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On the History of Modern Philosophy

Translation, Introduction, and Notes
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There are various reasons why, at least as an addition to an introduction to philosophy itself, a look back to earlier systems can also be advisable. Science (*Wissenschaft*) is also a product of time and constantly develops. Everyone who thinks he is in a position to advance science a big or a small step forward will tend of his own accord to show his relationship to what precedes him, in order thereby to make clear from which point of development or standstill he is taking up science and towards which subsequent goal he intends to advance it. He will stimulate greater interest in his own researches if he shows how, from stage to stage until now, the highest goal has not been achieved. The beginner in philosophy in this way already gets to know, albeit only historically, the issues in question and which of these have primarily concerned the minds of the last centuries. Finally, if it is also necessary, in order to learn to value and judge the truth, to know error, then such a presentation is the best and most gentle way to show the beginner the error which is to be overcome. But the weight of all these reasons increases if it is not just a question of a new method or of changed views in particular matters, but of a change in the concept of philosophy itself. In this case it will then be desirable if this concept, independently of the truth which it initially has or has in itself, appears at the same time as the natural historical result of earlier unsuccessful endeavours, no longer in its simple generality, but rather as a necessary result of precisely *this* time.

Descartes

The history of modern European philosophy is counted from the overthrow of scholasticism until the present time. Renatus Cartesius (René Descartes), born 1596, the initiator of modern philosophy, a revolutionary, in the spirit of his nation, began by breaking off all connection with earlier philosophy, by rubbing out, as if with a sponge, everything that had been achieved in this science before him, and by building it up again from the beginning, as if no one had ever philosophised before he did. The necessary consequence of such a total tearing away was, though, that philosophy regressed, as if into a second childhood, a kind of immaturity which Greek philosophy had already almost surpassed with its first steps. On the other hand, this regression to simplicity could be advantageous to the science itself; it withdrew thereby from the breadth and extension which it had already received in antiquity and in the middle ages, almost to a single problem, which now, by successive expansion, and after everything was prepared for it in detail, has grown into the great, all-inclusive task of modern philosophy. It is almost the first definition of philosophy to offer itself if one says philosophy is the science which begins absolutely at the beginning. It had, therefore, already to have a big effect, even if one only began at the beginning in the sense that one did not presuppose anything from previous philosophy and did not presuppose that *it* proved anything. The Greek Thales is supposed to have asked what the First and the Oldest in the whole nature of things was. Here, beginning at the beginning was meant objectively. But Descartes only asks: "What is the First *for me?*", and to that he could, of course, only answer: "I myself, and even then I myself at the most with respect to *being* (*Seyn*)". To this first, immediate certainty all other certainty for him was only subsequently to attach itself, everything was only to be true to the extent that it connected to that immediate certainty. But obviously the proposition: *I am* is at the most the starting point for me – and *only* for me; the connection which results from the attachment to this proposition or to the immediate con-

sciousness of one's own being can, therefore, always only be a subjectively logical one, i.e. I can always only infer: to the extent to which I certainly am, I must *assume* as certainly that *A, B, C,* etc., are. But how *A, B* and *C* are really connected to each other, or with their *true* principle, or even only how they are connected to the I am itself, is not shown at all. Philosophy achieves here, therefore, no more than a merely subjective certainty, and a certainty not about the kind of existence [of the subject] (which alone is really dubious), but only about the existence of everything outside the subject. This much [about Descartes] in general.

But now to describe the procedure of Descartes in detail: he takes it as his principle provisionally to doubt everything, indeed, in order to be very sure and completely certain that he had freed himself from every prejudice, to consider everything to be *false* which up to that time he had assumed to be true. This maxim was vigorously opposed by theologians, in particular; they thought that in this manner Descartes was a *temporary* atheist; if someone died before he had written or found the hoped-for demonstration of the existence of God, he would die as an atheist; in this way, at least provisionally, a pernicious doctrine was being taught; but one should not do evil in order that good should result, and suchlike. But the meaning is really only that one should not assume anything to be true in philosophy before one has known it in its context. When I begin philosophy, I do not really yet know anything philosophically. This goes without saying; on the other hand, that maxim is to be less approved of if it leads to wanting to acknowledge only what is certain *to me,* thus, as only *I myself* am immediately certain of myself, to acknowledge only *my self* as foundation, for this so-called immediate certainty, my own being (*Seyn*), is in fact just as incomprehensible – indeed, perhaps even more incomprehensible – than everything that I have assumed provisionally to be false or at least doubtful. If I understand the doubt about things properly, then I have just as much to doubt my own being (*Seyn*). The doubt of Descartes, which initially only extends as far as things known through the senses, cannot relate to their being *real* at all or in every sense – for in some sense or other I must grant reality to them. The true sense of my doubt can only be that I cannot believe these things which are knowable through the senses to be in *that* sense in which the *original*-being – being *through itself* (*das von sich selbst Seyende*) – is; for their being (*Seyn*) is not original being, we see in them something which has become; and to the extent that everything which has become is *only dependently* and ***as such*** *doubtfully* real, one can say they have *in themselves* a doubtful existence, or it is their nature to waver between being and not-being. But I must also recognise precisely this doubtful being

(*Seyn*) in myself; for the same reason that I must doubt things, I would have also to doubt myself. However, the doubt of Descartes in the reality of things really does not have the speculative significance which we just gave it; the basis of his doubt is only empirical, as he says himself, because he has often discovered that the senses deceived him, because many a time he has convinced himself in a dream that this or that was outside of him which afterwards turned out to be the opposite; indeed he adds that he has known people who felt pain in limbs which they had had removed long ago – in this argument one recognises the former military man. Incidentally, it seemed reasonable to reflect that such persons only felt pain in limbs which they once had, and there is no example of anyone who felt pains in limbs which they never had. Through this last experience, however, he thought himself even particularly justified also to doubt the existence of his own body.

From here he then proceeds to cognitions which are *not* drawn from the senses, which are therefore endowed with the character of necessity and generality, namely mathematical truths, for whose dubitability he cites the strangest reason, which is not, as was that of the ancient sceptics, taken from the inside of these objects and their premises themselves, but from something external. Namely, so he explains, although I am as convinced as I am convinced of my own life, and cannot help for a moment knowing, that the three angles of a triangle = two right angles, my soul has the opinion – I do not really know whether taught to it or even implanted in it – that there is a God, of whom I have heard that He can do everything and that I (the doubter) am completely His creature, with all I am and know. Now He could, he continues, also have made me be deceived even about *those* things which otherwise appeared to me as the most clear. As if one did not have far more cause to doubt such a doubt. Before one threw up this last doubt, one would have to cite some interest or other which the creator could have in deceiving me with necessary truths. The true relationship in which philosophy finds itself at the beginning to everything, and thus also to mathematical truths, is not to doubt them (for how would philosophy anyway already come to make them the object of its thinking?), but simply to leave them open until, in the course of its investigation beginning absolutely from the beginning, philosophy is led of its own accord to the premises upon which its truth depends.

Having doubted in this not really very deep manner everything which has come before his consciousness, Descartes asks whether he is left with nothing at all which he could still doubt as well, for the reasons given earlier or for other reasons. Although he seemed now to have doubted everything, he still had something left, namely himself

who was doubting in this way, not so far as he consisted of head, hands, feet and other bodily limbs – for he had already doubted the reality of these – but only to the extent that he was doubting, i.e. to the extent that he *was thinking*. By now carefully investigating this, he thought he found that he could not doubt *himself*, to the extent that he *was thinking*, for *any* of the reasons which moved him to doubt the other things. For, he says, whether I am awake or dreaming, I *am thinking* and am, and if I should have erred in relation to everything else, I still *was*, for I erred, *Eram quia errabam*, and the creator of nature, however elaborate He is assumed to be, cannot deceive me in this respect, for to be deceived, I must *be*. Indeed, the more reasons for doubt that are brought forward, the more reasons I gain which convince me of my existence, for the more often I doubt, the more I prove my existence – therefore, I prove that, whatever way I turn, I am after all compelled to break out into the words: "I doubt, I think, therefore I am"!

This, then, is the famous *Cogito ergo sum* [I think, therefore I am] of Descartes, with which, it must be said, for a long time the keynote, so to speak, of modern philosophy was established, which had worked like a spell by which philosophy was caught in the realm of the subjective and of the fact of the solely subjective consciousness. But on a higher level there was in the *Cogito ergo sum*, or in the decision to consider everything doubtful for the present, until it was connected in some way or other with that one thing which was immediately certain – in this decision lay the most decisive breaking away from all authority, the freedom of philosophy was achieved thereby, which it could not lose from this moment on.[1]

It is clear enough how Descartes was led to this *Cogito ergo sum*. His main doubt was how one could convince oneself of any form of ex-

[1] A special peculiarity lies for us in the fact that this beginning of completely free philosophy was, to all appearances, made in Bavaria, that, therefore, the foundation of modern philosophy was laid here. Descartes had, as he says himself in his essay *De Methodo*, which I take this opportunity to recommend to everyone as a splendid exercise, come to Germany in order to see the beginning of the Thirty Years' War; he had been present under Maximilian I at the battle on the white mountain and the capture of Prague, where, though, he primarily only made inquiries about Tycho Brahe and his unpublished work. In 1619, when he returned to the camp from Frankfurt, from the coronation of Ferdinand II, he had his winter quarters in a place on the Bavarian border, where he, as he says, found no one with whom he would have liked to converse, and there he conceived (aged twenty-three) the first ideas of his philosophy, which he, however, published much later. In the same way as Descartes began to philosophise in Bavaria, he later found in Princess Elisabeth, daughter of the unfortunate Elector of the Palatinate, Karl Friedrich, the so-called Winter King, a great and devoted admirer, just as it was later again a prince from the house of the Palatinate who became Spinoza's protector.

istence at all. This doubt seemed insurmountable to him with regard to external things. We imagine [*vorstellen*, which also has the sense of "represent", or "have ideas of"] external things – this is not denied, and we are even compelled to imagine them – but whether the things which we imagine and how we imagine them really *are*, namely *outside* ourselves, are like that independently of ourselves, that is the question to which there is no immediate answer. Descartes wanted, therefore, to find a point where thinking or imagining (*Vorstellen*) (for he does not distinguish the two) and being (*Seyn*) immediately coincide – and this he thought he had found through his *Cogito ergo sum*, and, because all doubt (in his opinion) is only related to existence, he believed that he had overcome *all* doubt with this proposition. In the *Cogito ergo sum* Descartes thought he had recognised thinking and being as ***immediately*** identical. For he most definitely denies in later explanations that the proposition *Cogito ergo sum* is meant by him as a conclusion (a syllogism). To a complete conclusion, it is true, a major proposition would belong, which would be as follows: *Omne, quod cogitat, est* [Each thing which thinks is] – the minor proposition would then be *Atque cogito* [and I think], and the conclusion *Ergo sum* [therefore I am]. Admittedly Descartes cannot have meant it like this; for thereby the proposition "I am" would become one which is mediated through a general proposition; in this syllogistic form the immediate certainty would be lost. The opinion of Descartes is, then, that the *Sum* [I am] is enclosed in the *Cogito* [I think], already comprised in it, and given without any further mediation. From this it follows, then, that the *cogito* really means the same as *Cogitans sum* [I am thinking] (for the verb anyway has no other meaning and is only a contraction of predicate and copula: e.g., *Lego* [I read] means nothing different from *Sum legens*, "I am reading" or "one who is reading"). Besides this, *Sum cogitans* cannot mean that it is as though I were *nothing* but thinking, as if I were only there in thinking or as if thinking were the substance of my being. For Descartes himself only says the "I think" *as* he thinks or doubts, in the *actu* [act] of his doubt. Thinking is, therefore, only a determination or a way of being (*eine Art und Weise des Seyns*), indeed, the *Cogitans* even only means "I am in the *state* of thinking". The state of real thinking is, as is well known, a very rare, transitory, indeed unnatural state for most people, from which they usually seek to emerge as soon as possible. Schiller's saying is well known: "I have often just been, and, in truth, thought of nothing at all". Admittedly Descartes uses, as was already remarked, the word *think* in a very general sense, where it, e.g., also means sensuous becoming aware of or perceiving. But I am also not always in the

state of sensuous perception. If one wanted to say that even in sleep it does not stop, for at least I dream, then there is always the swoon, in which I admittedly also do not say, "I am", this is in the same way, though, as I do not say it when asleep, indeed do not say it in the course of everyday life, and yet still indubitably am. The *Sum* which is contained in the *Cogito* is, therefore, only: *Sum qua cogitans*, "I am as thinking", i.e. in that specific way of being which is called thinking, and which is only *another* way of being from, e.g., that of the body, whose way of being consists in *filling* space, i.e. in excluding every other body from the space which it takes up. The *Sum* which is contained in the *Cogito* does not, then, have the significance of an absolute I am, but only the significance of an "I am *in one way or another*", namely as just thinking, in that way of being which one calls thinking. Hence, even in the *Ergo sum*, "I am absolutely" cannot be contained, only: "I am in one way or another". As was already shown, however, one can only really doubt of things that they *are* absolutely; that they are in *one way or another* can, however, be brought out in the same way that Descartes brings out his *Sum*. It is just as right to infer: I doubt the reality of things, therefore they are, or at least: therefore they *are not not at all*. For if something is not at all in any way, I also cannot doubt it. Therefore, from my doubt itself about the reality of things, it does not follow that they indubitably and absolutely are, but it does follow that they are in one way or another; but, as was shown, no more follows from the I think than that I am in one way or another. But everything which is only in one way or another is precisely for that reason something whose being is doubtful (*ein zweifelhaft Seyendes*). In the true sense of doubt, which is not just empirical and subjective but objective and philosophical, the being which I attribute to myself is therefore as doubtful as that which I attribute to things.

But we can go back even further and even put the *I think* itself in doubt – at least in the sense it undoubtedly has for Descartes. The statement "I think" has, namely, two foundations: (1) that which thinks in me, that is, e.g., precisely now doubting; (2) that which is reflecting upon this thinking or doubting; only when the *latter* recognises the former as identical with itself do I say: "I think". The "I think" is, therefore, in truth in no way something immediate, it only emerges via the reflection which directs itself at the thinking in me; this thinking, by the way, also continues independently of the thinking that reflects upon it, in the way that, even as a rule, I think without saying to myself *that* I am thinking, without once more thinking this thinking itself. Indeed, true thinking must even be objectively independent of that subject that reflects upon it; in other words, it will

think all the more truly the less the subject interferes with it. Therefore, because that which is thinking and that which reflects on this thinking and posits it as one with itself are two different things, or because there is an objective thinking which is independent of me, it follows that that which reflects might deceive itself about that supposed unity, or, by attributing the *original* thinking ***to itself,*** it might be precisely this attribution about which it is deceived, and the "I think" could have no more significance than expressions I also use, such as "I digest", "I make juices", "I walk" or "I ride"; for it is not really the thinking being that walks or rides. It thinks in me, thinking goes on in me, is the pure fact, in the same way as I can say with equal justification: "I dreamed", and "It dreamed in me". The certainty which Descartes attributes to the *Cogito ergo sum* cannot be sustained even by thinking; if there is a certainty, then it is blind and devoid of thought. To this certainty Descartes then attaches everything else. His principle is: Everything which is just as clearly and distinctly recognised as the "I am" must also be true. But, expressed more exactly, this can only mean the same as: Everything that is connected to that blind empirical certainty which I have of my own being, or which is *implicite* posited with the "I am" or can be proven to belong to the completeness of this idea (*Vorstellung*), I must assume as just as true as the "I am" itself (it goes no further); it does not follow, namely, that it is also like that objectively and independently of me. The truth of the "I am" can be sustained just as well if I am only compelled to imagine all those other things, e.g., my body and the things that apparently influence it. Once I want to attach everything to the "I am", I must give up ever getting any further than to this necessity of the idea of everything else; it can also, if I am the focus of all knowledge to myself, be completely indifferent to me whether that which I am compelled to imagine is there independently of imagining it or not, since it, to use Descartes's own example, is completely indifferent to the dreamer as long as he is dreaming.

Descartes, who was not even concerned to comprehend things but only to know that they *are* (the least that one can know of things), became the cause, by his procedure, of the question whether anything really corresponded to our ideas of external things being regarded for a considerable time as the main question in philosophy. It would have been easy for Descartes to proceed already to complete idealism, i.e. to the system which maintains that things are not objectively outside us, but only exist in our, albeit necessary, ideas. But he did not want this; in order to avoid this necessary consequence, he took refuge in another conception. Because ideas have no guarantee in themselves, he needed a *guarantor* for the truth of his ideas of external things –

here he seeks to come from the subjective into the objective (μετάβασιο) – this guarantor he finds in God, whose existence, though, must then previously have been proven. He achieves this briefly as follows: There is in me the concept of a most perfect being of all. (This is presupposed as an empirical fact, as the "I think" is also just an empirical fact.) But to the concept of the most perfect being of all belongs – not, as it was later said, the concept of existing at all, for Descartes, to whom one must grant within his limits the whole astuteness and ingenious capability and mobility of his nation, was not in the habit of inferring as clumsily as Kant does in presenting this proof, because he well knew that existing *at all* is something that is indifferent to perfection and imperfection – to the concept of the perfect being the concept of *necessary* existence also belongs. Therefore, even if I only think God, I must also see that He exists. This is, then, the proof of the existence of God known under the name of the "ontological proof". From the simple concept of the most perfect being of all it is then further inferred that the most perfect being of all would not be such if it were not also the most truthful of all (here there is a transition from the concept, which seemed up to now only to be considered as a metaphysical concept, to moral qualities), for such a being, therefore, it would also have to be impossible to deceive us (1) with regard to mathematical truths – (strange that Descartes always only doubts these, and not also the general concepts, as well as the laws of thought, judgement and inference); (2) just as impossible (since only God could effect this deception) with regard to sensuous things. Consequently God is here now, after a *completely different principium cognoscendi* had been assumed, additionally recognised as the *true* principle of cognition, i.e. as that which first grants truth to all cognition. That appeal to the truthfulness of God had, by the way, so little effect on the successor of Descartes, the Frenchman *Malebranche,* that he only concedes probability at the most to this argument, and remarks that God, if he were to think it to be good and necessary, certainly could imagine bodies for us, even if there were none.

What in the meanwhile must be most important for us, and it is primarily because of this that I have tried to give an idea of Descartes's philosophy, is precisely the introduction of that *ontological argument.* Descartes has become decisive for the whole of subsequent modern philosophy, far less for what he said otherwise about the beginnings of philosophy than for the setting up of the ontological proof. One can say: philosophy is still now occupied with disentangling and explaining the misunderstandings to which this argument gave rise. This argument is also curious because, among the classic proofs by which the existence of God used to be proven in ordinary metaphys-

ics, it was always in first place until Kant. It is important to note that this argument was not recognised at all by the scholastics. For, although Anselm of Canterbury had already advanced a similar argument, Thomas Aquinas most emphatically contradicted him. The so-called ontological proof became primarily an object of the Kantian critique, but neither Kant nor any of his successors hit upon the correct point. The main objection to the Cartesian proof which was primarily raised by Kant depends upon the already-mentioned incorrect idea that the argument is supposed to be as follows: I find in me the idea of the perfect being, but existence is itself a perfection, therefore existence is also of its own accord included in the idea of the perfect being. Here, then, the minor proposition of the conclusion is denied. It is said that existence is not a perfection. A triangle, e.g., does not become any more perfect by existing, or, if this were the case, then I should also have to be allowed to conclude that the perfect triangle must exist. What does not exist, it is said, is neither perfect nor imperfect. Existence only expresses the fact that the thing, i.e. that its perfections, *are*. Therefore existence is not one of these perfections, but it is that without which neither the thing nor its perfections are. But I have already remarked that Descartes does not infer in *this* manner. Rather, his argument goes as follows: it would contradict the nature of the perfect being to exist just contingently (as, e.g., my own existence is simply contingent, precarious and for this reason doubtful in *itself*), therefore the most perfect being can only exist necessarily. There would, I suggest, be no objection to this argument, particularly if one agrees that the concept of necessary existing should be understood to mean merely the opposite of contingent existing. But the conclusion of Descartes is different. Let us repeat again the whole syllogism. The perfect being *cannot* exist only contingently, thus can only exist necessarily (major proposition); God is the perfect being (minor proposition), therefore (he ought to conclude) He *can* only exist necessarily, for this alone is inherent in the premises; instead of this, though, he concludes: therefore He necessarily exists, and, it is true, thereby apparently brings out the fact that God exists, and seems to have proven the existence of God. But it is something completely different whether I say: God can only exist *necessarily*, or whether I say: He necessarily exists. From the First (He *can* only exist necessarily) only follows: therefore He exists necessarily (N.B., *if He exists*, but it does not at all follow *that* He exists). In this, therefore, lies the mistake of the Cartesian conclusion. We can also express this mistake like this. In the major proposition (the perfect being can only exist *necessarily*), it is only a question of the *manner* of existence (it is only

stated that the perfect being could not exist in a contingent *manner*); in the conclusion (in the *conclusio*), however, it is no longer a question of the *manner* of existence (in this case the conclusion would be correct) but of existence at all, therefore there is *plus in conclusione quam fuerat in praemissis* [more in the conclusion than there was in the premisses], i.e. a logical law has been broken, or the conclusion has an incorrect form. That *this* is the real mistake I can also prove by the fact that Descartes himself *directly* infers in several places, or, for the time being at least, infers *only* in the manner I have shown. In an essay with the title "Rationes Dei existiam etc. probantes ordine geometrico dispositae", the conclusion is as follows: Therefore it is true to say of God that in Him existence is a necessary existence ***or*** (he adds) that *He exists*. The latter, though, is something completely different from the former and cannot be regarded as equivalent to it, as is suggested by the "or". (Descartes himself is well aware that in his concept of the perfect being only the *manner* of existence is determined.) Thus he says in the same account: in the concept of a limited, finite thing, merely possible or contingent existence is contained; in the concept of the perfect thing, therefore, is contained the concept of necessary and perfect existence. At another point, in his fifth Meditation, he carries out the conclusion as follows: I find in me the idea of God no differently or in the same way as I find the idea of any geometrical figure or of a number, *nec*, he immediately continues, *nec minus clare et distincte intelligo, ad ejus naturam pertinere, ut* ***semper*** *existat* [nor do I understand any less clearly and distinctly that it belongs to His nature that He ***always*** exists]. (Take good note of this *semper;* here he does not, then, say, *ad ejus naturam pertinere, ut existat*, but only *ut semper existat*.) From that it merely follows that God, if He exists, only *always* exists, but it does not follow ***that*** He exists. The true meaning of the conclusion is always only: *either* God does not exist at all, or, if He exists, then He *always* exists necessarily, i.e., not contingently. But it is clear that His existence is not proven thereby.

With this critique of the Cartesian argument we admit, though, that, if not the existence, then the *necessary* existence of God is proven – and this *concept* is now really the one which has had the most decisive effect for the whole subsequent period of philosophy.

What is it, then, about this necessary existence of God?

Even as we only recognise the following as the *correct* conclusion: Therefore God exists necessarily, *if He exists*, we already state that the concept of God and the concept of the necessarily existing being are not simply *identical* concepts, namely in such a way that the one could be exactly contained in the other, that God would not be any *more*

than the being which just exists necessarily. If He were *only* this, then the proposition ***that*** He exists would be self-evident. Above all, then, the question is

1. What is to be understood by the necessarily existing being?
2. In what way is God the necessarily existing being?
3. Are God and necessarily existing being identical concepts? In what way is He *more* than just this?

In order, then, to answer the first, as far as it is possible at the point at which we are now still standing (for we will subsequently return more than once to this concept), we distinguish in *all* being (*Seyn*)

a. *What Is,* the subject of being (*Seyn*), or, as it is also said otherwise, the essence (*Wesen*). [Schelling also uses *Wesen* in referring to the "perfect being", where it could not be translated as "essence"; I translate it as "essence" here to distinguish it from the use of "being" in b. What he means is the subject of all predication prior to any determination.]

b. *Being* (*das Seyn*) itself, which relates as predicate to "***What*** is", indeed, of which I can say in general that it is the predicate *per se,* what alone is really predicated in every predicate. Nothing else is said anywhere and in any possible proposition but being (*Seyn*). If, e.g., I say: "Phaedon is healthy", then a kind of organic, and a kind of physical and finally of general being is said; or I say: "Phaedon is a lover", and here I say a kind of psychological being. But it is always being which is said. But I am free to think *what Is* by itself or purely, *without* the being that I would first have to predicate of it – if I have thought it in that way, then I have thought the ***pure*** *concept,* that in which there is no trace of a proposition or a judgement, but precisely just the simple concept. (It is absurd to put the pure concept into being, which is precisely that which goes beyond the concept, i.e. the predicate. But the subject is necessarily prior to the predicate, as already in the old ordinary logic the subject was called the *antecedens,* the predicate the *consequens.*) ***What*** *Is* is the concept κατ᾽ ἐξοχήν; it is the concept of all concepts, for in *every* concept I only think what Is, not being. As long as I think *what Is in a pure manner,* then there is here nothing which goes beyond the simple concept, my thinking is still confined in the pure concept, I cannot yet confer or attribute any being to *what Is,* I cannot say that it *has* a being, and yet it is not nothing, but certainly also Something, it is precisely being itself, αὐτὸ τὸ ὄΝ, *ipsum ens* – being, for it is still just in the essence (*Wesen*) or just in the concept, it is the being of the concept itself, or it is the point where being and thinking are one. I *must* think it in this nakedness, at least for a moment. But I cannot keep it in this abstraction; for it is impossible that *what Is,* of which I know no more than that it is the beginning, the

entitlement to everything which follows, but is itself not yet anything – it is impossible that what is the entitlement, the precondition, the beginning for all being should not also be – this "be" taken in the sense of existence, i.e. of being also outside the *concept.* The concept now immediately turns itself around for us, into its opposite – we find that which we had determined as *being itself* (*das Seyende selbst*) now also again as being (*das Seyende*), but as being (*das Seyende*) in a completely different – namely only in the predicative or, as we can also say, *objective* (*gegenständlich*) – sense, where formerly we thought it as being (*das Seyende*) in the *primary* (*urständlich*) sense. There is here the most complete *conversio* of the subject into the object – as, in the pure concept, it was the simple, pure subject (*suppositum,* for even these two expressions have the same meaning) or the pure original state (*Urstand*) of being (*Seyn*) – so it is as the immediate *consequence* of its concept – precisely by virtue of its concept of being being itself (*das Seyende selbst zu seyn*) – it is immediately, before we know where we are, objective being (*das objektiv, das gegenständlich Seyende*).

If we now look at it more closely as this objective being (*dieses gegenständlich Seyende*), how will it present itself to us? Obviously as that which cannot not be, and accordingly as being which is necessarily, is *blindly.* The being which is *blindly* is that in particular which has not been preceded by any possibility of its self. I act blindly, e.g., if I do something without having imagined its possibility beforehand. If the action rushes ahead of the *concept* of the action, then this is a blind action, and in just the same way being (*Seyn*) which has not been preceded by possibility, which could never *not*-be and thus also could never really *be,* which rather anticipates its possibility as such, such being is blind being (*Seyn*). One might object: we ourselves spoke first of all of what Is and determined it as the *Prius,* as the original state (*Urstand*), i.e. as the possibility of being. Quite right; but we also immediately added that it could not be sustained in this priority, therefore, even though the *Prius,* never *as* the *Prius;* the transition was inevitable, what Is was *in itself,* therefore it was not possible for a *moment* that *what Is* should not be, thus to think it as not-being (*nicht seyend*). But that for which it is *impossible* not to be (*quod non potest non-existere*) cannot ever *possibly* be – for that *possibility* of being also includes the possibility of *not* being in itself – therefore that for which it is impossible *not* to be is never in the possibility of being, and being (*Seyn*), reality (*Wirklichkeit*) precedes possibility. Here you now have, therefore, the concept of the necessarily being (*seyenden*), the necessarily existing being [*Wesen,* in the sense used of God as the "perfect Being"], and *you* grasp at the same time, via the genesis of the same, with what force it, as it were, overwhelms consciousness and deprives

it of all freedom. It is the concept against which thinking loses all its freedom.

But now the question arises as to *how* God might be called the being which is or exists necessarily (*das nothwendig seyende oder existirende Wesen*). Descartes contents himself with the popular argument that because non-necessary, i.e. contingent existence (as he defines the concept), is an imperfection, God is the most perfect being (*Wesen*). What he thinks when he thinks of the perfect being he does not say; but one can see that he is thinking of that which is the essence (*Wesen*) of all being (*Seyn*), which does not have a being outside itself, to which its own being also relates as *one* being (*Seyn*), or, more simply, which is not a being (*Seyendes*) which has another being or other beings (*Seyende*) outside itself, but is being *per se* (*das schlechthin Seyende*), which, therefore, can in its highest conception only be precisely what we called *being itself* (*das Seyende selbst*), *ipsum ens*. If God is only to be determined as being itself and that which is *being itself* as that which cannot *not* be, as that for which it is impossible not to be, then God is definitely and without all doubt that which exists necessarily (*das nothwendig Existirende*): this is now the *highest* sense in which the *real* ontological argument is to be taken; the so-called proof of Anselm comes down to *this*. But it is also now immediately clear whence the mistrust against this so-called proof originates, and why especially scholasticism rather preferred to refute it and refuse it than to adopt it.

Here we come to the question of whether the concept of the necessarily existing being (*Wesen*) is *identical* with the concept of God.

We have just shown the necessarily existing to be at the same time the blindly existing. Now there is, however, nothing more opposed to the nature of God as it is thought of in common belief – and only from this did Descartes, and thus up to now we also, adopt this concept – nothing is more opposed to the nature of God than blind being (*Seyn*). For the first thing about the concept of that which exists blindly (*des blindlings Seyenden*) is, of course, that it is devoid of freedom in relation to its being (*Seyn*), it can neither negate (*aufheben*), nor change, nor modify it. That which has no freedom in relation to its own being has no freedom at all – is *absolutely* unfree. If, then, God were the necessarily existing being (*Wesen*), He could only be defined at the same time as that which was rigid, immovable, absolutely unfree, incapable of any free action, progression or going out of Himself. Either we should have to stop at this blind being – we could not take a step beyond what exists blindly *at all* – or if we wanted to progress out of it, say to reach the world, this could only happen to the extent to which we were able, say, to demonstrate an emanative power in His blind being, by virtue of which other being (*anderes*

Seyn), e.g., that of things, *poured out* of this blind being – I say poured out, not emerged, for to that one could still attach the thought of a creation – but creation is precisely thoroughly incompatible with a blind being, which could at best be thought as an emanative cause, and even this would present not inconsiderable difficulty. Here, then, we come up against, to use a Kantian expression, an antinomy between what follows from reason of necessity, and what we really *want* if we want God. For so far God is obviously just an object of our wishing – we are not compelled by anything to use the expression *God;* beginning with the absolute concept of reason, with the concept of what Is, we are only led to the concept of the necessarily existing being (*Wesen*), but not to the concept of God. But even if we begin with the concept *God*, we have to say: God is the essence (*Wesen*) of all being (*Seyn*), He is *what Is* in the absolute sense, τὸ ὄN, however he was defined; but if He is this, He is also that which exists necessarily and blindly. But if He is that which exists blindly, then he is for just this reason not God – not God in *that* sense which the common consciousness associated with this word and concept. What can help here, or how can we escape from the straits in which we find ourselves? It would be no help at all if one just wished to deny that God is the necessarily existing being. For the real original concept (*Urbegriff*), which we absolutely may not renounce if our thinking is not everywhere to lack a firm point of departure, would thereby be removed.

God as *such* is, of course, not just the necessarily or blindly existing being (*Wesen*), He admittedly is it, but *as* God He is at the same time that which can negate (*aufheben*) this His own being which is dependent upon Him, can transform His necessary being into contingent being, namely into a being posited by itself, so that it in fact always *fundamentally* (*im Grunde*) (in the foundation) (*der Grundlage nach*) persists, but effectively or in fact is converted into an other, or as follows: necessary being does always lie at the foundation of that self-posited being, but without the effective, the real being of God just being this necessary being.

Life (*Lebendigkeit*) consists precisely in the freedom to negate its own being as immediate, posited independently of itself, and to be able to transform it into a being posited by itself. What is dead in nature, e.g., has no freedom to change its being; it is as it is – at no moment of its existence is its being self-determined. The very concept of the necessary being (*Seyenden*) would, therefore, not lead to the living but to the dead God. Generally, though, in the concept of God it is thought that He can do what He wants, and since He has no other object of His activity than His existence, then – I cannot say: it is, but in the concept of God it must be thought that He is free in relation to His existence, not bound to it, that He can make it itself into a *means*, can

negate existence in its absoluteness. Even if those who pronounce and assert God's freedom are not accustomed to proclaim it in this way – to think of it as freedom of God in relation to His existence, as a freedom to negate this existence as absolutely posited, it is still *in general* the case that in the concept of God absolute freedom of activity is thought. I say *in general.* For the concept of God does not in any way belong to philosophy in particular, it is present independently of philosophy in *general* belief. Now philosophy is, of course, free to take no notice at all of this concept, to avoid it. But Descartes, with whom we are concerning ourselves, drew it instead into philosophy, and there the antinomy is then obvious.

God can only be thought as the necessarily existing being (*Wesen*), and this in a sense in which this necessary existence negates all *free* activity. But what is called God independently of philosophy, and was unquestionably called this before philosophy, cannot be the necessary existence in *this* sense – He must be thought of as free – in relation to his own being (*Seyn*) – for otherwise He could not move Himself, not go out from Himself, i.e. from His own being (*Seyn*) in order to posit another being (*Seyn*). The question is only how this antinomy is to be overcome. To show this is a matter for philosophy itself.

In another way the system of Descartes was significant and determining for the further course of the human mind – by the absolute opposition between mind and body which he introduced into philosophy. This is usually called the dualism of Descartes. Dualism was otherwise understood as the system which maintained, next to the originally good principle, an equally originally bad principle, which sometimes was regarded as a principle of completely equal power, at other times at least as existing just as originally as the good principle. Descartes did not go as far, as that kind of dualism and the Gnostics did, as to posit matter as the source of all evil, as that which opposes all good. In this case matter was a true principle for him, at least. But for him it is not the principle of extension, but simply the extended thing (*Sache*). At the beginning, as we said, he had doubted the existence of the physical; on the other hand, what he thought he could not doubt was his existence as thinking being, even though the deduction from the simple *actus cogitandi*, of which alone he could be immediately certain because only this appears in immediate experience, to a thinking substance that was its foundation, which he saw as the soul, was in no way beyond all doubt. His reflections continued, as I have shown, by invoking God as a true *Deus ex machina* and by trusting that God, as the truest being, could not deceive us with the physical world as though with a phantasmagoria [I have altered this part of the sentence to make sense of what makes no sense in the original] – by this he admittedly restored the physical world *in integrum* [to its former state]; the physical was now something real for him, but mind and body were now apart and he could not bring them back together again. He saw in the physical *only* the opposite of the mental and of thinking, without considering it possible that, however different both might appear in their functions, it might still be one and the same *principle* which finds itself on the one hand, in matter, only in the state of its debasement, on the other, as mind, only in the state of its elevation; on the one hand in the state of complete loss of self, of being completely *outside*-of-itself, on the other in the state of self-possession, of being-in-itself. *For him* it seemed possible that something could *be absolutely* dead, i.e. something dead in which life never was, therefore something originally dead, an outside without any inside, a product without having something of the producing principle in itself. But such an absolutely or originally dead thing does not just contradict every scientific conception but even contradicts experience. For (1) there is a living nature (animals; difficulty of explaining these); (2) so-called dead nature is precisely never to be grasped as something dead, i.e. as an absolute lack of life, but only as life which has come to an end – as residuum or *caput mortuum* [death's head] of a process which preceded it, thus of a past life. What is dead, bound in matter, seemed to living minds so little able to be something original that many of them only thought they could explain it to themselves by a preceding catastrophe, as in India it was something incurred as punishment for a transgression, as a consequence of an ancient Fall in the world of spirits, as the oldest Greek mythology only saw in physical matter the suffocated spirits of the Titans of primeval times. Descartes, admittedly, did consider this dead, spiritless matter as something, but as something immediate, not as something which had emerged out of an earlier state; he has it created in the form of a rough, coherent lump by God, then be sundered, so that it splinters into infinitely many parts, which then create the world system and its movement by their rotations, eddies, etc. This crudity of scientific conception, which is still so close to us and is hardly two centuries away from us, may these days appear almost unbelievable. One can measure by it how far the human mind has since come. But one can also see from it how difficult and therefore how slow advances in philosophy must be, which people whom they benefit or who profit from them think are so easy – if minds like Descartes can stop at such ideas. It would be wrong to think less of them for that reason.

I have already remarked that the opposition in Descartes is not the opposition of two principles, such that he assumes a *principle* of thought and a principle of extension. The simple *principle* of exten-

sion might in its own way *also* be a spiritual principle, it would not necessarily need to be something extended itself, as, e.g., the *principle* of warmth is not itself *warm* because it is the principle of warmth, although it makes the body warm, communicates warmth to it. Descartes knows nothing of a *principle* of extension, but only of the extended thing, which for this reason is absolutely unspiritual. On the other hand he speaks of himself as of a thing which thinks: "Je suis une chose, qui pense" (Med. III p. 263). The thing which thinks and the thing which is extended are, therefore, *two* things to him, which mutually exclude each other and have nothing in common; the extended thing is completely devoid of spirit, spirit-less; the spiritual, in turn, is absolutely immaterial; what is extended is *simple* being together and being apart, pure disintegration, which, to the extent to which it appears nonetheless as held together, as in physical things, is not held together by an internal and thus spiritual principle, but only through external pressure and thrust. The extended thing consists of parts which are absolutely external to each other, these parts themselves lack an inner moving principle, thus also any inner source of movement. All movement is based on thrust, i.e. it is purely mechanical. Just as there is no spirit in matter, so, according to Descartes, there is, in turn, nothing in spirit which is related to matter; the being which is in matter (*das in der Materie Seyende*) is not a being which is only in a different *manner*, but something *toto genere* different, both are beyond all contact, two completely disparate substances, between which, for this reason, nothing in common is possible.

Two things which have absolutely nothing in common also cannot have effects on each other. For Descartes's philosophy it was, then, a very difficult task to explain that undeniable interaction which obviously takes place between the thinking and the extended being (*Wesen*). If both have nothing to do with each other at all, how can body and spirit do so much together and suffer so much together? As when a physical pain is felt by the mind, or an impression just made on the body transmits itself to the mind and creates in the thinking thing which we call our soul an idea, or when, on the other hand, an exertion of the mind, a pain of our soul tires out the body or makes it ill, or the thought of our mind, as, e.g., in speaking, forces merely physical organs to serve it, or a will, a decision of our mind produces a corresponding movement in the extended thing which we call our body. Until the time of Descartes, the accepted older scholastic system concerned with this was the system of so-called natural or immediate influence (*systema influxus physici*), which was based, even if not in a clearly conscious way then in an unconscious way, on the presupposition of a certain homogeneity of the *final* substance, of the substance

which lay at the foundation of *both* matter and mind and was therefore common to both. Admittedly it was a crude idea, if one did not wish to explain this just by a gradual becoming finer of the materials, as in certain hypotheses of the physiologists, who, it is true, considered a direct influence of the mind on what was called the *crudely* physical to be impossible, but who thought that if one only interpolated finer materials between the mind and the crudely physical (they used to talk of nerve juice, or, as they put it nowadays, in a supposedly more refined way, nerve ether), then such an immediate transition would eventually be possible.

Descartes removed at a stroke the difficulties which emerged for his dualism through the obvious interaction between the thinking and the extended thing by (1) denying animals a soul, declaring them to be just highly artificial machines which only carry out all their actions – even their actions which obviously resemble actions based on reason – in the *same* way as a good clock tells the time. He *also* needed to deny animals a soul because where there is thought there is a substance which is completely different from matter, and therefore indestructible and immortal.[1] (2) As far as man is concerned, he considers him in terms of his body as also only a highly artificially arranged machine, which, like a wound-up clock, carries out all natural actions completely independently of the soul and only according to its own mechanism; but as far as *those* movements which cannot be explained as automatic, which correspond to certain movements or acts of will of the mind, he is forced to assume that in every such case, if, e.g., a desire or a wish arises in the mind, which the body should carry out, God Himself should step in and produce the corresponding movement in the body – as if it should be more comprehensible how the highest spirit (for it is not that God is identical with it (*denn Gott ihm nicht etwa Identität* [the sense is not clear])) should affect the purely physical than how the human spirit should. And, in the same way, every time material things produce an impression on our body, the creator steps in and produces the corresponding idea in the soul; the soul would be inaccessible to all external or material impressions for itself, only God acts as a go-between, so that my soul has an idea of physical things. This is also, therefore, not an essential, but only an

[1] This cause (immortality), for which Descartes had to deny animals a soul, is explained by More in his letter to Descartes (*Oeuvres*, vol. 10, p. 190): "Having supposed that the body was incapable of thinking, you have concluded that everywhere where there is thought there ought to be a substance really distinct from the body and *consequently* immortal; whence it follows that, if animals thought, they would have souls which would be immortal substances." [*Translator's note:* The More quotation is given in French in Schelling's text.]

accidental or occasional unity between matter and mind. In themselves they both remain separated. It is *unitas non naturae sed compositionis* [unity not of nature but of combination]. Because God here always acts only occasionally, this system consequently received the name of *Occasionalism*. But in the same way as Descartes almost appears in philosophy at all only in order to offer the basis for a completely different system to another mind, so this hypothesis as well, via which the connection of soul and body, mind and body, was to be explained, is only significant in the history of science (*Wissenschaft*) because that momentary and always only transitory identity between matter and mind, between extended and thinking thing, gave cause for the *substantial* identity which soon afterwards Spinoza maintained not only between the thinking and the extended *thing*, but between thinking and extension themselves. Another consequence of the Cartesian system in this respect was that the question of the so-called *commercio animi et corporis* [communication of the soul and the body] – which only plays a subordinate role in a philosophy based on higher principles – became for a long time almost the main question in philosophy that people concerned themselves with, if not exclusively, then primarily; indeed for a long time one system only differed from another by the way in which it answered this question.

Descartes's philosophy had its most general, but at the same time worst, influence by tearing apart matter and mind, which absolutely belonged together and mutually explained and presupposed each other, thereby destroying the great general organism of life, and relinquishing with the lower organism also the higher organism to a dead, mechanical viewpoint, which has until recently remained the dominant one in all parts of human knowledge and even in religion.

This much about this side of Cartesian philosophy, which is usually termed its dualism. Now we would like also to take a general look at it.

Descartes's greatness lies in the general thought that nothing in philosophy may be considered true which is not known clearly and distinctly. But since this is not *immediately* possible – at least not everywhere – then everything should at least be recognised in a necessary *connection* with that of which I am immediately and indubitably conscious. In this way he was the first to introduce with clear consciousness into philosophy the concept of a *principle* and of a certain genealogy of our concepts and convictions, in which nothing should be considered true which does not originate with and cannot be deduced from the principle. But his limitation lay in the fact that he did not seek that which was First *in itself*, but contented himself with what was First to anyone, including *myself*. (Subjective generality, not generality in the thing itself (*in der Sache selbst*)). In this way he had also

fundamentally given up, as he had in the object, the connection which takes place between the principle and the things themselves, in a word, given up the objective connection, and contented himself with a merely subjective connection. He did, it is true, progress to the concept of that which is First *in itself*, to the concept of God; but he could not make this into a *principle*, because he only grasped His necessary existence, but not what is beyond this, and which only really makes God into God. Descartes still ***thought*** this Plus in the concept *God*, but this Plus did not enter his cognition, it remained outside of it as something just presupposed, not something comprehended.

COMPARISON OF BACON AND DESCARTES

If we had wished to follow chronological order in the historical development of modern systems, then we should have named Bacon first, before Descartes; for he was born in 1560, Descartes was born in 1596. With Bacon the development of modern empiricism begins, as the development of rationalism does with Descartes. Bacon's *main works* (and they are what really matters) are, by the way, almost contemporaneous with Descartes's first writings (for Descartes started when still very young to make his new principles known). There is no evidence that one of these two great writers influenced the other. Objectively, then, they stand side by side: empiricism is renewed by Bacon at the same time as Descartes renews rationalism. From the *beginning* of modern philosophy, then, rationalism and empiricism move parallel to each other, and they have remained parallel until now. In the history of the human spirit it is easy to see a certain simultaneity among great minds, who from differing sides nevertheless are finally working towards the same goal. This is also true of Bacon and Descartes. What they have in common is their breaking free from scholasticism. Bacon does not really oppose later scholasticism, and only opposes scholastic rationalism. Descartes and Bacon both want what can, in opposition to scholasticism, be called "realist philosophy" [*Realphilosophie:* the meaning of the term becomes obvious in what follows]: (A. Scholasticism, B. Realist philosophy: (a) rationalism, (b) empiricism). The first maxims of Descartes necessarily lead when they are developed to the fact that it is the *thing*, the object itself, which creates science by its movement, not the merely subjective movement of the concept, as it is in scholasticism. But this is just what Bacon wants. His philosophy is *realist* philosophy to the extent that it wants to proceed, not from the concept, but from *facts*, i.e. from the thing itself, as far as it is given in experience. But if one looks at it more exactly, the two are even more closely related to each other. For

Bacon's induction is for him, as one clearly sees in his explanation, not yet really science itself, but only the way to it.* He puts it as follows: "I leave", he says, "the syllogism to the scholastics. The syllogism presupposes already-known and well-founded (known as true) principles" (this is quite right; the use of the syllogism only really begins after one already has general and rational principles, and is for this reason really more important in the subordinate sciences than in philosophy; for philosophy is the science which looks for these general principles). "I leave", says Bacon, then, "the syllogism, which can be of no use to me, to scholasticism, for it already presupposes the principles, and these are what I am looking for; I stay, therefore, with induction – not with that lowest kind of the same, which proceeds just by enumeration (as, e.g., in the older arguments where we used to enumerate the Apostles), this kind of induction has the disadvantage that the smallest contradictory fact destroys the result; but I stay with that kind of induction, which, in separating, with the help of correct and well-made exclusions and negations, the necessary facts from the useless ones, reduces the former to a very small number and thus, by enclosing the true cause in the smallest space possible, makes discovering it all the more easy. From these thus reduced (brought down to a few) facts, and always by the light of induction, I will raise myself up, step by step and with extreme slowness, to particular propositions, from these to intermediate propositions, finally from these to the *principiis generalissimis et evidentissimis*" – but Bacon does not stop here, instead, after he has found these, he says: "Supporting myself on these as on unshakeable foundations, I will boldly carry on in my thought, whether it be to lay down new observation, *or* completely to replace observation, where it is not possible" (i.e. after all, having found the most general principles, to decide on those questions or objects which cannot be reached by observation), "and after I began with doubt" (thus like Descartes) "I shall end with certainty, and keep a correct mean between the dogmatic philosophy of the peripatetics" (i.e. of the scholastics), "which begins with what it should finish with" (the general principles), "and the wavering philosophy of the sceptics, which stops with what one could begin with" (with doubt). Basically, then, Bacon, as much as Descartes, wants in the last analysis a progressive philosophy; only it is to be founded regressively, by induction. (Bacon by no means rejects general principles, as he is understood as doing by his successors, namely by Locke, David Hume and even more by the Sensualists. Rather he wants to reach these principles by induction, and beginning with them, as he says, only then achieve certainty). Admittedly Bacon did not get any further than the foundation, and did not get into the science itself. But the same is true of Descartes; for he also really *concludes* with what, if one only were to have begun with it, would have made really progressive science possible, with the highest, with God. Both are at one in their opposition to scholasticism, in the common striving for a *real* (*reell*) philosophy. They only decisively part company in relation to the *highest* concept, which Descartes wishes, by an *a priori* argument, to make independent of all experience, thus also from his *own* starting point (the immediate fact *I think*); he is thereby the originator of *a priori*, rational–*a priori* philosophy, whilst Bacon still unquestionably wants the highest as something empirical.

* *Translator's note:* See chap. 2, bk. 5, of *The Advancement of Learning*.