"Ce qui passe la géométrie nous surpasse."

Pascal, "De l'esprit géométrique."

"Les plus grandes âmes sont capables des plus grands vices."

Descartes, "Discours de la Méthode."

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PREFACE

I should like to acknowledge my indebtedness to the scholarship of M. Gilson, and the extraordinary penetration of M. Maritain. I have also profited greatly by M. Gouhier's, La Pensée Religieuse de Descartes (1924), and many other works to which I am more obliged than I can adequately say.

The references are to the Adam and Tannery edition of Descartes' works, the texts being indicated by volume, page, and line. The references to the Meditations are to the Latin edition (A.T.VII) since in that the lines are numbered, though the French version (A.T.IX) has often been followed in preference to the Latin. In translating passages I have made great use of Veitch's version of Descartes' works, and a smaller and very cautious use of that of Haldane and Ross.

The terminal notes are a real part of the work, though numbers 66 and 80, which should be taken together, have far exceeded the length of notes, and may be read as a critical appendix.

It is hoped that something has been contributed to the concrete interpretation of the Cogito, and to a proper estimation of the problem of the cercle cartésien. The chief means employed has been reliance on the consecution of the Meditations. If considerable resort has been had to the writings/

writings of Cartesians like de la Forge, Arnauld, P-S. Régis, du Roure, and P. Nicholas Poisson, it has been with no consciousness of distorting the meaning of the Meditations, on which this study is above all else a commentary.

A final remark: Cartesianism gave definition not only to a new philosophy but to a new kind of man. What kind of man this was, is perhaps the most absorbing of all the problems of the Cartesian philosophy as well to the present-day student of it, as perhaps it was to Descartes himself.

It is important that of all his writings upon metaphysical subjects there is only one work to which Descartes refers as his Metaphysic,[1] and that work is his Meditations on the First Philosophy. To the end of his life he showed no inclination to add to, or subtract from, what he had written there. Among metaphysicians he stands perhaps alone in having successfully elaborated his doctrine at an early age, and having remained quite satisfied with it.

The fourth book of the Discourse on Method can only be called metaphysics by using the word somewhat inexactly. This work is a discourse on method. But for Descartes methodological doctrine is not metaphysical doctrine, since metaphysics presupposes rules of method for seeking the truth. The first aim of the Discourse, therefore, is not metaphysics, nor any other branch of science presupposing the Method. The aim of the Discourse cannot, therefore, be the exposition of metaphysics for its own sake. This work was written against Descartes' will, at a period of his life when he ardently desired seclusion, and wished to avoid publication. The author's motive in writing is clear. It became public after his famous meeting with the Neo-platonist Cardinal Bérulle at the house of the Papal Nuncio, that Descartes had a wonderful new method of thinking with which he had secured extraordinary results.[2] The importunities of Bérulle, and his own desire not to appear to have done more than he really had,[3]

had,[3] forced Descartes to declare how much he had done, and this he undertook in the Discourse on the method of rightly conducting the reason, and seeking truth in the sciences, a work consisting of a description of how this method was come by, and containing examples of the results of employing it. The Discourse is, first and foremost, a description of results, not a treatise which has the actual attainment of truth as its proper end. The fourth book of this Discourse contains an account of what Descartes believes he has achieved by the help of his method in the sphere of metaphysics, but he does not deny that from the strictly scientific standpoint this discourse on metaphysics is imperfect.[4] There is another fact which goes to confirm this. The Discourse on Method is also an autobiography. Descartes calls it the history of his spirit,[5] written in fulfilment of a promise, and undertaking no more than to describe the way in which he has conducted his own reason. The Discourse is thus historical.[6] If it speaks of doctrines, it is to tell us what in the main a certain man believed, and not actually to reproduce the scientific search by which these doctrines were arrived at. We should, indeed, expect what is contained there to be put in the order of interest rather than in the order of discovery.

Furthermore, the aim of this Discourse is to give an account of a method, the first rule of which is that one must doubt of everything which one does not clearly and distinctly know to be true. Because it is methodical, metaphysics must

commence/

commence by rigorously doubting everything obscure. But since the minds of the majority of people contain nothing but what is obscure, this might be sufficient to unbalance them completely. The Discourse is meant to be read by people of this kind as well as by the learned,[7] and that is why it is written in French, the vulgar tongue, and not in Latin. The hyperbolical doubt, indispensable first step in a cogent, coherent, and methodical metaphysic, must thus be lacking in the fourth book of the Discourse, which is, therefore, not strictly speaking scientific.

Descartes, however, had the intention of writing a complete, scientific metaphysic; and to fulfil it he composed the Meditations. The purpose of the Meditations is not historical anecdote but systematic exposition. They elaborate[8] the fourth book of the Discourse which can be properly understood only from them. They are not on this account merely a commentary on the Discourse, as which they have so often been treated, but a work of a different kind and intention, a systematic work, in its nature more complete and coherent. There is no good reason for believing that Descartes was in the least undecided about the details of his metaphysic when he wrote the Discourse. He merely did not consider it appropriate to reveal them. The completeness[9] with which he considered his metaphysics to be presented in the Meditations, is well seen from this work's being unaffected in either form or content by the Objections, whose only function was to clear

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away the adventitious impediments which prevented the reader from seeing what was in itself perfectly luminous.[10] It was to the Meditations that Descartes referred those who wished, or required, to be informed of his metaphysical doctrine.

It is true that the first book of the Principles of Philosophy is frequently regarded as an attempt of Descartes' to supplement the doctrine of the Meditations. It has been regarded as his Meditations reduced to dry formulae, their verve dissipated and their charm lost.[11] But in spite of the difference in form of the Principles, there is no evidence for believing that Descartes considered the Meditations to be in the least respect inadequate to their proper end, namely, metaphysics for their own sake. The demands of pure truth and pure science had been met. As a matter of fact, Descartes' intention in writing the Principles is easy to ascertain because it has been plainly stated. It is to present his philosophy in a form in which it can be easily taught.[12] We thus expect to find in the first part of the Principles a clear statement of the fundamental notions contained in his Metaphysic. We expect not so much the strict order of exposition obtaining in the Meditations, as the principles which emerge from them; and an elaboration of those things which, suppressed for the purpose of rigorous proof, nevertheless require some expansion if they are to be easily grasped. Some things may be abbreviated, and others appear at a greater length,[13]/

length,[13] since our preoccupation is now not so much with the order of proof as with the infirmities of the apprehending intellect. In this, the first part of the Principles shares in the motive of the Objections: both serve to remove difficulties. The content of Principles I.is, indeed, probably influenced by the Objections. For instance, the difficulty felt by Hobbes and Arnauld[14] with respect to Descartes' doctrine of substance, and the distinction of mind and body, might well be considered to account for the careful enunciation of this doctrine in the Principles,[15] and the classification of the kinds of distinctions. Consequently the structural beauty of the Meditations, and the rigid dependence of proof on proof, is not aimed at in the Principles. Indeed, the latter are not intelligible without the Metaphysic,[16] and can thus not be conceived as an independent piece of metaphysical writing, or as a restatement by Descartes of his position.

The Recherche remains somewhat of a mystery. It is undated, but would appear to belong to the period succeeding the Principles. Descartes' intentions in writing it are unknown. It is in dialogue form, but is largely lacking in the literary graces of dialogue, and the heavy attacks on the position occupied by Epistemon, the representative of the Schools, seem to indicate that period when Descartes was increasingly occupied in defending his position. The Recherche, too, does not give only a disinterested exposition of metaphysical/

metaphysical doctrine, though it follows the systematic order of the Meditations. Its value lies in this that it exhibits with greater clearness even than the latter, the structure of Descartes' metaphysics during the first stages of proof succeeding the Cogito, and dwells on aspects of the Cogito passed over in the Meditations.

To sum up, it is sufficiently clear, even from such evidence as that which has briefly been put forward, that of the Discourse, the Meditations, the first book of the Principles, and the Recherche, it is only the Meditations which Descartes considered to be a full and scientific work on metaphysics. The Recherche is critical and polemical, the first book of the Principles cannot be understood without the Meditations, and the Discourse is an incomplete exposition whose arguments are said to receive their full statement only in the Meditations. Only the latter is a formal and complete body of science. This conclusion will be confirmed as Descartes' conception of metaphysics becomes clearer, but even on such evidence as is present, it is difficult to see what other conclusion is possible. Provisionally, it can be accepted as true.

§2. Descartes' Metaphysic, then, in his own view, is fully contained in the Meditations. This work is his definitive exposition of "first philosophy." It must next be asked what kind of knowledge Descartes considers metaphysics to be.

In the Regulae we read: "We must not fancy that one kind of knowledge is more obscure than another, since all knowledge is of the same kind throughout, and consists solely in combining what is self-evident."[17] Again, "Mankind has no roads towards certain knowledge open to it, save those of self-evident intuition and necessary deduction."[18] Metaphysics is true knowledge. It must therefore follow the road of self-evident intuition and necessary deduction, that is, it must be pursued according to the Method.

It is true that in the Recherche, describing the path we must follow in the attainment of truth, Descartes places a knowledge of metaphysics before that of the method,[19] apparently contradicting his attitude elsewhere, this being the only text in his works where a knowledge of metaphysics is said to precede a knowledge of the method. But since M. Hamelin has already sufficiently explained this[20] there is no need to dwell upon it. It may be noted, however, that the Recherche itself, in other passages, takes for granted that the method precedes the metaphysics. Thus Polyander, surprised at the ease of metaphysics when methodically treated says, " --- it makes me marvel at the exactitude of your method, whereby/

whereby you conduct us little by little by simple and easy paths."[21] Again, Epistemon remarks, "All that Polyander has learnt by the help of this wonderful method --- consists solely of the fact that he doubts, that he thinks, and that he is a thinking being"[22] - these being the fundamental metaphysical truths.

The method by which Metaphysics is to be pursued, is that which Descartes has come by through observing the certainty with which mathematicians reason. We must study "the logic which teaches the right conduct of the reason, with the view to discovering the truths of which we are ignorant; and, because it greatly depends on usage, it is desirable we should exercise ourselves for a length of time in practising its rules on easy and simple questions, as those of mathematics. Then, when we have acquired some skill in discovering the truth in these questions, we should commence to apply ourselves in earnest to true philosophy, of which the first part is Metaphysics."[23] A mathematical training is necessary for metaphysics.[24] The four rules for correctly investigating the truth, prescribed in the Discourse on Method, must be used in the investigation of metaphysical things, as much as in the rest of the sciences.

When we investigate the truth in conformity with the demands of the true logic, we come by results which are worthy to be called exact science, that is to say, knowledge which has/

has the cogency of a mathematical demonstration. Metaphysics is therefore an exact science, whose propositions are demonstrated with mathematical certainty. In the famous letter of April 15th, 1630, Descartes announces that he has discovered "how one can demonstrate metaphysical truths in a manner more evident than the demonstrations of geometry." "Be assured," he says on another occasion, "that there is nothing in my metaphysic which I do not believe to be perfectly clear to the natural light, or accurately demonstrated."[25] Metaphysics is thus a knowledge of the same kind as, and even more evident than, geometry. It is more evident because, as we find when we examine the actual sequence of Descartes' metaphysical proofs, a large body of metaphysical truths can be discovered before the doubt is lifted from the truths of mathematics:

"And hence the Sceptics, etc., believed that the existence of God cannot be demonstrated, and many up to this time consider it indemonstrable, though on the contrary it is highly demonstrable, and (like all metaphysical truths), can be more surely demonstrated than the demonstrations of mathematics. For if the mathematicians were to call into doubt all which the author called into doubt in the Metaphysics, no mathematical demonstration could be made with certainty though the author nevertheless then gave metaphysical demonstrations. Therefore the latter are more certain than the former."[26]

Metaphysics is the most certain of the sciences because it is "the key to the rest of the sciences."[27] It is not necessary to labour this matter since the texts are quite clear. "I consider the demonstrations of which I here make use, to be equal or even superior to the geometrical in certitude and evidence."[28] "The reasonings which conduct us to the knowledge of our mind and of God --- are of all which come under human knowledge, the most certain and manifest: a conclusion which it was my single aim in these Meditations to establish."[29] These are but two out of numerous passages.[30]

Metaphysics is thus in its form a science of the same kind as mathematics. So much may safely be concluded. It is also the most certain, because it is rationally the most demonstrable of all the purely human sciences. Consequently its proofs have complete objectivity. Not only are the existence of God, and the real nature of the world, discoverable and demonstrable with mathematical precision, but the Metaphysic is intelligible to all who sufficiently attend to its proofs "with minds abstracted from the senses."[31] To understand these proofs, Descartes is convinced, is to be sure of their truth.

There are several features of Descartes' mind which can be understood only if this interpretation of what he means by metaphysics be accepted; and they may be mentioned in further support and illustration. In the first place, there/

there is Descartes' apparently dogmatic certainty in affirming God's existence and the soul's immateriality, and his strong resentment against the atheists. Since he believes that he has demonstrated the existence of God and the immateriality of the soul with more than geometrical precision, it is only to be expected that he should assert these truths as positively as the truth that the three angles of any triangle are together equal to two right angles. With those who denied these truths, he may well be expected to show an intellectual impatience which could easily be mistaken for religious intolerance.[32]

Secondly, it cannot be doubted that Descartes never saw any need to augment or revise the Meditations. Since the Meditations are a complete and perfect demonstration of metaphysical truth, there could be no thought, once they were completed, of adding to, or subtracting from them. There is no more to be said on the matters there treated of. If Descartes wrote only a small amount of metaphysics, it was not from lack of interest, but because he thought he had accurately and finally demonstrated all that needed to be said on the matter. He was not able to doubt that his alone was the "true metaphysic," and that mankind would need none after his. "I consider that all those to whom God has given the use of reason, are obliged to employ it principally for trying to know Him, and for knowing themselves ---; this is the matter to which I have devoted the most study, and in which, by God's grace, I am entirely satisfield."[33].

In publishing the Meditations, he says, "I have done what I thought obligatory for God's glory, and the discharge of my conscience. If my design has not succeeded and there are too few men in the world capable of understanding my arguments, that is not my fault, and they are not the less true for that."[34] "I believe," he says, speaking of the Metaphysic, "that I have omitted practically nothing of what is necessary for demonstrating the truth; and when the truth is once well grasped, all the particular objections that can be made have no force."[35] Like Eudoxus in the Recherche he considers that it is a diseased state of mind perpetually to be worked on by an insatiable curiosity.[36] He himself no longer feels any desire to learn anything at all.[37] Only complete certainty could lead to such entire satisfaction, in a nature such as Descartes'.

In the third place, it is only by believing that his conception of metaphysics was that of a completely objective science, that it is possible to understand why Descartes should have thought that his metaphysical demonstrations could equally well have been discovered by someone else. He considers his metaphysics, he says, to be the only road for arriving at truth in the matters of which it treats, but it is a road which could equally well have been followed by someone else.[38] No more glory is due to him for having discovered any truths, he says, than is due to a casual passer-by for having accidentally discovered under his feet a rich treasure/

treasure which had for long successfully eluded the searches of many.[39] Metaphysics is claimed by Descartes to discount personality. For him, imagination and memory do not belong to the essence of mind. The marks by which we ordinarily distinguish one individual from another are therefore not essential. We may say that Descartes pursues science as though he thought himself the impersonal thinking substance of his own Metaphysic.[40]

It is open to serious question whether Descartes' metaphysic is really objective and impersonal, though that is what he himself claims it to be, and it is only of that claim which has just been spoken. The metaphysic has, however, an implicit claim to be considered in relation to Descartes' personality, a complication which introduces great difficulties of interpretation. This must be remembered to avoid confusion in what follows.

§3. Since metaphysics is pursued by the same method as the other sciences, the knowledge of the metaphysician is not different in kind from that of the physicist or mathematician. It is only its objects which are different. From this point of view, it is not superior to the other sciences. Indeed, it is subordinate to them, since, merely the root of the tree of knowledge,[41] it must be studied as an introduction to the rest of the sciences. The proofs of the existence of God must be grasped before we can be sure that mathematical propositions are true. Furthermore, Descartes affirms that the six Meditations contain all the foundations of his physics.[42] The ancillary duties of metaphysics in the philosophy of Descartes have led to its being often disputed among his interpreters, whether Descartes was a physicist or a metaphysician.

Since this dispute has ramifications of great importance, it is necessary to enter upon it. M. Liard was the first to pose the problem fully.[43] Setting aside Descartes' statement that metaphysics is the root of the sciences, on the grounds that the physics is self-sufficient and is capable of independent exposition. M. Liard affirms that Descartes pursued physical investigations before metaphysical, and that the explanation of physical phenomena was the dominant and perpetual interest of his life. His physics differs from the medieval physics in being free from "metaphysical" ideas. Finally, it arises directly out of his method. But Descartes, M. Liard/

M. Liard continues, was not entirely free from Scholastic influences. Accepting the medieval idea of philosophy as the total of all we know, he had to construct a metaphysic to retain the unity of his system. Physics and metaphysics being traditionally united, a physicist was bound to take the precaution of supporting his physics by a metaphysic. Descartes submitted to a necessity external to his proper ends, and explicable by the demands of tradition. Being merely a safeguard it can be removed from the Cartesian philosophy without leaving any wound.

Thus M. Liard to whose view, however, are several objections. In the first place, it does not appear to be true that physics actually was Descartes' first love. A design to cultivate metaphysics seems to have had a definite place in his early purposes, for M. Gouhier has traced the development of the Meditations from an early plan for a "little treatise on divinity." Besides, it is very doubtful exegesis flatly to contradict Descartes' own statements. that all further knowledge depends from the knowledge of ourselves and of God, questions peculiarly those of metaphysics. The arrangement of the sciences in the Discourse and the Principles is an earnest of the professions of the Preface to the Principles, since in both works the conclusions of metaphysics are stated before those of the other sciences. M. Liard's theory suggests a picture of Descartes as a man given to precautions and expedients, and ruled by tradition, a portrait for which there is much less evidence to be found than used to be believed.[44]

The philosopher who in the Regulae (VIII) affirmed that all the sciences united were but the human understanding was hardly the man to give a merely apparent unity to his works, nor to yield to any necessity but that of knowledge itself. Furthermore, the contention that the physics has an immediate source in the method, is weakened by the quantity of metaphysics included, it seems inseparably, in Descartes' detailed treatise on method: the Regulae.[45] Indeed, the method seems actually to preclude the immediate rise from it of physics, for it enjoins the entry into a doubt which, when thoroughly entered upon, leads to uncertainty about the existence of the objects of physics. But physics cannot demonstrate the existence of its own objects, this being the proper work of metaphysics; so that the direct rise of physics from the method is forbidden by the method itself. In this is seen an essential difference between Descartes' position and the traditional. No medieval physicist needed to demonstrate the existence of the objects of his science, since scholastic metaphysics depended on physics, proving God's existence from the nature of material things as revealed by a physics which took their existence for granted. Descartes is far from being influenced by tradition to construct his metaphysic, when he entirely reverses the rôle which metaphysics is to play in the system of our knowledge.[46]

It is necessary to point out, however, that owing to the/

the difference between the Cartesian and the medieval physics, this reversal is not as simple as it may at first appear. The physics of Descartes, being mathematical, shares the nature of mathematical truths which Descartes declares to be indifferent to the existence of their objects. There is room to doubt seriously whether Descartes' physics actually requires the existence of the material world. It appears only to require the possible existence of this world, that is, as will be shown much further on, it requires to be a science of essences or natures which are other than our ideas. The real difficulty for physics, raised by the method's prescribing doubt, is, therefore, not so much the difficulty of the correspondence of our ideas with the existent, as with the possibly existent, or world of essences. But since it is the essence or nature of things which is that in them which we know, the insuperable difficulty for physics posed by the requiring of doubt by the method, is not that it cannot prove that it is a science of the existent, but that it cannot prove whether it is a science of the <u>essences</u> of things, which contain no more than the possibility of existence. It requires metaphysics, not to prove that its objects exist, but to prove that it is true.

The fact that the medieval relationship of physics and metaphysics was changed by Descartes has led more recent commentators to suppose that he believed metaphysics to have an/

an actual priority to physics, but that, precisely for that reason, it was no fundamental interest of his. Being relative to a certain end, the physics, it was something to construct and have done with. The metaphysics came into being only for the sake of the physics.[47]

This view depends on certain obvious facts. In the Preface to the Principles, Descartes compares philosophy to a tree of which metaphysics is the root, physics the trunk, and medicine, mechanics, and morals the branches. That he is in earnest with this arrangement, the Discourse and the Principles bear witness. Metaphysics raises the doubt from mathematical truths, from which physics and mechanics depend, and establishes the mechanism necessary for the study of the human body. It rids us of the substantial forms. And finally, in proving the substantiality of the mind, and the real existence of material things, it points beyond itself to morals and physiology. The conclusions of metaphysics are useless except as the foundations of the other sciences.

But in answering the question, physicist or metaphysician? we must ask whether these facts are really relevant. It is true that metaphysics occupies a subordinate place among the Cartesian sciences, from the point of view of architechtonics. But what the question asks is, what the man was and where his interests lay; and, to Descartes' own attitude to his works the "hierarchy" of the sciences in his philosophy/

philosophy gives no straightforward clue.

The conception of hierarchy within the sciences is essentially scholastic. For scholasticism, the relation of the sciences to each other was determined by the nature of the objects of these sciences. The highest science was that which had the noblest object; the lowest, that which had the least. The hierarchy of the sciences was, therefore, fixed by an immoveable criterion, and the order in which they were to be pursued determined by absolute objective standards and not by subjective ones. This order was above the interference of the individual, since it depended from an objective order divinely appointed from the Creation. This doctrine implied the perfect connaturality of the mind with its objects. It was the very essence of man's rational nature to know objects in a certain order. There was no question whether a man was primarily a physicist, a metaphysician or a theologian. These things were determined by his "definition," and his definition was not something peculiar to himself, but something common to all humanity. In his scientific activities he was first a physicist, and finally a theologian. Yet not he, but the humanity in him, for the hierarchy of the sciences gives no clue to the mind of Peter as Peter, but only as a man. Peter, as an individual, is of no account.

But, as René Descartes, Peter loses his old humility and ceases to efface himself. In disturbing the traditional order/

order of the sciences, Descartes denied the objectivity of this order. He affirmed himself in opposition to the order of things established by God from the Creation. In assigning a new order to the sciences, he broke entirely with the old conception of hierarchy which placed itself entirely beyond the interference of the individual thinker. Strictly speaking, the order he substituted is no hierarchy at all.

Descartes' changes in the Scholastic hierarchy may consequently be regarded as marking not merely a change in the order of philosophising, but the emergence of a new kind of man. The very fact that there is a question whether Descartes was a physicist or a metaphysician marks an interest in Peter as Peter, which is quite incompatible with the whole doctrine of connaturality. Breaking up the divine concord between thought and its objects, Descartes conceives thought to be anterior to things; his thought in particular, rather than thought in general. Hitherto, a man had been what he was by definition, fitting into the eternal order of things by a supernatural necessity. Now it was no longer the order of a man's studies which determined what he was - though that had had little interest for him; but he who could determine this order conformably to the demands of his own intellect.

The sciences, in fact, were coming to have a connection with individuality; to involve the total being of the thinker in a manner unadmitted by the scholastics.[49] The question, physicist/

physicist or metaphysician? involves the whole person of Descartes so deeply that it would be an oversimplification to try to answer it merely from the subservient part apparently played by the metaphysic in the Cartesian arrangement of the sciences. Descartes, experiencing the effect of the pursuit of a science upon the whole man, affirmed the right of the thinker to make himself whatever kind of man he wished to be, by choosing upon what intellectual occupation he should lay most stress. Believing it to be within a man's own power to shape himself, he considered science to be the implement by which it was to be effected. For better or worse, he did for the philosopher what the disappearance of the guilds did for the artisan: he threw upon him a vast responsibility for his own destiny. But if this is true, then the question, physicist or metaphysician? is to be answered in the light of Descartes' conception of the human end; for, the will of man having been exalted in a manner entirely destructive of the doctrine of connaturality, it is not the divine order in the universe, but man's moral end, in relation to which all his activities must be considered.

Descartes' innovations were not so great, however, that he did not retain many of the old forms. His arrangement of the sciences has, at least superficially, a resemblance to the scholastic. But the differences are of more importance than the similarities, and we can best obtain some estimate

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of them by considering the science of Theology which Descartes, like St. Thomas, considers the highest form of knowledge.

For St. Thomas, Theology is a science constructed by the rational development of the truths of faith by reason perfected by faith. But for Descartes, reason stands in no intrinsic need of being perfected in order to any of its operations. The natural light shines by virtue of itself, not by virtue of any supernatural light. Descartes, therefore, does not reject the title of theologian because he feels the lack of the perfection of his reason by faith. As to the revealed truths, which are the proper object of Theology, these are the common property of all Christians, the truths by which heaven is to be gained being in the possession even of idiots and rustics.[50] The interpreter seems to be faced with a dilemma. If reason requires no supernatural perfection in order to any of its operations, then it should be capable of constructing a theology provided that it was confronted with the proper objects of that science; and there is no reason to believe that Descartes did not consider these truths to be accessible to all Christians. Quite the contrary. Why, then, did he not consider himself fit to be a theologian? It is true that Descartes affirms that theologians "need to have some extraordinary assistance from heaven and to be more than men;"[52] while his friend, P. Nicholas Poisson, was convinced that Descartes would not pursue theology because it was

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a saint exercice;[53] evidence which suggests the conception of the perfection of reason by faith. But there seems to be another explanation of Descartes' refusal to pursue theology. It is this, that there are passages in Descartes which imply the rejection of the conception of Theology as the rational development of the truths of faith, and identify it with faith. Theology then becomes the corpus of the truths of faith, perhaps even only so far as these are apprehended by idiots and rustics. That is, it is a simple statement of the truths necessary for our salvation, and ceases to be a science in the strict sense. The truths of revelation, says Descartes, are beyond our intelligence; and therefore he dares not submit them to the feebleness of his reason. Why, indeed, should he do so when theology has the practical purpose of directing us to heaven, the road to which lies open as much to the most ignorant as to the most learned?[54]

The conclusion to be drawn from the famous passages[55] in the Discourse and the Dialogue with Burman, seems quite clear. Theology has a practical end, to point the way to heaven. Since we know that the most ignorant can be saved, it follows that the truths accessible to them are sufficient for the end to which Theology serves. Theology need, therefore, not contain more than these truths. Obviously their rational development is not relevant to its proper end. Why all the confusion of the Scholastic Theology, says Descartes, "when/

"when we see that idiots and rustics can reach heaven as well as we? This certainly should warn us, that it is far better to preserve our Theology as simple as they." Theology, then, is in the possession of idiots and rustics, a conclusion which agrees well enough with Descartes' secularisation of human reason, as a result of which divine things are felt to be beyond "the feebleness of our reasonings."

If this is true, then there is a difference startling enough between the Cartesian and Thomistic conceptions of Theology. For the former, it can hardly be called a science. Why, then, should Descartes rank theology as the highest kind of knowledge? Here again the solution lies in Descartes' humanistic standpoint. St. Thomas ranked the sciences in respect of their objects, Theology being preëminent by virtue of its supreme object. But, for Descartes, thoughts are anterior to things, so that the branches of knowledge can be classified only from the side, not of the character of objects but of thoughts. But if Theology is nothing more than the corpus of the truths of faith, then it must be the highest kind of knowledge by virtue of the subjective criterion of clearness and distinctness since, "matters which have been divinely revealed to us are more certain than our surest (sc. human) knowledge."[56] The Cartesian classification of the branches of knowledge relates to the certainty which we as humans can have of the truth, not to the object of which the/

the truth is affirmed. Thus, with respect to the preëminence of theology, Descartes' doctrine differs from that of St. Thomas in this, that man, not God, is the measure. It is quite probably that Descartes valued faith as the pattern of human certainty. He accorded it his admiration because it professed to give that kind of certainty, complete and absolute, which he regarded as the perfection of the human intellect. He admired theology as a scientist not as a man of faith, and he did not tire of attempting to gain by the sciences possible to the natural light that conviction of the nature of things, and that deep consolation which for the saints are the gift only of grace. Theology holds the place assigned to it by Descartes, by no secure tenure.

It may be objected to this exposition of Descartes' conception of Theology that, in fact, he did not wish to preserve theology simple, but that he had a secret desire to crown his philosophy with a Cartesian Theology, like that of which he has given an example in his writings on the Eucharist.[57] There is no reason to believe, however, that this "echantillon de la theologie cartesienne" is, in fact, a contribution to such a science. In the very passage from the dialogue with Burman where Descartes' identification of Theology with the truths of faith most clearly appears, the following words occur: "We can, however, and we ought to show that the truths of Theology are not at variance with those of Philosophy,/

Philosophy, but we should not examine them in any other way." But this precisely describes the nature of Descartes' writings on the Eucharist which are intended to show that his philosophy supports rather than conflicts with the truths of faith.[58] It is not an example of a theology built upon his philosophy, but a piece of apologetic whereby it is shown that there is an accord between his philosophy and that true and simple theology which is nothing but the corpus of the truths of the faith.

Descartes' humanistic conception of Theology carries with it profound consequences. The criterion by which the branches of knowledge are to be ranked is a purely human one. It is the value which they have for us as truth which decides their status. But, for Descartes, truth is a thing which is primarily of moral value. Its possession, he writes to Elizabeth, is a moral perfection. Nothing, indeed, is to be valued except insofar as it contributes to this perfection. M. Boutroux has discussed the relation of Descartes' science to his moral preoccupations in a fashion so clear, and so well based on the texts that, for present purposes, little remains to be said on that head. One text, too much ignored, will serve as an illustration of the fashion in which Descartes subjected science to morals, his chief preoccupation, according to Baillet.[59] "The whole conduct of our life depends on our senses. That of sight being the most universal of these and the most noble, there is no doubt that the inventions which serve to increase its powers are the most useful possible."

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The end of physics is utility.

"It ought to be our first care to live well,"[60] says Descartes, and moral philosophy teaches us how this is to be done. Let us pause to note some characteristics of this science. Influenced by Stoicism, Descartes conceives morality from the point of view of living an earthly life which in itself would be pleasing and complete. How can a man live the life most acceptable to himself? Believing with the Stoics that nothing is in our power except our own thoughts, Descartes emphasises the power of natural reason to enable us to live in perfect happiness.[61] Wisdom (la sagesse) can bring us complete happiness (la béatitude); and wisdom is nothing but the sum of the knowledge to which we can attain by the purely human sciences. It is human wisdom, attainable by human means.[62] Thus morality is for Descartes something more of the earth than it is for St. Thomas. His "parfaite morale," a human science, is "le dernier degré de la Sagesse," the final degree of wisdom.[63] The Pagan inheritance of the Middle Ages, re-asserting itself in the Renaissance, has turned Descartes in the direction of that Humanism in which M. Maritain sees the corroding vice of our times. Descartes believes that something which is in his own power can make him happy. There is, he thinks, a "béatitude naturelle" to which a Pagan philosopher could have shown us the way.[64]

"While he leqves to religion, says Boutroux, the task

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of assuring our felicity in the next world, he himself takes up the work left him by the ancient philosophers of guiding and making happy the present life."[65] He belongs to an age when philosophers could no longer be canonised.[66]

It is unnecessary, having regard to the results of modern scholarship, to dwell upon the fact of humanistic elements in the thought of Descartes. It is necessary only to call attention to the fact that moral science, being the human science par excellence was of peculiar interest to him. In it, we garner the fruit of the tree of knowledge.

"By the science of Morals, I understand the highest and most perfect which, presupposing an entire knowledge of the other sciences, is the last degree of wisdom."[67]

Truth comes to be valued by Descartes for its moral uses. We judge it by the moral ends which it serves, just as we judge a tree by its fruits. M. Boutroux has demonstrated the fashion in which Descartes directed his physical researches to the human good.[68] It remains to be remarked what is the relation of theology and metaphysics to moral values.

With respect to metaphysics the issue seems fairly clear. "It is in being superior to error," says Descartes, "that the highest and chief perfection of man consists."[69] But in what, ultimately, lies the gain in being superior to error? In this, that the power of distinguishing the true from the false enables us to act clearsightedly, and proceed with/

with confidence in this life.[70] It is for the sake of action, then, that we must know what is true and what is false.[71] We cannot but consent to the good which we clearly see.[72] But the power of distinguishing the true from the false is given us by metaphysics, which teaches the means of doubting the obscure and confused, and establishes the basis of all human certainty.[73] As making this fundamental and necessary contribution to the human good, it lies closer to Descartes' dearest ends than physics.

Furthermore, truth itself, apart from the end which it subserves, namely action, has a moral sublimity. Descartes writes to Elizabeth that the greatest good lies in the exercise of virtue, or what comes to the same thing, in the possession of all the perfections of which the acquisition depends upon our free will.[74] It is a very great perfection to know the truth, so great, indeed, that it is better to know it and be saddened than not to know it and be cheerful. The possession of truth, then, is a moral perfection. But the essential quality of truth is clearness and distinctness. The more clear and distinct it is, the greater its moral value. Since metaphysics is the science of immaterial things, and since immaterial things can be better known than material,[75] it is clear that metaphysics has a higher moral value as truth than the science of material things, and thus contributes more than physics to that greatest good which must be sought before all/

all other things. A man, therefore, desiring before all else to live well, must necessarily value metaphysics more than physics.

In his correspondence with Elizabeth, Descartes, in telling how the best life on earth is to be lived, says that the first two things necessary for this are the knowledge of the greatness and goodness of God, and of the soul's immortality.[76] The consciousness of the world's vastness takes a third place. If we consider the first two truths as being demonstrated by metaphysics, the nature of the superior importance of metaphysics over physics is once more apparent. If we consider them as revealed truths, we will be in the presence of another instance of how humanised the Cartesian conception of theology has become. The truths of faith subserve the human good. We believe in the life hereafter for the better satisfaction of the present life. Theology itself is subject to moral ends. No longer a science directed to God's glory, it is a corpus of revealed truths having as its end man's comfort and man's salvation, man's reassurance, and his peace of mind. We value it according to the force with which it reassures us. The path to heaven becomes a path to an idealised humanity, and the rational science of theology dwindles to a simple statement of the truths of faith, and is displaced by the perfect science of morality which has as its object the state of man as a creature of earth rather than of God.

"Since God alone knows all things perfectly we must content ourselves with knowing those which are of the greatest use to us" - God's existence, since the love of Him elevates our own spirits and relieves our own afflictions; and the soul's capacity to enjoy an infinite number of contentments in a future life,[77] so that detaching ourselves from the world by the aid of this knowledge we may better enjoy this world.[78]

Is it, perhaps, true that the secret of Descartes' deference to Theology is that he was obsessed with a human science which in the course of history would make the very truths of faith seem unnecessary? It is not a result which he foresaw, and it is an intention he would probably have repudiated with horror. But the seeds of it lie in his thought.[79,80]

In the light of the preceding discussion certain conclusions can be suggested as to extent to which the different branches of knowledge were of interest to Descartes. Whatever may have been his conception of theology, it is clear that he did not consider himself a theologian in the orthodox sense. He did not wish to elaborate it as a science nor to teach it.[81] Wholly preoccupied with moral values, he nevertheless constructed no definitive science of morals. It is, however, clear that morals determine the order of his interests, and, having regard to his conception of the human good, it is impossible to deny that there are good reasons for considering that he valued/

valued metaphysics more than physics. Descartes was a man who loved himself too much to busy himself throughout his life with that which was of small significance to him. He always considered truth in its relation to himself.

§4. Metaphysics is for Descartes the clearest of the human sciences. On this account, it was, of the sciences which he completed, that in which he was most interested, since he always professed to love truth more than anything else in this world,[82] and the first characteristic of truth is clearness and distinctness. Since metaphysics has its special virtues of clearness and distinctness because it is methodically pursued, we find that Descartes' chief interest in his metaphysics lay in its methodological or formal aspect. Indeed, in all branches of knowledge, it was the structure rather than the content of the science which appeared to him of importance, since the first and chief requirement for reaching truth is that we should search for it in that orderly and methodical fashion of which we are told in the Regulae and in the Discourse on Method. The test of a science, and the channel through which it compels our will and our understanding, is that its proofs should proceed with perfect consequence from simple, self-evident truths. As M. Milhaud says of Descartes' first scientific attempts: "It isn't the fact of formulating a truth which counts for him; it is the fact of demonstrating it, of grasping it, of unfolding it."[83] Thus we can understand why Descartes who regarded his method as novel, and as peculiarly his own, nevertheless set no value on a truth merely because it happened to be new.[84] We find him saying, "I am by no means of a like mind with those who desire that their opinions should appear new; on the contrary, I accommodate mine/

mine to those of others, so far as the truth permits me."[85] To see truths in a system was Descartes' endeavour. It did not matter whether they were old or new.[86] Hence his criticisms of Regius. "But now a manifold experience compels me to conclude that he is swayed not so much by love of truth as by love of novelty. He holds all he has learned from others to be old-world and outworn, thinking nothing sufficiently novel except what he has hammered out of his own brain."[87] In the Preface to the Principles, Descartes accuses Regius of having, in his Fundamenta Physicae, changed the necessary order of truth.[88] Truth is seen in the structure rather than in the content of knowledge. The study of the Meditations is interdicted to those who read "without caring to comprehend the order and connection of the reasonings."[89] Of this, we may here consider an important consequence.

It was said earlier that, on the grounds of Descartes' own expressed intentions, the Meditations could be considered to be his definitive metaphysical work, since he intended them to contain his whole metaphysics in their most truly scientific form. It is now possible to see how it follows, from Descartes' conception of the characteristics of true reasoning, that the Meditations should be regarded as complete and self-contained. True science must consist of a perfect nexus of truths. Since metaphysics is a demonstrative science, an exposition of metaphysical science must contain no proofs too few or too many. To be cogent it must be coherent and consequent,/

consequent, which it cannot possibly be if any omissions have been made from it. If to understand metaphysics it is necessary to comprehend the interrelation and order of proofs in a complete system, then, in considering his Meditations to be scientific, Descartes presents them as lacking in nothing. It follows that the proper study of the Cartesian metaphysics is the study of the formal order of the proofs of the Meditations. This is more important than the study of its content, since that is the same both for the Meditations and the first book of the Principles. More important than to know what is proved, is to know how it is proved, to understand the Meditations being to view at glance, or intuitively, the order and connection of the reasonings.[90]

The determination of Descartes' intentions in any point of metaphysical doctrine must, therefore, always be derived from the consideration of the fashion in which this point occurs in the nexus of proofs of the Meditations. It requires the concession ab initio that the Meditations are a complete body of truth, whose author was strongly aware that the least fault in his chain of reasoning must bring about the collapse of the whole system. Descartes' other works touching on metaphysics must, if we are faithful to their author's intention, be regarded not as supplementing the Meditations, but as aids to our own deficient understanding in comprehending a work which pretends to be without formal deficiencies. They are useful rather than necessary. They have no logical, but only/

only a practical connection with the Meditations, and if they seem to contain anything not included in the Meditations, we must conclude that the omission from the latter is intentional, as in the instance of the Responses of which Descartes says: "I do not consider it to the point, nor even possible, to include in my Meditations the reply to objections --- for that would break into their whole order."[91]

§5. Before it is possible to understand the Meditations it is therefore necessary to determine as far as possible what their structure is. Descartes treats metaphysical truths as though they were geometrical truths. They are similarly demonstrated. What form does this demonstration take?

In his response to the authors of the second set of objections Descartes clearly explains his intentions about the structure of the Metaphysic. There are two things, he says, which he distinguishes in the geometrical mode of writing, namely, the order and the method of proof.

I. The order of proof. "The order consists merely in putting forward those things first that should be known without the aid of what comes subsequently, and arranging all other matters so that their proof depends solely on what precedes them. I certainly tried to follow this order as accurately as possible in my Meditations; and it was through keeping to this that I treated of the distinction between the mind and the body, not in the second Meditation, but finally in the sixth, and deliberately and consciously omitted much, because it required an explanation of much else besides."[92] The order is thus an order of proof. It is an order of rational demonstration. The order we follow is not influenced by the order in the real of the objects into whose nature we are enquiring. The order is a purely logical one, in which we are concerned only with the order in which we apprehend things, apart altogether from the/

the ontological importance which we may assign to them after we have discovered their nature. According to the third rule of the Discourse on Method, we "assign in thought a certain order even to those objects which in their own nature do not stand in a relation of antecedence and consequence."[93] We start with the most simple things, not with the most real, and we prove, indeed we can prove, no more about them at any one step than the strict order of proof demands.

II The method of proof. In his reply to the authors of the second set of objections Descartes mentions that there are two methods of proof, the analytic and the synthetic. He himself employs the analytic method, because it represents the actual order in which metaphysical discoveries are made, and is therefore the best method of teaching. "If the reader care to follow it, and give sufficient attention to everything, he understands the matter no less perfectly and makes it as much his own as if he had himself discovered it. But it contains nothing to incite belief in an inattentive or hostile reader; for if the very least thing brought forward escapes his notice, the necessity of the conclusions is lost; and on many matters which, nevertheless, should be specially noted; it often scarcely touches, because they are clear to anyone who gives sufficient attention to them."[94] Descartes' intention is thus to take the reader with him on his journey of metaphysical discovery. [95] He is not merely showing him the countries he has/

has discovered, or conducting him by easy ways from capital to capital. He is traversing with him the jungles and morasses of original exploration. The reader has no right to assume that these capitals have been discovered until they actually come in sight, and he seems himself to discover them. This method implies the willingness of the reader to follow. It cannot constrain a hostile reader. The interpreter of Descartes' metaphysic who takes the Method seriously is thus compelled to put aside for the moment his personal metaphysical views. Above all else, Descartes' system requires the sympathy of those who wish to comprehend it. An unsympathetic critic betrays at once by his attitude his ignorance of the system he is examining. Descartes has made it quite clear that his system is not comprehensible until we have made it live in our minds as it lived in his own. This requirement is not by any means in the nature of a personal plea. It is the inescapable demand of the analytic method. It is impossible to follow the intricacies of the proof if we are hampered by a hostile attitude, because the method is a kind of mental habit.[96] At each step of the proof we have not only fully to grasp that step but to see completely all the previous steps, and how the last depends on them. The system has to be known at once in whole and in part. "I know how difficult it will be, even for one who does attend and seriously attempt to discover the truth, to have before his mind (intueri) the entire bulk of what is contained in my Meditations,/

Meditations, and at the same time to have a distinct knowledge of each part of the argument, and yet, in my opinion, one who is to reap the full benefit from my work must know it both as a whole and in detail."[97] To forget the least detail results in our losing the necessity of the conclusion. That is why Descartes asks us to bestow weeks and even months on the first Meditation[98] before going any further, and has told us that he despises those who think that they can learn in a day what it has taken others twenty years to discover.

Metaphysics is thus a strenuous and profound exercise, which is to absorb our whole energies leaving no room for hostility and prejudices. So great is its difficulty that to disseminate its conclusions it is better to act through the channel of authority than to submit the work directly to the public. In a letter, Descartes says that he proposes "to elucidate what I have written in the fourth part of the Method, but to have only twelve or fifteen copies printed, to send to twelve or fifteen of our principal theologians and to await their judgment: for I compare what I have done in that field with the demonstrations of Apollonius, in which there is truly nothing which is not very clear and certain, when one considers each point by itself; but because the demonstrations are rather long, and the necessity of the conclusion cannot immediately be seen, if one does not remember accurately everything which precedes it, it is with difficulty that a man is to be found in an entire country capable of understanding/

understanding them. However, because those few who understand them assert that they are true there is no one who should not believe them. Thus I think I have completely demonstrated the existence of God and the immateriality of the human soul, but because it depends on several consecutive arguments, of which the conclusion cannot be properly understood if the least detail of them be forgottem, I see that they will bear very little fruit if I do not find very capable people of a great reputation in metaphysics, who taking the trouble to examine my arguments carefully, and who, saying openly what they think, give the impulse to others, in this fashion, to judge of it as they do, or at least to be ashamed of contradicting them without grounds;[99] and it seems to me that I am obliged to spend more trouble to obtain some credit for this treatise which has regard to God's glory than my temper would permit me to give it, did it treat of another matter."[100]

The analytic method employed in the Meditations can, thus, satisfy only a few of the most capable minds. Yet it is the only method by which the matters there treated can be properly understood. Yet the Meditations were written for the general good of mankind, because they are intended to uphold the cause of God. Hence a dilemma: the more logically cogent the proofs are made, the more objective they become, the more worthily they defend the cause of God, the less capable are they of influencing the vulgar. The only solution is an appeal to authority, an appeal which illustrates the Discourse and Descartes'/

Descartes' whole character. In the second book of the Discourse Descartes speaks of "those who, possessed of sufficient sense or modesty to determine that there are others who excel them in the power of discriminating truth and error, and by whom they may be instructed, ought rather to content themselves with the opinions of such than trust for more correct to their own reason. For my own part," he says," I should doubtless have belonged to this class,[101] had I received instruction from but one master, or had I never known the diversities of opinion that from time immemorial had prevailed among men of the greatest learning." Dogma is necessary, not only in religion, but also in metaphysics, since few men can think for themselves. Curious fusion of pride and modesty! Descartes' choice of the analytic method shows how his undeviating allegiance to reason, which is only satisfied by the most cogent method of proof, goes together with a belief in the impotence of the popular reason, which, being nevertheless the mark of an immortal soul, must be influenced by authority to believe that the proofs of God's existence are successful. Rather an appeal to authority than a poor demonstration. The rejection of the synthetic method seems to be explicable only by the high estimation in which Descartes held both his reason and his religion.[102]

The authors of the second set of objections have asked for a sample of the Metaphysic demonstrated by the synthetic method employed by the ancient geometers. Descartes concedes that/

that this method "does indeed clearly demonstrate its conclusions, and it employs a long series of definitions, postulates, axioms, theorems and problems, so that if one of the conclusions that follow is denied, it may at once be shown to be contained in what has gone before. Thus the reader, however hostile and obstinate, is compelled to render his assent.[103] Yet this method is not so satisfactory as the other and does not equally well content the eager learner, because it does not show the way in which the matter taught was discovered." In the Metaphysic, then, it is important, from the point of view of the natural reason, not so much to know what has been discovered but how it was discovered. What is demanded is not assent but comprehension. If the synthetic method be employed, and a reader question a conclusion, he is bound to consent to its correctness when he is referred back to propositions to which he has already assented. Yet since this method does not demand from him the lively and constant comprehension of these earlier propositions, but merely the recollection that he once gave his assent to them, the mental gain of the reader is not very great. Again, even a willing reader is retarded by the comparatively mechanical arrangement of the matter demonstrated by the synthetic method. The final objection to this method is that it demands a statement of first principles from which the proof may proceed, and though this causes no difficulty in geometry whose first principles are obvious, it results in great difficulties for metaphysics/

metaphysics in which the trouble lies precisely in the comprehension of first principles.

§ 6 A great many of the difficulties which interpreters find in Descartes' system would be avoided by our bearing in mind the easily understood account which Descartes gives of the analytic and synthetic methods in metaphysics. We bring upon ourselves nothing but confusion when we try to interpret the Meditations now in the light of the one method, now in the light of the other. The habit of keeping these methods apart has to be formed before Descartes can be read intelligently.

It is clear that the order in which arguments are arranged in expositions after the synthetic and after the analytic methods necessarily differ from each other. The former is an order of exposition, the latter one of discovery. "These two methods," says Arnauld "differ only as the route which one takes in ascending from a valley to a mountain, from that which one takes in descending from the mountain to the valley; or as the two manners differ which we use for proving that someone is descended from St. Louis, one of which is to show that this person had such an one for a father, who was the son of such an one, and he of another, up to St. Louis; and the other to commence from St. Louis, and to show that he had such and such children, and these children others, descending from them to the person under discussion: and this example is all the better in this way that it is certain that, to trace an unknown genealogy, one must go upwards from son

to/

to father."[104] Suppose that I am following an exposition after the analytic method and, forgetting what is so important for that method: to recall constantly and vividly the steps by which I have arrived at the point where I stand, I mentally substitute for these steps a first principle of the synthetic method, and then continue analytically, the cogency of the further argument is destroyed. It is a very common mistake of interpreters to treat what would for the synthetic method be the first principles of Descartes' metaphysics, as though they were principles tacitly and unjustifiably assumed in the Meditations. There is clearly no end to the difficulties which could be raised against the Meditations if we believe that Descartes assumes principles which in fact he intends to establish there for the first time, metaphysics unlike geometry requiring that its first principles be demonstrated.[105] It is true that the demonstration of principles like "of nothing there can be no properties or qualities" consists, for the analytic method, in nothing other than positing such principles at the appropriate moment. Their proof consists in their appositeness. But it is precisely in this matter that the difference between the analytic and synthetic methods lies. In synthesis we pass from the general to the particular, from clearly formulated general truths to the nature of a particular thing. In analysis, on the contrary, we concern ourselves with the direct examination of the particular thing whose nature we wish to discover, making explicit during our examination/

examination the general principles which reveal themselves during that examination. The truth is not visualised by the analytic thinker as deduced from these principles: it is these principles, rather, which are revealed and confirmed by the discovery of the truth in a manner which implies them.

Assuming, then, that if the Meditations are to be understood, the requirements of the analytic method must be borne in mind, it is clear that they must not be interpreted as though the sequence of the argument were being tacitly directed by principles prejudged to be efficacious, more synthetico. The Meditations must be considered as a closed system of metaphysical truth, rigidly demonstrated, proceeding from the examination of the particular thing insofar as it is clearly and distinctly known, and affirming nothing which does not follow from what explicitly precedes it.

§ 6A It appears, then, that though Descartes desired to have his Metaphysic generally accepted because of its content, namely the demonstration of God's existence and of the soul's immateriality, yet it is by reason of its structure that he meant it to appeal to the natural reason. We are to be convinced of the truth of its proofs not by faith but by reason, and in reasoning it is the consecutiveness of the proofs that constitute the guarantee of its truth. It is therefore to the order of proof in the Meditations that attention must be paid. It is chiefly in respect of the order of proof that the Meditations can be profitably compared with the fourth book of the Discourse, and with Principles I. If the last two works are to be profitably read, they must be read with an eye not to supplementing the content of the Meditations, but to discovering how, by the contrasts and similarities of the order of their proofs, they throw light upon the structure of the Meditations.

An inspection of the Meditations shows that they can be dissected in the following fashion. The work falls naturally into two parts (I) the statement of the doubt, occupying the first Meditation, and (II) the systematic body of metaphysical proofs which make up the rest of the Meditations, for which the doubt clears the ground. This systematic body of truths which follows the doubt has two explicit aims: to prove God's existence; and to prove the soul's immateriality, i.e. to prove that it is a thinking substance really distinct from body. A complete study of the Meditations would demand the examination/

examination in detail of how both these sets of proofs are effected. But since the aim of this essay is not to make, but rather to justify the making of such a study, the detailed examination of the whole of the Meditations will not be attempted. The proof of the soul's immateriality, however, is peculiarly suited to illustrate the predominant importance of method in the Metaphysic. The second Meditation commences with the affirmation of my existence. In the sixth and last Meditation the real distinction of body and mind is concluded to, i.e. my immateriality is proved. The transition from the Cogito to the affirmation of the soul's immateriality is thus a transition running throughout the last five Meditations. By tracing the steps of this transition one would demonstrate one of the ways in which these five Meditations are connected with each other, that is, what their structure is. The further aim of this essay is to determine the place of the Cogito in the Meditations, and the nature of the transition to the conclusion that the mind is an immaterial substance really distinct from the body.

The very fact that there is such a transition has often been overlooked or denied. Millet suggested that the passage from the "thing that thinks" to the immaterial, substantial self was artificial, and that though Descartes probably felt the feebleness of the proof, he had nevertheless retained it both as a support to Christian beliefs, and as a means of preventing the fanatics from becoming excited against him.[106]/

him.[106] We have seen, however, that it is precisely because Descartes refused to rely on the proofs of synthesis, even though they were easier to apprehend than those of analysis, that he preferred to depend on the authority of theologians to gain credence for the conclusions of the Meditations. If he was willing to go to such extremes out of respect for the most stringent method of proof, it is not likely that he would have employed artificial arguments.

Throughout the history of Cartesian criticism, it has been constantly said that Descartes assumes the distinction between mind and body. If so, then the Meditations are an empty parade of false logic. Descartes was always particularly vigorous in rebutting the charge of assuming in the second Meditation what he proves in the sixth. So far from our knowing what our proper substance is at the stage of the Cogito, we arrive at this knowledge "by degrees."[107] Everything that he has written in the third, fourth, and fifth Meditations, says Descartes, serves to establish the real distinction of body and mind which is only concluded in the sixth Meditation.[108] The nature of the steps of this transition form one of the chief matters of discussion between Descartes and Arnauld. If Arnauld were successful in his criticism then not only would the Meditations be destroyed but the whole Cartesian method, since the method is a universal method. If it fails in metaphysics, if it merely serves to render foregone conclusions plausible instead of being a genuine/

genuine instrument of discovery, then its uselessness in all spheres of the search for truth is proved. It is precisely because it involves no assumptions that Descartes prefers his method to the scholastic logic which, he says, merely teaches a method of communicating unexamined knowledge to others.

The analysis of the Meditations, for the purpose of showing the nature of the transition from the Cogito to the real distinction of body and mind, is what is now to be attempted.

§7. Descartes claims that the first truth of which he is certain when he issues from his doubt is the Cogito ergo Sum. This is the starting point of his positive metaphysical construction. It is frequently objected that the Cogito is a conclusion from a syllogism, the major premise of which is Descartes' assumed but unadmitted first truth. This is not a matter which need be discussed since it concerns not the structure of the Metaphysic but Descartes' doctrine of method. It is relevant to a discussion of Descartes' doctrine of the syllogism, but not of the Metaphysic, which presupposes the acceptance of the doctrine of method. We accept, then, that Descartes' first truth is not the major premise of a syllogism, but an intuition.

There is another problem, however, which vitally concerns the student of the Meditations. It is the problem which has come to be indicated by the name of the cercle cartesien. The Authors of the Second Objections urge against Descartes a charge of circular reasoning:

"Since you are not yet aware of the existence of God, and yet according to your statement, cannot be certain of anything or know anything clearly and distinctly unless previously you know certainly and clearly that God exists, it follows that you cannot clearly and distinctly know that you are a thinking thing, since, according to you, that knowledge depends on the clear knowledge of the existence of God, the proof of which you have not yet reached at that point where you draw the/

the conclusion that you have a clear knowledge of what you are."[109]

How can Descartes affirm that any proposition is true before the existence of God is proved? How, indeed, can he be sure of that very proof?[110] The discussion of this question usually centres round the Cogito, though the question is really much wider. By what right is the truth of the Cogito affirmed before the existence of God is proved? There seems to be a circle in reasoning: we arrive at the proof of God's existence by affirming the truth of the Cogito in virtue of the clearness and distinctness with which it is known, and then conclude that God guarantees the truth of clear and distinct ideas. The objection is one of the most serious that can be brought against the Metaphysic. The cogency of the Metaphysic depends on the rigid order of its proofs. It is said to take nothing for granted, and to follow a mathematical order of proof. The proofs follow a strict order of progression, each stage depending on the one before it, in an irreversible sequence. To follow this order of proof is to understand the Metaphysic. If there is a flaw in this order, if there is a petitio principii, then the Metaphysic is unintelligible.

It is small wonder, then, that all serious commentators of Descartes have felt that the charge of circular reasoning is false and have tried to explain what the true position of Descartes is. The most profound attempt is probably/

probably that of M. Gilson, and it is an attempt which rests on very considerable evidence. In his reply to the Authors of the Second Objections, Descartes says:

"When I said that we could know nothing with certainty unless we were first aware that God existed, I announced in express terms that I referred only to the science apprehending such conclusions as can recur in memory without attending further to the proofs which led me to make them." The Cogito being an independent intuition, does not involve memory in its apprehension. M. Liard has distinguished two kinds of clear and distinct knowledge to which the doubt can apply.[111]

I. By the hypothesis of a God who is a deceiver we can doubt whether a clear and distinct idea is a true idea, i.e. whether the essence of the thing conceived really corresponds to the clear and distinct idea which we have of it.

II. We can doubt also of the truths obtained by chains of reasoning, i.e. of the <u>connections</u> of clear and distinct ideas, such as we have in a science. The doubt in the second of these cases is the more real. In the first case the doubt can only be "metaphysical." But with regard to the second, there is a more than "metaphysical" doubt. In chains of reasoning, <u>memory</u> is involved. In proving a proposition in the fifth book of Euclid we do not clearly and distinctly call to mind all the actual proofs which have gone before. Though the proposition we are proving depends so closely on what has gone before that if the smallest preceding detail were wrong our proof/

proof would fail, nevertheless we do not recall all this detail, but only certain main conclusions. But how are we to be sure of these conclusions, if we are not attending to the detail? We say that we are sure of them only because we remember that we had a clear and distinct knowledge of them grounded in intuitions not involving memory. But what can guarantee the truthfulness of memory? Our memory itself cannot guarantee its own truthfulness. We require knowledge of a God who will not let this faculty deceive us, in order to be certain of scientific truths.[112] That is why the possibility of mathematics demonstrated in the second half of the fifth Meditation is essentially a proof of the reliability of Memory.

M. Gilson emphasises the importance of thus guaranteeing the reliability of memory. He believes that the problem of the cercle cartesien is solved thereby. Only truths depending on memory require the divine guarantee. The Cogito does not require it.

There are two insuperable objections to this explanation. The first is the wide scope of the problem of the cercle cartesien. It arises not only in the case of the Cogito, but in the case of all propositions preceding the proof of God's existence. The transition from the Cogito to the certainty of God's existence is itself a long chain of proof, requiring much application, and involving memory to as great an extent as any chain of mathematical demonstrations.. Even if the Cogito/

Cogito did not require the divine guarantee, the problem would remain regarding the chains of demonstrations consequent upon it.

The second objection is that there seems no reason to suppose that Descartes ever distinguished between two kinds of clear and distinct ideas. The distinction does not occur in the first Meditation, when the hyperbolical doubt is raised. The only mark of true ideas is the clearness and distinctness with which they are conceived, and with respect to this mark there is no difference between the Cogito, and the most recordite mathematical proposition. Further, in the Regulae, Descartes takes away the possibility of this distinction by showing that it is the ideal of all knowledge to become intuitive. All truth is essentially capable of being intuitively apprehended. There is no intrinsic difference in this respect between the truth of the Cogito, and that of the squares on the sides of a right-angled triangle.

In view of these difficulties, it will be best to turn back to the texts in the Meditations where the nature of the truth of the Cogito is expressly set forth. These occur near the commencement of the third Meditation.

"I am certain that I am a thinking thing; but do I not therefore likewise know what is required to render me certain of a truth? In this first knowledge, doubtless, there is nothing that gives me assurance of its truth except the clear and distinct perception of what I affirm, which would not/

not indeed be sufficient to give me the assurance that what I say is true, if it could ever happen that anything I thus clearly and distinctly conceived should prove false, and accordingly it seems to me that I may now take as a general rule, that all that is very clearly and distinctly apprehended is true."[113]

But Descartes has an idea of an all-powerful God, and

"as often as this preconceived opinion of the sovereign power of a God presents itself to my mind, I am constrained to admit that it is easy for Him, if He wishes it, to cause me to err even in matters where I think I possess the highest evidence; and, on the other hand, as often as I direct my attention to things which I think I apprehend with great clearness, I am so persuaded of their truth that I naturally break out into such expressions as these: Deceive me who may, no one will yet ever be able to bring it about that I am not, so long as I shall be conscious that I am, nor at any future time cause it to be true that I have never been, it being now true that I am, or make two and three more or less than five, in supposing which, and other like absurdities, I discover a manifest contradiction."[114]

There are several very interesting features in these passages, which have not been properly appreciated in the past. The first is that our certainty of the truth of the Cogito rests on no different grounds from our certainty of the truth of other clear and distinct ideas. "I have no assurance of its/

its truth except the clear and distinct perception of what I affirm." To repeat, the kind of truth and the mark of truth which we find in the Cogito and in other clear and distinct perceptions differ in no way. We must note how in the second passage quoted the Cogito is coupled with and spoken of as being a truth of the same kind as other clear and distinct ideas: "Deceive me who may, no one will yet ever be able to bring it about that I am not, so long as I shall be conscious that I am, --- or make two or three more or less than five." The Cogito is therefore a truth of the same kind as the sum of two and three. Again, it is of the utmost weight to note that in the first passage quoted the truth of the Cogito is made conditional. The clearness and distinctness with which it is perceived "would not indeed be sufficient to give me the assurance that what I say is true, if it could ever happen that anything I thus clearly and distinctly conceived should prove false."

The Cogito is therefore no more and no less true than other clear and distinct ideas. It seems to me that as a consequence it becomes subject to the metaphysical doubt. Its truth is conditional. It is significant that in the corresponding passages in the Discourse, where there is no hyperbolical doubt, the clauses in which this condition is attached to the truth of the Cogito are lacking.[115] The solution of the problem of the cercle cartesien thus requires that we should show how a truth which is affected by the hyperbolical doubt

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I fear that I have not stated the matter sufficiently fully. Certainly Descartes is reasoning in a circle if the truth of the Cogito is conditional. But this ceases to be a charge against him, if the circularity is intentional, and if it is compatible with the Method. Indeed, the fact that there is a circle in reasoning must be accepted if the metaphysique is to be understood. But if the circle is vicious, it must be proved vicious on grounds other than those hitherto adduced by the critics.

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can yet serve as a first principle. Descartes has placed the Cogito on the level of the other clear and distinct truths, it makes its truth dependent on theirs. The other clear and distinct perceptions are not true because the Cogito is true, - which is the usual interpretation -; but the Cogito is true only provided that I cannot find a clear and distinct idea which is false.

It would appear that if this be borne in mind the ordinary charge of circular reasoning can be disposed of more effectively than ever before. All that stands in the way of Descartes' being able to use the Cogito as his first positive truth is the possibility of finding a clear and distinct idea which is false. How strong are the grounds of this possibility? I have an idea of a God who may be a deceiver, and since omnipotence is included in my idea of him, it may be that he can bring it about that the essence or nature of things does not correspond to my clear and distinct ideas of them. But to what extent is this of weight? My clear and distinct ideas may be false if there is a God who is a deceiver. The falsity of my clear and distinct ideas would only result if I could prove that there was a God who was a deceiver, and who actually was deceiving me with respect to these ideas. But I have as yet made no such proof, and I cannot as yet see the possibility of any such proof. I have only a "preconceived opinion of the sovereign power of a God," and further "I have no ground for believing that Deity is deceitful."[116] The proof of the existence/

existence of a God-deceiver would itself demand that we start from the Cogito. So flimsy and fantastic is the possibility of finding such a God, that it cannot have nearly the strength by which our certainty of the Cogito coerces us. If we are to set aside as false all that admits of the smallest doubt, it is the hypothesis of an evil genius or a God-deceiver which falls to the ground long before our certainty of the Cogito. It is thus on the very extravagance of the hyperbolical doubt that the justification of the structural position of the Cogito in the metaphysics rests. The Cogito is to be taken as true, and to be trusted for purposes of metaphysical proof, until we can find a clear and distinct idea which is false, or a God who has deceived us. The reliability of the Cogito does not depend directly on our finding a God who is no deceiver, but on our not finding a God who is. The proof of the existence of a God who is no deceiver, is thus of negative and indirect significance. It is a guarantee that there is no God-deceiver, and therefore that no clear and distinct idea can be false, the latter being the condition under which the Cogito was to be relied on. It is the fact that we can rely on the Cogito under a negative condition which lifts the charge of circular reasoning. The imputation of circular reasoning would be justified if we knew that the Cogito was true only when we had proved God's existence. However, we know that the Cogito is true until a clear and distinct idea which is false be found, and this possibility is finally removed by the proof of God's existence./

existence. Thus the structural position of the Cogito in the Meditations is not owing to its being independent of the divine guarantee, as M. Gilson affirms, but actually to its being dependent, not directly which M. Gilson assumes to be the only possible alternative, but indirectly and negatively.

It remains, however, to give an explanation of the treatment of truths depending on memory in Meditation V. Simple intuitions not involving memory, and the clear and distinct perceptions dependent on memory have been shown to be truths of the same kind, since the criterion of clearness and distinctness reduces all truths to a homogeneity of character. There is nevertheless a difference between them which arises not out of the truths themselves but out of the nature which apprehends them. There is a difference which arises out of our human infirmity. The truths of memory i.e. remembered truths may appear to be false "because my constitution is also such as to incapacitate me from keeping my mind continually fixed on the same object."[117] "I am conscious of the weakness of not being able to keep my mind continually fixed on the same thought."[118] There is, then, a sense in which the truths of memory are in greater need of God's guarantee than the Cogito. Nevertheless the true explanation of the emphasis which Descartes lays on the trustworthiness of memory is to be found in the essential similarity of remembered truths and of intuitions. The Cogito was found to be true <u>on condition</u> that no clear and distinct idea could be found which was false.

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We must therefore secure our metaphysic by showing that this is not possible. But the case where we have most reason to fear that a clear and distinct truth may not be true is, human nature being weak, the case where the memory of the grounds of a truth are involved. When it can be shown that there is no need to doubt of a truth of this kind, then, all truths being essentially the same, there is no possibility of finding any clear and distinct truth which is false. Thus the Cogito and the succeeding chains of proof are finally justified.

This explanation of the cercle cartesien rests on the supposition that the truth of the Cogito is conditional, and is affected by the hyperbolical doubt; but that nevertheless we are justified in using it to prove God's existence. It remains still to reply to an objection to this explanation which cannot but suggest itself: if Descartes has decided to set aside as false all that admits of the least doubt, then the Cogito as affected by the metaphysical doubt must be set aside as untrustworthy.

The important point to note, in resolving this difficulty, is that a clear and distinct idea, unlike the ideas of sense, is only extrinsically and not intrinsically capable of doubt. A clear and distinct idea in itself admits of no doubt whatever. Doubtfulness is never an intrinsic quality of clear and distinct ideas, in the fashion of the ideas of sense. The hyperbolical doubt consists in asking whether what cannot possibly be/

be doubted can yet be false. We are compelled to assent to what we clearly and distinctly conceive. The will is not free to refrain from assenting to what is clear and distinct. "I am of such a nature as to be unable, while I possess a very clear and distinct apprehension of a matter, to resist the conviction of its truth."[119] Further, the freedom of the will consists in being thus compelled to assent. The will can only suspend judgment by indifference, which is not true freedom.[120] To say that God has given us the power of assenting only to our clear and distinct ideas does not mean that we have the power of not assenting to them, but only that we have the power of not assenting to obscure ideas. God "has at least left it in my power --- firmly to retain the resolution never to judge where the truth is not clearly known to me."[121]

It is thus a false interpretation of Descartes' metaphysic to suppose that his doctrine of freedom makes possible the withholding of our assent to clear and distinct ideas. If the freedom of the will lies, as Descartes declares, in the compulsion which the will feels to assent to what is clearly and distinctly known, then the hyperbolical doubt arises from the will's doubting its own freedom. The will is free to doubt if it is free, but not to cease to be free. Failure to resolve the doubt would not enable us to cease from assenting to our clear and distinct ideas, but would involve us in the intolerable contradiction of not being able to believe in what we must believe in.[122]

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This interpretation of Descartes' thought seems to be contradicted in the Principles. Principles I : V, proves "why we may also doubt of mathematical demonstrations," followed in the succeeding paragraph by the observation, "that we possess a free will, by which we can withhold our assent from what is doubtful, and thus avoid error." Since it has been said that we can doubt of mathematical demonstrations, it seems we must conclude that we can withhold our assent from them.

However, this clearly disagrees, on the face of it, with the third Meditation. "Deceive me who may, no one will yet ever be able to --- make two and three more or less than five, in supposing which, and other like absurdities, I discover a manifest contradiction." God, however, cannot make a contradiction intelligible.[123] We cannot help assenting to the truth that two and three are five. How, then, are the passages in the Principles to be explained? As follows: we must assent; but we are free to ask, may we assent? I am free to withhold an affirmative answer to the latter question, though to do so would result in the total destruction of reason. Therein precisely lies the seriousness of the hyperbolical doubt. It questions whether I may believe what I do and must believe. My suspense ceases only when I know God's nature, but in the meantime I cannot help believing what I do believe, and so strong is my belief that in comparison with it "the ground of doubt --- is very slight, and so to speak, metaphysical,"[124] even though this ground of doubt threatens the validity/

validity of all human reason. This "slight" or "metaphysical" nature of the hyperbolical doubt must be interpreted to mean, not that Descartes does not seriously doubt of mathematical truths, but that he doubts them with an almost unexampled seriousness, since he doubts what we must assent to. The doubt is so deep as to seem superficial since it is beyond our normal comprehension. The sense, then, in which it is possible to say that we can withhold our assent from mathematical truths is thus apparent.

In order to confirm still further this interpretation of the doubt it is worth citing the following passage from the Responses:

"As soon as we think that we clearly conceive some truth we are naturally brought to believe it --- . We have assumed a belief or persuasion so strong, that it cannot be removed, and this conviction is consequently the same as the most perfect certitude. But it can be doubted whether there is any certitude of that nature, or any persuasion firm and immovable. It is indeed certain that no one can have such conviction in respect of things obscure and confused, however little obscurity or confusion we may remark there; for that obscurity, such as it is, is a sufficiently good reason for making us doubt of these things --- . If then there is any certainty, it must reside only with regard to those things which the mind conceives clearly and distinctly. But among these things there are some so clear, and at the same time so simple/

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To explain more fully:

It is true that ultimately our clear and distinct ideas receive our confidence by an act of external imputation. They are intrinsically tainted in the sense of requiring an external guarantee of their truth. On the reality of the hyperbolical doubt there will be reason to insist later. But that is not the point here, where we are not speaking of truth absolutely, but of the compulsion exercised upon our will by the proper virtues of clearness and distinctness in ideas, to assent to these ideas as if they were true. Clear and distinct ideas have an intrinsic power of compelling assent, and in this sense of not being doubted which is lacking to the ideas of sense because of the material falsity of the latter exposed by the doubt of the senses. The hyperbolical doubt is a contradiction in the mind which makes the interpreter appear to say contradictory things. It is precisely in this tension that Descartes' modernity consists and if we seek comparisons we may find them in the tension between Rousseau's belief in his goodness, and his sense of his vileness, and between Luther's confidence in Christ, and his belief that our concupiscence is invincible.

simple that it is impossible for us to think of them without believing them true: for example, that I exist when I think, that things once done cannot be undone, and other things of a like kind, of which it is manifest that we possess perfect certainty.

"For we cannot doubt these things without thinking of them; but we can never think of them without believing them true, as I upheld. Hence we cannot doubt them without believing them true, that is, we can never doubt them."[125]

The hyperbolical doubt, then, is not such as to taint intrinsically our clear and distinct ideas, which must be accepted for purposes of metaphysical proof; proof being nothing but the order in which we are compelled to assent to ideas. The Cogito is the first truth removing our doubt whether there are clear and distinct ideas. But it is no truer than other truths: it is merely the truth which first compels our assent. This fact is of considerable importance for the proper understanding of the Metaphysic. The Metaphysic is constructed according to the method, and the method is a method of discovery. The order of the metaphysic is therefore an order of discovery. A first truth has no virtue superior to that of other truths, except that it is found first. We must remember therefore that the order of proofs in the Meditations does not depend on any peculiar inner virtue of the Cogito, but on the necessity of assenting to and using any clear and distinct idea as soon as it is clearly and distinctly conceived./

conceived. The Cogito is the first truth which we come upon when we philosophise in order[126] and that is the only reason why the Cogito, and not the certainty of God's existence, occupies the structural position in the Meditations which the Cogito does in fact occupy.

An interesting commentary on this conception of the Cercle cartesien is provided by a study of the position occupied by the ontological proof of God's existence, in the Meditations, which goes to show that Descartes' use of the Cogito is essentially a use justified by the fact that his method prescribes the attainment of knowledge by the order of necessary assent, not by the order of things, and that the use of the Cogito as a first truth is thereby justified. This, it will be seen, is the only reason why the certainty of God's existence by the ontological proof cannot occupy the structural position of the Cogito.

One of the difficulties which arises in the study of the ontological proof is that in the Principles, and in the first proposition of Responses II, the ontological proof precedes the other proofs of God's existence, while in the Meditations it occurs only in the fifth book. Furthermore, if the position which it occupies in the fifth Meditation is not its true position in the system of Descartes, then that system collapses, because its intelligibility depends on its being a rigid sequence of proofs. How then is the primacy assigned to the ontological proof in the Principles and the Responses to be explained?

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The ontological proof is incorporated in the fifth Meditation in such a fashion that it could occur in no other place. The fourth Meditation establishes that the clear and distinct conception which we have of an object truly reveals the essence, though not the existence of that object. It is for this reason that the ontological proof cannot occur previously. For the doubt, it is to be remarked, has two distinct elements: there is a doubt whether material things exist, and there is a doubt whether clear and distinct ideas are true. The second doubt must be resolved before we can resolve the first, because we must first know truly what material things are before we can prove that they exist. At the stage where the ontological proof commences we are precisely in a position to be able to state that what is contained in the clear and distinct idea of an object can be affirmed of it with truth.

The ontological proof of God's existence concludes from the clear and distinct idea which we have of his essence, to his existence. From the clearness and distinctness with which the idea of God reveals to us that his essence is to exist, we conclude that he really exists. Thus the proof depends on our having a clear and distinct idea of God's essence. But however clear and distinct our idea may be, the ontological proof would not be possible did we not first know that the natures of things corresponded to our clear and distinct ideas of them. The hyperbolical doubt compels us to prove this. Now the ontological proof establishes the correspondence/

correspondence of essence and existence in the being of God: it presupposes the proof of the correspondence between essence, and clearness and distinctness of conception. That is why the ontological proof is introduced by the sentence: "But now if because I can draw from my thought the idea of an object, it follows that all I clearly and distinctly apprehend to pertain to this object, does in truth belong to it, may I not from this derive an argument for the existence of God?"[127] The other proofs of God's existence and the Meditation on error are thus necessary to establish the ontological proof.

How, then, is one to explain the primacy assigned to the ontological proof by the Principles, and Responses II? To reach an explanation it is necessary to go back a long way, to the beginning, in fact, of the third Meditation; and to recall what Descartes has said there about the certainty attaching to clear and distinct truths, a certainty such that we are justified in using the Cogito in spite of the hyperbolical doubt. This being recalled, it is necessary to take note of the following passages from Meditation V.

a. " ... I have already shown the truth of the principle, that whatever is clearly and distinctly known is true. And although this had not been demonstrated, yet the nature of my mind is such as to compel me to assent to what I clearly conceive while I so conceive it."[128]

b. "It is certain that I no less find the idea of a God in my consciousness, that is, the idea of a being supremely perfect,/

perfect, than that of any figure or number whatever; and I know with not less clearness and distinctness that an actual and eternal existence pertains to his nature than that all which is demonstrable of any figure or number really belongs to the nature of that figure or number; and, therefore, although all the conclusions of the preceding meditations were false, the existence of God would pass with me for a truth as least as certain as I ever judged any truth of mathematics to be."[129]

We have now to ask ourselves two important questions;
I. How it can come about that Descartes can say that the ontological proof of God's existence would pass for him as true even though all the preceding Meditations were false, when that proof has been seen to depend on the fourth, and therefore on all the preceding Meditations.
II. How Descartes can follow this with the statement that this is because he is as certain of God's existence as of mathematical truths, seeing that he has doubted of mathematical truths, and that by the help of the preceding Meditations he has just become certain of their truth, and as a consequence has embarked on the ontological proof. One recalls that his mathematics are forbidden to atheists.

It has been seen that the certainty of the Cogito is precisely the same as our certainty of mathematical truths, because the Cogito is known to be true by precisely the same mark as that by which we feel certain of mathematical truths, namely,/

namely, clearness and distinctness of conception. There is no difference between our certainty of the Cogito and our certainty of mathematical truths. "Deceive me who may, no one will yet ever be able to bring it about that I am not, so long as I shall be conscious that I am --- or make two and three more or less than five." In the passages from Meditation V under discussion it has just been affirmed once more that though it had not been demonstrated that what was clearly and distinctly conceived was true, yet we are compelled to assent to such conceptions. Thus three things must be accepted: i. The Cogito has precisely the same certainty as mathematical truths, no more, and no less; ii. Our will is compelled to assent to truths which, like the mathematical, are clearly and distinctly conceived, even though we have not yet proved that clearness and distinctness of conception truly reveal the essence of the thing conceived; iii. Our certainty of God's existence, by the inspection of his idea, is the same as our certainty of mathematical truths. From this it follows that we can be as certain of the truth of God's existence from the idea which we have of him, without any preceding proof, as we can be sure that the Cogito is true. For I am compelled "to assent to what I clearly conceive while I so conceive it," even though I do not yet know that clear and distinct conceptions are true. In this way it is true that the knowledge of God's existence, like the Cogito, depends on no proofs; and that the knowledge of God's existence through his idea, like that/

that of my existence through my perception of myself, is primary and depends on no other proofs.

It is clear, therefore, why in the Principles and in the Responses which are not rigidly systematic in the proper Cartesian sense, some departure from the order of the Meditations was possible to Descartes.

It follows further that we are able equally to doubt, in the sense explained, whether the Cogito is true, whether mathematics is possible, and whether God exists. The only reason why we have to lay the foundations for an ontological proof, and not for the proof of my own existence, is not that the Cogito has any inner superiority with respect to truth, but that it is the first truth that we come upon when we philosophise in order. With respect to our certainty of truth, the truths of mathematics and of God's existence are as primary as that of the Cogito. But with respect to the necessary order of proof, by which the hyperbolical doubt is to be vanquished, there is a strict sequence in the order in which these truths are to be affirmed. That which is found first is ipso facto affirmed first, since to find a clear and distinct truth is necessarily to affirm it. In this sequence the ontological proof of God's existence is only possible in the fifth Meditation, as has been shown. We do not affirm this supreme certainty of God's existence any earlier, because if we philosophise in order, there would not yet be any occasion for it.

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Some further consequences for the ontological proof may be mentioned, not merely for the light thus thrown on the proof itself, but also because such a deduction serves further to confirm the preceding explanation of the cercle cartesien.

It is interesting to note that the possibility of mathematical knowledge is not concluded as a result of the ontological proof of God's existence, but that the possibility of the ontological proof, and the possibility of mathematical knowledge are taken together as following from the previous proofs of God's existence. To put it differently: I do not conclude that a mathematical knowledge of nature is possible in virtue of the ontological proof, but I conclude at one and the same time both that mathematical knowledge is true and that the ontological proof is valid, in virtue of the reliability of clear and distinct ideas of which we are assured by the previous proofs of God's existence. If the certainty of the ontological proof is the same as that of a mathematical truth, as has been said, then the certainty of the latter could not follow from the former, and an inspection of the sequence of proof in Meditation V reveals that it is not expected to do so.

It has been remarked above that the ontological proof is very closely bound up in the sequence of thought of the Meditations, and that it is impossible for the proof to occur at any earlier stage. Thence arose the difficulties arising out of the Principles, and Responses II. In this way, therefore, the position of the ontological proof in the Meditations is/

is integral. On the other hand, it is just as clearly to be seen that its presence is not necessary to the aim of Meditation V insofar as that is taken to be the proof of the reliability of a mathematical knowledge of nature, because the ontological proof is not used to establish this reliability, but merely has its own validity proved in the same way and at the same time as that of mathematics. Further, since the ontological proof contributes nothing to the sixth Meditation, how are we to account for its presence?

The answer is one which is fatal to the view that Descartes' desire is to prove the existence of God for the sake only of science, and not of religion. The ends of science are sufficiently served by the earlier proofs of God's existence. The ontological proof contributes nothing to the proof of the validity of a mathematical knowledge of nature in Meditation V, nor to the proof of the real existence of bodies in Meditation VI. It is only possible to explain its presence by assuming that one of the aims of the Meditations is to prove the existence of God in the cause of religion. That is the only hypothesis on which it is possible to account for the presence of the proof of God's existence in Meditation V. The reason why Descartes should be anxious not to exclude the ontological proof from his Metaphysic, even though his doubt had rendered it impossible that this proof should be indispensable to him, has two reasons. The first is the great part which the ontological proof had played in the thought of metaphysicians/

metaphysicians since the time of St. Anselme. Thus we read in the Dedication of the Meditations:

"Moreover, I am aware that most of the irreligious deny the existence of God, and the distinctness of the human mind from the body, for no other reason than because these points, as they allege, have never as yet been demonstrated. Now, although I am by no means of their opinion, but, on the contrary, hold that almost all the proofs which have been adduced on these questions by great men, possess, when rightly understood, the force of demonstrations, and that it is next to impossible to discover new, yet there is, I apprehend, no more useful service to be performed in Philosophy, than if someone were, once for all, carefully to seek out the best of these reasons, and expound them so accurately and clearly that, for the future, it might be manifest to all that they are real demonstrations."[130]

Thus Descartes clearly shows his intention of demonstrating God's existence not primarily for the sake of science or for the cogency of his metaphysic, but for the sake of the proofs themselves. Moreover, these proofs must be perfect demonstrations, that the Faith may be better served. It is thus clear how the proof of the great Anselme can come to be included in the Meditations though it contributes nothing to the order of proof of the Metaphysic. It is also clear, further, why it is included at that point where it can be completely integrated in that order, since only thus can it have absolute/

absolute cogency.

Secondly, and perhaps principally, this proof appeared to Descartes to be the most appealing of all. "Although all the conclusions of the preceding Meditations were false, the existence of God would pass with me for a truth at least as certain as I ever judged any truth of mathematics to be." Since the other proofs of God's existence are contained in the preceding Meditations, it follows that Descartes considers that the ontological proof compels the assent of our wills in a stronger fashion than the other proofs. Though it is necessary to prove the existence of God by the ontological proof only at a certain point in the order of proofs, yet the certainty of God's existence has the same certainty as that of our own existence. Our wills are compelled to assent to it, as soon as the proof is presented. It is so clear and distinct that our wills cannot be sufficiently indifferent to refuse their assent. Had this truth come first in the order of discovery instead of the Cogito, we should have affirmed it with the same certainty, and in the same place, as now the Cogito. Since this certainty is as great as can be required to evoke complete assent, it is clear that the ontological proof is the proof par excellence to convince the atheists, and Descartes' highest aims, so far as he explicitly states them, are satisfied.

§8. Descartes seems, therefore, to be justified in the use he makes of the Cogito. If this is true, it is possible to look at the Cogito from a point of view which, not doubting that the structural position of the Cogito is logically justifiable, asks what can be learnt from this position. Let us, then, assume that we have just been conducted through the doubt, and that, like Polyander, we have just discovered that we exist because we think, and that we know nothing as yet of the truths still to be discovered. But instead of enquiring what truths can be deduced from the Cogito, it would be well to enquire what can be said about the Cogito, making abstraction of the truths that can be deduced from it, and considering it precisely at the moment of its discovery.

Though the Cogito is the first positive proposition of the Metaphysic, nevertheless it does not follow that it is true in any peculiar or unique fashion. The order of philosophising which is being followed is the order of discovery. Thus, to be discovered first is only the extrinsic mark of a truth. If the Cogito is the first truth which we cannot doubt, it is not because it is the most indubitable. It is a first truth only from a methodological point of view. But if the Cogito is not true in any peculiar fashion, it is nevertheless first in a peculiar fashion. For the analytic method, the order in which truths are affirmed is the order of their discovery, and it can therefore be said that, making abstraction of the truths that follow, it is solely in its nature as a

first/

first affirmation that the Cogito so taken is significant. Its significance is methodological.

It follows that at the precise moment that the Cogito is discovered the metaphysical emphasis lies in existence being affirmed of something, and not in the something, "I," of which existence is affirmed. It is not the fact of having discovered this truth in particular that matters, but the fact of having discovered any truth at all. For the moment, we can make abstraction of its content. This is easily understood if a pause be made to consider the seriousness of Descartes' doubt. Descartes desires that we should spend weeks and even months on the first Meditation before reading any further. It is a kind of moral and intellectual via purgativa, a night of despair for the intellect. During this night of intellectual cleansing, our greatest desire is to find something, no matter what, which we cannot doubt to be true.[131] Once this is discovered, not only is it possible to cease fearing for the capacity of reason, but it is possible to hope for great discoveries in the fields of metaphysics, physics, and morals. If we regard the Meditations in the manner in which Descartes's choice of the analytic method forces us to regard them, namely as the actual passage of a mind from the false or doubtful to the true, then it is clear that it is the fact of having discovered something certain, of having made the first step in the vast and wished-for land of certain knowledge, which is of supreme importance. It is the mere fact that the Cogito is an affirmation which is indubitable, on which the emphasis/

emphasis falls, It becomes the focus of attention because it represents truth in general, and not because of the being about whom it affirms a truth.

Of what importance is the "I," when abstraction is made of all which follows upon the first affirmation of the Cogito? Clearly its importance is very scant. It merely happens to be that of which the all-important first affirmation is made. I know that I exist and that I doubt, but this is of less importance to me than the hope that I am now able to escape from the night of doubt. I do not know that I am not a body, neither have I as yet seen any reason for calling to mind the things of which I am usually conscious. If I wish to discover further truths, I have as yet no reason to believe that my next step must be to examine my own nature.

The Cogito, taken dynamically at the moment of its discovery, thus appears to yield no reason for the importance of the self for Descartes' metaphysics. Further, it is to be noted that nothing can be inferred from the Cogito, thus taken, as to the self's place in reality. In metaphysics the order of proof is not the same as the order of things. Thus the things, whose existence is affirmed first for reasons of method, do not necessarily come first in the real. Ontologically, God is the supreme reality, but that the existence of God should be affirmed before that of any other reality is not required by the analytic method.

But if at the moment when the Cogito is first affirmed, the/

the self is so meagrely known, how is it possible for the self to assume so great an importance for the second Meditation, which confines itself to defining clearly the idea of a thinking thing? What is the reason for making the transition from the Cogito considered generally in its nature as a truth to the unimportant being, "I," which serves as the occasion for enunciating this first truth? Since at the point where the Cogito is affirmed, we are in possession of no metaphysical truths beyond the bare truth that we exist, it is clear that no metaphysical explanation can be sought without involving a petitio principii. Since we cannot seek an explanation in the nature of things which is as yet quite unknown to us, we must seek it in the demands of the analytic method. The step in the Meditations where Descartes seeks to discover what he is, has its explanation not in the nature of the "I" of the Cogito, as it is revealed in the first affirmation of the Cogito, but in the method which Descartes is using in the search for truth.

§9. That Descartes' method demands an emphasis upon the "I" of the Cogito becomes more evident when the question is asked what the first principle is which that method requires. It is commonly believed that the Cogito ergo sum is itself Descartes' first principle. Thus M. Gilson says: "The Cogito is the first principle of the whole philosophy, including physics. Thus: since I doubt, I am; but the ascertainment of this imperfection of doubt presupposes in me the idea of the perfect, and as a consequence the existence of God who is the sole conceivable cause of it. It presupposes also the existence of a perfect, therefore a truthful, God who, guaranteeing my clear and distinct ideas, guarantees the real distinction of soul and body, whence we proceed to the mechanistic physics of extension and movement, and thus to all the sciences which are derived from it."[132]

It is true that the Cogito is the first affirmation made in the field of certain science. It is the proposition on which the metaphysics depends, and metaphysics is the foundation of the rest of the sciences. But though it is undeniable that the Cogito is the first proposition which can be affirmed with certainty, it can nevertheless be questioned whether the Cogito corresponds to the first principle demanded by the method.

There are considerable grounds for concluding that Descartes' first principle is not the proposition, Cogito ergo sum, but a being, the res cogitans. It is the thinking thing which/

which is the fruitful starting point of our discoveries in metaphysics. Thus at the point where the Recherche breaks off, Polyander has been asked to set forth what he can derive from Endoxus' principle. "So many things" he replies "are contained in the idea of a thinking thing that whole days would be required to develop them."[133] Earlier in the dialogue Polyander asks, "Tell us, then, the order you will follow in your explanations;" and Eudoxus replies, "We must commence with the human mind because all our knowledge depends on it."[134] Eudoxus then explains how all that can be known derives from our knowledge of the human mind.

The affirmation of the Cogito, however, can only be said to be equivalent to the affirmation of the mind in retrospect. When the Cogito is affirmed, making abstraction of what follows, I know nothing about myself except that I exist and that I doubt. Though I can conclude from this that I am a thing that thinks, I cannot conclude that I am not a body, since it remains to be proved that bodies cannot think. Furthermore, in the second Meditation, Descartes interposes a considerable body of argument between the first affirmation of the Cogito, and the conclusion that he is a thinking thing or mind. These arguments can be summed up as follows. After I have doubted of all that I am able to doubt, I can affirm with the utmost certainty that I am, because I cannot doubt my own existence. Dubito ergo sum. But I must ask what I am. Descartes commences this enquiry with an enumeration of the things/

things which he formerly took himself to be. He will not waste time, he says, with subtleties like the definition of a man as a rational animal, but will attend to the natural thoughts which he used to have. He used to believe that he had a body whose nature was such as the senses reported it to be. He had also observed that he was nourished, and that he walked and perceived and thought; and these actions he referred to the soul, whose nature he did not stop to consider, except perhaps to imagine that it was something extremely rare and subtle, like wind or flame. Since he can doubt of the existence of bodies but not of himself he cannot say that he is a body. He then asks what the properties or qualities of a soul are, not in order that, finding some one of these properties or qualities to be appropriate to himself, he may conclude that he is a soul;[135] but simply in the hopes that during this enumeration he may find some quality appropriate to himself. He used to refer the powers of nutrition and walking to the soul, but since these functions are impossible without a body they cannot belong to him. Of all the properties of the soul, it is only thinking that can properly be said to belong to him, because, were he to cease to think, he would cease also to exist. He is, therefore, a thinking thing.

The second Meditation is thus far advanced before Descartes affirms that he is a thinking thing. Since it is necessary to give great weight to the order of argument, it follows that if the idea of a thinking thing can be shown to be/

be Descartes' first principle, then the Cogito cannot be so named, since the propositions: I am; and, I am a thinking thing, are by no means self-evidently equivalent.

It is to be observed that, from the mere fact that I exist and that I doubt, it can be concluded that I am a thing that thinks, since doubting is a kind of thinking, and must be a quality of something. It is nevertheless possible that I may be a body, since a body may be a thing that thinks. When, however, as a result of the argument summarised above, I conclude that I am a thinking thing, I have refused to recognise my bodily nature as proper to me, insofar as I am aware of myself. With reference, therefore, to the course of the argument of the Meditations, it is necessary to distinguish the proposition, I am a thing that thinks, from the proposition, I am a thinking thing, since in the second instance I have made a step towards recognising my independence from my bodily nature. There is thus a greater precision in the idea "thinking thing," than in the idea "thing that thinks."

In the Preface to the Principles, Descartes says: "By considering that he who strives to doubt of all is unable nevertheless to doubt that he is while he doubts, and that what reasons/ thus in not being able to doubt of itself and doubting nevertheless of everything else, is not that which we call our body, but that which we name our mind or thought, I have taken the existence of this thought[136] for the first principle." It is quite clear from its content that this passage refers to the/

the argument of the Meditations summarised above, in the light of which the distinction was drawn between the terms "thinking thing," and "thing that thinks," the latter being an idea standing closer to the Cogito in the order of argument, than the former. But it is an existent thought or mind, a thinking thing, of which bodily properties are denied, which is stated to be the first principle; whence it is necessary to conclude that this first principle is by no means self-evidently contained in the idea of our proper existence, and therefore that the Cogito is not a true first principle. This conclusion is supported by a letter to Clerselier in which Descartes defines what he means by a first principle. After dismissing the claims of the law of non-contradiction, he says, "the first principle is that our mind exists."[137] The first principle is thus, not merely that I exist, but that I, a mind or thinking thing, exist. The first principle must be "a being, the existence of which is better known (plus connue)to us than that of any others, so that it can serve us for a principle for knowing them. But that the mind is better known than anything else is a conclusion only drawn in the last paragraph of the second Meditation. It would seem, therefore, that it is only at this stage of the Metaphysic that we are in possession of the first principle of metaphysical proof.

It would thus seem that the Cogito does not supply the first principle of this philosophy. It is true that it posits the being whose existence is to be considered the first princi-

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principle, but at the time of the affirmation of the Cogito, this being is conceived by a confused and obscure idea.[138] The idea of a "thing that thinks" is an idea of something that may or may not be a body. Even the affirmation that I am a thinking thing (A.T.VII,27, 15-17) is immediately followed by the reservation that it is nevertheless still possible that I may be a body (loc.cit. 11.18-27); and by the effort to reach a greater precision in the idea of what I am. But if the first principle is the existence of a being, it follows from the fact that I know beings only mediately - having an immediate knowledge only of my ideas - that I must have a clear idea of this being, before I can be sure of its existence, since we cannot with certainty posit the existence of that whose nature is unknown to us. Hence the affirmations of my existence, at first sight superfluous, which occur at the end of the second Meditation, when I have a clear idea of myself.

It is usually taken for granted that the third rule of the Method indicates that the Cogito is the first principle. I must "conduct my thoughts in order, commencing with objects the most simple, and the most easy to know (plus aisés à connaître)."[139] The text is worth examining.

The Cogito appears to have all the characteristics of that from which we must commence. No ground of doubt can shake it. It is an intuition and not a conclusion from a syllogism.[140] Nothing so certain can be found before it in the order of truth. An interpretation of this kind, however, is possible/

possible only by not taking the passage quoted quite literally. In the letter to Clerselier already quoted, Descartes says that his first principle must be "a being, the existence of which is better known (plus connue)[141] than that of any others." It is impossible to see in what sense the Cogito fulfils the requirement of being un être. It is a self-evident proposition affirming the existence of something, my self, the nature of which is still obscure and unknown, and therefore incapable of serving as a first principle. At the stage of the Cogito, making abstraction of the rest of the Meditations, neither the Cogito nor the thing that thinks fulfils the requirements of a first principle. But further, the existence of the being which is to serve for a first principle must be better known, more easy to know (plus connue, plus aisée à connaître) than that of any other thing. The argument of the Meditations reveals that Descartes does not consider the certitude attaching to the Cogito to be itself sufficient to prove that my existence is better known than that of any other thing. The argument of the second Meditation first shows that I am a mind or thinking thing, the existence of which is more certain than that of the bodies I imagine. It then shows, by the aid of the piece of wax, how body can be clearly and distinctly conceived. Nevertheless, the hyperbolical doubt prevents my being sure of the existence of the object thus conceived. Yet I cannot doubt my own existence. Descartes concludes, "But, finally, what shall I say of the mind itself, that is, of myself? for as yet

I/

I do not admit that I am anything but mind. What, then! I who seem to possess so distinct an apprehension of the piece of wax, - do I not know myself, both with greater truth and certitude, and also much more distinctly and clearly? For if I judge that the wax exists because I see it, it assuredly follows, much more evidently, that I myself am or exist, for the same reason: for it is possible that what I see may not in truth be wax, and that I do not even possess eyes with which to see anything; but it cannot be that when I see, or which comes to the same thing, when I think I see, I myself who think am nothing. So likewise, if I judge that the wax exists because I touch it, it will still also follow that I am; and if I determine that my imagination, or any other cause, whatever it be, persuades me of the existence of the wax, I will still draw the same conclusion."[142]

It is thus clear that it is only at the stage of the argument marked by this passage that I am more certain of my existence than of the existence of other things. It is also clear that this certainty cannot be arrived at prior to some investigation into what my nature is, and what the nature of bodies. This is well illustrated by the sentence, "if I determine that my imagination, or any other cause, whatever it be, persuades me of the existence of the wax, I will still draw the same conclusion (sc. that it cannot be that I who think am nothing)," where there is a reference to the argument by which it is shown that imagination is one of my faculties; so/

so that the conclusion that I am more certain that I exist, than bodies clearly and distinctly conceived, presupposes knowledge already possessed by me of my nature, namely, that I possess the faculty of imagination, and that I am a thinking thing or mind, nothing of which I have explicitly recognised when the Cogito is first affirmed. In short, to obtain his first principle, Descartes must make an analysis of thinking and bodily natures, in order to discover what in them is known most clearly, the Cogito now coming to be taken not as a truth from which other truths can immediately be deduced, but as positing a thing from the analysis of whose nature we can arrive at a clear idea of a being which can serve as a principle. In the Cogito there is no clear idea; therefore nothing which can serve to a deduction.

The concluding arguments of the second Meditation give still further confirmation of the belief that it is the clear idea of something real, namely, a thinking thing, and not the affirmation of the existence of an unknown nature made by the Cogito which Descartes requires as a first principle. My having clear and distinct ideas of extended things not only serves to assure me of my existence, but to give me a clearer idea of myself.[143] I conclude that I am of all things, not only the most clearly known, but also the most easy to know. "I readily discover that there is nothing more easily or clearly apprehended than my own mind," concludes this Meditation, according with its title: "Of the nature of the human mind, and that it is/

is easier to know than the body."

Now it is required by the Discourse on Method, that we must commence to philosophise from objects the simplest and most easy to know. But the terms "plus connue," "plus aisé à connaître," as M. Gilson shows in his Commentary, are highly technical terms. In the Metaphysic of Descartes they are used only of the mind or thinking thing. If the first principle is to be the most easily known of all things, and if the latter characteristic is ascribed only to the mind, then the conclusion is inevitable that the first principle of metaphysics is the mind or thinking thing. This explains the second postulate of Responses II. "I ask them to consider their own mind --- and I beg them not to cease from considering it, until they have first acquired the habit of conceiving it distinctly and of believing that it is easier to know (plus aisé à connaître) than all corporeal things." Since we are certain only at the end of the second Meditation that our mind is easier to know than bodies, it is only then that we possess our first principle.[144]

What serves to confirm this conclusion is the phrase "habit of conceiving" in the text just quoted. Descartes, by his choice of the analytic method, makes of metaphysics a strenuous exercise. Its utility is to form in us a way of thinking. Thus Descartes writes to Elizabeth: "It seems that there can be only two things necessary for being always disposed to judge correctly; the one is the knowledge of the truth,/

truth, and the other the habit which brings it about that one remembers and concurs in that knowledge whenever the occasion requires it."[145] Explaining the aims of the second Meditation in Responses II, he says "I thought I should do more than a little, if I showed how the properties or qualities of the mind are to be distinguished from those of the body. For although many have already maintained that, in order to understand immaterial or metaphysical things, the mind must be withdrawn from the senses, no one, so far as I know, has yet shown how this is to be done. The true, and in my judgment, the only way to do this is found in my second Meditation, but such is its nature that it is not enough to have seen once how it is done. Much time and many repetitions are required if the habit of confounding intellectual with corporeal things, rooted in us during the whole course of our life, is to be effaced by a contrary habit of distinguishing them."[146] If the mind is to be better known than any other thing, the idea of it must be firmly grasped through habit and exercise, and it is this exercise which the second Meditation provides. To be able to use the mind as a first principle, it is not so much necessary to have seen once that the mind exists, and is better known than any other thing; we must ourselves by practice have come to know it better. Hence the conclusion of the second Meditation. "I readily discover that there is nothing more easily or clearly apprehended than my own mind --- . But it will be well to tarry for some time at this stage, that, by long/

long continued meditation, I may more deeply impress upon my memory this new knowledge."[147]

But all this argument seems of small avail in the face of a text in the Discourse:

"And observing that this truth, I think, hence I am, was so certain and of such evidence, that no ground of doubt, however extravagant, could be alleged by the Sceptics capable of shaking it, I concluded that I might, without scruple, accept it as the first principle of the Philosophy of which I was in search."[148]

This passage, however, in spite of the apparently insuperable difficulty it presents to an interpretation of Descartes' first principle such as that given above, can be easily explained. The Discourse does not pretend to be a systematic exposition of Descartes' thought. Conformably with the nature of the whole Discourse, the fourth book is a narrative rather than a metaphysical demonstration. Furthermore, it is of the highest importance to observe that, having regard to the circumstances under which this narrative was written, the proofs, which Descartes considers necessary for establishing what has been said above actually to be his first principle, could not possibly be given. Because he has written the Discourse in French, and intends it to be read by the vulgar and unlearned, Descartes has not carried his doubt very far in this work. He admits that this omission impairs his proofs, but he says that the deficiency is intentional. From consideration for the vulgar,/

vulgar, he has omitted the hyperbolical doubt from the Discourse.[149] There is thus no reason why he should be at great pains to stress exactly what those clear and distinct ideas are which this doubt calls into question. Therefore there is no reason why he should define how bodies are to be truly conceived, in the fashion of the Meditations where the wax is examined. But the ascertainment of the nature of bodies in the second Meditation is an integral part of the proof that the mind is the most easily known of all things. It is thus impossible for the Discourse to establish what is really the first principle of Descartes' philosophy. The assertion that the Cogito supplies such a principle is, under the circumstances, the best compromise that can be effected between the truth and the infirmities of the vulgar, since it at least posits that being which is in fact the first principle.

This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that the reason which Descartes gives in the Discourse for accepting the Cogito as a first principle is that no argument of the Sceptics can shake it. The reason given is not that it is the simplest and easiest thing to know, but that it is a proposition whose truth cannot be doubted. But if that were the criterion of a first principle there would be no reason for not accepting, say, the law of non-contradiction for a first principle since that cannot be doubted. Since the requirement, laid down in the Discourse itself, is that we should commence to reason from objects the simplest and easiest to know, it cannot/

cannot be said to be without significance that Descartes does not use of the Cogito the technical phrase "plus aisé à connaître," in proposing it as a first principle.

§10. It can be concluded that the Cogito is not Descartes' first principle, but the clear idea of a thinking thing. At the moment that the Cogito is first affirmed, I have not sufficient knowledge of what I am to be able to say that my existence and nature are better known than those of body. It is true that "I" am the being whose certain existence is affirmed in the Cogito. But I am not with certainty in possession of a first principle until the end of Meditation II, and this first principle is not the Cogito but the being "I," of whose existence affirmation is made by the Cogito. We know our first principle not in the flush of discovery of the Cogito, but only by the succeeding proofs forming in us a certain intellectual habit.

It has been remarked, however, that at the stage of the Cogito, nothing whatever is known about the nature of the "I" except that it exists and doubts. On the other hand, this being, the mind, comes to be taken by Descartes as his first principle, the second Meditation being chiefly devoted to the discovery of its nature. The question remains to be answered why the emphasis passes from the proposition, Cogito ergo sum, to the being whose existence is there affirmed, since there is no emphasis on this being at the moment when the Cogito is affirmed; nor is anything known of it sufficiently positive to make it an object of interest. Why should Descartes insist on "un être" for his first principle?

Descartes' temper is realistic. His rejection of

abstract/

abstract notions as first principles is made quite explicitly, in a passage so clear that it is well worth citing:

"I only add that the word principle can be taken in different senses, and that it is one thing to look for a common notion, which shall be so clear and so general that it can serve as a principle for proving the existence of all the beings, the entia, of which knowledge is gained afterwards; and another thing to look for a being, the existence of which shall be better known to us than that of any others, so that it can serve us for a principle for knowing them. In the first sense, it can be said that "it is impossible that the same thing can at one time be and not be" is a principle, and that it can serve in a general way, not properly to make possible knowledge of anything, but only to make it possible that when one knows the thing, one can confirm its truth by an argument of this sort: "It is impossible that that which is should not be; but I know that such a thing is, therefore I know that it is impossible that it should not be." A thing which is of very little importance and makes us none the wiser. In the other sense, the first principle is that our mind exists, because there is nothing the existence of which is better known to us." "The fashion in which other propositions are reduced to this, that it is impossible that the same thing can at one time be and not be, is superfluous and useless."[150]

The law of non-contradiction and other abstract truths of a like nature are to be rejected as first principles. Thus/

Thus Eudoxus says "Here, if I do not mistake, you must begin to see that he who knows how properly to avail himself of doubt can deduce from it absolutely certain knowledge, better, more certain, and more useful than that derived from this great principle which we usually establish as the basis or centre to which all other principles are referred and from which they start forth, that it is impossible that one and the same thing should at one time both be and not be."[151] They are not to be rejected because they are obscure or doubtful. In the Conversation with Burman, it is stated that common principles and axioms, for example, it is impossible for the same thing both to be and not to be, can be doubted only when confusedly conceived, and not when separata a materiâ et singularibus.[152] They are both clear and indubitable. This, however, is not sufficient to qualify them for first principles, since principles must be such that we can deduce truths from them,[153] while the manner in which other truths are reduced to the law of non-contradiction is "superfluous and useless." Such laws give us no knowledge of existents, but only serve as a kind of formal confirmation of the certainty we may already have that a thing exists, "a thing which is of very little importance and makes us none the wiser."

Descartes' rejection of truths such as the law of non-contradiction thus emphasises his demand for a first principle/

principle which is both concrete and fruitful. Thus Polyander remarks of Eudoxus' first principle, that so many things are contained in the idea of a thinking thing that whole days would be required to develop them. It also emphasises Descartes' break with the Scholastic method of philosophising. It would seem that it is purely for reasons of method that Descartes requires a being for a first principle. Is it possible to discover just what the method is which makes this demand? Could this be discovered, it would probably be known why the "I" plays so important a part in Meditation II, since it is by comprehension of its method and structure that the Metaphysic is to be understood. But, as M. Hamelin has well observed, we know very little of what Descartes' method actually was.[194] In Responses II Descartes says that he employs the analytic method of proof. He distinguishes it from the synthetic method. Both agree in being logically rigorous. But the analytic method has the advantage of being a method of discovery. Further, it makes much greater demands on the intelligence and sympathy of the reader. Indeed, it is the demand which this method makes on the personal attitude of the reader which is most strongly stressed in Responses II. We are told certain consequences of the employment of the analytic method in metaphysics, but not what the method is. We do not discover new truths by chance. We discover them only when we look for them methodically.

But what in detail is this method? What is the chart by the aid of which we must guide our voyage of metaphysical discovery? So deep is Descartes' silence that we may well believe that there is no such chart, and that the Metaphysic was constructed by a spontaneous impulse of creation which knew no law except its own inner necessity. However, Descartes believed that the inner structure of thought was mathematical. He tells us further, in the Discourse, that he believed so strongly in the necessity of thinking in conformity with a method, that he spent years in exercising himself in his method, chiefly in mathematical matters, before he felt himself fit to embark on his great constructive enterprises. One feels justified in believing, therefore, that the Meditations embody a method which influenced their form more deeply than would have been the case had Descartes set to work with no plan for their structure beyond the very general ideas about the analytic method set forth in Responses II. There is no open and explicit evidence of this, but there are nevertheless features in Descartes' writings which exercise a cumulative persuasion.

The aim of the second Meditation is to show that we have distinct ideas of mind and body, as will be confirmed later. This Meditation does not attempt to show that bodies exist, nor that, actually, mind is not body. The result of our/

our methodical thinking is the forming of ideas. To discover what the method is by an inspection of the second Meditation is to trace the process by which we come by a clear and distinct idea of the mind, conceived as distinct from body.

This Meditation, however, is not a treatise on method, but a body of knowledge arrived at by methodical reasoning. Explicit references to the method employed are therefore not to be expected. The most one can look for are hints, and a very suggestive hint is, in fact, forthcoming. When Descartes has affirmed that he exists, he immediately proceeds to try to discover what he is; and he attempts to discover this by first enumerating the things which he used to take himself to be. "What then did I formerly think I was? Undoubtedly I judged that I was a man. But what is man? Shall I say a rational animal? Assuredly not; for it would be necessary forthwith to enquire into what is meant by animal, and what by rational, and thus, from a single question, I should insensibly glide into others, and these more difficult than the first; nor do I now possess enough of leisure to warrant me in wasting my time amid subtleties of this sort."[155] This is the first attempt at a definition; and one would therefore expect that it contains the clue to the method of definition to be used, or, at least, to that which is not to be used. The definition of man/

man as a rational animal has been rejected, and, since reasoning is right or wrong according as the method of reasoning is correct or incorrect, the rejection of the method by which this definition is formed is implied. What this method is, and why it is rejected, is not explicitly told us in the Meditation, beyond the very brief remarks made in the passage quoted: that the definition so far from satisfying us merely starts us off on a whole train of definitions.

In the Recherche, however, the argument of the second Meditation is recapitulated, with differences; and perhaps the most outstanding difference is the emphasis placed on that stage of the argument, now under discussion, which is so briefly attended to in Meditation II. The Recherche must therefore be resorted to for further light on the matter. The persons in the Dialogue are Eudoxus, who represents the position of Descartes himself; Polyander, the plain man in whom the natural light is undimmed and unperverted; and Epistemon, who represents the opinion of the Schools. Let us break into the middle of their conversation. Polyander has been led through the doubt, and is now convinced that he cannot doubt his own existence. He exists, it is true, but what is he? How is he to be defined? He ventures the opinion that he is a man: Itaque dicam <u>hominem</u> me esse.[156] Eudoxus replies that this would lead to difficulties. He says that Epistemon, the Schoolman, if asked what a man was, would reply that/

that he was a rational animal;[157] and would then proceed to define the words 'rational' and 'animal' in terms which would stand in like need of being themselves defined. To explain what an animal is, for instance, he would have to say that an animal is a living thing possessed of sensations, that a living thing is an animated body, that a body is a corporeal substance, his definitions, like the branches of a genealogical tree, finishing in sheer tautology and leaving us in our original ignorance.[158] Epistemon replies that he is sorry to see that Eudoxus despises the tree of Porphyry which has for so long been the received method of the Schools, and than which no better has been found. Our knowledge cannot go further than this iteming up of our nature.

We may pause to remark that it is now quite clear what method of definition Descartes finds himself opposed to. He believes that he has found a method which is better than the received method of the Schools. Through the mouth of Polyander he repeats his objections to this method. "If for instance we say that a body is a corporeal substance, and do not however indicate what a corporeal substance is, these two words, corporeal substance, render us no wiser than the word body."[159] Similar difficulties arise when we try to define what lives as an animate body. We become involved in metaphysical degrees but we arrive at no clear and distinct idea. It is clear that Descartes' doubt makes this method impossible/

impossible for him. It would be foolish for him to try to arrive at clearness and distinctness of conception by involving himself in an arborescence of terms which he has rejected as obscure. The doubt aims at ridding us of our preconceptions, but the Scholastic method of definition is impossible without preconceptions. I cannot say that I am a man, and that a man is a rational animal, unless I had retained these ideas from my state of early prejudice. This method assumes the nature of the thing which is being defined, and is nothing other than a mere explication of the assumptions involved in the unexamined idea we have of that thing.

Let us, however, follow the argument of the Recherche further. Up to the point[160] where Polyander concludes that he is a thinking thing the argument does not relevantly differ from that of the Meditations. There is thus no need to say more about it. After Polyander concludes that he is a thinking thing, Eudoxus attacks principles like the law of non-contradiction, and arouses Epistemon to a criticism of the method of reasoning which Eudoxus has been employing. Epistemon says "I shall show that nothing of what Polyander has said rests on a legitimate foundation or leads to any conclusion. You say that you are and that you know that you are and that you know it because you doubt and because you think. But, indeed, do you know what doubting is, and what thinking? And as you do not wish to admit anything of which you are not certain/

certain, and do not know perfectly, how can you be certain that you are from attributes so obscure and consequently so uncertain? You should first have taught Polyander what doubt is, and thought, and existence, so that his reasoning could indeed have the force of a demonstration."[161]

Eudoxus appears to have been caught in a trap of his own devising. How are we to predicate any attribute of a thing without becoming entangled in a whole web of definitory propositions? What Epistemon desires are definitions of the terms doubt, thought, and existence after the scholastic method. Once more we are witnessing the clash of Descartes' method with that of the Schoolmen. Eudoxus replies that there are some terms which are too clearly known to require definition. No one who gives attention to it, he says, can fail to see clearly what doubt, thought, and existence are. "I declare that there are certain things which we render more obscure by trying to define them, because, since they are very simple and clear, we cannot know and perceive them better than by themselves. Nay, we must place in the number of those chief errors that can be committed in the sciences, the mistakes committed by those who would try to define what ought only to be conceived, and who cannot distinguish the clear from the obscure, nor discriminate between what, in order to be known, requires and deserves to be defined, from what can be best known by itself. And in the number of the things which are/

are clear in the way above explained, and which can be known by themselves, we must place doubt, thought, and existence. I do not think that anyone has ever existed who is stupid enough to have required to learn what existence is before being able to conclude and affirm that he is; the same holds true of thought and doubt. Indeed, I add that one learns those things in no other way than by one's self and that nothing else persuades us of them except our own experience, and that 'conscience' (conscientia) or internal testimony that each one finds within himself when he ponders things. In vain shall we define what white is in order to make it comprehensible to him who sees absolutely nothing, while in order to know it it is only necessary to open one's eyes and see the white; in the same way in order to know what doubt is, or thought, it is only requisite to doubt and think."[162]

Here we have the reply of Eudoxus quite plainly stated. It is driven further home by the remarks of Polyander which follow it, in which the contentions of Eudoxus are reiterated.[163] The Recherche is not the only text in which Descartes asserts that there are some notions which stand in no need of definition. In the letter to Clerselier concerning the criticisms of the Meditations made by Gassendi, Descartes says "The second objection which your friends remark is: that, in order to know that I think, I must know what thought is; which I certainly do not know, they say, because I have denied/

denied everything. But I have denied nothing but prejudices, and by no means notions like these, which are known without any affirmation or denial."[164] The authors of Objections VI raise the same difficulty as Epistemon. "In order to be sure that you think you ought to know what to think, or what thinking is, and what your existence is; but since you do not yet know what these things are, how can you know that you think or exist?"[165] Descartes replies in words greatly resembling those of Eudoxus, saying that however much we may pretend not to know what these words mean we cannot really be without that knowledge, which is innate in all men. Finally, in Principle I:X Descartes affirms "That the notions which are simplest and self-evident, are obscured by logical definitions; and that such are not to be reckoned among the cognitions acquired by study." He says, "I frequently remarked that philosophers erred in attempting to explain, by logical definitions, such truths as are most simple and self-evident; for they thus only rendered them more obscure." He does not deny that it is necessary to know what thought, existence and certitude are, and that it is true that to think it is necessary to be; but that since these are the simplest of notions affording of themselves the knowledge of nothing existing - and therefore not being doubtful - it is not necessary even to enumerate them.

Several characteristics of Descartes' method have emerged/

emerged quite clearly. It is opposed to the Scholastic method of definition. It rejects a method which, in fact, assumes instead of discovering the nature of the thing it defines. It is a method admitting the existence of notions which are clearly known in themselves, and stand in no need of definition, which would simply obscure their meaning. Finally, Descartes believes that his procedure will be very fruitful. When Epistemon declares that, after all, the principle "I am a thinking thing" is sterile,[166] and leads one no further, Eudoxus replies that this is the first of the things which we come to know by the help of a method, and that all other truths will follow from it.[167] "So many things are contained in the idea of a thinking thing," says Polyander "that whole days would be required to develop them."[168] A very different fruit is expected from this principle, from that which is borne by the tree of Porphyry.

§ 11. Pascal, in the fragment "De l'esprit géométrique" says that the most perfect method of demonstrating any truth is the geometrical. Geometrical demonstrations are the type of all perfect demonstrations. The method of Geometers is the surest method within human grasp of reaching the truth. In such demonstrations it is necessary, first, to use no term of which the sense is not exactly apprehended; and, secondly, to demonstrate every proposition by truths already known. Everything must be defined and everything must be proved.

Geometry knows only one kind of definition, that, namely, called the "définition de nom" by logicians. It consists in the giving of names to things which one has clearly designated, in terms which are perfectly known. If one wishes to distinguish numbers which are divisible by two without remainder from those which are not, one gives to the first class the name, even numbers, saying: I call every number divisible by two without remainder an <u>even number</u>. Here we have a geometrical definition. For after having clearly designated something, namely, a number divisible by two without remainder, I have given it a name destitute of all other sense. Such definitions are perfectly free, since I am at liberty to bestow what names I like on the thing designated, providing I mean no more by that name than is contained in the idea of the thing designated. To use the example of Arnauld, I may call a triangle a parallelogram, providing

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strip the word 'parallelogram' of all its former meaning, and then mean no more by that name than is contained in the idea of the thing designated, the triangle.[170] Nothing, says Pascal, is more capable of silencing the sophists than this method.

In geometry there are primitive words which we cannot define, and principles so clear that we can find no clearer principles by which to prove them.[171]

The order of proof in geometry, the most perfect known to man, does not consist in defining everything and proving everything. It is not necessary to define things which are clearly known to all, not to prove things which everyone clearly knows. There is, for instance, no need to define any of the things: space, time, movement, number, equality, and the like, since these terms so naturally designate the things which they signify, that an explanation would bring in its train obscurity rather than enlightenment. Nothing is more stupid than the discourse of those who wish to define primitive words. What necessity is there to explain, for instance, what we mean by the word "man"? Everyone knows to what the word refers. It is likewise foolish to try to define "existence"; since one must always commence the definition by saying "it is," using the very word to be defined in the definition.

It is not true, of course, that all men have the same idea of the <u>nature</u> of the thing which it has been said

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is useless and impossible to define. All that has been said is that the correspondence between the name and the thing designated is known to all. Definitions are only meant to point to the things which are named, and not to reveal their nature. But blindness as to the true nature of definition leads to complete confusion in science and in argument. Many people believe they have defined time when they say that it is the measure of movement, while leaving the word its ordinary sense. This, however, is not a true definition, which is free and acceptable by all, but a proposition, unacceptable to all, and requiring proof. Such propositions, or false definitions, are called "définitions de chose." These propositions must be contrasted with true definitions of the geometrical type, the "définitions de nom." The former assume the nature of the thing 'defined,' and then proceed to make positive affirmations about its nature, when in truth these affirmations are at best hypotheses to be proved.

We must thus not be surprised, says Pascal, to find that the wonderful science of geometry takes the most simple things as its point of departure, the quality which makes them worthy of being its objects being precisely that which makes them incapable of definition, the lack of which is a perfection rather than a fault because it has its ground not in obscurity but in extreme evidence. Geometry presupposes/

presupposes that one knows the things indicated by the words: movement, number, space, etc.; and without delaying to define them uselessly, it penetrates their nature and discovers their wonderful properties.

There is thus a similarity between the doctrines of the Recherche and those of Pascal. By using geometrical definitions we escape the obscurity of the science of the Schools which has defined light as the luminary movement of luminous bodies. A method merely assuming the nature of the thing to be defined must be rejected. There are certain things which stand in no need of definition, the attempt to define the clear and apparent being one of the chief sources of error in the sciences. When Eudoxus says that his method is very fruitful of new truths, and when Polyander affirms that much time will be required to derive from it all the things contained in the idea of a thinking thing, whose meaning is known to us without the aid of a definition; then we are clearly in the presence of the mathematical doctrine, of which Pascal's exposition has been given. Where the Recherche breaks off, I have established that I am a thinking thing; I know that the words 'thought' and 'existence' need no definition; and I am just about to penetrate the nature of a thinking thing and discover its wonderful properties.[172]

§ 12. The Recherche, then, rejects the Scholastic method of definition, and its argument proceeds in a fashion which suggests the doctrine of the geometers. This doctrine is, however, not definitively formulated by Descartes, and the chief reason for believing that the rejection of the tree of Porphyry implies the acceptance of the geometrical doctrine is that the followers of Descartes are explicit in stating it. This geometrical method, they say, can and must be used in metaphysics. Thus Arnauld, in the Port-Royal Logic, contrasting the geometrical and the scholastic methods, says that a nominal definition is a necessary preliminary to the demonstration that the soul is immortal: "I call mind that which is in us the principle of thought."[173]

The dispute about definitions was one of the chief points at issue between the Cartesians and the upholders of the received philosophy. The Cartesians accuse the latter, first, of not defining the terms of which they make use in a scientific fashion; and secondly, of defining terms - and that by a wrong method - which needed no definition, as there could be no doubt as to what were the ideas for which they stood. To define man as a rational animal would be an error of the first kind; to try to define terms such as <u>thought</u> or <u>space</u> would be an error of the latter kind. The point of difference between the old and the new methods which is of the greatest importance to subsequent thought is that for the/

the geometrical method, definition was a preliminary to the demonstration of the nature of a thing, while the old method of definition was the actual search itself. When the Schools defined man as a rational animal, and then defined 'rational' and 'animal,' forming a whole tree of propositions, they thought that by so doing they were arriving at a perfect knowledge of man's nature.[174] From the Cartesian point of view they were in fact only revealing the assumptions contained in the really unexamined idea, man. Thus the tree of Porphyry is a progressive revelation of ignorance rather than a search after truth.

The Cartesian doctrine is that when a name has been attached to an idea in the geometrical fashion we do not on that account have any knowledge of the nature of the thing represented by the idea, which we did not have before. Thus I cannot discover whether it is the nature of the soul to be immortal merely by defining the term "mind." Something further is required. If, says Arnauld, the question is proposed: whether the soul of man is immortal, we must, in order to discover it, apply ourselves to considering the nature of our mind.[175] In what does this examination of our mind consist? "We cannot know what we are" says Arnauld, "except by attending seriously to what takes place in us."[176] In this latter remark is revealed the really important characteristic of the geometrical method, the characteristic which decides

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why general truths and Scholastic definitions must be laid aside in the search after truth: namely, that to solve any problem we must attend solely to the examination of the proper nature of the particular thing with which the problem is concerned.

It follows that to form definitions, or to discuss the nature of definition, is not the primary duty of Cartesian philosophy, which desires, rather, to penetrate the nature of particular things by direct examination.[177] The formation of definitions or the use of terms requiring no definition plays an important part in methodical thinking, but we do not emphasise this procedure precisely because our attention is fixed upon things rather than upon questions of logic. Rejecting the definition of man as a rational animal, Descartes says, "I prefer here to attend to the thoughts that sprung up of themselves in my mind, and were inspired by my own nature alone, when I applied myself to the consideration of what I was."[178]

For the Cartesians the natural way of thinking was ipso facto the mathematical way of thinking. Thus, if I am fruitfully examining the nature of a particular thing, then I will naturally avail myself of nominal definitions and terms requiring no definition. The formation of an explicit doctrine of definition is thus unnecessary for discovering new truths in any field. The utility of formulation is only secondary/

secondary: by making clear the processes of our thinking when engaged in the search for truth, it is possible to give an absolutely convincing demonstration of the truths we have already discovered. Analysis, says Pascal at the beginning of his "De l'esprit géométrique," is the discovery of unknown truths, and of that he does not wish to write. His aim in formulating the doctrine of definition, is to show how to demonstrate truths already found, and so to make them clear that their proof shall be invincible;[179] whence the secondary aim of the doctrine is clear.

It is now possible to suggest the relationship between the Meditations and the Recherche. The Meditations embody the search for new truth by the analytic method. They do not therefore depend upon a formulated doctrine of definition, since such a formulation is necessarily secondary to the direct examination of particular things. Such a doctrine can, however, be derived from the Meditations by a reflexion upon its reasonings. Such a process of reflexion forms part of the Recherche, where, side by side with the proof by analysis, there takes place a process by which the logic of this proof is disengaged from the proofs themselves. The proof is thus supported not only by its own consistency, but by the supposed superiority of the doctrine of logic derived from it, over that of the Schools.

Therefore, while it would be a mistake to suppose the Meditations to have taken shape under the influence of a formulated/

formulated doctrine of definition, it would nevertheless be quite justifiable to see in its reasonings the doctrine of definition which is beginning to take shape in the Recherche in opposition to the Scholastic doctrine. In other words, it would be possible to find particular examples of what this doctrine states generally.

It has been pointed out that it is an implication of this doctrine itself that knowledge starts not with definitions but with particular things. Descartes, we find, commences his search for truth by enquiring into his own nature.[180] In the first place, he says, he must be careful not to substitute some other object for what is properly himself. He will therefore consider anew what he formerly believed himself to be, retrenching everything to which the doubt extends. He used to imagine that he was a body apparent to the senses, and perfused with a confusedly perceived soul. But he cannot be a body since he can be sure of his own existence while doubting the existence of bodies. When he examines the properties of the soul he finds that all which the doubt does not force him to reject is the property of thinking. He concludes that he is a thinking thing.

Descartes thus commences his enquiry into what he is, by asking what he is not. His first step is to remove ambiguities about what he is, not to prove that he is this thing or that. Thus he replies to an objection of Bourdin,[181] denying that he has been enquiring whether he is a mind, or that/

that he has concluded that he is a soul. He has concluded from the nature of the doubt that he is a thinking thing, and to this thinking thing he has given the name of mind or understanding or reason, signifying no more by the term 'mind' than by the term 'thinking thing.' There is no reason as yet for crying "Eureka!" So far has he been from harbouring the express aim of proving that he is a mind or thinking thing, that he had concluded this, the significance of these terms was unknown to him.[182]

In this fashion, then, is established the truth: I am a thinking thing or mind. But the terms 'thinking thing,' and 'mind' have not been assumed to have any content of their own. They are, in fact, mere sounds until they come to be attached to the clearly designated thing "I," for which henceforth they stand. It is clear that were we employing another manner of demonstration we could state this result as a nominal definition which could serve as a first principle for that demonstration: "I call that of whose existence I first am certain a thinking thing." By so doing, nothing is affirmed about the nature of the "I," which is merely posited for further examination.

It appears clearly from the following stage in the argument of the second Meditation that the reasoning by which I conclude that I am a thinking thing is merely a means of fixing my attention upon my proper nature, and avoiding the danger of substituting something else for myself when I regard myself./

myself. Nothing as to my nature is concluded from the argument summarised above. I must have a more positive knowledge of my nature before I can conclude finally that I am not a body: "But it is true, perhaps, that those very things which I suppose to be non-existent, because they are unknown to me, are not in truth different from myself whom I know. This is a point I cannot determine, and do not now enter into any dispute regarding it. I can only judge of things that are known to me: I am conscious that I exist, and I who know that I exist enquire into what I am."[183] Entering then upon the direct investigation of what takes place in me, I ask, "But what, then, am I? A thinking thing, it has been said. But what is a thinking thing? It is a thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, that imagines also and perceives."[184]

From this stage a second example of the geometrical doctrine of definition can be derived. A schoolman would stop to enquire what was meant by the term 'thinking.' But this is not what Descartes does. He assumes that this is one of a class of terms which require no definition, because its connection with the idea it stands for is self-evident. Free from the fear of confusing himself with what he is not, free from any assumptions as to his nature, and unhampered by the necessity of forming useless definitions, he is able by direct examination to discover what this thought, or mind, or self is, by attending to what takes place in his mind, "penetrating its/

its nature, and discovering its wonderful properties."[185] As a result of this examination he shows that he knows himself better than bodies, proves God's existence, and establishes the immateriality of the human mind.

It will be recollected that the above enquiry into what Descartes' method was, commenced with the observation that in the second Meditation a clear and distinct idea of a thinking thing was formed. This was to be the clue for discovering the method employed in this Meditation. The Recherche shows distinctly how this idea is not to be formed, condemning the Scholastic method of definition, and hinting unmistakeably at the geometrical doctrine explicitly stated by Descartes' followers as the only alternative to the Scholastic doctrine. The Cartesian doctrine contains within itself the reason why, in seeking knowledge of a thing, a doctrine of definition is less important than a direct acquaintance with the thing itself. This doctrine, in fact, implies the analytic method for the direct examination of particular facts, the doctrine of definition being reflexively derivative from this examination. Descartes' method is, then, a method for the direct examination of the natures of things in a fashion involving none of the assumptions contained in the ordinary employment of terms.[186]

It is now possible to answer the question put some time ago, why Descartes should desire "un être" for a first principle, and how the emphasis of the second Meditation comes/

comes to fall upon the "I." The analytic method discards the general and demands the particular as its starting point. Just as the geometer commences his search for truth not with abstract truths, which can at the best serve only as axioms, but with something real and concrete, space; so Descartes sets aside the claim of general, abstract truths to be first principles, and takes his departure from a real being whose properties are to be investigated by direct examination. But metaphysical enquiry is to be preceded by a profound state of doubt, in which all our assumptions perish. The order of discoveries succeeding the doubt is the order in which a mind, thinking systematically, is able to find true propositions. But the first truth that we discover when we philosophise in order is the Cogito. The only real being whose existence is thereby affirmed is the "I." The order of discovery thus predetermines that it shall be the self which is the real being from the investigation of whose nature the succeeding truths are to spring. Stripped as our minds are by the doubt, of all assumptions as to our nature,[187] we must for that very reason be careful not to confuse ourselves with anything else since as yet we can assume for ourselves no distinguishing feature except that we doubt. Then, in the security that we are fixing our attention upon ourselves and not on other things, and in the certainty that we are examining something real and concrete, we can form a true idea of ourselves by attending to what takes place in us.

§13. Here it is convenient to review what has so far been done, or at least attempted, in this study. It has been emphasised that Descartes believes that metaphysical truths have the same kind of certainty and evidence as geometrical truths, and are discovered by the same method. It has also been remarked that the Meditations are Descartes' definitive metaphysical work, and that for the proper understanding of his doctrine it is necessary to concentrate on the Meditations paying special attention to their form and to the order of their proofs. One of the most serious difficulties that can be urged against this order of proof is the charge of circular reasoning in the deduction of the criterion of truth. An attempt was made to vindicate the position assigned by Descartes to the Cogito, and the opportunity taken to account for the position and presence of the ontological proof of God's existence in the Meditations. It was then remarked that though the Cogito was vindicated as a first truth, it did not follow that it was Descartes' first principle. Descartes requires for a first principle a being, whose existence is better known that that of any other. This is to be accounted for by the geometrical structure implicit in the second Meditation.

It was said that the transition from the Cogito to the conclusion that the self is an immaterial substance provided the best illustration of the structure of the Meditations. The explication of the steps of this transition was thus/

thus undertaken as the chief end of this study. A number of results have already been reached. The lack of content of the idea of the self at the stage of the Cogito has been pointed out. The reason for the transition from the Cogito to the examination of the content of this idea has been suggested; and finally, the actual examination into the self's nature, as it is made in Meditation II, has been followed and remarked on, strictly in the light of the suggestions made about the nature of the method determining the structure of the Meditations.

But the steps of this transition have been by no means sufficiently traced. Descartes wishes to prove that the mind is an immaterial substance, wholly distinct from body. But hitherto the notions of substantiality, and of the distinctness of mind and body, which largely determine the orientation of the proofs in the Meditations, have not been dwelt upon. It is now necessary to speak of the transition from the Cogito, to the real distinction of mind and body in Meditation VI, keeping these notions clearly in view.

The Meditations can be looked at largely from the point of view of the conclusion that the mind is an immaterial substance really distinct from body. Providing that we avoid the error of reading the Meditations backwards, we may ask at every stage of the proofs how far we have advanced to this conclusion, what has been contributed to it, and what remains to be done. The real distinction of body and mind, as will

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be seen, largely dominates the trend of the proofs of the Meditations, and these proofs are best understood in the light of it. This fact will be uppermost during the rest of this study.

The critics of Descartes, especially the Objectors to the Meditations, realising how much the arguments of the Meditations trend to this distinction, with one voice charge Descartes with having prejudged the issue. The argument, they say, is made to conform to the desired conclusion. The truth that the mind consists only in thinking and is not corporeal, is assumed, and the proof is a false proof. The method pretends to assume nothing, and to prove everything; but since this, they say, is not the fact, it is a false method. Since this is the severest charge which could be brought against Descartes, it is not surprising to find that the main theme of the Responses to the Objections against the second Meditation is the denial that the issue of the real distinction of body and mind has been prejudged.

The nature of the real distinction is explained in Principles I-XI. The real distinction subsists between two substances. If we can clearly and distinctly conceive two substances as mutually distinct, then we can be sure that they are really distinct, because God can bring it about that they exist independently such as we conceive them. The first step towards the real distinction is therefore to form clear and distinct ideas of the things to be distinguished. The method/

method to be employed and defended is therefore in the first place a method of forming clear, distinct, and sufficiently adequate ideas.

It is in the second Meditation that Descartes intends to complete the task of forming a clear and distinct idea of thinking substance, as he himself attests. In the second Response he says that our early ideas of what mind is are confused, and attributed to mind much that belongs to sensible bodies. It is therefore his desire to show how the properties of mind are distinguished from those of body. "It seemed to me very appropriate to treat of nothing else in the second Meditation."[188] When his interlocutors ask how it is possible to form an idea of any incorporeal thing whatever, Descartes replies that he has succeeded in forming such an idea of the mind. "When you ask me to add something which can raise us to the knowledge of an immaterial or spiritual being, I can do nothing better than refer you to my second Meditation ... . For what could I achieve here in one or two paragraphs, if I could achieve nothing in a long discourse designed specially to that end, a discourse to which I think I have devoted as much work as to any other writing which I have published?"[189] Then, in Meditation VI itself, Descartes concludes the real distinction in the following fashion: "Because, on the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in as far as I am only a thinking and unextended thing, and as on the other hand, I possess a distinct idea of body, in as far as it/

it is only an extended and unthinking thing, it is certain that I, that is, my mind by which I am what I am, am entirely and truly distinct from my body, and may exist without it."[190] But though the real distinction is only made in the sixth Meditation, the clear and distinct idea of the mind has been formed in the second, and nothing is added to this idea by the intervening demonstrations, which are concerned solely with the proofs of God's existence, the nature of error, and a further precision of the idea of extended substance.[191] It is to be remarked that the idea of the mind must be the idea of a substance, since the real distinction subsists between substances; so that, if the second Meditation serves to the formation of such an idea, it must imply a doctrine of substance in terms of which it will be possible to form the clearest possible idea of a particular thing.

Descartes defines substance in the following manner: "By substance we can conceive nothing else than a thing which exists in such a way as to stand in need of nothing beyond itself in order to its existence. And, in truth, there can be conceived but one substance which is absolutely independent, and that is God.[192] We perceive that all other things can exist only by help of the concourse of God. And, accordingly, the term substance does not apply to God and the creatures univocally, to adopt a term familiar in the schools; that is, no signification of this word can be distinctly understood which is common to God and them."

"Created/

"Created substances, however, ... may be conceived under this common concept; for these are things which, in order to their existence, stand in need of nothing but the concourse of God."[193] One created substance does not stand in need of another in order to its existence, though all depend upon God. Independent existence is thus always contained in the idea which we have of a substance, the term substance being applicable univocally to all created substances.

But problems relating to substance in general were not of primary interest to Descartes. In the Meditations, his definitive metaphysical work, Descartes gives no attention to the problem of substance for its own sake. A certain theory of substance appears in the Meditations but it receives no elaboration there. Descartes' temper, let it be insisted on, is realistic or positivist. His method is one of investigation rather than of speculation, of discovery of the nature of things by an examination of the things themselves, rather than a deduction of their nature from general principles. He is not primarily concerned to know what substance in general is, but rather to know of what particular substances he is able to have a detailed knowledge.

It is necessary to explain that, in the following pages, the language used may suggest that Descartes formulated a theory of substance which exerted an influence from the outside on the proofs of the Meditations, as though he had first formulated the theory, and then constructed the Meditations conformably/

conformably with it. This, however, is a mere vice of exposition, harmless when explained. The analytic method does not permit the postulation ab initio of general doctrines. It proceeds from the examination of the particular. The doctrine of substance, implicit in the proofs of the Meditations, is supposed by the analytic method to be a doctrine made necessary by this examination and not vice versa. It is the doctrine which is natural to our minds in the examination of particular things; it occurs to us during this examination;[194] and it can be recovered afterwards and stated more fully, as it is in Principles I, by an act of reflexion upon the natural procedure of the mind in the analytical investigation of metaphysical objects.[195] It does not predetermine the way in which I shall examine my nature, nor was it invented to justify that examination. Though, in the following pages, Descartes's theory of substance has first been briefly stated, and though it is then shown how this theory is involved in the proofs of the Metaphysic, it must be remembered that this is a purely reflexive process, since in their living nature the Meditations involve no hidden doctrines.

To continue, if the nature of particular substances is to be truly examined, it is necessary that a theory of substance be arrived at which makes the nature of substance completely transparent to human thought.[196] Descartes's criticism of the Scholastic theory of substantial forms, is precisely that they make clear knowledge impossible. "But no natural explanation/

explanation of any happening can be given by means of the substantial forms, since the champions of these say that they are occult, and not understood a se; for should they say that any happening proceeds from a substantial form, it is the same as if they were to say that is proceeded from a thing not understood a se, which is no explanation."[197] If we really wish to know what substances are, and to use the conception of substance for exact reasoning, then it is necessary to be in possession of a theory of substance which makes this possible.

It is in this need that Descartes' theory of the principal attribute has its origin. This doctrine goes much further than the Scholastic doctrine of inseparable attributes,[198] and enables Descartes to be certain that a clear and distinct knowledge of substance is possible.

Descartes' attitude to the theory of substance is well illustrated in the following passage from Principles I:LII. "Substance cannot be first discovered merely from its being a thing which exists independently, for existence by itself is not observed by us." Here the interesting feature is the expression: animadverti. From this the trend of Descartes' thought is quite clear. Descartes' aim is the discovery or observation of substances. But to this end the definition of substance as that which is able to exist per se (Pr.I:LI) cannot serve, since "substance cannot be first discovered merely from its being a thing which exists independently."

In/

In order to be able to infer to the existence of any substance in particular a further principle is required. This principle is stated forthwith (Pr.I:LII). "We easily, however, discover substance itself from any attribute of it, by this common notion, that of nothing there are no attributes, properties or qualities: for, from perceiving that some attribute is present, we infer that some existing thing or substance to which it may be attritubed is also present." In Responses II, definition V, this is, indeed, the only definition of substance given. "Everything in which there is present immediately as in a subject, or through which there exists anything which we perceive, that is, any property, or quality, or attribute, of which there is a real idea in us, is called a substance. For we have no other idea of substance precisely taken, than that it is a thing in which exists, formally or eminently, that something which we perceive, or which is objectively in some one of our ideas; since it is known by the natural light that no real attribute can be an attribute of nothing." The formal definition of substance given in Principles I:LI is omitted. The omission is easily explained if we remember that Descartes is not so much concerned to define substance in a formally complete manner, as to obtain a definition of it which is useful to a particular end, namely, the discovery of the nature of this or that particular substance. There seems to be no other way of explaining Descartes' double definition of substance than this.

From/

From the definition of substance given in the second set of Responses and in Principles I:LII, it is clear that we can infer to the presence of a substance from any attribute, property, or quality, since "of nothing there are no attributes, properties, or qualities." Every substance, however, has one principal attribute. "But, although any attribute is sufficient to lead us to the knowledge of substance, there is, however, one principal property of every substance, which constitutes its nature or essence, and upon which all the others depend."[199] According to this doctrine of the principal attribute, proper to Descartes and stated in the Principles, all the other attributes, properties or qualities of a substance are conceived through this principal attribute. The substance itself is not known apart from this principal attribute, since it is the nature or essence[200] of the substance whose attribute it is. The substance is simply the principal attribute substantialised. Between the substance and the attribute there is only a distinction of reason.[201] Thus though we can make a distinction of reason between a substance and its principal attribute, and though we can have no knowledge of a substance thus distinguished, it is nevertheless certain that there is nothing occult in substances, since the principal attribute constitutes their nature or essence. It is more than inseparable from the substance, as is clear from a passage in the Principles, where the particular case of thought and extension which are

said/

said to be the principal attributes of thinking and extended substance, is being considered. "Thought and extension can be regarded as constituting the natures of intelligent and of corporeal substance; and then they ought to be conceived not otherwise than as that very thinking substance and that very extended substance, that is, as mind and body."[202] Since the principal attribute is capable of being clearly and distinctly known, we are in possession of a doctrine of substance according to which substance is thoroughly intelligible, and by which we are enabled to proceed to a knowledge of particular substances.

There is a further feature of Descartes' doctrine of substance which must be remarked upon. In Principles I:XI it is stated to be "a matter that is highly manifest by the natural light, that to nothing no affections or qualities belong; and, accordingly that where we observe certain affections, there a thing or substance to which these pertain is necessarily found. The same light also shows us that we know a thing or substance more clearly in proportion as we discover in it a greater number of qualities." The last sentence contains a doctrine which has not yet been mentioned. Although substance is thoroughly intelligible, our knowledge of it is nevertheless something to which we attain by degrees. Having found a substance by observing an affection of it, we have not on that account an immediate, clear, and distinct knowledge of that substance. It is necessary further to investi-

gate/

investigate the qualities of the substance, since we have a clear and distinct knowledge of a substance in proportion as we discover more qualities of it.[203] This is the principle which Descartes uses in the second Meditation to prove that the mind is the most clearly known of all things.[204]

In this principle we observe once more how suited Descartes's theory of substance is to his urge to approach the real as an investigator and discoverer, increasing his knowledge of objects by the gradual process of discovering their qualities. There is no royal road for knowing objects at a stroke. As with material things, so with our own minds; for though our own existence is the first truth which presents itself to us, we can never adequately know ourselves; and our knowledge of ourselves, lacking in adequacy as it is, is only obtained by an empirical attention to our faculties. We know the depths of the soul in the fashion in which we know the viscera of a calf.[205]

To conclude, then, there are two definitions of substance in the Metaphysics; and it is not the classical definition of substance as that which can exist per se which represents the true spirit of the Cartesian philosophy. It must not be thought that this definition has not its part to play. But it comes into use only in the sixth Meditation, when the real distinction of mind and body is concluded; and the manner of its employment is made clear in the Responses to the objectors.

"But/

"But it must now be explained how, from this alone that I clearly and distinctly understand one substance apart from another, I am certain that the one is excluded by the other.

"Now the notion of substance is precisely this: that which can exist per se, that is, without standing in need of any other substance. No one who perceives two substances through two different concepts has not judged that they are really distinct."

This notion of substance is here seen to confirm our right to draw the real distinction after we have formed clear and distinct conceptions of the things to be distinguished, but it cannot in the least help us to form these conceptions. To this end we require the definition of substance as that which is known through its attributes, properties, and qualities. But having formed the ideas of two different substances by the actual observation of their properties, we can be sure that it is the nature of these substances to exist apart, by virtue of the definition of substance as that which can exist per se.

§14. How, then, does Descartes, in the course of the second Meditation, arrive at the clear and distinct idea of a thinking substance?

It has always been a point of dispute at what stage of the metaphysic Descartes first concludes that he is a substance. In order to understand the matter, however, only two things need be borne in mind, the one, that for Descartes res and substantia are synonymous; and the other, that the questions: am I a substance? and, am I substance whose whole essence is to think? are separate questions.

The fact that I am a substance follows immediately from the Cogito, since the Cogito alone suffices to assure me that I am something, res quaedam, and therefore a substance. I am certain that I am and that I think, but since my thinking cannot be a quality of nothing, I must be a thing or substance. The extremely close connection between my certainty of my existence and of my substantiality, for the Cartesians, appears clearly from a text of Arnauld: "I am assured that I am, because I think; and thus, that I am a substance that thinks."[207]

It is to be remarked that, if the analytic method be properly understood, Descartes cannot be said to have committed an error often attributed to him, that, namely, of assuming a principle not previously stated: that no quality can be a quality of nothing; and deducing by its aid what in the Meditations he pretends to be spontaneously presented to his/

his mind. Synthesis explicitly states the most general principles as preliminaries to its proofs, and deduces the consequences. But analysis proposes certain "questions," and proceeds to answer them by the examination of something particular. Thus, in proposing the question "whether the soul of man is immortal" we do not start from general maxims such as: no substance can, properly speaking, perish; but we apply ourselves to directly considering our selves. Again, in discovering "whether or not I am a thinking thing," my first step is to observe in myself certain properties or qualities which are straightway seen to belong to something.

I am not, however, debarred from the use of general maxims in analysis; but these are only proposed at need, whereas for the synthetic method they are proposed as preliminaries. Their use in analysis is subservient to my direct examination of something particular. They are the principles by which I think rather than from which I think; the way my thought naturally acts in the discovery of the truth, rather than first principles which it explicitly posits.[208]

The whole plan of the Metaphysic of P.S. Régis bears witness to this. Régis appends to some chapters "Reflexions" in which he makes explicit the axioms which he has naturally used in the demonstrations made in these chapters, finally proving synthetically the conclusions he has discovered analytically, using the axioms, reflexively recovered, as first principles.

"After/

"After having hitherto used Analysis in the discovery of the truths I have examined, I still wish, the further to convince myself of them, to demonstrate them by Synthesis, using only the Axioms I have posited, and truths already proved. This is how I demonstrate the existence of the mind: Nothing has no properties (reflex.I, ax.I). I know by experience that I have the property of doubting and of being sure, for I am sure of my existence and doubt that of other things. Therefore I am and exist," etc.[209]

When, however, I first discover analytically that I am something, I do not deduce it in this fashion, but posit the axiom, "that nothing has no properties" merely as explaining the way my thought acts when it directly observes my nature. Thus, to repeat something which has already been said, Descartes's doctrine of substance must be understood in accordance with the demand of the analytic method, when it is brought into contact with the arguments of the Meditations. Descartes considers this doctrine to be, not something which he has arbitrarily formulated and used as a concealed general principle, but as something which the true method posits during its examination of the nature of particular things.[210]

But if Descartes can conclude, and rightly conclude, that he is a substance, so early in the second Meditation, this remains for him a conclusion to be accepted with considerable reserve. I know that I am a substance which thinks, but I am still very far from knowing that I am a substance whose/

whose nature or essence is thinking. Descartes forms no rapid conclusions from the Cogito as to what his substance[211] is. It may quite well be his body which thinks. He feels the scruple uttered by Régis and urged as an insoluble difficulty by the Objectors: "I am, however, so accustomed to considering extension and thought as two attributes of the same substance, that I feel myself inclined to believe that it is the same substance which thinks and is extended."[212]

It is necessary, therefore, that I should try to discover what, more precisely, I am. This examination is made by considering the Cogito in relation to the doubt. "I wrote that we could not doubt that our mind existed, because, from the very fact that we doubted, it followed that our mind existed, but that meantime we might doubt whether any material things existed; whence I deduced and demonstrated that mind was clearly perceived by us to be an existent thing or substance, although we should have no concept whatever of the body, and denied that any bodies existed; and thence that the concept of mind did not involve any concept of body."[213] Arnauld, in his objections to the Meditations, describes Descartes' proof in a manner to which Descartes takes no exception: I am able to doubt whether I have a body or whether any body exists at all; yet while I think I cannot doubt that I exist. Hence I who think cannot be a body, since in doubting about body, I do not doubt about myself. Even though I maintained that no body at all existed, it would remain true that/

that I am something, and therefore that I am not a body.[214] Though I am not the assemblage of members called the human body, nor a thin and penetrating air, or wind or flame or vapour or breath, nor anything else imaginable, it remains true that I am, and that I am something not imaginable, that is, not a body.[215]

This argument is, as Arnauld remarks, very ingenious. But the importance of the conclusion reached must not be exaggerated. I know that I am a substance which is the subject of thoughts, and I know that, as conscious of myself, I am not a body, but I am not yet certain that I am a substance whose whole nature or essence consists solely in thinking. On this matter Descartes retains an ultimate doubt. "But it is true, perhaps, that those very things which I suppose to be non-existent, because they are unknown to me, are not in truth different from myself whom I know. This is a point I cannot determine, and do not now enter into any dispute regarding it. I can only judge of the things that are known to me: I am conscious that I exist, and I who know that I exist inquire into what I am."[216] In order to discover whether or not his nature or essence consists only in thinking, Descartes proceeds to enquire more closely into what he is insofar as he is conscious of himself. This enquiry is made in the famous passage commencing: "But what, then, am I? A thinking thing, it has been said. But what is a thinking thing? It is a thing that doubts, understands, conceives, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, that imagines also, and perceives."[217]

This examination is conducted by a method of direct observation, and involves the principle already noticed "that we know a thing or substance more clearly in proportion as we discover in it a greater number of qualities."[218] Thus Descartes can reply to the authors of Objections II, that though he confesses that he has not, in the second Meditation, discovered whether or not the thinking thing is the same as the body or something different from it, yet he does not admit that he has no knowledge of the mind.[219] Who, he says, has ever had an acquaintance with anything, and yet known absolutely nothing about it? But, he continues, in proportion as we perceive more properties in anything, the better are we said to know it.

We discover what we are insofar as we are conscious of ourselves by an examination of our consciousness, enumerating the properties which we find there. Since this examination is meant to further the conclusion that the mind is a substance whose whole nature or essence is to think, it is necessary to enquire how this end is being furthered. This appears to be the explanation. By an examination of what we are insofar as we are conscious of ourselves, we come to recognise in ourselves a number of properties, all of which have the characteristic of being thought properties. These are not the only properties of which we have ideas. When we come to examine the piece of wax we find that we have ideas of the properties of figure and of extension, in short, the properties/

properties of things which we call material or extended. The properties which we observe in the mind, such as understanding, willing and imagining, are obviously quite different from properties such as magnitude, figure, and motion which we observe in material things. It is clear to us by the natural light that these two groups of properties have nothing whatever in common. One does not require to be a philosopher to distinguish between modes of thought and modes of extension. But can we thence proceed to distinguish the substances of which they are modes?

Here it is necessary to refer again to Descartes's doctrine of the principal attributes. The principal attribute fully expresses the nature of a substance. But a mode cannot be conceived without the substance of which it is a mode, and since the substance itself is conceived through the principal attribute, no mode can be conceived apart from this principal attribute. But the principal attribute not only fully expresses the nature of the substance of which it is an attribute, but is itself fully intelligible. Hence any mode reveals truly the nature of the substance of which it is a mode, in the sense that it posits the substance as being that alone through which it can be understood. Though it is the substance through which the modes are conceived, it is nevertheless from the side of the modes that we come to know what the nature of that substance is which the modes presuppose. Now all the discoverable modes of myself when I observe directly/

directly what takes place in me, have the attribute of thinking in common, and all the modes of a body like a piece of wax have the attribute of extension in common. Since no mode discovered by the examination of what we are presupposes an extended substance through which it must be conceived, we are forced to conclude that we have distinct ideas of two substances, the nature of one of which is thought, of the other, extension.

The matter is put very well in the Response to Hobbes. "Since we have no immediate cognition of substance through itself, but only through its being the subject of certain activities (actuum), it is highly reasonable, and conforms to custom that we should call by different names those substances which we recognise to be the subjects of activities (actuum) clearly diverse, and afterwards to examine whether these different names refer to different things, or to one and the same thing. Now there are certain activities which we call corporeal such as magnitude, figure, motion, and all the rest which cannot be thought of apart from local extension; and the substance in which they are present, we call body; nor can we pretend that it is one substance which is the subject of figure, and another which is the subject of local motion, etc., because all these activities come under the common notion of extension. Further, there are other activities which we call thought activities (cogitativos), such as understanding, willing, imagining, feeling, etc., which all come/

come under the common notion of thought, or perception, or consciousness; and the substance in which they are present we call a thinking thing, or a mind, or by any name we like, as long as we do not confound it with corporeal substance, because thought activities have nothing in common with corporeal activities, and thought which is the common notion (ratio communis) of the former, differs wholly from extension which is the common notion of the latter."[220]

To sum up, we come to know substances by knowing their modes. By enumerating the properties we can discover in a thinking thing, and contrasting them with those which we can discover in a body like a piece of wax, we can form the idea of mind as a substance whose whole essence is to think; a conclusion which clearly depends upon my right to determine what I am from the consciousness which I have of myself, since it is of a diversity of modes concretely presented in this consciousness that the direct examination is made from which I determine what I essentially am. It is this emphasis on the direct awareness of what we are which makes a formulated doctrine of substance of secondary importance to Descartes, and why this doctrine which is almost ignored in the Meditations receives such wide expansion in the Principles. Descartes desires to know what in particular he is, not what his nature is as a substance in general. His doctrine of substance depends on his doctrine of method, and not vice versa; and the method, being one which is directed to the investigation/

investigation of the particular, permits the formulation of general truths only secondarily and by reflexion.

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§15. At the end of the second Meditation we are in possession of the idea of a thinking substance. This idea is the idea of something complete and standing in need of nothing beyond itself in order to its existence. Nothing belonging to the nature of body is contained in this idea. How is it, then, that we cannot immediately conclude that the mind is a pure spiritual substance?

During the course of the second Meditation, Descartes makes a reservation which not only caused difficulty to the Objectors, but which is puzzling also to the present-day interpreter. The passage has already been quoted, but may be given again for convenience. "But it is true, perhaps, that those very things (viz., bodies) which I suppose to be non-existent, because they are unknown to me, are not in truth different from myself whom I know. This is a point I cannot determine, and do not now enter into any dispute regarding it. I can only judge of things that are known to me: I am conscious that I exist, and I who know that I exist enquire into what I am." Descartes thus admits that there is an ultimate possibility that he is not different from bodies. We must not, he says, confuse the question of what the mind really is, with the question, what we know of it.[221] In other words when I have formed a clear and distinct idea of a thinking thing, the question still remains whether or not I am a body. The Objectors believe that the question remains open because it has been begged. The idea which Descartes has formed/

formed of himself is not a true idea because it is inadequate.[222] Arnauld believes that the fatal step in Descartes' argument is his enquiring into what he is so far as he is conscious of himself. He says: "But he (sc. Descartes) says that, in terms of the argument proposed in the method, the deduction has proceeded to the point only of excluding from the nature of his mind whatsoever is corporeal 'not according to the order of truth in the matter by only according to the order of his perception, since he perceived (sensus esset) that he clearly apprehended nothing which he knew to belong to his essence except that he was thinking thing.' It is clear from this reply that the argument remains where it was, and that the question which he promises to solve remains untouched, namely: how it follows that, from the fact that he knows that nothing else pertains to his essence, nothing further really does belong to it."[223] The charge is that Descartes' reservation that he may be a body is not quite honest. Arnauld says that he cannot find where in Meditation II this possibility is finally disproved.[224] He goes on to say that where the proof is made in the sixth Meditation the adequacy of the idea of the mind formed in the second Meditation is taken for granted.[225] The promise made in the Preface to the Meditations is not fulfilled. Descartes' reservation that he may be something of which he is not conscious cannot thus be taken as being in good faith. By enquiring what he is insofar as he perceives himself to be a mind, he makes abstraction from what may possibly be his nature, and by enquiring into a part of/

of his being, namely, himself as far as he is conscious of himself, he forms an inadequate idea of his own nature.

The criticism of Arnauld is one of the acutest which could be urged against the second Meditation; and of all his Objectors, Descartes treats Arnauld with the greatest respect. This criticism, indeed, seems to be very well founded. Towards the end of the second Meditation, Descartes says "But, finally, what shall I say of the mind itself, that is, of myself? for as yet I do not admit that I am anything but mind." This statement clearly refers to the reservation made earlier in the Meditation, yet up to the end of this Meditation Descartes continues in the course of examining what he is only insofar as he is conscious of himself. The third, fourth, and fifth Meditations treat of other matters. The point which appears paradoxical is that in the fourth Meditation Descartes especially reminds us that the difficulty raised by the reservation in the second Meditation has not yet been solved. "But now I not only know that I exist, insofar as I am a thinking being, but there is likewise presented to my mind a certain idea of corporeal nature; hence I am in doubt as to whether the thinking nature which is in me, or rather which I myself am, is different from that corporeal nature, or whether both are merely one and the same thing."[227] This doubt continues unresolved, and yet the real distinction is concluded in the sixth Meditation just as though the idea of the mind formed in the second Meditation required nothing more/

more to complete it. The reason for Arnauld's bewilderment is clear. Descartes keeps emphasising the importance of the reservation which he has made, yet he remains equally firm in the belief that by the end of the second Meditation he has formed a complete idea of what mind is, an idea legitimately come by and not formed by intellectual abstraction. For Arnauld, these are two entirely incompatible positions. The difficulty is, indeed, profound; and it is one which has to be solved if the Meditations are to be admitted to be completely intelligible. One thing is quite clear, that Descartes is fully conscious of the difficulty, but that he sees no reason whatever to change the proofs of the Meditations. He holds to the opinion that the Meditations are a complete and coherent body of proofs.

The response to Arnauld provides the best clue to the solution of the difficulty. Descartes says that "the real distinction cannot be inferred from the fact that one thing is conceived apart from another by the abstracting action of an intellect conceiving a thing inadequately, but only from the fact that each of them is understood apart from the other in a complete fashion, or as a complete thing."[228] It can be seen from this that Descartes does not believe that the idea which he has formed of the mind has been obtained by abstraction. On the other hand M. Arnauld is wrong in assuming that an <u>adequate</u> idea is required in order to the real distinction. Adequate knowledge is the kind of knowledge which God has of things. Thus even if a man had an adequate knowledge of anything, he could/

could not know it unless God gave him a private revelation of the fact. Finite minds merely require to know that their knowledge is adequate for that thing, that is, they require to know that their idea of a thing is not falsifying its nature, not that they know everything about it which is to be known. We require to know no more than that we have an idea which we have not rendered inadequate by means of an intellectual abstraction. Human reason is capable of forming sufficiently adequate ideas of things. Though we are finite intellects, we can obtain true ideas about things. In order to have sufficiently adequate knowledge of a thing, we must have sufficient knowledge of it to let us know that it is a complete thing. But the idea which we have of the mind at the end of the second Meditation, which is used in drawing the real distinction in the sixth Meditation, is that of a complete thing. The mind is thus completely conceived by our enquiring into what we are insofar as we are conscious of ourselves.

But yet the reservation holds that our nature may depend on something, namely body, which is, at the time that the reservation is made, not yet fully known to us. It is clear that there cannot be a unanimity between Descartes and Arnauld about the nature of this reservation. Arnauld's interpretation of it is clear: if there is any possibility that I am a body then I must demonstrate that I am not a body before I can be certain that I have a complete idea of myself. Descartes, he thinks, has committed a bad flaw in reasoning in proving that he/

he is not a body by means of the complete idea which he has of himself (or the idea which he has of himself as a complete thing). It is clear that this objection strikes at the very root of Descartes' attempt to draw the real distinction between mind and body. How in principle, it implies, can one proceed to distinguish things by means of the ideas one has of them, when the very fact that one is setting out to distinguish these things implies that in the real they may be a single nature, and that consequently we can only form distinct ideas of them by assuming what has to be proved. How, in short, can we know things as they really are if ideas are anterior to things? This, however, is what Descartes is attempting. Since the steps by which he discovers what is contained in the idea of himself conform to a definite plan of reasoning, and since he cannot be suspected of distrusting his Method, his reservation that he may be a body cannot be attributed to a doubt whether his chain of proof is complete. The grounds of this reservation must therefore be sought otherwheres than where Arnauld seeks them.

§16. The problem to be solved, if the reservation, made by Descartes about his nature, is to be intelligible is: how is it possible for me to have a clear and distinct and methodically formed idea of myself as a mind only, and at the same time to admit that it is possible that my nature may be corporeal? Descartes has rejected the criticism of Arnauld that the possibility lies in his having formed an inadequate, or abstract, or incomplete idea of himself, in other words, in his having made an imperfect examination of his nature.

In the response to Arnauld, Descartes explains why he was unable to conclude the real distinction of mind and body at the end of the second Meditation, that is, to conclude that there was nothing corporeal in the nature of mind, and no thought in the nature of body. "Consequently, had I not been seeking a certitude greater than the vulgar, I should have been contented with showing, in the second Meditation, that mind is understood as a thing that subsists although clearly nothing be attributed to it which pertains to body; and conversely that body is understood as a thing that subsists, though nothing be attributed to it which pertains to mind. And I should have added nothing more for demonstrating that mind is really distinguished from body: because vulgarly we judge that all things stand in their true order, in the same order in which they stand to our perception. But since among those hyperbolical doubts which I proposed in the first Meditation there was one that went so far that I could not be certain even of this (namely that things/

things in their true nature were such as we perceive them), while I supposed myself ignorant of the author of my origin, all that I have written about God and truth in the third, fourth, and fifth Meditations serve to the conclusion of the real distinction of mind from body, a conclusion which I then complete in the sixth Meditation."[229]

It has been noted that the reservation under discussion was reaffirmed in the fourth Meditation. But the only reason why the real distinction is not made at the end of the second Meditation, is the hyperbolical doubt, as is clear from the passage just quoted. It is therefore to be concluded that Descartes considered that it is the hyperbolical doubt, and not, as Arnauld thinks, his method of investigating his nature, which must be held to account for this reservation. Though both Arnauld and Descartes admit the reservation, it is for entirely different and incompatible reasons.

It will therefore be profitable to dwell briefly on the nature of Descartes' doubt. It is to be noted that Descartes distinguishes between essence and existence.[230] The existence of God alone is contained in his essence. While, for this reason, it is self-evident that God exists, it is a matter requiring proof that any created thing exists of whose essence we have knowledge, Given the knowledge or the essence or nature of anything, there always remains a possibility of doubting whether that thing exists. But there is a further possibility of doubt. We know the essences or natures of things through the ideas we have of them. Just as there is a possibility/

possibility of a discrepancy between essence and existence, so there is a possibility of discrepancy between idea and essence. It is the latter possibility which gives rise to the hyperbolical doubt: whether things in their true nature are such as we perceive them. Though the hyperbolical doubt is the more ultimate doubt it must be solved first.

The nature and solution of the doubt as it appears in the Meditations may be stated as follows. The pre-hyperbolical doubt arises out of the evidence of the senses. The facts of dream, illusion, and errors of sense perception force us to doubt whether things exist such as we sense them. Since physics, astronomy, and medicine seem to deal with bodies that we sense, we must conclude that these sciences are doubtful. But what of the sciences which do not deal with existent bodies? - "Arithmetic, Geometry, and the other sciences of the same class, which regard merely the simplest and most general objects, and scarcely enquire whether or not these are really existent?"[231]. The fact that the existence of the things with which they deal is not all-important for the latter sciences, does not make them any the less open to doubt. Indeed, the highest doubt attaches precisely to these latter,[232] since by the hypothesis of the evil genius we can doubt whether the essences of things are such as we conceive them to be. A science like algebra which deals peculiarly with essences, is thus <u>par excellence</u> the object of the hyperbolical doubt.

Furthermore, the pre-hyperbolical and the hyperbolical doubts are closely interconnected. Physics, astronomy, and medicine/

medicine are doubtful sciences because they seem to deal with what are ordinarily and precritically called bodies, i.e., bodies as the objects of sense perception. They are doubtful because of the confusedness of our senses in perceiving such bodies. But in the first Meditation we do not yet know how bodies are to be truly conceived. This we discover by the examination of the piece of wax. But if physics, astronomy, and medicine are the doubtful sciences of objects confusedly perceived, are they the doubtful sciences of bodies when we clearly and distinctly conceive these as figured, moveable extension? It is clear that the doubt derived from the senses, which first infected these sciences, now has its basis removed. But the pre-hyperbolical doubt is not on that account resolved, for at this very point a new reason for doubt comes into operation. Just when these sciences cease to be the objects of the pre-hyperbolical doubt they become the objects of the hyperbolical doubt, for in the second Meditation, nature is seen to be the object not of the senses but of the intellect. As figured, moveable extension it is the object of mathematics. Physics, astronomy, and medicine are thus mathematical in nature, and are doubtful because of the doubt which applies to mathematics: the hyperbolical doubt, whether the natures of things is such as we clearly and distinctly conceive them to be. Thus the first necessity for placing physics on a firm foundation is to solve the doubt regarding the truths of mathematics. For firmly establishing these sciences it is useless for us to know/

know that material objects exist, until we know that they are such as we conceive them. That is why the hyperbolical doubt is resolved before the existence of material things is proved.

But the reason for the reservation which forms the matter of dispute between Descartes and Arnauld was found to be the hyperbolical doubt, which arises from the possibility of a discrepancy between our ideas and the natures or essences of things. The difficulty of being certain that mind is not corporeal, therefore, does not depend from the doubt of the existence of bodies, but from the doubt whether our ideas are veridical.

Let us suppose that the essence of things does not correspond to the clear and distinct ideas which I have of them. Then no matter how perfect may be the reasoning by which I proceed in forming a clear and distinct conception, I shall have advanced very little towards the certainty that the essence of the thing conceived is such as I conceive it to be. Therefore, when I have formed a clear and distinct conception of the mind, I must still retain an ultimate doubt whether the nature or essence of the mind is such as I conceive it to be; and while I retain this doubt I cannot be sure that corporeity is not involved in the essence of the mind. It is chiefly in this ultimate doubt that the explanation must be found for Descartes's reservation that he may be a body, in spite of his confidence in his method of forming a clear and distinct idea of the mind.

This, however, is not the full extent of the explanation./

explanation. The doubt whether or not our ideas truly represent to us the natures of things is solved in the fourth Meditation. But the doubt whether or not I am a body is not solved until the sixth Meditation, where the real distinction is concluded. "Finally, when I said that perhaps it was the fact that that which I had not yet come to know (namely, my body) was not different from me myself whom I knew (namely, from my mind), I do not know, I do not dispute the matter etc.; you object: if you do not know, if you do not dispute it, why do you assume that you are none of these things? But it is false that I assumed anything of which I was ignorant; for plainly and on the contrary, because I was ignorant whether or not body was the same as mind, I assumed nothing about it, but considered the mind alone, and afterwards, in the sixth Meditation, I did not assume but demonstrated that it was really distinct from the body." 233

Only the last Meditation finally solves the difficulty. Thus something more is required for the solution than the assurance that the natures of things correspond to our clear and distinct ideas of them. The natures which I conceive as distinct are distinct in virtue of the things of which they are the natures, and it is therefore on the real distinction of these things that the solution of the difficulty finally waits. But the real distinction does not require the proof of the actual existence of these things but only the assurance that they are of such a nature that, if they exist, they can exist apart. Thus in order to be sure that I am not a body I require

God's/

God's guarantee for two things: that my clear and distinct ideas are ideas of the true natures or essences of things, because God is no deceiver; and that things whose natures are distinguished in idea can exist in separation, because God is omnipotent and is able to do whatever we can clearly and distinctly conceive.

The reason why Descartes makes the reservation that he may be a body is thus explained. It remains to be seen, however, whether the reason he gives for examining his nature only insofar as he is conscious of himself is justified. This reason he states as follows: "It is, however, perfectly certain that the knowledge of my existence, thus precisely taken, is not dependent on things, the existence of which is as yet unknown to me: and consequently it is not dependent on any of the things I can feign in imagination."[234]

Descartes cannot doubt that he exists, even though he doubts of the existence of corporeal things, which he perceives through confused images. He has a clear and distinct knowledge that he exists not merely when he doubts of material things, but even because he doubts of them. There is nevertheless an ultimate possibility that his nature may be that of the things of which he doubts the existence. He wishes to find out more precisely what he is, and the question which now arises is: how far, in defining what he is, must he take into consideration the nature of those things whose existence he doubts because he perceives them confusedly. But the manner of reasoning prescribed/

prescribed by the Method is to proceed from one clear and distinct idea to another. A confused idea cannot be employed in reasoning. Consequently, though it is possible that I may be one of those things which I confusedly perceive, it is nevertheless clear that I cannot possibly arrive at the truth of the matter by introducing these confused perceptions into my reasoning. My only clear and distinct perception at this stage is that I am a thinking thing. My further reasoning can take only this knowledge into consideration. If I am to discover by a chain of accurate reasoning whether or not I am a body it is only by ignoring at this stage the confused images of body which I have. In so doing I do not prejudge the issue whether or not I am a body, but I take the only course which can bring the matter to an accurate and unprejudiced conclusion.

Thus Descartes can reply to Arnauld: "Nor can what M. Arnauld adds be urged against me: that it is not wonderful if, in concluding that I exist from the fact that I think, the idea which I thus form should represent me solely as a thinking thing. For similarly, when I examine the nature of body, I find nothing whatever in it which savours of thought. And no better argument for the distinction between two things can be urged than that in whichever we investigate we clearly find nothing which is not diverse from the other."[235] The conception of a corporeal thing has, when the opportunity arrived, been examined as carefully as that of a thinking thing, confirming the conclusion reached by the examination of myself as thinking,/

thinking, and thus justifying the procedure under discussion.

Gassendi urges the same difficulty as Arnauld, that if Descartes is ignorant whether or not he is a body, why does he assume that he is not, in examining his nature only insofar as he thinks.[236] To this Descartes replies that it is false that he has assumed something of which he is ignorant; for on the contrary, not knowing whether body was the same as mind or not, he made no assumptions about the matter, but treating of the mind alone and assuming nothing, he demonstrated the real distinction of body and mind in the sixth Meditation.[237] It is interesting to note that Descartes charges his opponent with having made an assumption. He himself is reasoning in an unprejudiced fashion, but merely because he admits the possibility that he may be a body, his opponent wishes him to assume that he is. But it is contrary to all good reasoning to leave the ground of certain knowledge in order to entertain the phantoms of imagination.

Granting that Descartes' general method of reasoning from what is clearly and distinctly known is correct, it is impossible not to admit that he is justified in proceeding with the argument of the Meditations from the idea which he has of himself as a thinking thing. It is demanded by the method "that we shall treat of things only in relation to our understanding's awareness of them."[238] However compounded any nature may be, we shall never discover what it is except by isolating and examining in it that of which we are clearly and distinctly/

distinctly aware. It would be to propose a false "question" for analysis to assume as a condition necessary for its solution that the body thinks.

Descartes's certainty that the idea which he has formed of himself is not formed by abstraction is further explained, in an illuminating fashion, by a letter to a Doctor of the Sorbonne. "Regarding the principle according to which I believe that the idea which I have of a thing has not been rendered inadequate by an abstraction of the intellect, I have concluded it only from my proper thought. For being assured that I cannot have any knowledge of what is outside of me except through the medium of the ideas of it which I have in me, I am careful about immediately referring my judgments to things, and attribute nothing positive to things which I have not first perceived in their ideas; but I also believe that everything which is in these ideas is necessarily in the things. Thus in order to know if my idea has not been rendered incomplete or inadequate by some abstraction of the mind, I only consider if I have derived it, not from some subject which is more complete, but from some other idea more complete and more perfect than I may have in me; and if I have not derived it thence by an abstraction of the intellect, that is to say, in turning away my thought from a part of what is contained in the complete idea, for better applying it and rendering me more attentive to the other part."[239] "It appears to me to be perfectly clear that the idea I have of a substance which thinks is complete ... and/

and that I have no other idea in my mind which precedes it."[240]

This text well illustrates the connection of the Cartesian doctrine of ideas with the argument of the Meditations. We know only our ideas directly. Consequently, when we have doubted not only whether material things exist, but whether the essences of things are such as we conceive them to be, we can only reason with certainty about our ideas. The application of the Method to metaphysical matters determines that it shall be the nature of the "I" which is to be examined. What regulates our thinking during this examination cannot possibly be the things which our ideas may or may not represent. My idea can only be judged inadequate with reference to some more complete idea from which it is clearly seen to depend as an incomplete fragment. In order that I may judge whether or not the idea which I am forming of myself is inadequate, I must compare it with some other idea which I may have of myself, and to which I have reason to assign more truth than to that which I am forming. But since my method of procedure in the second Meditation is precisely to form ideas than which I have hitherto had none clearer, it is impossible that such an idea be found. Consequently any belief that the idea of myself which I am forming in the second Meditation is inadequate, can be based only upon the false assumption which presupposes that that very idea has been found which it is the aim of the methodical reasoning of the second Meditation to find. The course of the argument, therefore, can confidently proceed, unhindered by the fear/

fear that the ideas formed can be rendered inadequate by comparison with any ideas which are clearer, or a fortiori, any ideas, like that of body, which have not yet reached precision.

The charge of having assumed what he wished to prove has been from Descartes's own time to the present, one of those most frequently levelled against him. It occurs in all the Objections except the first; it is made by Regius and by some of Descartes's correspondents, and was in subsequent times a matter of continual controversy.

There is a kind of grossness in the very questions, whether or not Descartes was in good faith, and whether or not his thinking is imperfect. These questions really belong to the heat of controversy of his own times, and it is only in order the better to understand those times that the question ought to be debated. There is no need to pursue the matter at any greater length here, though it will be of use to draw attention to two texts which show clearly that Descartes felt himself to be governed by logic, and logic only, in his demonstration of the real distinction of soul and body.

In the Response to the sixth set of Objections, Descartes tells his interlocutors the history of his thought on this head. He tells them that he pursued his thinking according to his method, and, going where he was driven by the argument, he was forced to the conclusion that the mind was really distinct from the body, and better known than it. This conclusion was so novel that he had difficulty in believing his own proofs, feeling/

feeling himself like the astronomers who are forced to judge, against the evidence of their senses, that the sun is larger than the earth. He required much reflection on his own conclusions fully to convince himself. If his proof surprised his readers, it surprised him equally.[241]

This is a convincing example of Descartes's subjection to his own logic. It is a consequence of this that he should be outraged by assertions to the contrary, and it is probably this feeling of outraged intellectual honesty alone which can account for the vigour of his reply to Bourdin, when the latter says that he should not take for granted the spiritual nature of the mind. "He falsely pretends here that I assume what I ought to have proved. And to such falsehoods, which are so freely framed, and cannot be substantiated by the smallest evidence, nothing further need be said than that they are untrue."[242] "I deny that I in any way posited that the mind is incorporeal, but, finally, demonstrated it in the sixth Meditation."[243] Evidently, Descartes regarded the imputation as a baseless slander.

If it is true that Descartes's conclusions followed strictly from his logic, it must nevertheless be admitted that the opposition of his critics is at least understandable. Consider what analysis demanded: "The second rule of the logic of M. Descartes is to divide, or make a kind of anatomical dissection of the difficulty which he proposes to examine. First he looks at it generally, then, distinguishing each part, he disentangles/

disentangles one from the other, in order to contemplate each in particular, and to know its nature and its properties. He wished, for example, to know himself; but the difficulty which he encountered obliged him to distinguish in himself the mind and the body of which he was composed, and to consider them separately."[244] When it is recollected that such a procedure in metaphysics was previously unheard of, it is not surprising that the preliminary anatomical dissection appeared to make distinctions without foundation. An opponent was bound to reply: "You wish to discover what you are, and yet you regard the division of yourself into soul and body as a mere preliminary, when in fact that is the heart of the whole question." Such an opponent ignores the fact that a mathematician is bound to have a kind of prescience of the course his solution must take, or he would never be able to commence upon it. Indeed, the higher his genius, the more speedily will he fasten upon the distinctions which at the end of the proof will be seen to have been most relevant to it.

Descartes' proof conforms perfectly to his logic. It was only in a later century that the question was asked whether the mathematical procedure was able to give the truth in such questions. Idealism suggested quite another way of approach to speculative problems, and from its point of view the Cartesian metaphysic is superficial. It would be absurd, however, to read history backwards in a fashion which would conceal how genuine was the attempt of Descartes to discover what he was.

§17. Descartes' system of metaphysics can be conceived as a body of affirmations made about a certain subject matter. It is truth about things. These things may be material or spiritual things, or other truths, but they are equally things about which the system makes certain affirmations. It will be of use here to look at the Metaphysic of Descartes from the point of view of this distinction.

The Regulae and the Discourse on Method prescribe certain rules which all scientific knowledge must obey. Above all, every science must consist in clear and distinct truths, connected in the correct order. But in metaphysics this leads to a tremendous difficulty. The preparation for this science is doubt. But this doubt affects our clear and distinct ideas: we cannot be certain whether or not they are true. Thus the hyperbolical doubt leaves us in this difficult position: it forces us to doubt whether metaphysics as a science is possible, and yet it is only by the aid of metaphysics itself that this difficulty can be solved. This is the problem of the cercle cartesien stated in its most general terms.

The difficulty of the cercle cartesien has already been dwelt upon. The doubt whether metaphysics as a science is possible is only solved in the fourth Meditation. It follows, therefore, from the nature of the doubt which is the indispensable introduction to metaphysics, that, from the point of view of absolutely certain truth, the first four Meditations must be regarded as having only provisional truth. It is not the Cogito alone/

alone whose truth is provisional, but every proposition preceding the proof of the certain truth of our clear and distinct ideas. This proof itself is provisional pending its own conclusion.

That there is some sort of circle here is evident. But the true defence of Descartes's reasoning is not to deny that this circle exists. The true defence lies in showing that this circularity is so fundamental to the Metaphysic, that it must have been intended by Descartes, and that so far from its being a deviation from his intention to philosophise in order, it expresses an inevitable consequence of the Method as applied in metaphysics. There is good reason for attaching considerable weight to some remarks of the R.P. Nicholas Poisson. "I do not believe that M. Descartes has ever broken the least of these rules (namely, those of Aristotle according to which 'there is a logical circle which so far from being vicious, is a demonstrative argument'); so that whatever circle is found in his reasoning can best be called a particular species or fashion of demonstrating things, and not a fault or vice."[245]

Unless Descartes intended the proof of God's existence to have retrospective effect, it would be hard to explain his own words: "In the fourth (sc. Meditation), it is shown that all which we clearly and distinctly perceive is true; and at the same time, is explained wherein consists the nature of error; points that require to be known as well for confirming the preceding truths (tam ad praecedentia firmanda), as for understanding/

understanding those to follow."[246]

That characteristic of the Metaphysic discussed above gives the Meditations a curious appearance of hanging in the air, as it were. When we look at the matter from another point of view, and ask what the things are about which these affirmations are made of whose truth we must remain so long uncertain, we find once more that we are hanging in a kind of metaphysical suspense.

The Metaphysic is to investigate the nature of material and spiritual things. But the doubt forces us to question whether material things exist. It also compels us to question whether the ideas which we have of the essences both of material and spiritual things truly represent their natures. Of what, then, can we be certain? "We are not more certain of anything," says Arnauld "than of the knowledge which we have of that which passes in our soul, when we take our stand there. For example, it is very certain to me that I conceive bodies when I believe myself to conceive bodies though it may be uncertain whether the bodies which I conceive either truly exist, or are such as I conceive them."[247] "Now, with respect to ideas," says Descartes "if these are considered only in themselves, and are not referred to any object beyond them, they cannot, properly speaking, be false; for, whether I imagine a goat or a chimera, it is not less true that I imagine one than the other ... for assuredly, if we but considered the ideas themselves as certain modes of our thought without referring them to anything beyond they/

they would hardly afford any occasion of error."[248] The conclusion to be drawn is plain: our doubt extends to the existence of the objects of our ideas, but it does not extend to our ideas insofar as they are related to us.

It is, furthermore, a Cartesian doctrine that we know only our ideas. The sciences, says Arnauld, are formed only by the reflexions which men make upon their own perceptions, as when a geometer, having conceived a triangle as a figure bounded by three straight lines, finds by examining this perception that it must have three angles together equal to two right angles.[249] All knowledge derives from the examination more geometrico of the objective essence of our ideas. As a consequence of the doubt, therefore, the immediate objects of science are ideas, and ideas only. Arnauld, who has a genius for making explicit what is implied in the metaphysics of Descartes, puts the matter very well. "If I think of the sun, the objective reality of the sun which is present to my mind is the immediate object of that perception; and the sun, possible or existent, which is outside my mind, is, so to speak, its mediate object. And thus one sees ... it to be most true, that not only with regard to material things, but generally with respect to all things,[250] it is our ideas which we see immediately,[251] and which are the immediate object of our thought.

We are now in a position fully to appreciate the extent of the cercle cartesien. The first books of the Meditations consist of provisional truths about ideas objectively considered./

considered. The method consists in forming ideas about ideas. We seem completely cut off from reality as well as from truth.

This way of reasoning may well seem to be curiously artificial. When in the second Meditation we form conclusions, by the examination of the piece of wax, about the nature of bodies, we are making affirmations which we cannot be certain to be true, about that which we do not yet know to exist. Nor does the matter stand very differently with our examination of what we ourselves are. It is true that I am certain that I exist, even though I do not yet know whether bodies exist; and in examining my nature I am aware that I am examining the nature of something that exists. But it is true, nevertheless, that my actual being is only the mediate object of my thought. The dispute between Descartes, Arnauld and Gassendi is impossible to appreciate unless we see quite clearly that Descartes preserves the distinction between what we are insofar as we are conscious of ourselves, that is, have an idea of ourselves, and what we may actually be. The objective essence of the idea which he has of himself is that of a purely spiritual being, and therefore, in enquiring what he is insofar as he is conscious of himself, Descartes considers his procedure as legitimate as that of the geometers. But the same difficulty remains as in the instance of material things: how are we to know whether things, existent or possible, are such as we conceive them to be?

The apparently inverted procedure of Descartes is therefore,/

therefore, not to be urged against him as illogical. It is, indeed, the mark of a very high degree of logic to have constructed a system of metaphysics which has so thoroughly initiated its model, mathematics, that it seems to have no immediate contact with the actually existent. It behoves metaphysics, however, to prove that it is a science of the really existent, and this Descartes is most anxious to do.

Let us consider the means at his disposal. That is easily done. He has to prove that his ideas correspond with the reality which he suspects to lie beyond his thought. The proof cannot be made from the side of the external reality since it is doubtful whether that exists. It must therefore be made from the side of our ideas. But it cannot be made from our ideas taken as true, since that would be to beg the question. The proof must therefore be made from the side of our ideas taken as pictures not known to correspond with anything external to them.

It is unnecessary to discuss at any length what Descartes means by the word "idea," since that is a task which has already been excellently performed by others.[252] It is sufficient to remark that Descartes defines "thought" as follows: "In the word, thought, I comprehend everything which is in us in such a fashion that we are immediately conscious of it. Thus all the operations of the will, the understanding, of imagination, and of sense are thoughts."[253] And then, "By the word, idea, I understand that form of each of our thoughts, through the immediate/

immediate perception of which we have knowledge of that same thought."[254] Nothing can be more certain than that we have ideas, and as long as we simply contemplate our ideas without affirming that they represent any reality external to them we are in no danger of error.[255] It is in this doctrine that the reason lies why Descartes commences his proof that we have knowledge of the real, from ideas as entities not taken as truly representing anything actual but only as seeming to do so. Since we have doubted whether knowledge is true, the demonstration of the existence of a reality external to our ideas can only be made, for the first time, from the fact of a relationship, other than that of knowledge, between our ideas and the supposed external world. This demonstration has to be made from the side of the real content of our thought, and takes the form of giving a sufficient reason for this content by means of the principle of causality. If our ideas are such that in order to explain their nature we must assume a cause of them other than ourselves, then we can be certain that we are not alone in the world but that there is a reality which is external to us.

It is on this supposition that the first proof of God's existence rests. It may be remarked incidentally that the reason why Descartes prefers this proof to the ontological is now clear: the ontological proof presupposes that we know we have a true idea, one which truly represents the essence of God; and of that we are not yet certain here.

It must be explained, therefore, how Descartes passes

from ideas, taken in the sense explained, to an external reality, without presupposing the truth of these ideas. In order to do so, it is necessary to consider what Descartes understands by the objective reality of an idea. Descartes says that some of his thoughts, those properly called ideas, exist in him as pictures or images, such as those by which he holds before his mind a man, a chimera, the sky, an angel, or God.[256] These ideas are pictures, but they are not of such a kind as to assure us that they are true pictures. Furthermore, even were we certain that they were true pictures it would still be the picture which we contemplated and not the reality apparently represented as it exists formally or actually. We know only our ideas; they are never formal signs through which another thing is seen. This having been explained it is easier to understand the passages in the third Meditation concerned with the nature of our ideas.

"If ideas are taken insofar only as they are certain modes of consciousness, I do not remark any difference or inequality among them, and all seem, in the same manner, to proceed from myself; but, considering them as images, of which one represents one thing, and another a different, it is evident that a great diversity obtains among them. For, without a doubt, those that represent substances are something more, and contain in themselves, so to speak, more objective reality, that is participate by representation in a higher degree of being or perfection, than those that represent only modes or accidents;/

accidents; and again, the idea by which I conceive a God sovereign, eternal, infinite, immutable, all-knowing, all-powerful, and the creator of all things that are out of himself, - this, I say, has certainly more objective reality than those ideas by which finite substances are represented."[257]

Though we know only our ideas, and though we are aware of the existence of nothing beside ourselves, it is nevertheless true that our ideas of themselves claim to represent other things. This is their objective essence, and it must consequently be taken to be a property of ideas themselves taken as images or pictures.[258] It is true that the nature of any idea "is such as of itself to demand no other formal reality than that which it borrows from our consciousness."[259] Nevertheless, and this is the very core and heart of Descartes' doctrine of objective essences, it is a mode of existence of the object represented.[260] In this fact lies the possibility of bridging the gap between our ideas, and things outside ourselves.

This doctrine of the objective essences of ideas is so extraordinary that it would be well to pause a little longer upon it. Though I know only my ideas, and though I am certain of the existence only of myself, yet I can be certain by marks proper to my ideas, that those things which I do not know to exist, nevertheless exist, though in an imperfect fashion, in my ideas. I am certain that my ideas are a way of existence of things of whose existence beyond my ideas I am still in doubt. St. Thomas shows how, from the undoubted fact that we have true knowledge,/

knowledge, we must conclude that knowledge is a manner of existence of the object known, in the mind of the knower. For Descartes, the fact of knowledge is still in doubt, yet he is certain that from the side of the thinking subject alone evidence can be derived that his ideas are modes of the existence of things other than any particular idea in question. Ultimately, these things cannot merely be other ideas.[261]

A few passages may be cited to drive home the nature of this typically Cartesian doctrine.

"By the objective reality of an idea I understand the entity or being of the thing represented by the idea, insofar as that entity is in the idea; and in like fashion one can speak of an objective perfection, or an objective artifice. For everything which we conceive as being in the objects of the ideas, is objectively or by representation in the ideas themselves."[262]

"I say that a thing is objectively in my mind when I conceive it. When I conceive the sun, a square, a sound: the sun, the square, this sound are objectively in my mind, whether they be, or whether they be not, outside of my mind."[263]

"When it is said that our ideas and our perceptions represent to us the things which we conceive, and are their images, this is in quite a different sense from that in which I say that pictures represent their originals, and are their images, or that words spoken or written are the images of our thoughts. For with respect to ideas, it is a way of saying that/

that the things which we conceive are objectively in our mind and in our thought. But this mode of being objectively in the mind is so peculiar to the mind and to thought, that, being that which constitutes its peculiar nature, we should search in vain for anything similar in everything which is not mind or thought."[264]

"What is termed being objectively in the mind is not only to be the object which is the limit (la terme) of my thought, but it is to be in my mind intelligibly, as objects are accustomed to be present there: and the idea of the sun is the sun insofar as it is in my mind, not formally as it exists in the sky, but objectively, that is to say, in the manner in which objects are in our thought, which is a mode of existing considerably more imperfect, than that by which the sun really exists, but which can nevertheless not be said to be nothing, and to have no need of a cause."[265]

Our ideas, then, though pictures or images, are pictures in a fashion peculiar to themselves.[266] They are something more than mirrors or indications of external reality. They actually are a mode of existence of that external reality. Their objective essence is to be that reality, in the manner in which that reality is accustomed to be present to our minds, though this mode of existence is imperfect. This is an ultimate metaphysical fact inexplicable in terms of other things. Furthermore, being unaware of the existence of any reality beyond our thought, we know all this from the inspection of the ideas themselves. The consequence of this doctrine is that it is

possible/

possible to avoid examining ideas from the point of view of truth, and to examine them from the point of view of their being existent things of a peculiar kind, for whose cause we may require a sufficient reason.

This is the doctrine of ideas involved in the proofs of God's existence contained in the third Meditation. From the point of view of Descartes' method of demonstration, its most important feature is that the proof of the existence of external reality can be attempted without making assumptions forbidden by the hyperbolical doubt. To illustrate this, a few remarks on the proofs of the third Meditation become necessary. After some very important remarks about the nature of our ideas, Descartes makes a classification of ideas into innate, adventitious, and factitious, a classification referring to the origin of his ideas, and based on his former prejudices. He then asks what grounds he had for thinking that those which appeared to come from external objects were like these objects. These grounds, namely, that he was so taught by nature, and that the ideas appeared in him independently of his will, he finds reason to reject. Being compelled to reject the proof of the existence of things other than himself by means of ideas taken merely as images, he enunciates the doctrine of the objective essence as a consequence of which we are able to consider ideas not as things related as mere pictures to a reality which they seem to mirror, but as being a way in which that reality exists. It enables us to consider ideas as effects, not/

not as images pretending to be true; as has already been insisted on.

A doctrine of cause and effect is then outlined. The natural light reveals to us that there must be at least as much reality in the efficient and total cause as in its effect. Further, not only can something not be produced by nothing, but the more perfect cannot be produced by the less perfect. Whatever comes into existence can only be produced by that which contains in itself, formally or eminently, whatever is contained in the thing produced. To these necessities the objective reality of ideas is as much subject as physical things like stones or heat. This, it may be remarked in passing, is the central assumption of this part of the proof. Since our ideas reveal to us that they are effects, we must enquire into the efficient cause in which they are contained formally or eminently. As a result of this enquiry we conclude that the reality objectively existing in our ideas requires the formal or actual, as opposed to the objective, existence of the thing represented by our idea, as its efficient cause.

It remains to enquire what this cause is, formally or actually. If my ideas are such that my own nature cannot be considered a sufficient reason for their objective essences, then I must conclude that I am not alone in the world and that this cause is other than myself. Among my ideas I find one that represents a God, others that represent corporeal and inanimate things; others, angels; others animals; and finally

some/

some representing men like myself. With respect to ideas representing living and spiritual beings other than God, I am compelled to conclude that I myself am able to be their efficient and actual cause since they are not such that they may not have been derived from the idea which I have of myself, and it is impossible to deny that I myself am the cause of the latter idea. With respect to the ideas of corporeal and inanimate things, a similar conclusion must be reached, since, though I am conscious that I am a thinking thing it is possible that the qualities of extension, figure, situation and motion may be contained in me eminently. The examination of these ideas, therefore, fails to assure me that I am not alone in the world. But such is not the conclusion to which I must come when I examine the idea of God. This idea is that of a substance infinite, eternal, immutable, independent, all-knowing, all-powerful, by which I myself, and all other things, should they exist were created. Is it possible that I am actually or formally what is contained objectively in the idea of God? But this is impossible since I am aware that I am an imperfect and finite creature, because I doubt. And since the idea of God is that of a being perfect and infinite, then, since the more perfect cannot have the less perfect as its cause, and since what is objectively in my idea requires an actually existing cause in which it is formally or eminently contained, I must conclude that there actually exists a God in whom there are contained all the perfections present objectively or by representation/

representation in my idea of him.

Such, in brief, is the celebrated first proof of God's existence. It is unnecessary, for present purposes, to examine the other proofs of the third Meditation since they add nothing relevant, for the present, to the first proof, serving only to confirm it. The ingenuity of this proof is wonderful, and the critique of it would have to be based on the possibility of making such a use as this of the doctrine of cause and effect. Since the objective essence of an idea appears to be of an order so different from that of its efficient cause, it is difficult to conceive of a causal relation between them. Descartes appears to avoid this difficulty by considering the objective essence to be a way in which the object represented exists in the mind, in a fashion, presumably, as proper to itself as to the mind, thus establishing the possibility of a causal connection. But such a critique is not called for here, where the main end is to ascertain Descartes' own thought. The proof illustrates once more the rigid logic of Descartes' thinking. Compelled to take his doubt with the utmost seriousness, Descartes is faced with the necessity of philosophising in an inverted fashion. He has to escape from the circle inevitable from the nature of the doubt, without doing violence to the demands of the doubt. By a theory which conceives philosophising to be the order in which our will is compelled to make affirmations as though they were true, rather than an order of absolutely certain truth, he tries to make his first metaphysical/

metaphysical propositions legitimate. But there is a second circle to be avoided, with respect to the objects about which these propositions are affirmed. Since the doubt has rendered suspect not only the existence of external objects but the truth of the ideas by which we appear to perceive any objects at all, it follows that that about which we philosophise can, at first and immediately, be only our ideas regarded with no assumptions as to their truth or error. All proofs must be made from the nature of our ideas thus taken, if no assumptions as to the nature of truth are to be made. If we are to establish the relation of our ideas to an external reality, this relation cannot at first be that of truth. Hence the peculiar genius of the first proof of God's existence, that it is made by considering the natures of ideas taken, not as truths, but as the effects of causes which must, from the very nature of the ideas of which they are causes, be considered to be of a certain order of existence. We are compelled to make divers affirmations about these causes because we clearly and distinctly conceive certain characteristics of them. When these affirmations have been made, we find that we have affirmed the existence of a Being of such a nature that, having created us, He could not deceive us in matters where we proceed by clear and distinct conceptions. The proof thus justifies both itself and all other proofs, and we seem to escape from the threatened circle without a petitio principii.

§18. In the preceding pages, the distinction has been drawn between metaphysical truths which are certain and evident propositions about their peculiar subject matter; and metaphysical things, or the objects of which these propositions are the rule of truth. The immediate objects of metaphysics are ideas, since we know only our ideas. The problem of truth, therefore, involves two distinct questions for Descartes. The first is, whether metaphysical propositions are true; the second, whether the ideas which are the immediate objects of our thought are veridical. When the existence of God has been proved we can be certain both that metaphysical propositions are the rule of truth in the things which they concern; and that we are acquiring true knowledge when clear and distinct ideas are the objects of our thought.

It is the latter consequence of the proof of God's existence which is of the greater importance in tracing the steps leading towards the drawing of the real distinction between body and mind. The peculiarity of Descartes's doctrine of ideas is that though we are not directly aware of the existence of anything except our ideas, and though the immediate objects of our thought are ideas, these are nevertheless conceived as representative beings. By their very nature they claim to be something other than themselves insofar as that other is present in the intellect, that is, is known. There is thus a contradiction in conceiving of an idea which is not the idea of something. But this is the contradiction which the

hyperbolical/

hyperbolical doubt threatens. The solution of this doubt, therefore, enables us to conclude that our ideas are true of independent natures or essences, and that everything which is contained in the clear and distinct idea of a thing can be affirmed with truth of that thing.[267] In examining our clear and distinct ideas we can be certain that we are eo ipso examining the nature or essence of something other than our ideas.

It remains true, however, that we have an immediate knowledge only of our ideas. The proof of God's existence makes a difference to the trust which we place in our ideas, not to the fact that we are said to know objects mediately by means of our ideas. We regard our ideas first as doubtful, then as true; but it remains our ideas of which we have immediate knowledge, and not their objects, as the latter exist formally. We never have direct knowledge of objects.

Arnauld's comments on the Cartesian doctrine are instructive:

"Thus, because to be an animal is contained in the idea of man, I can affirm of man that he is an animal; because to have all its diameters equal is contained in the idea of a circle, I can affirm of every circle that all its diameters are equal; because to have all its angles equal to two right angles is contained in the idea of a triangle, I must affirm it of every triangle.

"This principle cannot be contested without destroying all/

all evidence in human knowledge, and establishing a ridiculous Pyrrhonism. For we cannot judge of things except by means of the ideas we have of them, for we have no other means of conceiving them except insofar as they are in our mind, where they are present only by means of their ideas. But if the judgments which we form in considering these ideas do not regard things themselves but only our thoughts; that is to say if from this that I see clearly that to have three angles equal to two right angles is contained in the idea of a triangle, I have not the right to conclude that, in truth, every triangle has three angles equal to two right, but only that I think so, it can be seen that we have no knowledge of things but only of our thoughts; and consequently that we know nothing of the things which we persuade ourselves that we know with the greatest certainty; but that we know only that we think them to be of such a kind, a thing which manifestly would destroy all the sciences."[268]

It is certain, then, that the judgments we form in considering clear and distinct ideas give us true knowledge of the objects of these ideas, that is, give us knowledge of things other than our ideas. We know that we know the essences of things by means of our clear and distinct ideas. It does not follow from this, however, that the things represented by these ideas really exist. In the Cartesian philosophy we know what material things are before we know that they are or exist.

Descartes gives no definition of the terms, essence or nature, which are synonymous in his writings.[269] It is, however,/

however, clear that for him an essence or nature is something which is not merely a modification of the mind, for then we should know only our thoughts; but something which we know to belong to the thing which is the object of our thoughts even though we are as yet uncertain of the existence of that thing. In the glossary appended to his Cours Entier Régis gives the following definition: "Essence: By this term is called everything without which a thing can neither be nor be conceived." The essence of a thing is, therefore, necessary to it both as it exists for the mind, and as it exists in itself.

Thus, though we do not yet know that material things exist, it is true that any nature or essence, known by means of a clear and distinct idea, always presents itself as the nature or essence of something, that is, it contains in itself a possibility of existence. To have a clear and distinct idea, therefore, implies the possibility of the existence of something which in itself is not a mode of mind. "Existence is contained in the idea or concept of everything, because we can conceive nothing except under the form (sub ratione, sous la forme) of a thing that exists; but with this difference, that, in the concept of a limited thing, only possible or contingent existence is contained, and in the concept of a being supremely perfect, perfect and necessary existence is comprised."[270] "Existence, at least possible, is contained in the idea of whatever we conceive clearly and distinctly."[271]

If Descartes does not elaborate a doctrine or definition of essence, it is because he was not interested in the doctrine/

doctrine as such. We conclude directly from the fact of the truth of our clear and distinct ideas to the existence, actual or possible, of their objects. For this, an explicitly formulated doctrine: de essentia, is superfluous, since the possibility of the existence of the object of a clear and distinct idea is something which is recognised directly. For Descartes the doctrine of essence cannot be an ontological question, since the existence of the external world is still in doubt. The distinction of essence and existence in his metaphysic has its roots otherwhere than in the existent because of the priority of thought to things. The distinction, indeed, appears to be psychological in origin, and to arise out of the doubt. When we emerge from the hyperbolical doubt, it is apparent to the natural light that, when philosophising in order, we can know the natures of things, while still doubting their existence. It is a distinction come upon by thought in its passage from itself to the existent; a fact of introspection.

We have here another example of Descartes's preoccupation with the live movement of thought itself. His procedure is one of direct investigation with the postulation of principles. What he desires to know is particular natures or essences, not the doctrine of essence in general. That is why, from the point of view of a Thomist, Descartes may be called a metaphysician who does not love the truth, indeed, no metaphysician at all.

M. Maritain makes the latter charge against Descartes[272] precisely/

precisely the latter was more interested in the particular than the general, in things than in truths. For Descartes a doctrine such as that of essence is of secondary and derivative importance. It can never be one of the grand questions of metaphysics. Hence M. Maritain's criticisms. But on the other hand it could be concluded that, since it follows from the universal applicability of the Method that Descartes can know the things which are the proper objects of metaphysics in a manner fundamentally the same as that by which the objects of physics are known, he would pursue metaphysics with a new zest, precisely because he had assimilated the standpoints of metaphysics and physics.[273]

That, probably, would be true enough, if the question went no further than assessing Descartes's interests. A Thomist would be disposed to reply, and with complete justice from his point of view, that it was an unholy zest, because it had its origin in the materialisation of metaphysics. Furthermore, it is certainly true that Descartes did not appreciate what was truly valuable in Thomism. He represented it as mechanical in order that his own philosophy might appear the more spiritual. He regards the older system as a system of affirmations derived from a logic which was false because it did not have direct intuition as its starting point, but general propositions which, because general, had no direct contact with the real. Truth for the sake of truth and not for the sake of things, he believed, could only be words for the sake of words. He never appreciated/

appreciated the real necessities determining the Thomistic philosophy.

From his own point of view, however, the problem of truth is of more importance than the problem of being, and it is with truth rather than with being that his metaphysics is concerned. He has lost the Thomistic equilibrium between being and truth. He does not desire to evolve a metaphysic based on the fact of their perfect suitability to each other, but to investigate how far thought, which is present to the mind of man prior to existence, is true. Furthermore, the problem for Descartes is the relation of thought to beings in particular rather than to being in general. Thus his problem is determined with respect to truths in particular rather than to truth in general. The problem of the doubt is how the particular sciences of physics, mathematics, and metaphysics are possible. Never in the preceding centuries had the problem of the possibility of metaphysics itself appeared in so acute a form. Metaphysics had become reflexive, and it is this for which the cercle cartesien stands. Metaphysics must first safeguard itself, and then safeguard the other truths which are the objects of its speculations. Shut off from the grand questions of Being in general, it becomes introspective, and begins to substitute criticism for ontology.

The philosophy of Descartes suggests why the Critical philosophy is that of the age of positive science. The Cartesian philosophy lost sight of Being through its absorption in/

in beings. Even the metaphysic, whose special object was the mind, examined the self by a method which it had in common with physics, and can therefore be said to have ontological pre-occupations only in the sense that physics can be called ontological. It is a special science. But metaphysics had a double rôle to play. Since beings in particular are the objects of the special sciences, it becomes necessary to safeguard the special departments of truth relating to particular classes of objects. Metaphysics becomes, not only the special science which has minds as its objects, but the general science which has truth as its object. It contains in itself the attitudes both of criticism and of positive science; and it contains them as distinct elements because, having lost sight of truth through its positive interest in beings, it had to make a special effort to re-interest itself in truth, the truth in which it interested itself being now that claimed by the special sciences of which it was itself one. That was the way in which modern philosophy became introspective: precisely in assimilating the positive attitude. Thought was becoming self-conscicus because it was becoming other-conscious.

Descartes's interest in metaphysics was thus an interest entirely different from that of Scholasticism. Because this change in interest goes with a new attitude to the existent, the question arises: physicist or metaphysician? Just because he was a physicist Descartes had an interest in metaphysics which was new and entirely unlike that of Scholasticism. It

was/

was that of Kant: the love not only of truth but of the truth about truth. Descartes was the first to believe that the very character and existence of metaphysics depended on recognising a man's right wholly to devote himself to a special science like physics. His person was one which was subsequently to become two; and it would be to read history backwards if we assumed to be separate what was only in fission.

But nothing of this prevents our conceding that, though Descartes had this peculiarly intense form of the love of truth, this love was perhaps deluded and false. A pattern of the modern world, he doubted the truth of truth, while yet conceiving the natural reason to be the only solace and comfort of our purely human state. Is human nature capable of sustaining so much? Or does the modern grief come from nothing other than the hyperbolical confidence of the modern in his own stoic power to endure?

However, there is no need to linger here, and we can proceed with following the Meditations after merely mentioning that the concrete interpretation of the Cogito is of considerable significance for the interpretation of the history of philosophy.

Descartes, then, does not examine the nature of the concept of essence, because he is not interested in the question of what being in general is. In the last two Meditations his problem no longer is whether true knowledge is possible, but what the things are of which we are able to have this true knowledge./

knowledge. Metaphysics as a science is possible because it is a nexus of clear and distinct propositions, and such propositions must be true. That problem being disposed of, it is necessary to ask what in particular those objects are about which we can discover truths.

From the fourth Meditation it is evident that a clear and distinct idea is the proper object of science. "Nor have I merely learned to-day what I must do to escape error, but what I must do to arrive at the knowledge of truth; for I will assuredly reach truth if I only fix my attention sufficiently on all the things I conceive perfectly, and separate these from others which I conceive more confusedly and obscurely: to which for the future I shall give diligent heed."[274] When, therefore, the fifth Meditation opens with the determination "to discover whether anything can be known with certainty regarding material objects,"[275] it is clear that this question must be decided by our asking whether we have clear and distinct ideas of material things. This is a more pressing problem than their existence. "But before considering whether such objects as I conceive exist without me, I must examine their ideas in so far as these are to be found in my consciousness, and discover which of them are distinct, and which confused."[276] The Meditation concludes with the affirmation that we can have a perfect knowledge of corporeal nature as the object of pure mathematics (which does not consider whether it exists or not) because we have a clear and distinct idea of bodies.[277]

It/

It is probably true that Descartes' distinction between essence and existence arises largely from his conception of the nature of mathematical truths "which regard merely the simplest and most general objects, and scarcely enquire whether or not these are really existent;"[278] and, since the emphasis here (Medit.I) lies on the nature of our ideas, it is a distinction made from the side of the subject. By the end of the fifth Meditation, physics has been reduced to the contemplation of mathematical ideas, that is, it has become a science which studies the natures or essences of material things, which contain only a possibility of existence, through the medium of clear and distinct ideas.[279] To existence, the mathematical physicist is indifferent; and from this indifference or detachment of the thinker, and not from the fact of existence, depends the Cartesian distinction of essence and existence. The Cartesian physics can be quite properly described as a physics of "as if." The whole trend of Descartes's mind is to make essences or natures, which contain only a possibility of existence, of more importance than the actually existent. In his system, truth is not the correspondence of ideas with the existent but with the possible. Thus physics is not immediately the science of actually existing material things, and the last Meditation is not designed especially for it. If the Cartesian physics, unlike the Scholastic, required the proof of the existence of its objects, it was only because existence did not seem so necessary to Descartes as to the Schoolmen.

It/

It would not be easy to establish finally and precisely what the terms "essence" or "nature" signified for Descartes. That they are synonymous is significant. In the meantime, a hypothesis may be hazarded. It was shown above that though we do not yet know whether the material world exists, we are nevertheless aware that that about which we think by means of clear and distinct ideas of corporeal things is something other than our ideas. But this is the same as saying that we know ourselves to have a true knowledge of the essences or natures of material things. Now this would be impossible if these natures or essences had not some kind of being in their own right; for otherwise our knowledge would be as uncertain as the existence of the things of which these are the essences. Nevertheless it is certain, regardless of our doubt of the existence of these things.

Now by what means does Descartes secure this measure of independence for essences? It seems quite likely that in making essences the proper terminus of thought instead of the actually existent, he has materialised the concept of essence. Separating the essence from the existent, he conceives the former as having a real, and curiously equivocal being, proper to itself. The psychological source of his doctrine of essence, gives the essences or natures of things an ontological status of their own halfway between the extremes of full existence and mere ideality. The essences of corporeal objects are, in fact, real individuals. It is this half-real world of which thought is true;/

true; and if there is any external world more real than this we can be assured of the fact of its existence only indirectly.

But let us remember that the matter in hand is the fashion in which the real distinction is concluded in the metaphysics.

For the Cartesians, the immediate object of science is the objective essence from the examination of which, says Arnauld, derives all our knowledge. The objective essence is a real being which, though ideal in its mode of existence, has yet as its eminent or formal cause something other than the merely ideal. The nature of this cause can be fully known before we can assert that it exists such as it is represented in idea; but even before we know that it exists it determines what our idea of it shall be. Therefore, provided that we know that God exists, and that we have clear and distinct ideas of created things, we are able to have a true knowledge of created things and of the relations obtaining between them, whether or not we know them to exist. To determine whether or not mind and body are really distinct, therefore, it is not necessary first to establish that bodies actually exist.

In the Principles, the real distinction is defined as follows:

"The real distinction properly subsists between two or more substances, and we perceive that these substances are really and mutually distinct from each other, from this alone that we can clearly and distinctly conceive the one without the other./

other. For from the knowledge we have of God we are certain that he can effect whatever we distinctly conceive: so that, for example, from this alone that we now have an idea of extended or corporeal substance, though we do not yet know with certainty that any such substance truly exists, yet we are certain that it can exist; and if it exists every part of it determined by our thought, is really distinct from the other parts of the same substance. Also from this alone that everyone understands himself to be a thinking substance, and can exclude from himself every other substance, thinking as well as extended, it is certain that everyone thus considered is really distinct from every other thinking substance, and from every corporeal substance."[280]

This passage is perhaps the most instructive of all tests for determining what Descartes understands by the term "real distinction." The real distinction subsists between substances, and knowledge only of the possible and not the actual existence of, at least, extended substances, is required in order to this distinction. The real distinction is not the less real, because the existence of the things distinguished is hypothetical. It is, nevertheless, necessary to know that their existence is possible, for it is by being assured that our thinking is about natures or essences - which imply the possibility of existence - that we know that our knowledge has any validity. "The Cartesians" says Régis "have never pretended to demonstrate the real distinction of things purely from the difference/

difference between the ideas they have of them; the difference between ideas is rightly enough to enable us to know the difference between things ... , but not to enable us to know their real distinction. For knowing this real distinction, we require to know, not only the difference of the ideas, but that the different things can exist separately from each other."[281]

The real distinction is thus objectively determined without being determined by the actually existent, that is to say that it is determined not by our ideas as such but by that of which we have ideas. It is only substances, however, in the definition of which is contained the possibility of independent existence. Substance is that which can exist per se without the aid of any other substance.[282] No one can tell that one substance is not another unless he has distinct ideas of them;[283] but the possibility of the real distinction is contained in the proper nature of substances.

That this is true is further brought out by the citation from the Principles, from which it is clear that the real distinction subsists between any two substances, even substances of the same kind. Thus there is a real distinction between two thinking substances, and between two corporeal substances, as well as between a thinking and a corporeal substance. The fact that my ideas of thinking and of corporeal substance have nothing in common would be to no purpose did it not serve to assure me that these were the ideas of things which in their proper nature contained each the possibility of an existence

per/

per se. There is no difference between the idea I have of a round stone of a certain size, and that which I have of another of similar specifications, yet I am able really to distinguish one from the other by virtue, not primarily of the differences of the ideas, but by virtue of the substantiality of the stones revealed by the ideas. Similarly, my ideas of thinking and of extended substances must reveal to me that they are indeed the ideas of two substances; the fact that these two ideas have nothing in common being merely the best means to that end. They are, through contrary ideas, clearly and distinctly conceived as diverse substances, that is, as things that God can make to exist separately; and therefore they are really distinct.[284]

The real distinction, therefore, secures the real multiplicity of substances in the possible. The real distinction of body and mind, the deduction of which in the last Meditation will be traced below, must consequently be regarded as a particular instance of what God can effect throughout reality, the real distinction subsisting between any two substances. This general result is not apparent from the Meditations, in the last of which I merely distinguish my mind from my body, not my mind from other minds, nor my body from other bodies. Descartes appears to be indifferent about explaining how this passage from the particular to the general is to be made.

The proof of the existence of bodies in the last Meditation,/

Meditation, and the connection of this proof with that of the real distinction presents many problems which cannot be said to have been settled.[285] There is a way of approach to the matter, however, which has not been sufficiently explored, and that is to take quite literally Descartes' words that it is the order of proof which is of most importance to him, and then to examine the sixth Meditation simply for its own sake, so as to grasp the order of its reasonings. It will then be seen that the real distinction of body and mind precedes the proof of the existence of bodies, and is required for the latter. The following analysis is an abstract of the proofs of the first half of this Meditation. It may be said beforehand that the problem here is to prove the existence of material objects as the objects of pure thought, that is, as the objects of speculative geometry through the sense side of our nature.

I. The Meditation opens by distinguishing imagination from intellection, instancing that it is possible to conceive. but not to imagine, a chiliogon (A.T.VII. 71. 10-73. 4).

II.It is then concluded that imagination does not belong to the essence of our minds (A.T.VII. 13. 5-8); and must therefore depend on something different from the mind (A.T.VII. 73. 9-10).

III.We can suggest "with probability," and as the most likely hypothesis which our minds are capable of reaching, that it depends on bodies. But we cannot yet be certain. This step must be carefully borne in mind.

IV. The consequence of this conclusion is, that I have failed to/

to prove the existence of bodies from the distinct idea of corporeal nature which I have in my imagination. (This step and the one before: A.T.VII. 73. 20-28).

V. Since I cannot prove, from the side of imagination, which is capable of being distinct when geometrical figures are its objects, that bodies exist, I am compelled to try to prove it from the confused ideas of sense perception (A.T.VII. 74. 1-10).

Note: At the end of the fifth Meditation I find that I am able to have a perfect knowledge of nature considered as the object of pure mathematics; and I also know that a world of objects corresponding to this knowledge may really exist by the power of God. But I do not know whether it does exist, nor can these sciences inform me of that. If the proof of the existence of external objects cannot be made by considering our clear and distinct knowledge, then we are forced to the lower side of our nature to discover this proof.

VI. Descartes commences the proof from sense-perception by recalling to mind his early prejudices, to see whether, in the light of what he has learned since the doubt, he cannot find truth among them; since his doubt does not prevent his accepting as true afterwards what at first he doubted (A.T.VII. 74. 11-16).[286] He then makes a review of his early beliefs and his doubt of them (A.T.VII. 74. 17-77. 27).

VII. This doubt led him to form a clear and distinct idea of himself, of body, and of an all-powerful God. Though he does not yet know that body exists, yet, from his clear and distinct idea/

idea of its nature, and of God, he is certain that if it did exist it could exist distinct from mind. Mind and body are therefore really distinct. (A.T.VII. 78. 4-20).

VIII. The next paragraph is one of the most difficult in the Meditations, and requires more detailed examination. The modes and faculties of thought and of extension are, in virtue of the conclusion of (VII), now for the first time known to belong to substances really distinct and completely different. Hitherto we have merely believed that they belonged to different substances without being aware that by the power of God conceptual distinctions were valid for existence.

Having concluded the real distinction of body and mind, Descartes argues: "I find in myself diverse faculties of thinking which have each their special mode," for instance, those of imagining and perceiving, which I cannot conceive without conceiving myself, that is, an intelligent substance in which they reside. I remark likewise certain other faculties such as the "power of changing place, of assuming diverse figures, and the like" which, differing in kind from the faculties of thought are conceived through, and must belong to, a substance different from myself, namely extended substance. (A.T.VII. 78. 21-79. 6).

Here the argument takes a slight jump, reaching the same conclusion as that just come by, from different grounds. "There is in me a certain passive faculty of perception, that is, of receiving and taking knowledge of the ideas of sensible things; but this would be useless to me, if there did not also exist/

exist in me, or in some other thing, another active faculty capable of forming and producing those ideas. But this active faculty cannot be in me (in as far as I am but a thinking thing) seeing that it does not presuppose thought ... . This faculty must therefore exist in some substance different from me" (A.T.VII. 79. 6-15. IX. 63).

At this point it becomes clear of what tremendous importance for the proof of the existence of bodies it is that the proof of the real distinction of body and mind should already be an accomplished fact. I can now conclude that the faculties of imagination and extension belong to substances which are distinct actually, and not merely in idea. The fear that thinking may be a property of bodies is finally quelled only by the real distinction. By virtue of this distinction only, can I conclude that the active faculty forming the ideas of sensible things in me, must exist in some substance different from me, since it does not presuppose thought. For if I distinguish myself in thought from that, whatever it may be, which is conceived as having this active faculty, I may be sure that I am really distinct from it, and that this active faculty does not belong to me.

The argument continues (A.T.VII. 79. 15-80. 10): "This faculty must therefore exist in some substance different from me, in which all the objective reality of the ideas, that are produced by this faculty, is contained, formally or eminently." This substance must be either a body or God, since, except of mind/

mind to which this faculty cannot belong, we have knowledge of no other substances. For the first time we can lay aside the scruple of the third Meditation that we ourselves might be the eminent cause of our ideas of body.[287] But we have concluded (above, step III) that, as far as human hypothesis can determine it must be a body which has the power to produce our images; and since God is no deceiver, we must believe that a hypothesis, than which no more probable can be found, is trust-worthy, and that the power of producing these images belongs to really existent bodies, which, though confusedly and obscurely perceived by the senses, have all the properties which are discovered by speculative geometry. The proof from imagination which seemed to fail is now seen to have played an essential part in securing this result, for by it was concluded that bodies were the most probably cause of images; and the rest of the proof did no more than supply a sufficient reason, namely, God's veracity, for accepting this hypothesis as true. To understand that Descartes's aim is to impute truth to the conclusion that bodies exist forced on us by the nature of imagination, is to grasp the inner connection of the reasonings of the last Meditation.

§19. The pages of the Meditations, following the proof of the real existence of bodies, are concerned with the union of mind and body, and the reliability of the judgments of sense perception. The length at which the subject is treated is worthy of remark, the last Meditation giving the impression of being unduly prolonged. It is as though Descartes had shifted his attention from metaphysics in the strict sense, and had lost himself in the observation of certain experiences for their own sake.

This final preoccupation with the deliveries of the senses cannot serve the ends of physics, which dispenses with the data of the senses. The conclusion of the Meditations, therefore, does not have physics especially in view. It appears, rather, to lay the foundations of the science most intimately concerned with man in his earthly state.

The end of all Descartes' researches is the good of man. But what is man? A whole made up of mind and body, who has a sensual nature, and acts rightly or wrongly on the evidence of the senses. He enjoys his natural beatitude only insofar as he has a body. To be able to determine the nature of the union of body and mind is, therefore, to be able to determine that on which man's happiness depends. But in order that this knowledge should be of use to us in enabling us to live the best life we must know what this union is, not in the abstract, but in the concrete, since happiness depends upon particular acts. Knowledge which will lead to happiness must therefore be knowledge of/

of the conditions of particular acts. It is the foundations precisely of a science of this kind which appear to be laid in the last Meditation which shows that there is a close union between the mind and the body which has determinate results. The metaphysic, therefore, establishes the presuppositions of the science of man's happiness on this earth, that is, it shows a preoccupation with moral science. It makes possible the attainment of a natural beatitude by the study, by empirical means, of the connections between mind and body.

This becomes clearer when it is asked what the account is which Descartes gives of the union of mind and body. Here the conversation with Burman is of great interest. Descartes has stated that body and soul are substantially united. But how can this be, asks Burman, when they are clearly diverse in nature? To this Descartes replies, "This is very difficult to explain; but here experience is enough."[288] What is the meaning of this statement that experience is to be preferred to explanation?

Clerselier has written a very interesting letter to de la Forge,[289] in which he claims faithfully to explain Descartes' account of the union of body and mind, and which may be followed because it unites much of what is scattered in the writings of Descartes himself. Clerselier says that though our mind does not know the manner of its union with the body, it can, however, not disown it. He says that, should we ask how it is that our mind which is incorporeal can move the body, M. Descartes has

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most judiciously added that there is no argument or comparison drawn from other things which enables us to understand this, but that, nevertheless, we cannot doubt of it, since very certain and evident experience convinces us of it daily. We must take careful note that this is one of the things which are known through themselves, and which we obscure each time that we try to explain them through things other than themselves. The mind, he says, can know and wonder at the effects of its union with the body, and the reciprocal power they have over each other, but it can give no reason for this union or for its effects. Since there is no agreement or affinity between their properties, that is to say, between the movements of the body and the thoughts of the mind, the union between them can only be explained by the will of Him who has joined and united them; and experience alone can tell us what that union is.

The position taken up is clear. While we have before us the distinct ideas of body and mind, we cannot have a clear and distinct idea of their union, since that would be self-contradictory.[290] We can only be aware of the union. It is sensible, not conceivable.[291] In Cartesian terminology, we can give its "efficient," not its "formal" cause. It is clear that this is tantamount to saying that the nature of the union of mind and body is not a question for metaphysics; a conclusion referred to, and criticised by Spinoza, in his De Emendatione, as not giving us absolute or ultimate knowledge.[292]

Descartes' thought is, however, contained in the words

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of his reply to Burman: experience suffices. What we can be certain of is the fact of certain phenomena, namely the sensations and feelings whose presence can only be explained by the hypothesis of the union of mind and body. These phenomena admit of scientific investigation of the type followed in the "Passions of the Soul." We can give a particular account of the effects of the union, we can show just how these effects will vary in this or that man, in this or that situation; and this, a scientific and not a metaphysical account, is the only explanation which we can have of the union of mind and body. Experiment entirely displaces speculation.

The proof of the union of mind and body in the sixth Meditation consists only in drawing attention to a matter of fact which is not explicable by formal causes. It is nothing else than the abdication of metaphysics, since it is an admission that a problem posed by metaphysics cannot be answered by it. In the pages of the last Meditation following upon the proof of the real existence of the material world, metaphysics makes way for, and prepares the advent of, another science by drawing attention to occurrences inexplicable by its own methods. It withdraws in favour of the treatise on the passions without the proper control of which felicity is impossible.

Can Descartes be said on this account to have been no metaphysician? Quite the contrary. Interested above else in the knowledge of man, Descartes' great urge is to know what he is and how he is to act. The science of what man essentially is,/

is, is metaphysics; the science of how he is to act is morals, and they are inseparably bound together in a common passion for the human state. Man cannot seek the good which is proper to him unless he knows what that nature is for which he must seek a proper good. The metaphysic, whose first principle is the thinking self, precisely because it leads to the science of man's proper good, draws attention to its own significance for Descartes' deep interest in himself.

With this, the analysis of Meditations is concluded, and it is hoped that they, and not the interpretation of them, have been in the foreground. But history should be more than a study of systems; it should be a study of men. Are the Meditations intelligible if their writer be ignored? To close this study with an attempt to answer that, would not be out of place, especially since Descartes himself was deeply conscious of the moral effects of metaphysics, which as the clearest and distinctest of the sciences, contribute so much to that perfection of the mind in the exercise of which true liberty consists.

§20. It was remarked earlier, that an interesting feature of Descartes' attempt to prove that the mind is a spiritual substance really distinct from the body is, that while his procedure is to examine his own nature insofar as he is conscious of it, yet he believes that the solution he has reached is perfectly general. In the second Meditation, he asks: what am I; and in the last he concludes: "It is certain that I, that is, my mind by which I am what I am, is entirely and truly distinct from my body and may exist without it." Yet the titles both of the second and of the sixth Meditations are quite general: "Of the Nature of the Human Mind; and that it is more easily known than the body;" "Of the Existence of Material Things, and of the Real Distinction between the Mind and Body of Man." In examining his own nature, Descartes claims to be thinking for all humanity. In claiming objectivity for his metaphysic he imposes his own person upon the whole world.

By what right does Descartes make this claim? In the Discourse he avows that it is not his design to teach the method which every man ought to follow for the proper conduct of his reason, but only to show how he has tried to conduct his own.[293] However, we are assured of what we are by methodical reasoning, so that the Discourse, in not making the acceptance of the method obligatory by no means supports the pretensions of the Meditations. This difficulty is not to be explained by a change in Descartes' attitude subsequent upon/

upon his writing the Discourse. His doctrine of substance is framed in conformity with a demand to arrive at a knowledge of particular substances. Furthermore, we form an idea of any substance by an examination of its modes. We discover what we are by attending to that which passes in us, that is, to the stream of our private mental life. Whence, then, the claim of our findings to generality?

The difficulty is not diminished by the Cartesian doctrine of the real distinction. Not only are minds really distinguished from bodies but also from each other. Since they are entirely distinct, how can we know that they have anything in common? How, indeed, can we know that they exist? No proof of the existence of other minds occurs in the Meditations, though in the first Descartes has doubted whether anything exist except he himself. The third Meditation states that we have ideas of other men,[294] a proposition quite permissible to Descartes since the doubt does not strip the mind of its ideas. But since it compels us to doubt whether what they represent really exists, they can at that stage assure us only of our own existence. Even when God's existence is proved, the objects of any ideas except that which I have of myself can only have an imputed existence. What, then, happens to Descartes' claims for the generality of his metaphysical conclusions when those for whom he claims them to be general are never actually proved by him, in his definitive metaphysical work, to be other than his own ideas?

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To these questions no definite answers are formulated in Descartes's metaphysics. What was to become explicit in later philosophy was still buried in his own character, and it is there that we must seek a solution.

It is a notable fact that Descartes made demands upon other persons which he would never have made upon himself. It was repugnant to Descartes' spirit, says M. Ch.Adam, to enter into a thought which was not his own.[295] But in spite of his repugnance to other men's thought, Descartes desired that all men should accept his own. He claims that his is the true metaphysic, because it follows the true method; and yet, as was shown earlier, he says that the analytic method demands the surrender of one's own opinions if its demonstrations are to be appreciated.[296] He invented no device for disarming criticism more strong than this conception of the analytic method, since it put all criticism eo ipso in the wrong. Disagreement was diagnostic of prejudice, and prejudice of falsehood. From the resort to the authority of the twelve or fifteen theologians, already mentioned, the strength of Descartes' desire that the metaphysic be accepted can be judged.

But when we enquire further into the nature of the man that made these demands, two characteristics appear quite clearly: his fear of delusion, which was sufficiently strong to be personified as an omnipotent evil genius; and a distrust of his own talents. He is, he says, a man accustomed to think lowly/

lowly of himself on account of the mediocrity of his talents,[297] and to suspect the judgments in his favour of those that know him best.[298] He was, indeed, a man who himself stood in considerable need of reassurance. And yet he wished to impose his metaphysic upon the whole world: a metaphysic made necessary by doubts which he himself compares to the aberrations of the insane.

But there seems to be an explanation for these difficulties which reconciles the need to be assured with the desire to persuade. It is that Descartes' claim for the objectivity of his metaphysics arises from his own character and not from the nature of the objects of that science; and that his proud assurance and his modesty are but the obverse and the reverse of a single fault. Not questioning his essential similarity to all men, since reason is the same in all,[299] he can on the grounds of this very modesty assert that what one mind discovers to be true must be true for all minds. If he who is no different from us thinks himself a pure spirit then we others must be compelled to hold that opinion of ourselves. If the fear that we are "liable to delusion in what relates to ourselves"[300] leads Descartes to philosophise upon what he is, it is also a good reason for his imposing the results of his philosophising upon others. But since his separation of thought from being makes it impossible that, in fact, the certainty of the metaphysics can be founded on the existent, his certainty is, and can be, no more than the degree of self persuasion/

persuasion to which he has attained, the very nature of the metaphysic requiring that its certainty should be something enclosed within thought itself. His need to persuade others is a need of his own nature, not of theirs. In short, he requires the acquiescence of others in his conclusions to assure himself against his own timidity and self-distrust. Totally engrossed in himself, he did not wish to persuade others for their own sakes, because they did not have enough reality for him. He wished to persuade them from the horror of delusion into which a difference of opinion had the power to throw him. Utterly self-centred, he was a man constitutionally incapable of paying attention to the demands of other souls. Their existence and their beliefs were of importance only in relation to his own. That was his tragedy, to feel that his mental health depended from those of whom he was disdainful.[301]

It was Descartes' genius to accept nothing as he found it. His resolution to doubt of all things was the formulation of a fundamental impulse. He was a man, let us affirm, capable of doubting to the verge of madness. Few men have ever lived whose natures were so exquisitely adapted to the horrible sufferings of uncertainty. What was the source of this malady? - for as a malady Eudoxus himself describes it.[302] The disease of doubt was probably brought to a head by the mystical crisis of November, 1619. The vivid visions of that fateful night came upon Descartes in his search for his true vocation./

vocation. Quod vitae sectabor iter? Along what road shall I make life's journey? To a philosopher, that question has regard not so much to externals, but to the kind of man he wishes to be. Really to doubt my vocation is to be seized with a spiritual vertigo in which I lose entire grip upon myself as a creature both of time and of eternity. To Descartes in this plight came the revelation that he alone was the man to complete the corpus of the sciences, he alone of all the world. Yet when the divine thunder echoed in his ears, and his room was filled with flakes of fire, he was smitten with terror at his own sins. The utmost fear and the utmost elation consumed him. In one night, he felt the worst and the greatest of men, and these two moments fused into his very being, each, however, retaining its own identity. That they retained their identity is important, since it distinguishes the experience of Descartes from the perfect conversion of the saints. The coal on his lips did not burn deep enough. He was great and small, assured and afraid, confident of his mission yet fearful of his corruption, at once and in extremes. He emerged from that night with a fission in his nature, which was to determine the whole course of his life. Henceforth he was to go forward trusting only himself, yet seeing nothing beyond himself in which his inner contradictions could be reconciled.

The doubt of Descartes has thus three aspects. There is his disposition, present from childhood, to take nothing

for granted. That is the first kind of doubt; and it appears to have gathered and accumulated until it came to a head in the crisis where, doubting his vocation, Descartes doubted what he himself was, for upon that hinged the whole question. Descartes, we can be certain, was one of those who are called upon to make the horrible discovery that they do not know what the reality is. For this state of soul there is only one solution, and that solution he did not take. Still clinging to himself and to humanity, he deferred the solution to the sciences, at the commencement of which we again find the doubt, in a third form, as a methodical discipline, precisely formulated. First a disposition, it was then a crisis, and finally a method which admits us to the sciences by whose means, Descartes thought, he could determine what he himself and all other things were. That crisis, commencing in Descartes' quest for himself, died down with the search unended, indeed, only begun upon, since all that happened was that it had become clear to him that the answer was to be found in science as pursued by the natural light. Having doubted of all being in the pitiless night of the spirit, Descartes was still to wander upon the stage of the world, on a search, to contemplate the failure of which inspired some return of the terror which had come upon him in that night of dreams.

Quod vitae sectabor iter? The vivid realisation that that involves knowing what we are, and how life is best lived for creatures such as we, is the key to the understanding of Descartes'/

Descartes's life. Descartes believed that he had found the answer to this question in the revelation of his universal science, the highest branch of which is the science of morals which teaches us how to proceed with assurance in this life. And though this answer clearly implies the spending of life in the search for living, Descartes had the confidence to wish to teach the world what we are and how we must live. Since these are two indissolubly connected questions, and since Descartes seeks their respective solutions in the sciences of metaphysics and morals, we can understand why Descartes' metaphysics leads directly to his moral science, and why these two sciences, understood only when taken together, are the true reflection of his spirit. We can understand, also, that his dying with his Moral unwritten marks the failure of the resolution of the night of crisis to find in the sciences a way of life.

In that decisive night of visions Descartes did not discover what he was, nor along what road he should make life's journey. He discovered no more than the means which, it seemed to him, would be sufficient to demonstrate these things. In choosing the way of science to reach the solution of these problems, he deferred the solution[303] which it was open to him to grasp immediately by faith, by conceiving that it was to be found at the conclusion of a science, for which he desired, in order to be assured, that complete and absolute certainty which belong only to faith. To know by science <u>as</u> we know by faith, and/

and what we know by faith, was the aim of Descartes' endeavours.

Since that night revealed to Descartes only the means for discovering his nature, and the right way of living, it follows that the sciences of metaphysics and morals are the work of a man who is not using these sciences as a means of giving rational expression to something already known with an infallible certainty other than that of science. The old dependence of metaphysics from theology was gone, the dependance in which metaphysics could, in a spirit of spacious and luminous calm, give rational development to what God had revealed. Now it had the feverishness of search. It took upon its sole self the task of bringing the soul of man whither its questing would cease in the satisfaction of its deepest needs. It led the mind in a state of suspense towards conclusions which it could not see itself, the analytic method assuming by implication the functions of a doctrine of spiritual medicine. Yet the Moral, which was to tell Descartes how to proceed with assurance in this life, was never completed, and since the questions of what we are and how we must act are inseparable, it would seem right to conclude that the results of the metaphysic, more certain as they are than those of mathematics, were the conclusions of a man who did not know his mind. In this lies the paradox of Descartes' insistence that, in metaphysics, the reader who would wish to follow must not question the guide or the guidance. It is the call of the blind to the blind; of one who seeks company in the dark; of

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one who, seeing no light in himself is yet persuaded that he alone of mortals holds the clue by which we are able to guide our steps to the sun.

Here, indeed, lies the true interest of the Meditations. They are an attempt at a rational solution of a mystical crisis. Medieval philosophy was a rational account of a mystical solution. That the Cogito posits me as a thing of which I know nothing than that I doubt, of whose existence I nevertheless am certain, and whose nature I forthwith seek to discover, is a rational transposition of that intense moment when Descartes, never more aware of himself, was lost in a night of black indecision concerning what he was, and how he should go forward in this life. The Meditations, leading naturally to the Moral are the actual and fruitless struggle of a great mind to know itself. They are the vain attempt of a spirit which could have been set at rest only by faith, to reach the calm which faith offers by a rational certainty which, in attempting to copy a model in fact rejected, inflates itself to something extravagant and hyperbolical. Reasoning not so much to discover the nature of things as to convince himself, Descartes's joy in the contemplation of God at the end of the third Meditation, is not joy in the contemplation of God for His own sake, but joy in his felicity at having seemed to find that which secures reason; for it is to reason alone, and not to faith, to which belongs the medicine to heal our doubts.

That is the true Descartes: the man who doubted what

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he was, yet trusted only in himself.[304] Intolerable contradiction - is it wonderful if Descartes thought he might be mad?

"But it may be said, perhaps, that although the senses occasionally mislead us respecting minute objects, and such as are so far removed from us as to be beyond the reach of close observation, there are yet many other of their informations, of the truth of which it is manifestly impossible to doubt; as for example, that I am in this place, seated by the fire, clothed in a winter dressing-gown, that I hold in my hands this piece of paper, with other intimations of the same nature. But how could I deny that I possess these hands and this body, and withal escape being classed with persons in a state of insanity, whose brains are so disordered and clouded by dark, bilious vapours as to cause them pertinaciously to assert that they are monarchs when they are in the greatest poverty; or clothed in gold and purple when destitute of any covering; or that their head is made of clay, their body of glass, or that they are gourds? I should certainly be not less insane than they, were I to regulate my procedure according to examples so extravagant."[305]

Here, then, is Descartes, knowing himself to be insane if he doubts what he feels drawn to doubt. Fleeing from admitting this by the hypothesis of a dream, he attempts to secure himself by metaphysical arguments which are modelled on mathematical reasoning chiefly because of the necessity to be completely persuaded felt by a mind in such dire straits.

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But what do we then find? That we can doubt even whether our clear and distinct ideas are true. From a bad plight we are fallen into a worse. We cannot but assent to our clear and distinct ideas. Yet may we assent to that to which we must assent? If to persist in the doubt whether or not we have bodies is to be no better than the man who thinks himself a gourd, then to what profound derangement can this second and deeper doubt be compared? If the former doubt could be imparted to the readers of the Discourse, the latter had to be concealed from them lest its practical consequences for more feeble spirits should be disastrous. By the hyperbolical doubt the human mind is threatened with a conflict so deep that it is utterly helpless, since thought itself appears to be corrupted to the very core. The solution of this doubt is the fight of the mind for its very existence, a struggle in which the prospect of a possible failure must have afflicted Descartes with the very horror of despair. In this dark night of the intellect, his mind, fearful of its own utter corruption, took the leap of faith, and saved itself from destruction by a confidence in itself which came from the contemplation of God's veracity.

This confidence in the mind, however, remains for Descartes an act of external imputation. In the night of his visions Descartes pledged himself to the purely human sciences; and to the end he required no more of God than His external concurrence in this task. It is here that we may seek the explanation/

explanation of the earnestness of his attempt to defend his method against the accusations that in metaphysics it involved assumptions. If his reasoning is false nothing remains to him, for he has determined to seek the assurance given by faith in reason alone. If his is not the true metaphysic, what is there to assure him that he is not like one of those poor crazed beggars who believe that they are monarchs clad in purple and gold? At all costs, he must determine what he is, and what he is not, constructing to this end a metaphysic which persuades him that he is a pure spirit, whose will is like God's.

This, then, is the metaphysic of Descartes. Arising from a hyperbolical doubt which is the very black pit of intellectual despair, it seeks a hyperbolical certainty, so absolute that it is not proper to discursive reason. Arising from the need of the mind not so much to know the real as to persuade itself, it is a system logical and precise which, by its mere coherency, tries to delude the mind into that agreement with itself, and what is, which can be found only in a direct communion with the Existent which is more and other than that of metaphysics. Starting in a vision, it ends in something unsubstantial, a soliloquy spoken by an actor wandering masked upon the theatre of the world, persuaded by his own eloquence that he is indeed that man whom he says himself to be.[306]

Let us leave Descartes seated before the fire, warmed, wrapped/

wrapped up in his own thoughts and sensations, feeling his creatureliness as a kind of comfortable presence. Musing upon the world's uncertainties and illusions, he takes notice of a vivid doubt of all things. As he meditates the doubt grows in reality. He can doubt of all things. He can doubt of whatever he once believed. Yes, he can even doubt if he has a body. But surely he must be mad to doubt it! Deep in thought, the blood in his head, he wraps his dressing-gown more closely round himself, and stretches out his hands to the fire, his sense of warmth and bodily comfort increasing. But what if this body be not his! what if it be an illusion! what if nothing around him exist! He feels the blood throbbing in his temples. What if he be actually a madman, insane as those who think their bodies are of glass or their heads of clay? But he dare not seriously entertain such thoughts. That would be real madness. He will calm his brain by pretending he is dreaming. Yet so curious are his thoughts that he can almost persuade himself that he is really in a dream, here, before the fire, with the paper in his hands.

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1. A.T. III. 276.3; III. 296.14; III. 297.1; III. 359.7; etc.

2. M. Henri Gouhier gives a good account of this meeting. (La Pensée Religieuse de Descartes. 1924. p. 56 ff.)

3. A.T. VI. 30.17 - 31.1.

4. "Quaestiones de Deo et mente humana jam ante paucis attigi in Dissertatione de Methodo...., non quidem ut ipsas ibi accurate tractarem, sed tantum ut delibarem." A.T. VII. 7.1-5.

5. A.T. I. 570.23.

6. A.T. VI. 4.7-20.

7. A.T. I. 349.29 - 350.23; I. 353.2-20; I. 560.7-561.6.

8. "Je crois donc qu'en faisant imprimer ma Métaphysique, il sera bon d'y mettre ce commencement, afin qu'on voie que ce que j'avais écrit dans le discours de ma Methode n'est que la même chose que j'explique plus au long." A.T. III. 296.30-297.4.
"Ibi in Methodo continetur epitome harum Meditationum, quae per eas exponi debet." A.T. V. 153.

9. "Or, j'ai travaillé de tout mon possible pour comprendre dans ce Traité tout ce qui s'en peut dire." A.T. IX. 6.

10. Cf. A.T. VII. 10.6-23.

11. Saisset pointed out long ago that the Principles are lifeless compared with the Meditations. "Mais en même temps que je vois Descartes substituer aux intuitions de la conscience des concepts abstraits et géométriques, il me semble aussi qu'il tend manifestement à effacer dans tous les êtres ce principe d'activité qui constitue leur essence et leur vie." ("Précurseurs de Descartes." 2nd ed. 1862. p. 168)

12. Thus Descartes writes to Mersenne not to disturb him needlessly during the time which he has resolved to employ in writing his philosophy in an order in which it could be easily taught. A.T. III. 276.3-9. "Dans les Principia, ouvrage didactique, destine à répandre sa philosophie dans les écoles, il fait revêtir à ses idées la forme qui convenait à l'enseignement: il les distribue en articles, dont chacun porte un numero, et qui ressemblent à autant de propositions ou de thèses, dont la rapide esquisse laisse encore place à un developpement oral." (M. Ch. Adam. A.T. X. 530.)

13. "La premiere partie... contient quasi les mêmes choses que les Méditations... sinon qu'elle est entierement d'autre stile, et que ce qui est mis en l'un tout au long, est plus abregé en l'autre, et vice versa." A.T. III. 276. 9-14.

14. Objections III and IV.

15. Pr. I. LI-LXV.

16. The first part of the Principles contain "les Principes de la connaissance, qui est ce qu'on peut nommer la première Philosophie ou bien la Métaphysique: c'est pourquoi, afin de la bien entendre, il est a propos de lire auparavant les Méditations que j'ai écrites sur le meme sujet." A.T. IX. 16. 13-18. Thus Descartes can say in the course of the Principles: "Nec opus est ista pluribus verbis hoc in loco persequi, quoniam in Meditationibus Metaphysicis jam utcunque tractata sunt." Pr. I. XXX.

17. A.T. X. 427.27 - 428.2.

18. A.T. X. 425. 10-12.

19. A.T. X. 505.11 - 506.16.

20. O. Hamelin. "La Systeme de Descartes," 2nd Ed. p. 99 ff.

21. A.T. X. 518.

22. A.T. X. 525.

23. A.T. IX (2^{e}). 13.30. - 14.9.

24. A.T. VI. 18.16 - 19.5. cf. "Assuefacit autem Mathesis ingenium veritati agnoscendae, quia in Mathesi reperiuntur recta ratiocinia, quae nullibi invenias alibi. Etproinde ille qui semel assuefecerit ingenium suum ratiociniis mathematicis habebit etiam illud $\underset{a}{o}$ptum ad investigandas alias veritates, cum sit ratiocinatio ubique una et eadem." A.T. V. 177.

25. A.T. III. 284. 27-29.

26. A.T. V. 177.

27. A.T. II. 378.9.

28. A.T. VIII. 4. 24-25.

29. A.T. VII. 16. 5-9.

30. References in É. Gilson. Index Scolastico-Cartesien. 1913 art. 361.

31. A.T. I. 351.1; I. 560.16.

32. To avoid the risk of giving a one-sided view of Descartes' character it would be well to recall what M. Maxime Leroy says of the Descartes suggested by his friendships. He speaks of "... ces amitiés hérétiques, libertines, bizarres, qui, par leur durée, leur profondeur, révèlent, sinon des identités psychologiques, du moins des similitudes morales" (Descartes, le philosophe en masque. 1929. p. 10.) M. Leroy makes much of Descartes' relations with the possibly atheistic priest, Picot. The reasons for Descartes' impatience may become clearer later on.

33. A.T. I. 144. 12-14.

34. A.T. III. 436. 20-437.2.

35. A.T. III. 175. 9-12.

36. A.T. X. 500. 9-15.

37. A.T. X. 501. 1-6.

38. A.T. III. 237. 9-13.

39. A.T. X. 497. 10-14.

40. A.T. VI. 2.20 - 3.2.

41. A.T. IX. 14. 23-31.

42. A.T. III. 297.31 - 298.2. III.233. 24-26.

43. In his "Descartes." 1886.

44. If we are to accept the conclusions of M. H. Gouhier in his "La Pensée Religieuse de Descartes," 1924. The conclusion of M. Leroy (op. cit.) is possibly more profound: that the character of Descartes is so subtle that the question: tactician or not, is a gross simplification. But on either view the matter goes deeper than Liard suggested.

45. v. Hamelin. op. cit. ch. VII, p. 93-98.

46. The originality of Descartes' proof of God's existence from an idea is well shown by the difficulty and indignation occasioned thereby. Here is an example.

"Vous croiriez, peut-être, que ce qui a persuadé M. Descartes de l'Existence de Dieu, soit la beauté, la grandeur, l'ordre, le mouvement, la constance, l'utilité, et le rapport/

46 (contd).
rapport mutuel des principales parties du Monde, en soite que les Créatures luy ayent servi comme de degrez pour parvenit à la connoissance du Créateur, selon les paroles de l'Apotre, Invisibilia Dei per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur? Tout cela selon Descartes étoit peu de chose, nous avions besoin de cette Demonstration qu'il nous a enfin tiré de la profondeur de ses Meditations, la voici... (Here follows a summary of the first proof) Voila, par consequent Dieu qui existe, et dont l'éxistence est selon Descartes prouvée demonstrativement: de sorte que si quelqu'un ne se souvient pas qu'il ait pensé à Dieu dés le ventre de sa mere, tant pis pour luy, les Cartesiens s'en souviennent tres-bien." (Éclaircissement sur le Livre de M. de la Ville. ap. Bayle, "Recueil de quelques pieces curieuses..," 1684. p. 85-86.)

47. "On dit souvent que Descartes est avant tout un physicien et un savant: cela est vrai quant à ses prédilections, vrai aussi quant à ses plus authentiques titres de gloire et à sa plus geniale activité. Mais Descartes n'est pas un savant "positif" comme on en voit de nos jours; il reste substantiellement un métaphysicien - et c'est pourquoi il a fait tant de mal a la metaphysique, qui ne peut souffrit que des siens. Descartes est un métaphysicien infidèle à la métaphysique, et qui se détourne volontairement vers les plaines, vers le vaste pays plat qu'arrose le fleuve Mathématique; un métaphysicien qui n'aime pas la vérité métaphysique/

47 (contd).

métaphysique." (J. Maritain. "Le Songe de Descartes" 1932. p. 131-132.)

48. "La Métaphysique ne sert pas seulement à l'ame pour se connoître elle-même, elle luy est encore nécessaire pour connoître les choses qui sont hors d'elle: toutes les Sciences naturelles dépendent de la Métaphysique; la Mathématique, la Physique et la Morale sont fondées sur ses principes." (P.S. Régis. Cours Entier de Philosophie. 1691. La Métaphysique. Avertissement.)

49. In subsequent philosophy the reservation of the R. P. Nicholas Poisson becomes of ever-increasing importance: "Car bien que tous les esprits soient egaux, neantmoins les temperamens qui contribuent à ses fonctions sont assez differents." (Remarques sur la Méthode de Mr. Descartes. 1671. p. 34. cf. Descartes A.T. VI. 62. 15-20). In fact, we are within sight of Fichte and Hegel.

50. A.T. V. 176. cited in a note below.

51. For the divorce of philosophy and theology in the seventeenth century see the following typical text: "Enfin, ce qu'il faut considerer est que nous sommes Philosophes Chrestiens par deux qualitez differentes; c'est pourquoy nous perfectionner entant que nous sommes Philosophes, et entant que nous sommes Chrestiens par deux sortes de doctrine." (Jacques du Roure. Le Philosophie, divisée en toutes ses parties.../

51 (contd).

partïes... en tables et par discours. 1654. La Morale p. 304.)

52. A.T. VI. 8. 16-17.

53. "Remarques sur la Méthode..." p. 21-22.

54. v. Gilson. Commentaire Historique. p. 133-134. "ad p. 8 l. 11."

55. The most important passages are:

"Objection: Sed annon etiam in Theologia omnia ita se sequentur et connexa sunt?

Response: Imo procul dubio; sed nos earum veritatum nexum ita consequi et intelligere non possumus, quia a revelatione dependent. Et certe Theologia nostris ratiociniis, quae in Mathesi et aliis veritatibus adhibemus, subjicienda non est, cum nos eam capere non possimus; et quanto eam servamus simpliciorem, eo meliorem habemus. Et si sciret auctor aliquem ex sua Philosophia ratiocinia deducturum in Theologia, et in eum modum sua Philosophia abusurum, eum operae suae poeniteret. Possumus quidem et debemus demonstrare Theologicas veritates non repugnare Philosophicis, sed non debemus eas ullo modo examinare. Et per hoc monachi occasionem dederunt omnibus sectis et haeresibus, per suam Theologiam Scholasticam scilicet, quae ante omnia exterminanda esset. Et quorsum opus tanto molimine, cum videamus idiotas ac rusticos aeque coelo potiri posse ac nos? Et hoc/

55 (contd).

hoc certe nos monere deberet, longe satius esse tam simplicem habere Theologiam ac illi, quam eam multis controversiis vexare, et ita corrumpere, et occasionem dare jurgiis, rixis, bellis, et similibus." (Conversation with Burman. A.T. V. p. 176.)

Je révérais notre theologie, et prétendais, autant qu'aucun autre, à gagner le ciel; mais ayant appris, comme chose très assurée, que le chemin n'en est pas moins ouvert aux plus ignorants qu'aux plus doctes, et que les vérités révélées, qui y conduisent, sont audessus de notre-intelligence, je n'eusse osé les soumettre à la faiblesse de mes raisonnements, et je pensais que, pour entreprendre de les examiner et y réussir, il était besoin d'avoir quelque extraordinaire assistance du ciel, et d'être plus qu'homme." (A.T. VI. 8. 8-17.)

"En quoi il (sc. Comenius) me semble ne pas remarquer qu'il y a grande différence entre les Vérités Acquises et les Révélées, en ce que, la connaissance de celles-ci ne dépendant que de la Grâce (laquelle Dieu ne dénie à personne, encore qu'elle ne soit pas efficace en tous), les plus idiots et les plus simples y peuvent aussi bien réussir que les plus subtils; au lieu que, sans avoir plus d'esprit que le commun, on ne doit pas espérer de rien faire d'extraordinaire touchant les Sciences humaines." A.T. II. 347. 21-30.

56. A.T. X. 370. 19-21. In a letter to Huyghens, however, Descartes/

56 (contd).

Descartes says that he is more persuaded by clear and distinct reasoning than by faith. (A.T. III. 580. 18-28); but he describes this as an infirmity.

57. v. J. Maritain. "Le Songe de Descartes." p. 92 ff.

58. Be it mentioned that the opinion of the R. Père J. B. de la Grange of the Oratory was that "Descartes a trop bonne opinion de sa raison, et de sa Philosophie pour la condamner, en cas qu'elle enseigne quelque chose de contraire à la Theologie." (Les Principes de la Philosophie contre les noveaux Philosophes, Descartes, Rohault, Regius, Gassendi, le P. Maignan etc. 1675.p.5)

59. "La Vie de M. Descartes" I. 115. Of the practical orientation of Descartes' early training A. Espinas says: "Le collége de la Flêche, par son esprit pratique, réfléchi, inspirait a ses élèves un goût vif pour la méthode en toutes choses, mais surtout dans la pratique: cela n'est pas niable" (Descartes et la Morale. 1925. bk. I. p. 27. see the whole of ch. II).
The passage following is the opening of the Dioptrics A.T. VI. 81. 3-7.

60. A.T. IX (2^e). 13. 22-23. The capital texts are Descartes' correspondence with Elizabeth in 1645, especially the letters of the 4th Aug., 18th Aug., 1st Sept., 15th Sept., 6th Oct.

61. For the phrase "vivere beate" v. A.T. IV. 263. 17 - 264. 13.

62. "La Philosophie est l'Etude de la sagesse. On appelle icy Sagesse, la plus parfaite connoissance que les hommes puissent avoir des choses, qui sont ou necessaires ou utiles à la conduite de la vie, à la conservation de la santé et à l'invention des arts. Et c'est dans le soin d'aquerir cette connoissance, que consiste ce que les Grecs et les Romaines ont appellé Philosopher." (Jacques du Roure. La Philosophie divisee... Discours generaux sur la Philosophie, 1654, p. 1-2. This is obviously an echo from the Preface to the Principles.)

63. A.T. IX (2^e). 14. 29-31.

64. A.T. IV. 267. 20-26.

65. Preface to V. de Swarte's "Descartes, directeur spirituel," 1904.

66. A number of reflections suggest themselves.

I. Here is one of the occasions when the conceptual system of Descartes falls short of that of St. Thomas as a vehicle of spiritual truth. The discrepancy has its origin as far back as their metaphysical doctrines of substance. For St. Thomas the soul is the substantial form of the body. Considered in itself it is only in potency. Its virtue and intelligence must be brought from potency to act. But whatever/

66 (contd).

whatever is in potency is to its act as the incomplete is to the complete; potency existing only in respect of the act. The human soul being only in potency thus exists in view of some other thing, and cannot be its own last end. But beatitude is the last end of the soul, and therefore it cannot be that in which beatitude consistsis something contained in the soul itself. "Beatitudo est aliquid animae; sed id in quo consistit beatitudo, est aliquid extra animam." (Sum. Theol. Ia. IIae. 2. 7. ad Resp.)

Ultimately, a "béatitude naturelle" is a contradiction in terms. It is true that according to St. Thomas we can enjoy in this life an incomplete beatitude, and that we can attain this beatitude through the study of the speculative sciences. But this incomplete beatitude is essentially derivative and is only enjoyed through, and as a foretaste of, that complete beatitude which, both in itself, and in its essence as something possessed by us, is supernatural. Furthermore, this incomplete beatitude consists in the actual apprehension of science, that is, it is possessed by man insofar as he is a purely rational being. It is enjoyed by him through that in which he is nearest the pure spirits. But paradoxically, for Descartes, who, in really distinguishing the mind from the body, makes us like the pure spirits, our natural beatitude is enjoyed by us not as purely rational, but insofar as our reason turns towards the body. For him, the beatitude which depends on us/

66 (contd).

us is nothing but the accomplishment and fulfilment of our desires regulated according to reason; in short, a bodily enjoyment. Reason has become the servant of desire. Of the passions Descartes says, "c'est d'elles seules que depend tout le bien et le mal de cette vie" (Des Passions. Art. CCXII). "Nôtre bien et nôtre mal" says de la Forge "dépendent principalement des Emotions de l'Ame" (Traité de l'esprit de l'homme, ed. rev. 1725, p. 417).

Descartes, in distinguishing the soul from the body has separated it from God. Furthermore, the attempt to make ourselves self-sufficient by seeking nothing which does not depend from our own thoughts, subjects us to the things we despise. The R.P. de la Grange makes a criticism which strikes to the very roots of the Cartesian philosophy when he says that we are not so far removed from our bodies that we should despise material ills (Les Principes de la Philosophie, 1675, p. 29).

"La philosophie que je cultive n'est pas si barbare ni si farouche qu'elle rejette l'usage des passions, au contraire c'est en lui seul que je mets toute la douceur et la félicité de cette vie" (A.T. V. 135. 5-8). But if our felicity depends from our passions, and our passions from our bodies, which in turn are affected by other bodies then it no longer depends from us, but from the constitution of material things. There is thus an inner contradiction in the Cartesian philosophy. Since our happinesss depends

from/

66 (contd).
from our bodies, it comes to share in their apparitional nature when, by a development of the Cartesian distrust of the faculties, philosophy reduced the objects of experience to phenomena. Ever since then we have been uncertain whether or not we are happy. "Les grandes joies sont ordinairement mornes et serieuses," Descartes writes to Elizabeth (A.T. IV. 305. 21-22). One suspects, at times, that his hatred of the Calvinists arose from sheer fellow-feeling.

II. An important consequence of the Cartesian conception of wisdom is that it makes philosophy necessary to moral virtue. "Toutes les personnes de bon sens demeurent d'accord que c'est par la Philosophie que l'on peut agir suivant l'honnetete... " (Jacques du Roure. "La Philosophie divisée..," Discours generaux p. 11). We must be philosophers to act well and go forward with assurance in this life. It is by faith, however, that our salvation is secured; but since perfect faith can be found in idiots and rustics, incapable of being philosophers, it follows that salvation lies open equally to those who act in the best possible way, and those who do not. There is thus a separation of faith and action. The condition of salvation becomes a mere subjective attitude. Not only can we act well without the grace of faith, but faith, when bestowed, does not affect our works. "Pelagius a dit qu'on pouvait faire de bonnes oeuvres et meriter la Vie eternelle sans

la/

66 (contd).

la Grâce, ce qui a été condamné de l'Église; et moi, je dis qu'on peut connaître par la raison naturelle que Dieu existe, mais je ne dis pas pour cela que cette connaissance naturelle merite de soi, et sans la Grâce, la Gloire surnaturelle que nous attendons dans le Ciel. Car, au contraire, il est evident que, cette Gloire etant surnaturelle, il faut des forces plus que naturelles pour la meriter" (A.T. III. 544. 8-17).

If Descartes can deny the efficacy of works alone, it is only by affirming their indifference. Works done without the light of grace need not contain, he thinks, any element of obstruction to life eternal.

"Si une chose est convenable à la raison et aux natures intellectuelles, on l'appelle bien Moral ou honnéte," says du Roure (op. cit. "La Morale" p. 293-294. cf. Descartes' letter to Elizabeth of the fourth of August, 1645). It is in the same spirit that the R.P. Nicholas Poisson, priest of the Oratory, can say, "Toutes les fautes de nostre conduitte ne viennent donc pas de l'esprit, mais de la mauvaise méthode." (Commentaire sur la Méthode de Mr. Descartes, 1671. p. 17). "Remarqués en passant," he adds "que M. Descartes regarde l'homme dans sa propre nature, et qu'il ne pretend pas toucher aux effets du peché, n'y prejudicies à la necessité de la grace." How can it be stated more plainly that grace does not affect our natural conduct? If Descartes did not see these consequences himself, it was because/

66 (contd).
because he was too deeply absorbed in that Philosophy by the aid of which he could perform the actions which would make him happy in this life, but which were not necessary to his salvation. Yet what is this but a kind of degenerate Pelagianism?

When one comes to enquire what Descartes took man to be "in his proper nature" one questions the value of P. Poisson's passing remark. Terrified by the evil genius, Descartes can only feel certain that man's intellectual nature is not essentially corrupt by ensconcing himself, by God's aid, within a rationalism, which establishes that our passions are the source of our natural beatitude, and that they are not a consequence of the Fall, but are the natural outcome of the union of mind and body. Our passions are nearly all good, he says, forestalling Rousseau (A.T. IV. 538. 8; XI. 485. 25). Where are the effects of sin requiring grace, of which P. Poisson speaks, when man's passions are good, and his mind is clouded only by prejudice?

The impression must not be gained, however, that Descartes was a theologian actively debating these matters. We are here merely deriving consequences from his philosophy which follow from the very fact that this philosophy was wholly secularised. Indeed, the fact that Descartes did not see these results is exactly the proof of their reality. What is true, however, is that his philosophy is precisely the counterpart of Lutheran theology. It is interesting to observe how , in the sphere of reason, Descartes' difficulties/

66 (contd).

difficulties and solutions run parallel with those of the Reformation, in religion. Just as Luther believes that our concupiscence is invincible, so does Descartes, by the hypothesis of the evil genius, express the utter fallibility of man's rational nature; and just as for the former our justification is exterior to us, so for the latter does God bring it about that, without any change in our rational nature, we can nevertheless seek the truth with confidence. In both, we attain to assurance without an intrinsic regeneration. To be saved, spiritually or intellectually, we need do no more than rely on God. It is in the Reformed theology, too, that we find an exact counterpart of the cercle cartesien upon which we shall later come to insist. The determination to philosophise even while still doubting the very truths of metaphysics - what is this but the determination to persist in the actions of a nature which we fear to be fundamentally corrupted? the pecca fortiter et crede firmius of the intellect? And what is all subsequent Idealism but a perpetuation of this attitude?

III. The subjection of the mind to the body is one of the most noteworthy results of the Cartesian philosophy. Descartes derives the remedy for controlling the passions from a treatise, the Passions of the Soul, in which man is considered in his relation to his body. The material world acts upon our bodies in a certain fashion producing ascertainable effects which have their mental counterpart. But when philosophy has made/

66 (contd).

made us masters and possessors of nature, we shall be able to regulate its effect upon ourselves, controlling our passions by our perfect knowledge. Thus de la Forge speaks of "the means with which Philosophy furnishes us for regulating every passion." (Traité de l'esprit de l'homme, 1725, p. 412). Here is another instance of the fashion in which the Cartesian philosophy subjects morality to reason.

The treatises on the Passions and on Man must thus be considered to throw considerable light on the theological implications of Cartesianism. The regulation of the Passions requires not grace but knowledge. To live well we require not repentance but science. It is the doctor of medicine, not the priest, who now has care of souls. (cf. A.T. VI, 61, 15-20). Anger must be avoided only because it interferes with rational judgment and corrupts the blood. (P.S. Régis, Cours Entier, La Morale, I, II, 2). It is clear that according to Cartesianism a philosopher has a greater opportunity of living well than an ignorant man, since he can attend better to his temporal wants, bodily and mental.

M. Maritain remarks: "Descartes est également convaincu de la possibilité morale où nous sommes de parvenir par la seule raison à une sagesse pratique et à une perfection de vie complètes dans l'ordre des vertus naturelles - auxquelles pourra s'ajouter ensuite la superstructure des vertus chrétiennes - comme si, en l'état actuel de la nature humaine, nous pouvions/

66 (contd).

pouvions sans le secours de la grâce acquérir une pleine perfection dans le domaine de la moralité naturelle." (Le Songe de Descartes, 1932, p. 141).

There seems every reason to believe that Descartes thought that, since natural beatitude depends on unassisted human reason, both the ignorant man and the philosopher, secure in the faith, could proceed with their proper vocations without fear for their souls. If we look after the moral, the spiritual will take care of itself. (On the subject of Descartes' "social materialism" see M. Maxime Leroy's "Descartes Social," 1931). My natural beatitude comes to depend entirely from my station and its duties. It is wholly determined by the organisation of civil society, since from that depends the amount of philosophy I possess, our society being what it is, says Descartes, from the degree to which philosophy is infused through its members. (Pref. to Pr.). This trend of the Cartesian philosophy comes clearly to the fore in the moral philosophy of P. S. Régis (see esp. Cours Entier, La Morale, II, II, 3). Régis, who, of course, can claim no originality, distinguishes between "natural" and "civil" beatitude, and of them he says, inter alia: "La Béatitude naturelle et la Béatitude civile ne doivent pas estre considérées comme un Etat exempt de tout mal, mais comme un Etat dans lequel on peut jouir de la félicité, autant que la nature humaine, la constitution du/

66 (contd).

du corps, la condition du païs, et l'êtat de la paix ou de la guerre dans lequel on se trouve, le peuvent permettre à l'homme qui fait de sa raison le meilleur usage qu'il en peut faire." (loc. cit.). Since our sovereign good depends on the state in which we live, and since the maintenance of the best state depends upon the observation of the laws - civil society being more perfect than the state of nature (op. cit. II: II: 4) - our highest good lies in obedience to the civil law. "Il est visible qu'on n'a pû trouver aucun moyen plus propre pour établir la paix que la société civile, dont l'autorité et la puissance absoluë rendent l'invasion du bien d'autruy si dangereuse a ceux qui la voudirent entreprendre, que chacun aime mieux se tenir dans l'ordre des loix que de les violer." (loc. cit.). Virtue is conformity to the natural and/the civil law (op. cit. II: II: 2).

Nothing could show more clearly than the developments of the doctrine of earthly beatitude, how rationalism has led to the enslavement of men by the state. "Dans la société civile la raison exerce son empire, la surêté publique est établie, et les richesses abondent" (op. cit. II: II: 4). Reason, which was to make us independent of all external circumstances ends by subjecting man as never before to a civil law which secures that those riches will abound which a wise man does not need for his happiness.

This, then, has been the outcome of Descartes' moral philosophy/

66 (contd).

philosophy, to secure the subjection of man to a type of state which has as its end nothing but the attainment of material goods which, even on the principles of that philosophy, much more on those of Christianity, can make no fundamental contribution to the human good. It has been suggested that Descartes' preoccupation with reason implies a doctrine of justification which has as its complementary error a corrupt Pelagianism which falls below conceiving our human activities as themselves sufficient for securing salvation, by considering them only as a means to earthly welfare. In subsequent political philosophy, it is the state which comes to be regarded as the embodiment of that reason by which earthly felicity is to be attained. The will of the state expressed in its laws has ever since directed the consciences of men with a despotism pernicious, not because it enjoins political obedience, which is necessary to man's welfare, but because it has totally usurped the whole of his spiritual activity,making of the national state an ultimate end, which it can never properly be because its aims are of the earth only.

IV. De la Forge affords a good example of the Cartesian tendencies in morals. He contributes nothing fresh to the moral philosophy of Descartes, but may be profitably resorted to because it is often valuable to confirm the doctrine of a great thinker by taking note of its restatement/

66 (contd).

restatement by his followers. Himself a doctor of medicine, de la Forge draws his moral precepts from his physiology in a chapter whose heading is a clear echo of Stoicism: "Remèdes Generaux contre les Fougues des Passions, et les Adversitez de la Fortune" (de l'Esprit de l'Homme, 1725. Chap. Dernier, p. 412).

In this chapter the Stoic self-sufficiency is quite apparent.

p.417: Only attempt things within your own power. After that, and then only, are we absolutely in the hands of Providence.

p.419: "Un autre de plus puissans moyens que nous ayons à opposer au dereglement de nos Passions, est la Generosité, par laquelle un Homme s'estimant au plus haut qu'il puisse légitimement s'estimer, et reglant sur ce pied toutes les actions de sa vie, n'oublie rien de ce qu'il doit faire, et ne fait rien qui soit indigne de lui." (cf. Ch. Adam. "Vie de Descartes," pp. 505-509; and "Des Passions," art. CLIII.).

p.418: "Il faut nous munir de deux remèdes qui nous servironst de preservatifs contre toutes sortes d'évenemens. La I^{er} est, de nous conduire en telle sorte que nous ayons sujet d'être satisfaits de nous-mêmes." "La 2^{me} est (p. 419) de considerer toutes les choses qui se font dans le monde, et qui ne dépendent point de nous, comme des actions qui se representent sur un Theatre."

And/

66 (contd).

And hence one is led to remark that the Stoic detachment does, in fact, lead to theatricality. We bleed in our baths, declaiming. It is strange that Descartes who determined to go masked like a comedian upon the stage of the world (A.T. X, 213, 4-7) should nevertheless so have loved the play that he wished, by the art of medicine, to prolong human life on earth to indefinite lengths. He wished to give to human beings the power to live almost forever as players at a remove from the real. Nothing teaches more clearly than Stoicism that to despise the contingent is to be bound to it by a link which is the more pernicious because it is unseen. Descartes' philosophy is not compatible with that which overcomes the contingent by making it its own, and seeks in the misfortunes of life not an occasion of indifference but an opportunity of great benefits.

V. It is no wonder that the question of natural beatitude was one on which the Cartesian philosophy aroused the suspicion of the Church, by which it was put on the Index in 1663. The agreement between the Jesuits and the Oratory, in the latter of which a split was threatening, is thus of far more than the local significance attributed to it by Bayle (Preface to the work cited below). The agreement contains the following passage:

"On ne doit pas traiter en Philosophie la question qui demande s'il y a une béatitude naturelle, de peur de s'engager/

66 (contd).

s'engager a parler de l'etat de la nature pure et de celuy de l'innocence et du peché originel qui sont des matieres de Theologie. L'on doit traiter la question des actions et des vertus humaines en Philosophie, comme a fait Aristote par rapport à leurs fins prochaines et à leurs circonstances, et non en Theologien par rapport à la fin derniere." (Concordat entre les Jesuites et les Peres de l'Oratoire, P. Bayle, "Recueil de quelques pieces curieuses....." 1684, p.10).

VI. The modern world, being built upon the foundations laid by Descartes, rests upon the rejection of grace in human affairs. The Stoic conception of the human will, accepted by Descartes, recrudesces in the Kantian philosophy which expresses perfectly the pride of man in his ability to secure his own virtue through his own will. The second Critique marks a Pelagian renaissance. The Idealist philosophy - and let us not forget its connection with the modern conception of the national state - thus rests upon the rejection of the theological conception of man's nature. The acceptance of the modern world as expressed in politics as well as in philosophy; and the acceptance of Christianity, are thus mutually exclusive alternatives. "For if natural capacity, by help of free will, is in itself sufficient both for discovering how one ought to live, and also for leading a holy life, then 'Christ died in vain,' and therefore also 'the offence of the cross is ceased.'" (Augustine, Anti-Pelagian Writings, "On Nature and Grace," ch. 47).

67. IX (2^{e}), 14, 28-31.

68. Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale. 1896. This is an important article and the texts are very well assembled and dealt with. See also M. Maxime Leroy's "Descartes Social," 1931.

69. A.T. VII, 62, 8-9.

70. A.T. VI, 10, 9-11.

71. See Boutroux's article in the Cambridge Modern History, vol. IV (1906), p. 784.

72. A.T. VII, 57, 27-58.3.

73. Cf. de la Forge, "Traité de l'Esprit de l'Homme," ch. XXVII, where the author speaks of metaphysics particularly in its relation to the sovereign good. It is the means for avoiding error.

74. A.T. IV, 305, 11-14.

75. A.T. VII, 53, 1-2.

76. A.T. IV, 291, 20-292,12.

77. A.T. IV, 291, 16-19.

78. The utilitarian conception of the love of God may be said to have one of its roots in the philosophy of Descartes. Thus/

78 (contd).

Thus de la Forge says: "Le dernier et le plus efficace de tous les remedes contre les Passions, est l'Amour de Dieu." (Traité de l'esprit de l'Homme, 1725, 420). It is as though he were prescribing a remedy in his capacity of a doctor of medicine. He refers his opinion to a letter from Descartes to Chanut, where the love of God is called "la plus ravissante et la plus utile passion que nous puissons avoir." (1st Feb., 1647). One is reminded of Rousseau: "Je veux vivre en homme de bien et en bon chrétien, parce que je veux mourir en paix, et que d'ailleurs ce sentiment ne gêne en rien la suite de ma vie, et qu'il me fait concevoir une espérance qui m'est douce, quand je ne serai plus.... Illusion, peut-être; mais si j'en avais une plus consolante, je l'adopterais." (Memoires de Madame d'Epinay, II, 394-395).

79. M. Maxime Leroy suggests that Descartes' was "une morale née de la physiologie, utile à la conduite de la vie, une morale tendant a la rehabilitation des passions; dirons-nous une morale naturaliste." ("Descartes Social," p. 21).

80. The remarks of the R. Père J. B. de la Grange on the rules of conduct, formulated by Descartes in the Discourse, are very penetrating. (Les Principes de la Philosophie, pp. 26-30). In pointing out the Stoic element in the rules of Descartes' provisional moral, he shows the point of real connection of these rules with Descartes' projected scientific moral, and the/

) (contd).

the essential weakness of both. He makes the possibly significant remark that the Stoics desired to live this life with assurance because they had no hope of another. Who, indeed, can fail to note the melancholy, altogether Roman, in Descartes' letters to Elizabeth concerning the highest good? It is the melancholy proper to the deathbed of a man dying in the belief that he can reproach himself with nothing. It is the sadness of a life lived only to a happy retrospect. A noble sadness; a word summing up all the greatness and all the weakness of the pagan character.

A further point of interest suggested by the criticisms of the R. Pere, arises from his remarks on the second rule of the provisional moral. The resolution to be absolutely firm in decisions once taken, even when they are not well founded, leaves, he says, no room for remorse and repentance, that is, for the action of grace. Here is one of the respects in which the philosophy of Descartes is a forerunner of that of Spinoza, and of much that is subsequent. For Pantheism, remorse and repentance are necessarily defects, since our moral errors are realities, not negations, and belong to the nature of things.

With the criticism of P. de la Grange we may contrast the following remark of another priest of the Oratory: "N'est-ce pas en effet un sujet de contentement, lors qu'on fait reflexion sur sa bonne conduite, et que bien-loin de se repentir, on juge encore que si la chose estoit à refaire, et qu'on/

80 (contd).

qu'on n'eust pas d'autres lumieres que celles qu'on avoit lors qu'on l'a entrepris, on ne s'y prendroit pas autrement?" (P. Nicholas Poisson, "Remarques sur la Methode de Mr. Descartes," pp. 113-114, Observations on the second maxim of the provisional moral). To repent is not to act "en homme sage," that is, to act according to the Cartesian moral: "le dernier degré de la Sagesse." (cf. Descartes to Elizabeth: "... car il n'y a rien que le desir (sc. of things not in our power) et le regret ou le repentir, qui nous puissent empêcher d'être contents: mais si nous faisons toujours tout ce que nous dicte nôtre raison, nous n'aurons jamais aucun sujet de nous repentir." A.T. IV, 266, 1-6).

See also de la Forge: "Il faut craindre davantage la perte de sa raison, lors qu'elle vient par nôtre faute, que la perte de sa vie: Car sans l'usage de la raison nous ne pouvons pas être heureuse. Et la seule Philosophie naturelle sans les maximes de la Foy, fait esperer a nôtre Ame un état plus heureux apres la Mort, que celui où elle est à present....

Comme il n'y a que les remors et les repentirs qui puissent troubler notre satisfaction, pour nous faire justice à nous-mêmes, et nous en exempter, nous devons faire en sorte que nous puissons toûjours et avec verité nous rendre ce fidéle témoinage, que nous n'avons rien omis de ce qui étoit le meilleur et le plus raisonnable, ni manque de resolution pour l'executer (De l'esprit de l'homme, 1725, pp. 410-411, cf./

80 (contd).

cf. A.T. IV, 266).

See the whole of this chapter (ch. XXVI, p. 390 ff.), which treats of natural beatitude. The following sentence is interesting because it leaves no shadow of doubt upon the origins of the moral rules under discussion. Remarking that only our will is our own, and that it is the means to natural beatitude, de la Forge says: "Il est aisé par ce moyen, comme dit Mr. Descartes, d'accorder Zenon avec Epicure touchant le Souverain bien de cette vie; parce que c'est en effet dans le bon usage de la liberté que consistent toutes les vertus, dans lesquelles Zenon etablissoit la Béatitude" (op. cit., p. 393, cf. A.T. IV, 275 ff.). The moral theories of Descartes fell on ready ears.

It was remarked that this dislike of repentance was something which linked Descartes with Spinoza. It is further to be observed that the Cartesian emphasis on the power of the will, to the exclusion of repentance, does not contradict the determinism of Spinoza. At root, the Spinozist and Stoic doctrines of the will are in agreement. The Stoics cannot escape from the spiritual necessity by which the excessive contempt of external things is ultimately a complete submission to them, our wills being as much determined by what we do not seek as by what we seek. The Cartesian doctrine of the freedom of the will is one of the points of similarity, not of difference, between the systems of Descartes and Spinoza.

The/

80. (contd.)

The regulation of the passions by reason is the aim of the Ethic, and it is precisely in this regulation that Descartes places natural beatitude. Thus, when he says that "free will... renders us in some fashion like God in making us masters of ourselves" (A.T. XI. 445. 19-22), we can interpret this not as vindicating human freedom, but, on the contrary, as assimilating our wills so closely to that of God's, that they tend to become his, and that is Pantheism. Thus the freedom and independence of the human will are destroyed and not exalted by the Cartesian deification of the will.

The consequence of Descartes' making our happiness depend on our passions is in fact to make it depend on that which does not constitute our essence, which is rationality. It is to make it depend upon our animality, that is, on what we are considered as mind and body substantially united (for this phrase see references in Gilson. Index. p. 304 art. "Union"). But since will is the chief characteristic of a thinking thing, it is impossible to see how, for Descartes, our happiness can any longer be said to be within our own power. We come to regard men not as individuals in relation to a personal God, but as parts of nature, so that "to act in conformity with nature" becomes the highest wisdom for the modern as for the ancient world.

81. A.T. VII. 429. 5-8.

82. "en la recherche de la vérité... consiste mon principal bien en cette vie." A.T. V. 430. 24-26.

83. "Descartes Savant," 1921. p. 36.

84. v. Gilson. Commentaire Historique. p. 176-7.

85. A.T. IV. 113. 18-21.

86. "La Quatrieme Méditation tout entière, est un tissu d'emprunts faits à la théologie de Saint Thomas et à celle de l'Oratoire. Il n'est pas exagéré de dire qu'elle ne contient rien d'original, si ce n'est l'ordre selon lequel ces materiaux sont disposés." E. Gilson. "La Liberté chez Descartes et la Théologie" 1913. p. 441.

87. Notae in Prog. A.T. VIII. 364. 22-27.

88. A.T. IX (2^{e}). 19. 23. M. Gilson remarks that Descartes' is a doctrine where the truth of ideas is a function of their order. (Commentaire Historique. p. 231.)

89. A.T. VII. 9.28 - 10.2 cf. VII. 379. 15-22.

90. Regulae XI.

91. A.T. III. 267. 1-6.

92. A.T. VII. 155. 11-20.

93. A.T. VI. 18.31 - 19.2.

94. A.T. VII. 155.24 - 156.5.

95. "... clarum fiet iis qui satis attendent, et diu mecum meditabuntur." A.T. VII. 135. 30-31.

96. "l'analyse... consiste plus dans le jugement et dans l'adress de l'esprit que dans des règles particulières." (Port-Royal Logic. Pt. 4. Ch. II.)

97. A.T. VII. 159. 9-13.

98. A.T. VII. 130. 23-29.

99. The degree of intellectual submission implied by this is made more precise by the following text. "Même touchant les vérités de la foi, nous devons apercevoir quelque raison qui nous persuade qu'elles ont été révélées de Dieu, avant que de nous determiner à les croire; et encore que les ignorants fassent bien de suivre le jugement des plus capables, touchant les choses difficiles à connaître il faut neanmoins que ce soit leur perception qui leur enseigne qu'ils sont ignorants, et que ceux dont ils veulent suivre les jugements ne le sont peut-être pas tant, autrement ils feraient mal de les suivre, et ils agiraient plutot en automates, ou en bêtes, qu'en hommes." (A.T. IX. 208. 19-30.)

It is interesting to note that Descartes believes that one must trust in one's own discoveries as though they had a kind of external authority. He says that though it is necessary to grasp the principles of metaphysics once/

99. (contd.)

once in one's life, because they give us the knowledge of God and the soul, one should not meditate on them excessively. It is better to remember to have grasped these principles, than continually to agitate the matter. (A.T. III. 695. 4-15). The proof of the trustworthiness of memory in Meditation V gives the metaphysical ground for this, since it is there shown that I should not doubt of a truth providing I remember that I once possessed a clear and distinct comprehension of it. We must believe our own doctrines even when we are not presently aware of their rational grounds which it is not profitable always to recall. Descartes thus thought it advisable, not only for other people, but even for himself, to take his metaphysical conclusions on trust. We require not only the power of intellectual invention but also of intellectual faith, "for to perceive clearly is one thing, to know with certainty another; for we now know many things with certainty not only by the faith which comes from God, but also because we have perceived them clearly before, though at present we do not clearly perceive them." (A.T. VII. 519. 18-23.)

Incidentally, one wonders at the anxiety of Descartes to impose on men, by the authority of theologians, the truths concerning God and the soul, rationally demonstrated. If they are imposed by authority they cease, properly speaking, to be truths of reason. If the authority of theologians/

99. (contd.)

theologians is sufficient to persuade belief in these truths taken as mere conclusions of reason, surely it should be sufficient to persuade belief in them as truths of faith. It is the atheists at whom the rational demonstrations are said to be aimed, and an atheist is not likely to trust the authority of a theologian however eminent.

100. A.T. III. 102.11 - 103.16.

101. "Monsieur Descartes a temoigné assez de modestie dans toutes les action de sa vie, pour nous obliger de croire qu'il n'y a rien d'affecté dans celle-cy où il se met au nombre des esprits mediocres." (R.P. Nicholas Poisson. Remarques sur la Méthode de Descartes p. 17-18 ad. Discours I. A.T. VI. 2. 20-21. Cf. Claubergius, Defensio Cartesiana, De modestia Cartesii in modo loquendi; Opera Omnia Philosophica, Pars Secunda, 1691. p. 948).

102. I. It may well be asked whether these two attitudes are, in Descartes, compatible. Descartes speaks of his metaphysics as an edifice built to God's glory. He has constructed "not out of nothing, but out of the most durable material, not nothing, but a stable and well-built church to the glory of God" (A.T. VII. 542. 10-13). Of the sincerity of this aim, in the ordinary sense of the word, there can be no doubt. But sincerity is not enough. Who elected Descartes to this work? He himself. If he dedicated/

102. (contd.)

dedicated his metaphysics, he dedicated them with a sense of his strength and not of his weakness.

In a matter of such delicacy one hesitates to pass an opinion. Yet philosophical exegesis seems to call for a judgment. It is impossible to understand Descartes' metaphysics without evaluating his religious motives. When we make such an evaluation, it is impossible not to judge that Descartes, the apologist, was, unknown to himself, motivated by intellectual pride. His sincerity consists in his ignorance of his own presumption. If he regarded his metaphysic as a stable and well-built church, it could only be by substituting a corpus of rational truths for the mystical Body of Christ. Is this not, perhaps, the sanctification of reason by pride, but a pride so deep-rooted in Descartes that its expression is sincere by reason of its very depth?

However, and at present, the point is that this appeal to authority shows clearly how rigorous Descartes thought his proofs to be, and how thoroughly persuaded he was that it was necessary to his missionary ends to retain the analytic method of exposition.

II. That the analytic method is the best method of teaching is not agreed to by the later Cartesians.

"Il y a deux sortes de méthodes; l'une pour découvrir la/

102. (contd.)

la vérité, qu'on appelle analyse ou méthode de résolution, et qu'on peut aussi appeler méthode d'invention; et l'autre pour la faire entendre aux autres, quand on l'a trouvée, qu'on appelle synthèse ou méthode de composition, et qu'on peut aussi appeler méthode de doctrine." (Port-Royal Logic Pt. 4 Ch. II.)

Régis says that his Logic contains "deux méthodes, dont l'une s'appelle Analyse qui sert à nous instruire nous mêmes, et l'autre Synthèse, qui est propre à instruire les autres." (Cours Entier. Preface.)

Descartes himself seems to have suffered a disillusionment. He tells Burman that he has changed the order of proof in the Principles "quia alia est via et ordo inveniendi, alia docendi; in Principiis autem docet" (A.T. V. 153). As usual, however, it is hard to discover Descartes' real motives. Did he wish to give his proofs a wider popularity, or had he come to believe that not even the "twelve or fifteen theologians" could understand them? Had he come to think less of his powers, or more?

103. A.T. VII. 156. 6-16.

104. Port-Royal Logic. Pt. 4. Ch. II.

105. "l'application de la méthode d'analyse à la métaphysique exclut la velléité de déduire quoi que ce soit à partir de principes que le doute interdit de postuler." (Léon Brunschvicg/

105. (contd.)
Brunschvicg. Mathématique et Métaphysique chez Descartes. Rev. de Mét. et de Morale. 1927. p. 315.)

106. "Descartes avant 1637." 1867. p. 226.

107. A.T. III. 396. 17.

108. A.T. VII. 226. 23-26.

109. A.T. VII. 124. 29 - 125. 5.

110. Cf. Instances of Gassendi. In Medit. IV, dubit. 4, Inst. 2, quoted É. Gilson. Commentaire Historique. p. 360.

111. "Descartes" III. I.

112. A.T. VII. 146. 14-28.

113. A.T. VII. 35. 6-15.

114. A.T. VII. 36. 8-21.

115. A.T. VI. 33. 16-24.

116. A.T. VII. 36. 21-23. "de iis confuse solum loquor." A.T. V. 151.

117. A.T. VII. 69. 18-20.

118. A.T. VII. 62. 2-4.

119. A.T. VII. 69. 16-18. Cf. VII. 145. 27-146. 1; and VII. 416. 24-28.

120. A.T. VII. 58. 20-25.

121. A.T. VII. 62. 1-2.

122. "ne sommes-nous pas ici au centre d'un conflit de la lumière naturelle avec elle-même, de l'évidence avec l'évidence?" (J. Maritain "Le Songe de Descartes," p. 166)

123. A.T. I. 165. 16-19; III. 567. 17-21; VII. 71. 18-20.

124. A.T. VII. 36. 24-25.

125. A.T. VII. 144.26-146.4 cf. Port-Royal Logic. Pt. 4. Ch. VI.

126. Principles I. VII; I. X.

127. A.T. VII. 65. 16-20.

128. A.T. VII. 65. 5-6.

129. A.T. VII. 65. 24 - 66. 1.

130. A.T. VII. 3. 9-21.

131. A.T. VII. 24. 7-13.

132. Commentaire Historique. p. 299.

133. A.T. X. 527.

134. A.T. X. 505. 9-13.

135. See A.T. VII. 488 ff. and Notae p. 491 ff.

136. "pensée." A.T. IX. 10. 5. For the meaning of the term see the following passage:

"Cependant, je crains encore de me définir mal, quand je dis que je suis une pensée, qui a la propriété de douter et d'avoir de la certitude; car quelle apparence y a-t'il que ma nature qui doit estre une chose fixe et permanente, consiste dans la pensée, puis que je sçay par expérience que mes pensées sont dans un flux continuel, et que je ne pense, jamais à la même chose deux momens de suite? mais quand je considére la difficulté de plus prés, je conçois aisément qu'elle vient de ce que le mot de Pensée est equivoque, et que je m'en sers indifférement pour signifier la pensée qui constituë ma nature, et pour désigner les différentes manieres d'estre de cette pensée; ce qui est une erreur extrême; car il y a cette différence entre la pensée qui constituë ma nature, et les pensées, qui n'en sont que des manieres d'estre, que la premier est une pensée fixe et permanente, et que les autres sont des pensées changeantes et passageres. C'est pourquoy, afin de donner une idée exacte de ma nature, je diray: Que je suis une pensée qui existe en elle-même, et qui est le sujet de toutes mes manieres de penser." (P-S. Régis. Cours Entier. Métaph. I: I. ch. II. cf. the Secondes Réflexions I. and Resp. to du Hamel, Paris, 1692. p. 34-36). "Pensée," thus used, clearly connotes substantiality. (cf. A.T. V. 221. 10-25).

137. A.T. IV. 444. 23-24. Descartes' italics.

138. "In primis nego eum juste queri, quasi dixissem me habere clarum et distinctum mei conceptum, priusquam sufficiente explicuissem qua ratione habeatur." A.T. VII. 518.1-3. cf. "Quod autem dixi, me nondum satis intelligere quis sit ille qui cogitat, non bona fide ut serio dictum accipis." A.T. VII. 351. 12-14.

139. A.T. VI. 18. 27-29. cf. VI. 19. 17-20.

140. A.T. VII. 140.18 - 141.2.

141. For the historical origins of this phrase v. É. Gilson Commentaire Historique, p. 208-209.

142. A.T. VII. 33. 1-17. cf. Pr. I. XI.

143. cf. Pr. I. XI; A.T. III. 394. 14-31 etc.

144. The fact is interesting to note, that Descartes does not consider the position which the Cogito occupies in his metaphysics to be in itself a sufficient proof that the mind is more intelligible in its nature than bodies are. The Scholastics believed that Being as such is intelligible, and that everything is intelligible in exact proportion to the amount of being it possesses. Minds have more being than bodies, consequently it is in the nature of minds to be better known than bodies. God is the supreme being, and therefore his nature is the most supremely intelligible. Only/

144. (contd.)

Only God's own intellect is capable of fully understanding his own Being. Though he is in his own nature the most intelligible of all beings, we know him only obscurely, though this obscurity, by reason of its object, is nevertheless a more perfect knowledge than that which we have of created things, however clear the latter knowledge may be.

Descartes accepts the Scholastic hierarchy. "I have accurately observed that there is exceedingly little known with certainty respecting corporeal objects, - that we know much more of the human mind, and still more of God himself." (A.T. III. 52.24 - 53.3) But the doubt forbids Descartes to concede that Being as such is intelligible. That is the very thing which he has to prove. Hence arises the curious inversion that the mind is demonstrated to be better known than the body, as part of the proof that we know the real. Since the hierarchy cannot be established from the side of Being, it must be established from the side of our ideas, of whose correspondence we are as yet uncertain. Thus the demonstration that I know myself better than I know bodies does not take the form of showing that I have more actual being than bodies, but that the ideas I have of bodies assure me rather of my own existence than of that of bodies. In spite of this revolution in the scholastic doctrine, Descartes preserves, with a curious integrity, the necessity of connecting existence and intelligibility. "Quid, inquam, ego qui hanc ceram videor tam/

144. (contd.)

tam distincte percipere? Nunquid me ipsum non tantum multo verius, multo certius, sed etiam multo distinctius evidentiusque, cognosco? Nam si iudico ceram existere, ex eo quod hanc videam, certe multo evidentius efficitur me ipsum etiam existere." A.T. VII. 33. 3-8.

There is a resemblance of circularity in the Cartesian proof.

145. A.T. IV. 291. 11-16; IV. 295. 22 - 296. 3.

146. A.T. VII. 131. 3-16.

147. A.T. VII. 34. 5-9. cf. "les pensées métaphysiques qui exercent l'entendement pur, servent à nous rendre la notion de l'âme familière." A.T. III. 692. 10-12.

148. A.T. VI. 32. 18-23.

149. v.n. 7.

150. A.T. IV. 444.4 - 445.8. cf. Port-Royal Logic Pt. 4. ch. VII: The axioms "que l'on donne ordinairement sont de si peu d'usage, qu'il est assez inutile de les savoir, car ce qu'ils appellent le premier principe de la connaissance: Il est impossible que la même chose soit et ne soit pas, est très-clair et très - certain; mais je ne vois point de recontre où il puisse jamais servir à nous donner aucune connaissance." See also P.S. Régis. Cours Entier. La Logique. Pt. 2. ch. III.

151. A.T. X. 522.

152. A.T. V. 146. cf. Resp. II. Post III.

153. A.T. IX. (2e). 9. 18-22.

154. "Le Système de Descartes." Ch. V.

155. A.T. VII. 25. 25-31.

156. A.T. X. 515.

157. The "definitio vulgaris." A.T. VII. 259. 14-15.

158. A.T. X. 516.

159. A.T. X. 517.

160. A.T. X. 521.

161. A.T. X. 522.

162. A.T. X. 523-524.

163. A.T. X. 525.

164. A.T. IX. 206. 17-23.

165. A.T. VII. 413. 2-11. cf. Arnauld "Des Vrayes et des Fausses Idées," 1683, Ch. I. Rule 4. "La 4 (sc. règle) est de ne point demander de definitions des termes qui sont clairs d'eux mêmes, et que nous ne pourrions qu'obscurcir en les voulant definir, par ce que nous ne pourrions les expliquer que par de moins clairs. Tels sont les mots de penser et d'estre/

165. (contd.)

d'estre dans cette proposition: Je pensé, donc je suis. De sorte que c'estoit une fort mechante objection que celle qui fut faite à M. Descartes en ces termes dans les sixiêmes objections."

166. A.T. X. 525.

167. A.T. X. 526-527.

168. A.T. X. 527.

169. Pascal. Oeuvres. ed. Brunschvicg. vol. IX. p. 240 ff.

170. Port-Royal Logic. Pt. 1. Ch. 12.

171. Cf. Pr. I: X.

172. For the explicit application of this method to things metaphysical as well as geometrical see the Port-Royal Logic Pt. I. Ch. XII and XIII. These chapters make it clear that Descartes' successors had a very clear conception of the relevance of this branch of mathematical doctrine to metaphysics. The Port-Royal Logic displays a complete indifference in giving examples of the use of this method mentioning either mathematical or metaphysical objects and terms. The twelfth chapter of the first part proposes nominal definitions as a remedy against all confused thinking, in whatever sphere.

173. Port-Royal Logic. Pt. I. Ch. XII.

174. A.T. X. 516.

175. Port-Royal Logic. Pt. 4. Ch. II.

176. "Des Vrayes..." Ch. II.

177. It is perhaps in this very theory of definition which we must seek the reason for the ambiguity which some scholars find in the terminology of Descartes.

Eucken (Geschichte der Philosophischen Terminologie, 1879, p. 88, quoted by Koyré, l'Idée de Dieu chez Descartes 1922. p. 8.) remarks that it is characteristic of Descartes' style to confound and use as synonyms terms separated by the acuteness of centuries. "Wir finden z. B. als gleichwertig: noticiae sive ideae, conceptus sive idea, idea sive cogitatio, res sive substantia, natura sive essentia, corpus sive materia, materialis sive corporeus, res corporales sive physicae, res immateriales sive metaphysicae, intellectualis sive cogitativus, formae sive species, formae sive attributa, mens sive anima, intellectus sive ratio, realitas sive perfectio, est sive existit, und vieles andere mehr. Kan die scholastische Spitzfindigkeit schärfer bekämpft werden als es durch dieses sive geschieht?" Koyré remarks, "Tous ces sive ne font pas la pensée de Descartes plus "claire et distincte" et on peut bien souvent regretter qu'il n'ait pas conservé un peu plus des "distinctions" et des "subtilités" scolastiques."

In/

177. (contd.)

In fact, an indifference to strict terminology is an inevitable consequence of the Cartesian philosophy. The correct method for seeking the truth is not, in the scholastic sense, a method of definition, but a method for the direct examination of the properties of the real. It is things and not logical distinctions which must primarily be regarded. The term is of use and of meaning only as indicating independent things. It is this prepossession with the real which explains Descartes' disgust with the scholastic distinguo, which it is clear, from the speech of Epistemon in the Recherche, that Descartes regards as a red-herring across the path of thought. Preoccupation with terms means for him distraction from the real and true.

It is interesting to observe the tendency among the later Cartesians to multiply and give precision to the terms of the philosophy of Descartes. His followers are much more technical than he himself. This tendency, however, was sterile and reactionary, and marks the decay of the pure doctrine of Descartes, making it resemble the tired scholasticism it was intended to replace. Here, as often, the true trend of Descartes' thought must be sought for in Idealism, the terms of which are quite incapable of being defined in the strict scholastic fashion. For the Idealists, concepts take their meaning as they are developed, what they mean being known at the end of the system, and

then/

177. (contd.)

then not by a brief definition. We may trace the origin of the logical doctrine underlying this to the mathematicians of the seventeenth century, who, refusing to consider it a scientific need to give preliminary definitions of terms such as "space" proceeded to develop the content of these conceptions by examining the realities which they represented, so that the true meaning of the term was contained in the whole system of propositions thus developed. Space, for instance, is defined by the whole system of geometry.

As removing knowledge from the domination of verbal subtleties this development has been of great value. Unfortunately, what was excellent in scholasticism was lost sight of, owing it its philosophy coming to be considered a tissue of purely verbal subtleties. Its "formulae" were always called "barren." It is only recently that the labours of scholars, such as M. Gilson and M. Maritain, have begun to make philosophers in general aware of the great spiritual realities which underlie the philosophy of classical scholasticism, and the rich beauty of its precise and formal conceptions.

(The work of Rudolf Eucken cited is suggested (v. pp. 79-94). Of the seventeenth century he says: "Es scheint bisweilen beinahe, als handle es sich in dem Kampf um die Wahrheit an erster Stelle um den Ausdruck, und als könnten/

177. (contd.)

könnten durch Reform der Sprache die realen Probleme gelöst werden" (p. 87).

Of the philosophy of Descartes: "Die Distinction tritt in zweite Linie, nicht von der äussem Erscheinung, sondern vonden Grundkräften her muss sie begriffen werden." (p. 89)

He considers that the tendency to avoid distinctions was carried too far by Descartes, but that it was a necessary consequence of his philosophy. "Der Fehler hängt aber auf's engste mit der Eigenart seiner Philosophie zusammen, die Analyse nur bis zu einem gewissen Punkt zu verfolgen, diesen aber als unmittelbar gegeben hinzustellen." (p. 90)

178. A.T. VII. 25. 31- 26. 2.

179. Oeuvres. IX. p. 240-241.

180. A.T. VII. 25. 14 ff.

181. A.T. VII. 488-90 passim.

182. A.T. VII. 491.11-25. cf. VII. 509. 17-19; VII. 510. 3-5 and 9-16; VII. 522. 9-11.

183. A.T. VII. 27. 24-29.

184. A.T. VII. 28. 20 ff.

185. Veitch, in his well-known edition of Descartes, remarks: "The method, when carried out in its integrity, is primarily one of observation and reflective analysis. (cf. the meditando et advertendo of A.T. VII. 515. 20) And in order to the faithful application of it, we must scrutinise carefully and fully every form of our conscious life, and every, even apparent, deliverance of our intelligence." p. LXIX.

186. This became a commonplace among the Cartesians: "ie n'ay iamais établ̀y la science à apprendre des mots, mais à demontrer les choses." (J. du Roure. La Philosophie divisée.. Avertissement).

187. It may not be out of place to observe that the doubt purges our knowledge of assumptions, but it does not deprive the real of its qualities. This may seem obvious, but in fact the metaphysic of Descartes has been badly misunderstood in this country through the ignoring of this truth. Professor Latta identified the method of doubt with a process of abstraction applied to the real. "The essence of Descartes' method of doubt is the endeavour to attain certainty by stripping from experience (as it is given in common consciousness) all specific qualities or determinations, on the ground that no contradiction in terms is involved in regarding each of these qualities by itself as non-existent or/

187. (contd.)

or other than it is. The result of the method is to give, as the residual ultimate certainty, nothing but the instrument by which the process of stripping has been carried out, viz. the thinking Ego, without any specific thought." ("Leibniz" pp. 24-25. v. pp. 22-27 passim.) Hence arises Professor Kemp Smith's interpretation of the Cartesian metaphysics. He speaks of the "Cartesian tendency to hypostasise abstract and empty conceptions into absolute realities." (Studies in the Cartesian Philosophy. p. 133). "These conceptions, however, of extension and of consciousness... are in reality the emptiest in content" (op. cit. p. 134).

The abstract conception of the self attributed to Descartes by these authors rests on a simple misinterpretation of the doubt. The doubt does not strip our mind of its "specific qualities or determinations," that is, of its thoughts. What it does is to forbid us to assume that our ideas are true. Our ideas, in so far as they are merely taken as modes of our thought are not affected by the doubt. Our mind, that is, is not stripped of its ideas insofar as these are considered only as related to itself. Our consciousness, as such, remains full and concrete.

What, then, is the situation when we make ourselves the objects of our thought? It is this, that we may make no assumptions as to what our nature is, since the doubt has/

187. (contd.)

has revealed to us how many prejudices we harbour, and we must be careful to escape prejudice in this matter. But there is clearly a vast difference between freeing the intellect of its prejudices, and stripping its object of its qualities. It is our minds which are suspected to be without truth, not their objects which are without their concrete reality. When, therefore, the self is posited by the Cogito, it is we who know scarcely anything about the self, not the self about which there is nothing further to be known.

On the contrary, Descartes' attitude is essentially realistic and empirical. Descartes treats the self as the geometer treats space: as that about which there is nothing to be assumed but a great deal to be discovered. Thus the examination of the self in the second Meditation is not the illegitimate impletion of a thing rendered empty by abstraction, but an explication of the content of a thing which has been examined for the very reason that it is believed to be concrete.

Cf. "Neque enim substantias immediate cognoscimus, ut alibi notatum est, sed tantum ex eo quod percipiamus quasdam formas sive attributa, quae cum alicui rei debeant inesse ut existant, rem illam cui insunt vocamus Substantium.

"Si vero postea eandem illam substantiam spoliare vellemus iis attributis ex quibus illam cognoscimus, omnem nostram/

187. (contd.)

nostram de ipsa notitiam destrueremus; atque ita verba quidem aliqua de ipsa possemus proferre, sed non quorum significationem clare et distincte perciperemus." A.T. VII. 222. 5-14.

If existence by itself is not observed by us (Pr. I. LII) then so far as we from reaching certainty by despoiling substance of its modes, that that would be the surest method of destroying all possibility of knowledge.

188. A.T. VII. 130.30 - 131.18.

189. A.T. VII. 136.25-137.7. cf. VII. 133. 5-8.

190. A.T. VII. 78. 15-20.

191. A.T. VII. 13. 5-19.

192. Pr. I. LI.

193. Pr. I. LII.

194. In Pr. I. XLIX. Descartes speaks of innumerable axioms or general principles "quae quidem omnia recenseri facile non possunt, sed nec etiam ignorari, cum occurrit occasio ut de iis cogitemus."

195. Thus Régis says (Cours Entier. Métaph. Avertissement): "Et parce qu'il n'y a rien de plus nécessaire dans la recherche de la vérité que d'éviter les mots équivoques, et d'établir/

195. d'établir certains propositions qui soient connuës par elles-mêmes pour en déduire d'autres qui sont moins connuës, nous ajoûterons à quelques Chapitres de la premiere Partie du premier Livre, des Réflexions, qui contiendront non seulement les définitions des mots dont nous nous serons servis, mais encore certains axiomes, c'est-à-dire certaines véritez qui se seront présentées comme d'elles-mêmes."

"Les Axiomes que nous proposerons ne soient fondez que sur l'existence, et sur la nature particuliere de l'esprit et du corps."

The definitions and axioms given are, for instance, as follows: That nothing has no properties (Reflex. I. Ax. I); what the words substance and mode signify (Reflex. II. defn. I); what is meant by words l'esprit, sensation, and idea (Ibid. defns. III, IV); that every mode presupposes a substance in which it exists (Ibid. Ax. I); that modes are attached in such a manner to their proper substance that they can never become the modes of another substance (Ibid. Ax. II); that everything which exists is a substance or a mode (Ibid. Ax. III) etc.

It may be remarked that the Cartesians believe that any definition or axiom reflexively derivable at one stage of an analytic proof, may be used explicitly at a later stage. Thus Régis uses the causal axioms of Réflexions/

195. (contd.)

Réflexions I in the proof by analysis of God's existence. Such a use is considered to be quite different from the procedure of synthesis which, not starting with the examination of the particular, enunciates these truths as general principles at the commencement of its expositions.

196. The Cartesian doctrine is: "Les modes dépendent des substances, non seulement pour exister, mais encore pour estre conçûs." (P.S. Régis, Cours Entier. La Logique. Pt. IV. ch. II.)

197. A.T. III. 506. 8-13.

198. v. É. Gilson. Index scol.-cart. text 2, p.2.

199. Pr. I. LIII.

200. Pr. I. LIII.

201. Pr. I. LXII, I: LXIII.

202. Pr. I: LXIII.

203. See the important text: A.T. VII. 129.6 - 130.5.

204. Compare A.T. VII. 33.1 ad. fin. with Pr. I: XI.

205. How completely opposed the attitude of Descartes is to all wonder and all mysticism comes home strikingly if we recall the metaphysical rhapsody, in the Confessions of Augustine, on/

205. (contd.)

on the nature of memory, while reading that letter in which Descartes says that he is dissecting the heads of different animals to explain in what consists imagination, memory, etc. A.T. I. 263.

It must be remembered that Descartes distinguishes between imagination as a physical and as a mental modification; so that what is here intended is not that Descartes meant to discover the nature of consciousness by physical researches, but that his attitude to the powers of the mind is the direct, matter-of-fact attitude of the physiologist to the parts of a corpse.

206. A.T. VII. 225.26-226.7.

207. "Des vrayes et des fausses Idées," Ch. V. Postulate I.

208. Cf. Port-Royal Logic, Pt. 4. Ch. II.

209. Cours Entier. Metaph. I. I. XI.

210. It may also be remarked that the nature of the analytic method explains the relation of the first book of the Principles to the Meditations. The former comprises the "reflexions" made upon the latter. It contains axioms and definitions operative in the Meditations but not explicit there. Therefore, if the analytic method be properly grasped, the Principles can be used to explain/

210. (contd.)

explain the Meditations in a manner which is precise and scientific. Attempts to explain the Meditations by means of the general truths stated in Principles I must not lose sight of the fact that the Meditations represent the actual order of the affirmation of all metaphysical truths and principles.

211. "Car puis-que tout le monde convient, que la substance n'est autre chose que le premier sujet de quelque proprieté ou accident, il faut de nécessité que ce qui possede en nous la faculté de penser, et qui est le premier sujet dans lequel toutes nos pensées en particulier sont reçûës, soit une substance; Ainsi quoi que nous ne fachions pas encore de quelle nature et de quelle condition elle est, nous ne pouvons pourtant pas douter que nous n'ayons en nous une substance qui pense, qui est ce qu'on appelle l'Ame ou l'Esprit de l'Homme." (De la Forge. "de l'Esprit de l'Homme." 1725. p. 6)

212. P. S. Régis. Cour Entier. Métaph. I. I. IV.

213. A.T. VIII. (2^{e}). 354. 18-27. cf. Pr. I. VIII; and A.T. X. 518.

214. A.T. VII. 198. 12-19.

215. A.T. VII. 27. 18-23.

216. A.T. VII. 27. 24-29.

217. A.T. VII, 28. 20-29. 20. "Nous ne pouvons bien connoitre ce que nous sommes, que par une serieuse attention à ce qui se passe en nous." (Arnauld, "Des vrayes et des fausses Idées." Ch. II).

218. Pr. I. XI.

219. A.T. VII, 129. 21-27.

220. A.T. VII, 176. 1-26. cf. "neque enim substantias immediate cognoscimus" etc. A.T. VII. 222. 5-9.

221. A.T. VII. 386. 22-387. 5.

222. A.T. VII. 200. 20-24.

223. A.T. VII. 199. 1-12.

224. A.T. VII, 199. 12-14.

225. cf. A.T. VII, 7. 20-8.15.

226. A.T. VII. 33. 1-3.

227. A.T. VII. 59. 5-10.

This passage occurs in the fourth Meditation as an illustrative example of a proposition to which the will is free to refrain from assenting. Obviously, however, it has a further use, since its appearance would otherwise be merely awkward. It is not likely that a writer as/

227. (contd).

as careful in expressing himself as Descartes was, would have risked confusion to his readers by using merely as an example, a proposition charged with a great metaphysical import. It is probably correct to say that the proposition is intended not so much as a mere example of a proposition to which the will can not yet assent, than as a reminder of the stage at which our metaphysical proofs had arrived at the end of the second Meditation.

228. A.T. VII. 220. 1-5.

229. A.T. VII. 226. 8-26.

230. A.T. VII. 66. 4-6; VII. 194. 12; Pr.I. XVI; etc.

231. A.T. VII. 20. 23-27.

232. Pr. I: XXX.

233. A.T. VII. 357. 7-17.

234. A.T. VII. 27. 29-28.2.

235. A.T. VII. 227. 11-19.

236. A.T. VII. 264. 20-265.13.

237. A.T. VII. 357. 7-20.

238. A.T. X. 418. 13-14.

239. A.T. III. 474.9-475.5.

240. A.T. III. 475, 22-25.

241. A.T. VII. 439. 16 ff.

242. A.T. VII. 487. 13-18.

243. A.T. VII. 492. 17-19.

244. R. P. Nicholas Poisson. "Remarques sur la Méthode...." pp. 54-55.

245. R. P. Nicholas Poisson. op. cit. p. 199. What is important is not his defence of the cercle, but his admission that it is there.

246. A.T. VII. 15. 3-6.

247. "Des vrayes et des fausses Idées." Ch. V. ax. 6.

248. A.T. VII, 37. 13-22.

249. "Des vrayes et des fausses Idées." Ch. VI.

250. i.e. with respect also to the mind. cf. P. S. Régis: "Desirant sçavoir ensuite si une chose qui pense est corporelle ou spirituelle, j'examine l'idée d'une chose qui pense." (Cours Entier. Logique, Pt. 4. Ch. II). It would be a radical misinterpretation of the metaphysic of Descartes to believe that, because I am immediately aware/

250. (contd).

aware of my existence, I have an immediate knowledge of my nature. I know myself insofar as I am objectively present in my idea of myself. Thus, in the enquiry as to the formal or eminent causes of ideas in the third Meditation Descartes says: "Ex his autem meis ideis, praeter illam quae me ipsum mihi exhibet, de qua hic nulla difficultas esse potest...." A.T. VII. 42. 29-30. That is to say that I am represented to myself by an idea, and that there is no difficulty in seeing that I am able to be the formal or eminent cause of that which is in this idea objectively or by representation.

If this is to be properly grasped a few distinctions must be borne in mind.

My existence is known by a simple inspection of the mind, that is to say, no more is required to the certainty of my existence than that I should take note at any time that I have an idea. "I am - I exist: this is certain; but how often? As often as I think." (A.T. VII. 27. 9-10 cf. VII. 33. 3-17).

"Je ne mets autre différence entre l'âme et ses idées, que comme entre un morceau de cire et les diverses figures qu'il peut recevoir." (A.T. IV. 113. 22-24), says Descartes to P. Mesland. If this is true, then to have an idea is to be immediately aware of that of which it is a mode.

It is to be observed, however, that this immediate awareness/

250. (contd).

awareness of what we are is not an express knowledge of what we are. An idea of a stone, an idea even of something purely chimerical, give me an immediate awareness of what I am since our thought is sui conscia. But did these ideas give me an express knowledge of what I am, then the science of metaphysics, in which we expressly aim at forming a clear and distinct idea of the mind would be superfluous. It is this express idea of ourselves as such through which we are present to ourselves objectively or by representation.

In the letter to P. Mesland Descartes refers only to the manner in which ideas are present to the mind as modes, i.e. to the formal essence of ideas. But the modal relation of ideas to the mind is a relation only of modification which, though it involves, in the instance of mind, the self-awareness of the thing modified, is not strictly speaking a relation of cognition, since we know through the medium of ideas taken, not formally or as modes, but objectively or as referring to something else (Medit. III). That is why ideas considered formally are neither true nor false. Though the idea even of a material thing persuades me that I am, thought being sui conscia, yet some other idea than this, formed reflexively, is required expressly to inform me that the former idea persuades me that I am. If all ideas show me that I am a thing which thinks them, yet what more precisely they concur in showing me to be is a thing which I grasp by another idea.

The/

250 (contd).

The simple awareness that I have of myself is an idea or perception; but before I can arrive at a scientific knowledge of what I am, I must cease to regard this idea virtually, that is, as merely present, and make it the special object of reflection. I have begun to think metaphysically when I have commenced expressly to consider the idea of myself. By metaphysical thinking I form a clear and distinct idea of myself which has me as its special object.

There is, however, a potent source of confusion in this idea, and peculiarly in this idea. The idea of myself stands in a twofold relation to me. Formally taken, it is merely a mode of myself, and makes me aware of what I am in the fashion of the idea of an extended thing. It makes me aware of myself simply because thought is sui conscia. But the metaphysical idea of myself has also the peculiar characteristic of representing me. Of no other idea can it be said that it is related to me both modally and by representation, the ideas of God and of material things being related to me modally, and by representation to things other than myself.

Thus, while it may be said that the idea of myself implies an immediate awareness of myself, it is not by virtue of this awareness that the idea expressly informs me of what I am, but only by virtue of its objective essence in respect of which I am the mediate object of that idea.

251. "Des vrayes et des fausses Idées." Ch. VI. cf. P. S. Régis. Cours Entier. Métaph. Bk. I. Pt. I. Ch. III. Réflex. ax. I.

252. v. É. Gilson. "Commentaire Historique." pp. 318-323. J. Maritain, "Trois Reformateurs." (revised edition), n. 50.

253. Resp. II. defn. I, cf. Pr. I. IX.

254. Resp. II. defn. II.

255. A.T. VII. 37. 13-17; Pr. I. XIII; etc.

256. A.T. VII. 37. 3-12; VII. 42. 11-13.

257. A.T. VII. 40. 7-20.

258. "images or pictures." How these words must be understood will appear more clearly later.

259. A.T. VII. 41. 17-20.

260. A.T. VII. 41. 27.

261. A.T. VII. 41. 30-42.11.

262. Resp. II. defn. III. "me autem loqui de idea, quae nunquam est extra intellectum, et ratione cuius <u>esse objective</u> non aliud significat quam esse in intellectu eo modo quo objecta in illo esse solent." A.T. VII. 102. 12-15.

263. Arnauld. "Des vrayes et des fausses Idées." Ch. V, defn. 5.

264. Op. cit. Ch. V. defn. 8.

265. Op. cit. Ch. V. defn. 10.

For the contrast of 'formal' and 'objective' see further the following very clear texts: "Par l'estre formel des idées j'entens la proprieté qu'elles ont d'estre des modifications de l'ame, et que par leur estre objectif j'entens la proprieté qu'elles ont de representer leurs objets." "Par l'estre formel des idées M. Descartes et les Cartesiens entendent, non la vertu de representer les objets, mais la proprieté de modifier l'ame." P.S. Régis. "Réponse aux Reflexions Critiques de M. du Hamel. 1692. Ch. VI.

266. The meaning of the word "represent" presents considerable difficulties.

"Il est constant qu'on ne peut expliquer la ressemblance desidées par la ressemblance des tableaux, parce que dans le fond les tableaux ressemblent, et les idées ne ressemblent pas; d'où il s'ensuit que le mot de representation est fort équivoque, quand on l'attribuë aux ideés et aux tableaux. Quand on l'attribuë aux tableaux, il signifie representer en ressemblant; et quand on l'attribuë aux idées, il signifie seulement faire connoître/

connoître sans ressembler." (P. S. Régis. "Réponse aux Reflexions Critiques de M. du Hamel." Ch. VIII).

"Ils (sc. les Cartesiens) n'ont entendu par le mot de representer, autre chose que faire connoître.... n'estant plus obligez de chercher aucune ressemblance entre les idées et les objets, et s'appliquant uniquement à examiner comment il se peut faire que les idées, qui n'ont rien de semblable aux objets, fassent pourtant connoître les objets; ce qui fait toute la difficulté. Ils ont donc remarqué que les idées sont des connoissances, et que la nature des connoissances est de faire connoître, sans qu'il soit possible de remonter plus haut, pour demontrer comment la lumiere fait voir... parce que dans le fond les idées et la lumiere font connoître et voir par elles-mesmes, et par leur propre nature. C'est pourquoy les tableaux different des idées, en ce que les idées font connoître simplement en faisant connoître, et que les tableaux font connoître en representant par des lineamens et par des couleurs semblables aux couleurs et aux lineamens de leur original." (P. S. Régis. loc. cit.).

The difficulty of du Hamel is classical: ".... il faudroit auparavant connoître les objets, et il est certain qu'avant de former les idées, il est impossible de connoître les objets." (Op. cit. Ch. X).

267. Resp. II. defn. IX.

268. Port-Royal Logic. Pt. 4. Ch. VI. cf. "Les idées ne se representent point elles-mesmes; elles representent seulement leurs objets, et elles les representent aussi necessairement que les tableaux representent leur originaux, sans quoy nous serions bien assurez que nous aurions des idées, mais non pas qu'il y eût aucune chose dans le monde qui répondit à ces idées; ce qui détruiront toute la certitude humaine." (P. S. Régis. Seconde Replique à la Reponse du R. P. Malebranche. 1694. p. 24).

269. v. É. Gilson. Commentaire Historique. p. 305.

270. Resp. II. Ax. 10.

271. Port-Royal Logic. Pt. 4. Ch. VII. Ax. II.

272. "Le Songe de Descartes." pp. 131-132.

273. For the deliberate separation of metaphysical truths and metaphysical things, and the detachment of the former from the existent, see the following text: "Il y a plusieurs Philosophes parmi les Anciens, qui ont traité de la Métaphysique; mais il faut avouer que jusqu'a à ce Siecle il ne s'en est trouvé aucun, qui ait connu assez distinctement l'objet de cette science, ayant tous confondu les veritez Métaphysiques, qui sont certaines propositions/

273. (contd).

propositions claires et évidentes, qui servent de regle pour juger de la verité des choses, mais que ne nous font connoître l'existence d'aucune, avec les choses Métaphysiques qui sont des substances intelligentes, séparées de la matiere; et plûtôt connuës que la matiere." (P. S. Régis. Cours Entier. Métaph. Avertissement).

As a result of this separation there are clearly two main questions for metaphysics: I. Is metaphysics a measure of the truth? II. What are the natures of the things which are its objects, especially of minds?

274. A. T. VII. 62. 20-26.

275. A. T. VII. 63. 10-11.

276. A. T. VII. 63. 12-15.

277. A. T. VII. 71. 6-9.

278. A. T. VII. 20. 23-27.

279. "Mais j'ai bien de quoi me consoler, parce qu'on joint ici ma Physique avec les pures Mathématiques, auxquelles je souhaite surtout qu'elle ressemble." A.T. IX. 212. 30-213.2.

280. Pr. I. LX.

281. "Réponse aux Reflexions Critiques de M. du Hamel," Ch. XII.

282. A.T. VII. 226. 3-5; Pr. I; LI; etc.

283. A.T. III, 476. 3-14; VII. 132. 7-133.4.

284. Resp. II. prop. IV; and earlier in this study.

285. Thus M. Gilson says that the real distinction implies the existence of the things distinguished, in the sense that before we can prove that body and mind are really distinct we must prove that bodies exist (Commentaire Historique, p. 309).

But this cannot be upheld. The consecution of the Meditations, about to be traced, shows that the proof of the existence of bodies depends from the real distinctions already being proved. Furthermore, the texts adduced by M. Gilson do not really support his view. The reasons given by Descartes in these passages for not proving the real distinction of mind and body in the second Meditation are the hyperbolical doubts of which "una eousque processit ut de hoc ipso (nempe quod res juxta veritatem sint tales quales ipsas percipimus) certus esse non possem." As a result of this doubt the reservation, quoted by M. Gilson, is made as a reason for not proving the real distinction in Meditation II; "quia nesciebam esset ne corpus idem quod mens necne." (Comm., p. 309). The real distinction thus waits upon the/

285. (contd).

the proof of the truth of our ideas; but since, for Descartes, truth is not the correspondence of ideas with the existent but the possible, the real distinction is made between possible substances.

286. See the example of the basket of applies in Resp. VII (A.T. VII. 481). "Puer triennis posset respondere, nihil obstare quominus disceret ab iis quae olim noverat, quia, etsi fuissent abdicata, cum dubia erant, poterant tamen resumi postea, cum vera esse constaret." (A.T. VII. 514. 10-13).

Descartes' replies to the misconceptions of the R. P. Bourdin on the nature of the doubt show quite clearly that the doubt affects my belief in the testimony of my ideas rather than the proper nature of the things thought about. (Doubt is something separable from the objects doubted.) My doubt being only a mode of myself, doubtfulness cannot be said to belong to the proper essence of anything merely because I happen to doubt it. I cannot infer from my doubt to the dubious nature of the objects of my thought, for the very reason that my doubt reveals to me that I do not really know the nature of these objects. It is, therefore, always possible that my prejudices, dismissed by my doubt, may be reinstated as truths, since it would be itself a prejudice to judge that the objects of thought are not such that these prejudices may be true.

287. A.T. VII. 45. 2-8.

288. A.T. V. 163.

289. Printed in Clerselier's edition of Descartes' correspondence, vol. III. lett. 125. It is reproduced in Cousin X. 538 ff.

290. A.T. III. 693. 18-26.

291. A.T. III. 691. 20-692.3.

292. De Emend. IV. 21.

293. A.T. VI. 4. 6-10.

294. A.T. VII. 43.5.

295. A.T. XII. 414.

296. v. §§ 5 of this study.

297. A.T. VI. 3. 9-15.

298. A.T. VI. 3. 29-31.

299. A.T. VI. 2. 20-3.2.

300. A.T. VI. 3. 27-29.

301. It is hoped that what is said in this section may be of some use for the history of modern Idealism. The view/

301. (contd).
view taken here is that it was sown in corruption. But whether or not it has been raised in incorruption is a further question on which no final judgment is suggested here. It is too grave a matter in which to risk any prejudice.

Among the followers of Descartes, Cordemoy devoted a whole work to the problem of the existence of other minds, in which he develops the suggestion of the Discourse on Method, in the fifth book of which speech is said to be the mark of a rational soul (Géraud de Cordemoy, "Discours Physique de la Parole," 1668).

Malebranche opens the door to Romanticism wide by denying that we can have a clear and distinct idea of the soul. From the fact that we cannot have the sensory or affective experience of other men, through which confused experience alone we have knowledge of the soul, he concludes that we know the minds of other men only by conjecture. (Recherche, Bk. III. ch. VII). We have no ideas of other souls since these ideas remain shut up in God's mind. We know that in God are immutable laws, and we must believe that by these he acts similarly in all minds.

In Leibniz the windows of the monad are still more firmly shut. But there is no need to follow the history of Pantheism to thinkers like Bosanquet, in whose philosophy/

301. (contd).

philosophy we are not sure whether we are ourselves or someone else.

It is clear, however, that Idealism stands in suspicion of having carried on a heritage of self-sufficiency, which may prove disastrous to the person of the philosopher, and that, imbrued as it is with Stoicism, it represents the stand of Paganism against the spirituality of Christendom.

302. Eudoxus, it is true, declares himself free of the malady; but the point is that this declaration is itself a symptom of the disease.

303. In November, 1646, twenty seven years after his dream, Descartes writes to Chanut that the motto which guides him is:-

> Illi mors gravis incubat
> Cui, notus nimis omnibus
> Ignotus moritur sibi. (Seneca, Thyestis. A.T.IV. 537. 11-13)

Still a Stoic, and still unknown to himself!

304. Clearly the <u>cercle cartesien</u> may be taken to be merely a particular case of something absolutely fundamental in the character of Descartes. The call to trust in something hypothetical is the legacy left by the Cartesian philosophy. Since then, philosophy, and often Protestant theology, has called upon us to live <u>as if</u> we knew the real and the true. Thus deeply is the love of illusion planted/

304. (contd.)

planted in the flesh. But clearly no one can wholly surrender himself to any reality while a part of him responds to a doubt of it. That is a false view of human nature.

305. A.T. VII. 18. 19-19.7.

306. There seems good reason to believe that the paranoia, present in every human mind as a normal feature of it, was exaggerated in Descartes's, and that he separated thought from being because he himself had lost his grip upon reality. To doubt what he was, and then to produce a system of wonderful coherency in order to persuade himself that he was an immaterial substance - this is but the heroic and unsuccessful struggle of his mind against the tendency, deeply rooted in it, of finding no sure hold in the real, and taking refuge in a logic which has only mental states as its objects.

There is an interesting passage in the Discourse where Descartes speaks of those who in their conduct "are apt to fall into the extravagances of the knights-errant of Romance, and to entertain projects that exceed their powers" (A.T.VI.631-7.10). We think, of course, of Don Quixote, tilting at his own dreams; and we are right to think of him. If Don Quixote was a knight-errant for love of his delusions, Descartes was a philosopher for fear of them. We are fascinated by both because each expresses something tragic belonging to the very stuff of human nature.