurs to me that there is another way of investigating whether some of the things of which I possess ideas exist outside me. In so far as the ideas are <considered> simply <as> modes of thought, there is no recognizable inequality among them: they all appear to come from

1 '... or power for distinguishing truth from falsehood' (French version).

2 '... concerning truth and falsehood' (French version).

within me in the same fashion. But in so far as different ideas <are considered as images which> represent different things, it is clear that they differ widely. Undoubtedly, the ideas which represent substances to me amount to something more and, so to speak, contain within themselves more objective¹ reality than the ideas which merely represent modes or accidents. Again, the idea that gives me my understanding of a supreme God, eternal, infinite, <immutable,> omniscient, omnipotent and the creator of all things that exist apart from him, certainly has in it more objective reality than the ideas that represent finite substances.

Now it is manifest by the natural light that there must be at least as much <reality> in the efficient and total cause as in the effect of that cause. For where, I ask, could the effect get its reality from, if not from the cause? And how could the cause give it to the effect unless it possessed it? It follows from this both that something cannot arise from nothing, and also that what is more perfect – that is, contains in itself more reality – cannot arise from what is less perfect. And this is transparently true not only in the case of effects which possess <what the philosophers call> actual or formal reality, but also in the case of ideas, where one is considering only <what they call> objective reality. A stone, for example, which previously did not exist, cannot begin to exist unless it is produced by something which contains, either formally or eminently everything to be found in the stone;² similarly, heat cannot be produced in an object which was not previously hot, except by something of at least the same order <degree or kind> of perfection as heat, and so on. But it is also true that the *idea* of heat, or of a stone, cannot exist in me unless it is put there by some cause which contains at least as much reality as I conceive to be in the heat or in the stone. For although this cause does not transfer any of its actual or formal reality to my idea, it should not on that account be supposed that it must be less real.³ The nature of an idea is such that of itself it requires no formal reality except what it derives from my thought, of which it is a mode.⁴ But in order for a given idea to contain such and such objective reality, it must surely derive it from some cause which contains at least as much formal reality as there is objective reality in the

1 '... i.e. participate by representation in a higher degree of being or perfection' (added in French version). According to the scholastic distinction invoked in the paragraphs that follow, the 'formal' reality of anything is its own intrinsic reality, while the 'objective' reality of an idea is a function of its representational content. Thus if an idea *A* represents some object *X* which is *F*, then *F*-ness will be contained 'formally' in *X* but 'objectively' in *A*. See below, Second Replies pp. 74f.

2 '... i.e. it will contain in itself the same things as are in the stone or other more excellent things' (added in French version). In scholastic terminology, to possess a property 'formally' is to possess it literally, in accordance with its definition; to possess it 'eminently' is to possess it in some higher form. Cf. below, p. 201.

3 '... that this cause must be less real' (French version).

4 '... i.e. a manner or way of thinking' (added in French version).

idea. For if we suppose that an idea contains something which was not in its cause, it must have got this from nothing; yet the mode of being by which a thing exists objectively <or representatively> in the intellect by way of an idea, imperfect though it may be, is certainly not nothing, and so it cannot come from nothing.

And although the reality which I am considering in my ideas is merely objective reality, I must not on that account suppose that the same reality need not exist formally in the causes of my ideas, but that it is enough for it to be present in them objectively. For just as the objective mode of being belongs to ideas by their very nature, so the formal mode of being belongs to the causes of ideas – or at least the first and most important ones – by *their* very nature. And although one idea may perhaps originate from another, there cannot be an infinite regress here; eventually one must reach a primary idea, the cause of which will be like an archetype which contains formally <and in fact> all the reality <or perfection> which is present only objectively <or representatively> in the idea. So it is clear to me, by the natural light, that the ideas in me are like <pictures, or> images which can easily fall short of the perfection of the things from which they are taken, but which cannot contain anything greater or more perfect. 42

The longer and more carefully I examine all these points, the more clearly and distinctly I recognize their truth. But what is my conclusion to be? If the objective reality of any of my ideas turns out to be so great that I am sure the same reality does not reside in me, either formally or eminently, and hence that I myself cannot be its cause, it will necessarily follow that I am not alone in the world, but that some other thing which is the cause of this idea also exists. But if no such idea is to be found in me, I shall have no argument to convince me of the existence of anything apart from myself. For despite a most careful and comprehensive survey, this is the only argument I have so far been able to find.

Among my ideas, apart from the idea which gives me a representation of myself, which cannot present any difficulty in this context, there are ideas which variously represent God, corporeal and inanimate things, angels, animals and finally other men like myself. 43

As far as concerns the ideas which represent other men, or animals, or angels, I have no difficulty in understanding that they could be put together from the ideas I have of myself, of corporeal things and of God, even if the world contained no men besides me, no animals and no angels.

As to my ideas of corporeal things, I can see nothing in them which is so great <or excellent> as to make it seem impossible that it originated in myself. For if I scrutinize them thoroughly and examine them one by one, in the way in which I examined the idea of the wax yesterday, I notice

that the things which I perceive clearly and distinctly in them are very few in number. The list comprises size, or extension in length, breadth and depth; shape, which is a function of the boundaries of this extension; position, which is a relation between various items possessing shape; and motion, or change in position; to these may be added substance, duration and number. But as for all the rest, including light and colours, sounds, smells, tastes, heat and cold and the other tactile qualities, I think of these only in a very confused and obscure way, to the extent that I do not even know whether they are true or false, that is, whether the ideas I have of them are ideas of real things or of non-things.¹ For although, as I have noted before, falsity in the strict sense, or formal falsity, can occur only in judgements, there is another kind of falsity, material falsity, which occurs in ideas, when they represent non-things as things. For example, the ideas
 44 which I have of heat and cold contain so little clarity and distinctness that they do not enable me to tell whether cold is merely the absence of heat or vice versa, or whether both of them are real qualities, or neither is. And since there can be no ideas which are not as it were of things,² if it is true that cold is nothing but the absence of heat, the idea which represents it to me as something real and positive deserves to be called false; and the same goes for other ideas of this kind.

Such ideas obviously do not require me to posit a source distinct from myself. For on the one hand, if they are false, that is, represent non-things, I know by the natural light that they arise from nothing – that is, they are in me only because of a deficiency and lack of perfection in my nature. If on the other hand they are true, then since the reality which they represent is so extremely slight that I cannot even distinguish it from a non-thing, I do not see why they cannot originate from myself.

With regard to the clear and distinct elements in my ideas of corporeal things, it appears that I could have borrowed some of these from my idea of myself, namely substance, duration, number and anything else of this kind. For example, I think that a stone is a substance, or is a thing capable of existing independently, and I also think that I am a substance. Admittedly I conceive of myself as a thing that thinks and is not extended, whereas I conceive of the stone as a thing that is extended and does not think, so that the two conceptions differ enormously; but they seem to agree with respect to the classification 'substance'.³ Again, I perceive that I now exist, and remember that I have existed for some time; moreover, I have various thoughts which I can count; it is in these

1 '... chimerical things which cannot exist' (French version).

2 'And since ideas, being like images, must in each case appear to us to represent something' (French version).

3 '... in so far as they represent substances' (French version).

ways that I acquire the ideas of duration and number which I can then transfer to other things. As for all the other elements which make up the ideas of corporeal things, namely extension, shape, position and movement, these are not formally contained in me, since I am nothing but a thinking thing; but since they are merely modes of a substance,¹ and I am a substance, it seems possible that they are contained in me eminently. 45

So there remains only the idea of God; and I must consider whether there is anything in the idea which could not have originated in myself. By the word 'God' I understand a substance that is infinite, <eternal, immutable,>independent, supremely intelligent, supremely powerful, and which created both myself and everything else (if anything else there be) that exists. All these attributes are such that, the more carefully I concentrate on them, the less possible it seems that they² could have originated from me alone. So from what has been said it must be concluded that God necessarily exists.

It is true that I have the idea of substance in me in virtue of the fact that I am a substance; but this would not account for my having the idea of an infinite substance, when I am finite, unless this idea proceeded from some substance which really was infinite.

And I must not think that, just as my conceptions of rest and darkness are arrived at by negating movement and light, so my perception of the infinite is arrived at not by means of a true idea but merely by negating the finite. On the contrary, I clearly understand that there is more reality in an infinite substance than in a finite one, and hence that my perception of the infinite, that is God, is in some way prior to my perception of the finite, that is myself. For how could I understand that I doubted or desired – that is, lacked something – and that I was not wholly perfect, unless there were in me some idea of a more perfect being which enabled me to recognize my own defects by comparison? 46

Nor can it be said that this idea of God is perhaps materially false and so could have come from nothing,³ which is what I observed just a moment ago in the case of the ideas of heat and cold, and so on. On the contrary, it is utterly clear and distinct, and contains in itself more objective reality than any other idea; hence there is no idea which is in itself truer or less liable to be suspected of falsehood. This idea of a supremely perfect and infinite being is, I say, true in the highest degree; for although perhaps one may imagine that such a being does not exist, it cannot be supposed that the idea of such a being represents something

1 '... and as it were the garments under which corporeal substance appears to us' (French version).

2 '... that the idea I have of them' (French version).

3 '... i.e. could be in me in virtue of my imperfection' (added in French version).

unreal, as I said with regard to the idea of cold. The idea is, moreover, utterly clear and distinct; for whatever I clearly and distinctly perceive as being real and true, and implying any perfection, is wholly contained in it. It does not matter that I do not grasp the infinite, or that there are countless additional attributes of God which I cannot in any way grasp, and perhaps cannot even reach in my thought; for it is in the nature of the infinite not to be grasped by a finite being like myself. It is enough that I understand¹ the infinite, and that I judge that all the attributes which I clearly perceive and know to imply some perfection – and perhaps countless others of which I am ignorant – are present in God either formally or eminently. This is enough to make the idea that I have of God the truest and most clear and distinct of all my ideas.

47 But perhaps I am something greater than I myself understand, and all the perfections which I attribute to God are somehow in me potentially, though not yet emerging or actualized. For I am now experiencing a gradual increase in my knowledge, and I see nothing to prevent its increasing more and more to infinity. Further, I see no reason why I should not be able to use this increased knowledge to acquire all the other perfections of God. And finally, if the potentiality for these perfections is already within me, why should not this be enough to generate the idea of such perfections?

But all this is impossible. First, though it is true that there is a gradual increase in my knowledge, and that I have many potentialities which are not yet actual, this is all quite irrelevant to the idea of God, which contains absolutely nothing that is potential;² indeed, this gradual increase in knowledge is itself the surest sign of imperfection. What is more, even if my knowledge always increases more and more, I recognize that it will never actually be infinite, since it will never reach the point where it is not capable of a further increase; God, on the other hand, I take to be actually infinite, so that nothing can be added to his perfection. And finally, I perceive that the objective being of an idea cannot be produced merely by potential being, which strictly speaking is nothing, but only by actual or formal being.

If one concentrates carefully, all this is quite evident by the natural light. But when I relax my concentration, and my mental vision is blinded by the images of things perceived by the senses, it is not so easy for me to remember why the idea of a being more perfect than myself must

1 According to Descartes one can know or understand something without fully grasping it 'just as we can touch a mountain but not put our arms around it. To grasp something is to embrace it in one's thought; to know something, it suffices to touch it with one's thought' (letter to Mersenne, 26 May 1630).

2 '... but only what is actual and real' (added in French version).

necessarily proceed from some being which is in reality more perfect. I should therefore like to go further and inquire whether I myself, who have this idea, could exist if no such being existed. 48

From whom, in that case, would I derive my existence? From myself presumably, or from my parents, or from some other beings less perfect than God; for nothing more perfect than God, or even as perfect, can be thought of or imagined.

Yet if I derived my existence from myself,¹ then I should neither doubt nor want, nor lack anything at all; for I should have given myself all the perfections of which I have any idea, and thus I should myself be God. I must not suppose that the items I lack would be more difficult to acquire than those I now have. On the contrary, it is clear that, since I am a thinking thing or substance, it would have been far more difficult for me to emerge out of nothing than merely to acquire knowledge of the many things of which I am ignorant – such knowledge being merely an accident of that substance. And if I had derived my existence from myself, which is a greater achievement, I should certainly not have denied myself the knowledge in question, which is something much easier to acquire, or indeed any of the attributes which I perceive to be contained in the idea of God; for none of them seem any harder to achieve. And if any of them were harder to achieve, they would certainly appear so to me, if I had indeed got all my other attributes from myself, since I should experience a limitation of my power in this respect.

I do not escape the force of these arguments by supposing that I have always existed as I do now, as if it followed from this that there was no need to look for any author of my existence. For a lifespan can be divided into countless parts, each completely independent of the others, so that it does not follow from the fact that I existed a little while ago that I must exist now, unless there is some cause which as it were creates me afresh at this moment – that is, which preserves me. For it is quite clear to anyone who attentively considers the nature of time that the same power and action are needed to preserve anything at each individual moment of its duration as would be required to create that thing anew if it were not yet in existence. Hence the distinction between preservation and creation is only a conceptual one,² and this is one of the things that are evident by the natural light. 49

I must therefore now ask myself whether I possess some power enabling me to bring it about that I who now exist will still exist a little while from now. For since I am nothing but a thinking thing – or at least

¹ '... and were independent of every other being' (added in French version).

² Cf. *Principles*, Part I, art. 62: vol. I, p. 214.

since I am now concerned only and precisely with that part of me which is a thinking thing – if there were such a power in me, I should undoubtedly be aware of it. But I experience no such power, and this very fact makes me recognize most clearly that I depend on some being distinct from myself.

But perhaps this being is not God, and perhaps I was produced either by my parents or by other causes less perfect than God. No; for as I have said before, it is quite clear that there must be at least as much in the cause as in the effect.¹ And therefore whatever kind of cause is eventually proposed, since I am a thinking thing and have within me some idea of God, it must be admitted that what caused me is itself a thinking thing and possesses the idea of all the perfections which I attribute to God. In respect of this cause one may again inquire whether it derives its existence from itself or from another cause. If from itself, then it is clear
 50 from what has been said that it is itself God, since if it has the power of existing through its own might,² then undoubtedly it also has the power of actually possessing all the perfections of which it has an idea – that is, all the perfections which I conceive to be in God. If, on the other hand, it derives its existence from another cause, then the same question may be repeated concerning this further cause, namely whether it derives its existence from itself or from another cause, until eventually the ultimate cause is reached, and this will be God.

It is clear enough that an infinite regress is impossible here, especially since I am dealing not just with the cause that produced me in the past, but also and most importantly with the cause that preserves me at the present moment.

Nor can it be supposed that several partial causes contributed to my creation, or that I received the idea of one of the perfections which I attribute to God from one cause and the idea of another from another – the supposition here being that all the perfections are to be found somewhere in the universe but not joined together in a single being, God. On the contrary, the unity, the simplicity, or the inseparability of all the attributes of God is one of the most important of the perfections which I understand him to have. And surely the idea of the unity of all his perfections could not have been placed in me by any cause which did not also provide me with the ideas of the other perfections; for no cause could have made me understand the interconnection and inseparability of the perfections without at the same time making me recognize what they were.

1 '... at least as much reality in the cause as in its effect' (French version).

2 Lat. *per se*; literally 'through itself'.

Lastly, as regards my parents, even if everything I have ever believed about them is true, it is certainly not they who preserve me; and in so far as I am a thinking thing, they did not even make me; they merely placed certain dispositions in the matter which I have always regarded as containing me, or rather my mind, for that is all I now take myself to be. So there can be no difficulty regarding my parents in this context. Altogether then, it must be concluded that the mere fact that I exist and have within me an idea of a most perfect being, that is, God, provides a very clear proof that God indeed exists. 51

It only remains for me to examine how I received this idea from God. For I did not acquire it from the senses; it has never come to me unexpectedly, as usually happens with the ideas of things that are perceivable by the senses, when these things present themselves to the external sense organs – or seem to do so. And it was not invented by me either; for I am plainly unable either to take away anything from it or to add anything to it. The only remaining alternative is that it is innate in me, just as the idea of myself is innate in me.

And indeed it is no surprise that God, in creating me, should have placed this idea in me to be, as it were, the mark of the craftsman stamped on his work – not that the mark need be anything distinct from the work itself. But the mere fact that God created me is a very strong basis for believing that I am somehow made in his image and likeness, and that I perceive that likeness, which includes the idea of God, by the same faculty which enables me to perceive myself. That is, when I turn my mind's eye upon myself, I understand that I am a thing which is incomplete and dependent on another and which aspires without limit to ever greater and better things; but I also understand at the same time that he on whom I depend has within him all those greater things, not just indefinitely and potentially but actually and infinitely, and hence that he is God. The whole force of the argument lies in this: I recognize that it would be impossible for me to exist with the kind of nature I have – that is, having within me the idea of God – were it not the case that God really existed. By 'God' I mean the very being the idea of whom is within me, that is, the possessor of all the perfections which I cannot grasp, but can somehow reach in my thought, who is subject to no defects whatsoever.¹ It is clear enough from this that he cannot be a deceiver, since it is manifest by the natural light that all fraud and deception depend on some defect. 52

But before examining this point more carefully and investigating other

1 '... and has not one of the things which indicate some imperfection' (added in French version).

truths which may be derived from it, I should like to pause here and spend some time in the contemplation of God; to reflect on his attributes, and to gaze with wonder and adoration on the beauty of this immense light, so far as the eye of my darkened intellect can bear it. For just as we believe through faith that the supreme happiness of the next life consists solely in the contemplation of the divine majesty, so experience tells us that this same contemplation, albeit much less perfect, enables us to know the greatest joy of which we are capable in this life.

FOURTH MEDITATION

Truth and falsity

During these past few days I have accustomed myself to leading my mind away from the senses; and I have taken careful note of the fact that there is very little about corporeal things that is truly perceived, whereas much more is known about the human mind, and still more about God. The result is that I now have no difficulty in turning my mind away from imaginable things¹ and towards things which are objects of the intellect alone and are totally separate from matter. And indeed the idea I have of the human mind, in so far as it is a thinking thing, which is not extended in length, breadth or height and has no other bodily characteristics, is much more distinct than the idea of any corporeal thing. And when I consider the fact that I have doubts, or that I am a thing that is incomplete and dependent, then there arises in me a clear and distinct idea of a being who is independent and complete, that is, an idea of God. And from the mere fact that there is such an idea within me, or that I who possess this idea exist, I clearly infer that God also exists, and that every single moment of my entire existence depends on him. So clear is this conclusion that I am confident that the human intellect cannot know anything that is more evident or more certain. And now, from this contemplation of the true God, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and the sciences lie hidden, I think I can see a way forward to the knowledge of other things.² 53

To begin with, I recognize that it is impossible that God should ever deceive me. For in every case of trickery or deception some imperfection is to be found; and although the ability to deceive appears to be an indication of cleverness or power, the will to deceive is undoubtedly evidence of malice or weakness, and so cannot apply to God.

Next, I know by experience that there is in me a faculty of judgement which, like everything else which is in me, I certainly received from God. And since God does not wish to deceive me, he surely did not give me the 54

1 '... from things which can be perceived by the senses or imagined' (French version).

2 '... of the other things in the universe' (French version).

kind of faculty which would ever enable me to go wrong while using it correctly.

There would be no further doubt on this issue were it not that what I have just said appears to imply that I am incapable of ever going wrong. For if everything that is in me comes from God, and he did not endow me with a faculty for making mistakes, it appears that I can never go wrong. And certainly, so long as I think only of God, and turn my whole attention to him, I can find no cause of error or falsity. But when I turn back to myself, I know by experience that I am prone to countless errors. On looking for the cause of these errors, I find that I possess not only a real and positive idea of God, or a being who is supremely perfect, but also what may be described as a negative idea of nothingness, or of that which is farthest removed from all perfection. I realize that I am, as it were, something intermediate between God and nothingness, or between supreme being and non-being; my nature is such that in so far as I was created by the supreme being, there is nothing in me to enable me to go wrong or lead me astray; but in so far as I participate in nothingness or non-being, that is, in so far as I am not myself the supreme being and am lacking in countless respects, it is no wonder that I make mistakes. I understand, then, that error as such is not something real which depends on God, but merely a defect. Hence my going wrong does not require me to have a faculty specially bestowed on me by God; it simply happens as a result of the fact that the faculty of true judgement which I have from God is in my case not infinite.

- 55 But this is still not entirely satisfactory. For error is not a pure negation,¹ but rather a privation or lack of some knowledge which somehow should be in me. And when I concentrate on the nature of God, it seems impossible that he should have placed in me a faculty which is not perfect of its kind, or which lacks some perfection which it ought to have. The more skilled the craftsman the more perfect the work produced by him; if this is so, how can anything produced by the supreme creator of all things not be complete and perfect in all respects? There is, moreover, no doubt that God could have given me a nature such that I was never mistaken; again, there is no doubt that he always wills what is best. Is it then better that I should make mistakes than that I should not do so?

As I reflect on these matters more attentively, it occurs to me first of all that it is no cause for surprise if I do not understand the reasons for some of God's actions; and there is no call to doubt his existence if I happen to find that there are other instances where I do not grasp why or how

1 '... i.e. not simply the defect or lack of some perfection to which I have no proper claim' (added in French version).

certain things were made by him. For since I now know that my own nature is very weak and limited, whereas the nature of God is immense, incomprehensible and infinite, I also know without more ado that he is capable of countless things whose causes are beyond my knowledge. And for this reason alone I consider the customary search for final causes to be totally useless in physics; there is considerable rashness in thinking myself capable of investigating the <impenetrable> purposes of God.

It also occurs to me that whenever we are inquiring whether the works of God are perfect, we ought to look at the whole universe, not just at one created thing on its own. For what would perhaps rightly appear very imperfect if it existed on its own is quite perfect when its function as a part of the universe is considered. It is true that, since my decision to doubt everything, it is so far only myself and God whose existence I have been able to know with certainty; but after considering the immense power of God, I cannot deny that many other things have been made by him, or at least could have been made, and hence that I may have a place in the universal scheme of things. 56

Next, when I look more closely at myself and inquire into the nature of my errors (for these are the only evidence of some imperfection in me), I notice that they depend on two concurrent causes, namely on the faculty of knowledge which is in me, and on the faculty of choice or freedom of the will; that is, they depend on both the intellect and the will simultaneously. Now all that the intellect does is to enable me to perceive¹ the ideas which are subjects for possible judgements; and when regarded strictly in this light, it turns out to contain no error in the proper sense of that term. For although countless things may exist without there being any corresponding ideas in me, it should not, strictly speaking, be said that I am deprived of these ideas,² but merely that I lack them, in a negative sense. This is because I cannot produce any reason to prove that God ought to have given me a greater faculty of knowledge than he did; and no matter how skilled I understand a craftsman to be, this does not make me think he ought to have put into every one of his works all the perfections which he is able to put into some of them. Besides, I cannot complain that the will or freedom of choice which I received from God is not sufficiently extensive or perfect, since I know by experience that it is not restricted in any way. Indeed, I think it is very noteworthy that there is nothing else in me which is so perfect and so great that the possibility of a further increase in its perfection or greatness is beyond my understanding. If, for example, I consider the faculty of understanding, I 57

1 '... without affirming or denying anything' (added in French version).

2 '... it cannot be said that my understanding is deprived of these ideas, as if they were something to which its nature entitles it' (French version).

immediately recognize that in my case it is extremely slight and very finite, and I at once form the idea of an understanding which is much greater – indeed supremely great and infinite; and from the very fact that I can form an idea of it, I perceive that it belongs to the nature of God. Similarly, if I examine the faculties of memory or imagination, or any others, I discover that in my case each one of these faculties is weak and limited, while in the case of God it is immeasurable. It is only the will, or freedom of choice, which I experience within me to be so great that the idea of any greater faculty is beyond my grasp; so much so that it is above all in virtue of the will that I understand myself to bear in some way the image and likeness of God. For although God's will is incomparably greater than mine, both in virtue of the knowledge and power that accompany it and make it more firm and efficacious, and also in virtue of its object, in that it ranges over a greater number of items, nevertheless it does not seem any greater than mine when considered as will in the essential and strict sense. This is because the will simply consists in our ability to do or not do something (that is, to affirm or deny, to pursue or avoid); or rather, it consists simply in the fact that when the intellect puts something forward for affirmation or denial or for pursuit or avoidance, our inclinations are such that we do not feel we are determined by any external force. In order to be free, there is no need for me to be inclined both ways; on the contrary, the more I incline in one direction – either because I clearly understand that reasons of truth and goodness point that way, or because of a divinely produced disposition of my inmost thoughts – the freer is my choice. Neither divine grace nor natural knowledge ever diminishes freedom; on the contrary, they increase and strengthen it. But the indifference I feel when there is no reason pushing me in one direction rather than another is the lowest grade of freedom; it is evidence not of any perfection of freedom, but rather of a defect in knowledge or a kind of negation. For if I always saw clearly what was true and good, I should never have to deliberate about the right judgement or choice; in that case, although I should be wholly free, it would be impossible for me ever to be in a state of indifference.

From these considerations I perceive that the power of willing which I received from God is not, when considered in itself, the cause of my mistakes; for it is both extremely ample and also perfect of its kind. Nor is my power of understanding to blame; for since my understanding comes from God, everything that I understand I undoubtedly understand correctly, and any error here is impossible. So what then is the source of my mistakes? It must be simply this: the scope of the will is wider than that of the intellect; but instead of restricting it within the same limits, I extend its use to matters which I do not understand. Since the will is

indifferent in such cases, it easily turns aside from what is true and good, and this is the source of my error and sin.

For example, during these past few days I have been asking whether anything in the world exists, and I have realized that from the very fact of my raising this question it follows quite evidently that I exist. I could not but judge that something which I understood so clearly was true; but this was not because I was compelled so to judge by any external force, but because a great light in the intellect was followed by a great inclination in the will, and thus the spontaneity and freedom of my belief was all the greater in proportion to my lack of indifference. But now, besides the knowledge that I exist, in so far as I am a thinking thing, an idea of corporeal nature comes into my mind; and I happen to be in doubt as to whether the thinking nature which is in me, or rather which I am, is distinct from this corporeal nature or identical with it. I am making the further supposition that my intellect has not yet come upon any persuasive reason in favour of one alternative rather than the other. This obviously implies that I am indifferent as to whether I should assert or deny either alternative, or indeed refrain from making any judgement on the matter. 59

What is more, this indifference does not merely apply to cases where the intellect is wholly ignorant, but extends in general to every case where the intellect does not have sufficiently clear knowledge at the time when the will deliberates. For although probable conjectures may pull me in one direction, the mere knowledge that they are simply conjectures, and not certain and indubitable reasons, is itself quite enough to push my assent the other way. My experience in the last few days confirms this: the mere fact that I found that all my previous beliefs were in some sense open to doubt was enough to turn my absolutely confident belief in their truth into the supposition that they were wholly false.

If, however, I simply refrain from making a judgement in cases where I do not perceive the truth with sufficient clarity and distinctness, then it is clear that I am behaving correctly and avoiding error. But if in such cases I either affirm or deny, then I am not using my free will correctly. If I go for the alternative which is false, then obviously I shall be in error; if I take the other side, then it is by pure chance that I arrive at the truth, and I shall still be at fault since it is clear by the natural light that the perception of the intellect should always precede the determination of the will. In this incorrect use of free will may be found the privation which constitutes the essence of error. The privation, I say, lies in the operation of the will in so far as it proceeds from me, but not in the faculty of will which I received from God, nor even in its operation, in so far as it depends on him. 60

And I have no cause for complaint on the grounds that the power of understanding or the natural light which God gave me is no greater than it is; for it is in the nature of a finite intellect to lack understanding of many things, and it is in the nature of a created intellect to be finite. Indeed, I have reason to give thanks to him who has never owed me anything for the great bounty that he has shown me, rather than thinking myself deprived or robbed of any gifts he did not bestow.¹

Nor do I have any cause for complaint on the grounds that God gave me a will which extends more widely than my intellect. For since the will consists simply of one thing which is, as it were, indivisible, it seems that its nature rules out the possibility of anything being taken away from it. And surely, the more widely my will extends, then the greater thanks I owe to him who gave it to me.

Finally, I must not complain that the forming of those acts of will or judgements in which I go wrong happens with God's concurrence. For in so far as these acts depend on God, they are wholly true and good; and my ability to perform them means that there is in a sense more perfection in me than would be the case if I lacked this ability. As for the privation
 61 involved – which is all that the essential definition of falsity and wrong consists in – this does not in any way require the concurrence of God, since it is not a thing; indeed, when it is referred to God as its cause, it should be called not a privation but simply a negation.² For it is surely no imperfection in God that he has given me the freedom to assent or not to assent in those cases where he did not endow my intellect with a clear and distinct perception; but it is undoubtedly an imperfection in me to misuse that freedom and make judgements about matters which I do not fully understand. I can see, however, that God could easily have brought it about that without losing my freedom, and despite the limitations in my knowledge, I should nonetheless never make a mistake. He could, for example, have endowed my intellect with a clear and distinct perception of everything about which I was ever likely to deliberate; or he could simply have impressed it unforgettably on my memory that I should never make a judgement about anything which I did not clearly and distinctly understand. Had God made me this way, then I can easily understand that, considered as a totality,³ I would have been more perfect than I am now. But I cannot therefore deny that there may in some way be more perfection in the universe as a whole because some of

1 '... rather than entertaining so unjust a thought as to imagine that he deprived me of, or unjustly withheld, the other perfections which he did not give me' (French version).

2 '... understanding these terms in accordance with scholastic usage' (added in French version).

3 '... as if there were only myself in the world' (added in French version).

its parts are not immune from error, while others are immune, than there would be if all the parts were exactly alike. And I have no right to complain that the role God wished me to undertake in the world is not the principal one or the most perfect of all.

What is more, even if I have no power to avoid error in the first way just mentioned, which requires a clear perception of everything I have to deliberate on, I can avoid error in the second way, which depends merely on my remembering to withhold judgement on any occasion when the truth of the matter is not clear. Admittedly, I am aware of a certain weakness in me, in that I am unable to keep my attention fixed on one and the same item of knowledge at all times; but by attentive and repeated meditation I am nevertheless able to make myself remember it as often as the need arises, and thus get into the habit of avoiding error. 62

It is here that man's greatest and most important perfection is to be found, and I therefore think that today's meditation, involving an investigation into the cause of error and falsity, has been very profitable. The cause of error must surely be the one I have explained; for if, whenever I have to make a judgement, I restrain my will so that it extends to what the intellect clearly and distinctly reveals, and no further, then it is quite impossible for me to go wrong. This is because every clear and distinct perception is undoubtedly something,¹ and hence cannot come from nothing, but must necessarily have God for its author. Its author, I say, is God, who is supremely perfect, and who cannot be a deceiver on pain of contradiction; hence the perception is undoubtedly true. So today I have learned not only what precautions to take to avoid ever going wrong, but also what to do to arrive at the truth. For I shall unquestionably reach the truth, if only I give sufficient attention to all the things which I perfectly understand, and separate these from all the other cases where my apprehension is more confused and obscure. And this is just what I shall take good care to do from now on.

1 '... something real and positive' (French version).

*The essence of material things, and the existence of God
considered a second time*

There are many matters which remain to be investigated concerning the attributes of God and the nature of myself, or my mind; and perhaps I shall take these up at another time. But now that I have seen what to do and what to avoid in order to reach the truth, the most pressing task seems to be to try to escape from the doubts into which I fell a few days ago, and see whether any certainty can be achieved regarding material objects.

But before I inquire whether any such things exist outside me, I must consider the ideas of these things, in so far as they exist in my thought, and see which of them are distinct, and which confused.

Quantity, for example, or 'continuous' quantity as the philosophers commonly call it, is something I distinctly imagine. That is, I distinctly imagine the extension of the quantity (or rather of the thing which is quantified) in length, breadth and depth. I also enumerate various parts of the thing, and to these parts I assign various sizes, shapes, positions and local motions; and to the motions I assign various durations.

Not only are all these things very well known and transparent to me when regarded in this general way, but in addition there are countless particular features regarding shape, number, motion and so on, which I perceive when I give them my attention. And the truth of these matters is
64 so open and so much in harmony with my nature, that on first discovering them it seems that I am not so much learning something new as remembering what I knew before; or it seems like noticing for the first time things which were long present within me although I had never turned my mental gaze on them before.

But I think the most important consideration at this point is that I find within me countless ideas of things which even though they may not exist anywhere outside me still cannot be called nothing; for although in a sense they can be thought of at will, they are not my invention but have their own true and immutable natures. When, for example, I imagine a

triangle, even if perhaps no such figure exists, or has ever existed, anywhere outside my thought, there is still a determinate nature, or essence, or form of the triangle which is immutable and eternal, and not invented by me or dependent on my mind. This is clear from the fact that various properties can be demonstrated of the triangle, for example that its three angles equal two right angles, that its greatest side subtends its greatest angle, and the like; and since these properties are ones which I now clearly recognize whether I want to or not, even if I never thought of them at all when I previously imagined the triangle, it follows that they cannot have been invented by me.

It would be beside the point for me to say that since I have from time to time seen bodies of triangular shape, the idea of the triangle may have come to me from external things by means of the sense organs. For I can think up countless other shapes which there can be no suspicion of my ever having encountered through the senses, and yet I can demonstrate 65 various properties of these shapes, just as I can with the triangle. All these properties are certainly true, since I am clearly aware of them, and therefore they are something, and not merely nothing; for it is obvious that whatever is true is something; and I have already amply demonstrated that everything of which I am clearly aware is true. And even if I had not demonstrated this, the nature of my mind is such that I cannot but assent to these things, at least so long as I clearly perceive them. I also remember that even before, when I was completely preoccupied with the objects of the senses, I always held that the most certain truths of all were the kind which I recognized clearly in connection with shapes, or numbers or other items relating to arithmetic or geometry, or in general to pure and abstract mathematics.

But if the mere fact that I can produce from my thought the idea of something entails that everything which I clearly and distinctly perceive to belong to that thing really does belong to it, is not this a possible basis for another argument to prove the existence of God? Certainly, the idea of God, or a supremely perfect being, is one which I find within me just as surely as the idea of any shape or number. And my understanding that it belongs to his nature that he always exists¹ is no less clear and distinct than is the case when I prove of any shape or number that some property belongs to its nature. Hence, even if it turned out that not everything on which I have meditated in these past days is true, I ought still to regard the existence of God as having at least the same level of certainty as I 66 have hitherto attributed to the truths of mathematics.²

At first sight, however, this is not transparently clear, but has some

¹ '... that actual and eternal existence belongs to his nature' (French version).

² '... which concern only figures and numbers' (added in French version).

appearance of being a sophism. Since I have been accustomed to distinguish between existence and essence in everything else, I find it easy to persuade myself that existence can also be separated from the essence of God, and hence that God can be thought of as not existing. But when I concentrate more carefully, it is quite evident that existence can no more be separated from the essence of God than the fact that its three angles equal two right angles can be separated from the essence of a triangle, or than the idea of a mountain can be separated from the idea of a valley. Hence it is just as much of a contradiction to think of God (that is, a supremely perfect being) lacking existence (that is, lacking a perfection), as it is to think of a mountain without a valley.

However, even granted that I cannot think of God except as existing, just as I cannot think of a mountain without a valley, it certainly does not follow from the fact that I think of a mountain with a valley that there is any mountain in the world; and similarly, it does not seem to follow from the fact that I think of God as existing that he does exist. For my thought does not impose any necessity on things; and just as I may imagine a winged horse even though no horse has wings, so I may be able to attach existence to God even though no God exists.

67 But there is a sophism concealed here. From the fact that I cannot think of a mountain without a valley, it does not follow that a mountain and valley exist anywhere, but simply that a mountain and a valley, whether they exist or not, are mutually inseparable. But from the fact that I cannot think of God except as existing, it follows that existence is inseparable from God, and hence that he really exists. It is not that my thought makes it so, or imposes any necessity on any thing; on the contrary, it is the necessity of the thing itself, namely the existence of God, which determines my thinking in this respect. For I am not free to think of God without existence (that is, a supremely perfect being without a supreme perfection) as I am free to imagine a horse with or without wings.

And it must not be objected at this point that while it is indeed necessary for me to suppose God exists, once I have made the supposition that he has all perfections (since existence is one of the perfections), nevertheless the original supposition was not necessary. Similarly, the objection would run, it is not necessary for me to think that all quadrilaterals can be inscribed in a circle; but given this supposition, it will be necessary for me to admit that a rhombus can be inscribed in a circle – which is patently false. Now admittedly, it is not necessary that I ever light upon any thought of God; but whenever I do choose to think of the first and supreme being, and bring forth the idea of God from the treasure house of my mind as it were, it is necessary that I attribute all

perfections to him, even if I do not at that time enumerate them or attend to them individually. And this necessity plainly guarantees that, when I later realize that existence is a perfection, I am correct in inferring that the first and supreme being exists. In the same way, it is not necessary for me ever to imagine a triangle; but whenever I do wish to consider a rectilinear figure having just three angles, it is necessary that I attribute to it the properties which license the inference that its three angles equal no more than two right angles, even if I do not notice this at the time. By contrast, when I examine what figures can be inscribed in a circle, it is in no way necessary for me to think that this class includes all quadrilaterals. Indeed, I cannot even imagine this, so long as I am willing to admit only what I clearly and distinctly understand. So there is a great difference between this kind of false supposition and the true ideas which are innate in me, of which the first and most important is the idea of God. There are many ways in which I understand that this idea is not something fictitious which is dependent on my thought, but is an image of a true and immutable nature. First of all, there is the fact that, apart from God, there is nothing else of which I am capable of thinking such that existence belongs¹ to its essence. Second, I cannot understand how there could be two or more Gods of this kind; and after supposing that one God exists, I plainly see that it is necessary that he has existed from eternity and will abide for eternity. And finally, I perceive many other attributes of God, none of which I can remove or alter. 68

But whatever method of proof I use, I am always brought back to the fact that it is only what I clearly and distinctly perceive that completely convinces me. Some of the things I clearly and distinctly perceive are obvious to everyone, while others are discovered only by those who look more closely and investigate more carefully; but once they have been discovered, the latter are judged to be just as certain as the former. In the case of a right-angled triangle, for example, the fact that the square on the hypotenuse is equal to the square on the other two sides is not so readily apparent as the fact that the hypotenuse subtends the largest angle; but once one has seen it, one believes it just as strongly. But as regards God, if I were not overwhelmed by preconceived opinions, and if the images of things perceived by the senses did not besiege my thought on every side, I would certainly acknowledge him sooner and more easily than anything else. For what is more self-evident than the fact that the supreme being exists, or that God, to whose essence alone existence belongs,² exists? 69

1 '... necessarily belongs' (French version).

2 '... in the idea of whom alone necessary and eternal existence is comprised' (French version).

Although it needed close attention for me to perceive this, I am now just as certain of it as I am of everything else which appears most certain. And what is more, I see that the certainty of all other things depends on this, so that without it nothing can ever be perfectly known.

Admittedly my nature is such that so long as¹ I perceive something very clearly and distinctly I cannot but believe it to be true. But my nature is also such that I cannot fix my mental vision continually on the same thing, so as to keep perceiving it clearly; and often the memory of a previously made judgement may come back, when I am no longer attending to the arguments which led me to make it. And so other arguments can now occur to me which might easily undermine my opinion, if I were unaware of God: and I should thus never have true and certain knowledge about anything, but only shifting and changeable opinions. For example, when I consider the nature of a triangle, it appears most evident to me, steeped as I am in the principles of geometry, that its three angles are equal to two right angles; and so long as I attend to the proof, I cannot but believe this to be true. But as soon as I turn my mind's eye away from the proof, then in spite of still remembering that I perceived it very clearly, I can easily fall into doubt about its truth, if I am unaware of God. For I can convince myself that I have a natural disposition to go wrong from time to time in matters which I think I perceive as evidently as can be. This will seem even more likely when I remember that there have been frequent cases where I have regarded things as true and certain, but have later been led by other arguments to judge them to be false.

Now, however, I have perceived that God exists, and at the same time I have understood that everything else depends on him, and that he is no deceiver; and I have drawn the conclusion that everything which I clearly and distinctly perceive is of necessity true. Accordingly, even if I am no longer attending to the arguments which led me to judge that this is true, as long as I remember that I clearly and distinctly perceived it, there are no counter-arguments which can be adduced to make me doubt it, but on the contrary I have true and certain knowledge of it. And I have knowledge not just of this matter, but of all matters which I remember ever having demonstrated, in geometry and so on. For what objections can now be raised?² That the way I am made makes me prone to frequent error? But I now know that I am incapable of error in those cases where my understanding is transparently clear. Or can it be objected that I have in the past regarded as true and certain many things which I afterwards recognized to be false? But none of these were things which I clearly and

1 '... as soon as' (French version).

2 '... to oblige me to call these matters into doubt' (added in French version).

distinctly perceived: I was ignorant of this rule for establishing the truth, and believed these things for other reasons which I later discovered to be less reliable. So what is left to say? Can one raise the objection I put to myself a while ago, that I may be dreaming, or that everything which I am now thinking has as little truth as what comes to the mind of one who is asleep? Yet even this does not change anything. For even though I might be dreaming, if there is anything which is evident to my intellect, then it is wholly true. 71

Thus I see plainly that the certainty and truth of all knowledge depends uniquely on my awareness of the true God, to such an extent that I was incapable of perfect knowledge about anything else until I became aware of him. And now it is possible for me to achieve full and certain knowledge of countless matters, both concerning God himself and other things whose nature is intellectual, and also concerning the whole of that corporeal nature which is the subject-matter of pure mathematics.¹

1 '... and also concerning things which belong to corporeal nature in so far as it can serve as the object of geometrical demonstrations which have no concern with whether that object exists' (French version).

SIXTH MEDITATION

The existence of material things, and the real distinction between mind and body¹

72 It remains for me to examine whether material things exist. And at least I now know they are capable of existing, in so far as they are the subject-matter of pure mathematics, since I perceive them clearly and distinctly. For there is no doubt that God is capable of creating everything that I am capable of perceiving in this manner; and I have never judged that something could not be made by him except on the grounds that there would be a contradiction in my perceiving it distinctly. The conclusion that material things exist is also suggested by the faculty of imagination, which I am aware of using when I turn my mind to material things. For when I give more attentive consideration to what imagination is, it seems to be nothing else but an application of the cognitive faculty to a body which is intimately present to it, and which therefore exists.

To make this clear, I will first examine the difference between imagination and pure understanding. When I imagine a triangle, for example, I do not merely understand that it is a figure bounded by three lines, but at the same time I also see the three lines with my mind's eye as if they were present before me; and this is what I call imagining. But if I want to think of a chiliagon, although I understand that it is a figure consisting of a thousand sides just as well as I understand the triangle to be a three-sided figure, I do not in the same way imagine the thousand sides or see them as if they were present before me. It is true that since I am in the habit of imagining something whenever I think of a corporeal thing, I may construct in my mind a confused representation of some figure; but it is clear that this is not a chiliagon. For it differs in no way from the representation I should form if I were thinking of a myriagon, or any figure with very many sides. Moreover, such a representation is useless for recognizing the properties which distinguish a chiliagon from other polygons. But suppose I am dealing with a pentagon: I can of course understand the figure of a pentagon, just as I can the figure of a

¹ '... between the soul and body of man' (French version).

chiliagon, without the help of the imagination; but I can also imagine a pentagon, by applying my mind's eye to its five sides and the area contained within them. And in doing this I notice quite clearly that imagination requires a peculiar effort of mind which is not required for understanding; this additional effort of mind clearly shows the difference between imagination and pure understanding. 73

Besides this, I consider that this power of imagining which is in me, differing as it does from the power of understanding, is not a necessary constituent of my own essence, that is, of the essence of my mind. For if I lacked it, I should undoubtedly remain the same individual as I now am; from which it seems to follow that it depends on something distinct from myself. And I can easily understand that, if there does exist some body to which the mind is so joined that it can apply itself to contemplate it, as it were, whenever it pleases, then it may possibly be this very body that enables me to imagine corporeal things. So the difference between this mode of thinking and pure understanding may simply be this: when the mind understands, it in some way turns towards itself and inspects one of the ideas which are within it; but when it imagines, it turns towards the body and looks at something in the body which conforms to an idea understood by the mind or perceived by the senses. I can, as I say, easily understand that this is how imagination comes about, if the body exists; and since there is no other equally suitable way of explaining imagination that comes to mind, I can make a probable conjecture that the body exists. But this is only a probability; and despite a careful and comprehensive investigation, I do not yet see how the distinct idea of corporeal nature which I find in my imagination can provide any basis for a necessary inference that some body exists.

But besides that corporeal nature which is the subject-matter of pure mathematics, there is much else that I habitually imagine, such as colours, sounds, tastes, pain and so on – though not so distinctly. Now I perceive these things much better by means of the senses, which is how, with the assistance of memory, they appear to have reached the imagination. So in order to deal with them more fully, I must pay equal attention to the senses, and see whether the things which are perceived by means of that mode of thinking which I call 'sensory perception' provide me with any sure argument for the existence of corporeal things. 74

To begin with, I will go back over all the things which I previously took to be perceived by the senses, and reckoned to be true; and I will go over my reasons for thinking this. Next, I will set out my reasons for subsequently calling these things into doubt. And finally I will consider what I should now believe about them.

First of all then, I perceived by my senses that I had a head, hands, feet

and other limbs making up the body which I regarded as part of myself, or perhaps even as my whole self. I also perceived by my senses that this body was situated among many other bodies which could affect it in various favourable or unfavourable ways; and I gauged the favourable effects by a sensation of pleasure, and the unfavourable ones by a sensation of pain. In addition to pain and pleasure, I also had sensations within me of hunger, thirst, and other such appetites, and also of physical propensities towards cheerfulness, sadness, anger and similar emotions.

75 And outside me, besides the extension, shapes and movements of bodies, I also had sensations of their hardness and heat, and of the other tactile qualities. In addition, I had sensations of light, colours, smells, tastes and sounds, the variety of which enabled me to distinguish the sky, the earth, the seas, and all other bodies, one from another. Considering the ideas of all these qualities which presented themselves to my thought, although the ideas were, strictly speaking, the only immediate objects of my sensory awareness, it was not unreasonable for me to think that the items which I was perceiving through the senses were things quite distinct from my thought, namely bodies which produced the ideas. For my experience was that these ideas came to me quite without my consent, so that I could not have sensory awareness of any object, even if I wanted to, unless it was present to my sense organs; and I could not avoid having sensory awareness of it when it was present. And since the ideas perceived by the senses were much more lively and vivid and even, in their own way, more distinct than any of those which I deliberately formed through meditating or which I found impressed on my memory, it seemed impossible that they should have come from within me; so the only alternative was that they came from other things. Since the sole source of my knowledge of these things was the ideas themselves, the supposition that the things resembled the ideas was bound to occur to me. In addition, I remembered that the use of my senses had come first, while the use of my reason came only later; and I saw that the ideas which I formed myself were less vivid than those which I perceived with the senses and were, for the most part, made up of elements of sensory ideas. In this way I easily convinced myself that I had nothing at all in the intellect which I had not previously

76 had in sensation.¹ As for the body which by some special right I called 'mine', my belief that this body, more than any other, belonged to me had some justification. For I could never be separated from it, as I could from other bodies; and I felt all my appetites and emotions in, and on account of, this body; and finally, I was aware of pain and pleasurable ticklings in parts of this body, but not in other bodies external to it. But why should that curious sensation of pain give rise to a particular distress of mind; or

¹ See note 3, p. 186 below.

why should a certain kind of delight follow on a tickling sensation? Again, why should that curious tugging in the stomach which I call hunger tell me that I should eat, or a dryness of the throat tell me to drink, and so on? I was not able to give any explanation of all this, except that nature taught me so. For there is absolutely no connection (at least that I can understand) between the tugging sensation and the decision to take food, or between the sensation of something causing pain and the mental apprehension of distress that arises from that sensation. These and other judgements that I made concerning sensory objects, I was apparently taught to make by nature; for I had already made up my mind that this was how things were, before working out any arguments to prove it.

Later on, however, I had many experiences which gradually undermined all the faith I had had in the senses. Sometimes towers which had looked round from a distance appeared square from close up; and enormous statues standing on their pediments did not seem large when observed from the ground. In these and countless other such cases, I found that the judgements of the external senses were mistaken. And this applied not just to the external senses but to the internal senses as well. For what can be more internal than pain? And yet I had heard that those who had had a leg or an arm amputated sometimes still seemed to feel pain intermittently in the missing part of the body. So even in my own case it was apparently not quite certain that a particular limb was hurting, even if I felt pain in it. To these reasons for doubting, I recently added two very general ones.¹ The first was that every sensory experience I have ever thought I was having while awake I can also think of myself as sometimes having while asleep; and since I do not believe that what I seem to perceive in sleep comes from things located outside me, I did not see why I should be any more inclined to believe this of what I think I perceive while awake. The second reason for doubt was that since I did not know the author of my being (or at least was pretending not to), I saw nothing to rule out the possibility that my natural constitution made me prone to error even in matters which seemed to me most true. As for the reasons for my previous confident belief in the truth of the things perceived by the senses, I had no trouble in refuting them. For since I apparently had natural impulses towards many things which reason told me to avoid, I reckoned that a great deal of confidence should not be placed in what I was taught by nature. And despite the fact that the perceptions of the senses were not dependent on my will, I did not think that I should on that account infer that they proceeded from things

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1 Cf. *Med.* 1, above pp. 13–15.

distinct from myself, since I might perhaps have a faculty not yet known to me which produced them.¹

78 But now, when I am beginning to achieve a better knowledge of myself and the author of my being, although I do not think I should heedlessly accept everything I seem to have acquired from the senses, neither do I think that everything should be called into doubt.

First, I know that everything which I clearly and distinctly understand is capable of being created by God so as to correspond exactly with my understanding of it. Hence the fact that I can clearly and distinctly understand one thing apart from another is enough to make me certain that the two things are distinct, since they are capable of being separated, at least by God. The question of what kind of power is required to bring about such a separation does not affect the judgement that the two things are distinct. Thus, simply by knowing that I exist and seeing at the same time that absolutely nothing else belongs to my nature or essence except that I am a thinking thing, I can infer correctly that my essence consists solely in the fact that I am a thinking thing. It is true that I may have (or, to anticipate, that I certainly have) a body that is very closely joined to me. But nevertheless, on the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in so far as I am simply a thinking, non-extended thing; and on the other hand I have a distinct idea of body,² in so far as this is simply an extended, non-thinking thing. And accordingly, it is certain that I³ am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it.

Besides this, I find in myself faculties for certain special modes of thinking,⁴ namely imagination and sensory perception. Now I can clearly and distinctly understand myself as a whole without these faculties; but I cannot, conversely, understand these faculties without me, that is, without an intellectual substance to inhere in. This is because there is an intellectual act included in their essential definition; and hence I perceive that the distinction between them and myself corresponds to the distinction between the modes of a thing and the thing itself.⁵ Of course I also recognize that there are other faculties (like those of changing position, of taking on various shapes, and so on) which, like sensory perception and
79 imagination, cannot be understood apart from some substance for them

1 Cf. Med. III, above p. 27.

2 The Latin term *corpus* as used here by Descartes is ambiguous as between 'body' (i.e. corporeal matter in general) and 'the body' (i.e. this particular body of mine). The French version preserves the ambiguity.

3 '... that is, my soul, by which I am what I am' (added in French version).

4 '... certain modes of thinking which are quite special and distinct from me' (French version).

5 '... between the shapes, movements and other modes or accidents of a body and the body which supports them' (French version).

to inhere in, and hence cannot exist without it. But it is clear that these other faculties, if they exist, must be in a corporeal or extended substance and not an intellectual one; for the clear and distinct conception of them includes extension, but does not include any intellectual act whatsoever. Now there is in me a passive faculty of sensory perception, that is, a faculty for receiving and recognizing the ideas of sensible objects; but I could not make use of it unless there was also an active faculty, either in me or in something else, which produced or brought about these ideas. But this faculty cannot be in me, since clearly it presupposes no intellectual act on my part,¹ and the ideas in question are produced without my cooperation and often even against my will. So the only alternative is that it is in another substance distinct from me – a substance which contains either formally or eminently all the reality which exists objectively² in the ideas produced by this faculty (as I have just noted). This substance is either a body, that is, a corporeal nature, in which case it will contain formally <and in fact> everything which is to be found objectively <or representatively> in the ideas; or else it is God, or some creature more noble than a body, in which case it will contain eminently whatever is to be found in the ideas. But since God is not a deceiver, it is quite clear that he does not transmit the ideas to me either directly from himself, or indirectly, via some creature which contains the objective reality of the ideas not formally but only eminently. For God has given me no faculty at all for recognizing any such source for these ideas; on the contrary, he has given me a great propensity to believe that 80 they are produced by corporeal things. So I do not see how God could be understood to be anything but a deceiver if the ideas were transmitted from a source other than corporeal things. It follows that corporeal things exist. They may not all exist in a way that exactly corresponds with my sensory grasp of them, for in many cases the grasp of the senses is very obscure and confused. But at least they possess all the properties which I clearly and distinctly understand, that is, all those which, viewed in general terms, are comprised within the subject-matter of pure mathematics.

What of the other aspects of corporeal things which are either particular (for example that the sun is of such and such a size or shape), or less clearly understood, such as light or sound or pain, and so on? Despite the high degree of doubt and uncertainty involved here, the very fact that God is not a deceiver, and the consequent impossibility of there being any falsity in my opinions which cannot be corrected by some other

1 '... cannot be in me in so far as I am merely a thinking thing, since it does not presuppose any thought on my part' (French version).

2 For the terms 'formally', 'eminently' and 'objectively', see notes, p. 28 above.

faculty supplied by God, offers me a sure hope that I can attain the truth even in these matters. Indeed, there is no doubt that everything that I am taught by nature contains some truth. For if nature is considered in its general aspect, then I understand by the term nothing other than God himself, or the ordered system of created things established by God. And by my own nature in particular I understand nothing other than the totality of things bestowed on me by God.

There is nothing that my own nature teaches me more vividly than that I have a body, and that when I feel pain there is something wrong with the body, and that when I am hungry or thirsty the body needs food and drink, and so on. So I should not doubt that there is some truth in this.

- 81 Nature also teaches me, by these sensations of pain, hunger, thirst and so on, that I am not merely present in my body as a sailor is present in a ship,¹ but that I am very closely joined and, as it were, intermingled with it, so that I and the body form a unit. If this were not so, I, who am nothing but a thinking thing, would not feel pain when the body was hurt, but would perceive the damage purely by the intellect, just as a sailor perceives by sight if anything in his ship is broken. Similarly, when the body needed food or drink, I should have an explicit understanding of the fact, instead of having confused sensations of hunger and thirst. For these sensations of hunger, thirst, pain and so on are nothing but confused modes of thinking which arise from the union and, as it were, intermingling of the mind with the body.

I am also taught by nature that various other bodies exist in the vicinity of my body, and that some of these are to be sought out and others avoided. And from the fact that I perceive by my senses a great variety of colours, sounds, smells and tastes, as well as differences in heat, hardness and the like, I am correct in inferring that the bodies which are the source of these various sensory perceptions possess differences corresponding to them, though perhaps not resembling them. Also, the fact that some of the perceptions are agreeable to me while others are disagreeable makes it quite certain that my body, or rather my whole self, in so far as I am a combination of body and mind, can be affected by the various beneficial or harmful bodies which surround it.

- 82 There are, however, many other things which I may appear to have been taught by nature, but which in reality I acquired not from nature but from a habit of making ill-considered judgements; and it is therefore quite possible that these are false. Cases in point are the belief that any space in which nothing is occurring to stimulate my senses must be empty; or that the heat in a body is something exactly resembling the idea of heat which is in me; or that when a body is white or green, the

1 '... as a pilot in his ship' (French version).

selfsame whiteness or greenness which I perceive through my senses is present in the body; or that in a body which is bitter or sweet there is the selfsame taste which I experience, and so on; or, finally, that stars and towers and other distant bodies have the same size and shape which they present to my senses, and other examples of this kind. But to make sure that my perceptions in this matter are sufficiently distinct, I must more accurately define exactly what I mean when I say that I am taught something by nature. In this context I am taking nature to be something more limited than the totality of things bestowed on me by God. For this includes many things that belong to the mind alone – for example my perception that what is done cannot be undone, and all other things that are known by the natural light;¹ but at this stage I am not speaking of these matters. It also includes much that relates to the body alone, like the tendency to move in a downward direction, and so on; but I am not speaking of these matters either. My sole concern here is with what God has bestowed on me as a combination of mind and body. My nature, then, in this limited sense, does indeed teach me to avoid what induces a feeling of pain and to seek out what induces feelings of pleasure, and so on. But it does not appear to teach us to draw any conclusions from these sensory perceptions about things located outside us without waiting until the intellect has examined² the matter. For knowledge of the truth about such things seems to belong to the mind alone, not to the combination of mind and body. Hence, although a star has no greater effect on my eye than the flame of a small light, that does not mean that there is any real or positive inclination in me to believe that the star is no bigger than the light; I have simply made this judgement from childhood onwards without any rational basis. Similarly, although I feel heat when I go near a fire and feel pain when I go too near, there is no convincing argument for supposing that there is something in the fire which resembles the heat, any more than for supposing that there is something which resembles the pain. There is simply reason to suppose that there is something in the fire, whatever it may eventually turn out to be, which produces in us the feelings of heat or pain. And likewise, even though there is nothing in any given space that stimulates the senses, it does not follow that there is no body there. In these cases and many others I see that I have been in the habit of misusing the order of nature. For the proper purpose of the sensory perceptions given me by nature is simply to inform the mind of what is beneficial or harmful for the composite of which the mind is a part; and to this extent they are sufficiently clear and distinct. But I misuse them by treating them as reliable touchstones for immediate

83

1 '... without any help from the body' (added in French version).

2 '... carefully and maturely examined' (French version).

judgements about the essential nature of the bodies located outside us; yet this is an area where they provide only very obscure information.

I have already looked in sufficient detail at how, notwithstanding the goodness of God, it may happen that my judgements are false. But a further problem now comes to mind regarding those very things which nature presents to me as objects which I should seek out or avoid, and also regarding the internal sensations, where I seem to have detected errors¹ – e.g. when someone is tricked by the pleasant taste of some food
 84 into eating the poison concealed inside it. Yet in this case, what the man's nature urges him to go for is simply what is responsible for the pleasant taste, and not the poison, which his nature knows nothing about. The only inference that can be drawn from this is that his nature is not omniscient. And this is not surprising, since man is a limited thing, and so it is only fitting that his perfection should be limited.

And yet it is not unusual for us to go wrong even in cases where nature does urge us towards something. Those who are ill, for example, may desire food or drink that will shortly afterwards turn out to be bad for them. Perhaps it may be said that they go wrong because their nature is disordered, but this does not remove the difficulty. A sick man is no less one of God's creatures than a healthy one, and it seems no less a contradiction to suppose that he has received from God a nature which deceives him. Yet a clock constructed with wheels and weights observes all the laws of its nature just as closely when it is badly made and tells the wrong time as when it completely fulfils the wishes of the clockmaker. In the same way, I might consider the body of a man as a kind of machine equipped with and made up of bones, nerves, muscles, veins, blood and skin in such a way that, even if there were no mind in it, it would still perform all the same movements as it now does in those cases where movement is not under the control of the will or, consequently, of the mind.² I can easily see that if such a body suffers from dropsy, for example, and is affected by the dryness of the throat which normally produces in the mind the sensation of thirst, the resulting condition of the nerves and other parts will dispose the body to take a drink, with the result that the disease will be aggravated. Yet this is just as natural as the body's being stimulated by a similar dryness of the throat to take a drink
 85 when there is no such illness and the drink is beneficial. Admittedly, when I consider the purpose of the clock, I may say that it is departing from its nature when it does not tell the right time; and similarly when I consider the mechanism of the human body, I may think that, in relation to the movements which normally occur in it, it too is deviating from its nature if the throat is dry at a time when drinking is not beneficial to its

1 '... and thus seem to have been directly deceived by my nature' (added in French version).

2 '... but occurs merely as a result of the disposition of the organs' (French version).

continued health. But I am well aware that 'nature' as I have just used it has a very different significance from 'nature' in the other sense. As I have just used it, 'nature' is simply a label which depends on my thought; it is quite extraneous to the things to which it is applied, and depends simply on my comparison between the idea of a sick man and a badly-made clock, and the idea of a healthy man and a well-made clock. But by 'nature' in the other sense I understand something which is really to be found in the things themselves; in this sense, therefore, the term contains something of the truth.

When we say, then, with respect to the body suffering from dropsy, that it has a disordered nature because it has a dry throat and yet does not need drink, the term 'nature' is here used merely as an extraneous label. However, with respect to the composite, that is, the mind united with this body, what is involved is not a mere label, but a true error of nature, namely that it is thirsty at a time when drink is going to cause it harm. It thus remains to inquire how it is that the goodness of God does not prevent nature, in this sense, from deceiving us.

The first observation I make at this point is that there is a great difference between the mind and the body, inasmuch as the body is by its very nature always divisible, while the mind is utterly indivisible. For 86 when I consider the mind, or myself in so far as I am merely a thinking thing, I am unable to distinguish any parts within myself; I understand myself to be something quite single and complete. Although the whole mind seems to be united to the whole body, I recognize that if a foot or arm or any other part of the body is cut off, nothing has thereby been taken away from the mind. As for the faculties of willing, of understanding, of sensory perception and so on, these cannot be termed parts of the mind, since it is one and the same mind that wills, and understands and has sensory perceptions. By contrast, there is no corporeal or extended thing that I can think of which in my thought I cannot easily divide into parts; and this very fact makes me understand that it is divisible. This one argument would be enough to show me that the mind is completely different from the body, even if I did not already know as much from other considerations.

My next observation is that the mind is not immediately affected by all parts of the body, but only by the brain, or perhaps just by one small part of the brain, namely the part which is said to contain the 'common' sense.¹ Every time this part of the brain is in a given state, it presents the

¹ The supposed faculty which integrates the data from the five specialized senses (the notion goes back ultimately to Aristotle). 'The seat of the common sense must be very mobile, to receive all the impressions coming from the senses, but must be moveable only by the spirits which transmit these impressions. Only the *conarion* [pineal gland] fits these conditions' (letter to Mersenne, 21 April 1641).

same signals to the mind, even though the other parts of the body may be in a different condition at the time. This is established by countless observations, which there is no need to review here.

87 I observe, in addition, that the nature of the body is such that whenever any part of it is moved by another part which is some distance away, it can always be moved in the same fashion by any of the parts which lie in between, even if the more distant part does nothing. For example, in a cord ABCD, if one end D is pulled so that the other end A moves, the exact same movement could have been brought about if one of the intermediate points B or C had been pulled, and D had not moved at all. In similar fashion, when I feel a pain in my foot, physiology tells me that this happens by means of nerves distributed throughout the foot, and that these nerves are like cords which go from the foot right up to the brain. When the nerves are pulled in the foot, they in turn pull on inner parts of the brain to which they are attached, and produce a certain motion in them; and nature has laid it down that this motion should produce in the mind a sensation of pain, as occurring in the foot. But since these nerves, in passing from the foot to the brain, must pass through the calf, the thigh, the lumbar region, the back and the neck, it can happen that, even if it is not the part in the foot but one of the intermediate parts which is being pulled, the same motion will occur in the brain as occurs when the foot is hurt, and so it will necessarily come about that the mind feels the same sensation of pain. And we must suppose the same thing happens with regard to any other sensation.

88 My final observation is that any given movement occurring in the part of the brain that immediately affects the mind produces just one corresponding sensation; and hence the best system that could be devised is that it should produce the one sensation which, of all possible sensations, is most especially and most frequently conducive to the preservation of the healthy man. And experience shows that the sensations which nature has given us are all of this kind; and so there is absolutely nothing to be found in them that does not bear witness to the power and goodness of God. For example, when the nerves in the foot are set in motion in a violent and unusual manner, this motion, by way of the spinal cord, reaches the inner parts of the brain, and there gives the mind its signal for having a certain sensation, namely the sensation of a pain as occurring in the foot. This stimulates the mind to do its best to get rid of the cause of the pain, which it takes to be harmful to the foot. It is true that God could have made the nature of man such that this particular motion in the brain indicated something else to the mind; it might, for example, have made the mind aware of the actual motion occurring in the brain, or in the foot, or in any of the intermediate

regions; or it might have indicated something else entirely. But there is nothing else which would have been so conducive to the continued well-being of the body. In the same way, when we need drink, there arises a certain dryness in the throat; this sets in motion the nerves of the throat, which in turn move the inner parts of the brain. This motion produces in the mind a sensation of thirst, because the most useful thing for us to know about the whole business is that we need drink in order to stay healthy. And so it is in the other cases.

It is quite clear from all this that, notwithstanding the immense goodness of God, the nature of man as a combination of mind and body is such that it is bound to mislead him from time to time. For there may be some occurrence, not in the foot but in one of the other areas through which the nerves travel in their route from the foot to the brain, or even in the brain itself; and if this cause produces the same motion which is generally produced by injury to the foot, then pain will be felt as if it were in the foot. This deception of the senses is natural, because a given motion in the brain must always produce the same sensation in the mind; and the origin of the motion in question is much more often going to be something which is hurting the foot, rather than something existing elsewhere. So it is reasonable that this motion should always indicate to the mind a pain in the foot rather than in any other part of the body. Again, dryness of the throat may sometimes arise not, as it normally does, from the fact that a drink is necessary to the health of the body, but from some quite opposite cause, as happens in the case of the man with dropsy. Yet it is much better that it should mislead on this occasion than that it should always mislead when the body is in good health. And the same goes for the other cases. 89

This consideration is the greatest help to me, not only for noticing all the errors to which my nature is liable, but also for enabling me to correct or avoid them without difficulty. For I know that in matters regarding the well-being of the body, all my senses report the truth much more frequently than not. Also, I can almost always make use of more than one sense to investigate the same thing; and in addition, I can use both my memory, which connects present experiences with preceding ones, and my intellect, which has by now examined all the causes of error. Accordingly, I should not have any further fears about the falsity of what my senses tell me every day; on the contrary, the exaggerated doubts of the last few days should be dismissed as laughable. This applies especially to the principal reason for doubt, namely my inability to distinguish between being asleep and being awake. For I now notice that there is a vast difference between the two, in that dreams are never linked by memory with all the other actions of life as waking experiences are. If, while I am

90 awake, anyone were suddenly to appear to me and then disappear immediately, as happens in sleep, so that I could not see where he had come from or where he had gone to, it would not be unreasonable for me to judge that he was a ghost, or a vision created in my brain,¹ rather than a real man. But when I distinctly see where things come from and where and when they come to me, and when I can connect my perceptions of them with the whole of the rest of my life without a break, then I am quite certain that when I encounter these things I am not asleep but awake. And I ought not to have even the slightest doubt of their reality if, after calling upon all the senses as well as my memory and my intellect in order to check them, I receive no conflicting reports from any of these sources. For from the fact that God is not a deceiver it follows that in cases like these I am completely free from error. But since the pressure of things to be done does not always allow us to stop and make such a meticulous check, it must be admitted that in this human life we are often liable to make mistakes about particular things, and we must acknowledge the weakness of our nature.

1 '... like those that are formed in the brain when I sleep' (added in French version).

Philosophy and the
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RICHARD RORTY

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TO
M. V. R.

When we think about the future of the world, we always have in mind its being at the place where it would be if it continued to move as we see it moving now. We do not realize that it moves not in a straight line, but in a curve, and that its direction constantly changes.

Philosophy has made no progress? If somebody scratches where it itches, does that count as progress? If not, does that mean it wasn't an authentic scratch? Not an authentic itch? Couldn't this response to the stimulus go on for quite a long time until a remedy for itching is found?

Wenn wir an die Zukunft der Welt denken, so meinen wir immer den Ort, wo sie sein wird, wenn sie so weiter läuft, wie wir sie jetzt laufen sehen, und denken nicht, dass sie nicht gerade läuft, sondern in einer Kurve, und ihre Richtung sich konstant ändert. (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, Frankfurt, 1977, p. 14.)

Die Philosophie hat keinen Fortschritt gemacht? Wenn Einer kratzt, wo es ihn juckt, muss ein Fortschritt zu sehen sein? Ist es sonst kein echtes Kratzen, oder kein echtes Jucken? Und kann nicht diese Reaktion auf die Reizung lange Zeit so weitergehen, ehe ein Mittel gegen das Jucken gefunden wird? (Ibid., pp. 163-164.)

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Preface

ALMOST as soon as I began to study philosophy, I was impressed by the way in which philosophical problems appeared, disappeared, or changed shape, as a result of new assumptions or vocabularies. From Richard McKeon and Robert Brumbaugh I learned to view the history of philosophy as a series, not of alternative solutions to the same problems, but of quite different sets of problems. From Rudolph Carnap and Carl Hempel I learned how pseudo-problems could be revealed as such by restating them in the formal mode of speech. From Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss I learned how they could be so revealed by being translated into Whiteheadian or Hegelian terms. I was very fortunate in having these men as my teachers, but, for better or worse, I treated them all as saying the same thing: that a "philosophical problem" was a product of the unconscious adoption of assumptions built into the vocabulary in which the problem was stated—assumptions which were to be questioned before the problem itself was taken seriously.

Somewhat later on, I began to read the work of Wilfrid Sellars. Sellars's attack on the Myth of the Given seemed to me to render doubtful the assumptions behind most of modern philosophy. Still later, I began to take Quine's skeptical approach to the language-fact distinction seriously, and to try to combine Quine's point of view with Sellars's. Since then, I have been trying to isolate more of the assumptions behind the problematic of modern philosophy, in the hope of generalizing and extending Sellars's and Quine's criticisms of traditional empiricism. Getting back to these assumptions, and making clear that they are optional, I believed, would be "therapeutic" in the way in

which Carnap's original dissolution of standard textbook problems was "therapeutic." This book is the result of that attempt.

The book has been long in the making. Princeton University is remarkably generous with research time and sabbaticals, so it is embarrassing to confess that without the further assistance of the American Council of Learned Societies and the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation I should probably never have written it. I began thinking out its plot while holding an ACLS Fellowship in 1969-1970, and wrote the bulk of the first draft while holding a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1973-1974. I am most grateful to all three institutions for their assistance.

Many people—students at Princeton and elsewhere, audiences at papers given at various conferences, colleagues and friends—have read or listened to various drafts of various sections of this book. I made many changes of both substance and style in response to their objections, and am very grateful. I regret that my memory is too poor to list even the most important instances of such help, but I hope that here and there readers may recognize the beneficial results of their own comments. I do wish, however, to thank two people—Michael Williams and Richard Bernstein—who made very helpful comments on the penultimate version of the entire book, as did an anonymous reader for the Princeton University Press. I am also grateful to Raymond Geuss, David Hoy, and Jeffrey Stout, who took time out to help me resolve last-minute doubts about the final chapter.

Finally, I should like to thank Laura Bell, Pearl Cavanaugh, Lee Ritins, Carol Roan, Sanford Thatcher, Jean Toll, and David Velleman for patient help in transforming what I wrote from rough copy into a printed volume.

* * * * *

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Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature

Introduction

PHILOSOPHERS usually think of their discipline as one which discusses perennial, eternal problems—problems which arise as soon as one reflects. Some of these concern the difference between human beings and other beings, and are crystallized in questions concerning the relation between the mind and the body. Other problems concern the legitimation of claims to know, and are crystallized in questions concerning the “foundations” of knowledge. To discover these foundations is to discover something about the mind, and conversely. Philosophy as a discipline thus sees itself as the attempt to underwrite or debunk claims to knowledge made by science, morality, art, or religion. It purports to do this on the basis of its special understanding of the nature of knowledge and of mind. Philosophy can be foundational in respect to the rest of culture because culture is the assemblage of claims to knowledge, and philosophy adjudicates such claims. It can do so because it understands the foundations of knowledge, and it finds these foundations in a study of man-as-knower, of the “mental processes” or the “activity of representation” which make knowledge possible. To know is to represent accurately what is outside the mind; so to understand the possibility and nature of knowledge is to understand the way in which the mind is able to construct such representations. Philosophy’s central concern is to be a general theory of representation, a theory which will divide culture up into the areas which represent reality well, those which represent it less well, and those which do not represent it at all (despite their pretense of doing so).

We owe the notion of a “theory of knowledge” based on an understanding of “mental processes” to the seventeenth century, and especially to Locke. We owe the notion of

"the mind" as a separate entity in which "processes" occur to the same period, and especially to Descartes. We owe the notion of philosophy as a tribunal of pure reason, upholding or denying the claims of the rest of culture, to the eighteenth century and especially to Kant, but this Kantian notion presupposed general assent to Lockean notions of mental processes and Cartesian notions of mental substance. In the nineteenth century, the notion of philosophy as a foundational discipline which "grounds" knowledge-claims was consolidated in the writings of the neo-Kantians. Occasional protests against this conception of culture as in need of "grounding" and against the pretensions of a theory of knowledge to perform this task (in, for example, Nietzsche and William James) went largely unheard. "Philosophy" became, for the intellectuals, a substitute for religion. It was the area of culture where one touched bottom, where one found the vocabulary and the convictions which permitted one to explain and justify one's activity as an intellectual, and thus to discover the significance of one's life.

At the beginning of our century, this claim was reaffirmed by philosophers (notably Russell and Husserl) who were concerned to keep philosophy "rigorous" and "scientific." But there was a note of desperation in their voices, for by this time the triumph of the secular over the claims of religion was almost complete. Thus the philosopher could no longer see himself as in the intellectual avant-garde, or as protecting men against the forces of superstition.¹ Further, in the course of the nineteenth century, a new form of culture had arisen—the culture of the man of letters, the intellectual who wrote poems and novels and political treatises, and criticisms of other people's poems and novels and treatises. Descartes, Locke, and Kant had written in a

¹ Terms such as "himself" and "men" should, throughout this book, be taken as abbreviations for "himself or herself," "men and women," and so on.

period in which the secularization of culture was being made possible by the success of natural science. But by the early twentieth century the scientists had become as remote from most intellectuals as had the theologians. Poets and novelists had taken the place of both preachers and philosophers as the moral teachers of the youth. The result was that the more "scientific" and "rigorous" philosophy became, the less it had to do with the rest of culture and the more absurd its traditional pretensions seemed. The attempts of both analytic philosophers and phenomenologists to "ground" this and "criticize" that were shrugged off by those whose activities were purportedly being grounded or criticized. Philosophy as a whole was shrugged off by those who wanted an ideology or a self-image.

It is against this background that we should see the work of the three most important philosophers of our century—Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Dewey. Each tried, in his early years, to find a new way of making philosophy "foundational"—a new way of formulating an ultimate context for thought. Wittgenstein tried to construct a new theory of representation which would have nothing to do with mentalism, Heidegger to construct a new set of philosophical categories which would have nothing to do with science, epistemology, or the Cartesian quest for certainty, and Dewey to construct a naturalized version of Hegel's vision of history. Each of the three came to see his earlier effort as self-deceptive, as an attempt to retain a certain conception of philosophy after the notions needed to flesh out that conception (the seventeenth-century notions of knowledge and mind) had been discarded. Each of the three, in his later work, broke free of the Kantian conception of philosophy as foundational, and spent his time warning us against those very temptations to which he himself had once succumbed. Thus their later work is therapeutic rather than constructive, edifying rather than systematic, designed to make the reader question his own motives for philosophiz-

ing rather than to supply him with a new philosophical program.

Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Dewey are in agreement that the notion of knowledge as accurate representation, made possible by special mental processes, and intelligible through a general theory of representation, needs to be abandoned. For all three, the notions of "foundations of knowledge" and of philosophy as revolving around the Cartesian attempt to answer the epistemological skeptic are set aside. Further, they set aside the notion of "the mind" common to Descartes, Locke, and Kant—as a special subject of study, located in inner space, containing elements or processes which make knowledge possible. This is not to say that they have *alternative* "theories of knowledge" or "philosophies of mind." They set aside epistemology and metaphysics as possible disciplines. I say "set aside" rather than "argue against" because their attitude toward the traditional problematic is like the attitude of seventeenth-century philosophers toward the scholastic problematic. They do not devote themselves to discovering false propositions or bad arguments in the works of their predecessors (though they occasionally do that too). Rather, they glimpse the possibility of a form of intellectual life in which the vocabulary of philosophical reflection inherited from the seventeenth century would seem as pointless as the thirteenth-century philosophical vocabulary had seemed to the Enlightenment. To assert the possibility of a post-Kantian culture, one in which there is no all-encompassing discipline which legitimizes or grounds the others, is not necessarily to argue against any particular Kantian doctrine, any more than to glimpse the possibility of a culture in which religion either did not exist, or had no connection with science or politics, was necessarily to argue against Aquinas's claim that God's existence can be proved by natural reason. Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Dewey have brought us into a period of "revolutionary" philosophy (in the sense of Kuhn's "revolutionary" science) by introducing

new maps of the terrain (viz., of the whole panorama of human activities) which simply do not include those features which previously seemed to dominate.

This book is a survey of some recent developments in philosophy, especially analytic philosophy, from the point of view of the anti-Cartesian and anti-Kantian revolution which I have just described. The aim of the book is to undermine the reader's confidence in "the mind" as something about which one should have a "philosophical" view, in "knowledge" as something about which there ought to be a "theory" and which has "foundations," and in "philosophy" as it has been conceived since Kant. Thus the reader in search of a new theory on any of the subjects discussed will be disappointed. Although I discuss "solutions to the mind-body problem" this is not in order to propose one but to illustrate why I do not think there is a problem. Again, although I discuss "theories of reference" I do not offer one, but offer only suggestions about why the search for such a theory is misguided. The book, like the writings of the philosophers I most admire, is therapeutic rather than constructive. The therapy offered is, nevertheless, parasitic upon the constructive efforts of the very analytic philosophers whose frame of reference I am trying to put in question. Thus most of the particular criticisms of the tradition which I offer are borrowed from such systematic philosophers as Sellars, Quine, Davidson, Ryle, Malcolm, Kuhn, and Putnam.

I am as much indebted to these philosophers for the means I employ as I am to Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Dewey for the ends to which these means are put. I hope to convince the reader that the dialectic within analytic philosophy, which has carried philosophy of mind from Broad to Smart, philosophy of language from Frege to Davidson, epistemology from Russell to Sellars, and philosophy of science from Carnap to Kuhn, needs to be carried a few steps further. These additional steps will, I think,

put us in a position to criticize the very notion of “analytic philosophy,” and indeed of “philosophy” itself as it has been understood since the time of Kant.

From the standpoint I am adopting, indeed, the difference between “analytic” and other sorts of philosophy is relatively unimportant—a matter of style and tradition rather than a difference of “method” or of first principles. The reason why the book is largely written in the vocabulary of contemporary analytic philosophers, and with reference to problems discussed in the analytic literature, is merely autobiographical. They are the vocabulary and the literature with which I am most familiar, and to which I owe what grasp I have of philosophical issues. Had I been equally familiar with other contemporary modes of writing philosophy, this would have been a better and more useful book, although an even longer one. As I see it, the kind of philosophy which stems from Russell and Frege is, like classical Husserlian phenomenology, simply one more attempt to put philosophy in the position which Kant wished it to have—that of judging other areas of culture on the basis of its special knowledge of the “foundations” of these areas. “Analytic” philosophy is one more variant of Kantian philosophy, a variant marked principally by thinking of representation as linguistic rather than mental, and of philosophy of language rather than “transcendental critique,” or psychology, as the discipline which exhibits the “foundations of knowledge.” This emphasis on language, I shall be arguing in chapters four and six, does not essentially change the Cartesian-Kantian problematic, and thus does not really give philosophy a new self-image. For analytic philosophy is still committed to the construction of a permanent, neutral framework for inquiry, and thus for all of culture.

It is the notion that human activity (and inquiry, the search for knowledge, in particular) takes place within a framework which can be isolated prior to the conclusion of inquiry—a set of presuppositions discoverable a priori—which links contemporary philosophy to the Descartes-

Locke-Kant tradition. For the notion that there is such a framework only makes sense if we think of this framework as imposed by the nature of the knowing subject, by the nature of his faculties or by the nature of the medium within which he works. The very idea of “philosophy” as something distinct from “science” would make little sense without the Cartesian claim that by turning inward we could find ineluctable truth, and the Kantian claim that this truth imposes limits on the possible results of empirical inquiry. The notion that there could be such a thing as “foundations of knowledge” (*all* knowledge—in every field, past, present, and future) or a “theory of representation” (*all* representation, in familiar vocabularies and those not yet dreamed of) depends on the assumption that there is some such a priori constraint. If we have a Deweyan conception of knowledge, as what we are justified in believing, then we will not imagine that there are enduring constraints on what can count as knowledge, since we will see “justification” as a social phenomenon rather than a transaction between “the knowing subject” and “reality.” If we have a Wittgensteinian notion of language as tool rather than mirror, we will not look for necessary conditions of the possibility of linguistic representation. If we have a Heideggerian conception of philosophy, we will see the attempt to make the nature of the knowing subject a source of necessary truths as one more self-deceptive attempt to substitute a “technical” and determinate question for that openness to strangeness which initially tempted us to begin thinking.

One way to see how analytic philosophy fits within the traditional Cartesian-Kantian pattern is to see traditional philosophy as an attempt to escape from history—an attempt to find nonhistorical conditions of any possible historical development. From this perspective, the common message of Wittgenstein, Dewey, and Heidegger is a historicist one. Each of the three reminds us that investigations of the foundations of knowledge or morality or language or society

may be simply apologetics, attempts to eternalize a certain contemporary language-game, social practice, or self-image. The moral of this book is also historicist, and the three parts into which it is divided are intended to put the notions of "mind," of "knowledge," and of "philosophy," respectively, in historical perspective. Part I is concerned with philosophy of mind, and in chapter one I try to show that the so-called intuitions which lie behind Cartesian dualism are ones which have a historical origin. In chapter two, I try to show how these intuitions would be changed if physiological methods of prediction and control took the place of psychological methods.

Part II is concerned with epistemology and with recent attempts to find "successor subjects" to epistemology. Chapter three describes the genesis of the notion of "epistemology" in the seventeenth century, and its connection with the Cartesian notions of "mind" discussed in chapter one. It presents "theory of knowledge" as a notion based upon a confusion between the justification of knowledge-claims and their causal explanation—between, roughly, social practices and postulated psychological processes. Chapter four is the central chapter of the book—the one in which the ideas which led to its being written are presented. These ideas are those of Sellars and of Quine, and in that chapter I interpret Sellars's attack on "givenness" and Quine's attack on "necessity" as the crucial steps in undermining the possibility of a "theory of knowledge." The holism and pragmatism common to both philosophers, and which they share with the later Wittgenstein, are the lines of thought within analytic philosophy which I wish to extend. I argue that when extended in a certain way they let us see truth as, in James's phrase, "what it is better for us to believe," rather than as "the accurate representation of reality." Or, to put the point less provocatively, they show us that the notion of "accurate representation" is simply an automatic and empty compliment which we pay to those beliefs which are successful in helping us do what we want to do. In chapters

five and six I discuss and criticize what I regard as reactionary attempts to treat empirical psychology or philosophy of language as "successor subjects" to epistemology. I argue that only the notion of knowledge as "accuracy of representation" persuades us that the study of psychological processes or of language—qua media of representation—can do what epistemology failed to do. The moral of part II as a whole is that the notion of knowledge as the assemblage of accurate representations is optional—that it may be replaced by a pragmatist conception of knowledge which eliminates the Greek contrast between contemplation and action, between representing the world and coping with it. A historical epoch dominated by Greek ocular metaphors may, I suggest, yield to one in which the philosophical vocabulary incorporating these metaphors seems as quaint as the animistic vocabulary of pre-classical times.

In part III I take up the idea of "philosophy" more explicitly. Chapter seven interprets the traditional distinction between the search for "objective knowledge" and other, less privileged, areas of human activity as merely the distinction between "normal discourse" and "abnormal discourse." Normal discourse (a generalization of Kuhn's notion of "normal science") is any discourse (scientific, political, theological, or whatever) which embodies agreed-upon criteria for reaching agreement; abnormal discourse is any which lacks such criteria. I argue that the attempt (which has defined traditional philosophy) to explicate "rationality" and "objectivity" in terms of conditions of accurate representation is a self-deceptive effort to eternalize the normal discourse of the day, and that, since the Greeks, philosophy's self-image has been dominated by this attempt. In chapter eight I use some ideas drawn from Gadamer and Sartre to develop a contrast between "systematic" and "edifying" philosophy, and to show how "abnormal" philosophy which does not conform to the traditional Cartesian-Kantian matrix is related to "normal" philosophy. I present Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Dewey as philosophers whose

aim is to edify—to help their readers, or society as a whole, break free from outworn vocabularies and attitudes, rather than to provide “grounding” for the intuitions and customs of the present.

I hope that what I have been saying has made clear why I chose “Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature” as a title. It is pictures rather than propositions, metaphors rather than statements, which determine most of our philosophical convictions. The picture which holds traditional philosophy captive is that of the mind as a great mirror, containing various representations—some accurate, some not—and capable of being studied by pure, nonempirical methods. Without the notion of the mind as mirror, the notion of knowledge as accuracy of representation would not have suggested itself. Without this latter notion, the strategy common to Descartes and Kant—getting more accurate representations by inspecting, repairing, and polishing the mirror, so to speak—would not have made sense. Without this strategy in mind, recent claims that philosophy could consist of “conceptual analysis” or “phenomenological analysis” or “explication of meanings” or examination of “the logic of our language” or of “the structure of the constituting activity of consciousness” would not have made sense. It was such claims as these which Wittgenstein mocked in the *Philosophical Investigations*, and it is by following Wittgenstein’s lead that analytic philosophy has progressed toward the “post-positivistic” stance it presently occupies. But Wittgenstein’s flair for deconstructing captivating pictures needs to be supplemented by historical awareness—awareness of the source of all this mirror-imagery—and that seems to me Heidegger’s greatest contribution. Heidegger’s way of recounting history of philosophy lets us see the beginnings of the Cartesian imagery in the Greeks and the metamorphoses of this imagery during the last three centuries. He thus lets us “distance” ourselves from the tradition. Yet neither Heidegger nor Wittgen-

stein lets us see the historical phenomenon of mirror-imagery, the story of the domination of the mind of the West by ocular metaphors, within a social perspective. Both men are concerned with the rarely favored individual rather than with society—with the chances of keeping oneself apart from the banal self-deception typical of the latter days of a decaying tradition. Dewey, on the other hand, though he had neither Wittgenstein’s dialectical acuity nor Heidegger’s historical learning, wrote his polemics against traditional mirror-imagery out of a vision of a new kind of society. In his ideal society, culture is no longer dominated by the ideal of objective cognition but by that of aesthetic enhancement. In that culture, as he said, the arts and the sciences would be “the unforced flowers of life.” I would hope that we are now in a position to see the charges of “relativism” and “irrationalism” once leveled against Dewey as merely the mindless defensive reflexes of the philosophical tradition which he attacked. Such charges have no weight if one takes seriously the criticisms of mirror-imagery which he, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger make. This book has little to add to these criticisms, but I hope that it presents some of them in a way which will help pierce through that crust of philosophical convention which Dewey vainly hoped to shatter.

PART ONE

Our Glassy Essence

CHAPTER I

The Invention of the Mind

1. CRITERIA OF THE MENTAL

Discussions in the philosophy of mind usually start off by assuming that everybody has always known how to divide the world into the mental and the physical—that this distinction is common-sensical and intuitive, even if that between two sorts of “stuff,” material and immaterial, is philosophical and baffling. So when Ryle suggests that to talk of mental entities is to talk of dispositions to behave, or when Smart suggests that it is to talk of neural states, they have two strikes against them. For why, if anything like behaviorism or materialism is true, should there be anything like this intuitive distinction?

We seem to have no doubt that pains, moods, images, and sentences which “flash before the mind,” dreams, hallucinations, beliefs, attitudes, desires, and intentions all count as “mental” whereas the contractions of the stomach which cause the pain, the neural processes which accompany it, and everything else which can be given a firm location within the body count as nonmental. Our unhesitating classification suggests that not only have we a clear intuition of what “mentality” is, but that it has something to do with non-spatiality and with the notion that even if the body were destroyed the mental entities or states might somehow linger on. Even if we discard the notion of “mind-stuff,” even if we drop the notion of *res cogitans* as subject of predication, we seem able to distinguish mind from body nonetheless, and to do so in a more or less Cartesian way.

These purported intuitions serve to keep something like Cartesian dualism alive. Post-Wittgensteinian philosophers who oppose behaviorism and materialism tend to grant to

Wittgenstein and Strawson that in some sense there is nothing there but the human organism, and that we must give up the notion of this organism as made out of a bit of *res cogitans* nonspatially associated with a bit of *res extensa*. But, they say, the Cartesian intuition that the mental-physical distinction is unbridgeable by empirical means, that a mental state is no more like a disposition than it is like a neuron, and that no scientific discovery can reveal an identity remains. This intuition seems to them enough to establish an unbridgeable gap. But such neo-dualist philosophers are embarrassed by their own conclusions, since although their metaphysical intuitions seem to be Cartesian, they are not clear whether they are entitled to *have* such things as "metaphysical intuitions." They tend to be unhappy with the notion of a method of knowing about the world prior to and untouchable by empirical science.

In this situation, it is tempting for the dualist to go linguistic and begin talking about "different vocabularies" or "alternative descriptions." This jargon suggests that the dualistic intuition in question is merely one of the differences between ways of talking about the same phenomenon, and thus seems to lead one from something like dualism to something like Spinoza's double-aspect theory. But the question "two descriptions of *what*?" makes this a difficult position to hold onto. To reply "two descriptions of organisms" seems all right until we ask, "Are organisms physical?" or "Is there more to organisms, even human organisms, than the actual and possible dispositions of their parts?" Neo-dualists are usually happy to concede a whole raft of mental states to Ryle, and to say that beliefs, desires, attitudes, and intentions (not to mention skills, virtues, and moods) are all merely ways of talking about organisms, their parts, and the actual and possible movements of those parts. (But they may insist, following Brentano and Chisholm, that no Rylean necessary and sufficient conditions can be provided). But when they come to pains, mental images, and occurrent thoughts—short-term mental states which look,

so to speak, event-like rather than disposition-like—they hesitate. And well they should. For the difference between dualism and materialism would vanish if once they said that to describe an organism as in pain is simply one way of talking about a state of its parts. These parts, remember, must be *physical* parts, since once we have Kantized and Strawsonized Descartes the notion of "mental part" will no longer even seem to make sense. What more could a defender of mind-body identity ask for than the admission that talk of how one *feels* is just an alternative way of reporting on how suitable portions of one's anatomy (presumably neurons) *are*?

We thus have the following dilemma: either neo-dualists must construct an epistemological account of how we know a priori that entities fall under two irreducibly distinct ontological species, or else they must find some way of expressing their dualism which relies on neither the notion of "ontological gap" nor that of "alternative description." But before casting about for ways of resolving this dilemma, we should look more closely at the notion of "ontological species" or "ontological gap." What sort of notion is this? Do we have any other examples of ontological gaps? Any other case in which we know a priori that no empirical inquiry can identify two entities? We know, perhaps, that no empirical inquiry can identify two spatio-temporal entities which have different locations, but that knowledge seems too trivial to be relevant. Is there any other case in which we know a priori about natural ontological kinds? The only examples which I can think of are the distinctions between finite and infinite, between human and divine, and between particular and universal. Nothing, we intuit, could cross *those* divides. But these examples do not seem very helpful. We are inclined to say that we do not know what it would be for something infinite to exist. If we try to clarify the orthodox notion of "the divine" we seem to have either a merely negative conception, or else one explicated in terms of the notions of "infinity" and "immateriality."

Since reference to infinity explains the obscure by the more obscure, we are left with immateriality. We feel vaguely confident that if the infinite *could* exist, it, like the universal, could only be exemplified by the immaterial. If it makes any sense to speak of the existence of universals, it would seem that they must exist immaterially, and *that* is why they can never be identified with spatio-temporal particulars. But what does "immaterial" mean? Is it the same thing as "mental"? Even though it is hard to see more in the notion of being "physical" than being "material" or "spatio-temporal," it is not clear that "mental" and "immaterial" are synonyms. If they were, then such disputes as that about the status of universals between conceptualists and realists would look even sillier than they do. Nevertheless, the opposite of "mental" is "physical" and the opposite of "immaterial" is "material." "Physical" and "material" seem synonymous. How can two distinct concepts have synonymous opposites?

At this point we may be tempted to recur to Kant and explain that the mental is temporal but not spatial, whereas the immaterial—the mystery beyond the bounds of sense—is neither spatial nor temporal. This seems to give us a nice neat threefold distinction: the physical is spatio-temporal; the psychological is nonspatial but temporal; the metaphysical is neither spatial nor temporal. We can thus explain away the apparent synonymy of "physical" and "material" as a confusion between "nonpsychological" and "nonmetaphysical." The only trouble is that Kant and Strawson have given convincing arguments for the claim that we can only identify mental states as states of spatially located persons.¹ Since we have given up "mind-stuff," we are bound to take these arguments seriously. This brings us almost full circle, for now we want to know what sense it

¹ See Kant's "Refutation of Idealism" at K.d.r.V. B274ff. and P. F. Strawson, *Individuals* (London, 1959), chap. 2, and *The Bounds of Sense* (London, 1966), pp. 162ff.

makes to say that some states of a spatial entity are spatial and some are not. It is no help to be told that these are its *functional* states—for a person's beauty and his build and his fame and his health are functional states, yet intuition tells us that they are not mental states either. To clarify our intuition, we have to identify a feature shared by our pains and beliefs but not by our beauty or our health. It will not help to identify the mental as that which can survive death or the destruction of the body, since one's beauty can survive death and one's fame can survive the destruction of one's body. If we say that one's beauty or one's fame exists only relationally, in the eyes or the opinion of others, rather than as states of oneself, then we get sticky problems about how to distinguish merely relational properties of persons from their intrinsic states. We get equally sticky problems about a person's unconscious beliefs, which may be discovered only after his death by psycho-biographers, but which are presumably as much his mental states as those beliefs which he was aware of having during his lifetime. There may be a way of explaining why a person's beauty is a nonintrinsic relational property whereas his unconscious paranoia is a nonrelational intrinsic state; but that would seem to be explaining the obscure by the more obscure.

I conclude that we cannot make non-spatiality the criterion of mental states, if only because the notion of "state" is sufficiently obscure that neither the term *spatial state* nor the term *nonspatial state* seems useful. The notion of mental entities as nonspatial and of physical entities as spatial, if it makes any sense at all, makes sense for particulars, for subjects of predication, rather than for the possession of properties by such subjects. We can make some dim sort of pre-Kantian sense out of bits of matter and bits of mind-stuff, but we cannot make any post-Kantian sense out of spatial and nonspatial states of spatial particulars. We get a vague sense of explanatory power when we are told that human bodies move as they do because they are inhabited

by ghosts, but none at all when we are told that persons have nonspatial states.

I hope that I have said enough to show that we are not entitled to begin talking about the mind-body problem, or about the possible identity or necessary non-identity of mental and physical states, without first asking what we mean by "mental." I would hope further to have incited the suspicion that our so-called intuition about what is mental may be merely our readiness to fall in with a specifically philosophical language-game. This is, in fact, the view that I want to defend. I think that this so-called intuition is no more than the ability to command a certain technical vocabulary—one which has no use outside of philosophy books and which links up with no issues in daily life, empirical science, morals, or religion. In later sections of this chapter I shall sketch a historical account of how this technical vocabulary emerged, but before doing so, I shall beat some neighboring bushes. These are the possibilities of defining "mental" in terms of the notion of "intentionality" and in terms of the notion of being "phenomenal"—of having a characteristic appearance, an appearance somehow exhaustive of reality.

2. THE FUNCTIONAL, THE PHENOMENAL, AND THE IMMATERIAL

The obvious objection to defining the mental as the intentional is that pains are not intentional—they do not represent, they are not *about* anything. The obvious objection to defining the mental as "the phenomenal" is that beliefs don't feel like anything—they don't have phenomenal properties, and a person's real beliefs are not always what they appear to be. The attempt to hitch pains and beliefs together seems ad hoc—they don't seem to have anything in common except our refusal to call them "physical." We can gerrymander, of course, so as to make pain the acquisition of a belief that one of one's tissues is damaged, construing pain reports as Pitcher and Armstrong construe

perceptual reports.² But such a tactic still leaves us with something like a dualistic intuition on our hands—the intuition that there is "something more" to being conscious of a pain or a sensation of redness than being tempted to acquire a belief that there is tissue-damage or a red object in the vicinity. Alternatively, we can gerrymander the other way and simply confine the term *mental* to what *does* have phenomenal properties, abandoning beliefs and desires to Armstrong to identify with the physical. But that tactic runs up against the intuition that whatever the mind-body problem is, it is not the feeling-neuron problem. If we expel representations, intentional states, from the mind we are left with something like a problem of the relation between life and nonlife, rather than a mind-body problem.

Still another tactic would be simply to define "mental" disjunctively as "either phenomenal or intentional." This suggestion leaves it entirely obscure how an abbreviation for this disjunction got entrenched in the language, or at least in philosophical jargon. Still, it does direct our attention to the possibility that the various "mental" items are held together by family resemblances. If we consider thoughts—occurrent thoughts, flashing before the mind in particular words—or mental images, then we seem to have something which is a little like a pain in being phenomenal and a little like a belief in being intentional. The words make the thoughts phenomenal and the colors and shapes make the images phenomenal, yet both of them are *of* something in the required intentional sense. If I suddenly and silently say to myself, "Good Lord, I left my wallet on that cafe-table in Vienna," or if I have an image of the wallet on the table, then I am representing Vienna, the wallet, the table, etc.—I have all these as intentional objects. So perhaps we should think of thoughts and mental images as the *paradigmatic*

² See George Pitcher, *A Theory of Perception* (Princeton, 1971); D. M. Armstrong, *Perception and the Physical World* (London and New York, 1961) and *A Materialist Theory of the Mind* (London and New York, 1968).

mental entities. Then we can say that pains and beliefs get classified as mental through their resemblance to these paradigms, even though the resemblance is in two quite different respects. The relationship between the various candidates for mentality could then be illustrated by the following diagram:

	with phenomenal properties	without phenomenal properties
intentional, representational	occurrent thoughts, mental images	beliefs, desires, intentions
nonintentional, nonrepresentational	raw feels—e.g., pains and what babies have when they see colored objects	"the merely physical"

Suppose for the moment that we settle for this "family resemblance" answer to the question "what makes the mental mental?"—viz., that it is one or another family resemblance to the paradigmatically mental. Now let us turn back to our original question, and ask what makes us fill in the fourth box with "the merely physical?" Does "physical" mean merely "what doesn't fit in the other three boxes?" Is it a notion which is entirely parasitic on that of "mental?" Or does it somehow tie in with "material" and "spatial," and how does it do so?

To answer this, we have to ask two subquestions: "Why is the intentional nonmaterial?" and "Why is the phenomenal nonmaterial?" The first question may seem to have a fairly straightforward answer. If we take "the material" to be "the neural," for example, we can say that no amount of inspection of the brain will reveal the intentional character of the pictures and inscriptions found there. Suppose that all persons struck by the thought "I left my wallet on a cafe-table in Vienna," *in those very English words*, have an identical series of neural events concomitant with the

thought. This seems a plausible (though probably false) hypothesis. But it is *not* plausible that all those who acquire the belief that they have left their wallet on a cafe-table in Vienna have this series of events, for they may formulate their belief in quite other words or in quite other language. It would be odd if a Japanese and an English thought should have the same neural correlate. It is equally plausible that all those who suddenly see the same missing wallet on the same distant table in their mind's eye should share a second series of neural events, though one quite different from that correlated with the thinking of the English sentence. Even such neat concomitance would not tempt us to "identify" the intentional and the neurological properties of the thought or the image, any more than we identify the typographical and the intentional properties of the sentence "I left my wallet on a cafe-table in Vienna" when we meet it on the printed page. Again, the concomitance of pictures of wallets on cafe-tables against a Viennese background with certain properties of the surfaces of paper and canvas does not identify the intentional property "being about Vienna" with the arrangement of pigments in space. So we can see why one might say that intentional properties are not physical properties. But, on the other hand, this comparison between neurological and typographical properties suggests that there is no interesting problem about intentionality. Nobody wants to make philosophical heavy weather out of the fact that you can't tell merely from the way it looks what a sentence means, or that you can't recognize a picture of X as a picture of X without being familiar with the relevant pictorial conventions. It seems perfectly clear, at least since Wittgenstein and Sellars, that the "meaning" of typographical inscriptions is not an extra "immaterial" property they have, but just their place in a context of surrounding events in a language-game, in a form of life. This goes for brain-inscriptions as well. To say that we cannot observe intentional properties by looking at the brain is like saying that we cannot see a proposition when we look at a Mayan

codex—we simply do not know what to look for, because we do not yet know how to relate what we see to a symbol-system. The relation between an inscription—on paper or, given the hypothesized concomitance, in the brain—and what it means is no more mysterious than the relation between a functional state of a person, such as his beauty or his health, and the parts of his body. It is just those parts seen in a given context.

So the answer to the question “Why is the intentional nonmaterial?” is “because any functional state—any state which can only be grasped by relating what is observed to a larger context—is, in a trivial sense, nonmaterial.” The problem is in trying to relate this trivial notion of being “nonmaterial”—which means merely something like “not immediately evident to all who look”—with the philosophically pregnant sense of “immateriality.” To put it another way, why should we be troubled by Leibniz’s point that if the brain were blown up to the size of a factory, so that we could stroll through it, we should not see thoughts? If we know enough neural correlations, we shall indeed see thoughts—in the sense that our vision will reveal to us what thoughts the possessor of the brain is having. If we do not, we shall not, but then if we stroll through *any* factory without having first learned about its parts and their relations to one another, we shall not see what is going on. Further, even if we could find no such neural correlations, even if cerebral localization of thoughts was a complete failure, why would we want to say that a person’s thoughts or mental images were nonphysical simply because we cannot give an account of them in terms of his parts? To use an example from Hilary Putnam, one cannot give an account of why square pegs do not fit into round holes in terms of the elementary particles which constitute the peg and the hole, but nobody finds a perplexing ontological gap between macrostructure and microstructure.

I think that we can link the trivial sense of “nonmaterial” (which applies to any functional, as opposed to observable,

state) with the pregnant sense of “immaterial” only by resurrecting Locke’s view of how meaning attaches to inscriptions—the view which Wittgenstein and Sellars attack. For Locke the meaningfulness—the intentional character—of an inscription was the result of its production by, or encoding of, an idea. An idea, in turn, was “what is before a man’s mind when he thinks.” So the way to see the intentional as the immaterial is to say that neither a sequence of processes in the brain nor some ink on paper can represent anything unless an idea, something of which we are aware in that “immediate” way in which we are aware of pains, has impregnated it. In a Lockean view, when we walk through Leibniz’s factory we do not see thoughts not because, as for Wittgenstein, we cannot yet translate brain-writing, but because we cannot see those invisible (because nonspatial) entities which infuse the visible with intentionality. For Wittgenstein, what makes things representational or intentional is the part they play in a larger context—in interaction with large numbers of other visible things. For Locke, what makes things representational is a special causal thrust—what Chisholm describes as the phenomenon of sentences deriving intentionality from thoughts as the moon derives its light from the sun.³

So our answer to the question “How can we convince ourselves that the intentional must be immaterial?” is “First we must convince ourselves, following Locke and Chisholm and *pace* Wittgenstein and Sellars, that intentionality is intrinsic only in phenomenal items—items directly before the mind.” If we accept that answer, however, we are still only part of the way to resolving the issue. For since the problem with which we have been wrestling has been caused precisely by the fact that beliefs do not have phenomenal properties, we now have to ask how Locke, following Descartes, can conflate pains and beliefs under the common term *idea*—how he can convince himself that a

³ Roderick Chisholm, “Intentionality and the Mental” in *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 2 (1958), 533.

belief is something which is "before the mind" in the way in which a mental image is, how he can use the same ocular imagery for mental images and for judgments. I shall discuss the origin of this Cartesian-Lockean use of the term *idea* below. But for the moment I shall pass over the issue and come to the *second* subdivision of the question "Why should the mental be thought of as immaterial?"—namely, why should the *phenomenal* be thought of as immaterial? Why do some neo-dualist philosophers say that how something feels, what it is like to be something, cannot be identical with any physical property, or at least any physical property which we know anything about?

A trivial answer to this question would be that we can know all about something's physical properties and not know how it feels—especially if we can't talk to it. Consider the claim that babies and bats and Martians and God and panpsychistically viewed rocks all may inhabit different phenomenal "quality spaces" from those we inhabit.⁴ So they may. But what does this have to do with non-physicality? Presumably those who say that the phenomenal is

⁴ This claim has been presented very forcefully in Thomas Nagel's "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" *Philosophical Review* 83 (1974), 435-450. I have learned a great deal from Nagel's work in philosophy of mind, although I disagree heartily with him on almost every point. I think that the difference between our views goes back to the question (raised most sharply by Wittgenstein) of whether "philosophical intuitions" are more than residua of linguistic practices, but I am not sure how this issue is to be debated. Nagel's intuition is that "facts about what it is like to be an X are very peculiar" (p. 437), whereas I think that they look peculiar only if, following Nagel and the Cartesian tradition, we hold that "if physicalism is to be defended, the phenomenological features must themselves be given a physical account" (p. 437). In later sections of this chapter, I try to trace the history of the philosophical language-game in which this claim is at home. For the Davidsonian reasons offered in chapter four, section 4, below, I do not think physicalism subject to such a constraint. Physicalism, I argue there, is probably true (but uninteresting) if construed as predicting every event in every space-time region under some description or other, but obviously false if construed as the claim to say everything true.

nonphysical are not complaining that being told how the atoms of the bat's brain are laid out will not help one feel like a bat. Understanding about the physiology of pain does not help us feel pain either, but why should we expect it to, any more than understanding aerodynamics will help us fly? How can we get from the undoubted fact that knowing how to use a physiological term (e.g., "stimulation of C-fibers") will not necessarily help us use a phenomenological term (e.g., "pain") to an ontological gap between the referents of the two terms? How can we get from the fact that knowing Martian physiology does not help us translate what the Martian says when we damage his tissues to the claim that he has got something immaterial we haven't got? How, to come to the point, do we know when we have two ways of talking about the same thing (a person, or his brain) rather than descriptions of two different things? And why are neo-dualists so certain that feelings and neurons are an instance of the latter?

I think that the only reply such philosophers have to offer is to point out that in the case of phenomenal properties there is no appearance-reality distinction. This amounts to defining a physical property as one which anybody could be mistaken in attributing to something, and a phenomenal property as one which a certain person cannot be mistaken about. (E.g., the person who has the pain cannot be mistaken about how the pain feels.) Given this definition, of course, it is trivially the case that no phenomenal property can be a physical one. But why should this *epistemic* distinction reflect an *ontological* distinction? Why should the epistemic privilege we all have of being incorrigible about how things seem to us reflect a distinction between two realms of being?

The answer presumably has to go something like this: Feelings just *are* appearances. Their reality is exhausted in how they seem. They are pure seemings. Anything that is not a seeming (putting the intentional to one side for the moment) is merely physical—that is, it is something which

can appear other than it is. The world comes divided into things whose nature is exhausted by how they appear and things whose nature is not. But if a philosopher gives this answer he is in danger of changing from a neo-dualist into a plain old-fashioned Cartesian dualist, "mind-stuff" and all. For now he has stopped talking about pains as states of people or properties predicated of people and started talking about pains as particulars, a special sort of particular whose nature is exhausted by a single property. Of what could such a particular be made, save mind-stuff? Or, to put it another way, what could mind-stuff be save something out of which such thin, wispy, and translucent things can be made? As long as feeling painful is a property of a person or of brain-fibers, there seems no reason for the epistemic difference between reports of how things feel and reports of anything else to produce an ontological gap. But as soon as there is an ontological gap, we are no longer talking about states or properties but about distinct particulars, distinct subjects of predication. The neo-dualist who identifies a pain with how it feels to be in pain is hypostatizing a property—painfulness—into a special sort of particular, a particular of that special sort whose *esse* is *percipi* and whose reality is exhausted in our initial acquaintance with it. The neo-dualist is no longer talking about how people feel but about feelings as little self-subsistent entities, floating free of people in the way in which universals float free of the instantiations. He has, in fact, modeled pains on universals. It is no wonder, then, that he can "intuit" that pains can exist separately from the body, for this intuition is simply the intuition that universals can exist independently of particulars. That special sort of subject of predication whose appearance is its reality—phenomenal pain—turns out to be simply the painfulness of the pain abstracted from the person having the pain. It is, in short, the universal *painfulness* itself. To put it oxymoronically, mental particulars, unlike mental states of people, turn out to be universals.

This then is the answer I want to give to the question: Why do we think of the phenomenal as immaterial? We do so because, as Ryle put it, we insist on thinking of having a pain in ocular metaphors—as having a funny sort of particular before the eye of the mind. That particular turns out to be a universal, a quality hypostatized into a subject of predication. Thus when neo-dualists say that how pains *feel* are essential to what pains *are*, and then criticize Smart for thinking of the causal role of certain neurons as what is essential to pain, they are changing the subject. Smart is talking about what is essential to people being in pain, whereas neo-dualists like Kripke are talking about what is essential for something's being a *pain*. Neo-dualists feel unafraid of the question "What is the epistemological basis for your claim to know what is an essential property of pain?" for they have arranged things so that pains have only *one* intrinsic property—namely, feeling painful—and so the choice of which properties are to count as essential to them is obvious.

Let me now summarize the results of this section. I have said that the only way to associate the intentional with the immaterial is to identify it with the phenomenal, and that the only way to identify the phenomenal with the immaterial is to hypostatize universals and think of them as particulars rather than abstractions from particulars—thus giving them a non-spatio-temporal habitation. It turns out, in other words, that the universal-particular distinction is the *only* metaphysical distinction we have got, the only one which moves anything at all outside of space, much less outside of space-time. The mental-physical distinction then is parasitic on the universal-particular distinction, rather than conversely. Further, the notion of mind-stuff as that out of which pains and beliefs are made makes exactly as much or as little sense as the notion of "that of which universals are made." The battle between realists and conceptualists over the status of universals is thus empty because we have no idea of what a mind is save that it is made of

whatever universals are made of. In constructing both a Lockean idea and a Platonic Form we go through exactly the same process—we simply lift off a single property from something (the property of being red, or painful, or good) and then treat it as if it itself were a subject of predication, and perhaps also a locus of causal efficacy. A Platonic Form is merely a property considered in isolation and considered as capable of sustaining causal relations. A phenomenal entity is precisely that as well.

3. THE DIVERSITY OF MIND-BODY PROBLEMS

At this point we might want to say that we have dissolved the mind-body problem. For, roughly speaking, all that is needed to find this problem unintelligible is for us to be nominalists, to refuse firmly to hypostatize individual properties. Then we shall not be fooled by the notion that there are entities called pains which, because phenomenal, cannot be physical. Following Wittgenstein, we shall treat the fact that there is no such thing as "a misleading appearance of pain" not as a strange fact about a special ontological genus called the mental, but just as a remark about a language-game—the remark that we have the convention of taking people's word for what they are feeling. From this "language-game" point of view, the fact that a man is feeling whatever he thinks he's feeling has no more ontological significance than the fact that the Constitution is what the Supreme Court thinks it is, or that the ball is foul if the umpire thinks it is. Again following Wittgenstein, we shall treat the intentional as merely a subspecies of the functional, and the functional as merely the sort of property whose attribution depends upon a knowledge of context rather than being observable right off the bat. We shall see the intentional as having no connection with the phenomenal, and the phenomenal as a matter of how we talk. The mind-body problem, we can now say, was merely a result of Locke's unfortunate mistake about how words get meaning,

combined with his and Plato's muddled attempt to talk about adjectives as if they were nouns.

As fast dissolutions of philosophical problems go, this one has its points. But it would be silly to think that we had resolved anything by arriving at this diagnosis. It is as if a psychiatrist were to explain to a patient that his unhappiness is a result of his mistaken belief that his mother wanted to castrate him, together with his muddled attempt to think of himself as identical with his father. What the patient needs is not a list of his mistakes and confusions but rather an understanding of how he came to make these mistakes and become involved in these confusions. If we are going to get rid of the mind-body problem we need to be able to answer such questions as the following:

How did these rather dusty little questions about the possible identity of pains and neurons ever get mixed up with the question of whether man "differed in kind" from the brutes—whether he had dignity rather than merely value?

Given that people thought that they survived the destruction of their bodies long before Locke and Plato began to make specifically philosophical confusions, haven't we left something out when we treat the mind as simply an assemblage of phenomenal and intentional states?

Isn't there some connection between our ability to have knowledge and our having minds, and is this accounted for by referring simply to the fact that persons, like inscriptions, have intentional properties?

All these are good questions, and nothing that I have said so far helps answer them. To answer them, I think, nothing will serve save the history of ideas. Just as the patient needs to relive his past to answer his questions, so philosophy needs to relive its past in order to answer *its* questions. So far I have, in the customary manner of contemporary philosophers of mind, been flinging around terms like "phenomenal," "functional," "intentional," "spatial" and

the like as if these formed the obvious vocabulary in which to discuss the topic. But of course the philosophers who created the language which gave us the mind-body problem did not use this vocabulary, or anything close to it. If we are to understand how we got the intuitions which make us think that there *must* be a *real*, indissoluble, philosophical problem *somewhere* in the neighborhood, we have to set aside our up-to-date jargon and think in the vocabulary of the philosophers whose books gave us those intuitions. In my Wittgensteinian view, an intuition is never anything more or less than familiarity with a language-game, so to discover the source of our intuitions is to relive the history of the philosophical language-game we find ourselves playing.

The "mind-body problem" which I have just "dissolved" concerns only a few of the notions which, emerging at different points in the history of thought, have intertwined to produce a tangle of interrelated problems. Questions like "How are intentional states of consciousness related to neural states?" and "How are phenomenal properties such as painfulness related to neurological properties?" are parts of what I shall call the "problem of consciousness." This problem is distinct from such pre-philosophical problems about personhood as "Am I really only this mass of flesh and bone?" and from such Greek philosophical problems about knowledge as "How can we have certainty about the changing?" "How can knowledge be of the unchanging?" and "How can the unchanging become internal to us by being known?" Let us call the "problem of personhood" that of what more a human being is than flesh. This problem has one form in the pre-philosophical craving for immortality, and another in the Kantian and romantic assertion of human dignity—but both cravings are quite distinct from problems about consciousness and about knowledge. Both are ways of expressing our claim to be something quite different from the beasts that perish. Let us call the "problem of reason" that of how to spell out the Greek claim that

the crucial difference between men and beasts is that we can *know*—that we can know not merely singular facts but universal truths, numbers, essences, the eternal. This problem takes different forms in Aristotle's hylomorphic account of knowing, Spinoza's rationalist account, and Kant's transcendental account. But these issues are distinct both from those about the interrelations between two sorts of things (one spatial and the other nonspatial) and from issues concerning immortality and moral dignity. The problem of consciousness centers around the brain, raw feels, and bodily motions. The problem of reason centers around the topics of knowledge, language, and intelligence—all our "higher powers." The problem of personhood centers around attributions of freedom and of moral responsibility.

In order to sort out some of the relations among these three problems, I shall offer a list of ways of isolating beings which have minds in contrast to the "merely physical"—"the body," "matter," the central nervous system, "nature" or "the subject matter of the positive sciences." Here are some, though hardly all, of the features which philosophers have, at one time or another, taken as marks of the mental:

1. ability to know itself incorrigibly ("privileged access")
2. ability to exist separately from the body
3. non-spatiality (having a nonspatial part or "element")
4. ability to grasp universals
5. ability to sustain relations to the inexistent ("intentionality")
6. ability to use language
7. ability to act freely
8. ability to form part of our social group, to be "one of us"
9. inability to be identified with any object "in the world"

This is a long list, and it could easily be lengthened.⁵ But

⁵ See Herbert Feigl, *The "Mental" and the "Physical"* (Minneapolis, 1967) for a similar list, and for illuminating comments on the relationships between the various items.

it is important to go through these various suggestions about what it is to have a mind, for each of them has helped philosophers to insist on an unbridgeable dualism between mind and body. Philosophers have constantly seized upon some distinctive feature of human life in order to give our intuition of our uniqueness a "firm philosophical basis." Because these firm bases are so varied, naturalisms and materialisms, when not shrugged off as hopeless attempts to jump a vast ontological (or epistemological, or linguistic) gulf, are often treated as trivially true but pointless. They are pointless, it is explained, because our uniqueness has nothing whatever to do with whichever abyss the naturalist has laboriously filled in, but everything to do with some other abyss which has all the while been gaping just behind his back. In particular, the point is often made that even if we settled all questions about the relation between pains and neurons, and similar questions arising out of incorrigibility—(1) above—we should still have dealt, at best, only with (2) and (3) among the other marks of the mental. We should still have left everything relevant to reason (notably [4], [5] and [6]) and everything relevant to personhood (notably [7], [8] and [9]) as obscure as ever.

I think that this point is quite right, and further, that if it had been appreciated earlier the problem of consciousness would not have loomed so large as it has in recent philosophy. In the sense of having pains as well as neurons, we are on a par with many if not all of the brutes, whereas we presumably share neither reason nor personhood with them. It is only if we assume that possession of *any* non-physical inner state is somehow, via (3), connected with (4) or (5) that we will think that light shed upon raw feels would reflect off onto representational mental states, and thereby illuminate our capacity to mirror the world around us. Again, only the assumption that life itself (even that of the fetus, the brain-damaged human, the bat, or the caterpillar) has a special sanctity akin to personhood would make us think that understanding raw feels might help us to

understand our moral responsibilities. Both assumptions are, however, often made. Understanding why they are made requires an understanding of intellectual history rather than an understanding of the meanings of the relevant terms, or an analysis of the concepts they signify. By sketching a little of the history of discussions of the mind, I hope to show that the problem of reason cannot be stated without a return to epistemological views which no one really wishes to resurrect. Further, I want to supply some ground for a suggestion which I shall develop later: that the problem of personhood is not a "problem" but a description of the human condition, that it is not a matter for philosophical "solution" but a misleading way of expostulating on the irrelevance of traditional philosophy to the rest of culture.

I shall not, however, discuss all the items on the list above in this chapter, but only (2), (3), and (4)—separation from the body, non-spatiality, and the grasp of universals. What I want to say about the other items will come in other chapters. I shall discuss (1)—privileged access—in the following chapter, and I shall be discussing (5) and (6)—intentionality and the ability to use language—in chapters four and six. While the items bearing on personhood—(7), (8), and (9)—will not be discussed separately, I shall be sketching the way in which I think the notion of personhood should be treated in chapter four, section 4, again in chapter seven, section 4, and in chapter eight, section 3. In the present chapter, I want to stick as closely as possible to the question: Why should consciousness seem to have anything to do with reason or with personhood? By sticking to the three topics of grasping universals, separation from the body, and non-spatiality, I shall move toward my conclusion that if we hold these last three historically distinct notions apart, then we shall no longer be tempted by the notion that knowledge is made possible by a special Glassy Essence which enables human beings to mirror nature. Thus we shall not be tempted to think that the possession of

an inner life, a stream of consciousness, is relevant to reason. Once consciousness and reason are separated out in this way, then personhood can be seen for what I claim it is—a matter of decision rather than knowledge, an acceptance of another being into fellowship rather than a recognition of a common essence.

4. MIND AS THE GRASP OF UNIVERSALS

There would not have been thought to be a problem about the nature of reason had our race confined itself to pointing out particular states of affairs—warning of cliffs and rain, celebrating individual births and deaths. But poetry speaks of man, birth, and death as such, and mathematics prides itself on overlooking individual details. When poetry and mathematics had come to self-consciousness—when men like Ion and Theaetetus could identify themselves with their subjects—the time had come for something general to be said about knowledge of universals. Philosophy undertook to examine the difference between knowing that there were parallel mountain ranges to the west and knowing that infinitely extended parallel lines never meet, the difference between knowing that Socrates was good and knowing what goodness was. So the question arose: What are the analogies between knowing about mountains and knowing about lines, between knowing Socrates and knowing the Good? When this question was answered in terms of the distinction between the eye of the body and the Eye of the Mind, *νοῦς*—thought, intellect, insight—was identified as what separates men from beasts. There was, we moderns may say with the ingratitude of hindsight, no particular reason why this ocular metaphor seized the imagination of the founders of Western thought. But it did, and contemporary philosophers are still working out its consequences, analyzing the problems it created, and asking whether there may not be something to it after all. The notion of “contemplation,” of knowledge of uni-

versal concepts or truths as *θεωρία*, makes the Eye of the Mind the inescapable model for the better sort of knowledge. But it is fruitless to ask whether the Greek language, or Greek economic conditions, or the idle fancy of some nameless pre-Socratic, is responsible for viewing this sort of knowledge as *looking* at something (rather than, say, rubbing up against it, or crushing it underfoot, or having sexual intercourse with it).⁶

Given this model, and with it the Mind's Eye, what must the mind be? Presumably something as different from the body as invisible parallelness is from visible mountain ridges. Something like that was ready to hand, for poetry and religion suggested that something humanoid leaves the body at death and goes off on its own.⁷ Parallelness

⁶ Dewey sees the metaphor of the Eye of the Mind as the result of the prior notion that knowledge must be of the unchangeable:

The theory of knowing is modeled after what was supposed to take place in the act of vision. The object refracts light and is seen; it makes a difference to the eye and to the person having an optical apparatus, but none to the thing seen. The real object is the object so fixed in its regal aloofness that it is a king to any beholding mind that may gaze upon it. A spectator theory of knowledge is the inevitable outcome. (*The Quest for Certainty* [New York, 1960], p. 23)

It is hard to know whether the optical metaphor determined the notion that the object of true knowledge must be eternal and immutable or conversely, but the two notions do seem made for one another. Compare A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), chap. 2. The quest for certainty and the optical metaphor persist, however, once the notion of immutability and eternality is given up—for example, C. D. Broad's argument to sense-data on the ground that “if nothing elliptical is before my mind, it is very hard to understand why the penny should seem elliptical rather than of any other shape” (*Scientific Thought* [London, 1923], p. 240).

⁷ On the connection of *ψυχή*, shadow, and breath, see C. A. van Peursen, *Body, Soul, Spirit* (Oxford, 1966), p. 88 and chap. 7 passim, together with the passages in Bruno Snell's *Discovery of the Mind* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953) and R. B. Onians's *The Origins of European Thought* (Cambridge, Mass., 1951) to which van Peursen refers. Onians's discussion of the relation between *θυμός* and *ψυχή* (pp. 93ff.) makes clear how little connection either notion had with knowing, and how

can be thought of as the very breath of parallels—the shadow remaining when the mountains are no more. The more wispy the mind, the more fit to catch sight of such invisible entities as parallelness. So even Aristotle, who spent his life pouring cold water on the metaphysical extravagances of his predecessors, suggests that there probably is *something* to the notion that the intellect is “separable,” even though nothing else about the soul is. Aristotle has been praised by Ryleans and Deweyans for having resisted dualism by thinking of “soul” as no more ontologically distinct from the human body than were the frog’s abilities to catch flies and flee snakes ontologically distinct from the frog’s body. But this “naturalistic” view of soul did not prevent Aristotle from arguing that since the intellect had the power of receiving the form of, for example, froghood (skimming off the universal from the clearly known particular frog, so to speak) and taking it on itself without thereby becoming a frog, the intellect (*νοῦς*) must be something very special indeed. It must be something immaterial—even though no such strange quasi-substance need be postulated to explain *most* human activity, any more than it need be postulated to explain the frog’s.⁸

much with fighting, sex, and movement generally. On the relation of these two notions to *νοῦς* in the pre-philosophical period, see Snell, chap. I, where Plato’s description of *νοῦς* as “the eye of the soul” is cited and explained by reference to the archaic use of *νοεῖν* as the grasp of images. For our purposes, the important thing is that it is only when the notion of an immaterial and invisible object of knowledge (as in the knowing of the geometer) comes along that a clear distinction between, as van Peursen says, “inner and outer worlds” gets developed. Cf. van Peursen, pp. 87, 90.

⁸ I do not think Aristotle ever explicitly gives this argument for claiming that the intellect is separable (and the difficulty about the relations between the active and the passive intellect in *De Anima* III, 4 make it almost impossible to see whether he intended to). But his followers have assumed that this was the argument which led him to write *De Anima* 408b 19-20 and 413b 25ff., and I have no better suggestion. See Mortimer Adler, *The Difference of Man and the Difference*

Philosophers have often wished that Aristotle had never fallen in with Plato’s talk of universals and his spectator theory of knowledge, or that his *Entwicklung* had lasted long enough for such passages as *De Anima* III, 5 and *Metaphysics* XII to be expunged as juvenalia.⁹ But once again, there is no point in trying to pin the blame on Aristotle or his interpreters. The metaphor of knowing general truths by internalizing universals, just as the eye of the body knows particulars by internalizing their individual colors and shapes, was, once suggested, sufficiently powerful to become the intellectual’s substitute for the peasant’s belief in life among the shades. In varied forms, running the gamut between neo-Platonic notions of knowledge as a direct connection with (emanation from, reflection of) the Godhead on the one hand, and down-to-earth neo-Aristotelian hylomorphic accounts of abstraction on the other, the soul as immaterial-because-capable-of-contemplating-universals remained the Western philosopher’s answer to the question “Why is man unique?” for some two thousand years.

The tension thus established between the two sides of our being found conventionalized expression in passages like Isabella’s “ape and essence” speech:

It Makes (New York, 1967), p. 220, citing 429a 18-b23 as adumbrating the standard Thomistic argument from the hylomorphic explanation of abstraction. For a Deweyan account of “separability” as a “Platonic wild oat,” cf. J. H. Randall, *Aristotle* (New York, 1960), and the treatment by Werner Jaeger to which Randall refers. See also Marjorie Grene, *A Portrait of Aristotle* (London, 1963), pp. 243ff. I share Grene’s bafflement on the point.

⁹ For an interesting contrary view, see T. H. Green, “The Philosophy of Aristotle” (in *Collected Works* [London, 1885], III, pp. 52-91). Green takes *De Anima* III, 5 as an advance on both Plato and the *Posterior Analytics* toward the discovery of holism and of the concrete universal. Green also, incidentally, compliments Aristotle (at p. 81) on appreciating the difference between “sensation and the intelligent consciousness of sensation” which Locke fatally ignored. I suggest below, following Kenny, that Locke’s mistake was a consequence of Descartes’s transformation of the notion of the mind.

But man, proud man
Dressed in a little brief authority
Most ignorant of what he's most assured—
His glassy essence—like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven
As make the angels weep—who, with our spleens,
Would all laugh themselves mortal.¹⁰

Our Glassy Essence—the “intellectual soul” of the scholastics—is also Bacon’s “mind of man” which “far from the nature of a clear and equal glass, wherein the beams of things should reflect according to their true incidence . . . is rather like an enchanted glass, full of superstition and imposture, if it be not delivered and reduced.”¹¹ These early seventeenth-century conceits express a division within ourselves which was felt long before the New Science, Descartes’s division between thinking and extended substance, the veil of ideas, and “modern philosophy.” Our Glassy Essence was not a philosophical doctrine, but a pic-

¹⁰ William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, II, iii, 11. 117-123. See J. V. Cunningham, “‘Essence’ and *The Phoenix and the Turtle*,” *English Literary History* 19 (1952), p. 266 for the claim that the “glassy essence” here is the “intellectual soul,” which is “glassy, for it mirrors God.” The O.E.D. does not give this sense of “glassy,” but Cunningham is persuasive and is followed by the editors of the *Arden Shakespeare* (to which I owe the reference to Cunningham). Shakespeare here seems to be simply original, rather than using a stock trope. There is apparently no allusion to the “*speculum obscurum*” passage in St. Paul or any other standard notion. For the history of analogies between the soul and a mirror, see Herbert Grabes, *Speculum, Mirror und Looking-Glass* (Tübingen, 1973), pp. 92ff. (“Geistig-Seelisches als Spiegel”). The phrase *man’s glassy essence* was first invoked in philosophy by C. S. Peirce in an 1892 essay of that title on the “molecular theory of protoplasm,” which Peirce strangely thought important in confirming the view that “a person is nothing but a symbol involving a general idea” and in establishing the existence of “group minds” (cf. *Collected Works*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss [Cambridge, Mass., 1935], 6.270-271).

¹¹ Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, bk. II in *Works*, ed. James Spedding and Robert Ellis (Boston, 1861), VI, 276.

ture which literate men found presupposed by every page they read. It is glassy—mirror-like—for two reasons. First, it takes on new forms without being changed—but intellectual forms, rather than sensible ones as material mirrors do. Second, mirrors are made of a substance which is purer, finer grained, more subtle, and more delicate than most.¹² Unlike our spleen, which, in combination with other equally gross and visible organs, accounted for the bulk of our behavior, our Glassy Essence is something we share with the angels, even though they weep for our ignorance of its nature. The supernatural world, for sixteenth-century intellectuals, was modeled upon Plato’s world of Ideas, just as our contact with it was modeled upon his metaphor of vision.

There are few believers in Platonic Ideas today, nor even many who make a distinction between the sensitive and the intellectual soul. But the image of our Glassy Essence remains with us, as does Isabella’s lament that we cannot grasp it. A sense of moral failure mixes with a sense of grievance that philosophy—the discipline supremely concerned with “the higher”—has not made us more aware of our own nature. That nature, it is still felt, makes its distinctive character most clearly felt in a certain sort of knowledge—knowledge of the highest and purest things: mathematics, philosophy itself, theoretical physics, anything which contemplates universals. To suggest that there are no universals—that they are *flatus vocis*—is to endanger our uniqueness. To suggest that the mind is the brain is to

¹² Cf. *ibid.*, p. 242 for Bacon’s claim that “the soul is the simplest of substances.” He quotes a Lucretian passage from Vergil in support: *purumque reliquit / aethereum sensum atque aurai simplicis ignem* (*Aeneid*, VI, 747). The notion that the soul must be made of some very special fine-grained material in order to be capable of knowledge goes back to Anaxagoras. Antiquity wavered between *voûs* as utterly incorporeal and as made of some very special, very pure matter. Such wavering was inevitable, given the unimaginability of the non-spatio-temporal and the notion that reason must resemble the non-spatio-temporal forms or truths which it grasps.

suggest that we secrete theorems and symphonies as our spleen secretes dark humors. Professional philosophers shy away from these "crude pictures" because they have other pictures—thought to be less crude—which were painted in the later seventeenth century. But the sense that the nature of reason is a "permanent problem" and that anyone who doubts our uniqueness should study mathematics persists. The *θυμός* which quickened the Homeric heroes, St. Paul's *πνεῦμα*, and Aquinas's active intellect, are all quite different notions. But for present purposes we can coalesce them, as Isabella does, in the phrase *Glassy Essence*. They are all things which corpses do not have and which are distinctively human. The powers manifested by Achilles were not those of Theaetetus or the Apostles or St. Thomas, but the "intellectual essence" of the scholastics inherited the dualistic notions which gathered force between Homer and Anaxagoras, were given canonical form by Plato, were toned down by Aristotle, and then became entangled (in St. Paul) with a new and determinedly other-worldly religious cult.¹³

¹³ The vague common-sense dualism of body and soul which lay ready to hand for Descartes was a product of the vocabulary of vernacular translations of the Bible as much as of anything else. So, in order to see how recent and parochial the Cartesian distinction is, it is worth noting that the authors of the Bible did not have anything much like the Cartesian contrast between "consciousness" and "insensate matter" in mind. On Jewish conceptions and their influence on St. Paul, see Onians, *Origins of European Thought*, pp. 480ff. On St. Paul himself, it is useful to note that, unlike modern writers on philosophy of mind, he does not identify body (*σῶμα*) with what is buried after death. The latter is *σάρξ* (flesh) whereas, according to J.A.T. Robinson, "*σῶμα* is the nearest equivalent of our word 'personality'" (*The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* [London, 1952], p. 28; contrast Keith Campbell, *Body and Mind* [New York, 1970], p. 2: "Provided you know who you are, it is easy to say what your body is: it is what the undertakers bury when they bury you.") As Robinson says (p. 31n.), it is not that *σῶμα* and *σάρξ* are distinct *parts* of man but rather "the whole man differently regarded." The notion of man divided into *parts* does not come naturally to non-philosophers even after Plato; see van Peursen, *Body, Soul, Spirit*, chap. 6. For examples of the un-Cartesian ways in which *σῶμα*, *σάρξ*, *ψυχή*, and *πνεῦμα* are used by Paul, see 1 *Corinthians* 15:35-54.

In the "mirror" images of the Renaissance humanists, the differences between Homer and Augustine, Plotinus and Thomas, were flattened out to produce a vague but emphatic dualism—ape and essence—which everyone knew philosophers were supposed to know about, even though few could guess what they might hope to say about it. Recent philosophy of mind has tended to lump this vague conglomerate—man's Glassy Essence—together with the post-Cartesian notions of "consciousness" or "awareness." In the next section I shall try to show how different they are.

5. ABILITY TO EXIST SEPARATELY FROM THE BODY

The only point in the previous section at which argument intruded was in the mention of the Thomistic (and possibly Aristotelian) inference to the "separable," immaterial character of *νοῦς* from a hylomorphic conception of knowledge—a conception according to which knowledge is not the possession of accurate *representations* of an object but rather the subject's becoming *identical* with the object. To see the difference between this argument and the various Cartesian and contemporary arguments for dualism, we need to see how very different these two epistemologies are. Both lend themselves to the imagery of the Mirror of Nature. But in Aristotle's conception intellect is not a mirror inspected by an inner eye. It is both mirror and eye in one. The retinal image is *itself* the model for the "intellect which becomes all things," whereas in the Cartesian model, the intellect *inspects* entities modeled on retinal images. The substantial forms of frogness and starness get right into the Aristotelian intellect, and are there in just the same way they are in the frogs and the stars—not in the way in which frogs and stars are reflected in mirrors. In Descartes's conception—the one which became the basis for "modern" epistemology—it is *representations* which are in the "mind." The Inner Eye surveys these representations hoping to find some mark which will testify to their fidelity.

Whereas skepticism in the ancient world had been a matter of a moral attitude, a style of life, a reaction to the pretensions of the intellectual fashions of the day,¹⁴ skepticism in the manner of Descartes's *First Meditations* was a perfectly definite, precise, "professional" question: How do we know that anything which is mental represents anything which is not mental? How do we know whether what the Eye of the Mind sees is a mirror (even a distorted mirror—an enchanted glass) or a veil? The notion of knowledge as inner representation is so natural to us that Aristotle's model may seem merely quaint, and Cartesian (as opposed to Pyrrhonian "practical") skepticism seems to us so much a part of what it is to "think philosophically" that we are amazed that Plato and Aristotle never confronted it directly. But if we see that the two models—the hylomorphic and the representative—are equally optional, perhaps we can see the inferences to mind-body dualism which stem from each as just as optional.

In an article called "Why Isn't the Mind-Body Problem

¹⁴ See Philip P. Hallie on Greek skepticism as "eudaemonistic practical-wisdom philosophy" whose "doubt, rather than being an instrument for rolling back the veil of sense-experience, is a means of wiping off the excrescences that befoul man's life and lead him into endless, bitter conflicts with his fellow men" (*Scepticism, Man and God* [Middletown, Conn., 1964], p. 7). It is not clear what role the notion of the veil of ideas played in ancient skepticism, but it seems to have been incidental, rather than central in the way in which the Locke-Berkeley-Kant tradition made it central. Charlotte Stough (*Greek Scepticism* [Berkeley, 1969], p. 24) describes Pyrrho as viewing τὸ φαινόμενον as "a curtain between subject and object, screening the real world from his view." However it is not clear that τὸ φαινόμενον is much like a Lockean idea, which is incorrigibly before the mind, purely mental simply because incorrigibly known. The closest ancient thought seems to come to a notion of a class of incorrigibly knowable mental entities is the Stoic doctrine of καταληπτικὴ φαντασία (cf. Stough, pp. 38-40), but this is defined as a representation exactly corresponding to its object and therefore compelling assent, which is hardly Locke's notion. See also Josiah B. Gould, "Being, the World and Appearance in Early Stoicism and Some Other Greek Philosophers," *Review of Metaphysics* 27 (1974), 261-288, especially pp. 277ff.

Ancient?"¹⁵ Wallace Matson has noted the principal point which divides Greek from seventeenth-century ways of looking at the separation of mind from body:

The Greeks did not lack a concept of mind, even of a mind separable from the body. But from Homer to Aristotle, the line between mind and body, when drawn at all, was drawn so as to put the processes of sense perception on the body side. That is one reason why the Greeks had no mind-body problem. Another is that it is difficult, almost impossible, to translate such a sentence as "What is the relation of sensation to mind (or soul)?" into Greek. The difficulty is in finding a Greek equivalent for "sensation" in the sense philosophers make it bear. . . . "Sensation" was introduced into philosophy precisely to make it possible to speak of a conscious state without committing oneself as to the nature or even existence of external stimuli.¹⁶

One can sum up both of Matson's points by saying that in Greek there is no way to divide "conscious states" or "states of consciousness"—events in an inner life—from events in an "external world." Descartes, on the other hand, used "thought" to cover doubting, understanding, affirming, denying, willing, refusing, imagining, and feeling, and said

¹⁵ Wallace Matson, "Why Isn't the Mind-Body Problem Ancient?" in *Mind, Matter and Method: Essays in Philosophy and Science in Honor of Herbert Feigl*, ed. Paul Feyerabend and Grover Maxwell (Minneapolis, 1966), pp. 92-102.

¹⁶ Matson, "Mind-Body Problem," p. 101. He goes on to argue that neither αἴσθησις nor αἴσθημα will do as an equivalent of "sensation." Φάντασμα is a tempting possibility, but even to translate Aristotle's use of it as "mental image" is not above suspicion, and one could not call a pain a φάντασμα. On the difficulty of interpreting Aquinas's notion of *phantasma*, see Anthony Kenny, "Intellect and Imagination in St. Thomas" in *Aquinas: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Kenny (Garden City, N.Y., 1969), pp. 293-294. The point Matson makes in the final sentence of this quotation is backed up by Thomas Reid's account of the term "sensation." See his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), p. 249 (and essay II, *passim*).

that even if I dream that I see light "properly speaking this in me is called feeling, and used in this precise sense that is no other thing than thinking."¹⁷ Once Descartes had entrenched this way of speaking it was possible for Locke to use "idea" in a way which has no Greek equivalent at all, as meaning "whatsoever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks" or "every immediate object of the mind in thinking."¹⁸ As Kenny puts it, the modern use of the

¹⁷ In *Meditation II* Descartes starts by defining a "thing which thinks" as "a mind or soul, or an understanding, or a reason" (*res cogitans, id est, mens, sive animus, sive intellectus, sive ratio*) and quickly goes on to "What is a thing which thinks? It is a thing which doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, and also imagines and feels" (italics added; "*Nempe dubitans, intelligens, affirmans, negans, volens, nolens, imaginans quoque, et sentiens*"). Then he continues with the second passage cited above (*hoc est propria quod in me sentire appellatur; atque hoc praecise sic sumptum nihil aliud est quam cogitare*). All three texts are at pp. 184-186 in *Oeuvres Philosophiques*, ed. Alquié (Paris, 1967), vol. II (pp. 152-153 in vol. I of the Haldane and Ross translation). See also *Principles I*, sec. 9: "By the word *thought* I understand all that of which we are conscious of operating in us (*tout ce qui se fait en nous de telle sorte que nous l'apercevons immédiatement par nous-mêmes*). And that is why not only understanding, willing, imagining, but also feeling (*sentir*) are here the same thing as thought" (*Oeuvres Philosophiques III*, p. 95; Haldane and Ross, I, p. 222). On translating *res cogitans* as "consciousness" see Robert McRae, "Descartes' Definition of Thought" in *Cartesian Studies*, ed. R. J. Butler (Oxford, 1972), pp. 55-70.

¹⁸ The first quotation is from the *Essay* (I, i, 8) and the second from the "Second Letter to the Bishop of Worcester." Immediacy as the mark of the mental (with the criterion of immediacy being incorrigibility) became an unquestioned presupposition in philosophy because of such passages as these. As so often in philosophy, neologistic usage became the mark of an understanding of "distinctively philosophical" topics and issues. Thus we find Hume saying, "... all the conclusions, which the vulgar form under this head, are directly contrary to those which are confirmed by philosophy. For philosophy informs us, that everything, which appears to the mind, is nothing but a perception, and is interrupted, and dependent on the mind; whereas the vulgar confound perceptions and objects, and attribute a distinct continued existence to the very things we feel and see" (*Treatise*, I, iv, ii). Jonathan Bennett notes that "Locke's thought is dominated by his attempt to use 'idea'

word *idea* derives through Locke from Descartes, "and Descartes was consciously giving it a new sense . . . it was a new departure to use it systematically for the contents of a human mind."¹⁹ More important, there had been no term,

univocally as a key term in his accounts of perception and of meaning—or, in shorthand, his use of 'idea' to cover both sense-data and concepts" and says that this "embodies his substantive mistake, shared with Berkeley and Hume and others in the empiricist tradition, of assimilating the sensory far too closely to the intellectual" (Bennett, *Locke, Berkeley, Hume: Central Themes* [Oxford, 1971], p. 25). This mistake, however, goes back to Descartes and was embodied equally in the rationalist tradition. It is part of what Wilfrid Sellars calls the "framework of givenness" common to both traditions, and has always been the target of those influenced by Hegel. Cf. Sellars's *Science, Perception and Reality* (London and New York, 1963), pp. 127 and 155-156. Sellars's and Bennett's complaints are presaged by H. L. Prichard, and before him by T. H. Green, whom I discuss briefly below in chapter three, section 2.

¹⁹ Anthony Kenny, "Descartes on Ideas" in *Descartes: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Willis Doney (Garden City, N.Y., 1967), p. 226. See Descartes's definitions of "pensée" as "tout ce qui est tellement en nous, que nous en sommes immédiatement connaissants" and of "idée" as "cette forme de chacune de nos pensées, par la perception immédiate de laquelle nous avons connaissance de ses mêmes pensées" (*Replies to Second Objections*, Alquié edition, II, 586). John Yolton, however, takes issue with Kenny (and with Alquié and other commentators who take the traditional line—which I am taking here—that Descartes's doctrine of representative perception was a sharp, and perhaps disastrous, break with the scholastic tradition of direct realism.) In his "Ideas and Knowledge in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy" (*Journal of the History of Philosophy* 13 [1975], 145-165) he cites Descartes's characterization of "idée" as "une manière ou façon de penser" in the *Third Meditation* (Alquié, II, 439) as evidence that Descartes held an "act" theory of ideas which was compatible with scholastic direct realism. Here and in other works Yolton has suggested that the usual story (common to, e.g., Étienne Gilson and J. H. Randall) about the emergence of epistemological skepticism out of a theory of representative perception created by Descartes and Locke may be too simple-minded. A similar line is taken by Brian O'Neil in *Epistemological Direct Realism in Descartes' Philosophy* (Albuquerque, N.M., 1974), pp. 96-97: "Descartes' long struggle was an effort to retain and relate the theory of *esse obiectivum* and the doctrine of simple natures." O'Neil agrees with Jean

even of philosophical art, in the Greek and medieval traditions coextensive with the Descartes-Locke use of "idea." Nor had there been the conception of the human mind as an inner space in which both pains and clear and distinct ideas passed in review before a single Inner Eye. There were, to be sure, the notions of taking tacit thought, forming resolutions in *foro interno*, and the like.²⁰ The novelty was the notion of a single inner space in which bodily and perceptual sensations ("confused ideas of sense and imagination" in Descartes's phrase), mathematical truths, moral rules, the idea of God, moods of depression, and all the rest of what we now call "mental" were objects of quasi-observation. Such an inner arena with its inner observer had been suggested at various points in ancient and medieval thought but it had never been taken seriously long enough to form the basis for a problematic.²¹ But the seventeenth

Wahl that Descartes "ait exprimé les deux conceptions fondamentales et antinomiques du réalisme," the one based on something like Thomism and the other based on something like a veil of ideas, some of which guarantee their own accuracy as representations. If Yolton's revisionist readings of Locke and Descartes are correct, then one will have to look further along in history for the emergence of what is now thought of as the epistemological problematic created by Descartes. Here, however, I am going along with Kenny's more familiar account.

²⁰ See, for example, Plato, *Sophist* 263E.

²¹ Adler (*Difference of Man*, pp. 217-218) agrees with Matson that "within the framework of Aristotelian metaphysics and psychology there can be no mind-body problem" but claims that "Plato, for example, would have understood Descartes much better than Aristotle could have, especially the Cartesian separation of mind and body into existentially distinct substances and the Cartesian view of the mind's independence of the body." I would doubt, however, that there is a real difference between Plato and Aristotle on this point; Matson's point applies equally well to both. On the other hand, I have to admit that there is something to Gilson's view that Descartes brings back just those elements in the Augustinian tradition which Thomas had used Aristotle to criticize. So the Coleridgean choice between Plato and Aristotle does seem relevant. Further, there are passages in Augustine which are remarkably close to passages usually cited from Descartes to show the

century took it seriously enough to permit it to pose the problem of the veil of ideas, the problem which made epistemology central to philosophy.

Once Descartes had invented that "precise sense" of "feeling" in which it was "no other than thinking," we began to lose touch with the Aristotelian distinction between reason-as-grasp-of-universals and the living body which takes care of sensation and motion. A *new* mind-body distinction was required—the one which we call that "between consciousness and what is not consciousness." This was not a distinction between human faculties but a distinction between two series of events, such that many events in one series shared many characteristics with many events in

originality of his notion of "thinking" to cover both sense and intellect. Gareth Matthews (in "Consciousness and Life," *Philosophy* 52 [1977], 13-26) cites a striking example from *Contra Academicos*, bk. 3, sec. 11, chap. 26 and comments:

The picture of human beings as having . . . both an "inside" and an "outside" is so commonplace, so (as it may seem to us) commonsensical, that we find it hard to realize how strikingly modern it is. But to appreciate its modernity one need only cast about for statements of it earlier than Descartes. One does find interesting anticipations of it in Augustine, but not much earlier, and not much between the time of Augustine and that of Descartes. (p. 25)

Matthews's point (like Matson's) seems to me a useful corrective to the claim that Ryle was attacking a basic human intuition when he attacked the notion of the ghost in the machine, rather than merely a Cartesian idiosyncrasy. Such a claim is made, for example, by Stuart Hampshire ("Critical Study" of *The Concept of Mind*, *Mind* 59 [1950], 237-255, esp. sec. 2). On the other hand, Hampshire's criticism is strengthened by the suggestion (made to me in conversation by Michael Frede) that the apparent novelty of Cartesian doctrines of representative perception and of human beings' "inner space" is mitigated if one reads Hellenistic philosophy and appreciates the role of the Stoics in Renaissance thought. If Frede is right, and especially if Yolton is also right on the issues discussed above in note 19, then there are many more continuities in the history of philosophic discussion of these topics than the story I am telling (which is borrowed from the Gilson-Randall historiographical tradition) would allow.

the other, while nonetheless differing *toto caelo* because one was an event in extended, and the other in nonextended, substance. It was more like a distinction between two worlds than like a distinction between two sides, or even parts, of a human being. The "Ideal World" of philosophers like Royce inherits the prestige and the mystery of the Glassy Essence of the Renaissance, but it is self-contained in a way in which a part of a man could never be.²² To show that mind was imaginable apart from body was thus an entirely different project from that found in the tradition which stemmed from Aristotle. In Aristotle, the faculty which received universals without embodying them in matter was "separable" and it was hard (without some help from extra-philosophical concerns, such as Christianity) to say whether one should view it as a special power which the body had, a separate substance attached to each mature human body, or perhaps a single substance which was somehow shared among as many men and angels as there happened to be. Aristotle vacillated between the first and second options, with the second having the usual attrac-

²² See Royce's description of Cartesian subjectivism as "The Rediscovery of the Inner Life" (the title of chapter III of his *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* [New York, 1892]) and as opening the way to an understanding that the real world must be "mental" (the conclusion he draws triumphantly in chapter XI). See also chapter I of Lovejoy's *The Revolt Against Dualism* (La Salle, Ill., 1930), in which Lovejoy insists, against those who would dethrone Descartes, that the veil of ideas is a problem which arises for all who hold

the primary and most universal faith of man, his inexpugnable realism, his two-fold belief that he is on the one hand in the midst of realities which are not himself nor mere obsequious shadows of himself, a world which transcends the narrow confines of his own transient being; and, on the other hand, that he can himself somehow reach beyond those confines and bring these external existences within the compass of his own life, yet without annulment of their transcendence. (p. 14)

To Aristotle, Aquinas, Dewey, or Austin this "realism" would seem as artificial and farfetched as Royce's idealism.

tions offered by the possibility of surviving death. Medieval philosophy vacillated between the second and third. But in all these disputes the controversy was not about the survival of "consciousness" but about the indestructibility of *reason*.²³ Once mind is no longer synonymous with reason,

²³ Thus Augustine leads off his treatise "On the Immortality of the Soul" with what he regards as the simplest and most decisive argument of all: the soul is immortal because it is the subject (i.e., the seat) of science, which is eternal. In chapter II, for example, he says: "The human body is mutable and reason is immutable. For all which does not exist always in the same mode is mutable, but that two and two are four exists always in the same mode. . . . This sort of reasoning, then, is immutable. Therefore, reason is immutable" (*Concerning the Teacher and On the Immortality of the Soul*, trans. George Leckie [New York, 1938], p. 61). Between Plato's *Phaedo* and the seventeenth century, the standard philosophical argument for immortality had always revolved around our ability to do what beasts cannot—know unchanging truths rather than just particular facts. Even Descartes, although he opened the floodgates to an entirely new conception of the difference between mind and body, was inclined to backtrack to the standard position and say that the body was responsible for all the actions which we share with brutes—for example, flight from danger. Thus in the *Fourth Responses* he says that reflex action occurs "without the aid of mind," and that this is no more a marvel than that "light reflected from the body of a wolf in the eyes of a sheep should be capable of exciting a motion of flight" (*Oeuvres Philosophiques*, ed. Alquié, II, 671; Haldane and Ross, II, 104). But his treatment of feeling as a sort of thinking would seem to force him into the paradoxical claim (which neither Aristotle nor Augustine would have any reason to make) that the feeling of terror which accompanies our flight has no parallel within the sheep. See the argument in a letter to Henry More (February 5, 1649) at p. 885 of vol. III of the Alquié edition. In such passages as this, the ambiguity of "thought" between "reasoning" and "consciousness" comes to a head. Descartes needs the former sense to avoid paradox and to maintain a link with the tradition, and the latter sense to establish a dualism of extended and nonextended substance. For a review of relevant Cartesian texts and a good account of the impact of Descartes's view on later philosophy, see Norman Malcolm, "Thoughtless Brutes," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 46 (1973), 5-20. Malcolm, however, thinks that my question of why Descartes repackaged pains and thoughts so as

then something other than our grasp of universal truths must serve as the mark of mind.

If we look in Descartes for a common factor which pains, dreams, memory-images, and veridical and hallucinatory perceptions share with concepts of (and judgments about) God, number, and the ultimate constituents of matter, we find no explicit doctrine. Descartes tells us that we have a clear grasp of the distinction between the extended and the non-extended, and so we do (in the same trivial sense in which we might claim a clear grasp of the distinction between the finite and the infinite), but this does not help with the borderline cases (sensory grasp of particulars) which are, as it happens, the heart of the matter. For it is just the status of the "confused ideas of sense and imagination" which makes the difference between mind-as-reason and mind-as-consciousness.

The answer I should like to give to the question "What common factor did Descartes find?" is "indubitability," that is, the fact that pains, like thoughts and most beliefs, are such that the subject cannot doubt that he has them, whereas doubt is possible about everything physical. If we give this answer, then we can see what Royce called "Descartes's rediscovery of the inner life" as the discovery of the true

to include them within the same substance is answered by saying that what is common to imagining, willing, sensing, feeling, etc. is that in all of them "there is an object of awareness." (Malcolm, "Descartes's Proof That His Essence Is Thinking" in *Descartes: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Willis Doney, p. 317n.) In other words, Malcolm thinks that intentionality is sufficient to unite all the things which Descartes wants to unite under *cogitatio* and *pensée*. I do not think that this will work for pains. In any case it runs together the genuine intentionality of linguistic representations and the pseudo-intentionality (as Sellars calls it) of sensations which Aquinas kept separate. It is just this coalescence by Descartes which needs explanation. Or, to put it another way, what needs explanation is just the origin of the notion of "awareness" in the phrase "object of awareness." On the distinction between genuine and pseudo-intentionality, see Sellars, "Being and Being Known" in *Science, Perception and Reality*.

essence of consciousness—that there is no distinction between appearance and reality, whereas everywhere else there is. The trouble with offering this answer, however, is that it is never explicitly given by Descartes himself. So the best I can do to justify it is to say that *something* is needed to explain Descartes's repackaging of the various items which Aristotle and Aquinas had separated, that nothing else seems to do, and that indubitability was so close to the heart of the author of the *First Meditation* that it seems a natural motive for his conceptual revolution.

Margaret Wilson has noted that we can find in Descartes an argument for mind-body dualism (a dualism drawn along the revisionist lines I have been describing) which is a simple "argument from doubt." This argument says that what we can doubt exists cannot, by Leibniz's law, be identical with what we cannot doubt exists. As Wilson says, this argument is "universally recognized to be fallacious."²⁴ It is fallacious, if for no other reason, because Leibniz's law does not apply to intentional properties. But, Wilson continues, the argument for dualism in the *Sixth Meditation* is *not* a version of this fallacious argument. It turns instead on the notion of "a complete thing" (which seems the same as the notion of "substance" in the sense of the term in which Descartes will admit only three substances—thought, extension, and God). The crucial premise is "I can clearly and distinctly understand that something can be a complete thing if it has χ (a psychological property) even if it lacks ϕ (a physical property)" (p. 14).

I think that Wilson's analysis is right, and that she is also right when she says that this argument as a whole "is no better than the distinction between clear and distinct perception and 'mere' perception," concerning which she doubts whether "recent essentialists' appeals to intuition" are on better ground (p. 14). In my view, however, the prin-

²⁴ See Margaret Wilson, "Descartes: the Epistemological Argument for Mind-Body Distinctness," *Nous* 10 (1976), 7-8. I am much indebted to Wilson for careful and helpful comments on a draft of this chapter.

central question raised by her analysis is how Descartes managed to convince himself that something which included both pains and mathematical knowledge was "a complete thing" rather than two things. This in turn reduces to the question of how he was able to give "*penser*" the extended sense of "consciousness" while still seeing it as the name of a separate substance, in the way in which *voûs* and *intellectus* had been made familiar as the names of separate substances. In my view, as I have said, "essentialist intuitions" and "clear and distinct perceptions" are always appeals to linguistic habits entrenched in the language by our predecessors. So what needs explanation is how Descartes was able to convince himself that his repackaging was "intuitive."

Granted that the "argument from doubt" has no merit, I think that nevertheless it is one of those cases of "finding bad reasons for what we believe on instinct" which serves as a clue to the instincts which actually do the convincing. The hunch in question here was, I think, that the indubitably known mathematical truths (once their proofs had been worked through so as to make them clearly and distinctly perceived with a sort of "phenomenal" vividness and non-discursiveness) and the indubitable momentary states of consciousness had something in common—something permitting them to be packaged inside of one substance. Thus Descartes says:

Now as to what concerns ideas, if we consider them only in themselves and do not relate them to anything else beyond themselves, they cannot properly speaking be false; for whether I imagine a goat or a chimera, it is not the less true that I imagine the one rather than the other.²⁵

Speaking of the imaginary beings created by painters, he says that even if

²⁵ *Meditation III*, Alquié edition, II, 193.

their work represents a thing purely fictitious and absolutely false, it is certain all the same that the colors of which this is composed are necessarily real. And for the same reason, although these general things (*generalia*) such as eyes, a head, hands, and so on, may be imaginary, it is nevertheless necessary that there be some more simple and universal (*quaedam aduc magis simplicia et universalia*) things out of which all these are made—just as out of colors all the images of things (*rerum imagines*), whether true or false, which are in our thought (*quae in cogitatione nostra sunt*) are made.²⁶

In these passages, I think Descartes is dimly envisaging a similarity between the "simple natures" which we know in mathematical physics (which may be the *quaedam simplicia et universalia* in question) and the colors themselves. Colors, in his official, Galilean, metaphysical view, are secondary qualities waiting upon analysis into simples, but epistemologically they seem, like pain, to have the same sort of primitive inescapability as the simple natures themselves. He could not make the analogy explicit without setting his foot on the road toward Lockean empiricism. But neither could he give it up without falling back into the old Aristotelian distinctions between the sensitive and the intellectual souls. This would have brought back all the pre-Galilean metaphysics which he wanted to avoid, not to mention a hylomorphic epistemology impossibly difficult to reconcile with the explanatory power of Galilean mechanics.²⁷ In this difficult situation, he allowed, I think,

²⁶ *Meditation I*, Alquié edition, II, 179.

²⁷ Thus the following remark of A.G.A. Balz:

I think Descartes would have liked to assert that the intellect alone is the thinking thing, the unextended immaterial soul substance, attributing to the body imagination, sense, and feeling. But if the pain, caused by the knife, is not a property of the knife as a constellation of modes of matter, it cannot be a property of that constellation of modes of matter that is the human body. So perforce pain and all the remainder of our immediate experience must be dumped into the

most of the work of changing the notion of "mind" to be done under the table, not by any explicit argument but simply by verbal maneuvers which reshuffled the deck slightly, and slightly differently, at each passage in which the mind-body distinction came to the fore.²⁸

If I am right in thinking that Descartes's badly argued hunch, the one which made him able to see pains and thoughts as modes of a single substance, was that indubitability was the common factor they shared with nothing physical, then we can see him as working his way around toward a view in which indubitability is no longer the mark of eternality, but rather of something for which the Greeks had no name—consciousness. Whereas previous philosophers had more or less followed Plato in thinking that only the eternal was known with certainty, Descartes was substituting "clear and distinct perception"—that is, the sort of unconfused knowledge gained by going through a process of analysis—for "indubitability" as a mark of eternal truths. *This left indubitability free to serve as a criterion of the mental.* For although the thought that I am in pain does not count as a clear and distinct perception, it can no more be successfully doubted than the thought that I exist. Whereas Plato and the tradition had made the lines between confusion and clarity, dubitability and indubitability, and the mind and the body coincide, Descartes was

soul substance. ("Concerning the Thomistic and Cartesian Dualisms: A Rejoinder to Professor Mourant," *Journal of Philosophy* 54 [1957], 387.)

²⁸ Such unconscious sleight-of-hand, when practiced by men of Descartes's boldness of imagination, is an occasion for gratitude rather than censure. No great philosopher has avoided it, and no intellectual revolution could succeed without it. In "Kuhnian" terminology, no revolution can succeed which employs a vocabulary commensurable with the old, and thus none can succeed by employing arguments which make unequivocal use of terms shared with the traditional wisdom. So bad arguments for brilliant hunches must necessarily precede the normalization of a new vocabulary which incorporates the hunch. Given that new vocabulary, better arguments become possible, although these will always be found question-begging by the revolution's victims.

now rearranging them. The result was that from Descartes on we have to distinguish between the special metaphysical ground for our certainty about our inner states ("nothing is closer to the mind than itself") and the various epistemological reasons which ground our certainties about anything else. This is why, once this distinction was drawn clearly, and once Descartes's own confusion between certainty that something exists and certainty about its nature was dissipated, empiricism began to edge out rationalism. For our certainty that our concept of "painful" or "blue" signifies something real edges out our certainty that we have a clear and distinct perception of such simple natures as "substance," "thought," and "motion." With Lockean empiricism, foundationalist epistemology emerged as the paradigm of philosophy.²⁹

Descartes himself was forever trying to hold on to standard Platonic and scholastic distinctions with one hand while deconstructing them with the other. Thus we find him, when challenged by Hobbes,³⁰ using the pineal gland to

²⁹ The discovery of the possibility of an empiricist foundationalism is connected with what Ian Hacking has described in *The Emergence of Probability* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975) as the invention of the notion of "evidence" in the modern sense—a notion which was a prerequisite for foundationalist projects, and a fortiori for empiricism. This invention, as well as the eventual triumph of empiricism, was connected with the distinction between the high and low sciences (cf. Hacking, p. 35, and T. S. Kuhn, *The Essential Tension* [Chicago, 1978], chap. 3). A fuller account of these Cartesian shifts would bring these themes together.

³⁰ See his claim that Hobbes confuses ideas properly so-called with "les images des choses matérielles depeinte en la fantasie corporelle," the latter being the pineal gland, in *Replies to Third Objections*, Alquié edition, II, 611. Margaret Wilson, in "Cartesian Dualism" (in *Descartes: Critical and Interpretive Essays*, ed. Michael Hooker, [Baltimore, 1978]) suggests, on the basis of such passages, that we should be cautious about attributing to him the view that "we clearly and distinctly perceive our sensations apart from any physical state or occurrence." Caution is indeed called for, but this is not to say that there is a way of making Descartes's denial of this claim consistent with the more "mainline" dualistic passages in the *Meditations*. (This essay of Wilson's also makes the useful point that Descartes himself, unlike

reintroduce the distinction between the sensitive and intellectual souls, and using it again to recreate the standard Pauline association between the passions and the flesh in *The Passions of the Soul*. But this dissimulation was laughed out of court by, for example, Spinoza, who saw clearly that a confused, but purely mental, idea could do everything which animal spirits or "la fantasie corporelle" could do.³¹ Once such second-generation Cartesians, who viewed Descartes himself as having one foot still implanted in the scholastic mud, had purified and "normalized" Cartesian doctrine, we got the full-fledged version of the "'idea' idea," the one which made it possible for Berkeley to think of extended substance as a hypothesis of which we had no need. This thought could never have occurred to a pre-Cartesian bishop, struggling with the flesh rather than with intellectual confusion. With this full-fledged "'idea' idea" there came the possibility of philosophy as a discipline which centered around, of all things, epistemology, rather than around God and morality.³² Even for Descartes himself, the

Gassendi, Hobbes, and Spinoza, did not believe in psychophysical parallelism and thus did adopt the view that nonphysical forces operated in the mind which made it impossible to predict thoughts physiologically.)

³¹ See Spinoza, *Ethics*, the first and last paragraphs of part III and the discussion of animal spirits in the preface to part V.

³² This full-fledged "'idea' idea" (blandly presupposed by Hume in the passage cited in note 18 above) is the one Reid despairingly protested against; in this protest he was preceded by Arnauld and succeeded in later centuries by T. H. Green and by John Austin. John Yolton has pointed out to me a passage in Arnauld's *Des vraies et des fausses idées* (*Oeuvres*, Paris and Lausanne, 1780, vol. 39, p. 190) which brings in the mirror-imagery (going back to Plato, *Republic* 510a) that I have been treating as the original sin of epistemology:

Since all men were at first infants, and since they then were occupied only with their bodies and with the things which their senses encountered, they spent a long time without knowing of any other sight (*vue*) than the corporeal, which they attribute to their eyes. They could not avoid noticing two facts. The first is that it is necessary that the object be before our eyes if we are to see it. This is

matter of the relation between body and soul was not something for philosophy; philosophy had, so to speak, risen above the practical wisdom sought by the ancients and had become professional, almost as professional as mathematics, whose subject symbolized the indubitability characteristic of the mind. "It is only in daily life and ordinary discourse, abstaining from meditating and studying matters which excite the imagination, that one learns to grasp (*concevoir*) the union of body and soul . . . that union which everyone experiences without philosophizing."³³ The Cartesian change from mind-as-reason to mind-as-inner-arena was not the triumph of the prideful individual subject freed from scholastic shackles so much as the triumph of the quest for certainty over the quest for wisdom. From that time forward, the way was open for philosophers either to attain the rigor of the mathematician or the mathematical physicist, or to explain the appearance of rigor in these fields, rather than to help people attain peace of mind. Science, rather than living, became philosophy's subject, and epistemology its center.

6. DUALISM AND "MIND-STUFF"

I can summarize the result of the previous section by saying the notion of the "separation between mind and

what they call presence (*présence*) and this makes them regard the presence of the object as a necessity for sight. The second fact is that we sometimes see visible things in mirrors, or in water, or in other things which represent them. Thus they believe, wrongly, that they do not then see the things themselves, but only their images.

Compare Austin on "the philosophers' use of 'directly perceive'" (*Sense and Sensibilia* [Oxford, 1962], p. 19) and on mirror-images (*ibid.*, pp. 31, 50). For a valuable survey of post-Cartesian accounts of what Descartes should have meant by "idea" (including Arnauld's last-ditch attempt to treat ideas as acts, in the manner of Brentano, Husserl, and G. E. Moore), see Robert McRae, "'Idea' as a Philosophical term in the 17th Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 26 (1965), 175-190.

³³ Letter to Princess Elizabeth, June 28, 1643 (Alquié edition, III, 45), cited in van Peursen, *Body, Soul, Spirit*, p. 25.

body" means different things, and is proved by different philosophical arguments, before and after Descartes. The hylomorphic epistemology which thought of grasping universals as instancing in one's intellect what the frog instanced in its flesh was, thanks to the rise of mathematical physics, being replaced by a law-event framework which explained froghood as possibly a merely "nominal" essence. So the notion of reason as a faculty of grasping universals was not available for use in a premise proving the distinctness of the mind from the body. The notion which would define what could "have a distinct existence from the body" was one which would draw a line between the cramps in one's stomach and the associated feeling in one's mind.

I have suggested that the only criterion which will draw this line is indubitability—that closeness to the Inner Eye which permits Descartes to say (in a sentence which would have astonished Isabella and antiquity) that "nothing is easier for the mind to know than itself."³⁴ But this may seem strange, since the obvious Cartesian candidate for such a mark would seem to be non-spatiality. Descartes insists over and over again that we can separate mind from "extended substance," thereby viewing it as nonextended substance. Further, the first and most common-sensical rebuttal offered to contemporary philosophers who suggest that pains might be identical with brain processes is drawn straight from Descartes: viz., pains "in" amputated limbs are nonspatial—the argument being that if they had any spatial location they would be in an arm, but since there is no arm, they must be of a quite different ontological sort.

³⁴ This passage occurs in a splendid *non sequitur* following the example of the piece of wax in *Meditation II*: since even bodies are not known "*proprie*" by sense or imagination but only by intellect, it is clear that *nihil facilius aut evidentius mea mente posse a me percipi* (Alquié, II, 192; Haldane and Ross, I, 157). The argument depends upon confusion between the *cogito* as proof of my existence and as isolation of my essence.

Philosophers still insist that "it *makes no sense at all* to locate the occurrence of a thought at some place within your body,"³⁵ and they tend to attribute this insight to Descartes. But, as I have argued in section 2 above, we would hardly think of a thought or a pain as a *thing* (a particular distinct from a person, rather than a state of a person) which was not locatable unless we already had the notion of a nonextended substance of which it might be a portion. No intuition that pains and thoughts are nonspatial antedates, or can ground an argument for, the Cartesian notion of the mind as a distinct substance (a nonspatial one). There is, however, more to be said about how the notion of "nonspatial substance," and thus of "mind-stuff," entered philosophy, and thus about why contemporary philosophy of mind finds itself talking about *pains* and *beliefs* rather than *people having* pains or beliefs. Going over this further material will, I hope, make clearer how very different *Cartesian* dualism is from the "dualism" of contemporary discussions.

We need to bear in mind that the nonspatial substance which Kant and Strawson reject as an incoherent notion was a seventeenth-century notion, and that it is a commonplace of intellectual history that strange things happened to the notion of "substance" in that century. For Aristotle, and still for St. Thomas, the paradigm of a substance was an individual man or frog. Detached parts of men or frogs were, like clumps of turf or pailsful of water, dubious borderline cases—they were "capable of existing separately" in one sense (spatial separation), but they did not have the functional unity or "nature" which proper substances should have. Aristotle, when worried about such cases, was wont to dismiss them as "mere potencies"—as neither accidents, like the frog's color, nor proper actuali-

³⁵ Jerome Shaffer, *Philosophy of Mind* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1968), p. 48; cf. Norman Malcolm, "Scientific Materialism and the Identity Theory," *Dialogue* 3 (1964), 115-125.

ties, like the living, leaping frog itself.³⁶ Descartes pretends that he is using "distinct substance" in the standard sense of "capable of separate existence," but he does not mean *either* spatial separation *or* functional unity.³⁷ He means something like "capable of having everything else disappear [or be "thought away"] and still being around."³⁸ This definition of "capacity for separate existence" fits the One, the Platonic Ideas, and Aristotle's Unmoved Movers, but almost nothing else. Given such a definition, it is hardly surprising that there should turn out to be, at most, only three substances—God, mind, and matter. Nor is it surprising that Malebranche and Berkeley should begin to have doubts about the third candidate, and Spinoza about both third and second. It would not have occurred to Aristotle to think that frogs, stars, and men were simply so many accidents of one big substance merely on the ground that if

³⁶ Cf. *Metaphysics* 1040b, 5-10 on "heaps." I discuss the tension between Aristotle's criteria for being a substance—"separate existence" and "unity"—in "Genus as Matter," in *Exegesis and Argument: Studies in Greek Philosophy in Honor of Gregory Vlastos*, ed. Edward N. Lee et al. (Dordrecht, 1973).

³⁷ Descartes thinks that a human hand, whether or not detached, is a perfectly good example of substance. Cf. *Fourth Responses* (Alquié, II, 663; Haldane and Ross, II, 99), where he says that the sense in which a hand is an "incomplete substance" is unimportant and is merely a matter of "not forming a whole distinct from every other thing" (*en un autre sens on les peut appeler incomplètes, non qu'elles aient rien d'incomplet en tant qu'elles sont des substances, mais seulement en tant qu'elles se rapportent à quelqu'autre substance avec laquelle elles composent un tout par soi et distinct de tout autre*). There is, however, a tension in Descartes between the view that any material thing (a hand, a dust mote) is a substance and the notion (clear in Spinoza) that these things are only modes of a larger substance (e.g., matter-as-a-whole).

³⁸ This definition gives Descartes trouble since it suggests the Spinozistic view that God, on whom everything else must be thought to depend, is the only substance. The point is discussed by L. J. Beck, *The Metaphysics of Descartes* (Oxford, 1965), p. 110, who says: "The apparent inconsistency in using the word *substantia*, or even *res*, to connote the self of the *Cogito* is due, in no small measure, to trying to put new wine into old bottles, to express the Cartesian doctrine in the technical language of the schools."

we imagine all the other bodies in the world (e.g., earth and air) annihilated, the frog and the human could hardly be imagined to survive. But precisely this notion of one big substance was what was needed to provide a "philosophical foundation" of Galilean mechanics while heaping scorn on traditional hylomorphic explanations.³⁹ When matter-as-all-the-atoms-(or vortices)-put-together replaced matter-as-potentiality, it was promoted to the rank of substance (absorbing all the old nonhuman Aristotelian substances into itself) and left only Aristotle's "pure actuality" (the *νοῦς* which is the Unmoved Movers and may not be distinct from the "separable" *νοῦς* in individual men) as a possible rival in that rank.⁴⁰

We contemporary inheritors of the Cartesian distinction between mind and matter have lost touch with the notion of "substance" in its seventeenth-century definition. The notion of existence *a se* was never intelligible to the vulgar, and Kant succeeded in making it unintelligible even to professional philosophers. So when *we* assent to the claim that there is an obvious distinction between a category of things which can exist in space and another category of things which cannot, *we* are not assenting to Descartes' claim that mind and matter are distinct entities "which depend on nothing else for their existence." Many contemporary philosophers who agree that it is nonsense to

³⁹ Cf. E. A. Burtt, *Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science* (Garden City, N.Y., 1955), chap. IV. At p. 117 Burtt says, "The fact is, and this is of central importance for our whole study, *Descartes' real criterion is not permanence but the possibility of mathematical handling*; in his case, as with Galileo, the whole course of his thought from his adolescent studies on had inured him to the notion that we know objects only in mathematical terms." The resulting distinction between primary and secondary qualities supplies the motive to regard paradigmatic Aristotelian substances as merely modes of *res extensa*.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Fourth Responses* (Alquié, II, 662; Haldane and Ross, II, 98) where Descartes says that "*concevoir pleinement*" and "*concevoir que c'est une chose complète*" are synonymous, a point which he thinks helps explain how we grasp that soul and body are two substances.

speak of the location of a pain or a thought nevertheless insist, *pace* Descartes, that a stream of consciousness without a body is unimaginable. Such philosophers are content to think of mental entities as states of persons rather than "bits of ghostly stuff," and to let nonlocatability be a sign of the adjectival status of states rather than of the peculiar makeup of certain particulars. Since a man's build, personality, weight, hilarity, or charm is not capable of being pinpointed in space, why should his beliefs and desires be? So it seems plausible to say that Descartes's insight was merely a recognition of the difference between parts of persons or states of those parts (e.g., cramps of their stomachs) on the one hand and certain states of the whole person on the other, misleadingly stated in a corrupted scholastic vocabulary as a distinction of "substance."

This account of what it means to say that the mind is non-spatial provides a convenient way of simultaneously stating and dissolving *one* mind-body problem. For few people are worried by an ontological gap between what is signified by names and what is signified by adjectives. However, like most behaviorist-style solutions to the mind-body problem, this one has difficulties with thoughts and raw feels—events as opposed to dispositions. It is easy to view beliefs and desires and moods as (in Ryle's phrase) "traits of intellect and character" which require no nonmaterial medium as substrate but only the man himself. It is harder to think of raw feels, mental images, and thoughts this way.⁴¹ They suggest an immaterial stream of consciousness rushing invisibly and intangibly through the interstices of the brain, perhaps—

⁴¹ The point is made in various ways by Hampshire, Austin, and Ayer in their respective reviews of *The Concept of Mind* reprinted in *Ryle: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. O. P. Wood and George Pitcher (Garden City, N.Y., 1970). For ways of extending Ryle's methods to perceptions and the associated raw feels, see Pitcher, *A Theory of Perception*. On perceptions as dispositions to belief, and the discussion of "adverbial materialism," see James Cornman, *Materialism and Sensations* (New Haven, 1971). See also Richard Rorty, "Incorrigibility as the Mark of the Mental," *Journal of Philosophy* 67 (1970), 406-409.

because it seems so natural to regard them as things rather than states of things. So contemporary philosophers, returning to an Aristotelian and vulgar notion of "thing" instead of Descartes's sophisticated and extravagant notion of "substance," are inclined to split the difference between Aristotle and Descartes. That is, they think that Aristotle neglected certain particulars—for example, pains and raw feels—whereas Descartes pointlessly took them to be accidents of one big nonextended substance, just as he took frogs and atoms to be accidental configurations of one big extended substance called Matter. This permits contemporary philosophers to have mental entities without the soul, and thus without appearing to be haunted by the Invisible and Intangible Man of religious belief (a notion which they read into Descartes—not without some encouragement from Descartes himself).

This dualism based on "separate existence from the body"—a fourth sort—is quite different from the dualism between a person and his ghost, or between a person and his Aristotelian passive intellect, or between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. But it is also a partial dualism—as partial, in equal and opposite ways, as that of the ancients. Whereas the ancients took only the universal-grasping part of Descartes's nonextended substance as "separately existing," contemporary dualists (conceding beliefs, desires, and the like to Ryle as ways of speaking of dispositions) take only event-like candidates for mentality as "separately existing." Whereas Thomists, for example, accuse Descartes of having pointlessly endowed sense with the immateriality which is the prerogative of reason, contemporary dualists accuse him of having pointlessly endowed mathematical knowledge and decisions on conduct with the immaterial thinghood which belongs to pains, after-images, and occurrent thoughts. For the ancients, the mind was most obviously capable of separate existence when it contemplated the unchanging and was itself unchanging. For the moderns, it is most obviously so capable when it is a blooming, buzzing collection of raw

feels.⁴² Whoever is right, it is clear that neither ancients nor moderns share Descartes's "clear and distinct perception" of the separability of *all* the items he lumped together under "thinking."

Descartes's only improvement on the Homeric notion of an Invisible and Intangible Man was to strip the intruder of humanoid form. By thus making the possible intruders among bodies less easily identifiable, he made them more philosophical. They were more philosophical in that, like the *νοῦς* of Aristotle and the Glassy Essence of Isabella, they were not shady homunculi, but rather essentially unpicturable entities. Since to be concerned with philosophical matters was to be concerned with that which the eye cannot see nor the ear hear, both seventeenth-century nonextended substance and contemporary nonlocatable thoughts and feels were thought to be more philosophically respectable than the ghosts for whose peace religious believers pray. But contemporary philosophers, having updated Descartes, can be dualists without their dualism making the slightest difference to any human interest or concern, without interfering with science or lending any support to religion. For insofar as dualism reduces to the bare insistence that pains and thoughts have no places, nothing whatever hangs on the distinction between mind and body.

Let me now remind the reader of the course I have followed in this chapter. In sections 1–2 I argued that we could make no sense of the notion of "mental entities" as a distinct ontological genus without invoking the notion of "phenomenal entities" such as pains, entities whose being was exhausted by the single property of, for example, painfulness. I claimed that the real problem was not to abjure such

⁴² "Whereas, for Plato, rational thoughts were the paradigmatic activities of the soul, such lowly events as itches, toothaches, and twinges are now among those typically mentioned in philosophical discussion as mental events" (Jaegwon Kim, "Materialism and the Criteria of the Mental," *Synthese* 22 [1971], 336).

hypostatized universals but to explain why anyone had taken them seriously, and how they came to seem relevant to discussions of the nature of personhood and of reason. I hope that sections 3–6 have given an idea of how I think these historical questions can be answered (although I am painfully aware of the lacunae in the story I have told). My answer to the question "Why do we tend to lump the intentional and the phenomenal together as 'the mental'?" is that Descartes used the notion of the "incorrigibly known" to bridge the gap between them. So I now need to spell out more fully my own anti-Cartesian, Wittgensteinian, view of the nature of "our privileged access to the mental." In the following chapter, therefore, I put aside personhood and reason, and discuss consciousness almost exclusively. I shall try to show that the purportedly metaphysical "problem of consciousness" is no more and no less than the epistemological "problem of privileged access," and that once this is seen questions about dualism versus materialism lose their interest.

thought, as the not-external outside and the not-internal inside—that which cannot be thought and yet must be thought, which was thought once, as Christ was incarnated once, in order to show, that one time, the possibility of the impossible. Thus Spinoza is the Christ of philosophers, and the greatest philosophers are hardly more than apostles who distance themselves from or draw near to this mystery. Spinoza, the infinite becoming-philosopher: he showed, drew up, and thought the “best” plane of immanence—that is, the purest, the one that does not hand itself over to the transcendent or restore any transcendent, the one that inspires the fewest illusions, bad feelings, and erroneous perceptions.

3. Conceptual Personae

EXAMPLE 5

Although Descartes’s cogito is created as a concept, it has presuppositions. This is not in the way that one concept presupposes others (for example, “man” presupposes “animal” and “rational”); the presuppositions here are implicit, subjective, and preconceptual, forming an image of thought: everyone knows what thinking means. Everyone can think; everyone wants the truth. Are these the only two elements—the concept and the plane of immanence or image of thought that will be occupied by concepts of the same group (the cogito and other concepts that can be connected to it)? Is there something else, in Descartes’s case, other than the created cogito and the presupposed image of thought? Actually there is something else, somewhat mysterious, that appears from time to time or that shows through and seems to have a hazy existence halfway between concept and preconceptual plane, passing from one to the other. In the present case it is the Idiot: it is the Idiot who says “I” and sets up the

cogito but who also has the subjective presuppositions or lays out the plane. The idiot is the private thinker, in contrast to the public teacher (the schoolman): the teacher refers constantly to taught concepts (man—rational animal), whereas the private thinker forms a concept with innate forces that everyone possesses on their own account by right (“I think”). Here is a very strange type of persona who wants to think, and who thinks for himself, by the “natural light.” The idiot is a conceptual persona. The question “Are there precursors of the cogito?” can be made more precise. Where does the persona of the idiot come from, and how does it appear? Is it in a Christian atmosphere, but in reaction against the “scholastic” organization of Christianity and the authoritarian organization of the church? Can traces of this persona already be found in Saint Augustine? Is Nicholas of Cusa the one who accords the idiot full status as conceptual persona? This would be why he is close to the cogito but still unable to crystallize it as a concept.¹ In any case, the history of philosophy must go through these personae, through their changes according to planes and through their variety according to concepts. Philosophy constantly brings conceptual personae to life; it gives life to them.

The idiot will reappear in another age, in a different context that is still Christian, but Russian now. In becoming a Slav, the idiot is still the singular individual or private thinker, but with a different singularity. It is Chestov who finds in Dostoyevski the power of a new opposition between private thinker and public teacher.² The old idiot wanted indubitable truths at which he could arrive by himself: in the meantime he would doubt everything, even that $3 + 2 = 5$; he would doubt every truth of Nature. The new idiot has no wish for indubitable truths; he will never be “resigned” to the fact that $3 + 2 = 5$ and wills the absurd—this is not the same image of thought. The old idiot wanted truth, but the new idiot wants to turn the absurd into the highest power of thought—in other words, to create. The old idiot wanted to be accountable only to reason, but the new

idiot, closer to Job than to Socrates, wants account to be taken of “every victim of History”—these are not the same concepts. The new idiot will never accept the truths of History. The old idiot wanted, by himself, to account for what was or was not comprehensible, what was or was not rational, what was lost or saved; but the new idiot wants the lost, the incomprehensible, and the absurd to be restored to him. This is most certainly not the same persona; a mutation has taken place. And yet a slender thread links the two idiots, as if the first had to lose reason so that the second rediscovers what the other, in winning it, had lost in advance: Descartes goes mad in Russia?

It is possible that the conceptual persona only rarely or allusively appears for himself. Nevertheless, he is there, and however nameless and subterranean, he must always be reconstituted by the reader. Sometimes he appears with a proper name: Socrates is the principal conceptual persona of Platonism. Many philosophers have written dialogues, but there is a danger of confusing the dialogue’s characters with conceptual personae: they only nominally coincide and do not have the same role. The character of the dialogue sets out concepts: in the simplest case, one of the characters, who is sympathetic, is the author’s representative; whereas the others, who are more-or-less antipathetic, refer to other philosophies whose concepts they expound in such a way as to prepare them for the criticisms or modifications to which the author wishes to subject them. On the other hand, conceptual personae carry out the movements that describe the author’s plane of immanence, and they play a part in the very creation of the author’s concepts. Thus, even when they are “antipathetic,” they are so while belonging fully to the plane that the philosopher in question lays out and to the concepts that he creates. They then indicate the dangers specific to this plane, the bad perceptions, bad feelings, and even negative movements that emerge from it, and they will themselves inspire original concepts whose repulsive character remains a constitutive property of that philosophy. This is all the truer for the

plane's *positive* movements, for *attractive* concepts and *sympathetic* personae: an entire philosophical *Einfühlung*.^{*} And in both cases there are often great ambiguities.

The conceptual persona is not the philosopher's representative but, rather, the reverse: the philosopher is only the envelope of his principal conceptual persona and of all the other personae who are the intercessors [*intercesseurs*], the real subjects of his philosophy. Conceptual personae are the philosopher's "heteronyms," and the philosopher's name is the simple pseudonym of his personae. I am no longer myself but thought's aptitude for finding itself and spreading across a plane that passes through me at several places. The philosopher is the idiosyncrasy of his conceptual personae. The destiny of the philosopher is to become his conceptual persona or personae, at the same time that these personae themselves become something other than what they are historically, mythologically, or commonly (the Socrates of Plato, the Dionysus of Nietzsche, the Idiot of Nicholas of Cusa). The conceptual persona is the becoming or the subject of a philosophy, on a par with the philosopher, so that Nicholas of Cusa, or even Descartes, should have signed themselves "the Idiot," just as Nietzsche signed himself "the Antichrist" or "Dionysus crucified." In everyday life speech-acts refer back to psychosocial types who actually attest to a subjacent third person: "I decree mobilization as President of the Republic," "I speak to you as father," and so on. In the same way, the philosophical shifter is a speech-act in the third person where it is always a conceptual persona who says "I": "I think as Idiot," "I will as Zarathustra," "I dance as Dionysus," "I claim as Lover." Even Bergsonian duration has need of a runner. In philosophical enunciations we do not do something by saying it but produce movement by thinking it, through the intermediary of a concep-

tual persona. Conceptual personae are also the true agents of enunciation. "Who is 'I'?" It is always a third person.

We invoke Nietzsche because few philosophers have worked so much with both sympathetic (Dionysus, Zarathustra) and antipathetic (Christ, the Priest, the Higher Men; Socrates himself become antipathetic) conceptual personae. It might be thought that Nietzsche renounces concepts. However, he creates immense and intense concepts ("forces," "value," "becoming," "life"; and repulsive concepts like *ressentiment* and "bad conscience"), just as he lays out a new plane of immanence (infinite movements of the will to power and the eternal return) that completely changes the image of thought (criticism of the will to truth). But in Nietzsche, the conceptual personae involved never remain implicit. It is true that their manifestation for themselves gives rise to an ambiguity that leads many readers to see Nietzsche as a poet, thaumaturge, or creator of myths. But conceptual personae, in Nietzsche and elsewhere, are not mythical personifications or historical persons or literary or novelistic heroes. Nietzsche's Dionysus is no more the mythical Dionysus than Plato's Socrates is the historical Socrates. Becoming is not being, and Dionysus becomes philosopher at the same time that Nietzsche becomes Dionysus. Here, again, it is Plato who begins: he becomes Socrates at the same time that he makes Socrates become philosopher.

The difference between conceptual personae and aesthetic figures consists first of all in this: the former are the powers of concepts, and the latter are the powers of affects and percepts. The former take effect on a plane of immanence that is an image of Thought-Being (noumenon), and the latter take effect on a plane of composition as image of a Universe (phenomenon). The great aesthetic figures of thought and the novel but also of painting, sculpture, and music produce affects that surpass ordinary affections and perceptions, just as concepts go beyond everyday opinions. Melville said that a novel includes an infinite number of interesting characters but just one original Figure like the single sun of a constellation of a universe, like

^{*}*Einfühlung*, or empathy, as in the title of Wilhelm Worringer's great work *Abstraktion und Einfühlung*, translated into English as *Abstraction and Empathy* by Michael Bullock (London: Routledge, 1953).

the beginning of things, or like the beam of light that draws a hidden universe out of the shadow: hence Captain Ahab, or Bartleby.³ Kleist's universe is shot through with affects that traverse it like arrows or that suddenly freeze the universe in which the figures of Homburg or Penthesilea loom. Figures have nothing to do with resemblance or rhetoric but are the condition under which the arts produce affects of stone and metal, of strings and wind, of line and color, on a plane of composition of a universe. Art and philosophy crosscut the chaos and confront it, but it is not the same sectional plane; it is not populated in the same way. In the one there is the constellation of a universe or affects and percepts; and in the other, constitutions of immanence or concepts. Art thinks no less than philosophy, but it thinks through affects and percepts.

This does not mean that the two entities do not often pass into each other in a becoming that sweeps them both up in an intensity which co-determines them. With Kierkegaard, the theatrical and musical figure of Don Juan becomes a conceptual persona, and the Zarathustra persona is already a great musical and theatrical figure. It is as if, between them, not only alliances but also branchings and substitutions take place. In contemporary thought, Michel Guérin is one of those who has made the most profound discovery of the existence of conceptual personae at the heart of philosophy. But he defines them within a "logodrama" or a "figurology" that puts affect into thought.⁴ This means that the concept as such can be concept of the affect, just as the affect can be affect of the concept. The plane of composition of art and the plane of immanence of philosophy can slip into each other to the degree that parts of one may be occupied by entities of the other. In fact, in each case the plane and that which occupies it are like two relatively distinct and heterogeneous parts. A thinker may therefore decisively modify what thinking means, draw up a new image of thought, and institute a new plane of immanence. But, instead of creating new concepts that occupy it, they populate it with other instances, with other poetic, novelistic, or even pictorial or

musical entities. The opposite is also true. *Igitur* is just such a case of a conceptual persona transported onto a plane of composition, an aesthetic figure carried onto a plane of immanence: his proper name is a conjunction. These thinkers are "half" philosophers but also much more than philosophers. But they are not sages. There is such force in those unhinged works of Hölderlin, Kleist, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Kafka, Michaux, Pessoa, Artaud, and many English and American novelists, from Melville to Lawrence or Miller, in which the reader discovers admiringly that they have written the novel of Spinozism. To be sure, they do not produce a synthesis of art and philosophy. They branch out and do not stop branching out. They are hybrid geniuses who neither erase nor cover over differences in kind but, on the contrary, use all the resources of their "athleticism" to install themselves within this very difference, like acrobats torn apart in a perpetual show of strength.

There is all the more reason for saying that conceptual personae (and also aesthetic figures) are irreducible to *psychosocial types*, even if here again there are constant penetrations. Simmel, and then Goffman, have probed far into the enclaves or margins of a society the study of these types, which often seem to be unstable: the stranger, the exile, the migrant, the transient, the native, the homecomer.⁵ This is not through a taste for the anecdote. It seems to us that a social field comprises structures and functions, but this does not tell us very much directly about particular movements that affect the Socius. We already know the importance in animals of those activities that consist in forming *territories*, in abandoning or leaving them, and even in re-creating territory on something of a different nature (ethologists say that an animal's partner or friend is the "equivalent of a home" or that the family is a "mobile territory"). All the more so for the hominid: from its act of birth, it deterritorializes its front paw, wrests it from the earth to turn it into a hand, and reterritorializes it on branches and tools. A stick is, in turn, a deterritorialized branch. We need to see how everyone, at every age, in the smallest things as

in the greatest challenges, seeks a territory, tolerates or carries out deterritorializations, and is reterritorialized on almost anything—memory, fetish, or dream. Refrains express these powerful dynamisms: my cabin in Canada . . . farewell, I am leaving . . . yes, it's me; I had to come back. We cannot even say what comes first, and perhaps every territory presupposes a prior deterritorialization, or everything happens at the same time. Social fields are inextricable knots in which the three movements are mixed up so that, in order to disentangle them, we have to *diagnose real types or personae*. The merchant buys in a territory, deterritorializes products into commodities, and is reterritorialized on commercial circuits. In capitalism, capital or property is deterritorialized, ceases to be landed, and is reterritorialized on the means of production; whereas labor becomes “abstract” labor, reterritorialized in wages: this is why Marx not only speaks of capital and labor but feels the need to draw up some true psychosocial types, both antipathetic and sympathetic: *the capitalist, the proletarian*. If we are looking for the originality of the Greek world we must ask what sort of territory is instituted by the Greeks, how they deterritorialize themselves, on what they are reterritorialized—and, in order to do this, to pick out specifically Greek types (the Friend, for example?). It is not always easy to decide which, at a given moment in a given society, are the good types: thus, the freed slave as type of deterritorialization in the Chinese Chou empire, the figure of the Exiled, of which the sinologist Tokei has given us a detailed portrait. We believe that psychosocial types have this meaning: to make perceptible, in the most insignificant or most important circumstances, the formation of territories, the vectors of deterritorialization, and the process of reterritorialization.

But are there not also territories and deterritorializations that are not only physical and mental but spiritual—not only relative but absolute in a sense yet to be determined? What is the Fatherland or Homeland invoked by the thinker, by the philosopher or artist? Philosophy is inseparable from a Homeland to which the *a priori*, the

innate, or the memory equally attest. But why is this fatherland unknown, lost, or forgotten, turning the thinker into an Exile? What will restore an equivalent of territory, valid as a home? What will be philosophical refrains? What is thought's relationship with the earth? Socrates the Athenian, who does not like to travel, is guided by Parmenides of Elea when he is young, who is replaced by the Stranger when he is old, as if Platonism needed at least two conceptual personae.⁶ What sort of stranger is there within the philosopher, with his look of returning from the land of the dead? *The role of conceptual personae is to show thought's territories, its absolute deterritorializations and reterritorializations*. Conceptual personae are thinkers, solely thinkers, and their personalized features are closely linked to the diagrammatic features of thought and the intensive features of concepts. A particular conceptual persona, who perhaps did not exist before us, thinks in us. For example, if we say that a conceptual persona stammers, it is no longer a type who stammers in a particular language but a thinker who makes the whole of language stammer: the interesting question then is “What is this thought that can only stammer?” Or again, if we say that a conceptual persona is the Friend, or that he is the Judge or the Legislator, we are no longer concerned with private, public, or legal status but with that which belongs by right to thought and only to thought. Stammerer, friend, or judge do not lose their concrete existence but, on the contrary, take on a new one as thought's internal conditions for its real exercise with this or that conceptual persona. This is not two friends who engage in thought; rather, it is thought itself that requires the thinker to be a friend so that thought is divided up within itself and can be exercised. It is thought itself which requires this division of thought between friends. These are no longer empirical, psychological, and social determinations, still less abstractions, but intercessors, crystals, or seeds of thought.

Even if the word *absolute* turns out to be exact, we must not think that deterritorializations and reterritorializations of thought transcend

psychosocial ones, any more than they are reducible to them, or to an abstraction or ideological expression of them. Rather, there is a conjunction, a system of referrals or perpetual relays. The features of conceptual personae have relationships with the epoch or historical milieu in which they appear that only psychosocial types enable us to assess. But, conversely, the physical and mental movements of psychosocial types, their pathological symptoms, their relational attitudes, their existential modes, and their legal status, become susceptible to a determination purely of thinking and of thought that wrests them from both the historical state of affairs of a society and the lived experience of individuals, in order to turn them into the features of conceptual personae, or *thought-events* on the plane laid out by thought or under the concepts it creates. Conceptual personae and psychosocial types refer to each other and combine without ever merging.

No list of the features of conceptual personae can be exhaustive, since they are constantly arising and vary with planes of immanence. On a given plane, different kinds of features are mixed together to make up a persona. We assume there are *pathic features*: the Idiot, the one who wants to think for himself and is a persona who can change and take on another meaning. But also a Madman, a kind of madman, a cataleptic thinker or "mummy" who discovers in thought an inability to think; or a great maniac, someone frenzied, who is in search of that which precedes thought, an Already-there, but at the very heart of thought itself. Philosophy and schizophrenia have often been associated with each other. But in one case the schizophrenic is a conceptual persona who lives intensely within the thinker and forces him to think, whereas in the other the schizophrenic is a psychosocial type who represses the living being and robs him of his thought. Sometimes the two are combined, clasped together as if an event that is too intense corresponds to a lived condition that is too hard to bear.

There are *relational features*: "the Friend," but a friend who has a

relationship with his friend only through the thing loved, which brings rivalry. The "Claimant" and the "Rival" quarrel over the thing or concept, but the concept needs a dormant, unconscious perceptible body, the "Boy" who is added to the conceptual personae. Are we not already on another plane, for love is like the violence that compels thinking—"Socrates the lover"—whereas friendship asks only for a little goodwill? And how could a "Fiancée" be denied her place in the role of conceptual persona, although it may mean rushing to her destruction, but not without the philosopher himself "becoming" woman? As Kierkegaard asks (or Kleist, or Proust): is not a woman more worthwhile than the friend who knows one well? And what happens if the woman herself becomes philosopher? Or a "Couple" who would be internal to thought and make "Socrates the husband" the conceptual persona? Unless we are led back to the "Friend," but after an ordeal that is too powerful, an inexpressible catastrophe, and so in yet another new sense, in a mutual distress, a mutual weariness that forms a new right of thought (Socrates becomes Jewish). Not two friends who communicate and recall the past together but, on the contrary, who suffer an amnesia or aphasia capable of splitting thought, of dividing it in itself. Personae proliferate and branch off, jostle one another and replace each other.⁷

There are *dynamic features*: if moving forward, climbing, and descending are dynamisms of conceptual personae, then leaping like Kierkegaard, dancing like Nietzsche, and diving like Melville are others for philosophical athletes irreducible to one another. And if today our sports are completely changing, if the old energy-producing activities are giving way to exercises that, on the contrary, insert themselves on existing energetic networks, this is not just a change in the type but yet other dynamic features that enter a thought that "slides" with new substances of being, with wave or snow, and turn the thinker into a sort of surfer as conceptual persona: we renounce then the energetic value of the sporting type in order to pick out the pure dynamic difference expressed in a new conceptual persona.

There are *juridical features* insofar as thought constantly lays claim to what belongs to it by right and, from the time of the pre-Socratics, has confronted Justice. But is this the power of the Claimant, or even of the Plaintiff, as philosophy extracts it from the tragic Greek tribunal? And will not philosophers be banned for a long time from being Judges, being at most doctors enrolled in God's justice, so long as they are not themselves the accused? When Leibniz turns the philosopher into the Lawyer of a god who is threatened on all sides, is this a new conceptual persona? Or the strange persona of Investigator advanced by the empiricists? It is Kant who finally turns the philosopher into the Judge at the same time that reason becomes a tribunal; but is this the legislative power of a determining judge, or the judicial power, the jurisprudence, of a reflecting judge? These are two quite different conceptual personae. Or else thought reverses everything—judges, lawyers, plaintiffs, accusers, and accused—like Alice on a plane of immanence where Justice equals Innocence, and where the Innocent becomes the conceptual persona who no longer has to justify herself, a sort of child-player against whom we can no longer do anything, a Spinoza who leaves no illusion of transcendence remaining. Should not judge and innocent merge into each other, that is to say, should not beings be judged from within—not at all in the name of the Law or of Values or even by virtue of their conscience but by the purely immanent criteria of their existence (“at all events, beyond Good and Evil does not mean beyond good and bad”)?

And there are *existential features*: Nietzsche said that philosophy invents modes of existence or possibilities of life. That is why a few vital anecdotes are sufficient to produce a portrait of a philosophy, like the one Diogenes Laertius knew how to produce by writing the philosophers' bedside book or golden legend—Empedocles and his volcano, Diogenes and his barrel. It will be argued that most philosophers' lives are very bourgeois: but is not Kant's stocking-suspender a vital anecdote appropriate to the system of Reason?⁸ And Spinoza's liking for battles between spiders is due to the fact that in a pure

fashion they reproduce relationships of modes in the system of the *Ethics* as higher ethology. These anecdotes do not refer simply to social or even psychological types of philosopher (Empedocles the prince, Diogenes the slave) but show rather the conceptual personae who inhabit them. Possibilities of life or modes of existence can be invented only on a plane of immanence that develops the power of conceptual personae. The face and body of philosophers shelter these personae who often give them a strange appearance, especially in the glance, as if someone else was looking through their eyes. Vital anecdotes recount a conceptual persona's relationship with animals, plants, or rocks, a relationship according to which philosophers themselves become something unexpected and take on a tragic and comic dimension that they could not have by themselves. It is through our personae that we philosophers become always something else and are reborn as public garden or zoo.

EXAMPLE 6

Even illusions of transcendence are useful to us and provide vital anecdotes—for when we take pride in encountering the transcendent within immanence, all we do is recharge the plane of immanence with immanence itself: Kierkegaard leaps outside the plane, but what is “restored” to him in this suspension, this halted movement, is the fiancée or the lost son, it is existence on the plane of immanence.⁹ Kierkegaard does not hesitate to say so: a little “resignation” will be enough for what belongs to transcendence, but *immanence must also be restored*. Pascal wagers on the transcendent existence of God, but the stake, that *on* which one bets, is the immanent existence of the one who believes that God exists. Only that existence is able to cover the plane of immanence, to achieve infinite movement, and to produce and reproduce intensities; whereas the existence of the one who does not believe that God exists falls into the negative. It might even

be said here, as François Jullien says of Chinese thought, that transcendence is relative and represents no more than an "absolutization of immanence."¹⁰ There is not the slightest reason for thinking that modes of existence need transcendent values by which they could be compared, selected, and judged relative to one another. On the contrary, there are only immanent criteria. A possibility of life is evaluated through itself in the movements it lays out and the intensities it creates on a plane of immanence: what is not laid out or created is rejected. A mode of existence is good or bad, noble or vulgar, complete or empty, independently of Good and Evil or any transcendent value: there are never any criteria other than the tenor of existence, the intensification of life. Pascal and Kierkegaard, who were familiar with infinite movements, and who extracted from the Old Testament new conceptual personae able to stand up to Socrates, were well aware of this. Kierkegaard's "knight of the faith," he who makes the leap, or Pascal's gambler, he who throws the dice, are men of a transcendence or a faith. But they constantly recharge immanence: they are philosophers or, rather, intercessors, conceptual personae who stand in for these two philosophers and who are concerned no longer with the transcendent existence of God but only with the infinite immanent possibilities brought by the one who believes that God exists.

The problem would change if it were another plane of immanence. It is not that the person who does not believe God exists would gain the upper hand, since he would still belong to the old plane as negative movement. But, on the new plane, it is possible that the problem now concerns the one who believes in the world, and not even in the existence of the world but in its possibilities of movements and intensities, so as once again to give birth to new modes of existence,

closer to animals and rocks. It may be that believing in this world, in this life, becomes our most difficult task, or the task of a mode of existence still to be discovered on our plane of immanence today. This is the empiricist conversion (we have so many reasons not to believe in the human world; we have lost the world, worse than a fiancée or a god). The problem has indeed changed.

The conceptual persona and the plane of immanence presuppose each other. Sometimes the persona seems to precede the plane, sometimes to come after it—that is, it appears twice; it intervenes twice. On the one hand, it plunges into the chaos from which it extracts the determinations with which it produces the diagrammatic features of a plane of immanence: it is as if it seizes a handful of dice from chance-chaos so as to throw them on a table. On the other hand, the persona establishes a correspondence between each throw of the dice and the intensive features of a concept that will occupy this or that region of the table, as if the table were split according to the combinations. Thus, the conceptual persona with its personalized features intervenes between chaos and the diagrammatic features of the plane of immanence and also between the plane and the intensive features of the concepts that happen to populate it: *Igitur*. Conceptual personae constitute points of view according to which planes of immanence are distinguished from one another or brought together, but they also constitute the conditions under which each plane finds itself filled with concepts of the same group. Every thought is a Fiat, expressing a throw of the dice: constructivism. But this is a very complex game, because throwing involves infinite movements that are reversible and folded within each other so that the consequences can only be produced at infinite speed by creating finite forms corresponding to the intensive ordinates of these movements: every concept is a combination that did not exist before. Concepts are not deduced from the plane. The conceptual persona is needed to create concepts on the

plane, just as the plane itself needs to be laid out. But these two operations do not merge in the persona, which itself appears as a distinct operator.

There are innumerable planes, each with a variable curve, and they group together or separate themselves according to the points of view constituted by personae. Each persona has several features that may give rise to other personae, on the same or a different plane: conceptual personae proliferate. There is an infinity of possible concepts on a plane: they resonate and connect up with mobile bridges, but it is impossible to foresee the appearance they take on as a function of variations of curvature. They are created in bursts and constantly bifurcate. The game is all the more complex because on each plane *negative* movements are enveloped within positive movements, expressing the risks and dangers confronted by thought, the false perceptions and bad feelings that surround it. There are also *antipathetic* conceptual personae who cling to sympathetic personae and from whom the latter do not manage to free themselves (it is not only Zarathustra who is haunted by "his" ape or clown, or Dionysus who does not separate himself from Christ; but Socrates who never manages to distinguish himself from "his" sophist, and the critical philosopher who is always warding off his bad doubles). Finally, there are *repulsive* concepts locked within attractive ones but that outline regions of low or empty intensity on the plane and that continually cut themselves off, create discordancies, and sever connections (does not transcendence itself have "its" concepts?). But even more than a vectorial distribution, the signs, personae, and concepts of planes are ambiguous because they are folded within one another, embrace or lie alongside one another. That is why philosophy always works blow by blow.

Philosophy presents three elements, each of which fits with the other two but must be considered for itself: *the prephilosophical plane it must lay out (immanence)*, *the persona or personae it must invent and bring to life (insistence)*, and *the philosophical concepts it must create*

(consistency). Laying out, inventing, and creating constitute the philosophical trinity—diagrammatic, personalistic, and intensive features. Concepts are grouped according to whether they resonate or throw out mobile bridges, covering the same plane of immanence that connects them to one another. There are families of planes according to whether the infinite movements of thought fold within one another and compose variations of curvature or, on the contrary, select non-composable varieties. There are types of persona according to the possibilities of even their hostile encounters on the same plane and in a group. But it is often difficult to determine if it is the same group, the same type, or the same family. A whole "taste" is needed here.

Since none of these elements are deduced from the others, there must be coadaptation of the three. The philosophical faculty of coadaptation, which also regulates the creation of concepts, is called *taste*. If the laying-out of the plane is called Reason, the invention of personae Imagination, and the creation of concepts Understanding, then taste appears as the triple faculty of the still-undetermined concept, of the persona still in limbo, and of the still-transparent plane. That is why it is necessary to create, invent, and lay out, while taste is like the rule of correspondence of the three instances that are different in kind. It is certainly not a faculty of measuring. No measure will be found in those infinite movements that make up the plane of immanence, in those accelerated lines without contour, and those inclines and curves; or in those always excessive and sometimes antipathetic personae; or in those concepts with irregular forms, strident intensities, and colors that are so bright and barbarous that they can inspire a kind of "disgust" (especially in repulsive concepts). Nevertheless, what appears as philosophical taste in every case is love of the well-made concept, "well-made" meaning not a moderation of the concept but a sort of stimulation, a sort of modulation in which conceptual activity has no limit in itself but only in the other two limitless activities. If ready-made concepts already existed they would have to abide by limits. But even the "prephilosophical" plane is only

so called because it is laid out as presupposed and not because it preexists without being laid out. The three activities are strictly simultaneous and have only incommensurable relationships. The creation of concepts has no other limit than the plane they happen to populate; but the plane itself is limitless, and its layout only conforms to the concepts to be created that it must connect up, or to the personae to be invented that it must maintain. It is as in painting: there is a taste according to which even monsters and dwarves must be well made, which does not mean insipid but that their irregular contours are in keeping with a skin texture or with a background of the earth as germinal substance with which they seem to fit. There is a taste for colors that, in great painters, does not result in restraint in the creation of colors but, on the contrary, drives them to the point where colors encounter their figures made of contours, and their plane made of flats, curves, and arabesques. Van Gogh takes yellow to the limitless only by inventing the man-sunflower and by laying out the plane of infinite little commas. The taste for colors shows at once the respect with which they must be approached, the long wait that must be passed through, but also the limitless creation that makes them exist. The same goes for the taste for concepts: the philosopher does not approach the undetermined concept except with fear and respect, and he hesitates for a long time before setting forth; but he can determine a concept only through a measureless creation whose only rule is a plane of immanence that he lays out and whose only compass are the strange personae to which it gives life. Philosophical taste neither replaces creation nor restrains it. On the contrary, the creation of concepts calls for a taste that modulates it. The free creation of determined concepts needs a taste for the undetermined concept. Taste is this power, this being-potential of the concept: it is certainly not for "rational or reasonable" reasons that a particular concept is created or a particular component chosen. Nietzsche sensed this relationship of the creation of concepts with a specifically philosophical taste, and if the philosopher is he who cre-

ates concepts, it is thanks to a faculty of taste that is like an instinctive, almost animal *sapere*—a *Fiat* or a *Fatum* that gives each philosopher the right of access to certain problems, like an imprint on his name or an affinity from which his works flow.¹¹

A concept lacks meaning to the extent that it is not connected to other concepts and is not linked to a problem that it resolves or helps to resolve. But it is important to distinguish philosophical from scientific problems. Little is gained by saying that philosophy asks "questions," because *question* is merely a word for problems that are irreducible to those of science. Since concepts are not propositional, they cannot refer to problems concerning the extensional conditions of propositions assimilable to those of science. If, all the same, we continue to translate the philosophical concept into propositions, this can only be in the form of more-or-less plausible opinions without scientific value. But in this way we encounter a difficulty that the Greeks had already come up against. This is the third characteristic by which philosophy is thought of as something Greek: the Greek city puts forward the friend or rival as social relation, and it lays out a plane of immanence—but it also makes *free opinion* (*doxa*) prevail. Philosophy must therefore extract from opinions a "knowledge" that transforms them but that is also distinct from science. The philosophical problem thus consists in finding, in each case, the instance that is able to gauge a truth value of opposable opinions, either by selecting some as more wise than others or by fixing their respective share of the truth. Such was always the meaning of what is called dialectic and that reduces philosophy to interminable discussion.¹² This can be seen in Plato, where universals of contemplation are supposed to gauge the respective value of rival opinions so as to raise them to the level of knowledge. It is true that there are still contradictions in Plato, in the so-called aporetic dialogues, which forced Aristotle to direct the dialectical investigation of problems toward universals of communication (the topics). In Kant, again, the problem will consist in the selection or distribution of opposed opinions, but thanks to

universals of reflection, until Hegel has the idea of making use of the contradiction between rival opinions to extract from them suprascientific propositions able to move, contemplate, reflect, and communicate in themselves and within the absolute (the speculative proposition wherein opinions become moments of the concept). But, beneath the highest ambitions of the dialectic, and irrespective of the genius of the great dialecticians, we fall back into the most abject conditions that Nietzsche diagnosed as the art of the pleb or bad taste in philosophy: a reduction of the concept to propositions like simple opinions; false perceptions and bad feelings (illusions of transcendence or of universals) engulfing the plane of immanence; the model of a form of knowledge that constitutes only a supposedly higher opinion, *Urdoxa*; a replacement of conceptual personae by teachers or leaders of schools. The dialectic claims to discover a specifically philosophical discursiveness, but it can only do this by linking opinions together. It has indeed gone beyond opinion toward knowledge, but opinion breaks through and continues to break through. Even with the resources of an *Urdoxa*, philosophy remains a doxography. It is always the same melancholy that raises disputed Questions and Quodlibets from the Middle Ages where one learns what each doctor thought without knowing why he thought it (the Event), and that one finds again in many histories of philosophy in which solutions are reviewed without ever determining what the problem is (substance in Aristotle, Descartes, Leibniz), since the problem is only copied from the propositions that serve as its answer.

If philosophy is paradoxical by nature, this is not because it sides with the least plausible opinion or because it maintains contradictory opinions but rather because it uses sentences of a standard language to express something that does not belong to the order of opinion or even of the proposition. The concept is indeed a solution, but the problem to which it corresponds lies in its intensional conditions of consistency and not, as in science, in the conditions of reference of extensional propositions. If the concept is a solution, the conditions

of the philosophical problem are found on the plane of immanence presupposed by the concept (to what infinite movement does it refer in the image of thought?), and the unknowns of the problem are found in the conceptual personae that it calls up (what persona, exactly?). A concept like knowledge has meaning only in relation to an image of thought to which it refers and to a conceptual persona that it needs; a different image and a different persona call for other concepts (belief, for example, and the Investigator). A solution has no meaning independently of a problem to be determined in its conditions and unknowns; but these conditions and unknowns have no meaning independently of solutions determinable as concepts. Each of the three instances is found in the others, but they are not of the same kind, and they coexist and subsist without one disappearing into the other. Bergson, who contributed so much to the comprehension of the nature of philosophical problems, said that a well-posed problem was a problem solved. But this does not mean that a problem is merely the shadow or epiphenomenon of its solutions, or that the solution is only the redundancy or analytical consequence of the problem. Rather, the three activities making up constructionism continually pass from one to the other, support one another, sometimes precede and sometimes follow each other, one creating concepts as a case of solution, another laying out a plane and a movement on the plane as the conditions of a problem, and the other inventing a persona as the unknown of the problem. The whole of the problem (of which the solution is itself a part) always consists in constructing the other two when the third is underway. We have seen how, from Plato to Kant, thought, "first," and time took different concepts that were able to determine solutions, but on the basis of presuppositions that determined different problems. This is because the same terms can appear twice and even three times: once in solutions as concepts, again in the presupposed problems, and once more in a persona as intermediary, intercessor. But each time it appears in a specific, irreducible form.

No rule, and above all no discussion, will say in advance whether this is the good plane, the good persona, or the good concept; for each of them determines if the other two have succeeded or not, but each must be constructed on its own account—one created, one invented, and the other laid out. Problems and solutions are constructed about which we can say, “Failure . . . Success . . . ,” but only as we go along and on the basis of their coadaptations. Constructivism disqualifies all discussion—which holds back the necessary constructions—just as it exposes all the universals of contemplation, reflection, and communication as sources of what are called “false problems” emanating from the illusions surrounding the plane. That is all that can be said in advance. It is possible that we think we have found a solution; but a new curve of the plane, which at first we did not see, starts it all off again, posing new problems, a new batch of problems, advancing by successive surges and seeking concepts to come, concepts yet to be created (we do not even know if this is not a new plane that has separated from the preceding plane). Conversely, it is possible that a new concept is buried like a wedge between what one thought were two neighboring concepts, seeking in its turn the determination of a problem that appears like a sort of extension on the table of immanence. Philosophy thus lives in a permanent crisis. The plane takes effect through shocks, concepts proceed in bursts, and personae by spasms. The relationship among the three instances is problematic by nature.

We cannot say in advance whether a problem is well posed, whether a solution fits, is really the case, or whether a persona is viable. This is because the criteria for each philosophical activity are found only in the other two, which is why philosophy develops in paradox. Philosophy does not consist in knowing and is not inspired by truth. Rather, it is categories like Interesting, Remarkable, or Important that determine success or failure. Now, this cannot be known before being constructed. We will not say of many books of philosophy that they are false, for that is to say nothing, but rather

that they lack importance or interest, precisely because they do not create any concept or contribute an image of thought or beget a persona worth the effort. Only teachers can write “false” in the margins, perhaps; but readers doubt the importance and interest, that is to say, the novelty of what they are given to read. These are categories of the Mind. Melville said that great novelistic characters must be Originals, Unique. The same is true of conceptual personae. They must be remarkable, even if they are antipathetic; a concept must be interesting, even if it is repulsive. When Nietzsche constructed the concept of “bad conscience” he could see in this what is most disgusting in the world and yet exclaim, “This is where man begins to be interesting!” and consider himself actually to have created a new concept for man, one that suited man, related to a new conceptual persona (the priest) and with a new image of thought (the will to power understood from the point of view of nihilism).¹³

Criticism implies new concepts (of the thing criticized) just as much as the most positive creation. Concepts must have irregular contours molded on their living material. What is naturally uninteresting? Flimsy concepts, what Nietzsche called the “formless and fluid daubs of concepts”—or, on the contrary, concepts that are too regular, petrified, and reduced to a framework. In this respect, the most universal concepts, those presented as eternal forms or values, are the most skeletal and least interesting. Nothing positive is done, nothing at all, in the domains of either criticism or history, when we are content to brandish ready-made old concepts like skeletons intended to intimidate any creation, without seeing that the ancient philosophers from whom we borrow them were already doing what we would like to prevent modern philosophers from doing: they were creating their concepts, and they were not happy just to clean and scrape bones like the critic and historian of our time. Even the history of philosophy is completely without interest if it does not undertake to awaken a dormant concept and to play it again on a new stage, even if this comes at the price of turning it against itself.

29. See Meditations 34 and 35 of *L'Être et l'événement* for a full explanation of Cohen's method.

CHAPTER 1

Philosophy and desire

This philosophical investigation begins under the banner of poetry; thus recalling the ancient tie between poetry and philosophy.¹

Rimbaud employs a strange expression: 'les révoltes logiques', 'logical revolts'. Philosophy is something like a 'logical revolt'. Philosophy pits thought against injustice, against the defective state of the world and of life. Yet it pits thought against injustice in a movement which conserves and defends argument and reason, and which ultimately proposes a new logic.

Mallarmé states: 'All thought begets a throw of the dice.' It seems to me that this enigmatic formula also designates philosophy, because philosophy proposes to think the universal – that which is true for all thinking – yet it does so on the basis of a commitment in which chance always plays a role, a commitment which is also a risk or a wager.

The four-dimensional desire of philosophy

These two poetic formulas capture the desire of philosophy, for at base the desire of philosophy implies a dimension of *revolt*: there is no philosophy without the discontent of

thinking in its confrontation with the world as it is. Yet the desire of philosophy also includes *logic*; that is, a belief in the power of argument and reason. Furthermore, the desire of philosophy involves *universality*: philosophy addresses all humans as thinking beings since it supposes that all humans think. Finally, philosophy takes *risks*: thinking is always a decision which supports independent points of view. The desire of philosophy thus has four dimensions: revolt, logic, universality and risk.

I think that the contemporary world, our world, the world that we strive to think and transform, exerts an intense pressure upon these four dimensions of the desire of philosophy; such that all four dimensions, faced by the world, find themselves in a difficult and dark passage in which the destiny and even the very existence of philosophy is at stake.

To begin with, as far as the dimension of revolt is concerned, this world, our world, the 'Western' world (with as many inverted commas as you want), does not engage in thought as revolt, and for two reasons. First, this world already decrees itself free, it presents itself as 'the free world' – this is the very name it gives itself, an 'isle' of liberty on a planet otherwise reduced to slavery or devastation. Yet, at the same time – and this is the second reason – this world, our world, standardizes and commercializes the stakes of such freedom. It submits them to monetary uniformity, and with such success that our world no longer has to revolt to be free since it guarantees us freedom. However, it does not guarantee us the free use of this freedom, since such use is in reality already coded, orientated and channelled by the infinite glitter of merchandise. This is why this world exerts an intense pressure against the very idea that thinking can be insubordination or revolt.

Our world also exerts a strong pressure on the dimension of logic; essentially because the world is submitted to the

profoundly illogical regime of communication. Communication transmits a universe made up of disconnected images, remarks, statements and commentaries whose accepted principle is incoherence. Day after day communication undoes all relations and all principles, in an untenable juxtaposition that dissolves every relation between the elements it sweeps along in its flow. And what is perhaps even more distressing is that mass communication presents the world to us as a spectacle devoid of memory, a spectacle in which new images and new remarks cover, erase and consign to oblivion the very images and remarks that have just been shown and said. The logic which is specifically undone there is the logic of time. It is these processes of communication which exert pressure on the resoluteness of thinking's fidelity to logic; proposing to thought in the latter's place a type of imaginary dissemination.

As for the universal dimension of the desire of philosophy, our world is no longer suited to it because the world is essentially a specialized and fragmentary world; fragmented in response to the demands of the innumerable ramifications of the technical configuration of things, of the apparatuses of production, of the distribution of salaries, of the diversity of functions and skills. And the requirements of this specialization and this fragmentation make it difficult to perceive what might be transversal or universal; that is, what might be valid for all thinking.

Finally, we have the dimension of risk. Our world does not favour risky commitments or risky decisions, because it is a world in which nobody has the means any more to submit their existence to the perils of chance. Existence requires more and more elaborate calculation. Life is devoted to calculating security, and this obsession with calculating security is contrary to the Malthusian hypothesis that thought begets a throw of the dice, because in such a world there is infinitely too much risk in a throw of the dice.

The desire for philosophy thus encounters four principal obstacles in the world. These are: the reign of merchandise, the reign of communication, the need for technical specialization and the necessity for realistic calculations of security. How can philosophy take on this challenge? Is philosophy capable of such a challenge? The answer must be sought in the state of contemporary philosophy.

The present state of philosophy

What are the principal global tendencies in contemporary philosophy if we consider it from a bird's eye point of view?

I think it can be said that three principal orientations can be distinguished in philosophy today. These orientations correspond, in some measure, to three geographical locations. I will first name and then describe them. The first can be called the hermeneutic orientation, which historically goes back to German romanticism. The best-known names attached to this orientation are Heidegger and Gadamer, and its historical site was originally German. Then there is the analytic orientation, originating with the Vienna Circle. The principal names connected to it are those of Wittgenstein and Carnap. Despite its Austrian origin, it now dominates English and American academic philosophy. Finally, we have what can be called the postmodern orientation, which in fact borrows from the other two. It is without doubt the most active in France, and includes thinkers as different as Jacques Derrida and Jean-François Lyotard. It is equally very active in Spain, Italy and Latin America.

A hermeneutic orientation, an analytic orientation, and a postmodern orientation: there are, of course, innumerable intersections, mixtures and networks of circulation between the three, but together they form the most global and descriptive geography possible of contemporary philosophy.

What then interests us is how each orientation designates or identifies philosophy.

The hermeneutic orientation assigns philosophy the aim of deciphering the meaning of Being, the meaning of Being-in-the-world, and its central concept is that of *interpretation*. There are statements, acts, writings, and configurations whose meaning is obscure, latent, hidden or forgotten. Philosophy must be provided with a method of interpretation that will serve to clarify this obscurity, and bring forth from it an authentic meaning, a meaning which would be a figure of our destiny in relation to the destiny of being itself. The fundamental opposition for hermeneutic philosophy is that of the closed and the open. In what is given, in the immediate world, there is something dissimulated and closed. The aim of interpretation is to undo this closure and open it up to meaning. From this point of view the vocation of philosophy is a 'vocation devoted to the open'. This vocation marks a combat between the world of philosophy and the world of technique since the latter is the accomplishment of closed nihilism.

The analytic orientation holds the aim of philosophy to be the strict demarcation of those utterances which have meaning and those which do not. The aim is to demarcate what can be said and what it is impossible or illegitimate to say. The essential instrument of analytic philosophy is the logical and grammatical analysis of utterances, and ultimately of the entire language. This time the central concept is not interpretation but *the rule*. The task of philosophy is to discover those rules that ensure an agreement about meaning. The fundamental opposition here is between what can be regulated and what cannot be regulated, or what conforms to a recognized law assuring an agreement about meaning, and what eludes all explicit laws, thus falling into illusion or discordance. For the analytic orientation, the aim of philosophy is therapeutic and

critical. It is a question of curing us of the illusions and the aberrations of language that divide us, by isolating what has no meaning, and by returning to rules which are transparent to all.

Finally, the postmodern orientation holds the aim of philosophy to be the deconstruction of the accepted facts of our modernity. In particular, postmodern philosophy proposes to dissolve the great constructions of the nineteenth century to which we remain captive – the idea of the historical subject, the idea of progress, the idea of revolution, the idea of humanity and the ideal of science. Its aim is to show that these great constructions are outdated, that we live in the multiple, that there are no great epics of history or of thought; that there is an irreducible plurality of registers and languages in thought as in action; registers so diverse and heterogeneous that no great idea can totalize or reconcile them. At base, the objective of postmodern philosophy is to deconstruct the idea of totality – to the extent that philosophy itself finds itself destabilized. Consequently, the postmodern orientation activates what might be called mixed practices, de-totalized practices, or impure thinking practices. It situates thought on the outskirts, in areas that cannot be circumscribed. In particular, it installs philosophical thought at the periphery of art, and proposes an untotizable mixture of the conceptual method of philosophy and the sense-orientated enterprise of art.

The common themes of the three orientations of philosophy

Do these three orientations – so summarily described – have anything in common? Does anything allow us to say that, despite this diversity, features can be found which signal a unity of contemporary philosophy? I would suggest that there are two principal features that the three orientations, hermeneutic, analytic and postmodern, have in common. It

is these common features which signal that the three orientations of philosophy are all *contemporary*, and that however different they may be, their destiny is joined: they do not simply provide one possible division of thought but rather provide three expressions of the same demands that our epoch makes on philosophy.

The first of these features is negative. All three orientations hold that we are at the end of metaphysics, that philosophy is no longer in a position to sustain its *locus classicus*; that is, the great figure of the metaphysical proposition. In a certain sense, these three orientations maintain that philosophy is itself situated within the end of philosophy, or that philosophy is announcing a certain end of itself.

We can immediately give three examples. It is clear that for Heidegger the theme of the end is the central element of his thinking. For Heidegger our time is characterized by the closure of the history of metaphysics, and thus of an entire epoch going back to Plato, an entire epoch of the history of being and thought. This closure is first realized in the distress and dereliction of the injunction of technology.

No philosophy could be further from Heidegger's than Carnap's. Yet Carnap also announces the end of any possibility of metaphysics because, for him, metaphysics consists of nothing more than utterances that are non-regulated and devoid of meaning. The aim of analytic therapy is to cure the metaphysical symptom; that is, to cure the patient of utterances whose analysis shows that they cannot give rise to assent because they are devoid of meaning.

If we take Jean-François Lyotard, one of his central themes is what he calls 'the end of the great narratives' – the great narratives of the revolution, of the proletariat, and of progress. Once more we have an 'end'; the end of the great narratives being the end of the great configurations of the

subject and history that have been associated with modern metaphysics.

We find then a theme common to the three orientations, which is the theme of an end, of a drawing to a close, of an accomplishment. This theme can be articulated in another way: the ideal of truth as it was put forth by classical philosophy has come to its end. For the idea of truth we must substitute the idea of the plurality of meanings. This opposition between the classical ideal of truth and the modern theme of the polyvalence of meaning is, in my opinion, an essential opposition. We might say in a schematic, but not inexact way, that contemporary philosophy institutes the passage from a truth-orientated philosophy to a meaning-orientated philosophy.

In each of these three principal orientations, contemporary philosophy puts the category of truth on trial, and with it the classical figure of philosophy. That is what these three orientations have in common on the negative side. What they have in common on the positive side – and this is crucial – is the central place accorded to the question of language. The philosophy of this century has become principally a meditation on language, on its capacities, its rules, and on what it authorizes as far as thought is concerned. This is clear in the very definition of the orientations I have been talking about: the hermeneutic orientation, in a certain sense, always consists of the interpretation of speech acts; the analytic orientation consists of the confrontation between utterances and the rules which govern them; and the postmodern orientation promotes the idea of a multiplicity of sentences, fragments, and forms of discourse in the absence of homogeneity. Language has thus become the great historical transcendental of our times.

To recapitulate, contemporary philosophy has two fundamental axioms, common to all three orientations.

The first is that the metaphysics of truth has become impossible. This axiom is negative. Philosophy can no longer pretend to be what it had for a long time decided to be, that is, a search for truth. The second axiom is that language is the crucial site of thought because that is where the question of meaning is at stake. Consequently, the question of meaning replaces the classical question of truth.

The flaws in contemporary philosophy

My conviction is that these two axioms represent a real danger for thinking in general and for philosophy in particular. I think that their development and their infinitely subtle, complex and brilliant formulation, as found in contemporary philosophy, render philosophy incapable of sustaining the desire which is proper to it in the face of the pressure exerted by the contemporary world. These axioms cannot give philosophy the means to sustain its desire under the quadruple form of revolt, logic, universality and risk.

If philosophy is essentially a meditation on language, it will not succeed in removing the obstacle that the specialization and fragmentation of the world opposes to universality. To accept the universe of language as the absolute horizon of philosophical thought in fact amounts to accepting the fragmentation and the illusion of communication – for the truth of our world is that there are as many languages as there are communities, activities or kinds of knowledge. I agree that there is a multiplicity of language games. This, however, forces philosophy – if it wants to preserve the desire for universality – to establish itself elsewhere than within this multiplicity, so as not to be exclusively subordinated to it. If not, philosophy will become what in one way it mostly is, an infinite description of the multiplicity of language games.

Or else, but this would be even worse, philosophy might elect one particular language, claiming that the latter is the only one that can save it. We know what this leads to. Heidegger explicitly upheld the thesis of the intrinsic philosophical value, first of the Greek language, and then of the German language. He said: 'Being speaks Greek.' He said that the German language was, in a way, the only language in which thought could sustain the challenge of its destiny. And there is an ineluctable connection between this election of a language and the political position that resulted in Heidegger's commitment to German nationalism in the criminal form given to it by Nazism.

As for analytic philosophy, it is absolutely clear that it accords a unilateral privilege to scientific language as the language in which rules are both explicit and the most adequate to the subject of the language. This is clear in the way in which sense and non-sense are differentiated by presenting the distinction in the guise of a rule, as can be seen in mathematics and scientific language in general. But this privilege is itself philosophically dangerous because it leads directly to a contempt for all sites and spaces which rebel against the configuration of scientific language. And the privilege accorded this language isolates a figure of rationality that is ineluctably accompanied by disdain or contempt or the closing of one's eyes to the fact that even today the overwhelming majority of humanity is out of reach of such a language.

On the other hand, if the category of truth is ignored, if we never confront anything but the polyvalence of meaning, then philosophy will never assume the challenge that is put out to it by a world subordinated to the merchandising of money and information. This world is an anarchy of more or less regulated, more or less coded fluxes, wherein money, products and images are exchanged. If philosophy is to sustain its desire in such a world, it must propose a principle

of interruption. It must be able to propose to thought something that can interrupt this endless regime of circulation. Philosophy must examine the possibility of a point of interruption – not because all this must be interrupted – but because thought at least must be able to extract itself from this circulation and take possession of itself once again as something other than an object of circulation. It is obvious that such a point of interruption can only be an unconditional requirement; that is, something which is submitted to thought with no other condition than itself and which is neither exchangeable nor capable of being put into circulation. That there be such a point of interruption, that there be at least one unconditional requirement, is, in my opinion, a condition *sine qua non* for the existence of philosophy. In the absence of such a point, *all there is* is the general circulation of knowledge, information, merchandise, money and images. In my opinion, this unconditional requirement cannot be solely supported by the proposition of the polyvalence of meaning. It also needs the reconstruction or re-emergence of the category of truth.

We are subjected to the media's inconsistency of images and commentaries. What can be opposed to this? I do not think that anything can be opposed to it except the patient search for at least one truth, and perhaps several; without which the essential illogicism of mass communication will impose its temporal carnival.

Philosophy also requires that we throw the dice against the obsession for security, that we interrupt the calculus of life determined by security. But what chance has philosophy of winning, except in the name of a value that would ordain this risk and give it a minimum of consistency and weight? Here again I believe it is vain to imagine that in the absence of a principle of truth, one can oppose an existential gamble to the calculus of life, a gamble that could give rise to something that could be called liberty.

Given the axioms of contemporary philosophy, can the desire for philosophy be maintained in the world such as it is? Can we maintain the four dimensions of revolt, logic, universality and risk against the four contemporary obstacles: merchandise, communication, technical division and the obsession with security?

I submit that this cannot be done within the framework of the hermeneutic, analytic or postmodern orientations of philosophy. In my opinion these orientations are too strongly committed to the polyvalence of meaning and the plurality of languages. There is something in them that goes too far in reflecting the physiognomy of the world itself. They are too compatible with our world to be able to sustain the rupture or distance that philosophy requires.

Towards a new style of philosophy

My position is to break with these frameworks of thought, to find another philosophical style, a style other than that of interpretation, of logical grammarian analysis, or of polyvalence and language games – that is, to rediscover a foundational style, a decided style, a style in the school of a Descartes for example.

Such a position can be supported by two ideas, both simple, but in my opinion both preliminary to the development of philosophy. The first idea is that language is not the absolute horizon of thought. The great linguistic turn of philosophy, or the absorption of philosophy into the meditation on language, must be reversed. In the *Cratylus*, which is concerned with language from beginning to end, Plato says, 'We philosophers do not take as our point of departure words, but things.' Whatever may be the difficulty or obscurity of this statement, I am for philosophy's revivifying the idea that it does not take as its point of departure words, but things. Needless to say, it must be

acknowledged that a language always constitutes what can be called the historical matter of truth and of philosophy. A language always gives what I would call the colour of philosophy, its tonality, and its inflexion. All these singular figures are proposed to us by language. But I would also maintain that this is not the essential principle of the organization of thought. The principle that philosophy cannot renounce is that of its universal transmissibility, whatever the prescription of style or colour, whatever its connection to such or such a language. Philosophy cannot renounce that its address is directed to everyone, in principle if not in fact, and that it does not exclude from this address linguistic, national, religious or racial communities. Philosophy privileges no language, not even the one it is written in. Philosophy is not enclosed within the pure formal ideal of scientific language. Its natural element is language, but, within that natural element, it institutes a universal address.

The second idea is that the singular and irreducible role of philosophy is to establish a fixed point within discourse, a point of interruption, a point of discontinuity, an unconditional point. Our world is marked by its speed: the speed of historical change; the speed of technical change; the speed of communications; of transmissions; and even the speed with which human beings establish connections with one another. This speed exposes us to the danger of a very great incoherency. It is because things, images and relations circulate so quickly that we do not even have the time to measure the extent of this incoherency. Speed is the mask of inconsistency. Philosophy must propose a retardation process. It must construct a time for thought, which, in the face of the injunction to speed, will constitute a time of its own. I consider this a singularity of philosophy; that its thinking is leisurely, because today revolt requires leisureliness and not speed. This thinking, slow and consequently rebellious, is alone capable of establishing the fixed point,

whatever it may be, whatever its name may be, which we need in order to sustain the desire of philosophy.

At base, it is a question of philosophically reconstructing, with a slowness which will insulate us from the speed of the world, the category of truth – not as it is passed down to us by metaphysics, but rather as we are able to reconstitute it, taking into consideration the world as it is. It is a question of reorganizing philosophy around this reconstruction and giving it the time and space that are proper to it. This supposes that philosophy will no longer be in pursuit of the world, that it will stop trying to be as rapid as the world, because by wanting to be as rapid, philosophy dissolves itself at the very heart of its desire, no longer being in a state to maintain its revolt, to reconstitute its logic, to know what a universal address is, or to take a chance and liberate existence.

The world questions philosophy

Evidently the problem is one of knowing if, in the world as it is, there is the slightest chance for such an enterprise to flourish or be heard, or if what is proposed here is yet another vain invocation. There is no doubt that philosophy is ill. As always, the problem is knowing whether this illness is mortal or not, knowing what the diagnostic is, and knowing whether the proposed remedy is not in fact, as is often the case, exactly what will finish off the patient. Truth is suffering from two illnesses. In my opinion, it is suffering from linguistic relativism, that is, its entanglement in the problematic of the disparity of meanings, and it is also suffering from historical pessimism, including about itself.

My hypothesis is that although philosophy is ill, it is less ill than it thinks it is, less ill than it says it is. One of the characteristics of contemporary philosophy is to elaborate page after page on its own mortal illnesses. But you know, when it is the patient who says he is ill, there is always a

chance that it is at least in part an imaginary illness. And I think that this is the case, because the world itself, despite all the negative pressures it exerts on the desire of philosophy, the world, that is the people who live in it and think in it, this world, is asking something of philosophy. Yet philosophy is too morose to respond due to the morbidity of its own vision of itself.

Four reasons make me believe that the world is asking something of philosophy.

The first reason is that we now know that there is no chance that the human sciences will replace philosophy. The awareness of this seems to me to be fairly widespread since the human sciences have become the home of the statistical sciences. The human sciences are thereby themselves caught up in the circulation of meaning and its polyvalence, because they measure rates of circulation. That is their purpose. At base they are in the service of polls, election predictions, demographic averages, epidemiological rates, tastes and distastes, and all that certainly makes for interesting labour. But this statistical and numerical information has nothing to do with what humanity, nor what each absolutely singular being, is about. Everyone knows that the singular is always, in the final analysis, the true centre of any decision which counts, and that all truth is first presented in the form of the absolutely singular – as can be seen in scientific invention, artistic creation, political innovation or the encounter that comprises love. In every place where, in some way, a truth is pronounced on existence, it is founded on a singularity. Averages, statistics, sociology, history, demography, or polls are not capable of teaching us what the history of a truth is. Philosophy is thus required by the world to be a philosophy of singularity, to be capable of pronouncing and thinking the singular, which is precisely what the general apparatus of human sciences does not have as its vocation. That is the first reason.

The second reason is that we are witnessing the ruin of the great collective enterprises that we once imagined carried within themselves the seeds of emancipation and truth. We know now that there are no such great emancipatory forces, that there is neither progress, nor proletariat, nor any such thing. We know that we are not caught up by such forces and that there is no hope for us of sustaining our desire by simply incorporating ourselves into such a force, or by being a member of such a force. What does this mean? This means that each of us, and not only the philosopher, knows that today, if we are confronted with the inhuman, we must make our own decision and speak in our own name. One cannot hide behind any great collective configuration, any supposed force, any metaphysical totality which might take a position in one's stead. But in order to take a position in one's own name when faced with the inhuman, a fixed point is needed for the decision. An unconditional principle is needed to regulate both the decision and the assent. This is what everyone calls today the necessity of a return to ethics. But let us not be mistaken. Philosophically, the return to ethics necessitates the return of an unconditional principle. There is a moment when one must be able to say that this is right and that is wrong, in light of the evidence of the principle. There cannot be an infinite regression of quibbling and calculating. There must also be utterances of which it can be said they are unconditionally true. We know very well that when a position on a given question and an agreement on that position are demanded, as a last resort it is necessary to find a position which will be unconditionally true for everyone. Thus one cannot say that each of us must take a position in his or her own name once faced with the inhuman, without re-engaging philosophy in the dimension of truth. And this is required by the world as it is, and this is required of philosophy.

The third reason is connected to the recent rise of reactive or archaic passions; that is, the rise of cultural, religious, national and racist passions. These historically observable phenomena have also given birth to a demand upon philosophy. Confronted by these passions once again, philosophy is urged to speak about where reason lies, for these passions are the contemporary figures of irrational archaism and they carry with them death and devastation. Philosophy is required to make a pronouncement about contemporary rationality. We know that this rationality cannot be the repetition of classical rationalism, but we also know that we cannot do without it, if we do not want to find ourselves in a position of extreme intellectual weakness when faced with the threat of these reactive passions. We must then forge a rational philosophy in this sense of the term; that is, in the sense that philosophy must reiterate, under the conditions of the times, what it has already resolved.

The fourth and final reason is that the world we live in is a vulnerable, precarious world. It is in no way a world stabilized within the unity of its history. We must not allow the global acceptance of the themes of liberal economy and representative democracy to dissimulate the fact that the world the twentieth century has given birth to is a violent and fragile world. Its material, ideological and intellectual foundations are disparate, disunited and largely inconsistent. This world does not announce the serenity of a linear development, but rather a series of dramatic crises and paradoxical events. Take two recent examples, the Gulf War and the fall of bureaucratic socialism. Add to these the war in Bosnia and the Rwandan massacres. But do not be mistaken; these events are only the first in a long series. Philosophy is required to ensure that thought can receive and accept the drama of the event without anxiety. We do not fundamentally need a philosophy of the structure of things. We need a philosophy open to the irreducible

singularity of what happens, a philosophy that can be fed and nourished by the surprise of the unexpected. Such a philosophy would then be a philosophy of the event. This too is required of philosophy by the world, by the world as it is.

A new doctrine of the subject

What is thus demanded of us by the world is a philosophy of singularity, a philosophy of contemporary rationality, and a philosophy of the event. This is a programme in itself. To accomplish this programme we must go beyond the three principal tendencies of philosophy I have described. We need a more determined and more imperative philosophy, but one that is, at the same time, more modest, more remote from the world and more descriptive. A philosophy which is a rational intertwining of the singularity of the event and of truth. A philosophy open to chance, but a chance submitted to the law of reason; a philosophy maintaining unconditional principles, unconditional but submitted to a non-theological law.

This will allow us to propose a new doctrine of the subject – and I think this is the essential objective. We will be able to say what a subject is in terms other than those of Descartes, Kant or Hegel. This subject will be singular and not universal, and it will be singular because it will always be an event that constitutes the subject as a truth.

In view of this programme, it can be said, it's true, that the metaphysics of truth is ruined and classical rationalism is insufficient. But in a way the deconstruction of metaphysics and the contestation of rationalism are also insufficient. The world needs philosophy to be re-founded upon the ruins of metaphysics as combined and blended with the modern criticism of metaphysics.

I am convinced, and this is the reason for my optimism, that the world needs philosophy more than philosophy

thinks. Philosophy is ill, it might be dying, but I am sure that the world (the world, neither a God nor a prophet, but the world) is saying to philosophy: 'Get up and walk!'

Note

1. Translator's note: This paper was given in Sydney in 1999. Its original title was 'The desire of philosophy and the contemporary world'. In French, the phrase 'le désir de philosophie' is ambiguous as to the syntactic status of 'philosophie'. In the objective sense of the genitive, it is philosophy which is desired. However, in the subjective sense, it can also be said that it is philosophy which desires, or that there is a desire which traverses philosophy.

CHAPTER 2

Philosophy and truth

It is time to advance four fundamental theses on truth:¹

- 1 Regarding the question of truth, the Heideggerean edifice leaves no other solution than that of the poem.
- 2 In order to destroy this edifice and find another solution, we cannot reverse the historical process delineated by Heidegger himself. On the contrary, we must assume, against the analytic tradition, that the essence of truth remains inaccessible if its question is enclosed in the narrow form of the judgement or the proposition. Yet, at the same time, we cannot allow Heidegger his melancholic vision of the loss of the un-veiling.
- 3 We must conceive of a truth both as the construction of a fidelity to an event, and as the generic potency of a transformation of a domain of knowledge.
- 4 All the categories by which the essence of a truth can be submitted to thought are negative: undecidability, indiscernibility, the generic not-all (*pas-tout*), and the unnameable. The ethic of truths resides entirely in the measure taken of this negative, or in other words, in the limitations placed on the potency of truth by the hazards of its construction.

We shall select three references from the Heideggerean doctrine of truth. The first:

In becoming a property of the proposition, not only does truth displace its locus; it transforms its essence.

This must be understood as stating that the entire effect of the decline of thought, which is also the decline of being, is manifested in the fact that truth is presented, after Plato, as localizable in the proposition. This localization is also a de-naturing. Nothing of the truth, in its authentic sense, remains accessible if we allow that the phenomenon of truth occurs in the proposition.

The context of the second passage is Heidegger's question concerning what the major points of meditation must be if one wishes to capture the distress of Europe in thought. For Heidegger, the essential events of this distress are the flight of the gods, the destruction of the earth, the becoming social of man and the preponderance of the mediocre. In this passage, Heidegger tells us that for such a meditation one thing is decisive:

The mutation occurs through the interpretation of spirit as intellect, the latter being understood as the simple faculty to reason correctly in theoretical and practical considerations, and as the estimation of things already presented.

It is clear that spirit can only be interpreted as intellect if it manipulates truth in the form of a proposition. For a proposition is effectively the linguistic phenomenon of any estimation of things, insofar as they are things already presented. Consequently, the de-naturing of the essence of truth, which localizes it in the proposition, is the condition of possibility at the origins of Western distress.

The third passage concerns what can be said about an access to truth freed from the form of the proposition. What is a language that expresses the truth otherwise than in the

We must therefore say the same thing about language in relation to meaning that Simone de Beauvoir says about the body in relation to mind: it is neither first nor second. No one has ever made the body simply a means or an instrument, or maintained for example that one can love by principles. And since it is no more true that the body loves all by itself, we may say that it does everything and nothing, that it is and is not ourselves. Neither end nor means, always involved in matters which go beyond it, always jealous nevertheless of its autonomy, it is powerful enough to oppose any end which is merely deliberate, but it has none to propose to us if we finally turn toward it and consult it. Sometimes—and then we have the feeling of being ourselves—it lets itself be animated and takes upon itself a life which is not simply its own. Then it is happy and spontaneous, and we with it. Similarly, language is not meaning's servant, and yet it does not govern meaning. There is no subordination between them. Here no one commands and no one obeys. What we *mean* is not before us, outside all speech, as sheer signification. It is only the excess of what we live over what has already been said. With our apparatus of expression we set ourselves up in a situation the apparatus is sensitive to, we confront it with the situation, and our statements are only the final balance of these exchanges. Political thought itself is of this order. It is always the elucidation of an historical perception in which all our understanding, all our experience, and all our values simultaneously come into play—and of which our theses are only the schematic formulation. All action and knowledge which do not go through this elaboration, and which seek to set up values which have not been embodied in our individual or collective history (*or*—what comes down to the same thing—which seek to choose means by a calculus and a wholly technical process), fall short of the problems they are trying to solve. Personal life, expression, understanding, and history advance obliquely and not straight toward ends or concepts. What we strive for too reflectively eludes us, while values and ideas come forth abundantly to him who, in his meditative life, has learned to free their spontaneity.

Eye and Mind

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

What I am trying to convey to you is more mysterious; it is entwined in the very roots of being, in the impalpable source of sensations.

—J. Gasquet, *Cézanne*

Science manipulates things and gives up living in them.¹ Operating within its own realm, it makes its constructs of things; operating upon these indices or variables to effect whatever transformations are permitted by their definition, it comes face to face with the real world only at rare intervals. It is, and always has been, that admirably active, ingenious, and bold way of thinking whose fundamental bias is to treat everything as though it were an object-in-general—as though it meant nothing to us and yet was predestined for our ingenious schemes.

But classical science clung to a feeling for the opaqueness of the world, and it expected through its constructions to get back into the world. For this reason it felt obliged to seek a transcendent or transcendental foundation for its operations. Today we find—not in science but in a widely prevalent philosophy of the sciences—an entirely new approach. Constructive scientific activities see themselves and represent themselves to be autonomous, and their thinking deliberately reduces itself to a set of data-collecting techniques which it has invented. To think is thus to test out, to operate, to transform—the only restriction being that this activity is regulated by an experimental control that admits only

the most "worked-up" phenomena, more likely produced by the apparatus than recorded by it.

Whence all sorts of vagabond endeavors. Today more than ever, science is sensitive to intellectual fads and fashions. When a model has succeeded in one order of problems, it is tried out everywhere else. At the present time, for example, our embryology and biology are full of "gradients." Just how these differ from what classical tradition called "order" or "totality" is not at all clear. This question, however, is not raised; it is not even allowed. The gradient is a net we throw out to sea, without knowing what we will haul back in it. It is the slender twig upon which unforeseeable crystalizations will form. No doubt this freedom of operation will serve well to overcome many a pointless dilemma—provided only that from time to time we take stock, and ask ourselves why the apparatus works in one place and fails in others. For all its flexibility, science must understand itself; it must see itself as a construction based on a brute, existent world and not claim for its blind operations the constitutive value that "concepts of nature" were granted in a certain idealist philosophy. To say that the world is, by nominal definition, the object x of our operations is to treat the scientist's knowledge as if it were absolute, as if everything that is and has been was meant only to enter the laboratory. Thinking "operationally" has become a sort of absolute artificialism, such as we see in the ideology of cybernetics, where human creations are derived from a natural information process, itself conceived on the model of human machines. If this kind of thinking were to extend its dominion over humanity and history; and if, ignoring what we know of them through contact and our own situations, it were to set out to construct them on the basis of a few abstract indices (as a decadent psychoanalysis and culturalism have done in the United States)—then, since the human being truly becomes the *manipulandum* he thinks he is, we enter into a cultural regimen in which there is neither truth nor falsehood concerning humanity and history, into a sleep, or nightmare from which there is no awakening.

Scientific thinking, a thinking which looks on from above, and thinks of the object-in-general, must return to the "there is" which precedes it; to the site, the soil of the sensible and humanly modified world such as it is in our lives and for our bodies—not that possible body which we may legitimately think of as an information machine but this actual body I call mine, this sentinel standing quietly at the command of my words and my acts. Further, *associated bodies* must be revived along with my body—"others," not merely as my congeners, as the zoologist says, but others who haunt me and whom I haunt; "others" along with whom I

haunt a single, present, and actual Being as no animal ever haunted those of his own species, territory, or habitat. In this primordial historicity, science's agile and improvisatory thought will learn to ground itself upon things themselves and upon itself, and will once more become philosophy. . . .

Now art, especially painting, draws upon this fabric of brute meaning which operationalism would prefer to ignore. Art and only art does so in full innocence. From the writer and the philosopher, in contrast, we want opinions and advice. We will not allow them to hold the world suspended. We want them to take a stand; they cannot waive the responsibilities of humans who speak. Music, at the other extreme, is too far on the hither side of the world and the designatable to depict anything but certain schemata of Being—its ebb and flow, its growth, its upheavals, its turbulence.

Only the painter is entitled to look at everything without being obliged to appraise what he sees. For the painter, we might say, the watchwords of knowledge and action lose their meaning and force. Political regimes which denounce "degenerate" painting rarely destroy paintings. They hide them, and one senses here an element of "one never knows" amounting almost to an acknowledgment. The reproach of escapism is seldom aimed at the painter; we do not hold it against Cézanne that he lived hidden away at L'Estaque during the Franco-Prussian War. And we recall with respect his "life is frightening," although the most insignificant student, after Nietzsche, would flatly reject philosophy if he or she were told that it did not teach us how to live life to the fullest. It is as if in the painter's calling there were some urgency above all other claims on him. Strong or frail in life, but incontestably sovereign in his rumination of the world, possessed of no other "technique" than the skill his eyes and hands discover in seeing and painting, he gives himself entirely to drawing from the world—with its din of history's glories and scandals—*canvases* which will hardly add to the angers or the hopes of humanity; and no one complains.² What, then, is the secret science which he has or which he seeks? That dimension which lets Van Gogh say he must go "still further"? What is this fundamental of painting, perhaps of all culture?

II

The painter "takes his body with him," says Valéry. Indeed we cannot imagine how a *mind* could paint. It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings. To understand these

transubstantiations we must go back to the working, actual body—not the body as a chunk of space or a bundle of functions but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement.

I have only to see something to know how to reach it and deal with it, even if I do not know how this happens in the nervous system. My moving body makes a difference in the visible world, being a part of it; that is why I can steer it through the visible. Moreover, it is also true that vision is attached to movement. We see only what we look at. What would vision be without eye movement? And how could the movement of the eyes not blur things if movement were blind? If it were only a reflex? If it did not have its antennae, its clairvoyance? If vision were not prefigured in it?

All my changes of place figure on principle in a corner of my landscape; they are carried over onto the map of the visible. Everything I see is on principle within my reach, at least within reach of my sight, and is marked upon the map of the "I can." Each of the two maps is complete. The visible world and the world of my motor projects are both total parts of the same Being.

This extraordinary overlapping, which we never give enough thought to, forbids us to conceive of vision as an operation of thought that would set up before the mind a picture or a representation of the world, a world of immanence and of ideality. Immersed in the visible by his body, itself visible, the see-er does not appropriate what he sees; he merely approaches it by looking, he opens onto the world. And for its part, that world of which he is a part is not *in itself*, or matter. My movement is not a decision made by the mind, an absolute doing which would decree, from the depths of a subjective retreat, some change of place miraculously executed in extended space. It is the natural sequel to, and maturation of, vision. I say of a thing that it is moved; but my body moves itself; my movement is self-moved. It is not ignorance of self, blind to itself; it radiates from a self. . . .

The enigma derives from the fact that my body simultaneously sees and is seen. That which looks at all things can also look at itself and recognize, in what it sees, the "other side" of its power of looking. It sees itself seeing; it touches itself touching; it is visible and sensitive for itself. It is a self, not by transparency, like thought, which never thinks anything except by assimilating it, constituting it, transforming it into thought—but a self by confusion, narcissism, inherence of the see-er in the seen, the toucher in the touched, the feeler in the felt—a self, then, that is caught up in things, having a front and a back, a past and a future. . . .

This initial paradox cannot but produce others. Visible and mo-

bile, my body is a thing among things; it is one of them. It is caught in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing. But because it moves itself and sees, it holds things in a circle around itself.³ Things are an annex or prolongation of itself; they are incrustated in its flesh, they are part of its full definition; the world is made of the very stuff of the body. These reversals, these antinomies,⁴ are different ways of saying that vision is caught or comes to be in things—in that place where something visible undertakes to see, becomes visible to itself and in the sight of all things, in that place where there persists, like the original solution still present within crystal, the undividedness of the sensing and the sensed.⁴

This interiority no more precedes the material arrangement of the human body than it results from it. What if our eyes were made in such a way as to prevent our seeing any part of our body, or some diabolical contraption were to let us move our hands over things, while preventing us from touching our own body? Or what if, like certain animals, we had lateral eyes with no cross-blending of visual fields? Such a body would not reflect itself; it would be an almost adamant body, not really flesh, not really the body of a human being. There would be no humanity.

But humanity is not produced as the effect of our articulations or by the way our eyes are implanted in us (still less by the existence of mirrors, though they alone can make our entire bodies visible to us). These contingencies and others like them, without which mankind would not exist, do not by simple summation bring it about that there is a single man. The body's animation is not the assemblage or juxtaposition of its parts. Nor is it a question of a mind or spirit coming down from somewhere else into an automation—which would still imply that the body itself is without an inside and without a "self." A human body is present when, between the see-er and the visible, between touching and touched, between one eye and the other, between hand and hand a kind of crossover occurs, when the spark of the sensing/sensible is lit, when the fire starts to burn that will not cease until some accident befalls the body, undoing what no accident would have sufficed to do. . . .

Once this strange system of exchanges is given, we find before us all the problems of painting. These problems illustrate the enigma of the body, which enigma in turn legitimates them. Since things and my body are made of the same stuff, vision must somehow come about in them; or yet again, their manifest visibility must be repeated in the body by a secret visibility. "Nature is on the inside," says Cézanne. Quality, light, color, depth, which are there before us, are there only because they awaken an echo in our bodies and because the body welcomes them.

Things have an internal equivalent in me; they arouse in me a carnal formula of their presence. Why shouldn't these correspondences in turn give rise to some tracing rendered visible again, in which the eyes of others could find an underlying motif to sustain their inspection of the world?⁵ Thus there appears a "visible" to the second power, a carnal essence or icon of the first. It is not a faded copy, a *trompe l'oeil*, or another thing. The animals painted on the walls of Lascaux are not there in the same way as are the fissures and limestone formations. Nor are they *elsewhere*. Pushed forward here, held back there, supported by the wall's mass they use so adroitly, they radiate about the wall without ever breaking their elusive moorings. I would be hard pressed to say *where* the painting is I am looking at. For I do not look at it as one looks at a thing, fixing it in its place. My gaze wanders within it as in the halos of Being. Rather than seeing it, I see according to, or with it.

The word "image" is in bad repute because we have thoughtlessly believed that a drawing was a tracing, a copy, a second thing, and that the mental image was such a drawing, belonging among our private bric-a-brac. But if in fact it is nothing of the kind, then neither the drawing nor the painting belongs to the in-itself any more than the image does. They are the inside of the outside and the outside of the inside, which the duplicity of feeling [*le sentir*] makes possible and without which we would never understand the quasi presence and imminent visibility which make up the whole problem of the imaginary. The picture, the actor's mimicry—these are not devices borrowed from the real world in order to refer to prosaic things which are absent. For the imaginary is much nearer to, and much farther away from, the actual—nearer because it is in my body as a diagram of the life of the actual, with all its pulp and carnal obverse exposed to view for the first time. In this sense, Giacometti says energetically, "What interests me in all paintings is likeness—that is, what likeness is for me: something that makes me uncover the external world a little."⁶ And the imaginary is much farther away from the actual because the painting is an analogue or likeness only according to the body; because it does not offer the mind an occasion to rethink the constitutive relations of things, but rather it offers the gaze traces of vision, from the inside, in order that it may espouse them; it gives vision that which clothes it within, the imaginary texture of the real.⁷

Shall we say, then, that there is an inner gaze, that there is a third eye which sees the paintings and even the mental images, as we used to speak of a third ear which grasps messages from the outside through the noises they caused inside us? But how would this help us when the whole

point is to understand that our fleshly eyes are already much more than receptors for light rays, colors, and lines? They are computers of the world, which have the gift of the visible, as we say of the inspired man that he has the gift of tongues. Of course this gift is earned by exercise; it is not in a few months, or in solitude, that a painter comes into full possession of his vision. But that is not the question; precocious or belated, spontaneous or cultivated in museums, his vision in any event learns only by seeing and learns only from itself. The eye sees the world, and what it would need to be a painting, sees what keeps a painting from being itself, sees—on the palette—the colors awaited by the painting, and sees, once it is done, the painting that answers to all these inadequacies just as it sees the paintings of others as other answers to other inadequacies.

It is no more possible to make a restrictive inventory of the visible, than it is to catalog the possible expressions of a language or even its vocabulary and turns of phrase. The eye is an instrument that moves itself, a means which invents its own ends; it is *that which* has been moved by some impact of the world, which it then restores to the visible through the traces of a hand.

In whatever civilization it is born, from whatever beliefs, motives, or thoughts, no matter what ceremonies surround it—and even when it appears devoted to something else—from Lascaux to our time, pure or impure, figurative or not, painting celebrates no other enigma but that of visibility.

What we have just said amounts to a truism. The painter's world is a visible world, nothing but visible: a world almost mad, because it is complete though only partial. Painting awakens and carries to its highest pitch a delirium which is vision itself, for to see is *to have at a distance*; painting extends this strange possession to all aspects of Being, which must somehow become visible in order to enter into the work of art. When, apropos of Italian painting, the young Berenson spoke of an evocation of tactile values, he could hardly have been more mistaken; painting evokes nothing, least of all the tactile. What it does is entirely different, almost the inverse. It gives visible existence to what profane vision believes to be invisible; thanks to it we do not need a "muscular sense" in order to possess the voluminosity of the world. This voracious vision, reaching beyond the "visual givens," opens upon a texture of Being of which the discrete sensorial messages are only the punctuations or the caesurae. The eye lives in this texture as a man in his house.

Let us remain within the visible in the narrow and prosaic sense. The painter, any painter, *while he is painting*, practices a magical theory of vision. He is obliged to admit that objects before him pass into him or

else that, according to Malebranche's sarcastic dilemma, the mind goes out through the eyes to wander among objects; for he never ceases adjusting his clairvoyance to them. (It makes no difference if he does not paint from "nature"; he paints, in any case, because he has seen, because the world has at least once emblazoned in him the ciphers of the visible.) He must affirm, as one philosopher has said, that vision is a mirror or concentration of the universe or that, in another's words, the *idios kosmos* opens by virtue of vision upon a *koinos kosmos*; in short, that the same thing is both out there in the world and here at the heart of vision—the same or, if you will, a *similar* thing, but according to an efficient similarity which is the parent, the genesis, the metamorphosis of being into its vision. It is the mountain itself which from out there makes itself seen by the painter; it is the mountain that he interrogates with his gaze.

What exactly does he ask of it? To unveil the means, visible and not otherwise, by which it makes itself mountain before our eyes. Light, lighting, shadows, reflections, color, all these objects of his quest are not altogether real objects; like ghosts, they have only visual existence. In fact they exist only at the threshold of profane vision; they are not ordinarily seen. The painter's gaze asks them what they do to suddenly cause something to be and to be *this* thing, what they do to compose this talisman of a world, to make us see the visible. The hand pointing toward us in *The Nightwatch* is truly there only when we see that its shadow on the captain's body presents it simultaneously in profile. The spatiality of the captain lies at the intersection of the two perspectives which are impossible and yet together. Everyone with eyes has at some time or other witnessed this play of shadows, or something like it, and has been made by it to see things and a space. But it worked in them without them; it hid to make the object visible. To see the object, it was necessary *not* to see the play of shadows and light around it. The visible in the profane sense forgets its premises; it rests upon a total visibility which is to be recreated and which liberates the phantoms captive in it. The moderns, as we know, have liberated many others; they have added many a muted tone to the official gamut of our means of seeing. But the interrogation of painting in any case looks toward this secret and feverish genesis of things in our body.

And so it is not a question asked of someone who doesn't know by someone who does—the schoolmaster's question. The question comes from one who does not know, and it is addressed to a vision, a seeing, which knows everything and which we do not make, for it makes itself in us. Max Ernst (with the surrealists) says rightly, "Just as the role of the poet since [Rimbaud's] famous *Lettre du voyant* consists in writing under

the dictation of what is being thought, of what articulates itself in him, the painter's role is to circumscribe and project what is making itself seen within himself."⁸ The painter lives in fascination. The actions most proper to him—those gestures, those tracings of which he alone is capable and which will be revelations to others because they do not lack what he lacks—to him they seem to emanate from the things themselves, like figures emanating from the constellations.

Inevitably the roles between the painter and the visible switch. That is why so many painters have said that things look at them. As André Marchand says, after Klee: "In a forest, I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me, were speaking to me. . . . I was there, listening. . . . I think that the painter must be penetrated by the universe and not want to penetrate it. . . . I expect to be inwardly submerged, buried. Perhaps I paint to break out."⁹

We speak of "inspiration," and the word should be taken literally. There really is inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration in Being, action and passion so slightly discernible that it becomes impossible to distinguish between who sees and who is seen, who paints and what is painted. We say that a human being is born the moment when something that was only virtually visible within the mother's body becomes at once visible for us and for itself. The painter's vision is an ongoing birth.

In paintings themselves we could seek a figured philosophy¹⁰ of vision—its iconography, perhaps. It is no accident, for example, that frequently in Dutch paintings (as in many others) an interior in which no one is present is "digested" by the "round eye of the mirror."¹¹ This prehuman way of seeing things is emblematic of the painter's way. More completely than lights, shadows, and reflections, the mirror image anticipates, within things, the labor of vision. Like all other technical objects, such as tools and signs, the mirror has sprung up along the open circuit *between* the seeing and the visible body. Every technique is a "technique of the body," illustrating and amplifying the metaphysical structure of our flesh. The mirror emerges because I am a visible see-er, because there is a reflexivity of the sensible; the mirror translates and reproduces that reflexivity. In it, my externality becomes complete. Everything that is most secret about me passes into that face, that flat, closed being of which I was already dimly aware, from having seen my reflection mirrored in water. Schilder observes that, smoking a pipe before a mirror, I feel the sleek, burning surface of the wood not only where my fingers are but also in those otherworldly fingers, those merely visible ones inside the mirror.¹² The mirror's phantom draws my flesh into the outer world,

and at the same time the invisible of my body can invest its psychic energy in the other bodies I see.¹³ Hence my body can include elements drawn from the body of another, just as my substance passes into them; man is a mirror for man. Mirrors are instruments of a universal magic that converts things into spectacle, spectacle into things, myself into another, and another into myself. Artists have often mused upon mirrors because beneath this "mechanical trick," they recognized, as they did in the case of the "trick" of perspective,¹⁴ the metamorphosis of seeing and seen that defines both our flesh and the painter's vocation. This explains why they have so often chosen to draw themselves in the act of painting (they still do—witness Matisse's drawings), adding to what *they* could see of things at that moment, what *things* could see of them—as if to attest to there being a total or absolute vision, leaving nothing outside, including themselves. Where in the realm of the understanding can we place these occult operations, together with the potions and idols they concoct? What can we call them? Consider, as Sartre did in *Nausea*, the smile of a long-dead monarch which keeps producing and reproducing itself on the surface of a canvas. It is too little to say that it is there as an image or essence; it is there as itself, as that which was always most alive about it, the moment I look at the painting. The "world's instant" that Cézanne wanted to paint, an instant long since passed away, is still hurled toward us by his paintings.¹⁵ His *Mont, Sainte-Victoire* is made and remade from one end of the world to the other in a way different from but no less energetic than in the hard rock above Aix. Essence and existence, imaginary and real, visible and invisible—painting scrambles all our categories, spreading out before us its oneiric universe of carnal essences, actualized resemblances, mute meanings.

III

How crystal clear everything would be in our philosophy if only we would exorcise these specters, make illusions or objectless perceptions out of them, brush them to one side of an unequivocal world!

Descartes's *Dioptrics* is an attempt to do just that. It is the breviary of a thought that wants no longer to abide in the visible and so decides to reconstruct it according to a model-in-thought. It is worthwhile to remember this attempt and its failure.

Here there is no concern to cling to vision. The problem is to know "how it happens," but only enough to invent, whenever the need

arises, certain "artificial organs" which correct it.¹⁶ We are to reason not so much upon the light we see as upon the light which, from outside, enters our eyes and regulates our vision. And for that we are to rely upon "two or three comparisons which help us to conceive it [light]" in such a way as to explain its known properties and to deduce others.¹⁷ The question being so formulated, it is best to think of light as an action by contact—not unlike the action of things upon the blind man's cane. The blind, says Descartes, "see with their hands."¹⁸ The Cartesian model of vision is modeled after the sense of touch.

At one swoop, then, Descartes eliminates action at a distance and relieves us of that ubiquity which is the whole problem of vision (as well as its peculiar virtue). Why should we henceforth puzzle over reflections and mirrors? These unreal duplications are a class of things; they are real effects like a ball bouncing back. If the reflection resembles the thing itself, it is because this reflection acts upon the eyes more or less as a thing would. It deceives the eye by engendering a perception which has no object, yet this perception does not affect our conception of the world. In the world there is the thing itself, and outside this thing itself there is that other thing which is only reflected light rays and which happens to have an ordered correspondence with the real thing; there are two individuals, then, bound together externally by causality. As far as the thing and its mirror image are concerned, their resemblance is only an external denomination; the resemblance belongs to thought. The dubious relationship of likeness is—among things—an unequivocal relationship of projection.

The Cartesian does not see *himself* in the mirror; he sees a puppet, an "outside," which, he has every reason to believe, other people see in the very same way, but which is no more for himself than for others a body in the flesh. His "image" in the mirror is an effect of the mechanics of things. If he recognizes himself in it, if he thinks it "looks like him," it is his thought that weaves this connection. The mirror image is in no sense a *part* of him. For him, icons lose their powers.¹⁹ However vividly an etching may "represent" forests, towns, men, battles, storms, it does not resemble them. It is only a bit of ink put down here and there on the paper. A figure flattened down onto a plane surface scarcely retains the forms of things; it is a deformed figure that *must* be deformed—the square becomes a lozenge, the circle an oval—in order to represent the object. It is an image only as long as it does not resemble its object. If not through resemblance, how, then, does it work? It "excites our thought" to "conceive," as do signs and words "which in no way resemble the things they signify."²⁰ The etching gives

us sufficient indices, unequivocal "means" for forming an idea of the thing that does not come from the icon itself; rather, it arises in us, as "occasioned" by the icon. The magic of intentional species—the old idea of effective resemblance so strongly suggested to us by mirrors and paintings—loses its final argument if the entire potential of a painting is that of a text to be read, a text totally free of promiscuity between the seeing and the seen. We need no longer try to understand how a painting of things in the body could make them felt in the soul—an impossible task, since the very resemblance between this painting and those things would have to be seen in turn, since we would "have to have other eyes in our minds with which to apperceive it,"²¹ and since the problem of vision remains intact even after we have introduced these simulacra, wandering between things and us. What the light casts upon our eyes, and thence upon our brain, does not resemble the visible world any more than etchings do. Nothing goes from things to the eyes, and from the eyes to vision, no more than from things to a blind man's hands, and from his hands to his thoughts.

Vision is not the metamorphosis of things themselves into the sight of them; it is not a matter of things' belonging simultaneously to the world at large and a little private world. It is a thinking that unequivocally decodes signs given within the body. Resemblance is the result of perception, not its basis. Thus, the mental image, the visualization which renders present to us what is absent, is a fortiori nothing like a breakthrough to the heart of Being. It too is a thought relying upon bodily indices—this time insufficient ones—which are made to say more than they mean. Nothing is left of the oneiric world of analogy. . . .

What interests us in these famous analyses is that they make us aware of the fact that every theory of painting is a metaphysics. Descartes does not say much about painting, and one might think it unfair on our part to make so much of a few pages on engravings. And yet the very fact that he speaks of painting only in passing is itself significant. Painting for him is not a central operation contributing to the definition of our access to Being; it is a mode or a variant of thinking, where thinking is canonically defined as intellectual possession and self-evidence. His very brevity is the indication of a choice; a closer study of painting would lead to a different philosophy. It is significant, too, that when he speaks of "pictures" [*tableaux*] he takes line drawings as typical. We shall see that the whole of painting is present in each of its modes of expression: there is a kind of drawing, even a single line, that can embrace all of painting's bold potential.

But what Descartes likes most about engravings is that they pre-

serve the form of objects, or at least give us sufficient signs of their forms. They present the object by its outside, or its envelope. If he had examined that other, deeper opening upon things given us by the secondary qualities, especially color, then—since there is no rule-governed or projective relationship between them and the true properties of things, and we understand their message all the same—he would have found himself faced with the problem of a conceptless universality and opening upon things. He would have been obliged to find out how the uncertain murmur of colors can present us with things, forests, storms—in short the world. He would have been obliged, perhaps, to integrate perspective, as a particular case, into a broader ontological power. But for him it goes without saying that color is an ornament, mere coloring, and that the real power of painting lies in drawing, whose power in turn rests upon the ordered relationship between it and objective space established by perspectival projection. Pascal's famous saying that painting is frivolous because it attaches us to images whose originals would not move us is a Cartesian saying. For Descartes it is self-evident that one can paint only existing things, that their existence consists in being extended, and line drawing alone makes painting possible by making possible the representation of extension. Thus painting is only an artifice that puts before our eyes a projection similar to the one things themselves would (and do, according to the commonsense view) inscribe in them. Painting causes us to see, without real objects, just as we see things in everyday life; and in particular it makes us see empty space where there is none.²²

The picture is a flat thing contriving to give us what we would see in the presence of "diversely positioned" things, by offering sufficient diacritical signs, through height and width, of the missing dimension.²³ Depth is a *third dimension* derived from the other two.

It will be worth our while to dwell for a moment upon this third dimension. There is, at first glance, something paradoxical about it. I see objects that hide each other and that consequently I do not see; each one stands behind the other. I see depth and yet it is not visible, since it is reckoned from our bodies to things, and we are [as Cartesians] confined to our bodies. There is no real mystery here. I do not really see depth or, if I do, it is only another *size*. On the line from my eyes to the horizon, the foreground forever hides all the other planes, and if on either side I think I see things staggered at intervals, it is because they do not completely hide each other. Thus I see each thing outside the others, according to a width measured differently.²⁴ We are [as Cartesians] always on the hither side of depth, or beyond it. It is never the case that things

really *are* one behind the other. The encroachment and latency do not enter into their definition. They express only my incomprehensible solidarity with one of them—my body; and by their positivity they are thoughts of mine and not attributes of things. I know that at this very moment another person, situated elsewhere—or better, God, who is everywhere—could penetrate their hiding place and see them openly deployed. What I call depth is either nothing, or else it is my participation in a Being without restriction, first and foremost a participation in the being of space beyond every particular point of view. Things encroach upon one another *because they are outside one another*. The proof of this is that I can see depth in a painting which everyone agrees has none and which organizes for me an illusion of an illusion. . . . This two-dimensional being,²⁵ which makes me see a third, is a being that is pierced [*troué*]*—as the men of the Renaissance said, a window. . . . But in the final analysis the window opens only upon parties extra partes, upon height and breadth merely seen from another angle—upon the absolute positivity of Being.*

It is this space without hiding places which in each of its points is only what it is, neither more nor less, this identity of Being that underlies the analysis of engravings. Space is in itself; rather, it is the in-itself par excellence. Its definition is *to be* in itself. Every point of space is, and is thought as being, right where it is—one here, another there; space is the self-evidence of the “where.” Orientation, polarity, envelopment are, in space, derived phenomena linked to my presence. *Space* remains absolutely in itself, everywhere equal to itself, homogeneous; its dimensions, for example, are by definition interchangeable.

Like all classical ontologies, this one elevates certain properties of beings into a structure of Being, and in so doing it is both true and false. Reversing Leibniz’s remark, we might say that it is true in what it denies and false in what it affirms. Descartes’s space is true, when contrasted with a thought too empirically dominated, which dares not construct. It was necessary first to idealize space, to conceive of that being—perfect of its kind, clear, manageable, and homogeneous—which an unsituated thinking glides over without a vantage point of its own: a being which thought transcribes in its entirety onto three right-angled axes—so that subsequent thinkers could one day experience the limitations of that construction and understand that space does not have precisely three dimensions, (as an animal has either four or two legs), and that dimensions are taken by different systems of measurement from a single dimensionality, a polymorphous Being, which justifies all of them without being fully expressed by any. Descartes was right in liberating space: his

mistake was to erect it into a positive being, beyond all points of view, all latency and depth, devoid of any real thickness.

He was also right in taking his inspiration from the perspectival techniques of the Renaissance; they encouraged painting to experiment freely with depth and the presentation of Being in general. These techniques were false only in that they presumed to bring an end to painting’s quest and history, to found once and for all an exact and infallible art of painting. As Panofsky has shown concerning the men of the Renaissance, this enthusiasm was not without bad faith.²⁶ The theoreticians tried to forget the spherical visual field of the ancients, their angular perspective which relates the apparent size not to distance but to the angle from which we see the object. They wanted to forget what they disdainfully called *perspectiva naturalis*, or *communis*, in favor of a *perspectiva artificialis* capable in principle of founding an exact construction. To accredit this myth, they went so far as to expurgate Euclid, omitting from their translations the eighth theorem, which was inconvenient. But the painters knew from experience that no technique of perspective is an exact solution and that there is no projection of the existing world which respects it in all aspects and deserves to become the fundamental law of painting. They knew that linear perspective was far from being an ultimate breakthrough; on the contrary, it opened several pathways for painting. For example, the Italians took the way of representing the object, but the Northern painters discovered and worked out the formal technique of *Hochraum*, *Nahraum*, and *Schrägraum*. Thus plane projection does not always stimulate our thought to rediscover the true form of things, as Descartes believed. Beyond a certain degree of deformation, it refers us back, on the contrary, to our own vantage point; as for the things, they flee into a remoteness out of reach of all thought. Something about space evades our attempts to survey it from above.

The truth is that no means of expression, once mastered, resolves the problems of painting or transforms it into a technique. For no symbolic form ever functions as a stimulus. Symbolic form works and acts only in conjunction with the entire context of the *work*, and not at all by means of a *trompe-l’oeil*. The *Stilmoment* never dispenses with the *Wermoment*.²⁷ The language of painting is never “instituted by nature”; it must be made and remade. The perspective of the Renaissance is no infallible “gimmick.” It is only one particular case, a date, a moment in a poetic information of the world which continues after it.

Yet Descartes would not have been Descartes if he had thought to eliminate the enigma of vision. For him, there is no vision without thought: but *it is not enough* to think in order to see. Vision is a condi-

tioned thought; it is born "as occasioned" by what happens in the body; it is "incited" to think by the body. It does not *choose* either to be or not to be or to think this thing or that. It must carry in its heart that heaviness, that dependence which cannot come to it by some intrusion from outside. Such bodily events are "instituted by nature" in order to bring us to see this thing or that. The thinking that belongs to vision functions according to a program and a law which it has not given itself. It does not possess its own premises; it is not a thought altogether present and actual; there is in its center a mystery of passivity.

Thus the Cartesian situation is as follows. Everything we say and think of vision has to make a *thought* of it. When, for example, we wish to understand how we see the location of objects, we have no other recourse than to suppose the soul to be capable, knowing where the parts of its body are, of "transferring its attention from there" to all the points of space that lie along the prolongation of its bodily members.²⁸ But so far this is only a "model" of the event. For how does the soul know that space of its body which it extends toward things, that primary *here* from which all the *theres* will come? This space is not, like them, just another mode or specimen of extension; it is the place of the body the soul calls "mine," a place the soul inhabits. The body it animates is not, for it, an object among objects, and it does not deduce from its body all the rest of space as an implied premise. The soul thinks according to the body, not according to itself, and space, or exterior distance, is also stipulated within the natural pact that unites them. If, at a certain degree of ocular accommodation and convergence the soul becomes aware of a certain distance, the thought which draws the second relationship from the first is as if immemorially encoded in our inner workings. "Usually this comes about without our reflecting upon it—just as, when we clasp a body with our hand, we conform the hand to the size and shape of the body and thereby sense the body, without having need to think of those movements of the hand."²⁹ The body is both the soul's native space, and the matrix of every other existing space. Thus vision doubles. There is the vision upon which I reflect; I cannot think it except *as* thought, the mind's inspection, judgment, a reading of signs. And then there is the vision that actually occurs, an honorary or established thought, collapsed into a body—its own body, of which we can have no idea except in the exercise of it, and which introduces, between space and thought, the autonomous order of the composite of soul and body. The enigma of vision is not done away with; it is shifted from the "thought of seeing" to vision in act.

Still, this *de facto* vision and the "there is" which it contains do

not upset Descartes's philosophy. Since it is thought united with a body, it cannot, by definition, truly be conceived. One can practice it, exercise it, and, so to speak, exist it; yet one can draw nothing from it which deserves to be called true. If, like Queen Elizabeth,³⁰ we want at all costs to think *something* about it, all we can do is go back to Aristotle and scholasticism, to conceive thought as a corporeal something which cannot be conceived but which is the only way to formulate, for our understanding, the union of soul and body. The truth is that it is absurd to submit to pure understanding the mixture of understanding and body. These would-be thoughts are the emblems of "the practice of everyday life," the verbal blazons of union, permissible only if not taken to be thoughts. They are indices of an order of existence—of humanity and world as existing—of which we are not held to produce a concept. For this order there is no *terra incognita* on our map of Being. It does not confine the reach of our thoughts, because it, just as much as they, is sustained by a Truth which grounds its obscurity as well as our own lights.³¹

We have to go to these lengths to find in Descartes something like a metaphysics of depth. For we are not present at the birth of this Truth; God's being is for us an abyss. An anxious trembling quickly mastered; for Descartes it is just as futile to plumb that abyss as it is to think the space of the soul and the depth of the visible. Our very position, he would say, disqualifies us from looking into such things. That is the secret of Cartesian equilibrium: a metaphysics which gives us definitive reasons to leave off doing metaphysics, which validates our self-evidence while limiting it, which opens up our thinking without rending it.

The secret has been lost, and lost for good, it seems. If we are ever again to find a balance between science and philosophy, between our models and the obscurity of the "there is," it must be of a new kind. Our science has rejected the justifications as well as the restrictions which Descartes assigned to its domain. It no longer pretends to deduce its invented models from the attributes of God. The depth of the existing world and an unfathomable God no longer stand over against the flatness of "technicized" thought. Science manages without the excursion into metaphysics that Descartes had to make at least once in his life; it begins from the point he ultimately reached. Operational thought claims for itself, in the name of psychology, that domain of contact with oneself and with the world which Descartes reserved for a blind but irreducible experience. Operational thought is fundamentally hostile to philosophy as thought-in-contact, and if it rediscovers a sense of such a philosophy, it will be through the very excess of its daring; when, having introduced all sorts of notions that Descartes would have held to arise from con-

fused thought—quality, scalar structures, solidarity of observer and observed—it suddenly realizes that one cannot summarily speak of all these beings as *constructs*. Meanwhile, philosophy maintains itself against such operationalist thinking, plunging itself into that dimension of the composite of soul and body, of the existent world, of the abyssal Being that Descartes opened up and so quickly closed again. Our science and our philosophy are two faithful and unfaithful offshoots of Cartesianism, two monsters born of its dismemberment.

Nothing is left for our philosophy but to set out to prospect the actual world. We *are* the compound of soul and body, and so there must be a thought of it. It is to this knowledge by position or situation that Descartes owes what he himself says of it, or what he sometimes says of the presence of the body “against the soul,” or of the exterior world “at the tip” of our hands. Here the body is no longer the means of vision and touch, but their depository.

Our organs are not instruments; on the contrary, our instruments are added-on organs. Space is not what it was in the *Dioptrics*, a network of relations between objects such as would be seen by a third party, witnessing my vision, or by a geometer looking over it and reconstructing it from outside. It is, rather, a space reckoned starting from me as the null point or degree zero of spatiality. I do not see it according to its exterior envelope; I live it from the inside; I am immersed in it. After all, the world is around me, not in front of me. Light is found once more to be action at a distance. It is no longer reduced to the action of contact or, in other words, conceived as it might be by those who cannot see.³² Vision reassumes its fundamental power of manifestation, of showing more than itself. And since we are told that a bit of ink suffices to make us see forests and storms, light must have its own power to generate the imaginary. Its transcendence is not delegated to a reading mind which deciphers the impacts of the light qua thing upon the brain and which could do this quite as well if it had never inhabited a body. No longer is it a matter of speaking about space and light, but of making space and light, which are *there*, speak to us. There is no end to this questioning, since the vision to which it is addressed is itself a question. All the inquiries we believed closed have been reopened. What is depth, what is light, τί το ὄν? What are they—not for the mind that cuts itself off from the body but for the mind Descartes says is suffused throughout the body? And what are they, finally, not only for the mind but for themselves, since they pass through us and surround us?

This philosophy, which is yet to be elaborated, is what animates the painter—not when he expresses opinions about the world but in that

instant when his vision becomes gesture, when, in Cézanne's words, he “thinks in painting.”³³

IV

The entire history of painting in the modern period, with its efforts to detach itself from illusionism and acquire its own dimensions, has a metaphysical significance. There can be no question of demonstrating this here. Not because of the limits of objectivity in history and the inevitable plurality of interpretations, which would forbid linking a philosophy and an event, for the metaphysics we have in mind is not a separate body of ideas for which inductive justifications could then be sought in the experiential realm—and there are, in the flesh of contingency, a structure of the event and a virtue peculiar to the scenario that do not prevent the plurality of interpretations but in fact are the deepest reason for it. They make the event a durable theme of historical life, and have a right to philosophical status. In a sense everything that may have been said and will be said about the French Revolution has always been and will henceforth be within it, in that wave arising from a roil of discrete facts, with its froth of the past and its crest of the future. And it is always by looking more deeply into *how it came about* that we make and will go on making new representations of it. As for the history of works of art, in any case, if they are great, the sense we give to them later on has issued from them. It is the work itself that has opened the perspective from which it appears in another light. It transforms *itself* and *becomes* what follows; the interminable interpretations to which it is *legitimately* susceptible change it only into itself. And if the historian unearths beneath its manifest content a surplus and thickness of meaning, a texture which held the promise of a long history, then this active manner of being, this possibility he unveils in the work, this monogram he finds there—all are grounds for a philosophical meditation. But such a labor demands a long familiarity with history. I lack everything for its execution, both competence and space. But since the power or the fecundity of works of art exceeds every positive causal or linear relation, it is not illegitimate for a layman such as myself, speaking from his memory of a few paintings and books, to express how painting enters into his reflections, and to register his sense of a profound dissonance, a transformation in the relationship between humanity and Being, when he holds up a universe of classical thought, contrasting it *en bloc* with the explorations of modern painting. A sort of history by contact,

that perhaps does not go beyond the limits of one person, though it owes everything to his frequentation of others. . . .

"I believe Cézanne was seeking depth all his life," says Giacometti.³⁴ Says Robert Delaunay, "Depth is the new inspiration."³⁵ Four centuries after the "solutions" of the Renaissance and three centuries after Descartes, depth is still new, and it insists on being sought, not "once in a lifetime" but all through life. It cannot be merely a question of an unmysterious interval, as seen from an airplane, between these trees nearby and those farther away. Nor is it a matter of the way things are conjured away, one by another, as we see so vividly portrayed in a perspective drawing. These two views are very explicit and raise no problems. The enigma, though, lies in their bond, in what is between them. The enigma consists in the fact that I see things, each one in its place, precisely because they eclipse one another, and that they are rivals before my sight precisely because each one is in its own place—in their exteriority, known through their envelopment, and their mutual dependence in their autonomy. Once depth is understood in this way, we can no longer call it a third dimension. In the first place, if it were a dimension, it would be the *first* one; there are forms and definite planes only if it is stipulated how far from me their different parts are. But a *first* dimension that contains all the others is no longer a dimension, at least in the ordinary sense of a *certain relationship* according to which we make measurements. Depth thus understood is, rather, the experience of the reversibility of dimensions, of a global "locality" in which everything is in the same place at the same time, a locality from which height, width, and depth are abstracted, a voluminosity we express in a word when we say that a thing is *there*. In pursuing depth, what Cézanne is seeking is this deflagration of Being, and it is all in the modes of space, and in form as well. Cézanne already knew what cubism would restate: that the external form, the envelope, is secondary and derived, that it is not what makes a thing to take form, that that shell of space must be shattered—the fruit bowl must be broken. But then what should be painted instead? Cubes, spheres, and cones—as he said once? Pure forms having the solidity of what could be defined by an internal law of construction, forms which taken together, as traces or cross-sections of the thing, let it appear between them like a face in the reeds? This would be to put Being's solidity on one side and its variety on the other. Cézanne had already made an experiment of this kind in his middle period. He went directly to the solid, to space—and came to find that inside this space—this box or container too large for them—the things began to move, color against color; they began to modulate in the instability.³⁶ Thus we must seek

space and its content *together*. The problem becomes generalized; it is no longer solely that of distance, line, and form; it is also, and equally, the problem of color.

Color is the "place where our brain and the universe meet," he says in that admirable idiom of the artisan of Being which Klee liked to quote.³⁷ It is for the sake of color that we must break up the form *qua* spectacle. Thus the question is not of colors, "simulacra of the colors of nature."³⁸ The question, rather, concerns the dimension of color, that dimension which creates—from itself to itself—identities, differences, a texture, a materiality, a something. . . .

Yet there is clearly no one master key of the visible, and color alone is no closer to being such a key than space is. The return to color has the virtue of getting somewhat nearer to "the heart of things,"³⁹ but this heart is beyond the color envelope just as it is beyond the space envelope. The *Portrait of Vallier* sets white spaces between the colors which take on the function of giving shape to, and setting off, a being more general than yellow-being or green-being or blue-being. Similarly, in the water colors of Cézanne's last years, space (which had been taken to be self-evidence itself and of which it was believed that the question of *where* was not to be asked) radiates around planes that cannot be assigned to any place at all: "a superimposing of transparent surfaces," "a flowing movement of planes of color which overlap, advance and retreat."⁴⁰

As we can see, it is not a matter of adding one more dimension to those of the flat canvas, of organizing an illusion or an objectless perception whose perfection consists in simulating an empirical vision to the maximum degree. Pictorial depth (as well as painted height and width) comes "I know not whence" to alight upon, and take root in, the sustaining support. The painter's vision is not a view upon the *outside*, a merely "physical-optical"⁴¹ relation with the world. The world no longer stands before him through representation; rather, it is the painter to whom the things of the world give birth by a sort of concentration or coming-to-itself of the visible. Ultimately the painting relates to nothing at all among experienced things unless it is first of all "autofigurative."⁴² It is a spectacle of something only by being a "spectacle of nothing,"⁴³ by breaking the "skin of things"⁴⁴ to show how the things become things, how the world becomes world. Apollinaire said that in a poem there are phrases which do not appear to have been *created*, which seem to have *shaped themselves*. And Henri Michaux said that sometimes Klee's colors seem to have been born slowly upon the canvas, to have emanated from some primordial ground, "exhaled at the right spot"⁴⁵ like a patina or a

mold. Art is not construction, artifice, the meticulous relationship to a space and a world existing outside. It is truly the "inarticulate cry," as Hermes Trismegistus said, "which seemed to be the voice of the light." And once it is present it awakens powers dormant in ordinary vision, a secret of preexistence. When through the water's thickness I see the tiled bottom of the pool, I do not see it *despite* the water and the reflections; I see it through them and because of them. If there were no distortions, no ripples of sunlight, if it were without that flesh that I saw the geometry of the tiles, then I would cease to see it *as* it is and where it is—which is to say, beyond any identical, specific place. I cannot say that the water itself—the aqueous power, the syrupy and shimmering element—is *in* space; all this is not somewhere else either, but it is not in the pool. It inhabits it, is materialized there, yet it is not contained there; and if I lift my eyes toward the screen of cypresses where the web of reflections plays, I must recognize that the water visits it as well, or at least sends out to it its active, living essence. This inner animation, this radiation of the visible, is what the painter seeks beneath, the words *depth*, *space*, and *color*.

Anyone who thinks about the matter finds it astonishing that very often a good painter can also produce good drawings or good sculpture. Since neither the means of expression nor the creative gestures are comparable, this is proof that there is a system of equivalences, a Logos of lines, of lighting, of colors, of reliefs, of masses—a nonconceptual presentation of universal Being. The effort of modern painting has been directed not so much toward choosing between line and color, or even between figurative depiction and the creation of signs, as it has been toward multiplying the systems of equivalences, toward severing their adherence to the envelope of things. This effort may require the creation of new materials or new means of expression, but it may well be realized at times by the reexamination and reuse of those already at hand.

There has been, for example, a prosaic conception of the line as a positive attribute and property of the object in itself. Thus, it is the outer contour of the apple or the border between the plowed field and the meadow, considered as present in the world, such that, guided by points taken from the real world, the pencil or brush would only have to pass over them. But this line has been contested by all modern painting, and probably by all painting, as we are led to think by da Vinci's comment in his *Treatise on Painting*: "The secret of the art of drawing is to discover in each object the particular way in which a certain flexuous line, which is, so to speak, its generating axis, is directed through its whole extent."⁴⁶ Both Ravaisson and Bergson sensed something important in this, without daring to decipher the oracle all the way. Bergson scarcely looked for

the "sinuous outline [*serpentelement*]" outside living beings, and he rather timidly advanced the idea that the undulating line "could be no one of the visible lines of the figure," that it is "no more here than there," and yet "gives the key to the whole."⁴⁷ He was on the threshold of that gripping discovery, already familiar to the painters, that there are no lines visible in themselves, that neither the contour of the apple nor the border between field and meadow is in *this* place or that, that they are always on the near or the far side of the point we look at. They are always between or behind whatever we fix our eyes upon; they are indicated, implicated, and even very imperiously demanded by the things, but they themselves are not things. They were thought to circumscribe the apple or the meadow, but the apple and the meadow "form themselves" from themselves, and come into the visible as if they had come from a pre-spatial world behind the scenes.

Yet this challenging of the prosaic line is far from ruling out all lines in painting, as the impressionists may have thought. It is simply a matter of freeing the line, of revivifying its constituting power; and we are not faced with a contradiction when we see it reappear and triumph in painters like Klee or Matisse, who more than anyone believed in color. For henceforth, as Klee said, the line no longer imitates the visible; it, "renders visible"; it is the blueprint of a genesis of things. Perhaps no one before Klee had "let a line muse."⁴⁸ The beginning of the line's path establishes or installs a certain level or mode of the linear, a certain manner for the line to be and to make itself a line, "to go line."⁴⁹ Relative to it, every subsequent inflection will have a diacritical value, will be another aspect of the line's relationship to itself, will form an adventure, a history, a meaning of the line—all this according as it slants more or less, more or less rapidly, more or less subtly. Making its way in space, it nevertheless corrodes prosaic space and its *partes extra partes*; it develops a way of extending itself actively into that space which sub-tends the spatiality of a thing quite as much as that of a man or an apple tree. It is just that, as Klee said, to give the generating axis of a man the painter "would have to have a network of lines so entangled that it could no longer be a question of a truly elementary representation."⁵⁰

In view of this situation two alternatives are open, and it makes little difference which one is chosen. First, the painter may, like Klee, decide to hold rigorously to the principle of the genesis of the visible, the principle of fundamental, indirect, or—as Klee used to say—absolute painting, and then leave it up to the *title* to designate by its prosaic name, the entity thus constituted, in order to leave the painting free to function more purely as a painting. Or alternatively he may undertake, with

Matisse (in his drawings), to put into a single line both the prosaic, identifying characteristics of the entity and the hidden operation which combines such indolence or inertia and such force in it as are required to constitute it as *nude*, as *face*, as *flower*.

There is a painting by Klee of two holly leaves, done in the most representational manner. At first glance the leaves are thoroughly indecipherable, and they remain to the end monstrous, unbelievable, ghostly, *on account of their exactness*. And Matisse's women (let us keep in mind his contemporaries' sarcasm) were not immediately women; they became women. It is Matisse who taught us to see his shapes not in a "physical-optical" way but rather as structural filaments [*des nervures*], as the axes of a corporeal system of activity and passivity. Whether it be representational or nonrepresentational, the line is no longer a thing or an imitation of a thing. It is a certain disequilibrium contrived within the indifference of the white paper; it is a certain hollow opened up within the in-itself, a certain constitutive emptiness—an emptiness which, as Moore's statues show decisively, sustains the supposed positivity of things. The line is no longer the apparition of an entity upon a vacant background, as it was in classical geometry. It is, as in modern geometries, the restriction, segregation, or modulation of a pre-given spatiality.

Just as painting has created the latent line, it has made for itself a movement without displacement, a movement by vibration or radiation. And well it should, since, as they say, painting is an art of space, is carried out upon a canvas or sheet of paper and so lacks the wherewithal to devise things that actually move. But an immobile canvas could suggest a change of place, just as a shooting star's track on my retina suggests a transition, a motion not contained in it. The painting itself would then offer to my eyes almost the same thing offered them by real movements: a series of appropriately mixed, instantaneous glimpses along with, if a living thing is involved, attitudes unstably suspended between a before and an after—in short, the externals of a change of place which the spectator would read from the imprint it leaves. Here Rodin's well-known remark reveals its full weight: instantaneous glimpses, unstable attitudes petrify movement, as is shown by so many photographs in which an athlete-in-motion is forever frozen. We could not thaw him out by multiplying the glimpses. Marey's photographs, the cubists' analyses, Duchamp's *La Mariée* do not move; they give a Zenonian reverie on movement. We see a rigid body as if it were a piece of armor going through its motions; it is here and it is there, magically, but it does not go from here to there. Cinema portrays movement, but *how*? Is it, as we are inclined to believe, by copying more closely the changes of place? We

may presume not, since slow motion shows a body being carried along, floating among objects like seaweed, but not *moving itself*.

Movement is given, says Rodin, by an image in which the arms, the legs, the trunk, and the head are each taken at a different instant, an image which therefore portrays the body in an attitude which it never at any instant really held and which imposes fictive linkages between the parts, as if this mutual confrontation of impossibles could—and alone could—cause transition and duration to arise in bronze and on canvas.⁵¹ The only successful instantaneous glimpses of movement are those which approach this paradoxical arrangement—when, for example, a walking man or woman is taken at the moment when both feet are touching the ground; for then we almost have the temporal ubiquity of the body which brings it about that the person *bestrides* space. The picture makes movement visible by its internal discordance. Each member's position, precisely by virtue of its incompatibility with that of the others (according to the body's logic), is dated differently or is not "in time" with the others; and since all of them remain visibly within the unity of one body, it is the body which comes to bestride duration. Its movement is something conspired between legs, trunk, arms, and head in some locus of virtuality, and it breaks forth only subsequently by actual change of place. When a horse is photographed at that instant when he is completely off the ground, with his legs almost folded under him—an instant, therefore, when he must be moving—why does he look as if he were leaping in place? And why, by contrast, do Géricault's horses really *run* on canvas, in a posture impossible for a real horse at a gallop? It is because the horses in *Epsom Derby* bring me to see the body's grip upon the ground and that, according to a logic of body and world I know well, these "grips" upon space are also ways of taking hold of duration. Rodin said profoundly, "It is the artist who is truthful, while the photograph lies; for, in reality, time never stops."⁵² The photograph keeps open the instants which the onrush of time closes up forthwith; it destroys the overtaking, the overlapping, the "metamorphosis" [Rodin] of time. This is what painting, in contrast, makes visible, because the horses have in them that "leaving here, going there,"⁵³ because they have a foot in each instant. Painting searches not for the outside of movement but for its secret ciphers, of which there are some still more subtle than those of which Rodin spoke. All flesh, and even that of the world, radiates beyond itself. But whether or not one is, depending on the era and the "school," attached more to *manifest* movement or the monumental, the art of painting is never, altogether outside time, because it is always within the carnal.

Now perhaps we have a better sense of how much is contained in

that little word "see." Seeing is not a certain mode of thought or presence to self; it is the means given me for being absent from myself, for being present from within at the fission of Being only at the end of which do I close up into myself.

Painters have always known this. Da Vinci invoked a "pictorial science" which does not speak in words (and still less in numbers) but in works that exist in the visible just as natural things do—yet pass on that science "to all the generations of the universe."⁵⁴ A silent science, says Rilke (apropos of Rodin), that brings into the work the forms of things "whose seal has not been broken"; it comes from the eye and addresses itself to the eye.⁵⁵ We must understand the eye as the "window of the soul." "The eye . . . through which the beauty of the universe is revealed to our contemplation is of such excellence that whoever should resign himself to losing it would deprive himself of the knowledge of all the works of nature, the sight of which makes the soul live happily in its body's prison, thanks to the eyes which show him the infinite variety of creation: whoever loses them abandons his soul in a dark prison where all hope of once more seeing the sun, the light of the universe, must vanish." The eye accomplishes the prodigious work of opening the soul to what is not soul—the joyous realm of things and their god, the sun.

A Cartesian can believe that the existing world is not visible, that the only light is of the mind, and that all vision takes place in God. A painter cannot agree that our openness to the world is illusory or indirect, that what we see is not the world itself, or that the mind has to do only with its thoughts or another mind. He accepts, with all its difficulties, the myth of the windows of the soul; what is without place must be subjected to a body—or, what is even more: what is without place must be initiated *by* the body to all the others and to nature. We must take literally what vision teaches us: namely, that through it we touch the sun and the stars, that we are everywhere at once, and that even our power to imagine ourselves elsewhere—"I am in Petersburg in my bed, in Paris, my eyes see the sun"⁵⁶—or freely to envision real beings, wherever they are, borrows from vision and employs means we owe to it. Vision alone teaches us that beings that are different, "exterior," foreign to one another, are yet absolutely *together*, are "simultaneity"; which is a mystery psychologists handle the way a child handles explosives. Robert Delaunay says succinctly, "The railroad track is the image of succession which comes closest to the parallel: the parity of the rails."⁵⁷ The rails converge and do not converge; they converge *in order to* remain equidistant farther away. The world is in accordance with my perspective *in or-*

der to be independent of me, is for me *in order to be* without me, to be a world. The "visual quale" gives me, and is alone in doing so, the presence of what is not me, of what *is* simply and fully.⁵⁸ It does so because, as a texture, it is the concretion of a universal visibility, of one sole Space that separates and reunites, that sustains every cohesion (and even that of past and future, since there would be no such cohesion if they were not essentially parts of the same space). Every visual something, as individual as it is, functions also as a dimension, because it is given as the result of a dehiscence of Being. What this ultimately means is that the hallmark of the visible is to have a lining of invisibility in the strict sense, which it makes present as a certain absence. "In their time, our erstwhile opposites, the Impressionists, were perfectly right in electing domicile among the scrub and stubble of the daily spectacle. As for us, our heart throbs to get closer to the depths. . . . These oddities will become realities . . . because instead of being limited to the diversely intense restoration of the visible, they also annex the occultly perceived portion of the invisible."⁵⁹ There is that which reaches the eye head on, the frontal properties of the visible; but there is also that which reaches it from below—the profound postural latency whereby the body raises itself to see—and that which reaches vision from above like the phenomena of flight, of swimming, of movement, where it participates no longer in the heaviness of origins but in free accomplishments.⁶⁰ Through vision, then, the painter touches both extremities. In the immemorial depth of the visible, something has moved, caught fire, which engulfs his body; everything he paints is in answer to this incitement, and his hand is "nothing but the instrument of a distant will." Vision is the meeting, as at a crossroads, of all the aspects of Being. "A certain fire wills to live; it wakes. Working its way along the hand's conductor, it reaches the canvas and invades it; then, a leaping spark, it arcs the gap in the circle it was to trace: the return to the eye, and beyond."⁶¹ There is no break at all in this circuit; it is impossible to say that here nature ends and the human being or expression begins. It is, then, silent Being that itself comes to show forth its own meaning. Herein lies the reason why the dilemma between figurative and nonfigurative art is wrongly posed; it is at once true and uncontradictory that no grape was ever what it is in the most figurative painting and that no painting, no matter how abstract, can get away from Being, that even Caravaggio's grape is the grape itself.⁶² This precession of what is upon what one sees and makes seen, of what one sees and makes seen upon what is—this is vision itself. And to give the ontological formula of painting we hardly need to force the painter's own words,

Klee's words written at the age of thirty-seven and ultimately inscribed on his tomb: "I cannot be grasped in immanence."⁶³

V

Because depth, color, form, line, movement, contour, physiognomy are all branches of Being and because each entwines the tufts of all the rest, there are no separated, distinct "problems" in painting, no really opposed paths, no partial "solutions," no cumulative progress, no irretrievable options. There is nothing to prevent the painter from going back to one of the emblems he has shied away from—making it, of course, speak differently. Rouault's contours are not those of Ingres. Light is the "old sultana," says Georges Limbour, "whose charms withered away at the beginning of this century."⁶⁴ Expelled at first by the painters of matter, it reappears finally in Dubuffet as a certain texture of matter. One is never immune to these avatars or to the least expected convergences; some of Rodin's fragments are statues by Germaine Richier *because they were sculptors*—that is to say, enmeshed in a single, identical network of Being.

For the same reason nothing is ever finally acquired and possessed for good. In "working over" a favorite problem, even if it is just the problem of velvet or wool, the true painter unknowingly upsets the givens of all the other problems. His quest is total even where it looks partial. Just when he has reached proficiency in some area, he finds that he has reopened another one where everything he said before must be said again in a different way. Thus what he has found he does not yet have. It remains to be sought out; the discovery itself calls forth still further quests. The idea of universal painting, of a totalization of painting, of painting's being fully and definitively accomplished is an idea bereft of sense. For painters, if any remain, the world will always be yet to be painted; even if it lasts millions of years . . . it will all end without having been completed.

Panofsky shows that the "problems" of painting that structure its history are often solved obliquely, not in the course of inquiries instigated to solve them but, on the contrary, at some point when painters, having reached an impasse, apparently forget those problems and allow themselves to be attracted by other things. Then suddenly, their attention elsewhere, they happen upon the old problems and surmount the obstacle. This hidden historicity, advancing through the labyrinth by de-

tours, transgression, slow encroachments and sudden drives, does not imply that the painter does not know what he wants, but that what he wants is on the hither side of means and goals, commanding and overseeing all our *useful* activity.

We are so fascinated by the classical idea of intellectual adequation that painting's mute "thought" sometimes leaves us with the impression of a vain swirl of significations, a paralyzed or miscarried utterance. And one answers that no thought ever detaches itself completely from a sustaining support; that the sole privilege of speaking thought is to have rendered its own support manageable; that the figurations of literature and philosophy are no more settled than those of painting and are no more capable of being accumulated into a stable treasure; that even science learns to recognize a zone of the "fundamental," peopled with dense, open, rent beings of which an exhaustive treatment is out of the question—like the cyberneticians' "aesthetic information" or mathematico-physical "groups of operations"; that, in the end, we are never in a position to take stock of everything objectively or to think of progress in itself; and that the whole of human history is, in a certain sense, stationary. What, says the understanding, like [Stendhal's] *Lamriel*, is that all there is to it? Is this the highest point of reason, to realize that the soil beneath our feet is shifting, to pompously call "interrogation" what is only a persistent state of stupor, to call "research" or "quest" what is only trudging in a circle, to call "Being" that which never fully is?

But this disappointment issues from that spurious fantasy⁶⁵ which claims for itself a positivity capable of making up for its own emptiness. It is the regret of not being everything, and a rather groundless regret at that. For if we cannot establish a hierarchy of civilizations or speak of progress—neither in painting nor even elsewhere—it is not because some fate impedes us; it is, rather, because the very first painting in some sense went to the farthest reach of the future. If no painting completely painting, if no work is itself ever absolutely completed, still, each creation changes, alters, clarifies, deepens, confirms, exalts, re-creates, or creates by anticipation all the others. If creations are not permanent acquisitions, it is not just that, like all things, they pass away: it is also that they have almost their entire lives before them.

28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Francis Ponge, contemporary French poet and essayist.—*Trans.*

Chapter 6

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Eye and Mind*

1. "L'oeil et l'esprit" was the last work Merleau-Ponty saw published. It appeared in the inaugural issue of *Art de France* 1, no. 1 (January 1961). After his death it was reprinted in *Les Temps Modernes* 184-85, along with seven articles devoted to him. It has now been published, in book form, by Gallimard (1964). Both the *Art de France* article and the book contain illustrations chosen by Merleau-Ponty. According to Professor Claude Lefort, "L'oeil et l'esprit" is a preliminary statement of ideas that were to be developed in the second part of the book Merleau-Ponty was writing at the time of his death—*Le visible et l'invisible* (part of which was published posthumously by Gallimard in February 1964). The translator wishes to acknowledge his immense debt to George Downing, who spent many long hours working over the final revisions of the translation. Also, thanks are due to Michel Beaujour, Arleen B. Dallery, and Robert Reitter for their advice and encouragement.—*Trans.*
2. [Il est là, fort ou faible dans la vie, mais souverain sans conteste dans sa rumination du monde, sans autre "technique" que celle que ses yeux et ses mains se donnent à force de voir, à force de peindre, acharné à tirer de ce monde où sonnent les scandales et les gloires de l'histoire des toiles qui n'ajouteront guère aux colères ni aux espoirs des hommes, et personne ne murmure.]
3. Cf. *Le visible et l'invisible* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 273, 308-11.—*Trans.*
4. See *Signes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 210, 222-23, especially the footnotes, for a clarification of the "circularity" at issue here.—*Trans.*
5. [Cet équivalent interne, cette formule charnelle de leur présence que les choses suscitent en moi, pourquoi à leur tour ne susciteraient-ils pas un tracé, visible encore, où tout autre regard retrouvera les motifs qui soutiennent son inspection du monde?]
6. G. Charbonnier, *Le monologue du peintre* (Paris, 1959), 172.
7. [Beaucoup plus loin, puisque le tableau n'est un analogue que selon le corps, qu'il n'offre pas à l'esprit une occasion de repenser les rapports constitutifs des choses, mais au regard, pour qu'il les épouse, les traces de la vision du dedans, à la vision ce qui la tapisse intérieurement, la texture imaginaire du réel.]
8. Charbonnier, *Le monologue*, 34.
9. Ibid., 143-45.
10. "... une philosophie figurée." Cf. Bergson (Ravaisson), note 46 below.—*Trans.*
11. P. Claudel, *Introduction à la peinture hollandaise* (Paris, 1935).

12. P. Schilder, *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body* (London, 1935; New York, 1950), 223-24. ["the body-image is not confined to the borderlines of one's own body. It transgresses them in the mirror. There is a body-image outside ourselves, and it is remarkable that primitive peoples even ascribe a substantial existence to the picture in the mirror" (278). Schilder's earlier, shorter study, *Das Körperschema* (Berlin, 1923), is cited several times in *The Structure of Behavior* and in *Phenomenology of Perception*. Schilder's later work is of especial interest with regard to Merleau-Ponty's own elaborations of the meaning of the human body; it is worth examining for that reason, as well as for the chance it provides to discern some fundamental coincidences between Merleau-Ponty and certain American pragmatists.]
13. Cf. Schilder, *Image*, 281-82.—*Trans.*
14. Robert Delaunay, *Du cubisme à l'art abstrait* (Paris, 1957).
15. "A minute in the world's life passes! to paint it in its reality! and forget everything for that. To become that minute, be the sensitive plate, . . . give the image of what we see, forgetting everything that has appeared before our time." Cézanne, quoted in B. Dorival, *Paul Cézanne*, trans. H. H. A. Thackthwaite (London, 1948), 101.—*Trans.*
16. Descartes, *La Dioptrique*, Discours VII [conclusion]. Edition Adam et Tannery, VI, 165.
17. Ibid., Discours I. Adam et Tannery, 83. [*Oeuvres et lettres de Descartes*, ed. André Bridoux, Edition Pléiade, 181. Page references from the Bridoux selections have been added in the belief that this volume is more widely accessible today than the Adam and Tannery complete edition.]
18. Ibid., Adam et Tannery, 84. [Bridoux, 182].
19. This paragraph continues the exposition of the *Dioptrics*.—*Trans.*
20. Ibid., Discours IV. Adam et Tannery, 112-14. [Bridoux, 203-4; in English, *Descartes: Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. N. Kemp Smith (Modern Library Edition), 145-47.]
21. Ibid., 130. [Bridoux, 217; Smith, 148.]
22. The system of means by which painting makes us see is a scientific matter: Why, then, do we not methodically produce perfect images of the world, arriving at a universal art purged of personal art, just as the universal language would free us of all the confused relationships that lurk in existent languages?
23. *Dioptrique*, Discours IV. [Note 20 above.]
24. Discours V of the *Dioptrique*, especially Descartes's diagrams, helps considerably to clarify this compressed passage.—*Trans.*
25. That is, the painting.—*Trans.*
26. E. Panofsky, *Die Perspektive als symbolische Form*, in *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg*, vol. 4 (1924-25).
27. Ibid. [The *Stilmoment*, or moment of an instituted style, does not dispense with the *Wermoment*, or moment of the individual perception.—*Trans.*]
28. Descartes, Discours IV, Adam et Tannery, 135. [Bridoux, 220; Smith, 154.] [Here is N. Kemp Smith's translation of the passage under discus-

- sion: "Our knowledge of it (the situation of an object) does not depend on any image or action which comes to us from the object, but solely on the situation of the small parts of the brain whence the nerves take their origin. For this situation—a situation which changes with every change however small in the points at which these nerve-fibers are located—is instituted by nature in order to secure, not only that the mind be aware of the location of each part of the body which it animates, relatively to all the others, but also that it be able to transfer its attention to all the positions contained in the straight line that can be imaged as drawn from the extremity of each of these parts, and as prolonged to infinity."]
29. Ibid., Adam et Tannery, 137. [Bridoux, 222; Smith, 155. N. Kemp Smith's translation is given here.]
 30. No doubt Merleau-Ponty is speaking of Princess Elizabeth, Descartes's correspondent. Cf. *Phénoménologie de la perception*, 230-32 (C. Smith translation, 198-99), and Descartes's letter to Elizabeth of 28 June 1643 (Bridoux, 1157-61).—*Trans.*
 31. That is, the obscurity of the "existential" order is just as necessary, just as grounded in God, as is the clarity of true thoughts ("nos lumières").—*Trans.*
 32. Cf. note 18, above.—*Trans.*
 33. B. Dorival, *Paul Cézanne* (Paris, 1948), 103ff. [H. H. A. Thackthwaite's translation (London, 1948), 101-3.]
 34. Charbonnier, *Le monologue*, 176.
 35. Delaunay, *Du cubisme*, 109.
 36. F. Novotny, *Cézanne und das Ende der wissenschaftlichen Perspektive* (Vienna, 1938).
 37. W. Grohmann, *Paul Klee* (Paris, 1954), 141. [New York, 1956.]
 38. Delaunay, *Du cubisme*, 118.
 39. Klee, *Journal*. French trans. P. Klossowski (Paris, 1959).
 40. George Schmidt, *Les aquarelles de Cézanne*, 21. [*The Watercolors of Cézanne* (New York, 1953).]
 41. Klee, *Journal*.
 42. "The spectacle is first of all a spectacle of itself before it is a spectacle of something outside of it."—*Translator's note from Merleau-Ponty's 1961 lectures.*
 43. C. P. Bru, *Esthétique de l'abstraction* (Paris, 1959), 99, 86.
 44. Henri Michaux, *Aventures de lignes*.
 45. Ibid.
 46. Ravaisson, cited by Bergson, "La vie et l'oeuvre de Ravaisson," in *La pensée et le mouvant* (Paris, 1934), 264-65. [The passage quoted here is from M. L. Anderson's translation of that work, *The Creative Mind* (New York, 1946), 229. It remains moot whether these are Ravaisson's or da Vinci's words.]
 47. Bergson, *ibid.*
 48. Michaux, *Aventures de lignes*. ["laissé rêver une ligne."]
 49. Ibid. ["d'aller ligne."]
 50. Grohmann, *Paul Klee*, 192.

51. Rodin, *L'art*. Interviews collected by Paul Gsell (Paris, 1911).
52. Ibid., 86. Rodin uses the word "metamorphosis," quoted below.
53. Michaux, *Aventures de lignes*.
54. Cited by Delaunay, *Du cubisme*, 175.
55. Rilke, *Auguste Rodin*, French translation by Maurice Betz (Paris, 1928), 150. [English translation by Jessie Lamont and Hans Trausil (New York, 1919; republished 1945).]
56. Delaunay, *Du cubisme*, 115, 110.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
59. Klee, *Conférence d'Iena* (1924), according to Grohmann, *Paul Klee*, 365.
60. Klee, *Wege des Naturstudiums* (1923), as found in G. di San Lazzaro, *Klee*.
61. Klee, cited by Grohmann, *Paul Klee*, 99.
62. A. Berne-Joffroy, *Le dossier Caravage* (Paris, 1959), and Michel Butor, "La Corbeille de l'Ambrosienne," *Nouvelle Revue Française* (1959), 969-89.
63. Klee, *Journal*. ["Je suis insaisissable dans l'immanence."]
64. G. Limbour, *Tableau bon levain à vous de cuire la pâte: L'art brut de Jean Dubuffet* (Paris, 1953), 54-55.
65. "Mais cette déception est celle du faux imaginaire, qui . . ."

Chapter 7

Forrest Williams, Cézanne, Phenomenology, and Merleau-Ponty

1. This is a revised version of "Cézanne and French Phenomenology," originally published in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 12, no. 4 (June 1954), 481-92. At that time, almost forty years ago, none of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's writings had appeared in English, his work was virtually unknown in English-speaking countries, and the phenomenological movement that originated in the work of Edmund Husserl was much less familiar here than it is today. I have not attempted to remove all the signs of the original date of its composition, counting instead on the reader's awareness of the lapse of time. ("Eye and Mind," which of course was not published until 1961, seems to bear out the importance of the link suggested here.)—F. W.
2. In Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sens et non-sens* (Paris: Nagel, 1948), 15-49.
3. Here and subsequently we follow the title and data furnished by Lionello Venture in *Cézanne*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1936). See nos. 121 and 84, respectively.
4. See Bernard Bosanquet, *A History of Aesthetics*, 2d ed. (London, 1922), 23.
5. Quoted by Bosanquet, *ibid.*
6. Ibid.
7. See Venturi, *Cézanne*, nos. 51 and 457, respectively.
8. "Monet is only an eye, but, good Lord, what an eye!" (Quoted from Ambroise Vollard's *Paul Cézanne*, by Erle Loran, in *Cézanne's Composition* [Berkeley, 1946], 28.)
9. Herbert Read, *History of Modern Painting* (Geneva, 1949), xiii.

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**JACQUES
DERRIDA**

WRITING AND DIFFERENCE

A square graphic composed of the word "DIFFERENCE" repeated multiple times in a grid pattern, rotated 45 degrees. The text is arranged in a way that creates a central square void, with the words forming the outer border and internal grid lines. The font is a bold, sans-serif typeface.

peace of the *response* in which two affirmations *espouse each other*, but is called up in the night by the excavating work of interrogation. Writing is the moment of this original Valley of the other within Being. The moment of depth as decay. Incidence and insistence of inscription.

"Behold, here is a new table; but where are my brethren who will carry it with me to the valley and into hearts of flesh?"⁶⁷

The Instant of Decision is
Madness (Kierkegaard)

In any event this book was
terribly daring. A transparent
sheet separates it from mad-
ness. (Joyce, speaking of
Ulysses)

These reflections have as their point of departure, as the title of this lecture¹ clearly indicates, Michel Foucault's book *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*.²

This book, admirable in so many respects, powerful in its breadth and style, is even more intimidating for me in that, having formerly had the good fortune to study under Michel Foucault, I retain the consciousness of an admiring and grateful disciple. Now, the disciple's consciousness, when he starts, I would not say to dispute, but to engage in dialogue with the master or, better, to articulate the interminable and silent dialogue which made him into a disciple—this disciple's consciousness is an unhappy consciousness. Starting to enter into dialogue in the world, that is, starting to answer back, he always feels "caught in the act," like the "infant" who, by definition and as his name indicates, cannot speak and above all must not answer back. And when, as is the case here, the dialogue is in danger of being taken—incorrectly—as a challenge, the disciple knows that he alone finds himself already challenged by the master's voice within him that precedes his own. He feels himself indefinitely challenged, or rejected or accused; as a disciple, he is challenged by the master who speaks within him and before him, to reproach him for making this challenge and to reject it in advance, having elaborated it before him; and having interiorized the

master, he is also challenged by the disciple that he himself is. This interminable unhappiness of the disciple perhaps stems from the fact that he does not yet know—or is still concealing from himself—that the master, like real life, may always be absent. The disciple must break the glass, or better the mirror, the reflection, his infinite speculation on the master. And start to speak.

As the route that these considerations will follow is neither direct nor unilinear—far from it—I will sacrifice any further preamble and go straight to the most general questions that will serve as the focal points of these reflections. General questions that will have to be determined and specified along the way, many of which, most, will remain open.

My point of departure might appear slight and artificial. In this 673-page book, Michel Foucault devotes three pages—and, moreover, in a kind of prologue to his second chapter—to a certain passage from the first of Descartes's *Meditations*. In this passage madness, folly, dementia, insanity seem, I emphasize *seem*, dismissed, excluded, and ostracized from the circle of philosophical dignity, denied entry to the philosopher's city, denied the right to philosophical consideration, ordered away from the bench as soon as summoned to it by Descartes—this last tribunal of a Cogito that, by its essence, *could not possibly* be mad.

In alleging—correctly or incorrectly, as will be determined—that the sense of Foucault's entire project can be pinpointed in these few allusive and somewhat enigmatic pages, and that the reading of Descartes and the Cartesian Cogito proposed to us engages in its problematic the totality of this *History of Madness* as regards both its intention and its feasibility, I shall therefore be asking myself, in two series of questions, the following:

1. First, and in some ways this is a prejudicial question: is the *interpretation* of Descartes's intention that is proposed to us justifiable? What I here call interpretation is a certain passage, a certain semantic relationship proposed by Foucault between, *on the one hand*, what Descartes said—or what he is believed to have said or meant—and *on the other hand*, let us say, with intentional vagueness for the moment, a certain "historical structure," as it is called, a certain meaningful historical totality, a total historical project through which we think what Descartes said—or what he is believed to have said or meant—can *particularly* be demonstrated. In asking if the interpretation is justifiable, I am therefore asking about two things, putting two preliminary questions into one: (a) Have we fully understood the *sign* itself, in itself? In other words, has what Descartes said and meant been clearly perceived? This comprehension of the sign in and of itself, in its immediate materiality as a sign, if I may so call it, is only the first moment but also the indispensable condition of all hermeneutics and of any claim to transition from the sign to the signified. When one attempts, in a general way, to pass from an obvious to a latent language, one must first be rigorously sure of the obvious meaning.³ The analyst, for example, must first speak the same language as the

patient. (b) Second implication of the first question: once understood as a sign, does Descartes's stated intention have with the total historical structure to which it is to be related the relationship assigned to it? *Does it have the historical meaning assigned to it?* "Does it have the historical meaning assigned to it?" That is, again, two questions in one: Does it have *the* historical meaning assigned to it? does it have *this* meaning, a *given* meaning Foucault assigns to it? Or, second, does it have the *historical* meaning assigned to it? Is this meaning exhausted by its historicity? In other words, is it fully, in each and every one of its aspects, historical, in the classical sense of the word?

2. Second series of questions (and here we shall go somewhat beyond the case of Descartes, beyond the case of the Cartesian Cogito, which will be examined no longer in and of itself but as the index of a more general problematic): in the light of the rereading of the Cartesian Cogito that we shall be led to propose (or rather to recall, for, let it be said at the outset, this will in some ways be the most classical, banal reading, even if not the easiest one), will it not be possible to interrogate *certain* philosophical and methodological presuppositions of this history of madness? *Certain ones* only, for Foucault's enterprise is too rich, branches out in too many directions to be preceded by a method or even by a *philosophy*, in the traditional sense of the word. And if it is true, as Foucault says, as he admits by citing Pascal, that one cannot speak of madness except in relation to that "other form of madness" that allows men "not to be mad," that is, except in relation to reason,⁴ it will perhaps be possible not to add anything whatsoever to what Foucault has said, but perhaps only to *repeat* once more, on the site of this *division* between reason and madness of which Foucault speaks so well, the meaning, a meaning of the Cogito or (plural) Cogitos (for the Cogito of the Cartesian variety is neither the first nor the last form of Cogito); and also to determine that what is in question here is an experience which, at its furthest reaches, is perhaps no less adventurous, perilous, nocturnal, and pathetic than the experience of madness, and is, I believe, much less adverse to and accusatory of madness, that is, accusative and objectifying of it, than Foucault seems to think.

As a first stage, we will attempt a commentary, and will accompany or follow as faithfully as possible Foucault's intentions in reinscribing an interpretation of the Cartesian Cogito within the total framework of the *History of Madness*. What should then become apparent in the course of this first stage is the meaning of the Cartesian Cogito as read by Foucault. To this end, it is necessary to recall the general plan of the book and to open several marginal questions, destined to remain open and marginal.

In writing a history of madness, Foucault has attempted—and this is the greatest merit, but also the very infeasibility of his book—to write a history of madness *itself. Itself*. Of madness itself. That is, by letting madness speak for itself. Foucault wanted madness to be the *subject* of his book in every sense of

the word: its theme and its first-person narrator, its author, madness speaking about itself. Foucault wanted to write a history of madness *itself*, that is madness speaking on the basis of its own experience and under its own authority, and not a history of madness described from within the language of reason, the language of psychiatry *on* madness—the agonistic and rhetorical dimensions of the preposition *on* overlapping here—on madness already crushed beneath psychiatry, dominated, beaten to the ground, interned, that is to say, madness made into an object and exiled as the other of a language and a historical meaning which have been confused with logos itself. “A history not of psychiatry,” Foucault says, “but of madness itself, in its most vibrant state, before being captured by knowledge.”

It is a question, therefore, of escaping the trap or objectivist naïveté that would consist in writing a history of untamed madness, of madness as it carries itself and breathes before being caught and paralyzed in the nets of classical reason, from within the very language of classical reason itself, utilizing the concepts that were the historical instruments of the capture of madness—the restrained and restraining language of reason. Foucault’s determination to avoid this trap is constant. It is the most audacious and seductive aspect of his venture, producing its admirable tension. But it is also, with all seriousness, the *maddest* aspect of his project. And it is remarkable that this obstinate determination to avoid the trap—that is, the trap set by classical reason to catch madness and which can now catch Foucault as he attempts to write a history of madness itself without repeating the aggression of rationalism—this determination to bypass reason is expressed in two ways difficult to reconcile at first glance. Which is to say that it is expressed uneasily.

Sometimes Foucault globally rejects the language of reason, which itself is the language of order (that is to say, simultaneously the language of the system of objectivity, of the universal rationality of which psychiatry wishes to be the expression, and the language of the body politic—the right to citizenship in the philosopher’s city overlapping here with the right to citizenship anywhere, the philosophical realm functioning, within the unity of a certain structure, as the metaphor or the metaphysics of the political realm). At these moments he writes sentences of this type (he has just evoked the broken dialogue between reason and madness at the end of the eighteenth century, a break that was finalized by the annexation of the totality of language—and of the right to language—by psychiatric reason as the delegate of societal and governmental reason; madness has been stifled): “The language of psychiatry, which is a monologue of reason *on* madness, could be established only on the basis of such a silence. I have not tried to write the history of that language but, rather, the archaeology of that silence.”⁵ And throughout the book runs the theme linking madness to silence, to “words without language” or “without the voice of a subject,” “obstinate murmur of a language that speaks by itself, without speaker or interlocutor, piled

up upon itself, strangled, collapsing before reaching the stage of formulation, quietly returning to the silence from which it never departed. The calcinated root of meaning.” The history of madness itself is therefore the archaeology of a silence.

But, first of all, is there a history of silence? Further, is not an archaeology, even of silence, a logic, that is, an organized language, a project, an order, a sentence, a syntax, a work?⁶ Would not the archaeology of silence be the most efficacious and subtle restoration, the *repetition*, in the most irreducibly ambiguous meaning of the word, of the act perpetrated against madness—and be so at the very moment when this act is denounced? Without taking into account that all the signs which allegedly serve as indices of the origin of this silence and of this stifled speech, and as indices of everything that has made madness an interrupted and forbidden, that is, arrested, discourse—all these signs and documents are borrowed, without exception, from the juridical province of interdiction.

Hence, one can inquire—as Foucault does also, at moments other than those when he contrives to speak of silence (although in too lateral and implicit a fashion from my point of view)—about the source and the status of the language of this archaeology, of this language which is to be understood by a reason that is not classical reason. What is the historical responsibility of this logic of archaeology? Where should it be situated? Does it suffice to stack the tools of psychiatry neatly, inside a tightly shut workshop, in order to return to innocence and to end all complicity with the rational or political order which keeps madness captive? The psychiatrist is but the delegate of this order, one delegate among others. Perhaps it does not suffice to imprison or to exile the delegate, or to stifle him; and perhaps it does not suffice to deny oneself the conceptual material of psychiatry in order to exculpate one’s own language. All our European languages, the language of everything that has participated, from near or far, in the adventure of Western reason—all this is the immense delegation of the project defined by Foucault under the rubric of the capture or objectification of madness. *Nothing* within this language, and *no one* among those who speak it, can escape the historical guilt—if there is one, and if it is historical in a classical sense—which Foucault apparently wishes to put on trial. But such a trial may be impossible, for by the simple fact of their articulation the proceedings and the verdict unceasingly reiterate the crime. If the *Order* of which we are speaking is so powerful, if its power is unique of its kind, this is so precisely by virtue of the universal, structural, universal, and infinite complicity in which it compromises all those who understand it in its own language, even when this language provides them with the form of their own denunciation. Order is then denounced within order.

Total disengagement from the *totality* of the historical language responsible for the exile of madness, liberation from this language in order to write the archaeology of silence, would be possible in only two ways.

Either do not mention a certain silence (a *certain* silence which, again, can be determined only within a *language* and an *order* that will preserve this silence from contamination by any given muteness), or follow the madman down the road of his exile. The misfortune of the mad, the interminable misfortune of their silence, is that their best spokesmen are those who betray them best; which is to say that when one attempts to convey their silence *itself*, one has already passed over to the side of the enemy, the side of order, even if one fights against order from within it, putting its origin into question. There is no Trojan horse unconquerable by Reason (in general). The unsurpassable, unique, and imperial grandeur of the order of reason, that which makes it not just another actual order or structure (a determined historical structure, one structure among other possible ones), is that one cannot speak out against it except by being for it, that one can protest it only from within it; and within its domain, Reason leaves us only the recourse to strategems and strategies. The revolution against reason, in the historical form of classical reason (but the latter is only a determined example of Reason in general. And because of this oneness of Reason the expression "history of reason" is difficult to conceptualize, as is also, consequently, a "history of madness"), the revolution against reason can be made only within it, in accordance with a Hegelian law to which I myself was very sensitive in Foucault's book, despite the absence of any precise reference to Hegel. Since the revolution against reason, from the moment it is articulated, can operate only *within* reason, it always has the limited scope of what is called, precisely in the language of a department of *internal* affairs, a disturbance. A history, that is, an archaeology against reason doubtless cannot be written, for, despite all appearances to the contrary, the concept of history has always been a rational one. It is the meaning of "history" or *archia* that should have been questioned first, perhaps. A writing that exceeds, by questioning them, the values "origin," "reason," and "history" could not be contained within the metaphysical closure of an archaeology.

As Foucault is the first to be conscious—and acutely so—of this daring, of the necessity of speaking and of drawing his language from the wellspring of a reason more profound than the reason which issued forth during the classical age, and as he experiences a necessity of speaking which must escape the objectivist project of classical reason—a necessity of speaking even at the price of a war declared by the language of reason against itself, a war in which language would recapture itself, destroy itself, or unceasingly revive the act of its own destruction—the allegation of an archaeology of silence, a purist, intransigent, nonviolent, nondialectical allegation, is often counterbalanced, equilibrated, I should even say contradicted by a discourse in Foucault's book that is not only the admission of a difficulty, but the formulation of *another* project, a project that is not an expediency, but a different and more ambitious one, a project more effectively ambitious than the first one.

The admission of the difficulty can be found in sentences such as these, among others, which I simply cite, in order not to deprive you of their dense beauty: "The perception that seeks to grasp them [in question are the miseries and murmurings of madness] in their wild state, necessarily belongs to a world that has already captured them. The liberty of madness can be understood only from high in the fortress that holds madness prisoner. And there madness possesses only the morose sum of its prison experiences, its mute experience of persecution, and we—we possess only its description as a man wanted." And, later, Foucault speaks of a madness "whose wild state can never be restored in and of itself" and of an "inaccessible primitive purity."

Because this difficulty, or this impossibility, must reverberate within the language used to describe this history of madness, Foucault, in effect, acknowledges the necessity of maintaining his discourse within what he calls a "relativity without recourse," that is, without support from an absolute reason or logos. The simultaneous necessity and impossibility of what Foucault elsewhere calls "a language without support," that is to say, a language declining, in principle if not in fact, to articulate itself along the lines of the syntax of reason. In principle if not in fact, but here the fact cannot easily be put between parentheses. The fact of language is probably the only fact ultimately to resist all parenthization. "There, in the simple problem of articulation," Foucault says later, "was hidden and expressed the major difficulty of the enterprise."

One could perhaps say that the resolution of this difficulty is *practiced* rather than *formulated*. By necessity. I mean that the silence of madness is not *said*, cannot be said in the logos of this book, but is indirectly, metaphorically, made present by its *pathos*—taking this word in its best sense. A new and radical praise of folly whose intentions cannot be admitted because the *praise* [*éloge*] of silence always takes place within *logos*,⁷ the language of objectification. "To speak well of madness" would be to annex it once more, especially when, as is the case here, "speaking well of" is also the wisdom and happiness of eloquent speech.

Now, to state the difficulty, to state the difficulty of stating, is not yet to surmount it—quite the contrary. First, it is not to say in which language, through the agency of what speech, the difficulty is stated. Who perceives, who enunciates the difficulty? These efforts can be made neither in the wild and inaccessible silence of madness, nor simply in the language of the jailer, that is, in the language of classical reason, but only in the language of someone *for whom* is meaningful and *before whom* appears the dialogue or war or misunderstanding or confrontation or double monologue that opposes reason and madness during the classical age. And thereby we can envision the historic liberation of a logos in which the two monologues, or the broken dialogue, or especially the breaking point of the dialogue between a *determined* reason and a *determined* madness, could be produced and can today be understood and enunciated. (Supposing that they can be; but here we are assuming Foucault's hypothesis.)

Therefore, if Foucault's book, despite all the acknowledged impossibilities and difficulties, was capable of being written, we have the right to ask what, in the last resort, supports this language without recourse or support: who enunciates the possibility of nonrecourse? Who wrote and who is to understand, in what language and from what historical situation of logos, who wrote and who is to understand this history of madness? For it is not by chance that such a project could take shape today. Without forgetting, *quite to the contrary*, the audacity of Foucault's act in the *History of Madness*, we must assume that a certain liberation of madness has gotten underway, that psychiatry has opened itself up, however minimally, and that the concept of madness as unreason, if it ever had a unity, has been dislocated. And that a project such as Foucault's can find its historical origin and passageway in the opening produced by this dislocation.

If Foucault, more than anyone else, is attentive and sensitive to these kinds of questions, it nevertheless appears that he does not acknowledge their quality of being prerequisite methodological or philosophical considerations. And it is true that once the question and the privileged difficulty are understood, to devote a preliminary work to them would have entailed the sterilization or paralysis of all further inquiry. Inquiry can prove through its very act that the movement of a discourse on madness is possible. But is not the foundation of this possibility still too classical?

Foucault's book is not one of those that abandons itself to the prospective lightheartedness of inquiry. That is why, behind the admission of the difficulty concerning the archaeology of silence, a *different* project must be discerned, one which perhaps contradicts the projected archaeology of silence.

Because the silence whose archaeology is to be undertaken is not an original muteness or nondiscourse, but a subsequent silence, a discourse arrested by *command*, the issue is therefore to reach the origin of the protectionism imposed by a reason that insists upon being sheltered, and that also insists upon providing itself with protective barriers against madness, thereby making itself into a barrier against madness; and to reach this origin from within a logos of free trade, that is, from within a logos that preceded the split of reason and madness, a logos which within itself permitted dialogue between what were later called reason and madness (unreason), permitted their free circulation and exchange, just as the medieval city permitted the free circulation of the mad within itself. The issue is therefore to reach the point at which the dialogue was broken off, dividing itself into two soliloquies—what Foucault calls, using a very strong word, the *Decision*. The Decision, through a single act, links and separates reason and madness, and it must be understood at once both as the original act of an order, a fiat, a decree, and as a schism, a caesura, a separation, a dissection. I would prefer *dissension*, to underline that in question is a self-dividing action, a cleavage and torment interior to meaning *in general*, interior to logos *in general*, a division

within the very act of *sentire*. As always, the dissension is internal. The exterior (is) the interior, is the fission that produces and divides it along the lines of the Hegelian *Entzweiung*.

It thus seems that the project of convoking the first dissension of logos against itself is quite another project than the archaeology of silence, and raises different questions. This time it would be necessary to exhume the virgin and unitary ground upon which the decisive act linking and separating madness and reason obscurely took root. The reason and madness of the classical age had a common root. But this common root, which is a logos, this unitary foundation is much more ancient than the medieval period, brilliantly but briefly evoked by Foucault in his very fine opening chapter. There must be a founding unity that already carries within it the "free trade" of the Middle Ages, and this unity is already the unity of a logos, that is, of a reason; an already historical reason certainly, but a reason much less determined than it will be in its so-called classical form, having not yet received the determinations of the "classical age." It is within the element of this archaic reason that the dissection, the dissension, will present itself as a modification or, if you will, as an overturning, that is, a revolution but an internal revolution, a revolution affecting the self, occurring within the self. For this logos which is in the beginning, is not only the common ground of all dissension, but also—and no less importantly—the very atmosphere in which Foucault's language moves, the atmosphere in which a history of madness during the classical age not only appears *in fact* but is also *by all rights* stipulated and specified in terms of its limits. In order to account simultaneously for the origin (or the possibility) of the decision and for the origin (or the possibility) of its narration, it might have been necessary to start by reflecting this original logos in which the violence of the classical era played itself out. This history of logos before the Middle Ages and before the classical age is not, if this need be said at all, a nocturnal and mute prehistory. Whatever the momentary break, if there is one, of the Middle Ages with the Greek tradition, this break and this alteration are late and secondary developments as concerns the fundamental permanence of the logico-philosophical heritage.

That the embedding of the decision in its true historical grounds has been left in the shadows by Foucault is bothersome, and for at least two reasons:

1. It is bothersome because at the outset Foucault makes a somewhat enigmatic allusion to the Greek logos, saying that, unlike classical reason, it "had no contrary." To cite Foucault: "The Greeks had a relation to something that they called *hybris*. This relation was not merely one of condemnation; the existence of Thrasymachus or of Callicles suffices to prove it, even if their language has reached us already enveloped in the reassuring dialectic of Socrates. But the Greek Logos had no contrary."⁸

[One would have to assume, then, that the Greek logos had no contrary, which is to say, briefly, that the Greeks were in the greatest proximity to the elemen-

tary, primordial, and undivided Logos with respect to which contradiction in general, all wars or polemics, could only be ulterior developments. This hypothesis forces us to admit, as Foucault above all does *not*, that the history and lineage of the "reassuring dialectic of Socrates" in their *totality* had already fallen outside and been exiled from this Greek logos that had no contrary. For if the Socratic dialectic is reassuring, in the sense understood by Foucault, it is so only in that it has already expulsed, excluded, objectified or (curiously amounting to the same thing) assimilated and mastered as one of its moments, "enveloped" the contrary of reason; and also only in that it has tranquilized and reassured itself into a pre-Cartesian certainty, a *sophrosyne*, a wisdom, a reasonable good sense and prudence.

Consequently, it must be *either* (a) that the Socratic moment and its entire posterity immediately partake in the Greek logos that has no contrary; and that consequently, the Socratic dialectic could not be reassuring (we may soon have occasion to show that it is no more reassuring than the Cartesian cogito). In this case, in this hypothesis, the fascination with the pre-Socratics to which we have been provoked by Nietzsche, then by Heidegger and several others, would carry with it a share of mystification whose historico-philosophical motivations remain to be examined. Or (b) that the Socratic moment and the victory over the Calliclesian hybris already are the marks of a deportation and an exile of logos from itself, the wounds left in it by a decision, a difference; and then the structure of exclusion which Foucault wishes to describe in his book could not have been born with classical reason. It would have to have been consummated and reassured and smoothed over throughout all the centuries of philosophy. It would be essential to the entirety of the history of philosophy and of reason. In this regard, the classical age could have neither specificity nor privilege. And all the signs assembled by Foucault under the chapter heading *Stultifera navis* would play themselves out only on the surface of a chronic dissension. The free circulation of the mad, besides the fact that it is not as simply free as all that, would only be a socioeconomic epiphenomenon on the surface of a reason divided against itself since the dawn of its Greek origin. What seems to me sure in any case, regardless of the hypothesis one chooses concerning what is doubtless only a false problem and a false alternative, is that Foucault cannot *simultaneously* save the affirmation of a reassuring dialectic of Socrates and his postulation of a specificity of the classical age whose reason would reassure itself by excluding its contrary, that is, by *constituting* its contrary as an object in order to be protected from it and be rid of it. In order to lock it up.

The attempt to write the history of the decision, division, difference runs the risk of construing the division as an event or a structure subsequent to the unity of an original presence, thereby confirming metaphysics in its fundamental operation.

Truthfully, for one or the other of these hypotheses to be true and for there to be

a real choice between them, it must be assumed in *general* that reason can have a contrary, that there can be an other of reason, that reason itself can construct or discover, and that the opposition of reason to its other is *symmetrical*. This is the heart of the matter. Permit me to hold off on this question.

However one interprets the situation of classical reason, notably as regards the Greek logos (and whether or not this latter experienced dissension) in *all cases* a doctrine of *tradition*, of the tradition of logos (is there any other?) seems to be the prerequisite implied by Foucault's enterprise. No matter what the relationship of the Greeks to *hybris*, a relationship that was certainly not simple . . . (Here, I wish to open a parenthesis and a question: in the name of what invariable meaning of "madness" does Foucault associate, whatever the meaning of this association, Madness and *Hybris*? A problem of translation, a philosophical problem of translation is posed—and it is serious—even if *Hybris* is not *Madness* for Foucault. The determination of their difference supposes a hazardous linguistic transition. The frequent imprudence of translators in this respect should make us very wary. I am thinking in particular, and in passing, of what is translated by madness and fury in the *Philebus* (45e).⁹ Further, if madness has an invariable meaning, what is the relation of this meaning to the a posteriori *events* which govern Foucault's analysis? For, despite everything, even if his method is not empiricist, Foucault proceeds by inquiry and inquest. What he is writing is a history, and the recourse to events, in the last resort, is indispensable and determining, at least in principle. Now, is not the concept of madness—never submitted to a thematic scrutiny by Foucault—today a false and disintegrated concept, outside current and popular language which always lags longer than it should behind its subversion by science and philosophy? Foucault, in rejecting the psychiatric or philosophical material that has always imprisoned the mad, winds up employing—inevitably—a popular and equivocal notion of madness, taken from an unverifiable source. This would not be serious if Foucault used the word only in quotation marks, as if it were the language of others, of those who, during the period under study, used it as a historical instrument. But everything transpires as if Foucault *knew* what "madness" means. Everything transpires as if, in a continuous and underlying way, an assured and rigorous precomprehension of the concept of madness, or at least of its nominal definition, were possible and acquired. In fact, however, it could be demonstrated that as Foucault intends it, if not as intended by the historical current he is studying, the concept of madness overlaps everything that can be put under the rubric of *negativity*. One can imagine the kind of problems posed by such a usage of the notion of madness. The same kind of questions could be posed concerning the notion of truth that runs throughout the book . . . I close this long parenthesis.) Thus, whatever the relation of the Greeks to *hybris*, and of Socrates to the original logos, it is in any event certain that classical reason, and medieval reason before it, bore a relation to Greek reason, and that it is within the milieu of this more or less immediately

perceived heritage, which itself is more or less crossed with other traditional lines, that the adventure or misadventure of classical reason developed. If dissension dates from Socrates, then the situation of the madman in the Socratic and post-Socratic worlds—assuming that there is, then, something that can be called mad—perhaps deserves to be examined first. Without this examination, and as Foucault does not proceed in a simply aprioristic fashion, his historical description poses the banal but inevitable problems of periodization and of geographical, political, ethnological limitation, etc. If, on the contrary, the unopposed and unexcluding unity of logos were maintained until the classical “crisis,” then this latter is, if I may say so, secondary and derivative. It does not engage the entirety of reason. And in this case, even if stated in passing, Socratic discourse would be nothing less than reassuring. It can be proposed that the classical crisis developed from and within the elementary tradition of a logos that has no opposite but carries within itself and *says* all determined contradictions. This doctrine of the tradition of meaning and of reason would be even further necessitated by the fact that it alone can give meaning and rationality in *general* to Foucault’s discourse and to any discourse on the war between reason and unreason. For these discourses intend above all to be understood.]

2. I stated above that leaving the history of the preclassical logos in the shadows is bothersome for *two* reasons. The second reason, which I will adduce briefly before going on to Descartes, has to do with the profound link established by Foucault between the division, the dissension, and the possibility of history itself. “*The necessity of madness*, throughout the history of the West, is linked to the deciding gesture which detaches from the background noise, and from its continuous monotony, a meaningful language that is transmitted and consummated in time; briefly, it is linked to the *possibility of history*.”

Consequently, if the decision through which reason constitutes itself by excluding and objectifying the free subjectivity of madness is indeed the origin of history, if it is historicity itself, the condition of meaning and of language, the condition of the tradition of meaning, the condition of the work in general, if the structure of exclusion is the fundamental structure of historicity, then the “classical” moment of this exclusion described by Foucault has neither absolute privilege nor archetypal exemplarity. It is an example as sample and not as model. In any event, in order to evoke the singularity of the classical moment, which is profound, perhaps it would be necessary to underline, not the aspects in which it is a structure of exclusion, but those aspects in which, and especially for what end, its own structure of exclusion is historically distinguished from the others, from all others. And to pose the problem of its exemplarity: are we concerned with an example among others or with a “good example,” an example that is revelatory by privilege? Formidable and infinitely difficult problems that haunt Foucault’s book, more present in his intentions than his words.

Finally, a *last question*: if this great division is the possibility of history itself,

the historicity of history, what does it mean, here, “to write the history of this division”? To write the history of historicity? To write the history of the origin of history? The *hysteron proteron* would not here be a simple “logical fallacy,” a fallacy within logic, within an established rationality. And its denunciation is not an act of ratiocination. If there is a historicity proper to reason in general, the history of reason cannot be the history of its origin (which, for a start, demands the historicity of reason in general), but must be that of one of its determined figures.

This second project, which would devote all its efforts to discovering the common root of meaning and nonmeaning and to unearthing the original logos in which a language and a silence are divided from one another is not at all an expediency as concerns everything that could come under the heading “archaeology of silence,” the archaeology which simultaneously claims to say madness itself and renounces this claim. The expression “to say madness itself” is self-contradictory. To say madness without expelling it into objectivity is to let it say itself. But madness is what by essence cannot be said: it is the “absence of the work,” as Foucault profoundly says.

Thus, not an expediency, but a different and more ambitious design, one that should lead to a praise of reason (there is no praise [*éloge*], by essence, except of reason),¹⁰ but this time of a reason more profound than that which opposes and determines itself in a historically determined conflict. Hegel again, always . . . Not an expediency, but a more ambitious ambition, even if Foucault writes this: “*Lacking* this inaccessible primitive purity [of madness itself], a structural study must go back toward the decision that simultaneously links and separates reason and madness; it must aim to uncover the perpetual exchange, the obscure common root, the original confrontation that gives meaning to the unity, as well as to the opposition, of sense and non-sense” [my italics].

Before describing the moment when the reason of the classical age will reduce madness to silence by what he calls a “strange act of force,” Foucault shows how the exclusion and internment of madness found a sort of structural niche prepared for it by the history of another exclusion: the exclusion of leprosy. Unfortunately, we cannot be detained by the brilliant passages of the chapter entitled *Stultifera navis*. They would also pose numerous questions.

We thus come to the “act of force,” to the great internment which, with the creation of the houses of internment for the mad and others in the middle of the seventeenth century, marks the advent and first stage of a classical process described by Foucault throughout his book. Without establishing, moreover, whether an event such as the creation of a house of internment is a sign among others, whether it is a fundamental symptom or a cause. This kind of question could appear exterior to a method that presents itself precisely as structuralist, that is, a method for which everything within the structural totality is interdependent and circular in such a way that the classical problems of causality them-

selves would appear to stem from a misunderstanding. Perhaps. But I wonder whether, when one is concerned with history (and Foucault wants to write a history), a strict structuralism is possible, and, especially, whether, if only for the sake of order and within the order of its own descriptions, such a study can avoid all etiological questions, all questions bearing, shall we say, on the center of gravity of the structure. The legitimate renunciation of a certain style of causality perhaps does not give one the right to renounce all etiological demands.

The passage devoted to Descartes opens the crucial chapter on "the great internment." It thus opens the book itself, and its location at the beginning of the chapter is fairly unexpected. More than anywhere else, the question I have just asked seems to me unavoidable here. We are not told whether or not this passage of the first *Meditation*, interpreted by Foucault as a *philosophical* internment of madness, is destined, as a prelude to the historical and sociopolitical drama, to set the tone for the *entire* drama to be played. Is this "act of force," described in the dimension of theoretical knowledge and metaphysics, a symptom, a cause, a language? What must be assumed or elucidated so that the meaning of this question or dissociation can be neutralized? And if this act of force has a structural affinity with the totality of the drama, what is the status of this affinity? Finally, whatever the place reserved for philosophy in this total historical structure may be, why the sole choice of the Cartesian example? What is the exemplarity of Descartes, while so many other philosophers of the same era were interested or—no less significantly—not interested in madness in various ways?

Foucault does not respond directly to any of these more than methodological questions, summarily, but inevitably, invoked. A single sentence, in his preface, settles the question. To cite Foucault: "To write the history of madness thus will mean the execution of a structural study of an historical ensemble—notions, institutions, juridical and police measures, scientific concepts—which holds captive a madness whose wild state can never in itself be restored." How are these elements organized in the "historical ensemble"? What is a "notion"? Do philosophical notions have a privilege? How are they related to scientific concepts? A quantity of questions that besiege this enterprise.

I do not know to what extent Foucault would agree that the prerequisite for a response to such questions is first of all the internal and autonomous analysis of the philosophical content of philosophical discourse. Only when the totality of this content will have become manifest in its meaning for me (but this is impossible) will I rigorously be able to situate it in its total historical form. It is only then that its reinsertion will not do it violence, that there will be a legitimate reinsertion of *this* philosophical meaning *itself*. As to Descartes in particular, no historical question about him—about the latent historical meaning of his discourse, about its place in a total structure—can be answered before a rigorous and

exhaustive internal analysis of his manifest intentions, of the manifest meaning of his philosophical discourse has been made.

We will now turn to this manifest meaning, this properly philosophical intention that is not legible in the immediacy of a first encounter. But first by reading over Foucault's shoulder.

There had to be folly so that
wisdom might overcome it.
(Herder)

Descartes, then, is alleged to have executed the act of force in the first of the *Meditations*, and it would very summarily consist in a summary expulsion of the possibility of madness from thought itself.

I shall first cite the decisive passage from Descartes, the one cited by Foucault. Then we shall follow Foucault's reading of the text. Finally, we shall establish a dialogue between Descartes and Foucault.

Descartes writes the following (at the moment when he undertakes to rid himself of all the opinions in which he had hitherto believed, and to start all over again from the foundations: *a primis fundamentis*. To do so, it will suffice to ruin the ancient foundations without being obliged to submit all his opinions to doubt one by one, for the ruin of the foundations brings down the entire edifice. One of these fragile foundations of knowledge, the most naturally apparent, is sensation. The senses deceive me sometimes; they can thus deceive me all the time, and I will therefore submit to doubt all knowledge whose origin is in sensation): "All that up to the present time I have accepted as most true and certain I have learned either from the senses or through the senses; but it is sometimes proved to me that these senses are deceptive, and it is wiser not to trust entirely to any thing by which we have once been deceived."

Descartes starts a new paragraph.

"But . . ." (*sed forte* . . . I insist upon the *forte* which the Duc de Luynes left untranslated, an omission that Descartes did not deem necessary to correct when he went over the translation. It is better, as Baillet says, to compare "the French with the Latin" when reading the *Meditations*. It is only in the second French edition by Clerselier that the *sed forte* is given its full weight and is translated by "but yet perhaps . . ." The importance of this point will soon be demonstrated.) Pursuing my citation: "But it may be that although the senses sometimes deceive us concerning things which are *hardly perceptible*, or *very far away*, there are yet many others to be met with as to which we cannot reasonably have any doubt . . ." [my italics]. There would be, *there would perhaps be* data of sensory origin which cannot reasonably be doubted. "And how could I deny that these hands and this body are mine, were it not perhaps that I compare myself to certain persons, devoid of sense, whose cerebella are so troubled and clouded by

the violent vapours of black bile, that they constantly assure us that they think they are kings when they are really quite poor, or that they are clothed in purple when they are really without covering, or who imagine that they have an earthenware head or are nothing but pumpkins or are made of glass . . ."

And now the most significant sentence in Foucault's eyes: "But they are mad, *sed amentes sunt isti*, and I should not be any the less insane (*demens*) were I to follow examples so extravagant."¹¹

I interrupt my citation not at the end of this paragraph, but on the first words of the following paragraph, which reinscribe the lines I have just read in a rhetorical and pedagogical movement with highly compressed articulations. These first words are *Praeclare sane* . . . Also translated as *toutefois* [but at the same time—trans.]. And this is the beginning of a paragraph in which Descartes imagines that he can always dream, and that the world might be no more real than his dreams. And he generalizes by hyperbole the hypothesis of sleep and dream ("Now let us assume that we are asleep . . ."); this hypothesis and this hyperbole will serve in the elaboration of doubt founded on natural reasons (for there is also a hyperbolic moment of this doubt), beyond whose reach will be only the truths of nonsensory origin, mathematical truths notably, which are true "whether I am awake or asleep" and which will capitulate only to the artificial and metaphysical assault of the evil genius.

How does Foucault read this text?

According to Foucault, Descartes, encountering madness alongside (the expression *alongside* is Foucault's) dreams and all forms of sensory error, refuses to accord them all the same treatment, so to speak. "In the economy of doubt," says Foucault, "there is a fundamental imbalance between madness, on the one hand, and error, on the other . . ." (I note in passing that elsewhere Foucault often denounces the classical reduction of madness to error.) He pursues: "Descartes does not avoid the peril of madness in the same way he circumvents the eventuality of dream and error."

Foucault establishes a parallelism between the following two procedures:

1. The one by which Descartes wishes to demonstrate that the senses can deceive us only regarding "things which are hardly perceptible, or very far away." These would be the limits of the error of sensory origin. And in the passage I just read, Descartes did say: "But it may be that although the senses sometimes deceive us concerning things which are hardly perceptible, or very far away, there are yet many others to be met with as to which we cannot reasonably have any doubt . . ." Unless one is mad, a hypothesis seemingly excluded in principle by Descartes in the same passage.

2. The procedure by which Descartes shows that imagination and dreams cannot themselves create the simple and universal elements which enter into their creations, as, for example, "corporeal nature in general, and its extension, the figure of extended things, their quantity or magnitude and number,"¹² that is,

everything which precisely is not of sensory origin, thereby constituting the objects of mathematics and geometry, which themselves are invulnerable to natural doubt. It is thus tempting to believe, along with Foucault, that Descartes wishes to find in the analysis (taking this word in its strict sense) of dreams and sensation a nucleus, an element of proximity and simplicity irreducible to doubt. It is *in* dreams and *in* sensory perception that I surmount or, as Foucault says, that I "circumvent" doubt and reconquer a basis of certainty.

Foucault writes thus: "Descartes does not avoid the *peril* of madness in the same way he circumvents the *eventuality* of dreams or of error . . . Neither image-peopled sleep, nor the clear consciousness that the senses can be deceived is able to take doubt to the extreme point of its universality; let us admit that our eyes deceive us, 'let us assume that we are asleep'—truth will not entirely slip out into the night. For madness, it is otherwise." Later: "In the economy of doubt, there is an imbalance between madness, on the one hand, and dream and error, on the other. Their situation in relation to the truth and to him who seeks it is different; dreams or illusions are surmounted within the structure of truth; but madness is inadmissible for the doubting subject."

It indeed appears, then, that Descartes does not delve into the experience of madness as he delves into the experience of dreams, that is, to the point of reaching an irreducible nucleus which nonetheless would be interior to madness itself. Descartes is not interested in madness, he does not welcome it as a hypothesis, he does not consider it. He excludes it by decree. I would be insane if I thought that I had a body made of glass. But this is excluded, since I am thinking. Anticipating the moment of the Cogito, which will have to await the completion of numerous stages, highly rigorous in their succession, Foucault writes: "impossibility of being mad that is essential not to the object of thought, but to the thinking subject." Madness is expelled, rejected, denounced in its very impossibility from the very interiority of thought itself.

Foucault is the first, to my knowledge, to have isolated delirium and madness from sensation and dreams in this first *Meditation*. The first to have isolated them in their philosophical sense and their methodological function. Such is the originality of his reading. But if the classical interpreters did not deem this dissociation auspicious, is it because of their inattentiveness? Before answering this question, or rather before continuing to ask it, let us recall along with Foucault that this decree of inadmissibility which is a forerunner of the political decree of the great internment, or corresponds to it, translates it, or accompanies it, or in any case is in solidarity with it—this decree would have been impossible for a Montaigne, who was, as we know, haunted by the possibility of being mad, or of becoming completely mad in the very action of thought itself. The Cartesian decree therefore marks, says Foucault, "the advent of a *ratio*." But as the advent of a *ratio* is not "exhausted" by "the progress of rationalism," Foucault leaves Descartes there, to go on to the historical (politico-social) structure of which the

Cartesian act is only a sign. For "more than one sign," Foucault says, "betrays the classical event."

We have attempted to read Foucault. Let us now naïvely attempt to reread Descartes and, before repeating the question of the relationship between the "sign" and the "structure," let us attempt to see, as I had earlier mentioned, what the *sense of the sign itself* may be. (Since the sign here already has the autonomy of a philosophical discourse, is already a relationship of signifier to signified.)

In rereading Descartes, I notice two things:

1. That in the passage to which we have referred and which corresponds to the phase of *doubt* founded on *natural* reasons, Descartes *does not* circumvent the eventuality of sensory error or of dreams, and does not "surmount" them "within the structure of truth;" and all this for the simple reason that he apparently does not ever, nor in any way, surmount them or circumvent them, and does not ever set aside the possibility of total error for *all* knowledge gained from the senses or from imaginary constructions. It must be understood that the hypothesis of dreams is the radicalization or, if you will, the hyperbolic exaggeration of the hypothesis according to which the senses could *sometimes* deceive me. In dreams, the *totality* of sensory images is illusory. It follows that a certainty invulnerable to dreams would be *a fortiori* invulnerable to *perceptual* illusions of the sensory kind. It therefore suffices to examine the case of dreams in order to deal with, on the level which is ours for the moment, the case of natural doubt, of sensory error in general. Now, which are the certainties and truths that escape perception, and therefore also escape sensory error or imaginative and oneiric composition? They are certainties and truths of a nonsensory and nonimaginative origin. They are *simple* and *intelligible* things.

In effect, if I am asleep, everything I perceive while dreaming may be, as Descartes says, "false and illusory," particularly the existence of my hands and my body and the actions of opening my eyes, moving my head, etc. In other words, what was previously excluded, according to Foucault, as insanity, is admissible within dreams. And we will see why in a moment. But, says Descartes, let us suppose that all my oneiric representations are illusory. Even in this case, there must be some representations of things as naturally certain as the body, hands, etc., however illusory this representation may be, and however false its relation to that which it represents. Now, within these representations, these images, these ideas in the Cartesian sense, everything may be fictitious and false, as in the representations of those painters whose imaginations, as Descartes expressly says, are "extravagant" enough to invent something so new that its like has never been seen before. But in the case of painting, at least, there is a final element which cannot be analyzed as illusion, an element that painters cannot counterfeit: color. This is only an *analogy*, for Descartes does not posit

the necessary existence of color in general: color is an object of the senses among others. But, *just as* there always remains in a painting, however inventive and imaginative it may be, an irreducibly simple and real element—color—*similarly*, there is in dreams an element of noncounterfeit simplicity presupposed by all fantastical compositions and irreducible to all analysis. But this time—and this is why the example of the painter and of color was only an analogy—this element is neither sensory nor imaginative: it is intelligible.

Foucault does not concern himself with this point. Let me cite the passage from Descartes that concerns us here:

For, as a matter of fact, painters, even when they study with the greatest skill to represent sirens and satyrs by forms the most strange and extraordinary, cannot give them natures which are entirely new, but merely make a certain medley of the members of different animals; or if their imagination is extravagant enough to invent something so novel that nothing similar has ever before been seen, and that then their work represents a thing purely fictitious and absolutely false, it is certain all the same that the colours of which this is composed are necessarily real. And for the same reason, although these general things, to wit, a body, eyes, a head, hands, and such like, may be imaginary, we are bound at the same time to confess that there are at least some other objects yet more simple and more universal, which are real and true; and of these just in the same way as with certain real colours, all these images of things which dwell in our thoughts, whether true and real or false and fantastic, are formed.

To such a class of things pertains corporeal nature in general, and its extension, the figure of extended things, their quantity or magnitude and number, as also the place in which they are, the time which measures their duration, and so on.

That is possibly why our reasoning is not unjust when we conclude from this that Physics, Astronomy, Medicine and all other sciences which have as their end the consideration of composite things, are very dubious and uncertain; but that Arithmetic, Geometry and other sciences of that kind which only treat of things that are very simple and very general, without taking great trouble to ascertain whether they are actually existent or not, contain some measure of certainty and an element of the indubitable. For whether I am awake or asleep, two and three together always form five, and the square can never have more than four sides, and it does not seem possible that truths so clear and apparent can be suspected of any falsity.¹³

And I remark that the following paragraph also starts with a "nevertheless" (*verumtamen*) which will soon be brought to our attention.

Thus the certainty of this simplicity of *intelligible* generalization—which is soon after submitted to metaphysical, artificial, and hyperbolic doubt through the fiction of the evil genius—is in no way obtained by a continuous reduction

which finally lays bare the resistance of a nucleus of sensory or imaginative certainty. There is discontinuity and a transition to another order of reasoning. The nucleus is purely intelligible, and the still natural and provisional certainty which has been attained supposes a radical break with the senses. At this moment of the analysis, no imaginative or sensory signification, as such, has been saved, *no* invulnerability of the senses to doubt has been experienced. *All* significations or "ideas" of sensory origin are *excluded* from the realm of truth, *for the same reason as madness* is excluded from it. And there is nothing astonishing about this: madness is only a particular case, and, moreover, not the most serious one, of the sensory illusion which interests Descartes at this point. It can thus be stated that:

2. The hypothesis of insanity—at this moment of the Cartesian order—seems neither to receive any privileged treatment nor to be submitted to any particular exclusion. Let us reread, in effect, the passage cited by Foucault in which insanity appears. Let us resituate it. Descartes has just remarked that since the senses sometimes deceive us, "it is wiser not to trust entirely to any thing by which we have once been deceived."¹⁴ He then starts a new paragraph with the *sed forte* which I brought to your attention a few moments ago. Now, the entire paragraph which follows does not express Descartes's final, definitive conclusions, but rather the astonishment and objections of the nonphilosopher, of the novice in philosophy who is frightened by this doubt and protests, saying: I am willing to let you doubt certain sensory perceptions concerning "things which are hardly perceptible, or very far away," but the others! that you are in this place, sitting by the fire, speaking thus, this paper in your hands and other seeming certainties! Descartes then assumes the astonishment of this reader or naïve interlocutor, pretends to take him into account when he writes: "And how could I deny that these hands and this body are mine, were it not perhaps that I compare myself to certain persons, devoid of sense, whose . . . and I should not be any the less insane were I to follow examples so extravagant."

The pedagogical and rhetorical sense of the *sed forte* which governs this paragraph is clear. It is the "but perhaps" of the feigned objection. Descartes has just said that all knowledge of sensory origin could deceive him. He pretends to put to himself the astonished objection of an imaginary nonphilosopher who is frightened by such audacity and says: no, not all sensory knowledge, for then you would be mad and it would be unreasonable to follow the example of madmen, to put forth the ideas of madmen. Descartes *echoes* this objection: since I am here, writing, and you understand me, I am not mad, nor are you, and we are all sane. The example of madness is therefore not indicative of the fragility of the sensory idea. So be it. Descartes acquiesces to this natural point of view, or rather he feigns to rest in this natural comfort in order better, more radically and more definitively, to unsettle himself from it and to discomfort his interlocutor. So be it, he says, you think that I would be mad to doubt that I am sitting near the

fire, etc., that I would be insane to follow the example of madmen. I will therefore propose a hypothesis which will seem much more natural to you, will not disorient you, because it concerns a more common, and more universal experience than that of madness: the experience of sleep and dreams. Descartes then elaborates the hypothesis that will ruin *all* the *sensory* foundations of knowledge and will lay bare only the *intellectual* foundations of certainty. This hypothesis above all will not run from the possibility of an insanity—an epistemological one—much more serious than madness.

The reference to dreams is therefore not put off to one side—quite the contrary—in relation to a madness potentially respected or even excluded by Descartes. It constitutes, in the methodical order which here is ours, the hyperbolic exasperation of the hypothesis of madness. This latter affected only certain areas of sensory perception, and in a contingent and partial way. Moreover, Descartes is concerned here not with determining the concept of madness but with utilizing the popular notion of insanity for juridical and methodological ends, in order to ask questions of principle regarding only the *truth* of ideas.¹⁵ What must be grasped here is that *from this point of view* the sleeper, or the dreamer, is madder than the madman. Or, at least, the dreamer, insofar as concerns the problem of knowledge which interests Descartes here, is further from true perception than the madman. It is in the case of sleep, and not in that of insanity, that the *absolute totality* of ideas of sensory origin becomes suspect, is stripped of "objective value" as M. Guérout puts it. The hypothesis of insanity is therefore not a good example, a revelatory example, a good instrument of doubt—and for at least two reasons. (a) It does not cover the *totality* of the field of sensory perception. The madman is not always wrong about everything; he is not wrong often enough, is never mad enough. (b) It is not a useful or happy example pedagogically, because it meets the resistance of the nonphilosopher who does not have the audacity to follow the philosopher when the latter agrees that he might indeed be mad at the very moment when he speaks.

Let us turn to Foucault once more. Confronted with the situation of the Cartesian text whose principles I have just indicated, Foucault could—and this time I am only extending the logic of his book without basing what I say on any particular text—Foucault could recall *two truths* that on a second reading would justify his interpretations, which would then only apparently differ from the interpretation I have just proposed.

1. It appears, on this second reading, that, for Descartes, madness is thought of only as a single case—and not the most serious one—among all cases of sensory error. (Foucault would then assume the perspective of the factual determination of the concept of madness by Descartes, and not his juridical usage of it.) Madness is only a sensory and corporeal fault, a bit more serious than the fault which threatens all waking but normal men, and much less serious, within the epistemological order, than the fault to which we succumb in dreams.

Foucault would then doubtless ask whether this reduction of madness to an example, to a case of sensory error, does not constitute an exclusion, an internment of madness, and whether it is not above all a sheltering of the Cogito and everything relative to the intellect and reason from madness. If madness is only a perversion of the senses—or of the imagination—it is corporeal, in alliance with the body. The real distinction of substances expels madness to the outer shadows of the Cogito. Madness, to use an expression proposed elsewhere by Foucault, is confined to the interior of the exterior and to the exterior of the interior. It is the other of the Cogito. I cannot be mad when I think and when I have clear and distinct ideas.

2. Or, while assuming our hypothesis, Foucault could also recall the following: Descartes, by inscribing his reference to madness within the problematic of knowledge, by making madness not only a thing of the body but an *error* of the body, by concerning himself with madness only as the modification of ideas, or the faculties of representation or judgment, intends to neutralize the originality of madness. He would even, in the long run, be condemned to construe it, like all errors, not only as an epistemological deficiency but also as a moral failure linked to a precipitation of the will; for will alone can consecrate the intellectual finitude of perception as error. It is only one step from here to making madness a sin, a step that was soon after cheerfully taken, as Foucault convincingly demonstrates in other chapters.

Foucault would be perfectly correct in recalling these two truths to us if we were to remain at the naïve, natural, and premetaphysical stage of Descartes's itinerary, the stage marked by natural doubt as it intervenes in the passage that Foucault cites. However, it seems that these two truths become vulnerable in turn, as soon as we come to the properly philosophical, metaphysical, and critical phase of doubt.¹⁶

Let us first notice how, in the rhetoric of the first *Meditation*, the first *toutefois* [at the same time] which announced the "natural" hyperbole of dreams (just after Descartes says, "But they are mad, and I should not be any the less insane," etc.) is succeeded by a second *toutefois* [nevertheless] at the beginning of the next paragraph.¹⁷ To "at the same time," marking the *hyperbolic moment within natural doubt*, will correspond a "nevertheless," marking the *absolutely hyperbolic moment* which gets us out of natural doubt and leads to the hypothesis of the evil genius. Descartes has just admitted that arithmetic, geometry, and simple notions escape the first doubt, and he writes, "Nevertheless I have long had fixed in my mind the belief that an all-powerful God existed by whom I have been created such as I am."¹⁸ This is the onset of the well-known movement leading to the fiction of the evil genius.

Now, the recourse to the fiction of the evil genius will evoke, conjure up, the possibility of a *total madness*, a total derangement over which I could have no control because it is inflicted upon me—hypothetically—leaving me no responsi-

bility for it. Total derangement is the possibility of a madness that is no longer a disorder of the body, of the object, the body-object outside the boundaries of the *res cogitans*, outside the boundaries of the policed city, secure in its existence as thinking subjectivity, but is a madness that will bring subversion to pure thought and to its purely intelligible objects, to the field of its clear and distinct ideas, to the realm of the mathematical truths which escape natural doubt.

This time madness, insanity, will spare nothing, neither bodily nor purely intellectual perceptions. And Descartes successively judges admissible:

(a) That which he pretended not to admit while conversing with the non-philosopher. To cite Descartes (he has just evoked "some evil genius not less powerful than deceitful"): "I shall consider that the heavens, the earth, colours, figures, sound, and all other external things are nought but the illusions and dreams of which this genius has availed himself in order to lay traps for my credulity; I shall consider myself as having no hands, no eyes, no flesh, no blood, nor any senses, yet falsely believing myself to possess all these things"¹⁹ These ideas will be taken up again in the second *Meditation*. We are thus quite far from the dismissal of insanity made above.

(b) That which escapes natural doubt: "But how do I know that Hell (i.e., the deceiving God, before the recourse to the evil genius) has not brought it to pass that . . . I am not deceived every time that I add two and three, or count the sides of a square . . . ?"²⁰

Thus, ideas of neither sensory nor intellectual origin will be sheltered from this new phase of doubt, and everything that was previously set aside as insanity is now welcomed into the most essential interiority of thought.

In question is a philosophical and juridical operation (but the first phase of doubt was already such) which no longer names madness and reveals all principled possibilities. *In principle* nothing is opposed to the subversion named insanity, although *in fact* and from a natural point of view, for Descartes, for his reader, and for us, no natural anxiety is possible regarding this actual subversion. (Truthfully speaking, to go to the heart of the matter, one would have to confront directly, in and of itself, the question of what is *de facto* and what *de jure* in the relations of the Cogito and madness.) Beneath this natural comfort, beneath this apparently prephilosophical confidence is hidden the recognition of an essential and principled truth: to wit, if discourse and philosophical communication (that is, language itself) are to have an intelligible meaning, that is to say, if they are to conform to their essence and vocation as discourse, they must simultaneously in fact and in principle escape madness. They must carry normality within themselves. And this is not a specifically Cartesian weakness (although Descartes never confronts the question of his own language),²¹ is not a defect or mystification linked to a determined historical structure, but rather is an essential and universal necessity from which no discourse can escape, for it belongs to the meaning of meaning. It is an essential necessity from which no discourse can

escape, even the discourse which denounces a mystification or an act of force. And, paradoxically, what I am saying here is strictly Foucauldian. For we can now appreciate the profundity of the following affirmation of Foucault's that curiously also saves Descartes from the accusations made against him: "Madness is the absence of a work." This is a fundamental motif of Foucault's book. Now, the work starts with the most elementary discourse, with the first articulation of a meaning, with the first syntactical usage of an "as such,"²² for to make a sentence is to *manifest* a possible meaning. By its essence, the sentence is normal. It carries normality within it, that is, *sense*, in every sense of the word—Descartes's in particular. It carries normality and sense within it, and does so whatever the state, whatever the health or madness of him who propounds it, or whom it passes through, on whom, in whom it is articulated. In its most impoverished syntax, logos is reason and, indeed, a historical reason. And if madness in general, beyond any factitious and determined historical structure, is the absence of a work, then madness is indeed, essentially and generally, silence, stifled speech, within a caesura and a wound that *open up* life as *historicity in general*. Not a determined silence, imposed at one given moment rather than at any other, but a silence essentially linked to an act of force and a prohibition which open history and speech. *In general*. Within the dimension of historicity in general, which is to be confused neither with some ahistorical eternity, nor with an empirically determined moment of the history of facts, silence plays the irreducible role of that which bears and haunts language, outside and *against* which alone language can emerge—"against" here simultaneously designating the content from which form takes off by force, and the adversary against whom I assure and reassure myself by force. Although the silence of madness is the absence of a work, this silence is not simply the work's epigraph, nor is it, as concerns language and meaning, outside the work. Like nonmeaning, silence is the work's limit and profound resource. Of course, in essentializing madness this way one runs the risk of disintegrating the factual findings of psychiatric efforts. This is a permanent danger, but it should not discourage the demanding and patient psychiatrist.

So that, to come back to Descartes, any philosopher or speaking subject (and the philosopher is but the speaking subject par excellence) who must evoke madness from the *interior* of thought (and not only from within the body or some other extrinsic agency), can do so only in the realm of the *possible* and in the language of fiction or the fiction of language. Thereby, through his own language, he reassures himself against any actual madness—which may sometimes appear quite talkative, another problem—and can keep his distance, the distance indispensable for continuing to speak and to live. But this is not a weakness or a search for security proper to a given historical language (for example, the search for certainty in the Cartesian style), but is rather inherent in the essence and very project of all language in general; and even in the language

of those who are apparently the maddest; and even and above all in the language of those who, by their praise of madness, by their complicity with it, measure their own strength against the greatest possible proximity to madness. Language being the break with madness, it adheres more thoroughly to its essence and vocation, makes a cleaner break with madness, if it pits itself against madness more freely and gets closer and closer to it: to the point of being separated from it only by the "transparent sheet" of which Joyce speaks, that is, by itself—for this diaphaneity is nothing other than the language, meaning, possibility, and elementary discretion of a nothing that neutralizes everything. In this sense, I would be tempted to consider Foucault's book a powerful gesture of protection and internment. A Cartesian gesture for the twentieth century. A reappropriation of negativity. To all appearances, it is reason that he interns, but, like Descartes, he chooses the reason of yesterday as his target and not the possibility of meaning in general.

2. As for the second truth Foucault could have countered with, it too seems valid only during the natural phase of doubt. Descartes not only ceases to reject madness during the phase of radical doubt, he not only installs its possible menace at the very heart of the intelligible, he also in principle refuses to let any determined knowledge escape from madness. A menace to all knowledge, insanity—the hypothesis of insanity—is not an internal modification of knowledge. At no point will knowledge alone be able to dominate madness, to master it in order to objectify it—at least for as long as doubt remains unresolved. For the end of doubt poses a problem to which we shall return in a moment.

The act of the Cogito and the certainty of existing indeed escape madness the first time; but aside from the fact that for the first time, it is no longer a question of objective, representative knowledge, it can no longer literally be said that the Cogito would escape madness because it keeps itself beyond the grasp of madness, or because, as Foucault says, "I who think, I cannot be mad"; the Cogito escapes madness only because at its own moment, under its own authority, it is valid *even if I am mad*, even if my thoughts are completely mad. There is a value and a meaning of the Cogito, as of existence, which escape the alternative of a determined madness or a determined reason. Confronted with the critical experience of the Cogito, insanity, as stated in the *Discourse on Method*, is irremediably on a plane with scepticism. Thought no longer fears madness: "... remarking that this truth 'I think; therefore I am' was so certain and so assured that all the most extravagant suppositions brought forward by the sceptics were incapable of shaking it."²³ The certainty thus attained need not be sheltered from an imprisoned madness, for it is attained and ascertained within madness itself. It is valid *even if I am mad*—a supreme self-confidence that seems to require neither the exclusion nor the circumventing of madness. Descartes never interns madness, neither at the stage of natural doubt nor at the stage of metaphysical doubt. *He only claims to exclude it*

during the first phase of the first stage, during the nonhyperbolic moment of natural doubt.

The hyperbolic audacity of the Cartesian Cogito, its mad audacity, which we perhaps no longer perceive as such because, unlike Descartes's contemporary, we are too well assured of ourselves and too well accustomed to the framework of the Cogito, rather than to the critical experience of it—its mad audacity would consist in the return to an original point which no longer belongs to either a *determined* reason or a *determined* unreason, no longer belongs to them as opposition or alternative. Whether I am mad or not, *Cogito, sum*. Madness is therefore, in every sense of the word, only one *case* of thought (*within* thought). It is therefore a question of drawing back toward a point at which all determined contradictions, in the form of given, factual historical structures, can appear, and appear as relative to this zero point at which determined meaning and nonmeaning come together in their common origin. From the point of view which here is ours, one could perhaps say the following about this zero point, determined by Descartes as Cogito.

Invulnerable to all determined opposition between reason and unreason, it is the point starting from which the history of the determined forms of this opposition, this opened or broken-off dialogue, can appear as such and be stated. It is the impenetrable point of certainty in which the possibility of Foucault's narration, as well as of the narration of the totality, or rather of *all* the determined forms of the exchanges between reason and madness are embedded. It is the point²⁴ at which the project of thinking this totality by escaping it is embedded. By escaping it: that is to say, by exceeding the totality, which—within existence—is possible only in the direction of infinity or nothingness; for even if the totality of what I think is imbued with falsehood or madness, even if the totality of the world does not exist, even if nonmeaning has invaded the totality of the world, up to and including the very contents of my thought, I still think, I am *while* I think. Even if I do not *in fact* grasp the totality, if I neither understand nor embrace it, I still formulate the project of doing so, and this project is meaningful in such a way that it can be defined only in relation to a precomprehension of the infinite and undetermined totality. This is why, by virtue of this margin of the possible, the principled, and the meaningful, which exceeds all that is real, factual, and existent, this project is mad, and acknowledges madness as its liberty and its very possibility. This is why it is not human, in the sense of anthropological factuality, but is rather metaphysical and demonic: it first awakens to itself in its war with the demon, the evil genius of nonmeaning, by pitting itself against the strength of the evil genius, and by resisting him through reduction of the natural man within itself. In this sense, nothing is less reassuring than the Cogito at its proper and inaugural moment. The project of exceeding the totality of the world, as the totality of what I can think in general, is no more reassuring than the dialectic of Socrates when it, too, overflows the totality of

beings, planting us in the light of a hidden sun which is *epekeina tes ousias*. And Glaucon was not mistaken when he cried out: "Lord! what demonic hyperbole? *daimonias hyperboles*," which is perhaps banally translated as "marvelous transcendence."²⁵ This demonic hyperbole goes further than the passion of hybris, at least if this latter is seen only as the pathological modification of the being called man. Such a hybris keeps itself within the world. Assuming that it is deranged and excessive, it implies the fundamental derangement and excessiveness of the hyperbole which opens and founds the world as such by exceeding it. Hybris is excessive and exceeds only *within* the space opened by the demonic hyperbole.

The extent to which doubt and the Cartesian Cogito are *punctuated* by this project of a singular and unprecedented excess—an excess in the direction of the nondetermined, Nothingness or Infinity, an excess which overflows the totality of that which can be thought, the totality of beings and determined meanings, the totality of factual history—is also the extent to which any effort to reduce this project, to enclose it within a determined historical structure, however comprehensive, risks missing the essential, risks dulling the *point* itself. Such an effort risks doing violence to this project in turn (for there is also a violence applicable to rationalists and to sense, to *good* sense; and this, perhaps, is what Foucault's book definitely demonstrates, for the victims of whom he speaks are always the bearers of sense, the *true* bearers of the *true* and *good* sense hidden and oppressed by the *determined* "good sense" of the "division"—the "good sense" that never divides itself enough and is always determined too quickly)—risks doing it violence in turn, and a violence of a totalitarian and historicist style which eludes meaning and the origin of meaning.²⁶ I use "totalitarian" in the structuralist sense of the word, but I am not sure that the two meanings do not beckon each other historically. Structuralist totalitarism here would be responsible for an internment of the Cogito similar to the violences of the classical age. I am not saying that Foucault's book is totalitarian, for at least at its outset it poses the question of the origin of historicity *in general*, thereby freeing itself of historicism; I am saying, however, that by virtue of the construction of his project he sometimes runs the risk of being totalitarian. Let me clarify: when I refer to the forced entry into the world of that which is not there and is supposed by the world, or when I state that the *compelle intrare* (epigraph of the chapter on "the great internment") becomes *violence itself* when it turns toward the hyperbole in order to make hyperbole reenter the world, or when I say that this reduction to intraworldliness is the origin and very meaning of what is called violence, making possible all straitjackets, I am not invoking an *other world*, an alibi or an evasive transcendence. That would be yet another possibility of violence, a possibility that is, moreover, often the accomplice of the first one.

I think, therefore, that (in Descartes) everything can be reduced to a determined historical totality except the hyperbolic project. Now, this project be-

longs to the narration narrating itself and not to the narration narrated by Foucault. It cannot be recounted, cannot be objectified as an event in a determined history.

I am sure that within the movement which is called the *Cartesian Cogito* this hyperbolic extremity is not the only element that should be, like pure madness in general, silent. As soon as Descartes has reached this extremity, he seeks to reassure himself, to certify the Cogito through God, to identify the act of the Cogito with a reasonable reason. And he does so as soon as he *proffers* and *reflects* the Cogito. That is to say, he must temporalize the Cogito, which itself is valid only during the instant of intuition, the instant of thought being attentive to itself, at the point, the sharpest point, of the instant. And here one should be attentive to this link between the Cogito and the movement of temporalization. For if the Cogito is valid even for the maddest madman, one must, in fact, not be mad if one is to reflect it and retain it, if one is to communicate it and its meaning. And here, with the reference to God *and* to a certain memory,²⁷ would begin the hurried repatriation of all mad and hyperbolic wanderings which now take shelter and are given reassurance within the order of reasons, in order once more to take possession of the truths they had left behind. Within Descartes's text, at least, the interment takes place at this point. It is here that hyperbolic and mad wanderings once more become itinerary and method, "assured" and "resolute" progression through our existing world, which is given to us by God as terra firma. For, finally, it is God alone who, by permitting me to extirpate myself from a Cogito that at its proper moment can always remain a silent madness, also insures my representations and my cognitive determinations, that is, my discourse against madness. It is without doubt that, for Descartes, God alone²⁸ protects me against the madness to which the Cogito, left to its own authority, could only open itself up in the most hospitable way. And Foucault's reading seems to me powerful and illuminating not at the stage of the text which he cites, which is anterior and secondary to the Cogito, but from the moment which immediately succeeds the instantaneous experience of the Cogito at its most intense, when reason and madness have not yet been separated, when to take the part of the Cogito is neither to take the part of reason as reasonable order, nor the part of disorder and madness, but is rather to grasp, once more, the source which permits reason *and* madness to be determined and stated. Foucault's interpretation seems to me illuminating from the moment when the Cogito must reflect and proffer itself in an organized philosophical discourse. That is, *almost always*. For if the Cogito is valid even for the madman, to be mad—if, once more, this expression has a singular philosophical meaning, which I do not believe: it simply says the other of each determined form of the logos—is not to be able to reflect and to say the Cogito, that is, not to be able to make the Cogito appear as such for an other; an other who may be myself. From the moment when Descartes pronounces the Cogito, he inscribes it in a system of deductions and

protections that betray its wellspring and constrain the wandering that is proper to it so that error may be circumvented. At bottom, leaving in silence the problem of speech posed by the Cogito, Descartes seems to imply that thinking *and* saying what is clear and distinct are the same thing. One can say *what* one thinks and *that* one thinks without betraying one or the other. Analogously—*analogously only*—Saint Anselm saw in the *insipiens*, the insane man, someone who could not think because he could not think what he said. Madness was for him, too, a silence, the voluble silence of a thought that did not think its own words. This also is a point which must be developed further. In any event, the Cogito is a work as soon as it is assured of what it says. But before it is a work, it is madness. If the madman could rebuff the evil genius, he could not tell himself so. He therefore cannot say so. And in any event, Foucault is right in the extent to which the project of constraining any wandering already animated a doubt which was always proposed as methodical. This identification of the Cogito with reasonable—normal—reason need not even await—in fact, if not in principle—the proofs of the existence of a veracious God as the supreme protective barrier against madness. This identification intervenes from the moment when Descartes *determines natural light* (which in its undetermined source should be valid even for the mad), from the moment when he pulls himself out of madness by determining natural light through a series of principles and axioms (axiom of causality according to which there must be at least as much reality in the cause as in the effect; then, after this axiom permits the proof of the existence of God, the axioms that "the light of nature teaches us that fraud and deception necessarily proceed from some defect").²⁹ These dogmatically determined axioms escape doubt, are never even submitted to its scrutiny, are established only reciprocally, on the basis of the existence and truthfulness of God. Due to this fact, they fall within the province of the history of knowledge and the determined structures of philosophy. This is why the act of the Cogito, at the hyperbolic moment when it pits itself against madness, or rather lets itself be pitted against madness, must be repeated and distinguished from the language or the deductive system in which Descartes must inscribe it as soon as he proposes it for apprehension and communication, that is, as soon as he reflects the Cogito for the other, which means for oneself. It is through this relationship to the other as an other self that meaning reassures itself against madness and nonmeaning. And philosophy is perhaps the reassurance given against the anguish of being mad at the point of greatest proximity to madness. This silent and specific moment could be called *pathetic*. As for the functioning of the hyperbole in the structure of Descartes's discourse and in the order of reasons, our reading is therefore, despite all appearances to the contrary, profoundly aligned with Foucault's. It is indeed Descartes—and everything for which this name serves as an index—it is indeed the system of certainty that first of all functions in order to inspect, master, and limit hyperbole, and does so both by deter-

mining it in the ether of a natural light whose axioms are from the outset exempt from hyperbolical doubt, and by making of hyperbolical doubt a point of transition firmly maintained within the chain of reasons. But it is our belief that this movement can be described within its own time and place only if one has previously disengaged the extremity of hyperbole, which Foucault seemingly has not done. In the fugitive and, by its essence, ungraspable moment when it still escapes the linear order of reasons, the order of reason in general and the determinations of natural light, does not the Cartesian Cogito lend itself to repetition, up to a certain point, by the Husserlian Cogito and by the critique of Descartes implied in it?

This would be an example only, for some day the dogmatic and historically determined grounds—ours—will be discovered, which the critique of Cartesian deductivism, the impetus and madness of the Husserlian reduction of the totality of the world, first had to rest on, and then had to fall onto in order to be stated. One could do for Husserl what Foucault has done for Descartes: demonstrate how the neutralization of the factual world is a neutralization (in the sense in which to neutralize is also to master, to reduce, to leave free in a straitjacket) of nonmeaning, the most subtle form of an act of force. And in truth, Husserl increasingly associated the theme of normality with the theme of the transcendental reduction. The embedding of transcendental phenomenology in the metaphysics of presence, the entire Husserlian thematic of the living present is the profound *reassurance* of the certainty of *meaning*.

By separating, within the Cogito, *on the one hand*, hyperbole (which I maintain cannot be enclosed in a factual and determined historical structure, for it is the project of exceeding every finite and determined totality), and, *on the other hand*, that in Descartes's philosophy (or in the philosophy supporting the Augustinian Cogito or the Husserlian Cogito as well) which belongs to a factual historical structure, I am not proposing the separation of the wheat from the tares in every philosophy in the name of some *philosophia perennis*. Indeed, it is exactly the contrary that I am proposing. In question is a way of accounting for the very historicity of philosophy. I believe that historicity in general would be impossible without a history of philosophy, and I believe that the latter would be impossible if we possessed only hyperbole, on the one hand, or, on the other, only determined historical structures, finite *Weltanschauungen*. The historicity proper to philosophy is located and constituted in the transition, the dialogue between hyperbole and the finite structure, between that which exceeds the totality and the closed totality, in the difference between history and historicity; that is, in the place where, or rather at the moment when, the Cogito and all that it symbolizes here (madness, derangement, hyperbole, etc.) pronounce and reassure themselves then to fall, necessarily forgetting themselves until their reactivation, their reawakening in another statement of the excess which also later will become another decline and another crisis. From its very first breath, speech,

confined to this temporal rhythm of crisis and reawakening, is able to open the space for discourse only by imprisoning madness. This rhythm, moreover, is not an alternation that additionally would be temporal. It is rather the movement of temporalization itself as concerns that which unites it to the movement of logos. But this violent liberation of speech is possible and can be pursued only in the extent to which it keeps itself resolutely and consciously at the greatest possible proximity to the abuse that is the usage of speech—just close enough to *say* violence, to dialogue with itself as irreducible violence, and just far enough to *live* and live as speech. Due to this, crisis or oblivion perhaps is not an accident, but rather the destiny of speaking philosophy—the philosophy which lives only by imprisoning madness, but which would die as thought, and by a still worse violence, if a new speech did not at every instant liberate previous madness while enclosing within itself, in its present existence, the madman of the day. It is only by virtue of this oppression of madness that finite-thought, that is to say, history, can reign. Extending this truth to historicity in general, without keeping to a determined historical moment, one could say that the reign of finite thought can be established only on the basis of the more or less disguised internment, humiliation, fettering and mockery of the madman within us, of the madman who can only be the fool of a logos which is father, master, and king. But that is another discourse and another story. I will conclude by citing Foucault once more. Long after the passage on Descartes, some three hundred pages later, introducing *Rameau's Nephew* Foucault writes, with a sigh of remorse: "In doubt's confrontation with its major dangers, Descartes realized that he could not be mad—though he was to acknowledge for a long time to come that all the powers of unreason kept vigil around his thought."³⁰ What we have attempted to do here this evening is to situate ourselves within the interval of this remorse, Foucault's remorse, Descartes's remorse according to Foucault; and within the space of stating that, "though he was to acknowledge for a long time to come," we have attempted not to extinguish the *other* light, a black and hardly natural light, the vigil of the "powers of unreason" around the Cogito. We have attempted to *requite* ourselves toward the gesture which Descartes uses to requite himself as concerns the menacing powers of madness which are the adverse origin of philosophy.

Among all Foucault's claims to my gratitude, there is thus also that of having made me better anticipate, more so by his monumental book than by the naïve reading of the *Meditations*, to what degree the philosophical act can no longer no longer be in memory of Cartesianism, if to be Cartesian, as Descartes himself doubtless understood it, is to attempt to be Cartesian. That is to say, as I have at least tried to demonstrate, to-attempt-to-say-the-demonic-hyperbole from whose heights thought is announced to itself, *frightens* itself, and *reassures* itself against being annihilated or wrecked in madness or in death. *At its height* hyperbole, the absolute opening, the uneconomic expenditure, is always reembraced

by an *economy* and is overcome by economy. The relationship between reason, madness, and death is an economy, a structure of deferral whose irreducible originality must be respected. This attempt-to-say-the-demonic-hyperbole is not an attempt among others; it is not an attempt which would occasionally and eventually be completed by the saying of it, or by its object, the direct object of a willful subjectivity. This attempt to say, which is not, moreover, the antagonist of silence, but rather the condition for it, is the original profundity of will in general. Nothing, further, would be more incapable of regrasping this will than voluntarism, for, as finitude and as history, this attempt is also a first passion. It keeps within itself the trace of a violence. It is more written than said, it is *economized*. The economy of this writing is a regulated relationship between that which exceeds and the exceeded totality: the *différance* of the absolute excess.

To define philosophy as the attempt-to-say-the-hyperbole is to confess—and philosophy is perhaps this gigantic confession—that by virtue of the historical enunciation through which philosophy tranquilizes itself and excludes madness, philosophy also betrays itself (or betrays itself as thought), enters into a crisis and a forgetting of itself that are an essential and necessary period of its movement. I philosophize only in *terror*, but in the *confessed* terror of going mad. The confession is simultaneously, at its *present* moment, oblivion and unveiling, protection and exposure: economy.

But this crisis in which reason is madder than madness—for reason is non-meaning and oblivion—and in which madness is more rational than reason, for it is closer to the wellspring of sense, however silent or murmuring—this crisis has always begun and is interminable. It suffices to say that, if it is classic, it is not so in the sense of the *classical age* but in the sense of eternal and essential classicism, and is also historical in an unexpected sense.

And nowhere else and never before has the concept of *crisis* been able to enrich and reassemble all its potentialities, all the energy of its meaning, as much, perhaps, as in Michel Foucault's book. Here, the crisis is on the one hand, in Husserl's sense, the danger menacing reason and meaning under the rubric of objectivism, of the forgetting of origins, of the blanketing of origins by the rationalist and transcendental unveiling itself. Danger as the movement of reason menaced by its own security, etc.

But the crisis is also decision, the caesura of which Foucault speaks, in the sense of *krinein*, the choice and division between the two ways separated by Parmenides in his poem, the way of logos and the non-way, the labyrinth, the *palintrope* in which logos is lost; the way of meaning and the way of nonmeaning; of Being and of non-Being. A division on whose basis, after which, logos, in the necessary violence of its irruption, is separated from itself as madness, is exiled from itself, forgetting its origin and its own possibility. Is not what is called finitude possibility as crisis? A certain identity between the consciousness

of crisis and the forgetting of it? Of the thinking of negativity and the reduction of negativity?

Crisis of reason, finally, access to reason and attack of reason. For what Michel Foucault teaches us to think is that there are crises of reason in strange complicity with what the world calls crises of madness.

an organism existing on two levels whose designs gradually approach until they are completely joined. The play is over when the two levels are indistinguishable, that is, when the group of heroes watched by the spectators sees itself as the spectator-characters saw them. The real resolution is not the marriage promised to us at the fall of the curtain but the encounter of heart and vision" (ibid., p. 58) "We are invited to follow the development of the play in two registers, which offer us two parallel curves that are separated, however, different in their importance, their language, and their function: the one rapidly sketched, the other fully drawn in all its complexity, the first letting us guess the direction that the second will take, the second deeply echoing the first, providing its definitive meaning. This play of interior reflections contributes to the imparting of a rigorous and supple geometry to Marivaux's play, while at the same time closely linking the two registers, even up to the movements of love" (ibid., p. 59)

50. TN. In the *Phenomenology* Hegel takes the reader on a "voyage of discovery" that Hegel himself has already made. The dialectical turning points of the *Phenomenology* are always marked by the reader's being brought to a point where he can grasp what Hegel has already grasped, the concept in question becoming true "for us," the distance between subject and object having been annihilated. Hegel defines the structure of the *Phenomenology* as circular, a return to its point of departure.

51. Cited in *Forme et Signification*, p. 189. And Rousset, in fact, comments: "Not isolated, such a declaration is valid for all orders of reality. Everything obeys the law of composition, which is the law of the artist as it is of the Creator. For the universe is a simultaneity, by virtue of which things at a remove from each other lead a concerted existence and form a harmonic solidarity; to the metaphor that unites them corresponds, in the relations between beings, love, the link between separated souls. It is thus natural for Claudel's thought to admit that two beings severed from each other by distance can be conjoined in their simultaneity, henceforth resonating like two notes of a chord, like Prouhèze and Rodrigue in their inextinguishable relationship."

52. Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*.

53. For the man of literary structuralism (and perhaps of structuralism in general), the letter of books—movement, infinity, lability, and instability of meaning rolled up in itself in the wrapping, the volume—has not yet replaced (but can it ever?) the letter of the flattened, established Law: the commandment on the Tables.

54. On this "identification with itself" of the Mallarméan book, cf. Jacques Scherer, *Le 'Livre' de Mallarmé*, p. 95 and leaf 94, and p. 77 and leaves 129-30.

55. We will not insist upon this type of question, banal but difficult to get around, and posing itself, moreover, at each step of Rousset's work, whether he is concerned with an author taken by himself or with an isolated work. Is there only one fundamental structure each time? How is it to be recognized and given its privilege? The criterion can be neither an empirical-statistical accumulation, nor an intuition of an essence. It is the problem of induction which presents itself to a structuralist science concerned with works, that is to say, with things whose structure is not apriorical. Is there a material a priori of the work? But the intuition of a material a priori poses formidable preliminary problems.

56. TN. This is a reference to Levinas and his attempted pacification of philosophy through the notion of the Other as face. For Derrida, philosophy, metaphysics, is irreducibly violent, practices an economy of violence. Cf. "Violence and Metaphysics."

57. TN. The reference is to Nietzsche's opposition of the Apollonian and the Dionysian (sculpture/music, individuation/unification of the many with the one, tranquility/bacchanal) in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

58. TN. This explication is to be found in the chapter of the *Phenomenology* entitled "Force and Understanding." The title of that chapter alone demonstrates its relationship to this essay.

59. TN. Cf. above, note 18.

60. TN. Derrida here is specifying several characteristics of metaphysics without demonstrating their interrelatedness. 1. "Heliocentric metaphysics" refers to the philosophical language founded

on metaphors of light and dark, e.g., truth as light, error as dark, etc. 2. This language always implies a privileged position of "acoustics," i.e., a privilege accorded to a phonological, spoken model of the presence of truth in living, spoken discourse, and a concomitant abasement of the silent work of the "force" of differentiation. This abasement is typically revealed in the philosophical treatment of writing. 3. This system is set in motion by Platonism, whose doctrine of the *eidos* implies both points just mentioned.

61. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols*, translated by Anthony M. Ludovici (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), p. 67.

62. Flaubert, *Préface à la vie d'écrivain*, p. 111.

63. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Nietzsche contra Wagner," in *The Case of Wagner*, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964) p. 116. [In Nietzsche's text the French is left untranslated: "Flaubert is always despicable, the man is nothing, the work everything."] It is not without interest, perhaps, to juxtapose this barb of Nietzsche's with the following passage from *Forme et Signification*: "Flaubert's correspondence is precious, but in Flaubert the letter writer I cannot find Flaubert the novelist; when Gide states that he prefers the former I have the feeling that he chooses the lesser Flaubert or, at least, the Flaubert that the novelist did everything to eliminate" (Rousset, p. xx).

64. Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols*, p. 59.

65. Ibid., p. 6.

66. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, trans. Thomas Common (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), p. 239.

67. Ibid., p. 242, slightly modified.

Two

Cogito and the History of Madness

1. With the exception of several notes and a short passage (in brackets), this paper is the reproduction of a lecture given 4 March 1963 at the Collège Philosophique. In proposing that this text be published in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, M. Jean Wahl agreed that it should retain its first form, that of the spoken word, with all its requirements and, especially, its particular weaknesses: if in general, according to the remark in the *Phaedrus*, the written word is deprived of "the assistance of its father," if it is a fragile "idol" fallen from "living and animated discourse" unable to "help itself," then is it not more exposed and disarmed than ever when, miming the improvisation of the voice, it must give up even the resources and lies of style?

2. Michel Foucault, *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Plon, 1961); trans. Richard Howard *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Pantheon, 1965). [Howard has translated the abridged version of Foucault's book. Whenever possible I have used Howard's translations of passages cited by Derrida. All nonfootnoted translations of Foucault are my own.]

3. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (trans. and ed. James Strachey in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 4 London: Hogarth Press, 1955, p. 99, n.1), speaking of the link between dreams and verbal expression, Freud recalls Ferenczi's remark that every language has its own dream language. The latent content of a dream (and of any behavior or consciousness in general) communicates with the manifest content only through the unity of a language—a language that the analyst must thus speak as well as possible. (On this subject cf. Daniel Lagache, "Sur le polyglottisme dans l'analyse," in *La psychanalyse*, vol. 1 [Paris: 1956], pp. 167-78.) As well as possible: progress in the knowledge and practice of a language being by nature infinitely open (first by virtue of the original and essential equivocality of the signifier, at least in the language of "everyday life," its indeterminateness and playing-space being precisely that which liberates the difference between hidden and stated meaning; then, by virtue of the original and

essential communication between different languages throughout history; finally, by virtue of the play, the relation to itself, or “sedimentation,” of every language), are not the insecurities and insufficiencies of analysis axiomatic or irreducible? And does not the historian of philosophy, whatever his method or project, abandon himself to the same dangers? Especially if one takes into account a certain embedding of philosophical language in nonphilosophical language.

4. That all history can only be, in the last analysis, the history of meaning, that is, of Reason in general, is what Foucault could not fail to experience—we shall come to this in a moment. What he could not fail to experience is that the general meaning of a difficulty he attributes to the “classical experience” is valid well beyond the “classical age.” Cf., for example: “And when it was a question, in seeking it in its most withdrawn essence, of peeling it away to its last structure, we would discover, in order to formulate it, only the *very language of reason* employed in the impeccable logic of delirium; precisely that which made it accessible counterfeited it as madness.” The very language of reason . . . but what is a language that would not be one of reason in general? And if there is no history, except of rationality and meaning in general, this means that philosophical language, as soon as it speaks, reappropriates negativity—or forgets it, which is the same thing—even when it allegedly affirms or recognizes negativity. More surely then, perhaps. The history of truth is therefore the history of this *economy* of the negative. It is necessary, and it is perhaps time to come back to the ahistorical in a sense radically opposed to that of classical philosophy: not to misconstrue negativity, but this time to affirm it—silently. It is negativity and not positive truth that is the nonhistorical capital of history. In question then would be a negativity so negative that it could not even be called such any longer. Negativity has always been determined by dialectics—that is to say, by metaphysics—as *work* in the service of the constitution of meaning. To affirm negativity in silence is to gain access to a nonclassical type of dissociation between thought and language. And perhaps to a dissociation of thought and philosophy as discourse, if we are conscious of the fact that this schism cannot be enunciated, thereby erasing itself, except within philosophy.

5. Foucault, *Folie et déraison*, pp. x–xi. [I have modified Howard’s translation of this sentence to include the “on” whose double sense was played upon above, p. 34.]

6. TN. I have consistently translated *œuvre* as “work” throughout this essay to avoid confusions that could be caused by translating it as “work of art,” as Howard does. To translate Foucault’s definition of madness, commented upon by Derrida, as “the absence of the work of art” (*l’absence d’œuvre*) does not convey Foucault’s sense of the absence of a work governed by institutionalized rationalism.

7. TN. Derrida is making use of the fact that the word *éloge* (praise) is derived from the same word as “logos.”

8. Foucault, *Folie et déraison*, p. xi.

9. Cf. also, for example, *Symposium* 217e/218b; *Phaedrus* 244b–c/245a/249/265a ff.; *Theaetetus* 257e; *Sophist* 228d/229a; *Timeus* 86b; *Republic* 382c; *Laws* X 888a.

10. TN. Cf. note 7 above.

11. TN. *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, translated by Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (Cambridge: The University Press, 1970), p. 146.

12. TN. *Ibid.*, p. 146.

13. TN. *Ibid.*, pp. 146–47.

14. TN. *Ibid.*, p. 145.

15. *Madness, theme or index*: what is significant is that Descartes, at bottom, never speaks of madness itself in this text. Madness is not his theme. He treats it as the index of a question of principle, that is, of epistemological value. It will be said, perhaps, that this is the sign of a profound exclusion. But this silence on madness itself simultaneously signifies the opposite of an exclusion, since it is *not a question of madness* in this text, if only to exclude it. It is not in the *Meditations* that Descartes speaks of madness itself.

16. To underline this vulnerability and touch on the greatest difficulty, we would have to specify that

the expressions “sensory or corporeal fault” or “corporeal error” could have no meaning for Descartes. There is no corporeal error, particularly in illness: jaundice or melancholy are only the *occasions* of an error that itself is born only with the consent or affirmation of the will in judgment, when “one who is ill with jaundice judges everything to be yellow because his eye is tinged with yellow. So finally, too, when the imagination is diseased, as in cases of melancholia, and a man thinks that his own disorderly fancies represent real things” (*Rule XII*). Descartes emphasizes this point: the most abnormal sensory or imaginative experience, considered in and of itself, at its own level and at its proper moment, never deceives us; or never deceives understanding, “if it restrict its attention accurately to the object presented to it, just as it is given to it either firsthand or by means of an image; and if it moreover refrain from judging that the imagination faithfully reports the objects of the senses, or that the senses take on the true forms of things, or in fine that external things always are as they appear to be” [Haldane and Ross, p. 44].)

17. TN. The paragraph organization of Haldane and Ross does not correspond to the paragraph organization of the edition of Descartes cited by Derrida.

18. Haldane and Ross, p. 147.

19. Haldane and Ross, p. 148.

20. *Ibid.* It is a question here of the order of reasons, as it is followed in the *Meditations*. It is well known that in the *Discourse* (part 4) doubt very promptly attacks the “simplest geometrical questions” in which men sometimes “commit paralogisms.”

21. Like Leibniz, Descartes has confidence in “scientific” or “philosophical” language, which is not necessarily the language taught in the Schools (*Rule III*) and which must also be carefully distinguished from the “terms of ordinary language” which alone can “deceive us” (*Meditations* II).

22. That is to say, as soon as, more or less implicitly, *Being* is called upon (even before its determination as essence and existence)—which can only mean, to be called upon by *Being*. *Being* would not be what it is if speech simply preceded or invoked it. Language’s final protective barrier against madness is the meaning of *Being*.

23. Haldane and Ross, p. 101.

24. It is a question less of a *point* than of a temporal originality in general.

25. TN. The reference is to Plato’s *Republic* 509b–c.

26. It risks erasing the excess by which every philosophy (of meaning) is related, in some region of its discourse, to the nonfoundation of unmeaning.

27. In the next to last paragraph of the sixth *Meditation*, the theme of normality communicates with the theme of memory, at the moment when the latter, moreover, is confirmed by absolute Reason as “divine veracity,” etc.

Generally speaking, does not God’s confirmation of the remembrance of obvious truths signify that only the positive infinity of divine reason can absolutely reconcile temporality and truth? In the infinite alone, beyond all determinations, negations, “exclusions” and “internments,” is produced the reconciliation of time and thought (truth) which Hegel claimed was the task of nineteenth-century philosophy, while the reconciliation of thought and space was to have been the aim of the so-called “Cartesian” rationalisms. That this divine infinity is the proper location, condition, name, or horizon of these two reconciliations is what has never been contested by any *metaphysician*, neither by Hegel, nor by the majority of those, such as Husserl, who have attempted to think and to name the essential temporality or historicity of truth and meaning. For Descartes, the crisis of which we are speaking would finally have its intrinsic (that is, *intellectual*) origin in time itself, as the absence of a necessary link between its parts, as the contingency and discontinuity of the transition from instant to instant; which supposes that here we follow all the interpretations opposed to Laporte’s on the question of the role of the instant in Descartes’s philosophy. In the last resort, only continuous creation, uniting conservation and creation, which “differ only as concerns our way of thinking,” reconciles temporality and truth. It is God who excludes madness and crisis, that is to say, embraces them in the presence that encompasses all traces and differences. Which amounts to saying that crisis, anomaly, negativity,

etc. are irreducible within the experience of finitude, or of a finite moment, a *determination* of absolute reason, or of reason in general. To attempt to deny this, and allegedly to affirm positivity (the positivity of truth, meaning, norms, etc.) outside the horizon of this infinite reason (reason in general, beyond all its specific determinations), is to attempt to erase negativity, and is to forget finitude at the very moment when one allegedly denounces as mystification the theologism of the great classical rationalisms.

28. But God is the other name of the absolute of reason *itself*, of reason and meaning in general. And what could exclude, reduce, or—amounting to the same thing—*absolutely embrace* madness, if not reason in general, absolute and undetermined reason, whose other name is God, for the classical rationalists? One cannot accuse those, individuals or societies, who use God as a recourse against madness of seeking to *shelter themselves*, to be sure of having protections against madness—the safe boundaries of asylums—except by construing this shelter as a *finite* one, within the world, by making God a third party or finite power, that is, except by deceiving oneself; by deceiving oneself not concerning the content and effective finality of this gesture in history, but concerning the philosophical specificity of the idea and name of God. If philosophy has taken place—which can always be contested—it is only in the extent to which it has formulated the aim of thinking beyond the finite shelter. By describing the historical constitution of these finite protective barriers against madness within the movement of individuals, societies and all finite totalities in general—a legitimate, immense, and necessary task—one can finally describe everything except the philosophical project itself. And except the project of this description itself. One cannot allege that the philosophical project of the “infinitivist” rationalisms served as an instrument or as an alibi for a finite historico-politico-social violence (which is doubtless the case) without *first* having to acknowledge and respect the intentional meaning of this project itself. Now, within its own intentional meaning, this project presents itself as the conceptualization of the infinite, that is, of that which cannot be exhausted by any finite totality, by any function or by any instrumental, technical, or political determination. It will be said that this presentation of the philosophical project by itself as such is its greatest lie, its violence and its mystification—or, further, its bad faith. And, certainly, the structure which links this intention to exceed the world to the totality of history must be described rigorously, and its economy must be determined. But like all ruses, these economic ones are possible only for finite words and finite intentions, substituting one finitude for another. One cannot lie when one says *nothing* (that is finite or determined), or when one says God, Being, or Nothingness, or when one does not modify the finite by the declared meaning of one's words, or when one says the infinite, that is, when one lets the infinite (God, Being, or Nothingness, for part of the meaning of the infinite is its inability to be an ontic determination among others) be said and conceived. The theme of divine veracity and the difference between God and the evil genius are thus illuminated by a light which is only apparently indirect.

In short, Descartes knew that, without God, finite thought never had the *right* to exclude madness, etc. Which amounts to saying that madness is never excluded, except *in fact*, violently, in history; or rather that this exclusion, this *difference* between the fact and the principle is historicity, the possibility of history itself. Does Foucault say otherwise? “*The necessity of madness . . . is linked to the possibility of history*” (author's italics).

29. Haldane and Ross, p. 171.

30. Foucault, *Folie et déraison*, p. 199.

Three

Edmond Jabès and the Question of the Book

1. *Je bâtis ma demeure; Poèmes, 1943-1957* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959). This collection has been admirably prefaced by Gabriel Bounore. There have now been major studies devoted to Jabès: Maurice Blanchot, “L'interruption,” *Nouvelle revue française*, May 1964; Gabriel Bounore, “Ed-

mond Jabès: la demeure et le livre,” *Mercure de France*, January 1965; and “Edmond Jabès, ou la guérison par le livre,” *Les lettres nouvelles*, July-September 1966.

2. TN. Jabès, *Le Livre des questions* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963).

3. TN. The two interpretations of interpretation are again examined at the end of “Structure, Sign, and Play,” this vol., chap. 10. The “rabbinical” interpretation of interpretation is the one which seeks a final truth, which sees interpretation as an unfortunately necessary road back to an original truth. The “poetical” interpretation of interpretation does not seek truth or origin, but affirms the play of interpretation.

4. TN. Cf. the end of “Force and Signification,” this vol., chap. 1, for the broken tables in Nietzsche as they relate to writing as the mark of otherness, the “rupture” that “begins” history.

5. TN. Derrida is referring here to the moment of the unhappy consciousness in Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Mind*. Hegel's first model for the unhappy consciousness was Abraham.

6. TN. The silence and hiding of Being are Heideggerean themes, for they are, as Heidegger says, “the question of Nothing.”

7. TN. “To leave speech” is to leave behind a *trace* which always means that the writer is not present.

8. TN. On the Leibnizian Book, cf. “Force and Signification,” chap. 1 above, note 25.

9. TN. On these questions, cf. “Violence and Metaphysics.”

10. TN. That Being is neither present nor outside difference are the themes of *Identity and Difference* by Heidegger.

11. TN. The ontological double genitive is also a theme of *Identity and Difference*.

Four

Violence and Metaphysics

1. Emmanuel Levinas, *Théorie de l'intuition dans la phénoménologie de Husserl* (1st ed., Paris: Alcan, 1930; 2d ed., Vrin, 1963); *De l'existence à l'existant* (Fontaine, 1947); *Le temps et l'autre*, in *Le Choix, le Monde, l'Existence*, Cahiers du Collège philosophique (Arthaud, 1949); *En découvrant l'existence, avec Husserl et Heidegger* (Vrin, 1949); *Totalité et infini, Essai sur l'extériorité* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961); *Difficile liberté, Essais sur le judaïsme* (Albin Michel, 1963).

I shall also refer to several articles which I shall mention at the proper moment. The principal works will be designated by the initials of their titles: *Théorie de l'intuition . . . : THI*; *De l'existence à l'existant: EE*; *Le temps et l'autre: TA*; *En découvrant l'existence: EDE*; *Totalité et infini: TI* [see below]; *Difficile liberté: DL*.

This essay was already written when two important texts by Emmanuel Levinas appeared: “La trace de l'autre,” in *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, September 1963; and “La signification et le sens,” *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 1964, no. 2. Unfortunately we can make but brief allusions to these texts here. [The major work referred to in this essay has appeared in English: *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969). All page references to *TI* are to Lingis's translation.]

2. TN. On the double genitive cf. above, chap. 3, note 11.

3. After desiring to restore the properly ontological intention dormant within metaphysics, after having reawakened the “fundamental ontology” beneath “metaphysical ontology,” Heidegger, faced by the tenacity of traditional ambiguity, finally proposes to abandon the terms “ontology” and “ontological” (*Introduction to Metaphysics*). The question of Being cannot be submitted to an ontology.

4. That is, to relativism: the truth of philosophy does not depend upon its relation to the actuality of the Greek or European event. On the contrary, we must gain access to the Greek or European *eidos* through an irruption or a call whose point of departure is variously determined by Husserl and Heidegger. It remains that, for both, “the irruption of philosophy” (“Aufbruch oder Einbruch der

II THE GREAT CONFINEMENT

COMPELLE INTRARE

After defusing its violence, the Renaissance had liberated the voice of Madness. The age of reason, in a strange takeover, was then to reduce it to silence.

On the methodical path of his doubt, Descartes came across madness beside dreams and all the other forms of error. Might the possibility of his own madness rob him of his own body, in the manner in which the outside world occasionally disappears through an error of the senses, or in which consciousness sleeps while we dream?

How could it be denied that these hands or this whole body are mine? Unless perhaps I were to liken myself to madmen, whose brains are so damaged by the persistent vapours of melancholia that they firmly maintain they are kings when they are paupers, or say they are dressed in purple when they are naked, or that their heads are made of earthenware or that they are pumpkins, or made of glass.¹

But Descartes does not evade the danger of madness in the same way that he sidesteps the possibility of dream or error. However deceptive they might be, the senses can only alter 'things that are barely perceptible, or at

a great distance', and however strong the illusion, there is still a residue of truth assuring him that he is 'sitting by the fire, wearing a dressing gown'. Dreams, like the imaginings of painters, can represent 'Sirens and Satyrs, by strange, extraordinary, shapes', but of their own accord, they can never create 'simpler or more universal things' that make fantastical images possible: 'corporeal nature, and its extension, are of this class of things'. The fictitiousness of such things is so slight that they lend dreams their verisimilitude, and they are the inevitable marks of a truth that dreams themselves can never undo. Thus neither sleep peopled with images nor the clear consciousness that the senses are deceived can lead doubt to its most universal point: we might admit that our eyes can deceive us, and 'suppose that we are asleep', but the truth will never slip away entirely into darkness.

Madness is an altogether different affair. If its dangers compromise neither the enterprise nor the essential truth that is found, this is not because *this thing*, even in the thoughts of a madman, cannot be untrue, but rather because I, when I think, cannot be considered insane. When I think I have a body, can I be certain that my grasp on the truth is stronger than that of the man who believes his body to be made of glass? Assuredly, says Descartes, 'such people are insane, and I would be thought equally mad if I took anything from them as a model for myself'. It is not the permanence of truth that ensures that thought is not madness, in the way that it freed it from an error of perception or a dream; it is an impossibility of being mad which is inherent in the thinking subject rather than the object of his thoughts. If one admits the possibility that one might be dreaming, and one identifies with that dreaming subject to find 'some grounds for doubt', truth still appears, as one of the conditions of possibility for the dream. By contrast, one cannot suppose that one is mad, even in thought, for madness is precisely a condition of impossibility for thought: 'I would be thought equally mad.'²

In the economy of doubt, there is a fundamental disequilibrium between on the one hand madness, and dreams and errors on the other. Their position is quite different where truth and the seeker of truth are concerned. Dreams and illusions are overcome by the very structure of truth, but madness is simply excluded by the doubting subject, in the same manner that it will soon be excluded that he is not thinking or that he does not exist. A specific decision has been taken since the *Essays of Montaigne*. When the latter went to meet Tasso, there was nothing to assure him that

all thought was not haunted by the ghost of unreason. What of the people, the 'wretched folk taken in by this madness?' Perhaps they were no different from anyone else, and the thinking man was also in danger of falling into such eccentricity. He is to be 'equally pitied', for what reason could make him a judge of madness?

Reason has taught me that if you condemn in this way anything whatever as definitely false and quite impossible, you are claiming to know the frontier and bounds of the will of God and the power of Nature our Mother; it taught me also that there is nothing in the whole world madder than bringing matters down to the measure of our own capacities and potentialities.³

Amongst all other forms of illusion, madness traces what was still in the sixteenth century one of the most commonly taken paths of doubt. Man was never certain that he was not dreaming, and never sure that he was not mad: 'do we not often feel ourselves to be in contradiction with our own better judgement?'⁴

Descartes by contrast has now acquired that certainty, and he grasps it firmly: madness, quite simply, is no longer his concern. It would be an eccentricity for him to suppose that he were eccentric: as a way of thinking, madness implies itself, and thus excludes itself from his project. The perils of madness have been quashed by the exercise of Reason, and this new sovereign rules a domain where the only possible enemies are errors and illusions. The process of Descartes' doubt breaks the spells woven by the senses and steers a clear course through the landscape of dreams, constantly guided by the light of true things. But madness is banished in the name of the man who doubts, and who is no more capable of opening himself to unreason than he is of not thinking or not being.

Montaigne's problematics of madness are thereby modified, in an almost imperceptible but nonetheless decisive manner. Madness is placed in a zone of exclusion, from which it will only escape in part in Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit*. Unreason in the sixteenth century was a sort of open wound, which in theory constantly posed a threat to the link between subjectivity and truth. The path taken by Cartesian doubt seems to indicate that by the seventeenth century the danger has been excluded, and that madness is no longer a peril lurking in the domain where the thinking subject holds rights over truth: and for classical

thought, that domain is the domain of reason itself. Madness has been banished. While *man* can still go mad, *thought*, as the sovereign exercise carried out by a subject seeking the truth, can no longer be devoid of reason. A new dividing line has appeared, rendering that experience so familiar to the Renaissance – unreasonable Reason, or reasoned Unreason – impossible. Between Montaigne and Descartes an event has taken place, which concerns the advent of a *ratio*. But the advent of a *ratio* in the Western world meant far more than the appearance of a 'rationalism'. More secretly, but in equal measure, it also meant the movement whereby Unreason was driven underground, to disappear, indeed, but also take root.

And it is to that other aspect of the classical event that we must now turn our attention.

* * *

More than one sign gives it away, and they don't all come from a philosophical experience of knowledge. What we need to address is a wide cultural surface. This is signalled quite precisely by a series of dates, and with them an ensemble of institutions.

It is well known that the seventeenth century created vast houses of confinement, but it is less well known that in the city of Paris, one out of every hundred inhabitants found themselves locked up there within a matter of months. It is also recognised that the authorities made use of *lettres de cachet* and other arbitrary measures of imprisonment, but the juridical thinking behind such practices is less familiar.⁵ Since Pinel, Tuke and Wagnitz, we know that the mad underwent this process of confinement for a century and a half, until one day they were discovered in the wards of the Hôpital Général and in the cells of houses of correction, or among the population of the workhouses and *Zuchthäuser*. But it is rarely the case that their status there is clarified, or that what was meant by this enforced fraternisation between the poor, the unemployed, the criminal and the insane is clearly understood. It was in these spaces of confinement that Pinel and the psychiatry of the nineteenth century met the mad, and – lest we forget – it was there too that they allowed them to remain, while claiming to be their liberators. Since the mid-seventeenth century, madness had been linked to this place of confinement, and to the gesture that designated it as its natural place.

GASTON BACHELARD

THE POETICS
OF *R*EVERIE

CHILDHOOD, LANGUAGE, AND THE COSMOS

Translated from the French by Daniel Russell

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I

The night dream (*rêve*) does not belong to us. It is not our possession. With regard to us, it is an abductor, the most disconcerting of abductors: it abducts our being from us. Nights, nights have no history. They are not linked one to another. And when a person has lived a lot, when he has already lived some twenty-thousand nights, he never knows in which ancient, very ancient night he started off to dream. The night has no future. There are no doubt nights which are less dark when our day being still lives enough to traffic with its memories. The psychoanalyst explores these half-nights. In these half-nights, our being is still there, dragging along human dramas, all the weight of badly led lives. But already beneath this spoiled life, an abyss of non-being is open where certain nocturnal dreams are swallowed up. In such absolute dreams, we are returned to an ante-subjective state. We become elusive to ourselves, for we are giving pieces of ourselves to no matter whom, to no matter what. The nocturnal dream disperses our being over phantoms of unusual beings who are no longer even shadows of ourselves. The words "phantoms" and "shadows" are too strong. They are still too well attached to realities. They prevent us from going as far as the extremity of the obliteration of being, as far as the obscurity of our being dissolving into the night. The metaphysical sensitivity of the poet helps us approach our nocturnal abysses. Paul Valéry says that he believes dreams are formed "by some other sleeper, as if in the night,

they mistook the absent person.”¹ To go and be absent from the house of beings who are absent, such is precisely absolute flight, the resignation from all the forces of the being, the dispersion of all the beings of our being. Thus we sink into the absolute dream.

What can be recuperated from such a disaster of the being? Are there still sources of life at the bottom of this non-life? What a lot of dreams must be known, in depth and not superficially, in order to determine the dynamism of the outcroppings! If the dream descends deeply enough into the abysses of the being, how can one believe, as the psychoanalysts do, that it always systematically retains social meanings. In the nocturnal life, there are depths where we bury ourselves, where we have the will to live no longer. In these depths, we brush intimately against nothingness, our nothingness. Are there other nothingnesses than the nothingness of our being? All the obliterations of the night converge toward this nothingness of our being. At the limit, absolute dreams plunge us into the universe of the Nothing.

When this Nothing fills up with Water, we are already coming back to life. Then, saved from the ontological drama, we sleep better. Plunged into the waters of good sleep, we are in a balance of being with a universe at peace. But is being in a balance of being with a universe really being? Hasn't the water of sleep dissolved our being? In any case, we become beings with no history upon entering into the realm of the Night which has no history. When we sleep thus in the waters of profound slumber, we sometimes know eddies, but never currents. We experience passing dreams (*rêves*). They are not life dreams. For every dream which we recount upon returning to the light of day, there are many whose thread we have lost. The psychoanalyst does not work at those depths. He believes he can explain lacunae without paying attention to the fact that those black holes which interrupt the line of recounted dreams are perhaps the mark of the death instinct which is working at the bottom of our shadows. Alone, a poet can bring us an image, sometimes, of that distant place, an echo of the ontological drama of a slumber without memory when our being was perhaps being tempted by the non-being.

¹ Paul Valéry, *Eupalinos. L'âme et la danse. Dialogue de l'arbre*. Paris, Gallimard, p. 199.

Dreams without a history, dreams which could light up only in a perspective of annihilation are in the Nothing or in the Water. It is then self-evident that in such dreams the dreamer will never find a guarantee of his existence. Such nocturnal dreams, those dreams of extreme night, cannot be experiences in which one can formulate a *cogito*. There the subject loses his being; they are dreams without a subject.

Where is the philosopher who will give us the metaphysics of the night, the metaphysics of the human night? The dialectics of black and white, of no and yes, of disorder and order are not sufficient to frame the nothingness at work at the bottom of our sleep. What a distance is covered from the shores of Nothing, that Nothing that we were to this someone, however wan he may be, who is recovering his being beyond sleep! Ah! how can a Mind risk sleeping?

But won't the Metaphysics of the night remain a sum of peripheral views without ever being able to find the lost *cogito* again, a radical *cogito* which would not be the *cogito* of a shadow?

It is then necessary to envisage nocturnal dreams of lesser sleep in order to discover documents of subjective psychology. When the ontic losses of extreme dreams are measured better, people will be more prudent in the ontological determinations of the nocturnal dream. For example, even when it is a question of dreams which have emerged from the night and which can be unwound on the thread of a story, will someone ever tell us the veritable nature of the *inspiring character*? Is it really us? Always us? Do we recognize our inspiring being there, that simple habit of becoming which is attached to our being? Even if we can retell it, recover it in its strange becoming, isn't the dream evidence of the lost being, of a being which is getting lost, of a being which is fleeing our being?

Then a philosopher of the dream (*songe*) wonders: can I really pass from the nocturnal dream to the existence of the dreaming subject, as the lucid philosopher passes from the thought—from any thought—to the existence of the being which is thinking it? ²

² Night grammar is not the same as the grammar of the day. In the night dream, the function of the *whatever* does not exist. There is no ordinary

In other words, to follow the habits of philosophical language, it does not seem to us that one can speak of a valid *cogito* for a dreamer of nocturnal dreams. It is certainly difficult to trace the frontier which separates the domain of the nocturnal Psyche from that of the daytime Psyche, but this frontier exists. There are two centers of being within us, but the nocturnal center is a blurred center of concentration. It is not a "subject."

Does psychoanalytic inquiry descend all the way to the ante-subject? If it penetrated into that sphere, could it find explanatory elements there for the elucidation of the dramas of the personality? That is a problem which, as far as we are concerned, remains unresolved. It seems to us that human misfortunes do not descend that deeply; man's misfortunes remain "superficial." Deep nights return us to the equilibrium of the stable life.

When one meditates upon the lessons of psychoanalysis, he is already well aware that he is being sent back to the superficial zone, to the socialized zone. Furthermore, he finds himself confronted with a curious paradox. When the patient has exposed the bizarre vicissitudes of his dream, when he has emphasized the unexpected nature of certain events in his nocturnal life, then the psychoanalyst, confident in his extensive culture, can say to him: "I know, I understand that; I expected as much. You are a man like any other. In spite of all the aberrations of your dream, you are not privileged with a singular existence."

And then it is the psychoanalyst who is charged with setting forth the *cogito* of the dreamer by saying: "He dreams at night; therefore, he exists at night. He dreams like everyone else; therefore, he exists like everyone else."

"He believes that he is himself during the night and he is just anybody."

"Just anybody? Or perhaps—disaster of the human being—anything?"

dream; there are no ordinary oneiric images. All the adjectives in a nocturnal dream are qualifiers. The philosopher who believes he can include the dream in thought would have a great deal of difficulty, while remaining in the world of dream, passing, as he does so easily in his lucid meditations, from the *whatever* to the *someone*.

Anything? Some surge of warm blood, some excessive hormone which has lost its organic wisdom.

Anything coming from any time? Some too scanty milk in the bottles of long ago.

The psychic substance examined by the psychoanalyst would then appear as a sum total of accidents. It would also remain impregnated by the dreams of long ago. On the mode of the *cogito*, the psychoanalyst-philosopher should say: "I dream; therefore I am dreaming substance." Dreams would then be that which roots itself the most deeply in the dreaming substance. Thoughts can be contradicted and, consequently, obliterated. But dreams? Dreams of the dreaming substance?

Then—let us ask once more—where do we place the *I* in this dreaming substance? Within it, the *I* dissolves and is lost. . . . Within it the *I* lends itself to supporting accidents after their validity has lapsed. In the nocturnal dream, the *cogito* of the dreamer stammers. The nocturnal dream does not even help us formulate a *non-cogito* which would express a sense of our will to sleep. It is this *non-cogito* which a metaphysics of the night should associate with losses of being.

In short, the psychoanalyst thinks too much. He does not dream enough. In wanting to explain to us the depth of our being by the residues deposited on the surface by daytime life, he obliterates the sense of the gulf that is within us. Who will help us descend into our caverns? Who will help us recover, recognize, know our double being which, from one night to the next, keeps us in existence. That sleepwalker who does not tramp along the routes of life but who descends, always descends in quest of immemorial resting places.

In its depths, the nocturnal dream is an ontological mystery. Whatever can be the being of a dreamer who, in the depth of his night, believes he is still living, who believes he is still the being of the semblances of life? Whoever loses some of his being is mistaken about his being. Even in the bright life, the subject of the verb "to be mistaken" is difficult to stabilize. In the abyssal dream are there not nights when the dreamer takes the wrong abyss? Does he descend into himself? Does he go beyond himself?

Yes, there are nothing but questions at the threshold of a metaphysics of the night.

Before going so far, it will perhaps be necessary to study descents into the less-than-being (*moins-être*) in a realm which is more accessible than the dream of the nocturnal psyche. This is the problem we wish to reflect upon, by dealing simply with the *cogito* of reverie and not with a *cogito* of the nocturnal dream.

II

If the "subject" who dreams the nocturnal dream escapes us, if it is better grasped objectively by those who reconstitute it by analyzing the accounts of it made by the dreamer, the phenomenologist cannot work on the documents of nocturnal dreams. He must leave the study of the nocturnal dream to the psychoanalyst, or to the anthropologist who will compare the nocturnal dream to myths. All these studies will bring to light the immobile, anonymous man, the untransformable man which our phenomenological point of view leads us to call the man without a subject.

From then on, it is not by studying the nocturnal dream that we will be able to divulge the attempts at individualization which animate the man who is awake, the man whom ideas awaken, the man whose imagination calls him to subtlety.

Thus, since we wish to touch the poetic powers of the human psychism, it is best to concentrate all our research on simple reverie, by trying to determine clearly the specificity of simple reveries.

And here is the radical difference for us between the nocturnal dream (*rêve*) and reverie, the radical difference, a difference deriving from phenomenology; while the dreamer of the nocturnal dream is a shadow who has lost his self (*moi*), the dreamer of reverie, if he is a bit philosophical, can formulate a *cogito* at the center of his dreaming self (*son moi rêveur*). Put another way, reverie is an oneiric activity in which a glimmer of consciousness subsists. The dreamer of reverie is present in his reverie. Even when the reverie gives the impression of a flight out of the real, out of time and place, the dreamer of reverie knows that it is he who is absenting himself—he, in flesh and blood, who is becoming a "spirit," a phantom of the past or of voyage.

It will be easy for people to object to us that there is a whole range of intermediary states which go from rather clear reveries to formless musings (*rêvasseries*). Through this confused zone, phantasms lead us imperceptibly from day toward the night, from sleepiness to sleep. But is it self-evident that one falls from reverie into dream (*rêve*)? Are there really dreams which *continue* reveries? If the dreamer of reverie lets himself be overcome by sleepiness, his reverie unravels; it goes and gets lost in the sands of sleep, like streams in the desert. The place is free for a new dream, a dream which, like all nocturnal dreams, has an abrupt beginning. In going from reverie to dream, the sleeper crosses a frontier. And the dream is so new that the dream tellers rarely have confidence in an antecedent reverie.

But it is not in the realm of facts that we shall find an answer to the objection of a continuity from reverie to dream. We shall first have recourse to phenomenological principles. In fact, phenomenologically speaking, that is to say in taking the phenomenological examination to be linked, by definition, to any awareness (*prise de conscience*), we must repeat that a consciousness which is growing dark, diminishing and going to sleep has already ceased to be a consciousness. The reveries of the going-to-sleep are *facts*. The subject who submits to them has left the realm of *psychological* values. So we have a perfect right to neglect reveries which go down the wrong slope and reserve our research for the reveries which keep us in a consciousness of ourselves.

The reverie is going to be born naturally, in an awareness without tension, in an easy *cogito*, providing certainties of being with regard to a pleasing image—an image which pleases us because we have just created it, outside all responsibility, in the absolute liberty of reverie. The imagining consciousness holds its object (such images as it imagines) in an absolute immediacy. In a fine article which appeared in *Médecine de France*, Jean Delay uses the term *psychotrope* "to designate the group of chemical substances, whether of natural or artificial origin, which have a psychological tropism, that is to say, which are susceptible to modifying mental activity. . . . Thanks to the progress of psychopharmacology, medical workers have at their disposal today a

great variety of psychotropic drugs allowing them to vary psychological behavior in different ways and to institute at will a regimen of relaxation, stimulation, dream or delirium."³ But if the carefully chosen substance causes psychotropisms, it is because there are psychotropisms. And a highly skilled psychologist could make use of psychotropic images. For there are psychotropic images which stimulate the psychism by inspiring it into a sustained movement. The psychotropic image puts a little linear order into the psychic chaos. Psychic chaos is the state of the idle psyche, the less-than-being (*moins-être*) of the dreamer without images. The pharmaceuticals of the milligram then come to enrich this latent psychism.

Confronted with such a success, an efficient dreamer (*songeur*) cannot stop short. The chemical substance brings the image. But wouldn't whoever brings us the image, the image alone, be giving us all the benefits of the substance? *In the psychological order, simulating the effect well is being very close to bringing back the cause.* The being of the dreamer of reverie is constituted by the images he conjures up. The image awakens us from our torpor, and our awakening is announced in a *cogito*. One more valorization, and there we are in the presence of positive reverie, a reverie which produces, a reverie which, however weak its product, can well be named poetic reverie. In its products and in its producer, reverie can well take on the etymological sense of the word "poetic." Reverie assembles being around its dreamer. It gives him illusions of being more than he is. Thus, upon this less-than-being (*moins-être*) which is the relaxed state where the reverie takes form, there emerges an outline in relief—a relief which the poet will know how to swell into a more-than-being. The philosophical study of reverie calls us to nuances of ontology.⁴

And this ontology is easy, for it is the ontology of well-being (*bien-être*)—of a well-being made to measure for the being of the dreamer who knows how to dream it. There is no well-being

³ Jean Delay, "Ten Years of Psycho-Pharmaceutics in Psychiatry," in *Médecine de France*. Paris, Oliver Perrin, p. 19.

⁴ I am nostalgic for remedies with beautiful names. Only a hundred years ago, there were such beautiful sentences in medicine. When the doctor knew how "to throw some vehicle in the humors," the sick person understood that he was going to be animated.

without reverie. No reverie without well-being. Already, through reverie, one discovers that being is a possession (*bien*). A philosopher will say that being is a value.

Must we forbid ourselves that summary characterization of reverie as happiness under the pretext that happiness is psychologically a flat, poor, puerile state—under the pretext too that just the word "happiness" extinguishes all analysis, drowns the psychism in banality? Poets—we shall quote some soon—will bring us the *nuances* of a cosmic happiness, nuances so numerous and so diverse that it will be fairly necessary to say that the world of reverie begins with the nuance. And thus it is that the dreamer of reverie gets an impression of originality. With the nuance, one comprehends that the dreamer knows the *cogito* being born.

The *cogito* which thinks can wander, wait, choose—the *cogito* of reverie is immediately attached to its object, to its image. The shortest route of all is between the imagining subject and the imagined image. Reverie lives from its primary interest. The subject of the reverie is astonished to receive the image, astonished, charmed, awakened. Great dreamers are masters of the glittering consciousness. A sort of multiple *cogito* renews itself in the closed world of a poem. Other consciential powers will, of course, be necessary in order to take possession of the poem in its totality. But already in the flash of an image, we find an illumination. What a lot of stippled reveries come to enhance the dreaming state! Aren't two types of reverie possible according to whether one lets himself flow into the succession of happy images or whether he lives at the center of an image while feeling it radiate? A *cogito* is assured in the soul of the dreamer who lives at the center of a radiating image.

III

Suddenly an image situates itself in the center of our imagining being. It retains us; it engages us. It infuses us with being. The *cogito* is conquered through an object of the world, an object which, all by itself, represents the world. The imagined detail is a sharp point which penetrates the dreamer; it excites in him a concrete meditation. Its being is at the same time being of the image and being of adherence to the image which is astonishing.

The image brings us an illustration of our astonishment. Perceptible registers correspond to each other. They complement each other. In a reverie which is dreaming on a simple object, we know a polyvalence of our dreaming being.

A flower, a fruit, or a simple, familiar object suddenly comes to solicit us to think of it, to dream near it, to help it raise itself to the rank of companion to man. Without the poets we would not know precisely how to find direct complements for our dreamer's *cogito*. Not all the objects of the world are available for poetic reveries. But once a poet has chosen his object, the object itself changes its being. It is promoted to the poetic.

What joy there is then in taking the poet at his word, in dreaming with him, in believing what he says, in living in the world he offers us by putting the world under the sign of the object, of a fruit of the world, or a flower of the world!

IV

The beginning of life is the beginning of a dream; thus Pierre Albert-Birot suggests that we live the happiness of Adam: "I feel that the world enters me like the fruits I eat; yes, truly, I nourish myself with the World."⁵ Each fruit well tasted, each fruit poetically exalted is a type of happy world. And while dreaming well, the dreamer knows that he is a dreamer of the goods (*biens*) of the world, of the *closest* goods that the world offers him.

Fruits and flowers are already living in the being of the dreamer. Francis Jammes knew that: "I can scarcely feel any sentiment which is not accompanied by the image of a flower or a fruit."⁶

Thanks to a fruit, the whole being of the dreamer becomes round. Thanks to a flower, the whole being of the dreamer relaxes. Yes, what relaxation for the being in this single line by Edmond Vandercammen: "I spy a flower, adorable leisure . . ."⁷ The flower born in poetic reverie, then, is the very being of the dreamer, his flowering being. The poetic garden dominates all

⁵ Pierre Albert-Birot, *Mémoires d'Adam*, p. 126.

⁶ Francis Jammes, *Le roman du lièvre*, appended notes, p. 271.

⁷ Edmond Vandercammen, *L'étoile du berger*, p. 15.

the gardens of the earth. In no garden of the world could one pick this carnation, Anne-Marie de Backer's carnation:

He left me all I need to live
His black carnations and his honey in my blood.⁸

A psychoanalyst will quickly diabolize these two lines. But will he tell us that immense fragrance of a poet's flower which impregnates a whole life? And that honey—the incorruptible being—associated with the fragrance of blackness retained by the carnations, who will tell us how it keeps the dreamer alive? Upon reading such poems in complete sympathy, one feels that a past of what *could have been* is united with a past of what was:

Abortive memories are worse than necessary
They talk endlessly to invent life.

Thus the images of the poet's reverie dig life deeper, enlarge the depths of life. Let us pick that flower once again in the psychic garden: "The silver peony sheds its petals in the depths of fables."⁹ To what depths of psychic reality the surrealism of women descends!

Flowers and fruits, beauties of the world; in order to be dreamed well, they must be spoken and spoken well. The dreamer of objects only finds the accents of ephemeral enthusiasm. What support he receives when the poet tells him: "You have seen well; therefore you have the right to dream." Then, hearing the voice of the poet, he enters the chorus of the "celebration." The celebrated beings are promoted to a new dignity of existence. Let us listen to Rilke "celebrate" the apple:

Dare to speak what you call apple.
That softness which first condenses
In order, with a softness set up in the taste,

to reach clarity, alertness, transparency,
to become a thing of this place which means
both the sun and the earth—¹⁰

⁸ Anne-Marie de Backer, *Les étoiles de novembre*, p. 16.

⁹ Anne-Marie de Backer, *loc. cit.*, p. 19.

¹⁰ Rilke, *Sonnets à Orphée*, I, no. XIII, in *Les élégies de Duino et les sonnets à Orphée*, translated by Angeloz. Aubier, 1943, p. 167.

Here, the translator found himself confronted with such a condensation of poetry that, with our analytical language, he had to disperse it a little. But the centers of condensation remain. The softness "set up in the taste" concentrates a softness of the world. The fruit that one holds in his hand gives a pledge of its ripeness. Its ripeness is transparent. Ripeness, the time economized for the benefit of one hour. What a lot of promises there are in a single fruit which joins the double sign of the sunny sky and the patient earth. The poet's garden is a fabulous garden. A past of legends opens a thousand paths to reverie. Avenues of the universe radiate out from the "celebrated" object. The apple celebrated by the poet is the center of a cosmos, a cosmos where the living is good, where one is sure of living. "All the fruits of the apple tree are rising suns," says another poet to "celebrate" the apple.¹¹

In another sonnet to Orpheus, the orange is the center of the world, a center of dynamism which transmits movements; frenzies and exuberances; for the maxim for life which Rilke proposes to us here is "Dance the orange" (*Tanzt die Orange*):

Dance the orange. The warmest countryside,
Project it out from you, that it may radiate ripeness
in the air of its land! . . .¹²

Young girls must be the ones to "dance the orange," being light like perfumes. Perfumes! memories of the native atmosphere.

For Rilke, the apple and the orange are, as he says of the rose, "inexhaustible objects."¹³ "Inexhaustible object" is truly the sign of the object that the poet's reverie makes emerge from its objective inertia! The poetic reverie is always new before the object to which it attaches itself. From one reverie to the next, the object is no longer the same; it renews itself and this renewing is a renewal of the dreamer. Angeloz gives an extensive commentary of the sonnet which "celebrates" the orange.¹⁴ He situates it under the influence of Paul Valéry's *The Soul and the Dance* (the dancing lady is "the pure act of metamorphoses"); also under the influ-

¹¹ Alain Bosquet, *Premier Testament*, p. 26.

¹² *Sonnets I*, no. XV, translated by Angeloz, p. 171.

¹³ *Sonnets II*, no. VI, *loc. cit.*, p. 205.

¹⁴ Rilke, *loc. cit.*, p. 226.

ence of passages André Gide wrote in *Fruits of the Earth* on "The round of the pomegranate."

In spite of an inopportune point, the pomegranate, like the apple, like the orange, is round.

The beauty (*beauté*, f.) of the fruit is rounder the more it is sure of its feminine powers. What a reinforcement of pleasure for us when we dream all these reveries in *anima*!

At any rate, when one reads such poems, he feels himself in a state of *open symbolism*. Immobile heraldry can only retain antiquated aesthetic values. To dream of them well, it would be necessary to be unfaithful to the emblems. In front of the flower of fruit, the poet returns us to the birth of a happiness. And there precisely, Rilke finds "the happiness of eternal childhood":

See the flowers, the faithful of the earth
He who would carry them away into the
intimacy of sleep and would sleep
deeply with things—: O how light he would return
different in the face of a different day, from
the common depth.¹⁵

For the great renewing, it would doubtless be necessary to carry the flowers away into our dreams of the night. But the poet shows us that flowers are already coordinating generalized images in reverie. Not simply perceptual images, colors and fragrances, but images of man, of the delicacies of feeling, of warmth of memory, of temptations to make an offering, everything that can flower in a human soul.

Faced with this extravagance of fruits which invites us to taste the world, faced with those World-Fruits which solicit our reveries, how is it possible not to affirm that the man of reverie is cosmically happy. A type of happiness corresponds to each image. You cannot say of the man of reverie that he is "thrown to the world." For him the world is all welcome, and he himself is the principle of welcome. The man of reverie bathes in the happiness of dreaming the world, bathes in the well-being of a happy world.

¹⁵ *Sonnets à Orphée*, II, no. XIV, *loc. cit.*, p. 221.

The dreamer is the double consciousness of his well-being and of the happy world. His *cogito* is not divided into the dialectic of subject and object.

The correlation between the dreamer and his world is a strong correlation. It is this world experienced through reverie which refers most directly back to the being of the solitary man. The solitary man directly possesses the worlds which he dreams. It is necessary not to dream if one is to doubt the worlds of reverie; it is necessary to come out of the reverie. The man of reverie and the world of his reverie are as close as possible; they are touching; they interpenetrate. They are on the same plane of being; if the being of man must be linked to the being of the world, the *cogito* of reverie will be expressed in the following manner: I dream the world, therefore, the world exists as I dream it.

Here there appears a privilege of poetic reverie. It seems that in dreaming in such solitude we can touch only a world so singular that it is foreign to every other dreamer. But the isolation is not so great, and the deepest, most particular reveries are often communicable. At least, there are families of dreamers whose reveries grow firm, whose reveries deepen the being which receives them. And thus it is that great poets teach us to dream. They nourish us with images with which we can concentrate our reveries of repose. They present us with their psychotropic images by which we animate an awakened oneirism. In such encounters, a Poetics of Reverie becomes conscious of its tasks: causing consolidations of imagined worlds, developing the audacity of constructive reverie, affirming itself in a dreamer's clear consciousness, coordinating liberties, finding some true thing in all the indisciplines of language, opening all the prisons of the being so that the human possesses all becomings. Those are just so many often contradictory tasks lying between what concentrates the being and what exalts it.

V

Of course, the Poetics of Reverie which we are outlining is in no way a Poetics of Poetry. The documentation on the awakened oneirism with which reverie provides us must be worked on—often worked on at length—by the poet in order to take on the

dignity of poems. But, in the end, those documents formed by reverie are the most propitious matter to fashion into poems.

For those of us who are not poets, it is one of the access routes to poetry. Poets help us channel the flowing substance of our dreams (*songes*) and maintain it in a movement which adheres to laws. The poet retains the consciousness of dreaming distinctly enough to manage the task of writing his reverie. What a promotion of being it is to make a work out of a reverie, to be an author in reverie itself!

What relief is given to our language by a poetic image! If we could speak his high language and rise with the poet into that solitude of the speaking being who gives a new sense to the words of the tribe, we would be in a realm which is not entered by the active man for whom the man of reverie "is nothing but a dreamer" and for whom the world of reverie "is only a dream."

Of what importance to us, the dream (*songe*) philosopher, are those denials of the man coming back after his dream (*rêve*) to objects and men! The reverie *has been* a real state in spite of the illusions denounced after the event. And I am sure that I was the dreamer. I was there when all those beautiful things were present in my reverie. Those illusions were beautiful, and therefore beneficial. The poetic expression gained in the reverie adds to the richness of the language. Of course, if one analyzes the illusions by means of concepts, they will disperse at the first impact. But are there still, in this century, professors of rhetoric who analyze poems with ideas?

In any case, by looking a little, a psychologist always finds a reverie beneath a poem. Is it the poet's reverie? One is never sure, but by loving the poem, he sets about giving it oneiric roots, and thus it is that poetry nourishes within us reveries which we have not been able to express.

The fact will always remain that reverie is an original peace. Poets know it. Poets tell it to us. By a poem's exploit, reverie goes from a nirvana to poetic peace. In a book on Stefan George, Henry Benrath wrote: "Every creation springs from a sort of psychic nirvana."¹⁶ It is through reverie, in an awakened oneirism,

¹⁶ Henry Benrath, *Stefan George*, p. 27.

without going as far as nirvana, that many poets feel the forces of production fall into place. Reverie is that simple state where the work takes on its convictions by itself without being tormented by censorship. And thus it is that for many writers and poets the liberty of reverie opens paths to the work: "It is a bizarre disposition of my mind," writes Julien Green, "to believe a thing only if I have dreamed it. By believing, I do not mean simply possessing a certainty, but retaining it within oneself in such a way that the being finds itself modified because of it."¹⁷ What a beautiful text for a philosophy of reverie is the one which says that the dream coordinates life, prepares beliefs for a lifetime.

The poet Gilbert Trollet entitles one of his poems "Everything is Dreamed First" and he writes:

I wait. Everything is repose. Then innervated future
You are image within me. Everything is dreamed first.¹⁸

Thus creative reverie animates the nerves of the future. Nerve waves run along the lines of images shaped by reveries.¹⁹

In a passage from *The Antiquary*, Henri Bosco gives us a beautiful document which ought to help us prove that reverie is the *materia prima* of a literary work. The forms taken from the real need to be inflated with oneiric matter. The writer shows us the cooperation of the psychic reality function with the function of the unreal. In Bosco's novel, a character is speaking, but when a writer reaches that depth and lucidity at the same time, one can make no mistake about the intimacy of the confidence: "No doubt that in that singular time of my youth, what I was living, I thought I was dreaming and what I was dreaming, I thought I was living it. . . . Very often, those two worlds (of the real and the dream) interpenetrated and, without my knowing it, created a third equivocal world for me between reality and

¹⁷ Julien Green, *L'aube vermeille*, 1950, p. 73. The psychiatrist J. H. Van den Berg took the Green quotation as an exergue for a study of Robert Desoille, *Evolution psychiatrique*, no. 1, 1952.

¹⁸ Gilbert Trollet, *La bonne fortune*, p. 61.

¹⁹ In going beyond all human destiny, a visionary like Blake could say: "Everything which exists today was imagined long ago." And it is Paul Eluard who refers back to this absolute of the imagination (Paul Eluard, *Sentiers . . .*, p. 46).

dream (*songe*). Sometimes the most evident reality would melt into the mists there while a strangely bizarre fiction would illuminate my mind and make it marvelously subtle and lucid. Then the vague mental images would condense in such a way that one would have thought it possible to touch them with his finger. Tangible objects, on the other hand, would become phantoms of themselves, and I wouldn't be far from believing that one could pass through them as easily as he cuts through walls when he is walking around in dreams. When everything was back in order, I would get no other indication of it than a sudden and extraordinary faculty for loving noises, voices, fragrances, movements, colors and forms, which all of a sudden became perceptible in another way and yet with a familiar presence which delighted me." ²⁰

What an invitation to dream what one sees and to dream what one is. The dreamer's *cogito* moves off and goes to lend its being to things, to noises and to fragrances. Who is existing? What a relaxation for our own existence!

In order to have the sedative benefits of such a passage, it is necessary to read it *in slow reading*. We *understand* it too quickly (the writer is so clear!). We forget to dream it as it has been dreamed. In dreaming now, in a slow reading, we are going to believe in it, we are going to profit from it as from a gift of youth, to put our reverie youth into it, for we too, in the past, thought we were living what we were dreaming. . . . If we accept the hypnotic action of the poet's passage, our dreaming being will be returned to us from distant memory. A sort of *psychological memory*, calling an ancient Psyche back to life, calling back the very being of the dreamer we were, sustains our reading reverie. The book has just spoken to us of ourselves.

VI

The psychiatrist has doubtless encountered the phantomalization of familiar objects in numerous patients. But in his objective relationships, the psychiatrist, unlike the writer, does not help us make the phantoms *our* phantoms. Taken from the documents of

²⁰ Henri Bosco, *L'antiquaire*, p. 143.

the analysts, phantoms are only *hardened mists* offered to *perception*. Having named them, the analyst does not have to describe to us how these phantoms participate in our imagination through their intimate substance. On the contrary, the phantoms which take form in the writer's reverie are our intercessors to teach us to sojourn in the double life, at the sensitized frontier between the real and the imaginary.

A *poetic* force leads these phantoms of reverie. This poetic force animates all the senses; reverie becomes polysensorial. From the poetic passage, we receive a renewal of the joy of perceiving, a subtlety of all the senses—a subtlety which bears the privilege of a perception from one sense to another, in a sort of aroused Baudelarian correspondence. Awakening and no longer soporific correspondences. Ah! how a passage which pleases us can make us live! Thus in reading Bosco, one learns that the poorest objects are sachets of perfume, that, at certain times, internal lights render opaque bodies translucent, that every sonority is a voice. How the cup from which one drank as a child rings! From all over, coming from all objects, an intimacy lays siege to us. Yes, truly we dream while reading. The reverie which works poetically maintains us in an intimate space which does not stop at any frontier—a space uniting the intimacy of our being which dreams with the intimacy of the beings which we dream. It is within these composite intimacies that a poetics of reverie is coordinated. The whole being of the world is amassed poetically around the *cogito* of the dreamer.

On the contrary, active life, the life given animation by the reality function is a fragmented life, fragmenting outside us and within us. It rejects us to the exterior of all things. Then we are always *outside*. Always opposite things, opposite the world, opposite men with their mottled humanity. Except in the great days of true loves, except in the times of Novalis' *Umarmung*, a man is a surface for man. Man hides his depths. He becomes, as in Carlyle's parody, the consciousness of his clothes. His *cogito* assures his existence only within a mode of existence. And thus through artificial doubts, doubts in which—if it dare be said—he does not believe, he establishes himself as a thinker.

The dreamer's *cogito* does not follow such complicated pre-

ambles. It is easy; it is sincere; it is linked very naturally to its complementary object. Good things, soft things offer themselves in complete innocence to the innocent dreamer. And the dreams (*songes*) accumulate in front of a familiar object. The object is then the reverie companion of the dreamer. Easy certainties come to enrich the dreamer. A communication of being develops in both directions between the dreamer and his world. A great dreamer of objects like Jean Follain knows those hours when reverie becomes animated in an undulating ontology. An ontology with two united poles reverberates its certainties. The dreamer would be too much alone if the familiar object did not welcome his reverie. Jean Follain writes:

In the closed up house
he focuses on an object in the evening
and plays that game of existing.²¹

In "that game of existing" how well the poet plays! He indicates his existence to the object on the table, to an infinitesimal detail which gives existence to a thing:

The least crack
in a windowpane or a bowl
can bring back the felicity of a great memory
the naked objects
show their fine line
sparkle all of a sudden
in the sun
but lost in the night
gorge themselves as well on hours
long
or short.²²

What a poem of tranquility! Say it slowly; there will descend within you an *object time*. How the object we dream helps us forget time and be at peace with ourselves! Alone "in the shut up house" with an object chosen to be a companion in solitude what assurance we have of being in simple existence! There will come

²¹ Jean Follain, *Territoires*, p. 70.

²² Jean Follain, *loc. cit.*, p. 15.

other reveries which, like those of a painter who likes to live the object in its ever particular appearances, will be able to return the dreamer to the picturesque life, other reveries too which will come from very distant memories. But an attraction to a completely simple presence calls the object dreamer to a sub-human existence. The eyes of Bérénice's ass gave Maurice Barrès such dreams (*songes*). But the sensitivity of the dreamers of looking (*réveurs du regard*) is so great that everything which looks comes (up) to the level of the human. An inanimate object opens itself to the greatest dreams (*songes*). The sub-human reverie which equalizes the dreamer and the object becomes a sub-living reverie. To live this non-life is to carry to extremes "the game of existing" where Follain leads us on the gentle slope of his poems.

Object reveries sensitized to that extent lead us to reverberate to the object drama suggested to us by the poet:

When there falls from the hands of the serving girl
the pale round plate
the color of the clouds
the pieces must be picked up
while the chandelier trembles
in the masters' dining room.²³

That it is pale and round, that it is the color of the clouds, in the prestige of these simple words poetically united, the plate takes on a poetic existence. It is not described, and yet whoever dreams a little will not confuse it with any other. For me it is the Jean Follain plate. Such a poem could be a test of the adherence of ordinary life to poetry. What solidarity exists between the beings of that house! With what human pity the poet can inspire the chandelier who trembles at the death of a plate! What a magnetic field there is between the servant and the masters, between the plate and the crystal of the chandelier for measuring the humanity of the beings of the house, of all the beings, men and things. Helped by the poet, how well we awaken ourselves from the sleep of indifference! Yes, how can we remain indifferent in front of such an object? Why look farther when we can dream on the clouds of the sky by contemplating a plate?

²³ Jean Follain, *loc. cit.*, p. 30; this poem is entitled "The Plate."

In dreaming before an inert object, a poet will always find a drama of life and non-life:

I am a gray pebble; I have no other titles
I dream while hardening the dreams of my choice.²⁴

It is up to the reader to attach his preamble of sorrows to this poem, to relive all the petty sorrows which make up the gray look, all the troubles which make a heart of stone. In this poem from the *Premier Testament*, the poet calls us to the courage which hardens life. Besides, Alain Bosquet knows that to tell man's whole being, it is necessary to exist as the stone and the wind:

It is an honor to be the wind
It is a happiness to be the stone.²⁵

But are there "still lifes" for a dreamer of things? Can things which have been human be indifferent? Don't things which have been named come back to life in the reverie on their name? Everything depends upon the dreaming sensitivity of the dreamer. Chesterton writes: "Dead things have such a power for taking over the living mind that I wonder if it is possible for anyone to read the catalogue of an auction without coming across things which, when abruptly recognized, would make elementary tears flow." ²⁶

Only reverie can awaken such a sensitivity. Dispersed at auction, offered to any taker, won't each gentle thing find its dreamer? A good writer from Champagne, the Trojan Grosley, said that his grandmother, when she did not know how to answer his childhood questions, would add: "Go on with you, when you're big, you will see that there are a lot of things in a *chosier*."

But is our *chosier* really full? Isn't it rather encumbered with objects which do not bear witness to our intimacy? Our glass-doored whatnots are not really *chosières* in the style of the grandmother from Champagne. Whenever someone curious comes into the parlor we exhibit our curios. Curios! just so many objects which do not speak their names immediately. We want them to

²⁴ Alain Bosquet, *Premier Testament*. Paris, Gallimard, p. 28.

²⁵ *Loc. cit.*, p. 52.

²⁶ G. K. Chesterton, *La vie de Robert Browning*, translation, p. 66.

be rare. They are samples of unknown universes. One must have "culture" in order to extricate himself from the middle of this bric-a-brac of sampled universes. To keep company with objects, there must not be too many. One does not dream well, in beneficial reveries, before dispersed objects. The object reverie is a faithfulness to the familiar object. The dreamer's faithfulness to his object is the condition for intimate reverie. The reverie maintains the familiarity.

A German author could somehow say: "Each new object, well considered, opens a new organ within us." (*Jeder neue Gegenstand, wohl beschaut, schliesst ein neues Organ in uns auf*). Things do not go so fast. It is necessary to dream a great deal in front of an object for the object to bring about within us a sort of oneiric organ. The objects privileged by reverie become the direct complements of the dreamer's *cogito*. They value the dreamer; they hold the dreamer. In the intimacy of the dreamer, then, they are the organs of reverie. We are not available for dreaming no matter what. If our object reveries are deep, they occur in the harmony between our oneiric organs and our *chosier*. Thus our *chosier* is precious to us, oneirically precious since it gives us the benefits of *attached reveries*. In such reveries, the dreamer recognizes himself as a dreaming subject. What a proof of being it is to recover both our I-dreamer (*moi-rêveur*) and the very object which is welcoming our reverie in a faithfulness of reverie. Those are connections of existences which one could not find in the meditation upon the nocturnal dream. The reverie dreamer's diffuse *cogito* receives from the objects of its reverie a tranquil confirmation of its existence.

VII

Philosophers of the strong ontology who overtake being in its totality and keep it integrally even in describing the most fleeting modes will quickly denounce this dispersed ontology which attaches itself to details, perhaps to accidents and which believes it is multiplying its proofs by multiplying its points of view.

But in the course of our life as a philosopher, we have insisted upon choosing subjects for our studies according to our capacities. And a philosophical study of reverie attracts us by its character

which is both simple and well defined. Reverie is a manifest psychic activity. It contributes documentation on differences in the *tonality of the being*. At the level of the tonality of being a differential ontology can then be proposed. The dreamer's *cogito* is less lively than the thinker's *cogito*. The dreamer's *cogito* is less sure than the philosopher's *cogito*. The dreamer's being is a diffuse being. But on the other hand, this diffuse being is the being of a diffusion. It escapes the punctualization of the *hic* and of the *nunc*. The dreamer's being invades what it touches, diffuses into the world. Thanks to shadows, the intermediary region which separates man from the world is a full region, of a light density fullness. This intermediary region deadens the dialectic between being and non-being. The imagination does not know non-being. Its whole being can easily pass for a non-being in the eyes of the man at work, under the pen of the strong ontology metaphysician. But, on the other hand, the philosopher who gives himself enough solitude to enter the region of shadows bathes in an atmosphere without obstacles where no being says no. He lives by his reverie in a world homogenous with his being, with his demi-being. The man of reverie is always in space which has volume. Truly inhabiting the whole volume of his space, the man of reverie is from anywhere in his world, in an *inside* which has no *outside*. It is not without reason that people commonly say that the dreamer is *plunged* in his reverie. The world no longer poses any opposition to him. The I no longer opposes itself to the world. In reverie there is no more non-I. In reverie, the *no* no longer has any function: everything is welcome.

A philosopher enamored of the history of philosophy could say that the space in which the dreamer is plunged is a "plastic mediator" between man and the universe. It seems that in the intermediary world where reverie and reality mingle, a plasticity of man and his world is realized without one ever needing to know where the principle of this double malleability lies. This characteristic of reverie is so true that one can say, conversely, that where there is malleability, there is reverie. In solitude, it is enough that a dough be offered to our fingers to set us dreaming.²⁷

²⁷ Cf. *La terre et les rêveries de la volonté*, ed. Corti, chap. IV.

Contrary to reverie, the nocturnal dream hardly knows this soft plasticity. Its space is encumbered with solids—and solids always have a reserve of sure hostility. They keep their forms and when a form appears, it is necessary to *think*, it is necessary to name. In the nocturnal dream, the dreamer suffers from a hard geometry. It is in the nocturnal dream that a pointed object wounds us as soon as we see it. In the nightmares of the night, objects are evil. A psychoanalysis which would work on the two shores, on the objective and the subjective sides, would recognize that the evil objects help us, one might say, to succeed in our "abortive acts." Our nightmares are often coordinations of abortive acts. They often make us live abortive lives. And how is it that psychoanalysis, so abundant in studies of dream-desire, has devoted so little space to the study of dream-remorse? The melancholy of certain of our reveries does not descend as far as those experienced, re-experienced misfortunes which a nocturnal dreamer can always dread reliving.

We cannot keep from ceaselessly renewing our efforts to indicate the difference between the night dream and the reverie of an alert consciousness. We are well aware that, by eliminating from our inquiries literary works which are inspired by nightmares, we are closing off perspectives directed at the human destiny and, at the same time, that we are depriving ourselves of the literary splendor of apocalyptic worlds. But we had to discard many problems if we wanted to treat the problem of the reverie of an awakened consciousness in all simplicity.

If this problem were clarified, perhaps the oneirism of the day could help us know the night oneirism better.

One would perceive that there are mixed states, reverie-dreams and dream-reveries—reveries which fall into dream and dreams which take on the color of reverie. Robert Desnos has pointed out that our nocturnal dreams are interrupted by simple reveries. In these reveries, our nights find gentleness again.

A wider inquiry than ours into the aesthetics of the oneirism should envisage a study of the artificial Paradises such as they have been described by writers and poets. What a lot of phenomenological ambitions would be necessary to uncover the "I" of different states corresponding to different narcotics! At the very

least, it would be necessary to classify these "I's" in three species: the "I" of sleep—if it exists; the "I" of the narcosis—if it retains any value as individuality; the "I" of reverie, maintained in such vigilance that it can permit itself the happiness of writing.

Who will ever determine the ontological weight of all the imagined "I's"? A poet writes:

This dream (*songe*) in us, is it ours
I go alone and multiplied
am I myself; am I another
are we only imagined.²⁸

Is there an "I" which assumes these multiple "I's"? An "I" of all these "I's" which has the mastery of our whole being, of all our intimate beings? Novalis writes: "Die höchste Aufgabe der Bildung ist, sich seines transzendentalen Selbst zu bemächtigen, das Ich seines Ichs zugleich zu sein."²⁹ If the "I's" vary in tonality of being, where is the dominant "I"? In looking for the "I" of the "I's" won't we find, by dreaming like Novalis, the "I" of the "I," the transcendental "I"?

But what are we looking for in the artificial Paradises—we who are only an armchair psychologist? Dreams or reveries? What are the determinant documents for us? Books, always books. Would the artificial Paradises be Paradises if they were not *written*? For us, as readers, these artificial Paradises are Paradises of reading.

The artificial Paradises were written to be read, with the certainty that the poetic value would provide the means of communication from the author to the reader. It is in order to write that so many poets have tried to live the reveries of opium. But who will tell us the respective roles of experience and art? On the subject of Edgar Allan Poe, Edmond Jaloux makes a penetrating remark. Edgar Allan Poe's opium is an *imagined opium*. Imagined before, reimagined after, but never written during. Who will show us the difference between experienced opium and magnified

²⁸ Leo Libbrecht, "Enchanteur de toi-même" in *Poemes choisis*, Paris, Seghers, p. 43.

²⁹ Novalis, *Schriften*, ed. Minor, 1907, vol. II, p. 117. "The supreme task of culture is to take possession of its transcendental self, to be at once the I of its I."

opium? We, the readers who do not wish to know, but wish to dream, we must follow the ascension which goes from the experience to the poem. "The power of man's imagination," concludes Edmond Jaloux, "is greater than all the poisons."³⁰ Edmond Jaloux says further in speaking of Edgar Allan Poe: "So he lends the poppy one of the most striking peculiarities of his own spirituality."³¹

But there too, can't the man who lives the psychotropic images find the impulsions of the psychotropic substance in them? The beauty of images adds to their effectiveness. The multiplicity of images relays the uniformity of the cause. A poet does not hesitate to give himself over entirely to the effectiveness of the image. Henri Michaux writes: "No need for opium. Everything is a drug for the man who chooses to live on the other side."³²

And what is a beautiful poem if not a touched up madness? A little poetic order imposed upon aberrant images? The maintenance of an intelligent sobriety in the utilization—intensive all the same—of imaginary drugs. Reveries, mad reveries lead life.

³⁰ Edmond Jaloux, *Edgar Poe et les femmes*. (Geneva, 1943), Ed. du Milieu du Monde, p. 125.

³¹ *Loc. cit.*, p. 129.

³² Henri Michaux, *Plume*, p. 68.

The Psychoanalysis of Fire



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(PSYCHOANALYSIS
OF FIRE)

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Preface



Literary critics have been aware of the great importance of Bachelard's work for many years, but this is the first time *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* has been available in English. Professor Ross's lucid and eloquent translation gives an excellent sense of the original, which has a subversive wit reminding the English reader of the prose style of the nineteenth-century Samuel Butler. I speak of literary critics, because, as its conclusion makes clear, this is the area in which *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* lies, despite its title and the numerous references to its author's earlier scientific works. Nearly a century ago Thomas Huxley, discussing the limitations of the scientific method, remarked: "I cannot conceive how the phenomena of consciousness, as such, are to be brought within the bounds of physical science." He did not mean that no science of psychology would ever be possible, but that the process of perception could not nullify itself, so to speak, by becoming objective to itself. Sciences are placed at various angles to the perceiving process, as physics is at an angle to the primitive categories of hot, cold, moist and dry, or to the primitive perception of red and blue. Psychology occupies another angle of perception, and Bachelard has begun to isolate still another, a basis for a systematic development of the critical study of the arts.

The scientific procedure normally begins empirically, with reality thought of first of all as "out there," after which it gradually

becomes incorporated into an intellectual construct. The arts, on the other hand, begin with a constructing power, generally called imagination, and embody it in forms with a clarity of communication that makes them objects of perception to others. The units of this constructing power are analogy and identity, which appear in literature as the figures of simile and metaphor. To the imagination, fire is not a separable datum of experience: it is already linked by analogy and identity with a dozen other aspects of experience. Its heat is analogous to the internal heat we feel as warm-blooded animals; its sparks are analogous to seeds, the units of life; its flickering movement is analogous to vitality; its flames are phallic symbols, providing a further analogy to the sexual act, as the ambiguity of the word "consummation" indicates; its transforming power is analogous to purgation. These links of analogy are so adhesive that they spread all over the universe: we see in this book, as often elsewhere, how the pursuit of one mythical complex tends to absorb all other myths into it. The reader should consult Bachelard's books on the other three elements for a corrective.

It is possible to take up a construct based on such analogies and correspondences, and then apply it to the external world as a key to the explanation of its phenomena. The typical examples of such constructs are in occultism, though they exist also in the Ptolemaic cosmology of the Middle Ages, with its correspondences of the seven metals, seven planets, seven days of the week, and the like. From one point of view, a somewhat narrow one, such constructs are both bastard art and bastard science, combining the limitations of the two with the genuine achievements of neither. A more liberal view might see them rather as helping to expand the horizons of both. We notice that poetry shows a strong affinity for constructs based on analogy and symmetry, Ptolemaic in Dante, occult in the Romantics and their successors down to Yeats. For the poet, the elements will always be earth, air, fire and water; for the poet, the sun will always rise and set as it moves around the earth. It is only in science where such myths are a nuisance; yet even in science the tendency to make them is extraordinarily persistent. Almost every major group of discoveries in science brings with it a great wave of speculative cosmologies based on analogies to them. Bachelard gives many quaint examples from eighteenth-century science, along with such analogy-myths as "spontaneous combustion." He could have gone on with the nineteenth-century speculations about "odoric force"

and the vitalist philosophies that followed early Darwinism, both of them pure fire-myths.

The proper place for all such analogy-making is literature, or, in earlier times, the mythology which eventually develops into literature. Bachelard does not explicitly say that mythology, considered as a body of stories, is potential literature, but the whole trend of his book is towards that principle. He quotes some of the myths about the origin of fire which include the theme of a woman's hiding fire in her belly. This feat is known to be anatomically impossible by those who are telling and listening to the story, so why should it be told? We recall that many similar stories are told about water, that there are more highly developed stories of the Jonah type, where a human being disappears into a monstrous belly, that the conception of a hidden interior world of fire is the basis of Dante's *Inferno*—in short, the story illustrates a structural principle of story-telling, and its study eventually falls into the area of literary criticism.

Centuries ago it was believed that the four possible combinations of the four "principles," hot, cold, moist and dry, produced, in the organic world, the four humors, and, in the inorganic world, the four elements. The hot and dry combination produced cholera and fire, the hot and moist blood and air, the cold and moist phlegm and water, the cold and dry melancholy and earth. The four elements are not a conception of much use to modern chemistry—that is, they are not the elements of nature. But, as Bachelard's book and its companion works show, and as an abundance of literature down to Eliot's *Quartets* also shows, earth, air, water and fire are still the four elements of imaginative experience, and always will be. Similarly, the four humors are not a conception of any use to modern medicine; they are not the constituents of human temperament. But they may be the elements of imaginative perception, and Bachelard's analysis of Hoffmann's fire-images is linked to a suggestion that poets may be "humors" not in their bodies or characters but in their poetry, a poetic temperament being reflected in a preference for the corresponding element.

What Bachelard calls a "complex" might better be called something else, to avoid confusion with the purely psychological complexes of actual life. I should call it a myth, because to me a myth is a structural principle in literature. For example, there is, in Bachelard's sense, a literary Oedipus complex: it appears in every comedy

second this fire could devour me like a vine twig, like a wisp of straw.' And she would approach the open apertures through which the liquid flames could be seen shining more brightly than summer's noon-day sun and coiling around the clay pots in which was melting the still shapeless metal that the workers, stationed about the furnace behind the firescreens, were scooping up with an iron rod in order to give it shape with the breath from their lips."

It can be seen that in the most varied circumstances the call of the funeral pyre remains a fundamental poetic theme. It no longer corresponds in modern life to any real-life observation. It does stir our emotions nonetheless. From Victor Hugo to Henri de Régnier, the funeral pyre of Hercules continues, like a natural symbol, to portray to us the destiny of mankind. That which is purely artificial insofar as objective knowledge is concerned remains then profoundly real and active for unconscious reveries. The dream is stronger than experience.

Psychoanalysis and Prehistory:

The Novalis Complex



Psychoanalysis has already been long engaged in the study of legends and mythologies. It has prepared for studies of this kind a working stock of explanations that are sufficiently rich to throw light upon the legends surrounding the conquest of fire. But what psychoanalysis has not yet completely systematized—although the works of C. G. Jung have cast a bright light upon this point—is the study of scientific explanations, of objective explanations, which purport to account for the discoveries of prehistoric man. In this chapter we shall bring together and complete the observations of C. G. Jung by calling attention to the weakness of rational explanations.

In the first place we must criticize the modern scientific explanations which seem to us quite inappropriate for prehistoric discoveries. These scientific explanations originate in an arid and cursory rationalism which claims to be profiting by recurring factual evidence; but which is, however, quite unrelated to the *psychological* conditions of the primitive discoveries. There is then a place, we feel, for an indirect and secondary psychoanalysis which would constantly seek the unconscious under the conscious, the subjective value under the objective evidence,

the reverie beneath the experiment. One can study only what one has first dreamed about. Science is formed rather on a reverie than on an experiment, and it takes a good many experiments to dispel the mists of the dream. It should be noted particularly that the same action working on the same substance to give the same objective result does not have the same objective meaning in mentalities as different as those of the primitive man and the educated modern man. For primitive man thought is a centralized reverie; for the educated modern man reverie is a loose form of thought. The dynamic meaning is completely opposite in the two cases.

For example, it is a leitmotiv of the rationalist explanation that the first men produced fire by the rubbing together of two pieces of dry wood. But the *objective* reasons that are invoked to explain how men are supposed to have been led to imagine this procedure are very weak. These writers often do not even venture to try and throw light upon the psychology of this first discovery. Among the few authors who do concern themselves with an explanation, most recall that forest fires are produced by the "rubbing together" of branches in summer. They are applying just that recurrent rationalism that we wish to expose. They are judging by inference from a known science without seeking to recapture the conditions of the primitive observation. Nowadays, when people cannot discover another cause of a forest fire, they end by thinking that the unknown cause may be the action of rubbing. But in fact we can say that *the phenomenon in its natural aspect has never been observed*. If one were to observe it, it would not be, properly speaking, a rubbing action that one would think of if one approached the phenomenon from an ingenuous standpoint. One would think rather of a *shock*; one would find nothing that might suggest a phenomenon which is so prepared, long-lasting and progressive as the rubbing which is to cause the igniting of the wood. We arrive, then, at this critical conclusion: none of the practices based on rubbing that are used by primitive peoples to produce fire can be directly suggested by a phenomenon of nature.

These difficulties had not escaped Schlegel. Without putting

forward any solution, he had seen quite clearly that the problem set forth in rational terms did not correspond to the psychological possibilities of primitive man.¹

The mere invention of fire, the cornerstone of the whole cultural edifice, as the fable of Prometheus so well expresses it, presents insurmountable difficulties in our conjectures about man in a crude state of civilization. For us nothing is more common than fire; but man could have wandered in the desert for millions of years without once having seen fire on earthly soil. Let us grant him an erupting volcano, a forest set on fire by lightning: hardened in his nakedness against the rigors of the seasons, would he have run forward at once to warm himself? Would he not rather have taken flight? The sight of fire frightens most animals, except those which through a domesticated life have become accustomed to it . . . Even after having experienced the beneficent effect of a fire offered him by nature, how would he have been able to keep it going? Once extinguished, how would he have been able to rekindle it? Even if two pieces of dry wood had fallen for the first time into the hands of the savage, what previous experience would indicate to him that they could be ignited by a long-continued and rapid rubbing action?

On the other hand, if a rational and objective explanation is really quite unsatisfactory in accounting for a discovery made by a primitive mind, a psychoanalytical explanation, however overbold it may seem, must in the end be the true psychological explanation.

In the first place it must be recognized that rubbing is a highly sexualized experience. Merely by glancing through the psychological documents amassed by classical psychoanalysis one will have no difficulty in convincing oneself of this fact. Secondly, one need only make a systematic study of the items of information gained by a special psychoanalysis of the impressions pertaining to heat, to be convinced that the *objective* attempt to produce fire by rubbing is suggested by entirely intimate experiences. In any case, it is in this direction that the circuit between the phenomenon of fire and its reproduction is the shortest. The love act is the first scientific hypothesis about

the objective reproduction of fire. Prometheus is a vigorous lover rather than an intelligent philosopher, and the vengeance of the gods is the vengeance of a jealous husband.

As soon as one has formulated this psychoanalytical observation, a great number of legends and customs are easily explained; curious expressions that have been unconsciously mingled with rational explanations appear in a new light. Thus Max Muller, who brought such a penetrating psychological intuition to the study of human origins, comes quite close to the psychoanalytical intuition without, however, actually discerning it.² "There were so many things to relate about fire!" And here then is the first: "It was the son of two pieces of wood." Why the *son*? Who is fascinated by this genetic point of view? Primitive man or Max Muller? In what way is such an image clearest? Is it clear objectively or subjectively? Where is the experience which throws light upon it? Is it the objective experience of the rubbing together of two pieces of wood or is it the intimate experience of a more gentle, more caressing kind of rubbing which excites the body of the beloved? One has only to ask these questions in order to disclose the source of the conviction which believes that fire is the son of wood.

Should we be surprised that this impure fire, the fruit of a secret love, should already be marked almost from its inception with the Oedipus complex? The expression of Max Muller is revealing in this regard: the second thing to be related about primitive fire was "how, no sooner had it been born, than it devoured its father and mother, that is to say the two pieces of wood from which it had sprung." Never has the Oedipus complex been better and more completely revealed: if you lack fire, this *burning* failure will gnaw at your heart, the fire will remain within you. If you produce fire, the sphinx itself will consume you. Love is but a fire that is to be transmitted. Fire is but a love whose secret is to be detected.

Since Max Muller naturally was not able to profit by the new knowledge provided by the psychological revolution of the Freudian era, certain inconsistencies may be noted even in his linguistic thesis. He wrote, for example: "And when primitive

man *pictured* fire and named it what must have happened? He could name it only according to what it did; it was that which consumed and that which gave light." One should expect then in following the *objective* explanation of Max Muller that it should be the *visual* attributes that are used to designate a phenomenon thought of by primitive man as something *visible*, always seen before being touched. But this is not the case: for according to Max Muller "it was particularly the rapid movement of the fire that caught man's attention." And thus it was called "the quick, the ag-ile, Ag-nis, ig-nis." This designation by an associated phenomenon that is objectively indirect and inconstant cannot fail to appear quite artificial. On the other hand the psychoanalytical explanation straightens everything out. Yes, fire is the Ag-nis, the Ag-ile, but what is originally agile is the *human* cause prior to the produced phenomenon; it is the hand which pushes the wooden stick through the groove, thereby imitating more intimate caresses. Before being the son of wood, fire is the son of man.

The generally accepted method of throwing light upon the psychology of prehistoric man is to study still existing primitive peoples. But for a psychoanalysis of objective knowledge there are other instances of *primitiveness* which seem to us to be ultimately more pertinent. Indeed, we need only consider a *new* phenomenon to verify the difficulty of adopting a truly adequate objective attitude. It seems that the *unknown* aspect of the phenomenon is actively and positively opposed to its objectivation. To the *unknown* aspect it is not so much ignorance which corresponds as error, and error that is most heavily overlaid with subjective defects. In order to construct a psychology of *primitiveness* it is sufficient, then, to consider an essentially new piece of scientific knowledge and to follow the reactions of non-scientific, ill-educated minds that are ignorant of the methods of effective scientific discovery. The science of electricity in the eighteenth century offers us in this respect an indispensable mine of psychological observations. It should be particularly noted that *electrical fire*, even more perhaps than ordinary fire, which

had then been relegated to the status of a banal phenomenon without psychoanalytical interest, was a *sexualized fire*. Since it is mysterious, it is clearly sexual. Concerning the idea of friction, of which we have just pointed out the obvious primary sexuality, we shall again find applied to electricity all that we have said about fire. Charles Rabiqueau, "Lawyer, engineer, holder of the King's privilege for all his works on Physics and Mechanics," wrote in 1753 a treatise on "The Spectacle of Elementary Fire or A Course in Experimental Electricity" (*Le spectacle du feu élémentaire ou Cours d'électricité expérimentale*). In this work one can see a kind of reciprocal of the psychoanalytical thesis that we are putting forward in this chapter to explain the production of fire by friction. Since friction is the cause of electricity, Rabiqueau will develop an *electrical theory of the sexes* on this theory of friction:

The gentle rubbing separates the parts composed of spirits of air which are opposed to the passage and the fall of a spirituous substance that we call seminal fluid. This electrical friction or rubbing arouses within us a sensation, a tickling through the sharpness of the points of the spirit of fire in proportion as the rarefaction takes place and this spirit of fire is accumulated at the place being rubbed. Then the liquid, unable to maintain the lightness of the spirit of fire accumulated in the atmosphere, leaves its place and comes to fall in the womb in which there is also atmosphere: the vagina is merely the pipe leading to the general reservoir formed by the womb. There is in the feminine sex a sexual part. This part is to that sex what the sexual part of man is to the man. This part is subject to a similar rarefaction, tickling and sensation. This same part also participates in the rubbing action. The points of the spirit of fire are felt even more by the feminine sex . . .

The feminine sex is the depository of the tiny human spheres which are in the ovaries. These little spheres are an electrical substance, inert and lifeless; like an unlit candle or an egg ready to receive the spark of life, or the pip of an apple or a seed: or finally, like the flint or match which awaits the spirit of fire . . .

We have perhaps already tired the patience of our reader; but similar texts, which could be extended and multiplied, tell

us quite clearly of the secret preoccupations of a mind which claims to be devoting itself to "pure mechanics." One can see, moreover, that the center of the convictions is not at all the objective experiment. Everything that rubs, that burns, or that electrifies is immediately considered capable of explaining the act of generation.

When the unconscious secret harmonics of rubbing are lacking, when they have a poor resonance in dry and austere souls, immediately the act of rubbing, restored to its purely mechanical aspect, loses its power of explanation. From this point of view one could perhaps account for, psychoanalytically, the protracted resistance encountered by the kinetic theory of heat. This theory, very clear to the conscious understanding, entirely adequate for a mind that is sincerely positivistic, appears to be lacking in depth—we should really say lacking in unconscious satisfaction—to a prescientific mind. The author of an *Essay on the Cause of Electricity* (*Essai sur la cause de l'électricité*), addressed in a series of letters to G. Watson, reveals in these terms his disillusionment: "I find nothing to be so incorrectly reasoned as the statement that fire is caused by rubbing. It seems to me that one might just as well say that water is caused by the pump."

As for Mme du Châtelet, she does not appear to find in this thesis the slightest enlightenment and is content to admit that fire is a miracle: "It is undoubtedly one of the greatest miracles of Nature that the most violent Fire can be produced in a moment by the striking together of bodies that have the coldest appearance." Thus a fact which is plainly evident to a scientific mind grounded in the teaching of modern energetics and which can understand immediately that the sudden tearing away of a flint particle can lead to its incandescence, is an object of mystery for the prescientific mind of Mme du Châtelet. She needs a substantialist explanation, a *profound* explanation. *Profoundness* is something one hides; it is something one says nothing about. One is always justified in being preoccupied with it.

Our theory would appear less daring if the reader would only free himself from an intransigent utilitarianism and would

cease to imagine prehistoric man as being automatically subject to misfortune and necessity. It is in vain that all travellers tell us about the carefree life of primitive man: we nevertheless continue to shudder at our mental picture of life at the time of the cave man. Perhaps our ancestor was more receptive to pleasure, more conscious of his happiness in proportion as he was less sensitive to suffering. The warm sense of well-being arising from physical love must have been transferred into many primitive experiences. To set fire to the stick by sliding it up and down in the groove in the piece of dry wood takes time and patience. But this work must have been very agreeable to an individual whose reverie was wholly sexual. It was perhaps while engaged in this gentle task that man learned to sing. In any case it is an obviously rhythmic kind of task, a task which *answers* to the rhythm of the worker, which brings him lovely, multiple resonances: the arm that rubs, the pieces of wood that strike together, the voice that sings, all are united in the same harmony and the same rhythmic increase in energy; everything converges on to the one hope, on to an objective whose *value* is known. As soon as one engages in the action of rubbing, one experiences a pleasant objective warmth at the same time that one has the warm impression of an agreeable form of exercise. The rhythms are mutually supporting. They are mutually induced and continue through self-induction. If we accepted the psychological principles of rhythm analysis of M. Pinheiro dos Santos, who advises us to give *temporal reality* only to that which vibrates, we would understand immediately the value of the vital dynamism and of the psychic totality attached to such a rhythmic task. It is really the whole being that is engaged in play. It is in this play rather than in some form of suffering that the primitive being finds self-awareness, which in the first place is self-confidence.

The way we imagine is often more instructive than what we imagine. One has only to read the account of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre to be struck by the readiness—and consequently by the sympathy—with which this writer “understands” the primitive method of obtaining fire by friction. Lost in the forest with Virginie, Paul wishes to give to his companion the “prickly

cabbage” which is at the top of a young palmetto or cabbage palm. But the tree defies the axe, and Paul has no knife! Paul thinks of setting fire to the base of the tree, but he has no tinder box. Moreover, on this rock-covered island there are no flint-stones to be found. We note these rapid sentences full of ideas and second thoughts which denote that the various methods are being discarded as unfeasible. These sentences prepare psychoanalytically for the decision: I must resort to the method used by the blacks. This method will reveal itself as being so easy that we are surprised at the hesitations that preceded its adoption.³

With the sharp corner of a stone he made a little hole in a branch of well-dried wood and then placed this branch firmly beneath his feet; then with the cutting edge of this stone he made a point on another branch that was equally dry but of a different kind of wood. He then put this piece of pointed wood into the little hole of the branch that was under his feet and made it rapidly revolve between his hands as one rolls or rotates a beater with which one wishes to whip up chocolate. In a very few moments he caused smoke and sparks to rise up from the point of contact. He gathered dry grasses and other branches and set fire to the foot of the palmetto tree, which, soon after, fell with a great crash. He also made use of the fire to strip off from the cabbage fruit its envelope of long, prickly, fibrous leaves. Virginie and he ate part of this cabbage raw and the other part cooked under the embers and found both equally tasty . . .

One will notice that Bernardin de Saint-Pierre recommends using two pieces of wood of a *different nature*. For a primitive mind this difference is of a sexual order. In his *Voyage en Arcadie* Bernardin de Saint-Pierre will specify quite gratuitously the ivy and the laurel. We should also note that the comparison of the rubbing stick and the beater used to whip up chocolate is found in the *Physics* of the Abbé Noller whose work Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, impelled by his scientific pretensions, used to read. This mixing of his dream and his reading is in itself symptomatic of a rationalization. Moreover, at no time does the writer appear to have seen the illogical elements in his story. An agreeable

fancy carries him along, his unconscious rediscovers the joys of the first fire to be lit in a carefree atmosphere of mutual love.

Furthermore, it is quite easy to establish that the *eurhythmia* of an active rubbing motion, on condition that it be sufficiently gentle and prolonged, brings about a *euphoria*. One has only to wait until the violent acceleration has settled down, until the different rhythms are coordinated, to see the smile and the look of peace return to the face of the worker. This joy cannot be explained objectively. It is the indication of a specific affective power. In this way is explained the joy of rubbing, cleaning, refurbishing, and polishing that could not be adequately explained by the meticulous care taken by certain housewives. Balzac has pointed out in *Gobseck* that the "cold houses" of old maids had some of the shiniest furniture. Psychoanalytically speaking, cleanliness is really a form of uncleanness.

In their parascientific theories, certain minds do not hesitate to accentuate the value given to the act of rubbing by going beyond the stage of solitary thoughts of love consisting wholly of reverie until they reach the circumstances of shared physical love. J.-B. Robinet, whose books went through a great number of editions, wrote in 1766: "The flintstone that is being rubbed in order to make it luminous understands what is being demanded of it, and its brilliance proves its condescension . . . I cannot believe that minerals should do us so much good through their virtues without enjoying the sweet satisfaction, the gentle satisfaction which is the first and greatest reward for beneficence." Opinions that are objectively so absurd must have a deep-rooted psychological cause. Sometimes Robinet breaks off his explanations for fear of "exaggerating." A psychoanalyst would say "for fear of betraying himself." But the exaggeration is already quite obvious. It is a psychological fact that has to be explained. We do not have the right to overlook it, as would a history of science that was systematically devoted to objective results.

To sum up then, we propose, as did C. G. Jung, to seek out systematically the component elements of the Libido in all primitive activities. Indeed, it is not only in art that the Libido is sublimated. It is the source of all the works of *homo faber*.

Someone undoubtedly stated it very well when he defined man as: a hand and a language. But the *useful* gestures must not hide the *agreeable* gestures. The hand is the organ that caresses, just as the voice is the organ that sings. Primitively, caress and work must have been associated. Long tasks are relatively easy tasks. A traveller tells us about primitive men shaping objects on the polishing wheel in a work which might last for two months. The more gentle the retouching instrument, the finer is the polish. In a somewhat paradoxical way we might well state that the age of chipped stone is the age of the tormented stone, whereas the age of the polished stone is the age of the caressed stone. The brutish man breaks the silex or flint, he does not work at it. The man who works at the silex loves the silex, and one does not love stones any differently than one loves women. When we look at an axe of dressed flint, it is impossible to resist the idea that each well-placed facet was obtained by a *reduction* in force, by an inhibited, restrained, directed force, in short, by a psychoanalyzed force. With the polished stone, we pass from the intermittent caress to the continued caress, to the gentle, the enveloping, the rhythmic and seductive movement. In any case, the man who works away with such patience is encouraged both by a memory and by a hope, and it is in the domain of the affective powers that we must look for the secret of his reverie.

The mark of a distinctive ceremony is forever attached to the production of fire by friction. In the fire rituals that were so famous in the Middle Ages and are so universally in evidence among primitive tribes, a return is sometimes made to the initial custom, a fact which seems to prove that the birth of fire is the primary cause of its adoration. In Germania, according to A. Maury, the Nothfeuer or Nodfyr had to be lit by rubbing two pieces of wood together. Chateaubriand gives us a long description of the ceremony of the *new fire* among the Natchez. On the night preceding the ceremony, the fire, which has been burning for a whole year, is allowed to go out. Before dawn appears, the priest slowly rubs two pieces of wood together while pronouncing in a low voice some magic words. When the Sun

appears, the priest speeds up the motion. "At that moment the High Priest utters the sacred 'oah,' fire spurts forth from the wood which has been heated by the friction, the tinder which has been treated with sulphur catches fire . . . The medicine man sets fire to the hoops of reed: the flame winds along following their spiral shapes. Pieces of oak bark are kindled upon the altar, and this new fire then gives a new seed to the extinguished hearths of the village."⁴ Thus this festival among the Natchez, which unites the Sun festival and the harvest festival, is above all a celebration of the *seeding* of the fire. In order that it may have all its force, this seeding must be seized in its first intensity, when it comes fresh from the rubbing tool which causes the fire. The method of rubbing then appears as the *natural* method. Once again it is natural because man accedes to it *through his own nature*. In actual fact, fire was detected within ourselves before it was snatched from the gods.

Frazer gives numerous examples of bonfires that are kindled through friction. Among others the Scottish fires of Beltane were lit by *forced* fire or *need-fire*.⁵ "This was a fire produced exclusively by the rubbing of two pieces of wood against one another. As soon as the first sparks were emitted, they applied a species of agaric which grows on old birch trees and is very combustible. This fire had the appearance of being immediately derived from heaven and manifold were the virtues ascribed to it. They esteemed it . . . a sovereign remedy against malignant diseases, both in men and in cattle . . ." One wonders to what "appearance" Frazer is alluding when he says that *this forced fire descends directly* from heaven. But on this point Frazer's whole system of explanation seems to us to be misdirected. Frazer indeed bases his explanations on *utility*. Thus from the bonfires are taken ashes which go to fertilize the fields of flax, wheat and barley. This first proof introduces a sort of *unconscious rationalization* which misleads a modern reader who is easily convinced of the usefulness of carbonates and other chemical fertilizers. But let us look more closely at how these facts lead us to profound and obscure values. These ashes from the forced fire are given not only to the land which is to yield the harvests, but

are also mixed in with the cattle fodder to make the animals fat. Sometimes they are mixed in so that the cattle will multiply. Now the psychological reason for the custom becomes obvious. Whether an animal is being fed or fields are being fertilized, there is, over and above the evident utility, a more intimate dream, the dream of fertility in its most sexual form. The ashes of the bonfires make fertile both animals and fields, *because* they make women fertile. It is the experience of the flame of love which forms the basis for the objective induction. Once more the explanation by the *useful* must give way to the explanation by the *agreeable*, the rational explanation must give way to the psychoanalytical explanation. When the accent is placed, as we propose to do, on the agreeable value, it must be granted that while the fire is *useful afterwards*, it is already agreeable in its preparation. It is perhaps more enjoyable before than after, like love. At the very least the happiness that results is subordinate to the happiness that is first sought. And if the primitive man is convinced that the bonfire, the originating fire, has all kinds of virtues and that it gives both power and health, it is because he experiences the well-being, the inner and almost invincible strength of the man who is living that decisive moment when the fire is about to shine forth and his desires to be fulfilled.

But we must go even further, it seems, and reverse Frazer's explanation in every detail. For Frazer, the bonfires are ceremonies connected with the death of the vegetation divinities, particularly the forest vegetation. One may then wonder why these gods of vegetation should hold such an enormous place in the primitive mind. What then is the first *human* function of the woods: is it shade; is it the rare and sickly fruit? Is it not rather the fire? And here is the dilemma: do they make fires in order to worship the woods, as Frazer believes, or do they burn the wood in order to worship the fire, as a more profoundly animistic explanation would have it? It seems to us that this latter interpretation casts a good deal of light upon details of the *fire festivals* which remain unexplained in Frazer's interpretation. Thus why does tradition often recommend that bonfires should be lighted by a young girl and a young man together; or by that

man among the inhabitants of the village who was last married? Frazer pictures all the young people "jumping over the glowing embers in order to obtain a good harvest, or in order to make within the year a good marriage, or again in order to avoid attacks of colic." Among these three motives is there not one which for youth is clearly predominant? Why is it "the youngest married woman of the village who is to jump over the fire?" Why, in Ireland, "when a girl jumps three times forwards and backwards over a fire, do they say that she will soon be married, that she will be happy and that she will have a great many children?" Why are certain young people "convinced that the Saint John's fire will not burn them?" Do they not, in order to establish such a strange conviction, have an experience that is more intimate than objective? And how do the Brazilians place "red-hot coals in their mouths without burning themselves?" What then is this initial experience which inspired them with this audacity? Why do the Irish cause "to pass through the fires of the solstice those of their cattle which were sterile?" And this legend of the valley of Lech is very clear also: "When a young man and a young woman jump together over one of these fires without being touched even by the smoke, they say that the young woman will not be a mother during the year because the flames have neither touched her nor made her fertile." She has shown that she had the skill to play with fire without being burnt. Frazer wonders whether one could not attach to this latter belief "the scenes of debauchery in which the Estonians engage on the day of the solstice." And yet, in a book in which he does not hesitate to pile up references, he gives no account of this igneous debauch. Nor does he feel it necessary to give us a circumstantiated account of the fire festival in northern India, a festival "which is accompanied by singing and gestures which are licentious to the point of obscenity."

This last remark indicates certain drawbacks in his methods of explanation. We could have cited a large number of questions which remain unanswered in Frazer's theory but which are easily resolved by the theory of the primitive sexualization of fire. Nothing can make us better understand the inadequacy of

sociological explanations than a parallel reading of Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Jung's *Libido*. Even on an extremely precise point such as the problem of the mistletoe, the insight of the psychoanalyst appears to be decisive. One will find, moreover, in Jung's book numerous arguments in support of our thesis concerning the sexual nature of rubbing and of primitive fire. We have merely systematized these arguments and added to them certain documents drawn from a mental zone which is less profound and therefore closer to that of objective knowledge.

That particular book of Frazer which is entitled *Myths of the Origin of Fire* reveals on each page such obviously sexual marks that a psychoanalysis of it is really unnecessary. Since our aim in this short book is rather to study modern mentalities, we shall not dwell upon the primitive mentalities studied by Frazer. We shall, therefore, give only a few examples to illustrate the necessity for correcting the sociologist's interpretation by a psychoanalytical interpretation.

Often the creator of fire is a little bird bearing on its tail a red mark which is the mark of fire. In one Australian tribe the legend is very amusing or, rather, it is because a bird is being amusing that it succeeds in stealing the fire. "The deaf adder had formerly the sole possession of fire, which he kept securely in his inside. All the birds tried in vain to get some of it, until the small hawk came along and played such ridiculous antics that the adder could not keep his countenance and began to laugh. Then the fire escaped from him and became common property."⁸ Thus, as is often the case, the legend of fire is the legend of licentious love. Fire is associated with innumerable jokes.

In many cases the fire is *stolen*. The Prometheus complex is dispersed over all the animals in creation. The one stealing the fire is most often a bird, a wren, a robin, a hummingbird, some small creature. Sometimes it is a rabbit, a badger, or a fox who carries off the fire at the end of its tail. Elsewhere women fight one another: "finally one of the women breaks her cudgel and immediately there comes forth from it fire." Fire is also produced by an old woman who "vented her rage by breaking off two

sticks from the trees and rubbing them violently together."⁷ On several occasions the creation of fire is associated with a similar act of violence: fire is the objective phenomenon of an inner rage, of a hand which has become irritable. It is thus quite noteworthy that we always come upon an exceptional psychological condition that is strongly tinged with affectivity at the origin of an objective discovery. We can distinguish then between many kinds of fire—gentle fire, cunning fire, unruly fire—by characterizing them according to the initial psychology of the desires and passions.

An Australian legend recalls that a totemic animal, a certain euro, carried fire within its body. A man killed it. "He examined the body carefully to see how the animal made fire, or where it came from; and pulling out the male organ of generation, which was of great length, he cut it open and found that it contained very red fire."⁸ How could such a legend be perpetuated if it were not that each generation had its intimate reasons to believe in it?

In another tribe

... the men had no fire and did not know how to make it, but the women did. While the men were away hunting in the bush, the women cooked their food and ate it by themselves. Just as they were finishing their meal, they saw the men returning away in the distance. As they did not wish the men to know about the fire, they hastily gathered up the ashes, which were still alight, and thrust them up their vulvas, so that the men should not see them. When the men came close up they said: "Where is the fire?" but the women replied: "There is no fire."⁹

In studying such a story, one must admit *the total impossibility of the realistic explanation*, whereas the psychoanalytical explanation is, on the contrary, immediately clear. It is quite evident, indeed, that one cannot hide *real* fire, *objective* fire, within the human body, as so many myths claim. It is equally true that it is only on the emotional level that one can lie with such effrontery and say, in the face of all the evidence, and by denying the most intimate form of desire, "There is no fire."

In a South-American myth, the hero, in order to get fire, pursues a woman:

He sprang up and seized her. He said that he would embrace her if she did not reveal to him the secret of fire. After several evasions, she consented to do so. She sat flat on the floor with legs wide apart. Taking hold of the upper part of her abdomen she gave it a good shake and a ball of fire rolled out of the genital canal on the floor. This was not the fire that we know today; it would not burn nor make things boil. These properties were lost when the woman gave it up. Ajijeko said, however, that he could remedy that; so he gathered all the bark, fruits, and hot peppers which burn, and with these and the woman's fire he made the fire that we now use.¹⁰

This example affords us definite evidence of the passing over from *metaphor to reality*. It should be noticed that this transition does not take place, as the realist explanation would have it, from reality to metaphor, but, in quite the opposite manner and in accord with the theory we are supporting, it proceeds from metaphors of subjective origin to an objective reality: the fire of love and the fire of pepper joined together end by setting fire to the dry grasses. It is this absurdity which explains the discovery of fire.

Generally speaking, one cannot read the rich and intensely interesting book of Frazer without being struck by the poverty of the realist explanation. There must be at least a thousand legends that are studied in the book and only two or three of these are explicitly connected with sexuality. For the rest, in spite of the underlying affective meaning, one might imagine that the myth has been created for the purpose of affording objective explanations. Thus, "the Hawaiian myth of the origin of fire, like many of the Australian myths of the same type, also serves to explain the particular color of a certain species of bird." Elsewhere the theft of fire by a rabbit served to explain the reddish-brown or black color of its tail. Such explanations, hypnotized by an objective detail, fail to take into account the primitivity of the *affective* interest. The primitive phenomenology is a phenomenology of affectivity: it fabricates objective beings out of

phantoms that are projected by reverie, it creates images out of desires, material experiences out of somatic experiences, and fire out of love.

The Romantics, by returning to certain more or less permanent experiences of primitiveness, rediscovered, without suspecting it, those themes of fire that have been accorded a sexual value. G. H. von Schubert, for example, has written this sentence which only becomes clear in the light of a psychoanalysis of fire:¹¹ "Just as friendship prepares us for love, so by the rubbing together of similar bodies, nostalgia (heat) is created and love (flame) spurts forth." How can it be better stated that nostalgia is the memory of the warmth of the nest, the memory of the cherished love for the "calidum innatum." The poetry of the nest, of the fold, has no other origin. No objective impression acquired by examining the nests in a row of bushes could ever have supplied the wealth of adjectives which confer such a value upon the coziness, the sweetness, and the warmth of the nest. Were it not for the memory of man made warm by man, producing as it were a redoubling of *natural* heat, we could not conceive of lovers speaking of their snug little nest. Gentle heat is thus at the source of the consciousness of happiness. More precisely, it is the consciousness of the origins of happiness.

All of Novalis' poetry could receive a new interpretation, if we would apply to it the psychoanalysis of fire. This poetry is an attempt to re-live *primitivity*. For Novalis, the story is always more or less a cosmogony (theory of the formation of the universe). It is contemporaneous with a soul and a world that are being created. He maintains that the story is "the era . . . of liberty, the primitive state of nature, the age before the *Cosmos*."¹² Here, then, in all his obvious ambivalence, we see the *rubbing god* who is going to produce both fire and love: the beautiful daughter of King Arctur

. . . lying on silken cushions, was reclining on a throne artistically carved from an enormous sulphur crystal; and some maid servants were energetically rubbing her delicate limbs which seemed a blend of milky whiteness and crimson.

And on all the places over which passed the hand of the servants there broke through the entrancing light with which the whole palace shone in such a marvellous manner . . .

This light is an inward light. The person being caressed shines with happiness. The caress is none other than the act of rubbing symbolized and idealized.

But the scene continues:

The hero remained silent.

"Let me touch your shield," she said sweetly,

and as he consented

. . . his whole armor vibrated; and an enlivening force ran through his whole body. His eyes flashed; his heart could be heard beating beneath its cuirass.

The beautiful Freya seemed more serene; and more burning did the light become which was emanating from her.

"The King is coming!" cried a wonderful bird . . .

If we add that this bird is the "phoenix," the phoenix which is reborn from its ashes, like a desire that has been momentarily appeased, we see, moreover, that this scene is marked by the double primitivity of fire and of love. If we set the beloved on fire when we love, this is proof that we ourselves loved when we kindled this fire.

"When Eros, transported with joy, saw that he was in front of the sleeping Freya, suddenly a sharp sound was heard. A powerful spark had run from the princess to his sword." The exact psychoanalytical image would have led Novalis to say "from the sword to the princess." In any case, "Eros dropped his sword. He ran to the princess and imprinted a kiss of fire on her cool lips."¹³

If from the work of Novalis we struck out the intuitions of primitive fire, it seems that all the poetry and dreams would be dissipated at the same time. The case of Novalis is so characteristic that it could be made the type example of a particular complex. In the field of psychoanalysis the naming of things is often sufficient to cause a *precipitate*; before the name, there

was only an amorphous, troubled, disturbed solution; after the name, crystals are seen at the bottom of the liquid. The *Novalis complex* would synthesize, then, this impulse towards fire that is brought about by friction, the need for a shared warmth. This impulse would reconstitute, in its exact primitivity, the prehistoric conquest of fire. The Novalis complex is characterized by a consciousness of inner heat which always takes precedence over a purely visual knowledge of light. It is based upon a satisfaction of the thermal sense and the deep-seated consciousness of calorific happiness. Heat is a property, a possession. It must be guarded jealously and only given as a gift to a chosen being who merits its communion in a reciprocal fusion. Light plays upon and laughs over the surface of things, but only heat *penetrates*. In a letter to Schlegel, Novalis wrote: "You can see in my tale my antipathy for the play of light and shadow, and the desire for bright, hot, penetrating Ether."

This need to *penetrate*, to go to the *interior* of things, to the *interior* of beings, is one attraction of the intuition of inner heat. Where the eye cannot go, where the hand does not enter, there heat insinuates itself. This communion at the interior, this thermal sympathy, will, in the work of Novalis, find its symbol in the descent into the depths of the mountain, into the grotto and the mine. It is there that the heat is diffused and equalized, that it becomes indistinct like the contour of a dream. As Nodier has very well recognized, every description of a descent into hell has a dream structure.¹⁴ Novalis has dreamed of the warm intimacy of the earth as others dream of a cold, resplendent, expanding sky. For him the miner is an "astrologer in reverse." Novalis lives with a concentrated heat rather than with a luminous radiation. How often he has meditated "on the edge of the dark abysses!" He is not the poet of minerals because he was a mining engineer; he became an engineer, although a poet, in order to obey the call of the subterranean, in order to return to the "calidum innatum." In his words, the miner is the hero of the depths, prepared "to receive the divine gifts and to exalt himself joyfully above the world and its miseries." The miner sings of the Earth: "To Her he feels bound—and intimately united

—and for Her he feels the same ardor as for a fiancée." The Earth is the maternal bosom, warm as a mother's lap in the unconscious mind of the child. The same heat animates both the rock and the miner's heart. "One would say that the miner has in his veins the inner fire of the earth which excites him to explore its depths."

At the center are the seeds; at the center is the engendering fire. That which germinates burns. That which burns germinates. "I need . . . flowers that have grown in the Fire . . . Zinc!" cried the King.¹⁵ 'Give us flowers . . .' The gardener stepped out of the ranks, went to fetch a pot filled with flames and sowed in it a shining seed. It was not long before the flowers sprang forth . . .

Perhaps a positive-minded person will undertake to develop here a *pyrotechnical* interpretation. He will show us the brilliant flame from the zinc projecting the white and dazzling flakes of its oxide into the air. He will write down the oxidation formula. But this *objective* interpretation, while it discovers a chemical cause of the phenomenon that fills us with wonder, will never take us to the center of the image, to the kernel of the Novalis complex. This interpretation will even deceive us as to what kinds of imagery take precedence in the poet's mind; for, by following this particular interpretation, we shall not understand that for a poet like Novalis the need to feel dominates the need to see, and that ahead of the light of Goethe there must be placed the gentle, indistinct heat that is ingrained in all the fibres of the being.

No doubt there are more subdued tones in the work of Novalis. Often love gives way to nostalgia just as it does in the work of von Schubert; but the mark of heat is indelibly stamped upon it. You may also object that Novalis is the poet "of the little blue flower," the poet of the forget-me-not tossed as a pledge of imperishable memory over the edge of the precipice in the very shadow of death. But go down into the depths of the unconscious, find there with the poet the primitive dream and you will clearly see the truth: the little blue flower is red!

ON DESCARTES'
METAPHYSICAL PRISM

*The Constitution and
the Limits of
Onto-theo-logy
in Cartesian Thought*



JEAN-LUC MARION

Translated by Jeffrey L. Kosky

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JEAN-LUC MARION is professor of philosophy at the Sorbonne.
He has written a number of books on philosophy,
including *God without Being* (1991) and *Cartesian Questions* (1999),
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If this translation could be held to a prism of its own, one would see in the spectrum of its refracted light the contributions of numerous persons whose care, encouragement, and assistance have lent their color to what I, something of a prism in reverse, have composed here. Since these individual colors are perhaps no longer visible in the work that follows, I want these acknowledgments to serve as just such a prism, letting those who have colored my composition be seen and thanked in their own light.

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J. L. K.

Chicago, November 1997

FOUR

GOD

§16. The Question of the Divine Names

A great divide thus separates the *ego* from itself; or rather, it separates a strictly metaphysical sense of the *ego*—one in which the *ego* exists in the mode of permanent subsistence—from another, rarer and less easily thematizable sense, in which the *ego* harbors possibility and even impossibility. Before we can identify this second face of the *ego*, and in order that we might succeed in doing so, we have to confirm the reality and the legitimacy of such a separation, which claims to manifest nothing less than the limits of metaphysics. Aren't we attributing to Descartes, quite imprudently, either a damaging incoherence or anachronistic investigations? We must therefore repeat the distinction that we thought we recognized between two senses of the *ego*, with an eye toward affirming or else nullifying it. And we can in fact do so with regard to another being, God. Several observations suggest this possibility to us. (a) We saw that the *ego* achieves its metaphysical status, and thus eventually escapes from it, only by starting from the equivalence of thought and Being, which Hegel posited as a fundamental metaphysical thesis. And yet this equivalence, Hegel often insists, does not concern only, nor first of all, the *ego*, but rather God: "... the unity of thought and Being. In the form of God no other conception is thus here given than that contained in *Cogito, ergo sum*, wherein Being and thought are inseparably bound up."¹ In short, the theoretical decision that metaphysically institutes the *ego* also metaphysically enthrones God. Consequently, in the same way that they share a similar metaphysical status, they could similarly modify it and eventually transgress it, at least to some extent, which remains to be determined in both cases. (b) There is another reason to suspect that God enters into metaphysics equivocally: the redoubling

of onto-theo-logy which was made clear earlier (chapter II). In this redoubled onto-theo-logy, God receives not one but two metaphysical positions—first as the most thinkable being, then as the being *causa sui*. This discrepancy calls for clarification all the more as it grows wider on account of a second disharmony: of these two positions, only the second affords God the rank of the being par excellence, of the *causa sui* that, through its effectivity, carries out the universal determination of all beings *ut causatum*; by contrast, in the first position, God does not carry out the universal determination of beings *ut cogitatum*, since he too is no more than a *cogitatum* submitted, despite his divinity, to the being par excellence—the *ego* as the sole *cogitatio sui*. Our inquiry can thus no longer avoid confronting this multifaceted aporia; it must inquire whether or not the two metaphysical names attributed to God can fit together without contradiction, and thus whether or not they exhaust the Cartesian thought of God and limit it strictly to the metaphysical domain marked out by the redoubled onto-theo-logy. (c) In fact, seeing as he claimed to have thought the attributes of God, Descartes can be said to have consciously attempted to determine the nature of God through, and also over and above, his existence: "I proved quite explicitly that God was the creator of all things, and I proved all his other attributes at the same time."² Admitting the idea of God necessarily implies that one admits the divine attributes. He who denies this implication contradicts himself: "... How could he affirm that these attributes [infinity, incomprehensibility] belong to him, and countless others which express his greatness to us, unless he had the idea of him?" Accordingly, the attributes are as inseparable from the idea of God as the idea of God is from the attributes: "It would be no good saying that we believe that God exists and that some attribute or perfection belongs to him; this would be to say nothing, because it would convey no meaning to our mind. Nothing could be more impious or impertinent."³ Consequently, the idea of God can be known—and in point of fact we do know it, "*Habemus autem ideam Dei* [we have an idea of God]" (AT VII, 167, 17 = PW II, 118)—only if the attributes are set forth in the light of clear evidence. In consequence, the *Meditationes* will investigate "... *de singulis Dei attributis, quorum aliquod in nobis vestigium agnoscimus* [the individual attributes of God of which we recognize some trace in ourselves]" (137, 13–14 = 98) by starting from the presupposition that

1. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie, Jubiläum Ausgabe*, Bd. 206 XIX, p. 350 [English trans., p. 237].

2. *To Mersenne*, 28 January 1641 (AT III, 297, 15–17 = PW III, 172).

3. *To Mersenne*, July 1641 (AT III, 394, 1–4 then 8–13 = PW III, 185 then 185).

"... intelligamus existentiam actualem necessario et semper cum reliquis Dei attributis esse conjunctam [We understand that actual existence is necessarily and always conjoined with the other attributes of God]" (117, 6–7 = 83); thus that, inversely, the existence of God cannot be separated from the other attributes and in fact even demands that they be studied. When the existence of God is established for the first time, it provokes contemplation, but an act of contemplation whose scope is immediately enlarged to include the attributes: "... in ipsius Dei contemplatione immorari, ejus attributa apud me expendere [I should like to pause here and spend some time in the contemplation of God; to reflect on his attributes]" (52, 12–13 = 36). When God's existence is established for the second time, this time by means of a demonstration, Descartes mentions the divine attributes in advance: "Multa mihi supersunt de Dei attributis... investiganda [There are many matters which remain to be investigated concerning the attributes of God]" (63, 4–5 = 44). Given that the examination of God's attributes makes up an integral part of the attempt to demonstrate his existence, when Descartes studies them, he should make a decision, a clearer one than we have yet seen, about God's essence; therefore, according to the terms of our investigation, he should also make a decision about the coherence of the disparate definitions applied to God, and, eventually, about their belonging—or not—to the metaphysics designated by the redoubled onto-theo-logy of the *cogitatio* and the *causa*. (d) A final argument could, though it remains extrinsic, confirm our claim. Descartes once acknowledges in passing that he has "said nothing about the knowledge of God except what all the theologians say too."⁴ While in context this statement concerns the possibility of a natural knowledge of God, in general it is also possible to understand this protestation as the sign of a discussion or at least a tacit confrontation with the theologians of his day—in particular a discussion concerning the determination of the divine attributes. How could Descartes have entirely ignored the celebrated theological debates of his time? We here suggest one hypothesis in particular: a Jesuit, Lessius, former student of Suarez, born in Anvers (in 1554) and died in Louvain (in 1623), after a brilliant teaching career not without its share of famous controversies, had published a treatise *De perfectionibus mori-*

busque divinis (Anvers, 1620; Paris, 1620), then, posthumously, at the same time as the *Meditationes* were being edited, a treatise on the *Quinquaginta nomina Dei* (Brussels, 1640). Without claiming that Descartes was directly influenced by these texts (which no argument could suggest), nor even that he read them seriously, we will not rule out the possibility that he was aware of them, at least indirectly (and experience shows, time and again, that this sort of relation is not the weakest). This rapprochement could have a twofold usefulness: first of all, it would permit a comparison, on certain delicate matters, between Descartes' decisions about the divine attributes and those of an acknowledged theologian; next and above all, it would permit reconsidering the Cartesian project—to give metaphysically rigorous names to God and to the God of the Christian revelation—within the ongoing theological debate that plays itself out in the treatise on the divine names and that, inaugurated thematically by Dionysius the Areopagite, traverses the entire Middle Ages until it finds one of its last notable representatives precisely in the person of Lessius.⁵ What appears notable is Lessius' insistence on maintaining the Dionysian distinction between, on the one hand, knowledge of God "by affirmations or positive concepts," and, on the other, knowledge by "negations or negative concepts." This couple allows God to be named

... most sublime, best, greatest, eternal, most powerful, wisest, kindest, holiest, most just, most merciful, most beautiful, present to all things, inward creator of all, the fashioner, conservator, governor, and ordainer of all things to his glory as their first principle and their ultimate end

just as well as, inversely, he can be named

infinite, immense, eternal, infinitely raised above all perfection, excellence and magnitude conceivable by a created mind: beyond all substance, all power, all wisdom, all understanding, all light, all beauty, all holiness, all justice, all goodness, all beatitude, all glory; in such a way that he is properly speaking none of these things, like unto none among them and infinitely more sublime and more elevated than them.⁶

5. A history of the treatise on the divine names remains to be written. In this regard, we permit ourselves the liberty of referring to the studies in our *L'idole et la distance* (Paris, 1977), chap. III, and *God without Being*, chap. III.

6. L. Lessius, *Quinquaginta nomina Dei*, respectively: "... per affirmationes seu conceptus positivos ... per negationes, seu conceptus negativos ..." (chap. I, p. 6—the prologue makes explicit reference to Dionysius, p. 5); then: "Priori modo, concipimus Deum esse spiritum sublimissimum, optimum, maximum, sempiternum, potentissimum, sapientissimum, benignissimum, sanctissimum, justissimum, misericordissimum, pulcherri-

4. To Mersenne, March 1642 (AT III, 544, 17–19 = PW III, 211). Perhaps it is also necessary to consider the formula *Deus est suum esse* (AT III, 433, 9–11 and VII, 383, 15 = PW III, 196 and 263), taken directly from Saint Thomas, "Deus non solum est sua essentia ... sed etiam suum esse [God is not only His own essence ... but also His own existence]" and "... sua igitur essentia est suum esse [His essence is His existence]" (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 3, a. 4, resp. [English trans., pp. 17 and 17]).

This twofold pronouncement defines the horizon within which the Cartesian determination of God's attributes appears not only more understandable (in its innovations as well as its repetitions), but above all as a kind of treatise on the divine names. In short, we propose to try reading the Cartesian discussion of the attributes of God as a metaphysical repetition of the theological treatise on the divine names. Only on this condition will it become possible to answer the crucial question: how and within what limits does God enter, with Descartes' redoubled onto-theo-logy, into metaphysics? More than just an arbitrary appeal, the comparison with Lessius makes up an invaluable landmark. And moreover, it seems to us even less illegitimate since, among other points in common, Lessius and Descartes closely link infinity to incomprehensibility. When Descartes retorts to Gassendi that "... idea enim infiniti ut sit vera, nullo modo debet comprehendi, quoniam ipsa incomprehensibilitas in ratione formali infiniti continetur [The idea of infinity, if it is to be a true idea, cannot be grasped at all, since the impossibility of being grasped is contained in the formal definition of the infinite]" (368, 2-4 = 253), he seems to be citing Lessius: "Deum ratione suae infinitatis esse incomprehensibilem [God is incomprehensible by definition of his infinity]."⁷ For these four reasons, the determination of God's essence be-

...mum, rebus omnibus praesentem, omnia interius creantem, formantem, conservantem, gubernantem et ad suam gloriam ordinantem tanquam primum principium et finem rerum omnium" (chap. I, pp. 6-7); and finally:

Posteriori modo Deus concipitur esse Spiritus infinitus, immensus, sempiternus, infinitus supra omnium perfectionem, excellentiam et magnitudinem a mente creata conceptibilem elevatus: supra omnem substantiam, supra omnem potentiam, supra omnem sanctitatem, omnem justitiam, omnem bonitatem, omnem beatitudinem, omnem gloriam; adeo ut ipse nihil horum proprie sit, nulli horum sit similis, sed infinite sublimior et praestantior.

(Chap. I, p. 8.)

7. L. Lessius, *De Perfectionibus moribusque divinis*, I, 2 (Paris, 1620), p. 11. See the subsequent development:

Omnis hi modi incomprehensibilitatis sequuntur ex ejus infinitate: sed nos hic potissimum agimus de tertio, quo Deus dicitur *incomprehensibilis* omni intellectui creato. Hoc modo Dionysius et Damascenus Deum dicunt esse ἀκατάληπτον, ἀπερίληπτον, ἀπεριχώριστον. [All these modes of incomprehensibility follow from his infinity: but we hold this most especially concerning the third, in which God is said to be incomprehensible to every created thing. This is why Dionysius and Damascene said God is ἀκατάληπτον, ἀπερίληπτον, ἀπεριχώριστον]

(Ibid.) If Descartes' formula depended on Lessius, even from a distance, it would thus go back directly to Dionysius, and through him to the entire tradition of the Church Fathers. Permit us to let this ever so fascinating hypothesis remain open. See *infra*, n. 36.

comes a fundamental task when assessing the Cartesian constitution of metaphysics.

The *Meditationes* evoke the name or the names of God from their very beginning, the raising of universal doubt. However, no explicit definition of God is fixed at that time—for rigorous reasons that will be made more clear below. It is only with *Meditatio III* that, in order to support the proof for God's existence, developed formulations of the essence and the attributes of God appear. As a result, Descartes enters, consciously or not (it matters little), into the debate about the divine names. Let us therefore read the two formulae introduced here. Here is the first definition:

[1] . . . illa [idea] per quam summum aliquem Deum, aeternum, infinitum, omniscium, omnipotentem, rerumque omnium, quae praeter ipsum sunt creatorem intelligo [the idea that gives me my understanding of a supreme God, eternal, infinite, omniscient, omnipotent and the creator of all things that exist apart from him]. (AT VII, 40, 16-18 = 28)

Here is the second formulation:

[2] Dei nomine intelligo substantiam quandam infinitam, independentem, summe intelligentem, summe potentem, et a qua tum ego ipse, tum aliud omne, si quid aliud extat, quodcumque extat est creatum [By the word 'God' I understand a substance that is infinite, independent, supremely intelligent, supremely powerful, and which created both myself and everything else (if anything else there be) that exists]. (45, 11-14 = 31)

These two pronouncements, which we will cite from now on as [1] and [2], are framed by the so-called proof for the existence of God by effects, which opens just before [1]—"Sed alia quaedam via mihi occurrit [But it now occurs to me that there is another way] . . ." (40, 5 = 27)—and closes a little after [2], "Ideoque ex antedictis Deum necessario existere, est concludendum [So from what it has been said it must be concluded that God necessarily exists]" (45, 17-18 = 31). This quite clearly delimited situation immediately gives rise to a difficulty, itself multifaceted: obviously [1] and [2] come up only within the second onto-theo-logy, since [1] appears on the same page in which there also arise, in a tremendous relaunching of the *ordo rationum, substantia* (40, 12 = 28) and the principle of universal causality (40, 21-23 = 28). What thread connects these three theses, if their textual proximity is not conceptually just by chance? Is the validity of the divine attributes advanced by [1] and [2] limited to the onto-theo-logy of the *ens ut causatum* alone, or do they

exceed it in advance? For that matter, can [1] and [2], which are introduced by one and the same *intelligo*, claim to offer a real definition of God and his attributes, or must they be proposed simply as working hypotheses?⁸ In this case, how are we to understand that this idea of God can at once remain hypothetical and be actually given to us—"Si detur Dei idea (ut manifestum est illam dari) [if we do have an idea of God—and it is manifest that we do] . . ." (183, 21 = 129), "Habemus autem ideam Dei [We have an idea of God] . . ." (167, 17 = 118)? Such difficulties can find neither a rapid nor an easy resolution; they call for a detailed examination of each of the attributes successively mentioned by [1] and [2]. Only once such an examination has been performed will the objection of incoherence (*inconsistency*) be able to receive something more than a formal or superficial confirmation or nullification—a carefully considered validation, historically and conceptually carefully considered.⁹ Let us therefore retrace, step by step, the terms attributed to God by [1] and [2], with an eye toward testing their many coherences or incoherences and reconstituting their partial necessities.

Quaedam [*substantia*]. This announces, as the first determination of God, indetermination itself. The two formulae agree in this. *Quaedam* [2] (45, 11) in effect corresponds to *aliquis* [*Deus*] in [1] (40, 16). Though the French translation hides it behind a simple indefinite article (*un/une*, AT IX-2, 32, 5 and 35, 41), this indetermination constantly determines all the previous places where God is mentioned in the *Meditationes*; or rather, all the places where Descartes suggests a definition of what, before the first demonstration of the existence of the true God, could lay claim to this title. Two occurrences confirm this claim. The first is found at the end of *Meditatio I*. When Descartes constructs hyperbolic doubt by invoking, equally and indifferently, the two contrary hypotheses of an omnipotent God and an evil genius, he nonetheless gathers them together in the imprecise phrase "tam potentem aliquem Deum [some God so powerful]," a phrase that is not rendered in the French transla-

tion (21, 17–18 = 14 [modified]). Next, when *Meditatio III* in its opening stages recalls the situation at which *Meditatio I* ended up, it again evokes "aliquem Deum [some God]" (36, 11 = 25); "quelque Dieu" translates the French (AT IX-1, 28, 36). The indetermination would not be marked so consistently if it did not have an essential function. In fact, it has several. First, during each moment of the rational proceedings that precede the first proof for the existence of a God, Descartes reasons without yet having a precise concept of God; or to say it more precisely, he hesitates between several hypotheses: a God who can do everything, thus one who also allows me to deceive myself (21, 1–16 = 14); a *Deus fictitius* (21, 20 = 14) who can be identified indifferently with destiny (*fatum*, ἀνάγκη) or with chance (*casus*, τύχη) or with the necessary order of nature (21, 20–21 = 14), in short with any mode of deception whatsoever ("seu quovis alio modo [or by some other means]," 21, 21–22 = 14); and finally, an evil genius who is himself indefinite ("... genium aliquem malignum [some evil genius]," 22, 24 = 15 [modified], rendered in French by "un certain mauvais génie," AT IX-1, 17, 37). This indefinite evil genius can be imagined only insofar as the concept of God invoked up until now has itself remained fundamentally undetermined. And moreover, the entire second *Meditatio* works within the determinate hypothesis of a decidedly indeterminate God; the *ego* found itself certain of itself only by struggling against an uncertain God. Whence these decidedly undecided denominations: "... est aliquis Deus, vel quocumque nomine illum vocem [is there not some God, or whatever I may call him]" (24, 21–22 = 16 [modified], translated in French by "quelque Dieu," AT IX-1, 19, 19); by virtue of the same indefiniteness, this can also become "deceptor nescio quis [I know not what deceiver]" (25, 6 = 17 [modified], or "je ne sais quel trompeur," AT IX-1, 19, 30), therefore properly *deceptor aliquis* [some deceiver] (26, 24 = 18, or "quelqu'un qui est . . .," AT IX-1, 21, 3–4). In fact, before the proof by effects, Descartes does not base his reasoning on the hypothesis of God, nor on that of the evil genius, chance, necessity, or destiny; he bases it solely on the determined hypothesis of something undetermined. The sole point that all of these hypotheses have in common is to be found in their very indetermination. Before the proof by effects, the *ego* confronts only an adversary hidden by his very indetermination, one that, for each proper name, is named only with a name so common that it is not even a name: *aliquis*. Therefore, when the definition advanced by *Meditatio III*, in [1] as much as in [2], opens with a marker of indeterminacy, it is not saying nothing; it sums up in a single word the only characteristic proper to the previous

8. *Intelligo* introducing a definition of God: AT VII, 50, 19; 40, 18; 45, 11; 109, 7; etc. = PW II, 34; 28; 31; 78; etc. Formulas [1] and [2] are directly commented upon by, among others, E. M. Curley, *Descartes against the Skeptics* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), pp. 127–28 ("Is this definition stipulative or reportive?").

9. H. Frankfurt, "Descartes on the consistency of reason," in M. Hooker, ed., *Descartes: Critical and Interpretive Essays* (Baltimore/London, 1978), p. 36. See also, by the same author, the study "Descartes' Validation of Reason," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 11/2 (1965), particularly pp. 223–25. Whence our study "The Essential Incoherence of Descartes' Definition of Divinity," in A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Descartes' Meditations* (Berkeley–Los Angeles, 1986).

hypotheses—their radical impropriety. *Aliquis* in [2] does not add indetermination to the subsequent list of qualifiers so much as it opposes the indetermination previously established as the sole determination to the determinations yet to come. About what he attempts for the first time to define categorically as God (and no longer merely as anything whatsoever that can be defined, so long as it is other than the *ego*), Descartes first says the only thing that experience has, as of now, taught him about it: namely, that it is indeterminate. By God, I mean an undetermined someone, *aliquis*. Here, it is not the *ego* who can say “*larvatus prodeō* [I come forward masked]” (AT X, 213, 6–7 = PW I, 2), but God who, like Voëtius later, “. . . in me non prodeat nisi personatus [does not come forward against me except in disguise]” (AT VIII-2, 7–8 = not included in PW). God comes to the *ego* only hidden beneath the mask of the role (*persona*) that he has until now been playing in the theater of the previous *Meditationes*—that of an *aliquis*. In short, God appears beneath the most dissimulating mask, that of the most total indetermination. In contrast with theology, which proffers negations of God only after having exhausted the affirmations, here the *ego* begins by saying of God that he is named *nescio quis* [I know not what], a *je ne sais qui*: negative philosophy, in which one must acknowledge the echo, no doubt barely conscious, of the negating moment in the divine names: “All things are denied of him because he is higher than all reason and all *species* comprehensible by a created mind,” Lessius said.¹⁰ Descartes, however, stands apart from the more common opinion that Lessius has formulated: first because he starts with indetermination, instead of reaching it after affirmations have been denied each in their turn; next because he practices the denegating indetermination with penury, not with excess. That is to say, indetermination holds the place of the affirmations provisionally; it does not correct them after they have been uttered. The negative moment thus loses its theological originality. Far from leading to the overcoming of predicative and categorical discourse in general, the negative moment intends such discourse and always strives for it, all the more so when it clearly designates its absence. In this, one has the feeling that affirmations can be established further along, that there is no negation or indetermination that will not be alleviated—thus opening the metaphysical discourse on the essence of God to the threat of idolatry.

10. L. Lessius, *De Perfectionibus moribusque divinis*, I, 3: “Negantur de ipso omnia, quia ipse est supra omnem rationem et speciem creatae menti conceptibilem” (op. cit., p. 14).

However, indetermination is justified by its fulfilling a second function. Hyperbolic doubt can exert its radical *époché* over genuine science (for it destroys Cartesian science itself)¹¹ only by confusing two different characteristics. There must first of all be an authority that offers enough omnipotence to disqualify all mathematical and rational logic. Next, it must be the case that this authority, itself absolutely unsurpassable, pass beyond the humanly unsurpassable conditions of science, thus that it be identified, in one way or another, with God. And yet, upon serious reflection, it is seen that these two characteristics are contradictory. In effect, as soon as their utmost consequences have been developed, they can be uttered in the untenable paradox of a deceptive omnipotence, directly (evil genius) or indirectly (omnipotent God who created the conditions of my self-deception). As soon as one poses the question of logical possibility and noncontradiction, the initial hypothesis of the *Meditationes* appears to be not only hyperbolic, but also incoherent. And Descartes does not hide this fact either: outside the strict boundaries of the provisional *ordo rationum*, he will always respond to the objections of atheism by claiming that an omnipotent God can neither deceive, nor let one deceive oneself:

Et ineptum est quod subjungit, nempe *Deum ut deceptorem cogitari*. Et si enim, in prima mea Meditatione, de aliquo deceptore summe potenti locutus sim, nequaquam tamen ibi verus Deus concipiebatur, quia ut ipse [Voëtius] ait, fieri non potest ut verus Deus sit deceptor. Atque si ab eo petatur unde sciat id fieri non posse, debet respondere se scire ex eo quod implicet contradictionem in conceptu, hoc est, ex eo quod concipi non possit. [(He claims that in my philosophy) “God is thought of as a deceiver.” This is foolish. Although in my First Meditation I did speak of a supremely powerful deceiver, the conception there was in no way of the true God, since, as he [Voëtius] himself says, it is impossible that the true God should be a deceiver. But if he is asked how he knows this is impossible, he must answer that he knows it from the fact that it implies a conceptual contradiction—that is it cannot be conceived.]

Or, according to Burman’s testimony, “Loquitur hîc auctor [Descartes] contradictoria cum summa potentia malignitas consistere non potest [What the author (Descartes) says here is contradictory, since malice is

11. On this essential point, see F. Alquié, “Expérience ontologique et déduction systématique dans la constitution de la métaphysique de Descartes,” in *Descartes. Cahiers de Royaumont* (Paris, 1957), and our work *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes*, §14, pp. 323ff.

incompatible with supreme power].” Finally: “. . . auctor contradictoria loquitur, si dicat potentissimum et malignum, quia potentia et malignitas simul consistere non possunt [If he calls it both most powerful and malicious, the author contradicts himself since power and malice are incompatible with each other].”¹² And yet it is precisely this conceptual contradiction that is called for, at least provisionally, by the unfolding of the *Meditationes*; but to make such a notion bearable, simply as a hypothesis not yet contested, it must be toned down, indeed dissimulated. This is precisely how the indeterminacy of an *aliquis* functions. The debate about the omnipotence of God being opposed (or not) to the merely very great power of the evil genius—however much it might be highly instructive—has in the end only something very limited at stake in it; and the same is true of the general distinction between these two engines of hyperbolic doubt. For despite their being incompatible by right, a single indeterminacy is enough for them to be confounded in the same role, as provisional as it is unified.¹³

But there is more. The indeterminacy also permits, though again provisionally, another difficulty to be removed. One could and even should raise an objection to the primacy of indeterminacy as the first determination of what lays claim to the title *God*. In effect, the evil genius, the *Deus fictitius*, chance, necessity, and destiny come up only on account of a single common point—namely, the function of omnipotence, through which, whatever they might be, they could disqualify the evidence of order and measure. Omnipotence would thus precede inde-

12. Respectively, *To Voëtius* (AT VIII-2, 60, 16–24), then *Conversation with Burman* (AT V, 147, 7–8); finally, AT V, 150, 30ff. = PW III, 222 then 333; finally, not included in PW. When the *ordo rationum* permits, the *Meditationes* will raise this contradiction: AT VII, 53, 23–29 = PW II, 37 (see *Principia Philosophiae* I, §29); similarly, the *Letter to Buitendijck* from 1643 (AT IV, 64, 1–28 = PW III, 229–30). H. Frankfurt made this point clear: “. . . Descartes does not recognize in the *First Meditation*, that the notion of a being both omnipotent and evil is logically incoherent. And as long as the existence of the demon seems possible to him, it provides him with what he must take to be a reasonable ground for doubt” (*Demons, Dreamers and Madmen: The Defense of Reason in Descartes’ Meditations* [Indianapolis, 1970], p. 48).

13. We are thinking of the famous debate between R. Kennington, “The Finitude of Descartes’ Evil Genius,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* (1971), pp. 441–46, and H. Caton, “Kennington on Descartes’ Evil Genius,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* (1973), pp. 639–41; then R. Kennington, “Reply to Caton,” *ibid.*, pp. 641–43, and H. Caton, “Rejoinder: The cunning of the Evil Genius,” *ibid.*, pp. 641–44. See also H. Caton, *The Origin of Subjectivity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 115–21. In fact, *summe potens* in 45, 12–13 is equivalent to *omnipotens* at least in 40, 17 [1], as well as in *Principia Philosophiae* I, §§14 and 22.

termination, and nothing would be submitted to indeterminacy except for the sake of coming under the sway of power. In fact, as we will soon see, omnipotence constitutes an essential qualification of the Cartesian God. But one must ask what right it has to enter—before all clear and distinct knowledge of the essence as well as the existence of God—the *ordo rationum*. Whence comes the fact that before envisaging God in the strict sense and as such, it is already possible and even permissible to mobilize the idea of an omnipotent God? Descartes’ response is always the same: “Verumtamen infixata quaedam est meae menti vetus opinio, Deum esse qui potest omnia [And yet firmly rooted in my mind is the long-standing opinion that there is an omnipotent God]” (21, 1–2 = 14) says *Meditatio I*, which the parallel text in *Meditatio III* will take over: “. . . haec praeconcepta de summa Dei potentia opinio [my preconceived opinion as to the supreme power of God]” (36, 8–9 = 25 [modified]). Omnipotence qualifies something like God, but only by way of an opinion; and for that matter, it could even be demonstrated that such an equivalence finds its origin in the nominalism of William of Ockham.¹⁴ But the only thing that is important to us here is the modality according to which a positive doctrine, thus one foreign to the *ordo rationum*, can get mixed up in this *ordo*. It enters in the mode of *opinio*, that is to say, of a confused, not rationally determined thought having neither origin nor reason—in short, it enters as an undetermined thought. Omnipotence thus only apparently precedes indeterminacy, since in fact only its indeterminacy can permit omnipotence to enter into the *ordo rationum*, as an opinion with neither genealogy nor status.

Thus, by opening the list of divine names and attributes with the reticence of an *aliquis/quaedam*, Descartes is not simply signaling the inevitably provisional character of a definition that still awaits an answer to the question *quid sit* as well as *an sit*. To understand this, one has only to compare his work to that of Suarez. To be sure, when Suarez comes up against the impossibility of defining God, he too will immediately have recourse to a *praeconceptio* in order to continue his reasoning: “. . . nevertheless, for us to be able to reason about God, it is certainly necessary to presuppose and have a preconception (*praeconcepere*) as to what this word means.” But for Suarez, the *praeconceptio* has a function that is the inverse of the role it plays for Descartes: it precedes and introduces a correct and universally admissible nominal definition of God,

14. For this identification, see *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes*, pp. 330–33 and 303–5.

far from making provisionally possible an inadmissible contradiction: "For this name signifies a certain (*quoddam*) very noble being, one who surpasses all the others, and all depend on it as on their first author, who, for that very reason, must be served and worshipped as the supreme divinity. This is in effect the ordinary and so to speak first concept that we all form when we hear the name of God."¹⁵ No doubt Suarez's pre-comprehension, like the Cartesian *praeconcepta opinio*, introduces a vague and indeterminate concept of God. But while in Descartes this indeterminate concept is contradictory, provisional, and false, in Suarez it is already correct, thus, in this sense, definitive and established. In the context of Descartes' thought, indetermination makes up an integral part of the concept, which would collapse without it. Accordingly, the genuine concept of God, if one can be found, will have to be won by starting with an already constitutive and forever irreducible indetermination. Imprecision belongs to the concept of God, intrinsically—either for the sake of dissimulating its impossibility during hyperbolic doubt or for the sake of permitting its sudden irruption in the renewal of the *ordo rationum*. Thus a new task imposes itself on us: it is no longer a matter of interpreting the indetermination that constitutes the concept of God as the condition for the possibility of a logical and theological impossibility; rather, it is a question of interpreting this indetermination as the path to a new conceptual situation. The fact that formulas [1] and [2] show up in the same passage where the first occurrence of *substantia* appears now takes on its full meaning: indetermination, preliminary determination of God, in effect opens onto substance.

§17. Substance and Infinity

Substantia: this term characterizes not only formula [2], "... Dei nomine intelligo substantiam quandam ..." but also, indirectly, definition [1].

15. Suarez, *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, XXIX, s. 3, n. 4: "... tamen ut de illo [Deo] ratiocinari possimus, necesse est saltem praeconcepere et praesupponere, quid hac voce significetur" (op. cit., vol. 26, p. 35); then n. 5: "Significat ergo hoc nomen [Deus] quoddam nobilissimum ens, quod et reliqua omnia superat, et ab eo tanquam a primo auctore reliqua omnia pendent, quod proinde ut supremum numen colendum est ac venerandum; hic enim est vulgaris et quasi primus conceptus quem omnes de Deo formamus, audito nomine Dei" (ibid.) Like Suarez, Descartes admits a spontaneous preconception of God; on this occasion, he borrows it from the nominalist tradition (or simply from the first article of the *Credo*). However, while for Suarez this preconception maintains a certain theoretical validity, for Descartes, based on the fact of hyperbolic doubt, the preconception not only loses all solidity, it is also inverted into an argument against all correct thought, as much of God as of *reliqua omnia*. Indetermination is inverted for the same reason as the preconception.

The latter, definition [1], appears just after the first opposition between substance and accident, whose hierarchy allows Descartes to conclude that a certain idea of God "... plus profecto realitatis objectivae in se habet, quam illae [ideae] per quas finitae substantiae exhibentur [has in it more objective reality than the ideas that represent finite substances]" (40, 19–20 = 28). In other words, the still undetermined idea of God is made more precise by being opposed not only to all accidents, but also to all finite substance. In fact, shortly after this, Descartes will introduce the third term, *substantia infinita*—first in definition [2] (at 45, 11 = 31), then in the text: "... non tamen idcirco esset idea substantiae infinitae, cum sim finitus, nisi ab aliqua substantia, quae revera esset infinita procederet [This would not account for my having the idea of an infinite substance, when I am finite, unless this idea proceeded from some substance which really was infinite]" (45, 20–22 = 31). In other words: "... manifeste intelligo plus realitatis esse in substantia infinita quam in finita [I clearly understand that there is more reality in an infinite substance than in a finite one]" (45, 26–27 = 31), a formula that is repeated in the *Second Set of Replies*: "... substantia plus habet realitatis, quam accidens vel modus; et substantia infinita, quam finita [There is more objective reality in the idea of a substance than in the idea of an accident; and there is more objective reality in the idea of an infinite substance than in the idea of a finite substance]" (165, 29–31); or: "... si detur substantia infinita et independens, est magis res quam finita et dependens [If there is an infinite and independent substance, it is more of a thing than a finite and dependent substance]" (185, 25–29 = 130).

The introduction of the concept substance backs up the points we have already established and gives rise to a difficulty. Our first point was the profound coherence of formulas [1] and [2]. One, [1], introduces substance into God for the sake of opposing it to accidents and especially to *substantia finita* (40, 20). The other, [2], positively determines this substance as infinite. In this way, we reached our second point: Descartes overcomes the imprecision necessary to the definition of God, an imprecision that is imposed by the contradictory hypotheses sustaining hyperbolic doubt—in short, the inevitable indetermination of his first point of departure—only by constructing a second definition of something like God. This second definition is constructed solely on the basis of the new parameters that are imposed by the "alia quaedam adhuc via": namely, causality, the nonrepresentative status of the idea, and, above all, substantiality. The fact that [1] and [2] are constructed around and on the basis of *substantia* signifies that they belong completely to the new beginning of the *ordo rationum*. In other words, it signifies that,

without this new beginning and without *substantia*, no definition of God could ever pass beyond the initial indetermination. In short, for Descartes, God will be defined according to substantiality and causality, or not at all—otherwise (and this amounts to the same thing), he will be defined by the indetermination of *aliquis Deus*. But more precisely, what is implied by the recourse, as obligatory as it is resolute, to substantiality in order to be able to define God?

In fact, consciously or not (a distinction that makes little difference), Descartes here runs up against a previous theological debate, one that forces upon him a very precise conceptual difficulty. Theologically, can God be named according to substance? For a positive answer, one can rely on the formula “quoddam pelagus infinitae substantiae [that sea of infinite substance],” which accurately translates an expression of John Damascene’s, οἶόν τι πέλαγος οὐσίας ἀπειρον καὶ ἀόριστον.¹⁶ However, this authority does not entirely remove a difficulty that finds its origin in at least three authors of the utmost theological importance. Let us consider first Saint Augustine. He holds that “it is clear that God is improperly called a substance,” and proposes that οὐσία be translated by *essentia*, essence, no longer by *substantia*. The reason for this rejection is found in the very definition of substance: it implies the permanence of a substrate, which thus makes possible accidental qualifications from which, at the same time, it stands in contradistinction. Accordingly, “neither changeable nor simple things are properly called substances.” Thus the body constitutes a substance because qualities, accidents, and attributes find their subsistence in it, according to the Aristotelian couple οὐσία/συμβέβηκος. But in God, properties—such as greatness, goodness, omnipotence, etc.—are not added like accidents to a different substance. All that is in God is identically God: “It is an impiety to say that God subsists and is a subject in relation to His own goodness (*ut subsistat et subsit Deus bonitati suae*) and that this goodness is not a substance, or rather essence, and that God Himself is not His own goodness, but that it is in Him as in a subject (*tanquam in subjecto*).”¹⁷ Saint Anselm also

contests the notion that substantiality befits God. That is, “Substance is principally said of individuals, which especially constitute a plurality. For it is individuals that especially stand under (i.e. underlie) accidents and therefore more properly take the name ‘substance.’” In short, substance implies accidents that it lies under. The inevitable plurality of accidents implies in turn the plurality of substances. And this plurality in the end contradicts the divine simplicity. Therefore, “the supreme essence (*summam essentiam*), which does not underlie any accidents, cannot properly be called a substance unless ‘substance’ is being used in place of ‘essence.’”¹⁸ However, such a refusal of *substantia* is not limited to the Augustinian tradition—it is found in Saint Thomas as well. The first reason for this is obvious: God does not have any ontic determination because he is defined only as the pure act of Being (*actus essendi*), in which *esse* takes the place of all *essentia*, thus excluding *substantia* all the more. But the traditional reason remains operative, being presented first in the guise of an objection: “God cannot be called an individual substance since matter is the principle of individuation, while God is immaterial; nor is He the subject of accidents (*neque etiam accidentibus substat*), so as to be called a substance. Therefore the word person ought not be attributed to God.” The reply concedes what is essential to the objection and claims for God the name *substance* only in a very restricted sense: “Substance can be applied to God in the sense of (*secundum quod*) signifying self-subsistence.”¹⁹ In fact, Saint Thomas will admit *substantia* into discourse about God only by first interpreting it as a quasi-synonym of

chapter “L’idée de Dieu chez saint Augustin,” written by A. Koyré and appearing in his study of *L’idée de Dieu dans la philosophie de saint Anselme* (Paris, 1923 and 1984). In the last of these, see in particular the felicitous formula “None of the Aristotelian categories can be applied to God” (p. 172). More recently, Roland J. Teske, “Augustine’s Use of ‘Substantia’ in Speaking about God,” *Modern Schoolman* (March 1985).

18. Saint Anselm, *Monologion*, LXXIX [English trans., p. 89]: “. . . substantia principaliter dicitur de individuis quae maxime in pluralitate consistunt. Individua namque maxime substant, id est subjacent accidentibus, et ideo magis proprie substantiae nomen suscipiunt. Unde jam supra manifestum est summam essentiam quae nullis subjacet accidentibus proprie non posse dici substantiam, nisi substantia ponatur pro essentia.”

19. Saint Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 29, a. 3, obj. 4 [English trans., p. 148]: “. . . Deus dici non potest individua substantia, cum principium individuationis sit materia; Deus autem immaterialis est: neque etiam accidentibus substat, ut substantia dici possit; nomen ergo personae Deo attribui non debet.” Then *ad 4m* [English trans., p. 158]: “Substantia vero convenit Deo, secundum quod significat existere per se.” See also *In Sententiarum libros*, I, d. XXIII, a. 2, obj. 3 (which cites Augustine) and *ad 3m* (which cites Richard of Saint-Victor’s interpretation of the trinitarian *substantia* as *existentia*, *De Trinitate*, IV, 20, PL 196, col. 943–44).

16. John Damascene, *De Fide Orthodoxa*, I, 9, Patrologia Graeca, vol. 94, col. 833 A-B.

17. Saint Augustine, *De Trinitate*, VII, 5, 10 [English trans., p. 111], respectively: “. . . manifestum est Deum abusive substantiam vocari, ut nomine usitatore intelligatur essentia, quod vere ac proprie dicitur: ita ut fortasse solum Deum dici oporteat essentia.” Then: “Res ergo mutabiles neque simplices, proprie dicuntur substantiae.” And finally: “. . . nefas est autem dicere ut subsistat et subsit Deus bonitati suae, atque illa bonitas non substantia sit vel potius essentia, neque ipse Deus sit bonitas sua, sed in illo sit tanquam in subjecto.” On the same point, see V, 2, 3, and VI, 5, 7, as well as note 33 of M. Mellet and T. Camelot, in their edition *La Trinité* (Paris, 1955), vol. 1, p. 584, and the excellent

the divine *esse* held to be subsistent: "God is subsisting *esse* itself."²⁰ Permanent subsistence can be said of God without his having to bear the status of substance, nor the relation to accidentality and materiality that it implies. Subsistence dispenses with substantiality in order to directly attain the *actus essendi*. Following his own paths, Saint Thomas thus recovers the Augustinian thesis. Hence Descartes' decision to attribute to God the name *substantia* cannot pass for a trivial repetition of previous decisions. Moreover, the fact that echoes of this debate were still ringing among his contemporaries forbids us to suppose the question to be minor or resolved. Take Gassendi: on the one hand, he agrees that "... it is customary to exclude God from the category of substance"; on the other hand, he contradicts this common opinion—"it is wrong to exclude God from the category of substance"—by treating the divine substance strictly in parallel with divine causality, just as Descartes did: "Seeing as God is really a cause—in fact the prime cause—and therefore is rightly counted among the causes, then he is really a substance and must be counted among the substances—and in fact even as the prime substance; for obviously it is more reasonable to call God a prime substance than Socrates, Bucephalus, or this stone."²¹ Gassendi was therefore perfectly conscious of opposing the regnant thesis when, like Descartes, he attributed substantiality to God. And he is not the only one. In 1613, Goclenius juxtaposes the two possibilities for justifying such an attribution, either its near-univocity or its restriction to Being *per se*:

Substance is understood at first generally, so that it might also be suitable to God. 2. [Secondly] in a specific sense, such that it is suitable only to creatures. . . . Substance is understood more properly and [also] abusively.

20. Saint Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 4, a. 2, c. [English trans., p. 22]: "... Deus est ipsum esse subsistens."

21. P. Gassendi, *Exercitationes Paradoxicae Adversus Aristoteleos*, II, d. 3, §6 [English trans., p. 54 (modified)], respectively: "... Deus vulgo excludatur a Categoria substantiae"; then: "Immerito Deum a Substantiae Categoria excludi"; finally: "Quippe ut vere Deus est causa et propterea inter causas (et prima quidem) merito habetur, ita vere substantia, ut proinde inter substantias numerari valeat (et quidem tanquam prima substantia, quia scilicet Deum potiore ratione, quam Socratem, quam Bucephalum, quam hunc lapidem primam substantiam appelleris)," ed. B. Rochot (Paris, 1959), pp. 325–27. As is well known, only *Book I* of the *Exercitationes* appeared during the lifetime of Gassendi, in 1624, from the house of Verdier. The rest of the work, constantly amended, appeared only posthumously (*Opera postuma*, Lyon, 1658). Consequently, Descartes should have been unaware of Gassendi's arguments on this point. However, it can be seen, with H. Jones, that Gassendi criticized the ambiguities in the Cartesian doctrine of substance: *Pierre Gassendi, 1592–1655: An Intellectual Biography* (Nieuwkoop, 1981), pp. 150ff.

More properly [when it is understood] in the most universal sense such that it is suitable even to God. Thus the being who really subsists *per se* is τὸ καθ' ἑαυτὸ ὑπεσθηκός.²²

Only the perseity of subsistence legitimates calling God a substance. Eustache de Saint-Paul adopts the same solution: faced with the substance spoken of as a *substando*, as "subject of accidents," he attempts to introduce a substance that can be thought exclusively as "existing *per se*, or rather not existing in another, which is what it means to subsist."²³ Scipion Dupleix applies substantiality to God only in this restricted sense: "God is a true and most perfect substance, however not predicable or categorical . . . , as he is not the subject or the lackey of any accident."²⁴ In view of this trend, Descartes appears to be one of the supporters of a weak sense of substantiality, one that makes it acceptable when speaking of God: namely, no longer the supposed subject of attributes, but subsistence *per se*; not categorical subsistence, but self-subsistence referred to itself: "... substantiae, hoc est res per se subsistentes [substance, that is, things which exist on their own (*per se*)] . . ." (AT VII, 222, 18 = 157); "... haec est ipsa notio substantiae, quod per se, hoc est absque ope alterius ullius substantiae possit existere [The notion of a *substance* is just this—that it can exist by itself (*per se*), that is without the aid of any other substance]" (226, 3–5 = 159). "Per substantiam, nihil aliud intelligere possumus quam rem quae ita existit, ut nulla alia re indigeat ad existendum [By *substance* we can understand nothing other than a thing which exists in such a way as to depend on no other thing for its existence]" (*Principia Philosophiae*, I, §51).²⁵ It can thus be observed in

22. Goclenius, *Lexicon Philosophicum*: "Substantia primum accipitur generaliter, ut etiam de Deo conveniat. 2. Specialiter, ut tantum conveniat creaturis. . . . Substantia accipitur magis proprie et abusive. Magis proprie generalissime, ut Deo etiam, conveniat. Ita est ens revera per se subsistens τὸ καθ' ἑαυτὸ ὑπεσθηκός" (op. cit., p. 1097).

23. Eustache de Saint-Paul, *Summa Philosophiae Quadripartita*, I, Logica, III, s. 1, q. 2: "Ut autem planius intelligas, cur particulares substantiae maxime proprie substantiae dicantur, nota substantiam dici tum a substando, cum a subsistendo; proprium enim substantiae est tum substerni seu subesse accidentibus, quod est substare, cum per se seu in non alio existere, quod est subsistere" (op. cit., p. 97). Only the second sense befits God, since "... vero repugnat Deum accidentibus subesse, cum nulli mutationi sit obnoxius [In truth, it is contradictory to say that God lies under accidents, since he is not susceptible of any change.]" (ibid., q. 3, op. cit., p. 98).

24. Scipion Dupleix, *La Métaphysique ou science surnaturelle*, V, 2, §4, op. cit., p. 193. Whence the recourse also to the qualifier *sur-substance* (X, 7, §12, op. cit., p. 88).

25. Or also: *vera substantia sive res per se subsistens*, *To Regius*, January 1642 (AT III, 502, 11 = PW III, 207). Here *vera* is opposed to the customary definition of substance as substantial form in relation to matter: "... substantiam quandam materiae adjunctam [a certain substance joined to matter]" (502, 8 = 207). See *Principia Philosophiae* I, §51 and

Descartes and his contemporaries that the very concept of substance undergoes a radical modification—it is freed from all reference to attributes and is summed up by subsistence *per se*. It can therefore be said beyond any doubt that the chief objection that was holding back Saint Augustine, Saint Anselm, and Saint Thomas—among others—now disappears. But despite that, not every objection disappears, if persiety does not just qualify God alone, but also defines all the other substances. With this alone, the indisputable displacement of the meaning of substantiality is not enough to make us understand how and why Descartes can determine God properly with the name *substance*. In fact, the first precise examples of a substance “*quae per se apta est existere* [which is capable of existing on its own (*per se*)]” given in *Meditatio III* do not lead to God, but to a stone (44, 22–23 = 30 [modified]) or to the *ego* (44, 22; 45, 7 = 30; 31 “*ego autem substantia*”). If substance *can* define God, it can also correctly define every extended or thinking finite thing. The new understanding of substantiality gives access to God only to at once come to a halt before a formidable aporia: the univocity, at least the near-univocity, of the henceforth indifferent notion of substance. This danger is one that Descartes sees, since he denounces it quite vigorously:

Atque ideo nomen substantiae non convenit Deo et illis [res omnes quae non nisi ope concursus Dei existere posse percipimus] *univoce*, ut dici solet in Scholis, hoc est, nulla ejus nominis significatio potest distincte intelligi, quae Deo et creaturis sit communis. [Hence the term “substance” does not apply *univocally*, as they say in the Schools, to God and to other things (namely, all things which we perceive cannot exist without help from the ordinary concurrence of God); that is, there is no distinctly intelligible meaning of the term which is common to God and his creatures.] [*Principia Philosophiae I*, §51.]

In *Scholis*, “in the Schools,” substance tends to become a determination that has the same meaning when it concerns God as it does when it concerns other things—at least if one trusts Suarez, for example: “. . . Created substance does not agree with uncreated substance merely by definition of being, but also by definition of substance.” Consequently, substantiality is attributed intrinsically to the creature in the same way as it is to God, in a finally undetermined relation: “. . . Even if God admits a

especially *Responsiones VI* (AT VII, 435, 5–8 = PW II, 293), which, with regard to the Eucharist, makes the distinction between the two senses of substantiality (see *supra*, chap. III, §13, n. 28).

certain agreement with some created beings by definition of substance, this is not spoken univocally but analogically.”²⁶ If one keeps in mind the drift toward univocity that analogy has in Suarez and others, one can sense that this stylistic reserve in fact covers over a univocity. This is what Descartes points out in the text cited above. But it is not enough to see a danger in order to avoid it. Though challenging all univocal application of substance to God and other beings, Descartes never succeeds in conceptualizing these two different senses with distinct terms. He maintains the same concept, and merely juxtaposes two contradictory uses of it: (a) Substance is said of a thing that has no need of anything else in order to exist. In the strict and only real sense, this definition admits only one consequence: “*Et quidem substantia quae nulla plane re indigeat, unica tantum potest intelligi, nempe Deus. Alias vero omnes, non nisi ope concursus Dei existere posse percipimus* [There is only one substance which can be understood to depend on no other thing whatsoever, namely God. In the case of all other substances, we perceive that they can exist only with the help of God’s concurrence]” (*Principia Philosophiae I*, §51). To put this in other terms, if the former definition of substance rules out applying it to God, the new one rules out applying it to anything but God alone. God alone is absolutely *per se*; therefore, he is the only actual substance. God is not just solely substance; he is the sole substance. Spinoza’s solution is already in play. (b) Nonetheless, Descartes does not stick to this position, even though he never contests it explicitly. Without the least theoretical justification, he will juxtapose to the first definition of the sole substance, God, a second definition of what persists—without reason—and will again use the name *substance*. In the *Meditationes*, one finds *ratio substantiae* (common to extension and the ego, according to 44, 27 = 30 and echoing Suarez). In *Principia*

26. Suarez, *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, XXXII, s. 1, respectively n. 1: “. . . substantia creata non convenit cum increata solum in ratione entis, sed etiam in ratione substantiae”; then n. 9: “. . . licet [Deus] aliquo modo conveniat in ratione substantiae cum aliquibus entibus creatis, non tamen univoce, sed analogice” (vol. 26, pp. 312 and 314). On this point, we refer to our analyses in *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes*, §7, pp. 110–20. According to the same logic and more radically than Suarez, Gassendi concludes:

... dico, ut nihil recedam ex Principiis communibus, tam nomen quam definitionem substantiae vere ac formaliter convenire Deo et creaturis, quare et convenire ipsis substantiam, sive conceptum substantiae abstractum univoce. [So that I might not fall back onto ordinary principles, I say that the name as well as the definition of substance truly and formally is suitable to God and to creatures, and for that reason substance too, that is the concept of substance abstracted universally, is suitable to them.]

(*Exercitationes* . . . II, d. 3, §9, op. cit., p. 335.)

Philosophiae I, §52, one finds a *communis conceptus*, which, however (*autem*), in contradiction with the preceding definition, names as substances “res, quae solo Dei concursu egent ad existendum [things that need only the concurrence of God in order to exist].” Here, the divine concurrence is put out of play, so to speak, with the result that not needing the concurrence of God and being totally in need of it amount to the same thing—namely, to the same denomination of substance. Here, in its lexicon if not in its intention, it is still a matter of Suarez’s imperfect solution.²⁷ Thus, Descartes does not elaborate a definition of substantiality that is sufficiently articulated to avoid falling into an untenable alternative: either repeat Suarez or anticipate Spinoza. The simple notion of substance does not offer a sufficient criterion for him to distinguish the three terms arranged hierarchically in *Meditatio III*: substance without help from any other thing is enough to distinguish between accident and substance, but not between created and uncreated substance.

This is why Descartes will introduce a new criterion: the infinite, which, in opposition to finite substance, will determine the fully constituted substance. It is important to emphasize that the infinite appears in definition [2] in, as it were, the same move that explicitly fixes its third term, “. . . quendam substantiam infinitam. . . .” For only when the criterion of infinity appears is it possible to apply substantiality to God. God is not *first* defined as a substance and *then subsequently* qualified as infinite or an infinite substance. To the contrary, God could never be named substance if Descartes did not first understand substance—with regard to God—as thoroughly infinite. The terms *substantia infinita* form a single and indivisible phrase, and this phrase is added to the definition without having any subset in common with the two other preceding terms. According to the hierarchy of perfection: accident < substance (always finite) < infinite-substance. One must even venture to say that substance, when applied to God, becomes a simple qualification added to the infinite, the only substantive, and then speak less of an infinite substance than of a substantial infinite. No doubt the texts do not explicitly confirm this interpretation. Sometimes it seems that God can be named substance by making just a slight adjustment: “Substantia, quam summe perfectam esse intelligimus, et in qua nihil plane concipimus

27. On this point, we would like now to correct the thesis that we advanced in *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes*, p. 113 and n. 3: Descartes does not refute the Suarezian doctrine of substance by limiting substance to created things, but by deducing it, in the case of God, from the infinite.

quod aliquem defectum sive perfectionis limitationem involvat, Deus vocatur [The substance which we understand to be supremely perfect, and in which we conceive absolutely nothing that implies any defect or limitation in that perfection, is called *God*]” (*Second Set of Replies*, AT VII, 162, 4–7 = PW II, 114). This text, drawn from a group arranged *more geometrico*, an order that, so strangely non-Cartesian, often alters the most Cartesian of conceptions, nonetheless remains an isolated example. It is counterbalanced by the commentary, from Descartes’ own hand, on the phrase *substantia infinita* in *Meditatio III*:

Per infinitam substantiam, intelligo substantiam perfectiones veras et re-ales actu infinitas et immensas habentem. Quod non est accidens notioni substantiae superadditum, sed ipsa essentia substantiae absolute sumptae, nullisque defectibus terminatae; qui defectus, ratione substantiae, accidentia sunt; non autem infinitas et infinitudo. [By “infinite substance” I mean a substance which has actually infinite and immense, true and real perfections. This is not an accident added to the notion of substance, but the very essence of substance taken absolutely and bounded by no defects; these defects, in respect of substance, are accidents; but infinity or infinitude is not.]²⁸

Thus we are clearly informed of three things: First, the perfections defining the infinite substance are themselves totally affected by infinity; accordingly, their reality becomes actually synonymous with the infinite itself (which eliminates the new definition of substantiality). Second, this substance does not admit of any accidents (which eliminates the categorical definition that former theologians had argued over). Third, the infinite and infinity, not being accidents added to substance, are identified with it. The definition of substance—in a word, the substance of substance—is therefore stated: the infinite. The infinite is not added—regarding God—to substance; it is substance that results from the infinite originally in God, and is suitable to him only in this way. Substantial infinite, less *substantia infinita* than, as here, *infinita substantia*. Thus, in sequence [2] of the attributes, *infinite* is added to *substance* lexically because, conceptually, substance itself is suitable to God only as subject to the primordial condition of infinity. Just as the lack of precision (*aliquis/quaedam*) called for the intervention of substance, substance in turn calls

28. *To Clerselier*, 23 April 1649, n. 4 (AT V, 355, 22–356, 2 = PW III, 377). As this explanation follows three others, each of which comments on a formulation from *Meditatio III*, it seems possible to relate it to [2] (and perhaps also to 45, 21, 22, and 27).

for the infinite. This is what—by a simple juxtaposition in his text, but in a much longer course for his reader—Descartes teaches.

Infinita/infinitus [*Deus*]. Therefore, in the end, God is properly qualified *Deus . . . infinitus* according to [1], or *substantia infinita* according to [2]. This name in fact dominated Descartes' rational theology from 1630 onward: contrary to "the common . . . way of imagining him as a finite thing," contrary to "the majority of people who do not regard God as a being who is infinite," Descartes established "that God is infinite."²⁹ In 1637, the infinite already counts among "all the perfections which I could observe to be in God" (DM 35, 5–6 = PW I, 128). The *Praefatio* to the *Meditationes* recommended at the outset that we remember "... mentes nostras considerandas esse ut finitas, Deum autem ut . . . infinitum [Our minds must be regarded as finite, while God is infinite]" (AT VII, 9, 15–17 = PW II, 8). All the way until the *Conversation with Burman*, God is defined by *infinita perfectio*.³⁰ We here find an unchanging Cartesian absolute, one that remains operative in all his writings. This privilege, as we already know, rests on strict theoretical reasons: only the infinite permits attributing substantiality to God; only this substantiality permits passing beyond the inevitable indetermination, and therefore entering upon "alia quaedam adhuc via." With the infinite, it is a matter of the highest Cartesian determination of God's essence, one that overarches and gives access to all the terms of both formulations [1] and [2], but also to any other foreseeable definition. *Infinite* does not express merely one among many other characteristics proper to God (as in DM, 35, 4 = PW I, 128), nor does it express the divine essence directly ("... Dei naturam esse . . . infinitam [the nature of God is . . . infinite]," AT VII, 55, 20–21 = PW II, 39). Rather, it defines God as such: "... Deum autem ita judico esse actu infinitum [God, on the other hand, I take to be actually infinite]" (47, 19 = 32); or, as an immediate corollary of [2] puts it, "... in me esse perceptionem infiniti . . . hoc est Dei [my perception of the infinite, that is God]" (45, 28–29 = 31). In a word, God "intelligitur enim esse infinitus [is understood to be infinite]" (365, 20 = 252 [modified]). This excellence is attested to explicitly by the infinite's anteriority to the finite; it is not the posterior negation of the finite, but indeed its *a priori* horizon: "... priorem quoddammodo in me esse perceptionem infiniti quam finiti, hoc est Dei quam mei ipsius [My perception of the infinite, that is God, is in some way prior to my perception of the finite,

that is myself]" (45, 28–29 = 31); or also: "In re ipsa prior est Dei infinita perfectio, quam nostra imperfectio [In reality the infinite perfection of God is prior to our imperfection]."³¹ Far from having used negation to constitute the infinite on the basis of the finite, it is the finite that, despite its appearance of positivity, results from a negation of the infinite, the sole positive *de facto* and *de jure*: "Nec verum est intelligi infinitum per finis sive limitationis negationem, cum e contra omnis limitatio negationem infiniti contineat [It is false that the infinite is understood through the negation of a boundary or limit; on the contrary, all limitation implies a negation of the infinite]" (365, 6–8 = 252).³² Attested to in this way, the priority of the infinite should not be understood in a restricted sense. It does not mark merely a logical priority (negation of the negation), nor an epistemological priority (*idea maxime clara et distincta*, 46, 8); rather it marks the priority of an *a priori*. The infinite precedes the finite in that it makes experience and the objects of this experience possible. Thus doubt but also all the (finite) modalities of the *cogitatio* find their condition of possibility in the idea of God as idea of the infinite. Descartes insists on the paradoxical fact that it is "per eandem facultatem [by the same faculty]" (51, 22 = 35) and even "simul [at the same time]" (51, 27 = 35) that the *ego* both perceives itself and apperceives the infinite; thus God (51, 29 = 35). "Totaque vis argumenti [the whole force of the argument] . . ." (51, 29–30 = 35) stems from this coincidence. The infinite does not precede the finite merely as a transcendent being, but above all as a transcendental condition for the possibility of the finite. Paradoxically, the idea of the infinite can claim to be *prior*, first after a long course of thought, only insofar as it shows itself as an *a priori* of the finite. It is thus imperative that the infinite be the first proper name of God, for at least two reasons: first because it alone makes it possible to attribute substantiality to God without running the risk of univocity; next because it causes God to be conceived as the *a priori* of finite experience and of the finite objects of experience.³³ This second reason reinforces, and perhaps even lies under, the first, whose innermost truth it constitutes.

The transcendental primacy of the infinite in the qualification of God

31. *Conversation with Burman* (AT V, 153, 30–31 = PW III, 338).

32. See *Responsiones I* (AT VII, 113, 11–14) and the response, *To Hyperaspistes*, August 1641 (AT III, 426, 27–427, 20 = PW II, 81 and PW III, 192).

33. See F. Alquié, *La découverte métaphysique de l'homme chez Descartes* (Paris, 1950), pp. 236ff.; E. Levinas, *Totalité et infini* (The Hague, 1964), pp. 186ff.; and "Sur l'idée d'infini en nous," in *La passion de la raison. Hommage à Ferdinand Alquié* (Paris, 1983), as well as N. Grimaldi, *L'expérience de la pensée dans la philosophie de Descartes* (Paris, 1978), p. 283.

29. *To Mersenne*, respectively, 15 April 1630 (AT I, 146, 18–19); 6 May 1630 (150, 5–7); and 27 May 1630 (152, 11; = PW III, 23; 24 [modified]; and 25).

30. AT V, 153, 30 = PW III, 338.

is immediately developed into several other determinations. They all take up the prefix, apparently negative but in fact supereminent and more than affirmative, that identifies the infinite: *in-*. Hence immensity, incomprehensibility, independence.³⁴ *Immensitas*: this qualifies God either directly (*Dei immensitas*, AT VII, 231, 26–232, 1 = PW II, 162) or through the mediation of his essence (*essentia immensa*, 241, 2–3 = 168) or through the mediation of his power (*immensitas potentiae*, 237, 8 = 165; *immensa potentia*, 110, 26–27; 119, 13; 188, 23 = 79; 85; 132; *immensa potestas*, AT VIII-1, 20, 8–9 = not included in PW; “. . . the immensity of his power . . .” AT IV, 119, 7–8 = PW III, 235) or even through the mediation of certain of his faculties (AT VII, 57, 11 = PW II, 40). In all these cases, immensity, more exactly the *absoluta immensitas* (137, 15–16), is to be understood at once in its most banal and its most rigorous meaning: what cannot be measured. Now, ever since the *Regulae*, measure determines, by means of the order that institutes and governs it, the entire field of the method. There is method solely in the realms of that objectivity “. . . in quibus aliquis ordo vel mensura examinatur [in which questions of order and measure are of concern” (AT X, 378, 1–2 = PW I, 19); in this way, the *Mathesis universalis* is carried out. In consequence, to qualify God by immensity retroactively affects all his properties; it amounts to subtracting God from the field in which the method is applied and removing him from the sciences that it elaborates. Immensity therefore does not rank with the other divine properties; it is not counted like one term among others. Rather, deduced directly from the infinite, it marks its extraterritoriality. Not measurable by infinity, God does not have a place, at least not in the method that must, in this case, admit a non-place. From the moment that measure—and thus the *Mathesis universalis*—can no longer comprehend the divine determinations within itself, it must be concluded that nothing in the definition of God, as much in [1] and [2] as in the other elaborations, will belong to the methodic science, and that therefore nothing in the definition of God can be treated in the mode of objectivity. Between the methodic science that uses all the simple natures indistinctly and the knowledge of God, immensity—immediately deduced from the infinite—cuts an unbridgeable chasm. Nothing of God can be constituted as object of a methodic science. Nothing of methodic objectivity can be attributed to God.

34. To this list, one should add immutability, mentioned in *Principia Philosophiae II*, §§37, 39, and 42, *To Mersenne*, 26 April 1643 (AT III, 649, 22–23 = PW III, 217), etc. See *supra*, chap. III, §14.

Hence, *incomprehensibilitas*—the second determination, which Descartes also deduces directly from the divine infinity: “. . . Deum autem, ut incomprehensibilem et infinitum [God is infinite and beyond our comprehension] . . .” (AT VII, 9, 16–17 = PW II, 8), “. . . Dei autem naturam esse immensam, incomprehensibilem, infinitam [The nature of God is immense, incomprehensible, infinite]” (55, 20–21 = 39). In fact, as early as 1630, this deduction appears in the same terms as it does in 1641. It can be found in one of the texts from 1630, which introduces the doctrine of the creation of the eternal truths: “. . . God as a being who is infinite and incomprehensible.”³⁵ This does not happen by chance; for if the eternal truths, thus also the simple natures that the method makes operative, are created by a God, this God, obviously, passes beyond the method, thus appears as incomprehensible to it. If the infinity of God on principle passes beyond (creation of the eternal truths) the strictly objectifying method, incomprehensibility will not betray an imperfection, a deficiency, or an irrationality in the definition of God; on the contrary, it will attest to its perfection, as the sign of another rationality. God the infinite is not known despite his incomprehensibility, but through it. For in casting itself toward the divine incomprehensibility, human reason truly surpasses itself and transcends the finite that it is in the direction of the infinite that is. Hence a doctrine that is as constant as it is paradoxical: “It is possible to know that God is infinite and all powerful although our soul, being finite, cannot comprehend or conceive him” (AT I, 152, 10–13 = PW III, 25 [modified]); “. . . intellectum meum, qui est finitus, non capere infinitum [My intellect, which is finite, does not encompass the infinite]” (AT VII, 107, 1–2 = PW II, 77); “. . . infinitum, qua infinitum est, nullo quidem modo comprehendi, sed nihilominus tamen intelligi [The infinite, *qua* infinite, can in no way be comprehended. But it can still be understood]” (112, 21–23 = 81 [modified]); “. . . idea infiniti, ut sit vera, nullo modo debet comprehendi, quoniam ipsa incomprehensibilitas in ratione formali infiniti continetur [The idea of the infinite, if it is to be a true idea, cannot be comprehended at all, since incomprehensibility itself is contained in the formal definition of the infinite]” (368, 2–4 = 253 [modified]); and finally: “. . . est de ratione infiniti ut a nobis, qui sumus finiti, non comprehendatur [It is in the nature of the infinite

35. *To Mersenne*, 6 May 1630 (AT I, 150, 6–7 = PW III, 24 [modified]), confirmed by the letter to the same correspondent in July 1642: “God is infinite and incomprehensible” (AT III, 393, 29–30 = PW III, 185), completed by “. . . Deus est ineffabilis et incomprehensibilis [God is ineffable and incomprehensible]” (*To Mersenne*, 21 January 1641 [AT III, 284, 7–8 = PW III, 169 (modified)]).

not to be fully comprehended by us, who are finite] . . ." (*Principia Philosophiae I*, §19 [modified]).³⁶ With divine incomprehensibility, it is not a matter of renouncing the rational knowledge of God, but of allowing rationality to know the infinite, thus to know, beyond the objectivity that it methodically masters, the infinite as such, as incomprehensible to the finite. Incomprehensibility will even become the surest sign that it is indeed God that the *cogitatio* knows, in accordance with the rule that nothing divine can be thought except as incomprehensible, and that nothing truly incomprehensible can be offered to the *cogitatio* without it in the end concerning God. From now on, all the subsequent elements of definition [1] and [2] will verify this rule, and with incomprehensibility, they will bear the mark of the infinite that they illustrate.

Independens: The attribute of independence (in [2], 45, 12) is deduced immediately from the infinite in accordance with a fundamental equivalence: "independence, conceived distinctly, involves infinity."³⁷ The idea of God implies independence as necessarily as it does noncreation and substantiality par excellence: "... ideam claram et distinctam substantiae cogitantis increatae et independentis, id est Dei [a clear and distinct idea of uncreated and independent thinking substance, that is of God]" (*Principia Philosophiae I*, §54). Of course, in God, substance accedes to independence only by virtue of the infinite, as opposed to the finite, which will therefore be dependent: "... si detur substantia infinita et independens, est magis res quam finita et dependens [substantia] [If there is an infinite and independent substance, it is more of a thing than a finite and dependent substance]" (*Third Set of Replies*, AT VII, 185, 25–27 = PW II, 130). The same opposition can be deduced directly from doubt, in which the divine independence appears as the transcendental *a priori* of the experience that the *ego* has of its own incompleteness: "Cumque attendo me dubitare, sive esse rem incompletam et dependentem, adeo clara et distincta idea entis independentis et completi, hoc est Dei, mihi occurrit [When I consider the fact that I have doubts, or that I am a thing that is incomplete and dependent, then there arises in me a clear and distinct idea of a being who is independent and complete, that is, an idea of God]" (53, 9–12 = 37). Independence is directly equivalent to aseity, as the French translation of the formula "... si a me essem [if

I derived my existence from myself] . . ." (48, 7 = 33) suggests with the gloss "... si j'étais indépendant de tout autre et que je fusse moi-même l'auteur de mon être [if I was independent of all others and was myself the author of my Being]."³⁸ If independence defines the divine aseity as *a priori*, then it determines in advance all that is not God as dependent. The concept of substance is thus divided between, on the one hand, the (substantial) infinite and, on the other, (substantial) dependence. One could even venture to say that, in both cases, "substance" plays the role of a simple attribute, either of the infinite or of the dependent. Since it always characterizes the created, nothing could be more coherent than to qualify the (created) eternal truths with the title dependent: "... The mathematical truths which you call eternal have been laid down by God and depend on him entirely no less than the rest of his creatures. Indeed to say that these truths are independent of God is to talk of him as if he were Jupiter or Saturn and to subject him to Styx and the Fates." Or: "... non autem contra veras [the eternal truths] Deo cognosci quasi independenter ab illo sint verae [They (the eternal truths) are not known as true by God in any way which would imply that they are true independent of him]." This thesis of 1630 is found again unchanged in 1641:

... ego non puto essentias rerum, mathematicasque veritates quae de ipsis cognosci possunt, esse independentes a Deo; sed puto nihilominus, quia Deus sic voluit, quia sic disposuit, ipsas esse immutabiles et aeternas. [I do not think that the essences of things, and the mathematical truths which we can know concerning them, are independent of God. Nevertheless I do think that they are immutable and eternal, since the will and decree of God willed and decreed that they should be so.]³⁹

Even the problem of man's free will will not alter the chasm between the divine independence and the dependence of the finite; man, though free,

36. See *To Mersenne*, 11 October 1638 (AT II, 383, 16–20) and 11 November 1640 (AT III, 234, 1–2 = PW III, 126 and 157). See *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes*, pp. 396–402.

37. *To Mersenne*, 30 September 1640 (AT III, 191, 15–16 = PW III, 154). Independence can be combined, within certain limits, with the finitude of free will: *To Elisabeth*, 3 November 1645 (AT IV, 332, 12–333, 7 = PW III, 277).

38. AT IX-1, 38, 17–18, confirmed by "... if I had existed alone and independently of every other being . . . , then for the same reason I could have got from myself everything else I knew I lacked, and thus been myself infinite, eternal, immutable, omniscient, omnipotent . . ." (DM, AT VI, 34, 30–35, 5 = PW I, 128).

39. Respectively, *To Mersenne*, 15 April 1630 (AT I, 145, 7–13); *To Mersenne*, 6 May 1630 (149, 23–24 [see also 150, 8 and 17]); *Responsiones V* (AT VII, 380, 8–12 [see *ibid.*, 370, 6–12] = PW III, 23; 24 [see also 25 and 25]; PW II, 261 [see 255]). See also *To Mesland*, 2 May 1644 (AT IV, 119, 1–14) and *Conversation with Burman*: "... illa et omnia alia pendunt a Deo [These too depend on God, like everything else] . . ." (AT V, 160, 1 = PW III, 235 and 343).

nonetheless remains dependent.⁴⁰ It must therefore be concluded first that independence is deduced directly from the infinity of God, and next that, by this peculiarity, the infinite determines *a contrario* what is not it. Accordingly, definition [2], precisely because it is anchored in the infinite as such, will from now on be inclined, in and through the transition from independence, toward the finite; or rather, it allows infinity to be declined from the point of view of the finite. And besides, how could the infinite give itself to be conceived, if not from the point of view of the finite, which the *ego* is? Consequently the subsequent attributes will only explicate the infinite, which, so to speak, oversees the relation between the infinite and the finite, either directly (creator/creatures) or indirectly (passage to the infinite from the finite perfections).

§18. Power and Perfections

The appellations attributed to God up until now all have a point in common. They are stated and justified negatively: God refuses finitude, measure, dependence. No doubt these negations are put right, first by the initial indetermination, then by the claim to the positive primacy of the infinite. But this does not stop one from hearing in them an echo of the “theological negations,” and it is even more likely that one will hear this echo insofar as the latter lead directly to the “way of eminence”—which transcends negation as well as affirmation by passing to excess. Such a theological identification of the first divine attributes (and names) can be confirmed in another way, too: By beginning with infinity and adding incomprehensibility, immensity, and its possible substance, Descartes retrieves the same order that Lessius followed when he intended to set forth the names and perfections of God.⁴¹ Consequently, shouldn’t

40. For example, *To Elisabeth*, 3 November 1645 (AT IV, 332, 12–333, 7) or January 1646 (AT IV, 352, 28–354, 14 = PW III, 277 or 282).

41. L. Lessius, in the *Quinquaginta nomina Dei*, devotes the two first chapters to *De Deo et divinitate*, then he passes to the infinity of God (chap. III), which governs his immensity (chap. IV), his indivisibility (chap. V), his eternity and his *altitudo* (chaps. VI and VII), then *immutabilitas* (chap. VIII), *immortalitas* (chap. IX), *invisibilitas* (chap. X) and, as for Descartes, *incomprehensibilitas* (chap. XI) accompanied by *ineffabilitas* (chap. XII). Thus, at issue is a series of theological negations. *Omnipotentia* appears only next (chap. XIII), making the transition to the affirmative attributes: wisdom, beauty, goodness, holiness, mercy, justice, etc. Still more significant, at least for purposes of a comparison with Descartes, is the order followed by Lessius in the treatise *De perfectionibus moribusque divinis*: at the outset, one finds the *infinitas Dei*, which engenders *incomprehensibilitas* (chaps. 1 and 2), then immensity (chap. II, 1) and immutability. Here again it is *omnipotentia* that permits passing to the affirmative perfections (chap. V).

we seek to determine a theological status for the qualifications that will follow? They too have a point in common: they open with the index of a superlative—*summe intelligens*, *summe potens*, *summe perfectum*. The mention of the creator does not really count as an exception here, since it results directly from the *ego*’s consciousness of its own imperfection (from the inversion of *summe*). The superlative still indicates eminence, to be sure; but this time by means of affirmation and, in the end, in the mode of affirmation. Descartes thus discovers the “theological affirmations,” not *before* the “theological negations”—as Dionysius the Areopagite and Saint Thomas would have it—but *after* them. This carries a twofold consequence. First of all, eminence no longer constitutes a third moment, autonomous if not equivalent to the first; rather, it simply crowns the other two ways, without really surmounting them. Next, since they do not open onto any third term, the negations (positive) and the affirmations (superlative) run the risk of being juxtaposed, indeed of contradicting each other, without there being any possibility of a final arbiter or court of appeals. This gives rise to an incurable tension in the Cartesian doctrine of the divine attributes and names—or at least these are the hypotheses that it is now time for us to test.

Summe intelligens: To this qualification of [2] (in 45, 12) there corresponds in [1] “*Deum . . . omniscium* [God . . . omniscient]” (40, 16–17 = 28); in the *Discourse on the Method*, “the perfect being . . . omniscient;”⁴² and in *Principia Philosophiae* I, §14, *ens summe intelligens*. In itself, this attribute does not call for any particular commentary, since it seems obvious that God should have supreme intelligence attributed to him. Nonetheless, not only in [1] and [2], but in the entirety of the Cartesian corpus, the attribute of supreme intelligence never receives any noticeable elaboration. This silence is all the more noticeable since the superlative *summe* sets up the parallel with the immediately following attribute, *summe potens*, whose privilege we have already seen in the initial indetermination (*vetus opinio* 21, 1–2; *praeconcepta opinio*, 36, 8–9) and whose development we have already pointed out. From this an inescapable question arises: why is there such an imbalance between two attributes that are ordinarily put on the same level? Or: why doesn’t supreme intelligence play a role comparable to omnipotence? Why is supreme intelligence not developed into a supreme *cogitatio*, which would correspond to omnipotence (however, without falling back into a distinction

42. DM, 35, 2–5 = PW I, 128. The Latin translation of P. de Courcelles reads *omniscius* (*Specimina Philosophiae* [Amsterdam, 1644], p. 32 = AT VI, 560, 4).

of faculties—understanding, will—in God)? One answer appears, at the very least, plausible, though provisional: God is not essentially determined by intelligence, and therefore Descartes mentions intelligence only briefly.

Summe potens. This title, formulated by [2] in 45, 12–13, confirms *omnipotens* in [1], 40, 17. In *Meditatio III*, its occurrences are not so numerous that they require particular commentary. However, omnipotence does not come up for the first time in [1] and [2]. In fact, it appears before the attempt at a real definition of the true essence of God; more specifically, it appears in the confused, not critical but working, definition of a “certain” God who provokes hyperbolic doubt. Descartes identifies this notion quite clearly: “. . . haec praeconcepta de summa Dei potentia opinio [my preconceived belief in the supreme power of God] . . .” (36, 8–9 = 25), “. . . infixam quaedam est meae menti vetus opinio, Deum esse qui potest omnia [Firmly rooted in my mind is the long-standing opinion that there is an omnipotent God] . . .” (21, 1–2 = 14). *Meditationes I* and *III* correspond to one another precisely: God is given to be thought as omnipotent, even before the *ordo rationum* becomes operative (*vetus/prae*), thus by a historically transmitted conception (*infixa/opinio*). In this way, omnipotence shows up before the *ordo rationum*. It even precedes the correct definitions of God; and its status as opinion takes away nothing from this factual privilege: first of all because such a status was the sole mode in which it was possible for the *ordo rationum* to appear at that time; and, more important, because the determination of God in terms of a preconceived opinion (21, 1–2 and 36, 8–9 = PW II, 14 and 25) is then confirmed rationally by [1] and [2]. The opined omnipotence becomes concept; the modality has changed, the meaning remains. Therefore omnipotence truly qualifies God in [1] and [2], but also, by anticipation, as early as the very first *Meditatio* in which the *vetus opinio* was definitively true, though not yet certain. From even before the raising of doubt, the divine omnipotence that provokes this doubt lies beyond it and withdraws from it, being hyperbolically certain. For if omnipotence deceives me, it is certain that it is. The omnipotence of God is freed from the *ordo rationum*, since it is always effective at playing its many roles, though with a different status each time. How are we to understand this exorbitant privilege, one shared by no other term in [1] and [2], of something theoretically valid yet indifferent to the *ordo rationum*? In fact, omnipotence does not hold this privilege in 1641 alone. To what does the opinion that has been firmly rooted in my mind (“. . . infixam quaedam . . . mea menti vetus opinio [firmly rooted in my

mind is the long-standing opinion] . . .” 21, 1–2 = 14), and that befalls me (“. . . mihi occurrit [comes to my mind] . . .” 36, 9 = 25), refer? Before searching for probable historical origins,⁴³ it is necessary to go back to the origin of Descartes’ own properly metaphysical career. From 1630 on, following a definitive decision, he thinks God as and through “incomprehensible power.”⁴⁴ This point, which is held by the *Discourse on the Method* in 1637, is thus something of an ancient and unchanging fact, traversing the texts of 1641 and, beyond *Meditationes I* and *III*, blossoming in the *Responsiones*, which resume to the letter the phrase from 1630: “. . . attendentesque ad immensam et incomprehensibilem potentiam, quae in ejus idea continetur [We attend to the immense and incomprehensible power that is contained in the idea of God] . . .” (AT VII, 110, 26–27 = 79). This revival of the theme allows for its overabundant orchestration: *infinita potestas* (220, 20 = 155), *immensitas potentiae* (111, 4 and 237, 8–9 = 80 and 165), *immensa potentia* (119, 13 and 188, 23 = 85 and 132), *potentia exuperans* (110, 27 = 79), *exuperantia potestatis* (112, 10 = 80). When it defines God as *summe potens*, definition [2] does not only anticipate *Responsiones I* (119, 6; 19; 22 = 85; 85; 85) by retrospectively justifying the hypothesis of *Meditatio I* (22, 25); it also designates the concept that Descartes will privilege, from 1630 until the end, whenever he wants to define the essence of God. Until the end: in the chronological sense to be sure, but also because everything, in God, can be deduced from omnipotence; for God alone can “. . . sibi dare omnipotentiam totam simul, aliasque perfectiones divinas collectivè sumptas [give himself omnipotence and the other divine perfections all together].”⁴⁵ As a constant, omnipotence determines the divine essence, be it epistemologically (1630) or hypothetically (*Meditatio I*) or as merely one of the divine attributes (*Meditatio III*, [1] and [2], *Discourse on the Method*, and *Principia Philosophiae*) or as the very essence of God as in the *Responsiones*—“. . . immensitatem potentiae, sive essentiae [the immensity of his power or essence] . . .” (AT VII, 237, 1 = PW II, 165). Permanent, unchanging, indifferent to the *ordo rationum*, omnipotence rejects every parallel with other attributes, like supreme intel-

43. See *supra*, n. 14.

44. To Mersenne, 15 April 1630 (AT I, 146, 4–5) and again 6 May 1630 (AT I, 150, 22 = PW III, 23 and 25). The *Principia Philosophiae I* read *summe potens* (§14) or *omnipotens* (§22).

45. To Arnauld, 4 June 1648 (AT V, 194, 1–3 = PW III, 355 [modified]). See To Mersenne, March 1642: “. . . [This] is known by natural reason—that he is all good, all powerful, all truthful, etc.” (AT III, 544, 20–21 = PW III, 211).

ligence. Etienne Gilson saw in it nothing less than “a new idea of God,” and we detect in it the oldest and most abiding Cartesian idea of God.⁴⁶ However, are we not thus contradicting ourselves massively? On the one hand, we are here positing omnipotence as the primordial definition of God; but on the other hand, we had established the infinite as the proper name of God. No doubt the contradiction cannot be hidden. What is still to be asked is the following: First, could this contradiction be eased by interpreting the infinite itself as the infinity of an omnipotence? Next, doesn’t this contradiction, be it provisional or definitive, betray a tension that is constitutive of Descartes’ discourse on God—in other words, don’t definitions [1] and [2], indisputably built on the primacy of the infinite as the proper name of God, harbor the possibility, already operative, of their displacement, replacement, indeed subversion by omnipotence, pregnant with another definition? Finally, does this contradiction stigmatize the fallibility of the interpreter or an incoherence that characterizes the rational theology of Cartesian metaphysics? As omnipotence, instead of being inscribed harmoniously in the *ordo rationum* like the infinite is, is deployed with total indifference to it and is also authorized by an unjustified anteriority, it could indeed, precisely by the contradiction that it effects, put us on the trail of an architectural incoherence.

... *et a qua tum ego ipse, tum aliud omne, si quid aliud extat, quodcumque extat, est creatum* [and which created both myself and everything else (if anything else there be) that exists]. This formulation from [2], at 45, 13–14 = 31, confirms [1] “... rerumque omnium, quae praeter ipsum sunt, creatorem [creator of all things that exist apart from him]...” (40, 17–18 = 28). Even though “... [he had] proved quite explicitly that God was the creator of all things,”⁴⁷ Descartes in the metaphysical texts does not grant the title *Deus creator omnium* (AT VII, 255, 10) a frequency proportionate to its dogmatic importance. It does, however serve, two functions: Either (1) that of a God who creates the *ego* in such a way that even the most evident things might in fact deceive it: “Deum esse qui potest omnia, a quo talis qualis existo, creatus sum [an omnipotent God who made me the kind of creature that I am]” (21, 2–3 = 14); “... talem me creasse, ut semper fallar [created me such that I am deceived all the time]” (21, 13–14 = 14); “Nec dubium est quin potuerit Deus me talem creare ut numquam fallerer [There is, moreover, no

doubt that God could have given me a nature such that I was never mistaken]” (55, 10–11 = 38). Or (2), that of a God who is creator of, among all things, the theoretical truths (“eternal truths”); thus, in 1630: “You ask me *in quo genere causae Deus disposuit aeternas veritates*. I reply: *in eodem genere causae* as he created all things, that is to say, *ut efficiens et totalis causa*. For it is certain that he is the author of the essence of created things no less than of their existence; and this essence is nothing other than the eternal truths.”⁴⁸ In 1644, the *Principia* again state this doctrine by mobilizing the concept of creation: “... omnipotentem, omnis veritatis bonitatisque fontem, rerum omnium creatorem [omnipotent, the source of all goodness and truth, the creator of all things]...” (I, §22),

... quia Deus solus omnium quae sunt aut esse possunt vera est causa, perspicuum est optimam philosophandi viam nos sequuturos, si ex ipsius Dei cognitione rerum ab eo creatarum explicationem deducere conemur, ut ita scientiam perfectissimam, quae est effectuum per causas, acquiramus. [Since God alone is the true cause of everything which is or can be, it is very clear that the best path to follow when we philosophize will be to start from the knowledge of God himself and try to deduce an explanation of things created by him. This is the way to acquire the most perfect scientific knowledge, that is knowledge of effects through their causes.] [I, §24.]

Of these two functions of creation, apparently only the first appears in 1641. Without being able to demonstrate it at length here, we believe that, in fact, in the *Meditationes* the first plays the role that the second has in the other texts. For God (or his provisional placeholder) could not overdetermine an evidence that my consciousness regards as perfect if he did not exceed this same evidence, and thus the truths and the essences in general; and he can exceed them only insofar as he creates them and thus is distinct from them. In this way, the two metaphysical functions of the attribute *creator* count as just one.⁴⁹ But at the same time, it becomes clear that, in all cases, creation is understood in terms of efficient causality (mentioned in 1630 and 1644), which is itself deduced directly from divine omnipotence (mentioned in 1630, 1641, and 1644). Descartes does not add any new qualification to his definition of God when he mentions that he is creator, since, for him, creation becomes

46. E. Gilson, *Etudes sur le rôle de la pensée médiévale dans la formation du système cartésien* (Paris, 1930), chap. V, pp. 224–33.

47. *To Mersenne*, 28 January 1641 (AT III, 297, 15–16 = PW III, 172).

48. *To Mersenne*, 27 May 1630 (AT I, 151, 1–152, 5 = PW III, 25).

49. See the demonstration in *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes*, §13, pp. 267ff.

intelligible only on the basis of omnipotence being carried out as *ultima causa* (50, 6). In contrast to the nominalists, who justified the (metaphysical) omnipotence of God by reference to (theological) creation, Descartes renders creation intelligible by reducing it to omnipotence, which is itself rationalized as efficient cause. This then is why definitions [1] and [2] do not begin with the creative function, conceived as an *explicans* drawn from theology, but instead are completed by it—as an *explicandum* rationally reduced to the preceding determinations, and, first of all, to omnipotence. Thus the attempt at two definitions of God in *Meditatio III* should be closed here. This however is not the case, despite appearances. A final name, strangely absent here, must still appear.

Ens summe perfectum. This phrase has to come up, since formulae [1] and [2] suffer not only from the incoherence that they introduce between the infinite and omnipotence, but also from a quite obvious incompleteness: they omit a number of qualifications that the theologians—but also the philosophers and, among them, Descartes himself—mention elsewhere: namely unity, eternity, truthfulness, goodness, beauty, justice, etc. That on its first try the *ordo rationum* cannot include them in its inventory is acceptable; but it cannot eliminate them without saying anything more. Descartes, no doubt well aware of the difficulty, therefore introduces, at the very heart of *Meditatio III*, something like a complementary definition, which, later, will be of use to *Meditatio V* when it tries to restate the *a priori* proof. Let us take this to be the third pronouncement:

[3] . . . unitas, simplicitas, sive inseparabilitas eorum omnium [rerum] quae in Deo sunt, una ex praecipuis perfectionibus quas in eo esse intelligo [The unity, the simplicity, or the inseparability of all the attributes of God is one of the most important of the perfections which I understand him to have]. (50, 16–19 = 34)

This pronouncement must be completed by the formulations surrounding it: “. . . omnesque perfectiones quas Deo tribuo [all the perfections which I attribute to God]” (46, 30 = 33) “. . . reliquas omnes Dei perfectiones [all the other perfections of God]” (47, 5 = 32), “. . . nihil enim ipso perfectius [nothing more perfect than God] . . .” (48, 5 = 33), “. . . omnium perfectionum, quas Deo tribuo, ideam [the idea of all the perfections which I attribute to God] . . .” (49, 28–29 = 34), “. . . omnes [perfectiones] quas in Deo esse concipio [all the perfections which I conceive to be in God]” (50, 3–4 = 34), and finally “. . . Deus, inquam, ille idem cujus idea in me est, hoc est habens omnes illas perfectiones quas

ego . . . quocumque modo attingere cogitatione possum [By ‘God’ I mean that of which the idea is in me, that is, the possessor of all the perfections which I . . . can somehow reach in my thought]” (52, 2–6 = 35 [modified]). God thus becomes accessible to thought in a new way: his idea, thus also his existence, is not imposed right away, as previously the idea of infinity was, but can be constructed by the human understanding that counts up the perfections, reconciles them with each other, then attributes them to God. We must follow, quickly, these three operations in a new definition of God. First, the counting up or the inventory: after unity, simplicity, and inseparability (50, 16–17), Descartes mentions goodness (85, 25; 87, 28; 88, 20), truth (“ . . . cum enim Deus sit summum ens, non potest non esse etiam summum bonum et verum [Since God is the supreme being, he must also be supremely good and true]” (144, 3–4 = 103), beauty (52, 14), etc. Among the perfections, even *summum ens* must be counted,⁵⁰ and especially *existentia* (66, 13–14; 67, 14–15, 26–27). In fact, the list of perfections to be counted up for the new notion of God can never be closed, since “all the perfections which I could observe to be in God” (DM, AT VI, 35, 5–6 = PW I, 128) include nothing less than “. . . omnes omnino perfectiones [absolutely all the perfections]”: “. . . Deus tale quid dicat quod omnes omnino perfectiones in se comprehendit [God is spoken of as the one who includes absolutely all the perfections in himself].”⁵¹ Quantitatively, God accumulates perfections indefinitely; their inventory will thus always remain, on principle, incomplete. But God can receive these perfections legitimately by marking them with the infinite, which characterizes him in the first place. To the practice of a (quantitative) inventory, the human mind must therefore add that of a (qualitative) amplification. Descartes describes this by reference to “. . . facultas omnes perfectiones creatas ampliandi, hoc est aliquid ipsis majus sive amplius concipiendi [a faculty for amplifying all created perfections (i.e., conceiving of something greater or more ample than they are)],” or “. . . vis perfectiones humanas eoque ampliandi ut plusquam humanae esse cognoscantur [the power of amplifying all hu-

50. *Summum ens* (AT VII, 54, 18 = PW II, 38); *ens primum et summum* (67, 21 = 47); “. . . cum animadverto existentiam esse perfectionem, recte concludam ens primum et summum existere [When I later realize that existence is a perfection, I am correct in concluding that the first and supreme being exists].” 67, 26–28 = 47; *summum ens sive Deum*, 69, 8 = 47; “cum enim Deus sit summum ens [since God is the supreme being] . . .,” 144, 3 = 103; “. . . Dei sive entis summi ideam [the idea of God, or a supreme being] . . .” *Principia Philosophiae I*, §18. See *supra*, chap. II, §8, n. 40.

51. *Conversation with Burman* (AT V, 161, 8–9 and 3, 4 = not included in PW).

man perfections up to the point where they are recognized as more than human].”⁵² For it is clear that the perfections, such as they are apprehended by the *ego* while it counts them up, still belong to the finite and the created human. It must therefore be the case that the idea of the infinite that inhabits the *ego* “stretches” each of them to the infinite, by means of an operation that renders them incomprehensible but only thus appropriate to the infinite. Only then can the perfections quantitatively and qualitatively carried to infinity be attributed to God, conceived as *cumulum perfectionum* and *omnium perfectionum complementum*.⁵³ God therefore does not accomplish merely the summation of perfections, but most important, their elevation to an infinite power: from an infinity of perfections to the infinity of the perfections. Thus the highest perfection of God consists in the utterance of perfection itself, carried to the superlative—the “. . . idea entis perfectissimi hoc est Dei [idea of a most perfect being, that is, God]” (51, 3–4 = 35), says *Meditatio III*, along with other names. In what follows, this phrase constantly reappears: “. . . Dei, sive entis summe perfecti [God, or a being who is supremely perfect]” (54, 13–14 = 38), “. . . Deum (hoc est ens summe perfectum) [God, that is a supremely perfect being]” (66, 12–13 = 46), “. . . Deum . . . (hoc est ens summe perfectum) . . . [God . . . (that is, a supremely perfect being) . . .]” (67, 9–10 = 46), “Substantia, quam summe perfectam esse intelligimus . . . *Deus* vocatur [The substance which we understand to be supremely perfect . . . is called *God*]” (162, 4–7 = 114). The superlative of perfection, in other words the perfection of perfection, fills the role of dominant qualification of God, as much by its frequency in 1641 as by its enduring unchanged in 1637 and 1644.⁵⁴ The

52. *Fifth Set of Replies* (AT VII, 365, 15–17 and 370, 25–371, 2 = PW II, 252 and 255). At issue here is the transformation of the finite attributes (human perfections) into infinite attributes (divine), as is suggested quite explicitly by a text from the *First Set of Replies* (AT VII, 137, 15–138, 10 = PW II, 98–99). See *To Regius*, 24 May 1640 (AT III, 64, 5–20 = PW III, 147). The perfections thus become superlatives: “. . . summarum Dei perfectionum ideam [an idea of the supreme perfections of God] . . .” *Principia Philosophiae I*, §20; “. . . summam perfectiones . . . in Deo [the supreme perfections . . . in God],” *I*, §18 [modified].

53. Respectively, *Comments on a Certain Broadsheet* (AT VIII- 2, 362, 12 = PW I, 306) (“le comble et l’accomplissement des perfections,” translates F. Alquié, in *Descartes, Œuvres philosophiques*, vol. 3, p. 812) then *Principia Philosophiae I*, §18 [modified], which goes on to define God as “Archetypus aliquis, omnes ejus perfectiones reipsa continens [some archetype which contains in reality all the perfections]” [modified].

54. See, among other occurrences: “. . . nihil enim ipso perfectius [nothing more perfect than God] . . .” (AT VII, 48, 5 = PW II, 33); “. . . Deum . . . summe perfectum [God, who is supremely perfect] . . .” (62, 17–18 = 43); “. . . illis omnes perfectiones tribuere

definition of God [3] by superlative perfection proves its primordial role by sustaining the *a priori* proof for the existence of God; but it offers especially strong proof of playing this role by its limitless capacity to integrate any perfection whatsoever into a single determination of God—provided only that this perfection pass into the superlative (or have the adverb *summe* attached). Definition [3] furnishes, far more than a definition of the divine essence, the matrix for an infinite number of possible definitions of the divine essence by means of any perfection whatsoever being taken to the infinite. The infinite is concretely accomplished in the summation of perfections, as Descartes indicates at least once: “. . . nomen *infiniti*, quod rectius vocari posset *ens amplissimum* [I kept the term infinite, when the ‘greatest being’ would be more correct].”⁵⁵ The sum of the perfections designates God as *ens perfectissimum*—as a sort of divine name, and not merely like a concept of being in general.⁵⁶ The determination of God by perfection thus takes up, through summation, an infinity of other perfections borne to the infinite in each case. God as *ens summe perfectum* should therefore appear at the forefront of the definitions. This is not the case, however, seeing as this divine name, directly implied by the last attributes stated in [1] and [2], is explicitly thematized only with formula [3]. The tension between the two divine names in each of the first two formulations is now compli-

[attribute all perfections to him] . . .” (67, 23–24 = 47); “. . . in causa illa contineri omnes perfectiones, ac proinde illam Deum esse [that this cause contains every perfection, and hence that it is God] . . .” (108, 5–6 = PW II, 78); “. . . ista idea Dei . . . naturam entis summe perfecti [the idea of God . . . the nature of a supremely perfect being] . . .” (138, 10–13 = PW II, 99); “. . . natura Dei, sive entis summe perfecti [the nature of God, or the supremely perfect being] . . .” (163, 12 = 115); DM, 34, 20–24 = PW I, 128: “. . . a nature truly more perfect than I was and even possessing in itself all the perfections of which I could have any idea, that is—to explain myself in one word—by God; ‘a perfect being’” (38, 20 = 130); “. . . God, who is all-perfect . . .” (40, 10–11 = 130); “. . . the infinite perfections of God . . .” (43, 7–8 = 132).

55. *To Hyperaspistes*, August 1641 (AT III, 427, 12–13 = PW III, 192).

56. We therefore cannot subscribe to Heidegger’s thesis:

Gott ist einfach der Titel für dasjenige Seiende, in dem sich die Idee von Sein überhaupt im echten Sinne realisiert. “Gott” ist hier einfach ein rein ontologischer Begriff, und daher wird er auch das *ens perfectissimum* genannt. [God is the name for that entity in which the idea of being as such is realized in its genuine sense. Here “God” is but a purely ontological concept and is therefore also called the *ens perfectissimum*] [most perfect entity].

(*Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, G. A., 20, p. 233, see p. 239 [English trans., p. 173, see 177.] This interpretation, put forth explicitly with regard to Descartes, is found again in *Sein und Zeit*, §20, op. cit., pp. 92, 19 [English trans., p. 125].

cated by a new tension between, on the one hand, these two formulae, and, on the other, a third—since it alone clearly states the third divine name, presupposed by but not made explicit in the first two. If one inventories the attributes that define God in *Meditatio III*, it then becomes possible to refer each of them to a precise divine name: Falling under the jurisdiction of the divine name *infinitum* are the attributes (cited by [1] and [2]) *substantia*, infinity, independence, immensity, and incomprehensibility, all within the domain of the *via negativa*. Falling under the jurisdiction of the divine name *potentia* are the attributes (also cited in [1] and [2]) creation and supreme power, each within the domain of eminence, since power remains at once incomprehensible (negation) and productive (affirmation). Finally, falling under the jurisdiction of the divine name *ens summe perfectum* is the attribute (cited by [1] and [2]) of supreme intelligence, but also all the thinkable perfections (cited in [3]), each within the domain of the *via affirmativa*. Descartes thus recognizes three principal divine names, and following the three moments of the theology of divine names such as it has unfolded since Dionysius the Areopagite, he attaches to them three series of God's attributes. If this classification is correct, a question immediately forces itself upon us. Descartes simply juxtaposes three names, three modes of utterance, and three series of attributes, without giving any cause to suspect that a rigorous organization of them might be possible. Meanwhile, the theologians—the ancient ones, at least—arrange these terms in the coherent itinerary of a mystical theology. The rhapsody that Descartes substitutes for this coherence certainly does not totally eliminate it; it merely masks it, since we have been able to reconstitute it. However, isn't it exposed to a disorder that reaches the point of incoherence? Can the three divine names here juxtaposed without a theologically justified organization be deployed without contradicting each other? Doesn't the absence of all hierarchy condemn them to unveil their incompatibility in the field of metaphysical pronouncements? In short, doesn't the metaphysical revival of the divine names outside of their theological situation lead to tensions that are so strong that, in the end, they appear contradictory? The hesitations and the imprecisions stigmatized in [1], [2], and [3] would thus offer only the signs of a more essential conceptual distortion.

§19. The System of Contradictions

The task before us now is to test, with an eye toward proving or disproving, the irreducible plurality of divine names implied by the attributes

enumerated in formulae [1], [2], and [3]. The three divine names, designated approximately as *infinitum*, *potentia*, and *ens summe perfectum*, oppose each other for a reason: each of them takes up one of the ways of mystical theology; but instead of being organized into a single anabasis, they are simply juxtaposed without any conceptual links. Everything happens as if Descartes deployed successively, but without any conceptual connection, a *via negativa* (God the infinite), a *via affirmativa* (God as *ens summe perfectum*), and finally a passage unto eminence (*potentia*). This verdict could be tested by two procedures, one internal and one external. The internal procedure: which body of concepts issued from Descartes' texts emphasizes the irreducibility of each of the three terms just distinguished? We propose the following hypothesis: each of the three divine names is discussed in one of the three principal proofs for the existence of God constructed by Descartes: *infinitum* names God in *Meditatio III*; *ens summe perfectum* names God in *Meditatio V*; *potentia* names God in *Responsiones I* and *IV*, by way of the proof by *causa sui*. The compatibility, or lack thereof, of the three divine names would thus be decided by reference to the compossibility, or lack thereof, of the three principal Cartesian proofs for the existence of God. The organization of the proofs would display the arrangement of the divine names that they put into operation and presuppose.⁵⁷ This procedure, that is, this internal examination, should also be followed up by an external examination. The divine names that Descartes privileged, like the corresponding proofs, have a history. By identifying their respective genealogies, be it only summarily, it would perhaps become possible to point out conceptual decisions that are more precise than their Cartesian consequences. In a word, the tensions between the divine names would appear all the more visible if they were seen diachronically, and no longer just synchronically. For each of the three divine names Descartes kept, we will therefore attempt to identify a historically probable and conceptually significant origin, so as to widen the debate about the Cartesian divine names to include the debate about the history of the divine names in general. Subject to this twofold condition, it will perhaps become possible to situate the Cartesian decisions about the essence of God

57. We thus again come across the difficulty at which the earlier analysis of *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes* ended up, particularly §19, pp. 444ff., and are obliged to oppose our position, at least methodologically, to F. Alquié: "The distinction of the different proofs employed by Descartes cannot be essential, and their nature will be better revealed to him who, on the contrary, will consider their unity" (*La découverte métaphysique de l'homme chez Descartes*, op. cit., p. 219).

within the ranks of the theological treatise on the divine names. That is to say, it will become possible to really broach the most basic question—does God, for and through Descartes, enter into metaphysics, and, if so, with what names?

The first determination of the essence of God—which, for the sake of convenience, we will designate [A]—apprehends him as infinite. In formulations [1] and [2], the infinite governs substantiality, independence, immensity, and incomprehensibility. It also makes possible the so-called proof by effects in *Meditatio III*. Can we pinpoint its historical origin? Caterus' conviction was this: discussing the derived and pedagogical form of the proof by the idea of infinity, a proof that is set out as a search for the productive cause of this idea in me, he concludes:

Illa demum ipsa via est, quam et S. Thomas ingreditur, quam vocat viam a causalitate causae efficientis, eamque desumpsit ex Philosopho; nisi quod isti de causis idearum non sint solliciti. [This is exactly the same approach as that taken by St. Thomas: he called this "the way based on the causality of the efficient cause." He took the argument from Aristotle, though neither he nor Aristotle was bothered about the causes of ideas.] [AT VII, 94, 15–18 = PW II, 68.]

No doubt one can make a favorable comparison between the proof by effects, arriving at God as a *causa ultima* "... quae erit Deus [and this will be God]" (50, 6 = 34), and the second of the five *viae* constructed by St. Thomas: "It is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name God."⁵⁸ But the limits of this rapprochement appear at once, and even Caterus himself sees them: causality is exerted not over beings, according to an Aristotelian and trivial ἀνάγκη στήναι, but over the *idea* of the infinite, and this infinite is understood positively, such that it never need come to a stop anywhere. This is why Descartes declines, discreetly but firmly, the improperly attributed support of Thomistic authority: "... sed permittat, quaeso, de aliis me tacere, atque eorum tantum, quae ipse scripsi, reddere rationem [However, I hope he will allow me to avoid commenting on what others have said, and simply give an account of what I have written myself]" (106, 11–13 = PW II,

58. *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 2, a. 3, *resp.* [English trans., p. 13]: "... ergo est necesse ponere aliquam causam efficientem primam, quam omnes Deum nominant." Caterus makes such a comparison, noting all the while that "... isti [Thomas and Aristotle] de causis idearum non sint solliciti [Neither he nor Aristotle was bothered about the causes of ideas]" (AT VII, 94, 15–18 = PW II, 68). This comparison is supported by AT VII, 383, 15 = PW II, 263 and by F. Alquié in *Descartes. Œuvres philosophiques*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 254.

77). The reference to Saint Thomas, in fact inaccurate, also seems perfectly useless, since Descartes could have direct access to two denominations of God by the infinite: first Lessius, who, as we have seen, makes it the first of the divine names; then Suarez, who establishes that "... the first and most essential division of being is into finite and infinite,"⁵⁹ such that God's way of Being consists in the infinite itself. By this twofold intermediacy, Descartes can be seen to be affiliated with Duns Scotus, who—more clearly than anyone, if not perhaps before anyone—had thought God as infinite:

The most perfect and at the same time the most simple concept possible for us is the concept of infinite being. For this is simpler than the concept of good being, true being or other similar concepts since infinite is not something like an attribute or an affection of being or of that to which it is predicated. Rather it signifies an intrinsic mode of that entity so that when I say "infinite being," I do not have a concept composed accidentally, as it were, of a subject and its affection, but a single concept of the subject with a certain degree of perfection, namely infinity.

In other words, "this most perfect concept which we have formed about God is the concept of infinite being; for it is the most simple, the most proper and the most perfect of the concepts we conceive of God." That is, it is the most simple because every other concept is extended to beings other than God (for instance the true, the good, etc.); it is the most proper because it is not counted among the other attributes of God, but on the contrary, overdetermines them: "Infinity is formally included in any [divine] attribute whatsoever as a certain degree of perfection"; finally, it is the most perfect "because it contains virtually all the other concepts which are spoken of God."⁶⁰ Like Descartes after him, Duns

59. Suarez, *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, XXVIII, prol.: "Diximus autem in superioribus, disp. 4, sect. 4, primam et maxime essentialem divisionem entis esse in finitum et infinitum secundum essentiam seu in ratione entis, quod solum est proprie et simpliciter infinitum" (op. cit., vol. 26, p. 1).

60. Duns Scotus, respectively *Ordinatio*, d. 3, p. 1, q. 1–2, n. 58 [English trans., p. 30 (modified)]:

... conceptus perfectior simul et simplicior, nobis possibilis, est conceptus entis infiniti. Iste enim est simplicior quam conceptus entis boni, entis veri, vel aliorum similium, quia "infinitum" non est quasi attributum vel passio entis, sive ejus de quo dicitur, sed dicit modum intrinsecum illius entitatis, ita quod cum dico "infinitum ens" non habeo conceptum quasi per accidens, ex subjecto et passione, sed conceptum per se subjecti in certo gradu perfectionis, scilicet infinitatis.

Opera omnia, ed. C. Balič (Rome, 1950), vol. 3, p. 40; then *Lectura*, I, d. 3, p. 1, q. 1–2, nn. 50–52: "... ille conceptus perfectissimus quem nos concipimus de Deo, est conceptus entis

Scotus privileges the infinite as concept. From the perspective of conceiving him, thus of knowledge and its particular demands, God is said with the infinite—most simple, most proper, and most perfect to be known. With this presupposition, both Scotus and Descartes break with Saint Thomas, who, all the while acknowledging infinity in God, subordinates it to *esse*, to the detriment of the epistemological privilege of conceptualization: “Since therefore the divine being is not a being received in anything [other than itself], but He is His own subsisting being . . . , it is clear that God Himself is infinite and perfect.”⁶¹ Here the infinite is deduced from subsisting *esse*, and therefore remains an attribute that is secondary from the perspective of subsisting beingness. Thus Descartes adopts a second position from Duns Scotus (one from which the first point of agreement derives directly)—the concept’s primacy over beingness. It is inasmuch as he is conceivable that God must first be spoken of as the infinite. In concluding “Deum autem ita judico esse actu infinitum [God, on the other hand, I take to be actually infinite]” (47, 19 = 32), Descartes is, as it were, citing Duns Scotus: “. . . ergo aliquod infinitum ens existit in actu [Therefore some infinite being actually exists].”⁶² Of course, the infinite is understood not negatively, but positively. Besides the authority of Duns Scotus, Descartes could invoke that of Suarez: “Though the term *infinite* is negative, by this negation we are defin-

infiniti; est enim simplicior et magis proprius, et perfectior conceptus quem nos concipimus de Deo. . . . infinitum formaliter includitur in quolibet attributo tanquam gradus perfectionis cujuslibet. . . . Item, est perfectior conceptus quem de Deo concipimus, quia virtualiter continet alios conceptus dictos de Deo” (op. cit. [Rome, 1960], vol. 16, p. 244). See also *Quodlibet* V, n. 4, and V, n. 17: “Divinitas est formaliter infinita [Divinity is formally infinite].” On this point, in addition to the classic works of E. Gilson, one should consult P. Vignaux, “Etre et infini selon Duns Scot et Jean de Ripa,” in *De doctrina Ioannis Scoti. Acta congressus scotistici internationalis, Oxonii et Edimburghi*, 11–17 Sept. celebrati (Rome, 1966), vol. 4, as well as “Infini, liberté et histoire du salut,” in *Deus et homo ad mentem I. Duns Scoti. Acta tertii congressus scotistici internationalis*, Vindobonae, 28 Sept.–2 Oct. 1970 (Rome, 1972). Both these articles are reprinted in *De saint Anselm à Luther* (Paris, 1976), pp. 353ff. and 495ff. See also C. Berubé, “Pour une histoire des preuves de l’existence de Dieu chez Duns Scot,” in *Deus et homo ad mentem I. Duns Scoti*, op. cit.

61. Saint Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia., q. 7, a. 1, resp.: “. . . cum autem esse divinum non sit esse receptum in aliquo, sed ipse sit suum esse subsistens, ut supra ostensum est (q. 3, a. 4), manifestum est, quod ipse Deus sit infinitus et perfectus” [English trans., p. 31]. On this text and the opposition between Thomas and Scotus on matters concerning the infinite in God, see E. Gilson, *Jean Duns Scot. Introduction à ses positions fondamentales* (Paris, 1952), pp. 149–215 (particularly pp. 208–10).

62. Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio I*, d. 2, p. 1, q. 1–2, n. 147 (op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 214ff. [English trans., p. 80]).

ing a certain supreme being or excellence.”⁶³ Confronted with the same paradox, Descartes will say: “. . . priorem quodammodo in me esse perceptionem infiniti quam finiti [My perception of the infinite . . . is in some way prior to my perception of the finite]” (45, 28–29 = 31). This is to say that he will invert the verbal negation with a semantic affirmation: “Nec verum est intelligi infinitum per finis sive limitationis negationem, cum e contra omnis limitatio negationem infiniti contineat [It is false that the infinite is understood through the negation of a boundary or limit; on the contrary, all limitation implies a negation of the infinite].”⁶⁴ An objection of the Hegelian sort—the infinite, remaining without determination or delimitation, does not offer any actually thinkable rational content—would here ring false: the infinite is determined as first, most simple, most proper, most perfect, most intelligible, condition for the possibility of the finite, etc. With the choice of the infinite as first divine name, Descartes does not make a solitary departure into some uncharted territory, but is inscribed in an ongoing tradition that comes to him from Duns Scotus through Suarez in philosophy and Lessius in theology. The fact that he is not the first to so distinguish the infinite provides even more support for our claim that the infinite can count as the first of all the divine names. We have thus identified, in what is essential, the status and the origin of determination [A] of God as infinite. It remains for us to determine how the *via negativa*, from which [A] unquestionably arises, does not weaken its theoretical rigor. Or, in other words, how can a denomination obtained negatively (even if it claims to be semantically positive), a denomination that is the origin of a series of negations (independence, immensity, ineffability, etc.), perform the function of “. . . praecipuum argumentum ad probandum Dei existentiam [principal argument for proving the existence of God]” (AT VII, 14, 18–19 = PW II, 10), or of *praecipua ratio* (101, 17)? It, [A], does not hold this incomparable primacy on account of its anteriority in the *ordo rationum* (which depends on it), but on account of its intrinsic excellence. This excellence follows from its characteristic property: incomprehensibility. And we have seen that incomprehensibility results directly from the infinite: “. . . idea enim infiniti, ut sit vera, nullo modo debet comprehendi, quoniam ipsa incomprehensibilitas in ratione formali infiniti continetur [For

63. Suarez, *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, XXVIII, respectively s. 2, n. 12: “Nam licet vox *infinitum* negativa sit, per illam negationem nos circoscribimus summam quamdam entitatem seu excellentiam” (op. cit., vol. 26, p. 11).

64. *Responsiones* V, 365, 6–8 = PW II, 252. See *Responsiones* I, 113, 9–14 = PW II, 81.

the idea of the infinite, if it is to be regarded as a true idea, cannot be comprehended at all, since the impossibility of being comprehended is contained in the formal definition of the infinite]."⁶⁵ The incomprehensibility of the infinite is not the same as the impossibility of knowing it (*incognoscibilitas*); it designates precisely the particular mode of its knowability: the infinite is known without being comprehended—that is to say, without admitting a construction according to the rules and the parameters of the method as a measurable and ordered object, one made evident and available to the mind. Without resuming here a line of inquiry that we have taken up elsewhere,⁶⁶ we will recall a weighty argument: definition [A], thus the proof by the infinite, comes up in a passage between the end of *Meditatio I* and the ultimate conclusion of *Meditatio III* (52, 6–9); it thus shows up when the evidence of objects of the method is suspended and disqualified. If God must be known nevertheless, he has to be known in another mode besides that of the evidence of objects of the method. Whence a knowledge of God that, by virtue of hyperbolic doubt, also hyperbolically passes beyond the evidence (now out of play) of the material simple natures, which is to say, beyond the evidence of, among other things, the mathematical truths. But, it will be asked, what do we really know of the infinite if it is interchangeable with the incomprehensible? What reality will its idea have if we absolutely cannot apprehend it as an object? The answer to this question had already been formulated by Descartes in 1630: "... The greatness of God, on the other hand, is something which we cannot comprehend even though we know it. But the very fact that we judge it incomprehensible makes us esteem it the more greatly ... his power is incomprehensible."⁶⁷

65. *Responsiones V*, 368, 2–4 = PW II, 253 [modified]. Without here reviving the debate about "the ontological, and not purely representational, character" of the idea of infinity (F. Alquié, *La découverte métaphysique de l'homme chez Descartes*, p. 219) or, on the contrary, "its representative character" (M. Gueroult, *Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons*, vol. 1, pp. 161ff.), two points will simply be noted: (a) Non-comprehension does not mean non-knowledge, but a knowledge that does not construct its object according to the parameters of the *Mathesis Universalis*. Thus God can and must be known as infinite without the clarity of a methodic object and, at the same time, with an evidence greater than it. (b) This deduction of incomprehensibility from the infinite does not prevent Descartes from speaking—on the very same page—of a representation of the infinite: "... repraesentare ... totum infinitum, eo modo quo debet repraesentari per humanam ideam [represent the infinite in its entirety in a manner which is appropriate to a human idea]" (368, 6–8 = 253 [modified]). See *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes*, pp. 404–6.

66. References in *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes*, p. 399, n. 6.

67. *To Mersenne*, 15 April 1630 (AT I, 145, 21–24 and 146, 4–5 = PW III, 23 and 23 [modified]). See: "But they should rather take the opposite view, that since God is a cause

With its incomprehensibility, the infinite transgresses the truths commensurate with our mind by assuming the figure of a power that is itself incomprehensible. Descartes' position in 1641, in formulae [1] and [2] of *Meditatio III*, thus remains in line with the creation of the eternal truths first promulgated in 1630. From this, one must draw a decisive consequence concerning the first determination of God [A]: it is incompatible with any determination of God that would maintain that his essence is accessible to the same evidence as the mathematical truths and the essences of finite objects. If such a determination comes to light in Descartes' texts, it will be inconsistent with [A]. There is yet another consequence: [A] applies to God the determination 'cause' in 1641 (*causa ultima*, AT VII, 50, 6), and also already in 1630 ("... a cause whose power surpasses the bounds of human understanding ...," *efficiens et totalis causa*).⁶⁸ However, this causality is here limited to defining the action of God exterior to himself, with regard to creatures and to them alone. Now, ever since the *Regulae*, cause has belonged to the simple natures. Therefore, it presents an evidence that is perfectly comprehensible, and exemplarily so; better, it produces methodic evidence, in excess of and well before any other simple nature. Therefore it renders intelligible, among other things, God's relation to the world. But precisely because it arises from comprehensible evidence and always produces it, cause cannot be applied intrinsically to God. In short, comprehensible causality is an extrinsic determination of the infinite and incomprehensible (*ad extra*) God. From this, we must conclude by observing a second incompatibility: determination [A] of God as incomprehensible infinite will be inconsistent with any determination of God's essence in terms of intrinsic causality. This double incompatibility of [A], first with the methodic objectivity and evidence of the created truths, then with causality as one of the simple natures, thus characterizes God inasmuch as he is infinite; but more important, it decides, in advance, his relations with two other essential determinations of God.

whose power surpasses the bounds of human understanding, and since the necessity of these truths does not exceed our knowledge, these truths are therefore something less than, and subject to, the incomprehensible power of God" (*To Mersenne*, 6 May 1630 [AT I, 150, 17–22 = PW III, 25]). It should also be noted that the *res cogitans*, which bears in it the likeness of the divine infinite (51, 15–29 = 35), will in the end be described more specifically as a will, and thus that it also experiences the infinite within the perspective of power (57, 11–21 = 40).

68. Respectively AT I, 150, 18–19 and 152, 2 = PW III, 25 and 25. In short, *cause*, in 1630 as much as in formula [1], has no further meaning in God than *creator*.

Determination [B] is announced in *Meditatio III* by formula [3]—“... una est ex praecipuis perfectionibus quas in eo [Deo] esse intelligo [one of the most important of the perfections which I understand him to have]” (50, 18–19 = 34)—but also in formulae [1] and [2], when they mobilize the superlative (*summe potens*, *summe intelligens*, *omnisciens*, *omnipotens*). However, it is fully developed only in *Meditatio V*, where it allows first for defining the essence of God and then for proving his existence, which was understood previously as one of the perfections. From this, there follows the complete determination of God as *ens summe perfectum* (54, 13–14; 66, 12–13; 67, 9–10; etc. = 38; 46; 46; etc.). Subject to certain conditions, it seems possible to refer this determination to the fourth of Saint Thomas’s *viae*, which also claims to reach God by means of the superlative: “There is something which is truest, something best, something noblest, and, consequently, something which is uttermost being, *maxime ens*.”⁶⁹ To stick more precisely to perfection, it will be observed that, if Saint Thomas posits in principle that “... everything that is perfect must be attributed to God,” he does not however think perfection on its own terms. Just as previously he had deduced the divine infinite from *esse subsistens*, far from illuminating the former by means of the latter as Descartes does, here too he derives divine perfection from the *esse* of God. Several texts indicate this reduction: “God is pure act, simply and in all ways perfect.” Even better: “The first being which is God must needs be most perfect and consequently supremely good.” Or: “The first being must therefore be most perfect. But we have shown that God is the first being. He is therefore the most perfect.”⁷⁰ Here, perfection results—immediately to be sure, but all the more as a consequence—from the more fundamental determination of God as the *ens* whose essence consists in *esse* itself. Saint Thomas thinks divine perfection on the basis of the *esse* of the divine being, while Descartes first thinks the divine perfection in order to then, eventually, qualify God with the name *ens*. Saint Thomas never stopped until he had led perfec-

69. Saint Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 2, a. 3, *resp.* [English trans., p. 14]: “Est igitur aliquid quod est verissimum, et optimum, et nobilissimum, et per consequens maxime ens.”

70. Saint Thomas, respectively *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 29, a. 3, *resp.* [English trans., p. 158]: “... omne illud, quod est perfectionis, Deo sit attribuendum ...,” q. 25, a. 1, *resp.* [English trans., p. 136]: “... Deus est purus actus, et simpliciter et universaliter perfectus, neque in eo aliqua imperfectio locum habet”; *De potentia*, q. 7, a. 1, *resp.* [English trans., vol. 3, p. 4]: “... portet primum ens, quod Deus est, esse perfectissimum, et per consequens optimum”; and finally, *Contra Gentes*, I, 28 [English trans., p. 136]: “... primum ens debet esse perfectissimum. Ostensum est autem Deum esse primum ens; est ergo perfectissimus.”

tion (as well as all the other attributes) back to the more fundamental determination of the *actus purus essendi*, while Descartes, who in no way privileged the divine *esse*, reaches God directly through the thought of supreme perfection. From here on out, when it is a question of historically situating Cartesian denomination [B], it is clear that Saint Thomas does not provide the best point of reference. Another reference immediately presents itself in support of Descartes’ choice, Suarez: “... God is the first being ...; therefore he is also essentially the greatest and the most perfect; therefore it is the case that his essence in some way includes all possible perfection in the total range of beings.”⁷¹ Through Suarez, there is no doubt but that Descartes rejoins a prior tradition. Just which one is the question that must be addressed more precisely. At first glance, it seems evident—even to the most educated critics—that one must turn to Saint Anselm, as much because of his presumed and real “Augustinianism” as because of his renowned argument for proving the existence of God, an argument revived precisely in *Meditatio V*. And yet, if the continuity between Descartes and Anselm cannot be contested on this point, it seems that one should be cautious in admitting the hypothesis of Descartes’ debt to Saint Anselm for determination [B]. For in fact, the texts of the *Monologion*—remote and presumed source of *Meditatio V*—mention perfection only rarely, and when they do, they always subordinate it to beingness. For example: “He alone [God] will be seen to exist in an unqualified sense and perfectly and absolutely, whereas all other things nearly do not exist at all”; or: “each of them [the persons of the trinity] is perfectly the supreme essence.”⁷² That is, the force of the *Monologion* bears on more than perfection in particular; it is directed toward making every property pass into the superlative, with the intention of thereby making it attributable to God. In short, it is less an issue of perfection, even supreme, than of each quality passing to the limit, heading toward a common superlative that juxtaposes them all in God. Hence, one finds enumerations of qualities that enact the

71. Suarez, *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, XXX, s. 1, n. 5: “Deus est primum ens, ut ostensum est; ergo est etiam summum et perfectissimum essentialiter; ergo de essentia ejus est, ut includat aliquo modo omnem perfectionem possibilem in tota latitudine entis” (op. cit., vol. 26, p. 61). In s. 2, n. 21 (ibid., p. 71), among other texts, perfection is directly deduced from the superlative (*summum*).

72. Saint Anselm, *Monologion*, respectively XXVIII [English trans., p. 47]: “... ille solus videbitur simpliciter et perfecte et absolute esse, alia vero omnia fere non esse et vix esse,” then LIX [English trans., p. 72]: “... unusquisque illorum sic est perfecte summa essentia ...” (S. Anselmi, *Opera Omnia*, ed. F. S. Schmidt [Edinburgh, 1946], vol. 1, respectively, p. 46 and p. 70).

affirmative way: "And so he is the supreme essence, supreme life, supreme reason, supreme salvation, supreme justice, supreme truth, supreme immortality, supreme incorruptibility, supreme immutability, supreme beatitude, supreme eternity, supreme power, supreme unity, which is none other than supremely being (*summe ens*) supremely living and other similar things."⁷³ No doubt we can here recognize certain Cartesian determinations cited in [1] and [2]: *summa potestas* is equivalent to *summe potens*, *summa veritas* announces *summe intelligens*, *summa aeternitas* is found again in *aeternum*, *summa essentia* and *summe ens* correspond in advance with *substantia*. The case is similar, with certain qualifications, in [3]: *unitas* corresponds to the Cartesian *unitas*, *summa incorruptibilitas* is related to *inseparabilitas*, etc. Nonetheless, in the *Monologion*, these qualities, even when carried to their maximum intensity, remain merely juxtaposed; they lack a deduction or an organization that would consolidate them in a final, unique, and infinite perfection. There where Descartes puts forth an essential determination—[B], God as the most perfect being—Saint Anselm employs the superlative (and not perfection as such) only so that each quality might be borne to its maximum, but in its own genus only. For him, perfection does not put forth a name of God so much as for each quality, it effects the passage to the limit. In this precise sense, Descartes could not have found any anteced-

73. Saint Anselm, *Monologion* XVI [English trans., p. 31]: "Illa igitur est summa essentia, summa vita, summa ratio, summa salus, summa iustitia, summa sapientia, summa veritas, summa bonitas, summa magnitudo, summa pulchritudo, summa immortalitas, summa incorruptibilitas, summa immutabilitas, summa beatitudo, summa aeternitas, summa potestas, summa unitas, quod non est aliud quam summe ens, summe vivens, et alia similiter" (op. cit., p. 31). In the same vein, see IV and VI. A more coherent and radical formulation is approached in III: "... aliquid quod, sive essentia, sive substantia, sive natura dicetur, optimum et maxime est et summum omnium quae sunt [There is something (whether he is called essence or a substance or a nature) that is best and greatest and supreme among all existing things]" (op. cit., p. 16 [English trans., p. 13]). But in this case too, it is only a matter of a maximum, thus more of quantification than of perfection. On this tendency in Anselm, see C. Viola, "La dialectique de la grandeur. Une interprétation du *Proslogion*," in *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 37, 1970, pp. 23–55. Significant in this regard is the gap between the formula *ens perfectissimum*, constantly used by A. Koyré, and the absence of any text from Anselm that would confirm its legitimacy (*L'idée de Dieu dans la philosophie de saint Anselme*, pp. 41, 43, 44, 47, etc.). The same strangeness appears in D. Heinrich, *Der ontologische Gottesbeweis* (Tübingen, 1960), pp. 3, 11, 19, and E. Jüngel, *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt* (Tübingen, 1977), p. 147 (who, by the way, depend quite closely on Koyré, like the student of D. Heinrich, X. Tilliette, "L'argument ontologique et l'histoire de l'ontothéologie," *Archives de Philosophie* 25/1 [1962]). A good collection of texts can be found in R. Payot, "L'argument ontologique et le fondement de la métaphysique," *Archives de Philosophie* 39/2, 39/3, 39/4 (1975).

ent nor any assistance for his own denomination of God as *ens summe perfectum* in the Anselmian conceptualization. Moreover, he always rejected the rapprochement that his correspondents suggested to him: "I shall look at St. Anselm at the first opportunity," he declares in December 1640, without ever giving, afterward, the least indication of having done so.⁷⁴ Now, which author could have preceded Descartes and was likely to have influenced him? Without making a decisive argument, but taking account of other probable rapprochements (such as AT VII, 21, 1–2 and 36, 8–9 = PW II, 14 and 25), we risk making the hypothesis of Descartes' affinity with William of Ockham. The latter explicitly defines God by perfection taken to the superlative and considered as unique: "... God is the most perfect being. This is why, since he is in a certain way knowable to us . . . , he will be the most perfectly intelligible." Here particular perfections do not precede perfection understood as such, but rather are deduced from it as from *illa perfectio simpliciter quae est Deus* [that perfection which quite simply is God].⁷⁵ This perfection taken simply as such can be understood in two quite distinct, though convergent, senses: in its proper sense, perfection befits only God; in its wider and thus improper sense, the attributed perfections are said first with respect to creatures so that then, by passing to the limit, they might be applied to God; in this case, these common concepts remain purely nominal and do not attain the divine essence as such.⁷⁶ The identification of this nominalist antecedent to Cartesian definition [B] of God at once gives rise to a difficulty. Specifically, when Ockham privileges the *ens perfectissimum* as the first divine name, he clearly knows that he is opposed—on this point as on so many others—to Duns Scotus. There where Scotus concludes that "... the most perfect concept that we can conceive of God is the concept infinity," thus reducing perfection to infinity, Ockham says in opposition that "... the concept of infinite being is not formally in and of itself a concept that is more perfect than any possible concept concerning God because any negative concept is formally less perfect than a positive concept; but the concept of infinite being includes, be-

74. To Mersenne, December 1640 (AT III, 261, 9 = PW III, 161).

75. William of Ockham, *In Sententiarum*, I, d. 3, respectively q. 1: "Tertium patet, quia Deus est ens perfectissimum; igitur cum sit aliquo modo cognoscibilis a nobis, sicut in sequenti quaestione patebit, erit intelligibile perfectissimum"; and q. 2, *In Opera philosophica et theologica*, ed. S. Brown (New York, 1970), vol. 2, pp. 390 and 413. On the possibility of an indirect line of descent, see G. Rodis-Lewis, "Descartes aurait-il eu un professeur nominaliste?" *Archives de Philosophie* 34/1 (1971): 37–46.

76. See William of Ockham, *In Sententiarum*, I, d. 2, q. 2 and q. 3, op. cit., pp. 62 and 98.

yond the concept of being, something negative.”⁷⁷ This clear-cut opposition indirectly confirms that Cartesian determination [A] of God by the infinite arises at once from Duns Scotus and the *via negativa*, while Cartesian determination [B] of God by perfection belongs—according to its champion, Ockham—to the *via affirmativa*. This fully justifies our initial effort to situate Descartes’ proofs within the ranks of a problematic of divine names. But it gives rise to an unavoidable difficulty: Descartes at once and successively holds two determinations of God, [A] and [B], which, historically, were posited as adversaries, and irreconcilable ones at that. Can the antagonism between Duns Scotus and Ockham disappear simply because the same author claims in the same text to use both their theses? Mustn’t we rather admit that in all likelihood, the antagonism between Duns Scotus, championing the primacy of the infinite, and Ockham, championing the priority of perfection, is to be rediscovered, just barely veiled, within *Meditationes III* and *V*? This hypothesis seems even more difficult to avoid in that the majority of critics have noted, as an “unexpected occurrence” (Hamelin), that on the threshold of *Meditatio V*, indeed at the end of *Meditatio III*, “. . . perfect replaces infinite” (Beysade).⁷⁸ For that matter, it suffices to recall the famous polemic that this difficulty provoked: either the proof stemming from [B] depends on the *idea infiniti* guaranteed by [A] in *Meditatio III* (Alquié, Gouhier, Kenny), or the proof stemming from [B] remains perfectly independent (Gueroult, Beck, etc.). In one case, subordination implies (without explaining why) that a first divine name, *ens summe perfectum*, become a simple derived name. In the other, it suggests a rupture in the *ordo rationum*, thus the irreducibility of [A] and [B]—which could be deepened into an antagonism and contradiction. In both cases, the question arises, one that we will have to take up again (§20): is not the divine name *infinity* incompatible with the divine name *perfection* for reasons that are not only historical, but also intrinsically and conceptually Cartesian?

There remains a third and final fundamental determination of the es-

77. William of Ockham, *In Sententiarum*, I, d. 3, q. 3: “. . . quod conceptus entis infiniti non sit formaliter in se perfectior conceptus omni conceptu possibili haberi de Deo, quia nullus conceptus negativus est formaliter perfectior conceptu positivo; sed conceptus infiniti est includens ultra conceptum entis aliquid negativum” (op. cit., p. 422), against Duns Scotus, *Lectura I*, d. 3, p. 1, q. 1–2, n. 50: “. . . ille conceptus perfectissimus quem nos concipimus de Deo est conceptus entis infiniti” (op. cit., vol. 16, p. 224).

78. O. Hamelin, *Le Système de Descartes* (Paris, 1911), p. 202, n. 1, and J.-M. Beysade, *La philosophie première de Descartes*, p. 311.

sence (therefore of the existence) of God—we will designate it [C]. It appears, almost in the same terms, in *Responsiones I* and *IV*. During his discussion with Catus, Descartes defines God as existing through himself, *a se*, positively—that is to say as exercising a cause over himself—and no longer negatively, as subtracted from the sway of causality. In short, God “. . . quodammodo idem . . . respectu sui ipsius quod causa efficiens respectu sui [stands in the same relation to himself as an efficient cause does to itself]” (AT VII, 111, 5–7 = PW II, 80). What holds the place of a cause internal to God is nothing less than the very essence of God interpreted as an *immensa et incomprehensibilis potentia* such that it might be “causa, cur ille [Deus] esse perseveret [the cause of (God’s) continuing existence]” (110, 28–29 = 79). This interpretation of the divine essence as power therefore defines it as “ens summe potens [a supremely powerful being]” (119, 22 = 85) and recovers the very terms of [1] and [2]: *omnipotens, summe potens* (40, 17 and 45, 12–13 = 28 and 31). But this interpretation [C] would be neither useful nor necessary if God himself did not have to satisfy a principle that is stated as a *dictat* of reason:

Dictat autem profecto lumen naturae nullam rem existere, de qua non liceat petere cur existat, sive in ejus causam efficientem inquirere, aut si non habet, cur illa non indigeat, postulare. [However, the light of nature does establish (Dictat autem profecto lumen naturae) that if anything exists we may always ask why it exists; that is, we may inquire into its efficient cause, or, if it does not have one, we may demand why it does not need one.] [108, 18–22 = 78.]

The discussion with Arnauld then posits that the divine essence exerts a formal causality, which “. . . magnam habet analogiam cum [causa] efficiente, ideoque quasi causa efficiens vocari potest [will be strongly analogous to an efficient cause, and hence can be called something close to an efficient cause]” (243, 25–26 = 170). Here again the *immensitas potentiae sive essentiae* (237, 1 = 165) assimilates the divine essence to a power, which then holds the place of a positive cause: “. . . inexhausta Dei potentia sit causa sive ratio propter quam causa non indiget [The inexhaustible power of God is the cause or reason for his not needing a cause]” (236, 9–10 = 165). If God becomes something like the efficient cause of himself, by letting his essence be interpreted as power, this is because he must do so; and he must do so, in the eyes of Descartes, because “. . . considerationem causae efficientis esse primum et praecipuum medium, ne dicam unicum, quod habeamus ad existentiam Dei

probandam [A consideration of efficient causes is the primary and principal way, if not the only way, that we have of proving the existence of God]" (238, 11–13 = 166). The two expositions are thus organized into two parallel sequences: the absolute principle of causality (and, already, of reason) compels one to seek a cause even in God—"de ipso Deo [even concerning God himself]" (164, 29 = 116 [modified]). This cause will be his own essence, which can play the role, since it admits of being interpreted as inexhaustible, immense, and incomprehensible power. Therefore God will be spoken *a se* positively—that is to say, *causa sui*.⁷⁹ Before taking a look at the relation of [C], just now defined quickly, with [A] and [B], one must also briefly determine its historical position. It is precisely because Etienne Gilson was right when he declared Descartes to be "without any known predecessor"⁸⁰ that we have to seek out historically the reason for this (almost) total absence of genealogy. If we again consider the five Thomistic *viae*, we observe almost immediately in the course of the *secunda via* the explicit refusal of the hypothesis, which is nonetheless clearly seen, of a *causa efficiens sui*: "... There is no case known (neither is it indeed possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible." Such a rebuke presupposes, it is true, that the efficient cause be exclusively transitive (and not immanent), so that either a being can exert it only over a being other than itself, or else by exerting it over itself, it has to become other than itself. Two of the other *viae* that could potentially have ended up at *causa sui* corroborate this condemnation: the first *via* in effect leads to "... a first mover, put in motion by no other"; the third to "... some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity."⁸¹ In contrast to things in motion, God is determined as the first mover, therefore as himself not in motion. In contrast with contingent things, he is determined as the cause of their necessity, therefore as himself free from external necessity. Thus, in contrast with what needs a cause in order to be, God is defined as the cause of beings, a cause that

is itself free of all cause. Absolute, God appears free of the motion, the necessity, and the efficiency that nonetheless—better: for that very reason—he provokes and guarantees. If God exerts efficiency and is manifest by it, he therefore does not depend on it. Causality touches on God because it comes from him, not because it would include him; it remains contiguous with him, but neither co-extensive nor connected. When Saint Thomas admits an acceptance of *causa sui*—"the free is that which is its own cause (*causa sui*)"—it is in no way a matter of causality (cause/effect), still less of efficient causality (transitive), but solely of a translation of the classic Aristotelian formula: ἐλεύθερος ὁ αὐτοῦ ἐνεκα καὶ μὴ ἄλλον [The man is free, we say, who exists for himself and not for another].⁸² Saint Thomas does not stand alone on this point, either, given that even his adversaries reason as he does. For example, Saint Anselm: "The supreme nature could not come about either by his own agency or by that of some other thing." Also, Duns Scotus: "The totality of essentially ordered effects is caused consequently by some cause which is nothing of that totality; for then it would be *causa sui*."⁸³ Suarez alone hints at some ambiguity. No doubt he maintains that "God . . . is without principle or cause," and that *a se*, "... though appearing to be positive, adds only a single negation to being itself, for being cannot be *a se* by a positive origin and an emanation. . . . And it is in this sense that it is fit to explain what certain saints mean when they say that God is by himself cause of his Being, his substance, or his wisdom."⁸⁴ Nevertheless, Suarez

82. When reading the formula "Liberum quod sui causa est" (*Contra Gentiles*, II, 48 [English trans., vol. 2, p. 144]), one has to think of *Metaphysics A*, 2, 982 b, 25–26 [English trans., p. 1555]. The same prudence is forced upon us when confronted with its uses by Plotinus (*Enneads*, VI, 8, 14 or 20) and Proclus (*Elements*, §46). The question does not reside so much in the formula *causa sui* as in its Cartesian interpretation in terms of efficiency, if not entirely as efficient (which relativizes the pertinence of the Spinozist revival of this term). On the opposition between the Thomist and Cartesian theses, see the recent clarification by J. de Finance, "La formule 'Deus causa sui' et l'oubli de l'être," in *Pela Filosofia*. Homenagem a Tarcisio Meireles Padilha (Rio de Janeiro, 1984). And, within a broader frame, S. Breton, "Origine et principe de raison," *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 58/1 (1974).

83. Duns Scotus, *De Primo Principio*, III, 2: "Universalitas causatorum essentialiter ordinatorum est causata; igitur ab aliqua causa quae nihil est universitatis; tunc enim esset causa sui" (*Ioanni Duns Scoti Tractatus de Primo Principio*, ed. M. Müller [Freiburg im Breisgau, 1941], pp. 41–42 [English trans., p. 45]). See also *Ordinatio*, I, d. 2, p. 1, q. 1–2, nn. 57 and 59, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 162–63 and 165. Likewise, Saint Anselm, *Monologion*, VI, op. cit., pp. 18–20 [English trans., p. 16].

84. Suarez, *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, respectively I, s. 1, n. 27: "... Deum qui est sine principio et sine causa . . ." (op. cit., vol. 25, p. 11), XXVIII, s. 1, n. 7: "Nam quod dicitur ex se vel a se esse, licet positivum hoc esse videatur, tamen solam negationem addit ipsi enti, nam ens non potest esse a se per positivam originem et emanationem; . . . et hunc

79. On this collection of texts, see *supra*, chap. II, §9, and *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes*, §18.

80. E. Gilson, *Etudes sur le rôle de la pensée médiévale dans la formation du système cartésien*, p. 226.

81. Saint Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 2, a. 3, *resp.*, respectively "... nec tamen invenitur, nec est possibile, quod aliquis sit causa efficiens sui ipsius, quia sic esset prius seipso, quod est impossibile"; then "... ergo necesse est devenire ad aliquod primum movens, quod a nullo moveatur" and "... ergo necesse est ponere aliquid, quod sit per se necessarium, non habens causam necessitatis aliunde, sed quod est causa necessitatis alius" [English trans., p. 13].

also envisages the possibility of a *causa sui* when he invokes it only to at once restrict its scope: "... and God does not have a *causa sui*, through which it would be *a priori* demonstrated that he is. And, if he had one, God is not known exactly or perfectly enough that we could reach him on the basis of his own principles."⁸⁵ Does God have a *causa sui* or does he not? Why does Suarez put forth both positions? How is this ambivalence to be explained? It seems to us that its origin should be located in the interpretation—which Descartes will push to its conclusion—of the divine essence as holding the place of a cause, and thus before offering reasons for his necessary existence: "Though we suppose that being as being does not have causes properly speaking nor in the most rigorous sense . . . , there is however a certain reason for its properties, and reasons of this sort or of this type can be found even in God (*etiam in Deo*), for starting from the infinite perfection of God, we can give a cause stating why he is one only, and thus for the rest."⁸⁶ Suarez anticipates Descartes' daring formula, *de ipso Deo* (AT VII, 164, 29 = PW II, 116), because, like him, he begins by submitting God to what will become the principle of reason, and, in order to succeed in this, to an interpretation of the divine essence as a *ratio*: "Hoc enim de ipso Deo quaeri potest, non quod indigeat ulla causa ut existat, sed quia ipsa ejus naturae immensitas sit causa sive ratio, propter quam nulla causa indiget ad existendum [This question may even be asked concerning God, not because he needs any cause in order to exist, but because the immensity of his nature is the cause or reason why he needs no cause in order to exist]" (164, 29–165, 3 = 116). Suarez already assimilates, tangentially, the divine essence to a *ratio* for its infinity, indeed to a cause. It will fall to Descartes to take the decisive step: directly interpreting the divine essence as power, so that it can then be built into an efficient cause of itself. Despite this considerable gap, it is therefore necessary to modify Gilson's opinion, which was cited previously: Descartes no doubt finds a

modum exponendi sunt aliquid Sancti, cum dicunt Deum esse sibi causam sui esse, vel substantiae suae aut sapientiae" (op. cit., vol. 26, p. 3).

85. Suarez, *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, XXIX, s. 3, n. 1: "... supponendum est simpliciter loquendo, non posse demonstrari a priori Deum esse, quia neque Deus habet causam sui esse, per quam a priori demonstretur, neque si haberet, ita exacte et perfecte nobis cognoscitur Deus, ut ex propriis principiis (ut sic dicam) illum assequamur" (op. cit., vol. 26, p. 47). See the similar ambiguity in XXIX, s. 1, n. 20, op. cit., vol. 26, p. 27.

86. Suarez, *Disputationes Metaphysicae*, I, s. 1, n. 29: "Quamvis ergo demus ens, in quantum ens, non habere causas proprie et in rigore sumptas priori modo, habet tamen rationem aliquam suarum proprietatum; et hoc modo etiam in Deo possunt hujusmodi rationes reperiri, nam ex Dei perfectione infinita reddimus causam, cur unus tantum sit, et sic de aliis" (op. cit., vol. 25, p. 12).

partial predecessor in Suarez. But the question takes a new turn: if even Suarez is hesitant to think God as *causa sui*, because he is hesitant to submit his essence to the *causa sive ratio*, and thus to return, for his fundamental position, to the traditional thesis, how can Descartes reconcile the categorical affirmation of the *causa sui* [C] with two other divine names [A] and [B], which are supposed to take up the traditional theses? Posed otherwise: Can Descartes at one and the same time submit God to the *causa sive ratio* by defining him as a *causa sui* that exercises the general requirement of a *causa* over itself, and also accord to him supreme, absolutely unconditional names such as infinite and *ens summe perfectum*? In short, doesn't the conditioned name *causa sui*, in which *potentia* [C] is accomplished, contradict *in fine* the first two names, infinity [A] and supreme perfection [B], without making any prior judgments as to the compatibility of these last two terms? On the contrary, shouldn't it be seen that once Descartes admits the difficulty raised by the *causa sui*, a difficulty that had caused even Suarez (a virtuoso in daring reconciliations) to reel, a new contradiction in the corpus of divine names arises and the incompatibility between [A] and [B] is doubled by another incompatibility, one between [A] and [B], on the one hand, and [C], on the other? About this latent conflict, the critics never fail to differ: while one side thinks that "here the real unity of the new theodicy is perceived" (H. Gouhier), another believes that Descartes "subordinates God himself to causality" (F. Alquié), and a third welcomes in Descartes, who "... reconciles by overcoming Saint Anselm and Duns Scotus," "... the reconciliation of God the efficient cause and God the archetype" (M. Gueroult).⁸⁷ Be it only for the sake of resolving—or at least not avoiding—a difficulty in the Cartesian corpus, we should ask about the compatibility, or lack thereof, of [C] with [A] as well as with [B].

Can the contradictions be reduced, or do they form a system? Availing ourselves of these elements, we must now attempt to bring them together in the unity of a system, for the sake of either reconciling them or opposing them.

§20. The Exceptional Name

Descartes thus uses successively, but in a single *ordo rationum*, three determinations of the essence of God, and these determinations hold the

87. Respectively, H. Gouhier, *La pensée métaphysique de Descartes*, p. 175; F. Alquié, note in *Descartes. Œuvres philosophiques*, vol. 2, p. 682; M. Gueroult, *Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons*, vol. 1, pp. 204 and 207—where, obviously, the mention of Saint Anselm is to be criticized.

place of three divine names. It is now time for us to assess their relationships with each other, that is, their compatibilities and their contradictions, two by two. Only then will it eventually become possible to attempt a hierarchization of the divine names such as Descartes elaborates them.

The first task focuses on the relations between determination [A] of God as infinite and his determination [B] as the most perfect being. The criterion that distinguishes them seems to be connected to the possibility, or lack thereof, of comprehending the idea of God exactly. We have established that the idea of infinity in 1641 is as incomprehensible as was the creator of the eternal truths in 1630. This incomprehensibility transposed the ontic transcendence at play between infinite being and finite being into an epistemological gap between the objects comprehensible to the human mind and the divine non-object, incomprehensible though known all the more certainly. And yet in *Meditatio V* it seems that this gap vanishes, so that the idea of a supremely perfect God can, in the end, be reduced to the level of the ideas of finite objects. Three arguments can establish this. (a) It will be observed, first of all, that just as all the innate ideas are drawn from thought (“... alicujus rei ideam possim ex cogitatione mea depromere [I can produce from my thought the idea of something] ...,” 65, 16–17 = 45), so too is the idea of God drawn from the warehouse in which it was stored among other ideas, as it were: “... quoties de ente primo et summo libet cogitare, atque ejus ideam tanquam ex mentis meae thesauro depromere [whenever I do choose to think of the first and supreme being, and bring forth the idea of God from the treasure house of mind] ...” (67, 21–23 = 46). No doubt, in [1], the idea of infinity is given before all experience; nevertheless, arising with the act of the *cogito* (51, 21–23 = 35), and by opening the horizon of possibility, it did not remain, permanently and subsistently, “in” thought as in a receptacle for extension. Here, on the contrary, the idea of a supreme being is not actually enacted—it remains stored in the treasure house (*thesaurus mentis meae*) of ideas that the *cogito* keeps available to itself. The idea of God, innate to be sure, is only one innate idea among others, though the first. The difference is found not between it and the innate ideas, but between the innate ideas—thus that of God—and the forged ideas: “... magna differentia est inter ejusmodi falsas positiones et ideas veras mihi innatas, quarum prima et praecipua est idea Dei [There is a great difference between this kind of false supposition and the true ideas which are innate in me, of which the first and most important is the idea of God]” (68, 7–10). (b) A second contradic-

tion with incomprehensibility will then be observed: the idea of God, as an innate idea, is inevitably compared to other innate ideas. Which ones? All those that offer “... suas ... veras et immutabiles naturas [their own true and immutable natures]” (64, 11 = 44), and thus attest to “... determinata quaedam ejus natura, sive essentia, sive forma, immutabilis et aeterna [a determinate nature, or essence, or form ... which is immutable and eternal]” (64, 14–16 = 45). This refers, obviously if not explicitly, to two previous themes. At the outset, let us consider only the first: that of the simple natures. The innate ideas of *Meditatio V* define as true natures and forms the following: quantity, extension, shape, sizes, position in space, motion, and duration (63, 16–21 = 44). That is to say, they define something like the mathematical truths enumerated by *Meditatio I* before they are cast into doubt (20, 15–19 = 14). As we have tried to show elsewhere, both cases are concerned with the *naturae simplicissimae*, whose theory is worked out definitively in 1628 by the *Regulae*.⁸⁸ And in fact here it is a matter of the pure and abstract *Mathesis* (65, 13–14 = 45), echoing the *Mathesis Universalis* of 1628. From this, it follows that the idea of God and the idea of a simple mathematical nature will be put on an equal footing: “Certe ejus ideam, nempe entis summe perfecti, non minus apud me invenio, quam ideam cujusvis figurae aut numeri [Certainly, the idea of God, or a supremely perfect being, is one which I find within me just as surely as the idea of any shape or number]” (65, 21–23 = 45). This pronouncement is as clear as it is stupefying: the idea of God is not found in me any less than—that is to say, it is found in me at least as much as—the idea of a triangle and thus the simple natures extension, shape, number, etc. God thus comes to his idea in the same way as the simple natures do. When related to the *ordo rationum* of the *Meditationes*, this takes on a very clear meaning: the simple natures can intervene validly only before or after hyperbolic doubt, not during it (and in fact only the beginnings of *Meditatio I* and *Meditatio V* invoke them). The idea of God constructed in [B] therefore could be homogeneous with the simple natures only if it belongs to the domain that is not, or is not any longer, affected by hyperbolic doubt: namely, the science of corporeal things, of simple material natures, and thus of the method. One must not shrink back before this consequence: the fundamental determination of the essence of God in [B] is still grasped [*comprise*]—and therefore is still comprehensible [*compréhensible*].

88. In particular, *Regula XII* (AT X, 419, 18–20 = PW I, 44–45). See *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes*, pp. 351–56.

within the field and in the mode of the method. Consequently, it cannot, by definition, coincide with the fundamental definition of God's essence given in [A], seeing as this latter definition, belonging like all of *Meditatio III* to the moment of hyperbolic doubt, transgresses the domain of the method. Determinations [A] and [B] do not differ merely in the sense in which the idea of the infinite differs from the idea of a supremely perfect being; they contradict each other, as a thought within hyperbolic doubt contradicts a thought outside this same hyperbolic doubt. What is more, inasmuch as determination [B] shares precisely, neither more nor less, the status of the simple natures revoked by hyperbolic doubt, it must be said that it too would be revoked by the determination of God as the infinite [A] if by chance [B] had been mentioned *before* hyperbolic doubt (as would have been possible, from a strictly theoretical point of view). And besides, hadn't it been revoked, *de facto*, by hyperbolic doubt as early as *Meditatio I*? This doubt mobilizes an all-powerful God, who renders caducous the perfection goodness (*summe bonus*, 21, 12) and who remains indifferent to the thinkable degrees of perfection, to the point that it can be named chance, destiny, or the necessity of things—indeed, this God can even be replaced by the fiction of the evil genius. In any case, the God who disqualifies evidence anticipates determination [A], as was seen above. As for the equivalent names, they are situated within the horizon of perfection; they thus anticipate determination [B] (*imperfectio*, 21, 23 = 14; *imperfectum*, 21, 25 = 14).

(c) We can now broach the final argument, the one that appears first, since simple nature is also defined as *vera, immutabilis et aeterna* nature (64, 11 and 16 = PW II, 44 and 45). We believe that it is possible to see in this the immutable, true, and eternal mathematical truths whose created character Descartes proclaimed in 1630. But, it will immediately be objected, this rapprochement is insane: the idea of God is caused in me by the infinite, and therefore cannot be a created truth. However, this objection holds only to the extent that the idea of God considered in [B] can be identified with the infinite, that is to say, with determination [A]. And yet this is obviously not the case, since, on the contrary, the following paradox must be maintained: if one juxtaposes the position from 1630—in which God, by his “incomprehensible power,” creates the mathematical truths that we can comprehend—with the position in *Meditatio V*, one notices that determination [B] of God as supremely perfect is not confused with divine omnipotence; rather, it assumes a place among the created mathematical truths. This is proven by the following observation: in 1630, those who work with the simple natures “perfectly comprehend

mathematical truths and do not perfectly comprehend the truth of God's existence” precisely because this existence is demonstrated “in a manner which is more evident than the proofs of geometry” and that “makes me know that God exists with more certainty than I know the truth of any proposition of geometry.”⁸⁹ In this way, the idea of God—in fact, as we have shown, the fundamental determination [A]—stands beyond the mathematical truths, and for that matter the created truths, in terms both of evidence and of certainty. In *Meditatio V*, the situation is inverted radically: the existence of God is concluded from his perfect essence—according to determination [B]—with neither more (*non magis*, 66, 8 and 12 = 46 and 46) nor less (*non minus*, 65, 21–22, 23 = 45; 45) certainty and evidence than those with which the sum of the angles is deduced from the essence of a triangle. The existence of God is neither more nor less evident than mathematical truths (“... ad minimum eodem gradu [having at least the same level] ...,” 65, 28–29 = 45)—which contradicts the greater evidence that it provided in 1630. Is the existence of God more evident than or only as evident as the mathematical truths? Is it a created truth or not? Confronted with this question, there are only two answers.⁹⁰ Either Descartes is grossly contradicting himself, or *Meditatio V* concerns another idea of God besides that of 1630—which, referred to our problematic, amounts to saying two things. First, determination [B] of the divine essence as the supremely perfect being, implying a rational construction of comprehensible perfections, remains within the domain of the simple natures, the mathematical truths, and the method; therefore, determination [B] is still to be counted among the creations of the incomprehensible and infinite power of God. Second, determination [A] of God as infinite, implying his incomprehensibility as well as his immensity, causes him to surpass (by means of creation) the measure and order of the method; therefore, determination [A] surpasses even the supreme perfection that [B] applies to God. Thus, from these three arguments, we conclude that the first two fundamental determinations of God's essence are incompatible with each other, as are the two corresponding proofs for his existence. The one, [A], thinks him as infinite,

89. To Mersenne, 6 May 1630 (AT I, 150, 14–17); then 15 April 1630 (AT I, 144, 15–17); and 25 November 1630 (AT I, 182, 2–4 = PW III, 25; then 22; and 29).

90. *The Discourse on the Method* vacillates between the two positions. On the one hand, it follows [B]: “... I found that this included existence in the same way as ... the idea of a triangle includes the equality of its three angles to two right angles ...” (DM, 36, 22–26 = PW I, 129). On the other hand, it seems to want to follow [A] by amending this with “... or even more evidently than.”

creator of the truths and surpassing the method, therefore incomprehensible. The other, [B], thinks him as the supreme perfection constructed from the created truths and the simple natures, therefore comprehensible. In one case, the evidence for God transgresses the ordinary schema of methodic evidence; in the other, it is officially inscribed within it. In order to avoid having the incompatibility between [A] and [B] degraded into a pure contradiction, it is certainly permissible to see it as just a subordination. It will be said that, as the “incomprehensible power” creates the eternal truths, so does determination [A] of God as incomprehensible infinite hyperbolically surpass determination [B] of God as the sum of comprehensible perfections. But this hierarchy of two determinations of the divine essence marks, more than it masks, their irreducible *inconsistency*. It must be admitted that [A] and [B] contradict each other in terms of the parameter incomprehensibility—definitively.⁹¹

A second task now stands before us. To determinations [A] and [B], a final determination [C] is added. It is put forth in formula [4] from the *Responsiones* and is stated in terms of divine omnipotence:

... plane admitto aliquid esse posse, in quo sit tanta et tam inexhausta potentia, ut nullius unquam ope egerit ut existeret, neque etiam nunc egeat ut conservetur, atque adeo sit quodammodo sui causa; Deumque talem esse intelligo. [I do readily admit that there can exist something which possesses such great and inexhaustible power that it never required the assistance of anything else in order to exist in the first place, and does not now require any assistance for its preservation, so that it is, in a sense, its own cause (*sui causa*); and I understand God to be such a being.] [AT VII, 109, 3–7 = PW II, 78.]

What relationship does this have with the two preceding determinations? To come to some decision about this, it must be recalled that the

91. In a way, this conclusion does nothing more than take a position within a now classic debate concerning the subordination or the independence of the two proofs *a priori* and *a posteriori*. Holding positions that defend their independence are F. Alquié, *La découverte métaphysique de l'homme chez Descartes*, pp. 225–26 (who holds, against all appearances, that “... Descartes does not say that the idea of God is similar to the ideas of mathematics...”); H. Gouhier, “La preuve ontologique de Descartes (A propos d'un livre récent),” in *Revue internationale de Philosophie* 29 (1954), and *La pensée métaphysique de Descartes*, chaps. VI–IX; and J. Brunschwig, “La preuve ontologique interprétée par M. Guerout,” in *Revue philosophique* 1960/2. Supporting their subordination are M. Guerout, *Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons*, vol. 1, chap. VIII, then *Nouvelles réflexions sur la preuve ontologique* (Paris, 1955), followed by L. Beck, *The Metaphysics of Descartes: A Study of the Meditations* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 231–37. We are content with radicalizing this second interpretation, by taking into account the *Letters* of 1630.

parameter incomprehensibility does not permit making a distinction between [A] and [C] in the way that it distinguished [A] from [B]. Actually, the determination of God by cause [C], pushed to the point of assuming the figure *causa sui*, interprets the incomprehensible divine essence (according to formulae [1] and [2]) as a cause, eventually an efficient cause, of itself by way of its tangential status of power—in turn incomprehensible. If God can be assimilated to a *causa sui*, this is because his incomprehensible essence begets, as its derivative, a power, still incomprehensible—*incomprehensibilis potentia* (AT VII, 110, 26–27)—that corresponds to the “incomprehensible power” of 1630 (AT I, 146, 4–5 and 150, 22). The transition from infinite essence to the power of this essence and then to *causa sui* is unfolded within the incomprehensibility proper to God. Consequently, in terms of the criteria that oppose [A] and [B], [A] will always agree with [C]. We must therefore pursue our analysis in terms of a new criterion of differentiation. In order to identify it, a consideration of the *causa sui* itself will suffice. Among the numerous objections to which *causa sui* gives rise—is it self-contradictory, logically or temporally; must it be understood *quodammodo* and analogically, or directly as *causa efficiens sui ipsius* (111, 1)?—the most serious does not receive the most attention. Descartes establishes on principle that nothing escapes from the requirement of having to have a reason for existing—“... nihil possumus fingere ita esse a se, ut nulla danda sit ratio cur potius existat quam non existat [It is impossible for us to imagine anything deriving existence from itself without there being some reason why it should exist rather than not exist]” (112, 7–8 = 80)—and, reciprocally, that for every thing, no matter what it might be, an efficient cause can be sought: “... nisi putarent cujusque rei causam efficientem posse inquiri [unless they thought it possible to inquire into the efficient cause of anything whatsoever]...” (244, 24–25 = 170). This requirement, which admits no exception, results from a *dictat* (108, 18 = 78) of the natural light, which itself admits of no exception. To this law pertaining to all, God belongs like every other being: “Hoc enim de ipso Deo quaeri potest [For this question may even be asked concerning God]...” (164, 29–165, 1 = 116), “... licentiam... in rerum omnium, etiam ipsius Dei, causas efficientes inquirendi: quo enim jure Deum inde exciperemus, priusquam illum existere sit probatum? [We cannot develop this proof with precision unless we grant our minds the freedom to inquire into the efficient causes of all things, even God himself. For what right do we have to make God an exception, if we have not yet proved that he exists?]” (238, 15–18 = 166). No doubt, once the proof has been made, certain allowances will be made for God: efficiency is,

for him, analogical; cause is always equivalent to the power of his essence; the *ratio* for his existence is not totally confused with a *causa*; etc. But these allowances, which Descartes concedes only reluctantly when pressed by his critics, would not have a place to occur, if, precisely, there did not still stand the *dictat* stating that all existence must be justified with an efficient cause—or with some *ratio*, which takes its place: the more latitude God is granted in satisfying the *dictat* (and in fact Descartes will grant it to him broadly), the more he officially recognizes this same *dictat*, and therefore is submitted to it. The characteristic peculiar to [C] can now be identified. This characteristic opposes [C] to determination [A] in terms of a new criterion—causality. According to [A], God exerts causality, while according to [C] God is exerted by causality. More particularly, according to [A], “God is a cause whose power surpasses the bounds of human understanding” (AT I, 150, 18–19 = PW III, 25), because as *efficiens et totalis causa* (AT I, 152, 2; AT VII, 40, 22–23 = PW III, 25; PW II, 28), this cause creates, transcends, and produces all at once the totality of its effectively finite effects. The effects alone are effective; effectivity characterizes finite effects. In short, efficiency is relevant only to creation, as an act and as a region. Consequently, it is possible to go back from the effects—finite, created, and submitted to effectivity—all the way to God, as their efficient cause, which itself is exempt from causality and efficiency—“... ad causam ultimam deveniatur, quae erit Deus [until eventually the ultimate cause is reached, and this will be God]” (50, 6 = 34). Here, God escapes from efficient causality because he exerts it. In determination [A] of God’s essence, Descartes respects the dominant medieval interpretation of divine causality—namely, that it remains strictly external to him. According to [C], the matter is quite different: God is a function of causality because with regard to him, the human mind functions by seeking out a cause, one that justifies his existence. God satisfies a causality that he first undergoes; “... si prius de causa cur sit, sive cur esse perseveret, inquisivimus ... [if we have previously inquired into the cause of God’s existing or continuing to exist]” (AT VII, 110, 24–25 = PW II, 79). We, that is to say, the light of reason announcing its *dictat*, inquire (*inquirere*) into the reason that authorizes God to exist and to continue existing. It is then always the same *dictat* that is satisfied, when the power of the divine essence is understood (*intelligi*) as the reason for his existence, standing in the place of a cause (eventually an efficient cause): “... verbum, *sui causa*, nullo modo de efficiente potest intelligi, sed tantum quod inexhausta Dei potentia sit causa sive ratio propter quam causa non indiget

[The phrase ‘his own cause’ cannot possibly be taken to mean an efficient cause; it simply means that the inexhaustible power of God is the cause or reason for his not needing a cause]” (236, 7–10 = 165). If God is not submitted to efficiency, this is precisely because he is submitted, already and even without it, to the demand for a *causa sive ratio*. He is submitted to it all the more radically as he *is* himself, directly and by his essence, such a cause and reason: “... quia ipsa ejus naturae immensitas est causa sive ratio, propter quam nulla causa indiget ad existendum [because the immensity of his nature is the cause or reason why he needs no cause in order to exist]” (165, 2–3 = 116). Essentially, God is submitted to the requirements of the inquiry in search of a *causa sive ratio* that justifies existence. Determination [C] of God’s essence anticipates the Leibnizian formulation of the principle of reason and submits the divine existence to it in advance—more specifically, causality, as the reason for his existence, becomes internal to God, and even identical with his essence. Thus, according to the criterion of causality, a second contradiction between the determinations of God’s essence comes up in Descartes’ thought: in determination [A], as in previous medieval metaphysics, God transcends all causality, because he exerts it and thereby remains free in the face of that which cannot be presented as the principle of reason; by contrast, in determination [C], which in fact is decisive for the development of all subsequent metaphysics, the principle of reason transcends God because it is raised to the point of proving and legitimating his very existence and can thereby suggest in advance a definitive formulation of God. The contradiction between [A] and [C] thus does not merely mark a new tension in the Cartesian revival of the thematic of the divine names. More important, it decides the future direction of the history of metaphysics, a history that could therefore be played out not between Descartes and some other “adversary,” but, more originally, between Descartes and himself.

Having succeeded in reaching this result, it is now possible for us to compare the three Cartesian determinations of the essence of God. This multiple comparison is clearly organized around the two consequences of determination [A]: God is incomprehensible; God exerts, without undergoing, causality. (a) Determination [A] is opposed to determination [B] in terms of incomprehensibility, since in [B] the divine essence has regressed to the level of the objects of the method; but [A] is also opposed to [B] in terms of the second criterion, since the idea of the supremely perfect being admits a cause that constructs it or that produces it for us. (b) Determination [A] is opposed to determination [C] in terms

of cause and principle of reason; but, according to the criterion of incomprehensibility, [A] agrees with [C], which clearly determines the divine essence as "incomprehensible power." (c) Determination [B] is opposed to determination [C] according to the criterion of incomprehensibility: the essence methodically constructed of the perfections contradicts the "incomprehensible power," maintained from 1630 until 1641. But [B] agrees with [C] in terms of causality: the *causa sive ratio*, which exerts its *dictat* over the God *causa sui*, also exerts it over the eternal truths that it, as their *causa efficiens et totalis*, creates; thus the *causa sive ratio* is in the end exerted over the sum of comprehensible perfections that culminate in the *ens summe perfectum*. These term-by-term comparisons can be summarized in a table:

Determination	[A]	[B]	[C]
IDENTIFICATION			
Divine Name	<i>idea infiniti</i>	<i>ens summe perfectum</i>	<i>causa sui</i>
Formula	<i>Meditatio III</i> [1] and [2]	<i>Meditatio V</i> [3]	<i>Responsiones I and IV</i> [4]
Antecedent	Duns Scotus	William of Ockham	Suarez?
(IN-)COHERENCE			
Incomprehensibility	yes	no	yes
Not causable	yes	no	no
Not methodic	yes	no	yes

From this table, several lessons follow directly. Concerning identification, it appears evident from now on that one cannot avoid the simple question of the plurality of divine names in Cartesian metaphysics. The use, surprising to be sure, of the phrase *divine names* in metaphysics is justified by the same reasons that cause their plurality to be admitted: Descartes employs several determinations that can no longer be used interchangeably as soon as their origins are identified (even in a cursory fashion, as here); and these historical origins all refer to theological debates in which these determinations earned an irreducible singularity. As a general rule, Descartes' discourse depends quite closely on its predecessors, and all the more so when it is a matter of his discourse on God. Without considering these genealogies, the interpretation of Descartes' discourse becomes almost impossible. Thus the theological ori-

gins of this discourse compel us to speak of a debate about the divine names; but the characteristics peculiar to the Cartesian new beginning also demand that we assess the displacement and the transmutation of these divine names into metaphysics. Descartes translates, no doubt for the first time, some of the divine names elaborated by medieval Christian theology into the field of the chiefly systematic metaphysics of modernity. Today, reflection on this historic translation constitutes the stakes of the history of philosophy as it is applied to Descartes. We hope to have established this. Concerning the coherence, or rather the incoherence, of the three Cartesian determinations, it must first be said (according to a horizontal reading of the table) that they never agree in such a way that the three criteria are satisfied unanimously: incomprehensibility, satisfied by [A] and [C], is in contradiction with [B]; transcendence with respect to cause is annulled by [B] and [C], but satisfied by [A]; as for the transgression of the methodic horizon (which does not coincide with being submitted to causality), it is confirmed in [A] and [C], but annulled by [B]. Thus this tension, going so far as to become a complex web of contradictions, leaves out no determination, nor any of the criteria, but cuts across the depths in the ultimate strata of Descartes' thought about God. Such is the risk run by the daring of a new beginning, one that nonetheless claims to be taking up several distinct theological legacies. It must next be said (according to a vertical reading of the table) that each of the three determinations of the divine essence does not contradict the three criteria of differentiation equally. Without minimizing the arbitrariness with which they were chosen, certainly limited but still likely, and without in the least underestimating the fact that these criteria are borrowed from particular moments of the *ordo rationum*, it seems clear that a hierarchy of determinations is set up. More particularly, [B] contradicts the three criteria retained; in conformity with its being the divine name belonging to the *via affirmativa*, as we already noted, the *ens summe perfectum* can do nothing but reject the three negative (at least grammatically negative) criteria retained here. *Causa sui*, [C], satisfies two of the three criteria because the *potentia incomprehensibilis* on which it rests safeguards its incomprehensibility, and is excluded from the horizon of the method, in an equilibrium that could offer at least a formal echo of eminence. There remains the idea of infinity, [A], which is the only one to respond to all three distinctive criteria of the idea of God being opposed to every other knowable object. These three criteria define it negatively to be sure: neither comprehensible, nor submitted to the exercise of causality in it, nor held within the horizon of the method,

We thus find confirmation of its belonging, at least formally, to the *via negativa*. However, it is not limited strictly to it, seeing as Descartes never stops emphasizing that the infinite, seen from all angles and with all its implications, states positive properties negatively. The affirmative and negative ways are here grounded in a tension where the authentic eminence should be recognized, more so than in the *causa sui*. In fact, beneath the negative appearances, *causa sui* accomplishes affirmations: incomprehensibility does not pose any obstacle to giving a *ratio* for the divine existence that would be formally univocal with the *ratio* for all other existences; its transcendence with respect to the method does not stop it from deferring, like the objects of the *Mathesis universalis*, to the privilege of *causa*, itself one of the first simple natures. Consequently, if *causa sui* [C] and *ens summe perfectum* [B] tend to privilege the *via affirmativa* conceptually if not in their formulation, only the idea of infinity [C] would hold not simply the role of the *via negativa*, but also that of eminence. Therefore, on the basis of an internal examination of the network of interlaced contradictions among the three Cartesian determinations of the divine essence, we posit the primacy—as more operative, more complete, and alone unconditioned—of the idea of infinity.

There is, however, a much more compelling reason to admit the primacy of the idea of infinity (determination [A]) over the two other determinations of God, [B] by *ens summe perfectum* and [C] by *causa sui*. More specifically, if we look back over the previous results (chapter II, §10), which concluded with a redoubling of the onto-theo-logy of *cogitatio* by an onto-theo-logy of *causa*, we can certainly risk a rapprochement that is itself redoubled. On the one hand, the onto-theo-logy of *cogitatio* would correspond with determination [B] of God as *ens summe perfectum*: the summation of perfections would offer to the *cogitatio* an (infinite) sum of perfect objects to be thought; and God would manifest his excellence all the more in that all thinkable perfections are actually found to be completed in him in such a way that the supreme perfection of God also brings to completion the search for the most perfect of the *cogitata*. On the other hand, the onto-theo-logy of *causa* would correspond with determination [C] of God as *causa sui*: the third proof ends up directly at the divine name that corresponds to the second onto-theo-logy; God accomplishes, exemplarily, as his own essence the causality that he exerts over the other beings, as their reason and, above all, as their way of Being. This would confirm two separate analyses with a remarkable consistency: the redoubling of onto-theo-logy (chapter II) displayed a tension in Cartesian thought that is even less open to debate

since it was detected a second time in the plurality of determinations of God's essence, thus of the divine names (chapter IV). But an objection immediately arises: the redoubling of onto-theo-logy can take up only two of the three divine names, and therefore leaves the idea of infinity undetermined; doesn't such an aberration disqualify the reconstitutions and remodelings that we just attempted (chapters II and IV)? It could be, on the contrary, that with this we have attained a fundamental result. What, really, does the Cartesian redoubling of onto-theo-logy signify? Answer: the most rigorous and most operative (in the present state of thought) conceptual determination of the fact and the limits of Descartes' belonging to metaphysics. Therefore, if the idea of infinity, as one of the divine names according to Descartes (and in fact the first), does not find shelter in any of the Cartesian figures of onto-theo-logy, it must inevitably be concluded that it does not arise from the Cartesian constitution of metaphysics. As surprising as this conclusion appears, it perhaps states only something obvious. In bearing the names *ens summe perfectum* and *causa sui*, God puts into operation the way of Being of all other beings—and, in fact, Descartes elaborates regional ontologies, in the guise of a physics, a theory of the soul, a cosmology, etc., which deal with the simple natures, thus the intelligible perfections, by recourse to efficient causality. But when God bears the name infinity, he does not put into operation any science of beings or of their ways of Being. The pair infinite/finite does not allow one to think the Being of finite beings, nor to elaborate any particular science of beings. It authorizes only the irreparable and inconfusable distinction between God and creatures—which for Descartes is no minor point. This distinction is of no use to the elaboration of the sciences, since it ends up at the incomprehensibility of the infinite by the finite and at the strict delimitation of the sciences practiced by the finite understanding. This distinction is likewise of no use in the elaboration of a general ontology because the very thinkers who privilege it (Duns Scotus and Suarez) suspend it just as quickly when it is a matter of establishing a univocal concept of being. The metaphysical extraterritoriality of the divine name drawn from the idea of infinity could also be confirmed from outside the thought and texts of Descartes. That is, those who inherit the themes put into play by Descartes reproduce diachronically the point that we have established synchronically in a strictly Cartesian field. Without yielding too much to simplification, and without anticipating a study still to be done concerning their respective doctrines of divine names, Malebranche and Leibniz here cast a powerful light on these matters. Of the three Cartesian deter-

minations, which ones do they privilege? Malebranche certainly knows determination [A] of God by the idea of infinity; however, he makes use of it only by integrating it with determination [B], *ens summe perfectum*, according to a clear and precise transition: "By 'Deity' we all understand the Infinite, Being without restriction, infinitely perfect Being." And in fact, the most frequent and most functional name is said "infinitely perfect Being,"⁹² where *infini* is absorbed into a mere indication of perfection, and amounts to saying *summe*, while losing all its own, proper, signification. No doubt it can be presumed that this evolution toward the massive privileging of the divine name drawn from the perfections maintains a close relationship, though one still to be clarified, with the interpretation of God as the very place where truth is known and the sciences are practiced—in opposition to the doctrine of the creation of the eternal truths. We therefore suggest a hypothesis: Malebranche develops a single one of the two figures of the onto-theo-logy Descartes redoubled, that of the *ens* as *cogitatum*; and consequently, from among the three Cartesian determinations of God's essence, he privileges the one that best corresponds to it: namely, *ens summe perfectum* become, by incorporating the infinite, "the infinitely perfect Being." Leibniz obviously was aware of Cartesian determinations [A] and [B], and, sometimes, grants them certain rights; but it cannot be contested that he privileges determination [C] when he evokes the *final reason of things*: "Thus the sufficient reason, which needs no further reason, must be outside this series of contingent things, and must lie in a substance which is the cause of this series, or which is a necessary being, bearing the reason of its existence within itself; otherwise we should still not have a sufficient reason, with which we could stop. And this final reason of things is called *God*." Or else: "This is why the ultimate reason of things must lie in a necessary substance, in which the differentiation of the changes only exists eminently as in their source; and this is what we call *God*." Or finally: "Est scilicet Ens illud ultima ratio Rerum, et uno vocabulo solet appellari Deus [This entity is the ultimate reason for things, and is usually called by the one word 'God.']"⁹³ *Ratio* of the world and of himself, God thus

92. Malebranche, *Entretiens sur la métaphysique et sur la religion*, VIII, 1, *Œuvres complètes*, vols. XII–XIII (Paris, 1965), p. 174. Then VIII, 2, p. 175 [English trans., p. 171 then 173]. The formula *l'Etre infiniment parfait* is so frequent that it seems as useless as it is difficult to give a list of references for it.

93. Leibniz, respectively, *Principes de la Nature et de la Grâce*, §8, then *Monadology*, §38; and finally *Résumé de philosophie, Opuscules et Fragments inédits*, ed. L. Couturat, p. 534 [English trans., p. 198, then 185; and finally 145]. On the fate of the most original

fulfills, as an echo of the *causa sui* and no doubt more radically than it, the role of making the Being of each being manifest according to the measure of cause, *ut causatum*. The Leibnizian privilege thus accorded to Cartesian determination [C] of God as *causa sui*, by privileging the divine name *final reason of things*, answers to the parallel choice of taking up the onto-theo-logy of the *ens ut causatum*. In this way, Malebranche and Leibniz could each be seen to deploy one of the two figures of the redoubled onto-theo-logy in Descartes; and in each of these efforts at metaphysical simplification, they privilege the only one of the three determinations of the divine essence that corresponds to the figure of metaphysics previously retained. Whence this consequence, which is at the very least probable and would deserve to be tested in the details of the texts: the divine name drawn from the idea of infinity does not assume a place in any figure of post-Cartesian onto-theo-logy. Therefore it ought to be understood as a nonmetaphysical utterance of Descartes' thought about God, belonging more to the previous theology of the divine names than to the subsequent onto-theo-logies, where the conceptual idol excludes God from the horizon of metaphysics by pretending to sequester him within onto-theo-logical functions. Descartes here, as elsewhere, reaches beyond his successors, as the incomprehensible complex of contradictions that the secret of the thing itself imposes surpasses and also allows for the simplicity of multiple rival intelligibilities, each a widow of the incomprehensible itself. By drawing out and maintaining the primacy of the idea of the infinite, Descartes does not merely accomplish, for the last time, the itinerary of a treatise on the divine names, expired fragment of a silent disappearance. Most important, in the very moment in which he fixes the onto-theo-logical figures that are going to govern all modern metaphysics, Descartes marks their limits: the *ego*, which rules the first onto-theo-logy, can itself transgress metaphysics when it is temporalized by means of possibility (chapter III, §15); but the *ego* would not succeed in doing so if God, who rules the second onto-theo-logy, did not himself first transgress metaphysics when he is spoken with the most divine name, infinity. Instituting the possible figures of modern metaphysics, Descartes, with an unsurpassable authority, redoubled his own institution, by establishing, in advance and before anyone else, the limits of metaphysics. We have not finished contemplating the

and decisive of the Cartesian theses, see our sketch, "De la création des vérités éternelles au principe de raison. Remarques sur l'anti-cartésianisme de Spinoza, Malebranche, Leibniz," *XVIIème siècle* 1985/2: 147.

import of this magnificent acknowledgment: "... I have never written about the infinite except to submit myself to it."⁹⁴ And if the Cartesian names of God are organized in a confused complex of contradictions, this is not because Descartes lacked conceptual power or conceptual rigor; on the contrary, it is because he dared face up to the contradiction that is necessarily imposed on the finite by the infinite advancing upon it—and to which, perhaps, only a certain conceptual madness can testify without being unworthy of it. Before God, reverentially, and as a rarity among the metaphysicians, Descartes stands hidden—he does not keep secrets, nor does he sneak away, but hides his face before that of the infinite—*larvatus pro Deo*.⁹⁵

94. To Mersenne, 28 January 1641 (AT III, 293, 24–25 = PW III, 172).

95. Descartes, of course, writes "Larvatus prodeo [I come forward masked]" (AT X, 213, 6–7 = PW I, 2). We transform this *j'avance masqué* into an abusive *masqué devant la face de Dieu* only because this modification gives cause for thought, and also because others before us have ventured to put it forth, of course with a wholly other meaning (J.-L. Nancy, in *Ego sum* [Paris, 1979], and especially L. Brunschvicg, "Métaphysique et mathématiques chez Descartes," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* [1927], p. 323).

FIVE

OVERCOMING

§21. Pascal within Cartesian Metaphysics

In reconstructing the metaphysics of Descartes, we end up at a redoubled onto-theo-logy. If it serves all the better to confirm the claim that Cartesian thought belongs to metaphysics in general, it is no less striking for leaving out a twofold remainder. That is, two doctrinal elements remain irreducible to the constitution of Cartesian metaphysics. When the *ego* is thought, it is defined in the first onto-theo-logy as a *cogitatio sui*, and in the second as an *ens causatum*, that is to say, a *substantia creata*. But its ultimate determination—namely, the freedom that, in morality, reestablishes possibility as the first modality of beings (chapter III, §15)—does not find a place in either of the two figures of onto-theo-logy. Nonetheless, the freely acting *ego* mobilizes each of their respective concepts: *cogitatio* and cause permit it to exert a causality through representation (according to the Kantian formula); thus the third determination of the *ego* again has an impact on metaphysics, even though it does not belong to the redoubled onto-theo-logy. What status can be granted to it? This line of questioning is even more unavoidable in that isolating a second doctrinal element validates the question: among the concurrent determinations of the divine essence, if one—*ens perfectissimum*—agrees exactly with the onto-theo-logy of the *ens cogitatum*, and if the other—*causa sui*—corresponds literally with the onto-theo-logy of the *ens ut causatum*, the first and most fundamental—*infininitum*—is not justified by any figure of metaphysics; it could even be that it explicitly contradicts the two figures of the redoubled onto-theo-logy (chapter IV, §20). What status can then be granted to the determination of God as infinite? The excellence of these two exceptions to the onto-theo-logical constitution of Cartesian metaphysics bars one from seeing them as merely negligible and insignificant residues. On the contrary, fundamental concepts are at issue: it belongs as radically to the *ego* to act freely as it does to God to be deployed infinitely. The fact that