

since the method that examines things by considering them in their birth and origin is more orderly and illuminating, and makes them known more thoroughly than any other, let us try to put it into practice here.

### 1. *The nature and properties of the understanding.*

Being neither material nor extended, the mind of man is undoubtedly a simple, indivisible substance without composition of parts; but nonetheless, it is customary to distinguish two faculties in it, to wit, the *understanding* and the *will*, which first need to be explained so that we can attach a precise notion to these two words, for it seems that our notions or ideas of these two faculties are neither clear nor distinct enough.

But because these ideas are quite abstract and do not fall within the scope of the imagination, it seems appropriate to express them by comparison with the properties that belong to matter. These properties, being more easily imagined, will make the notions properly attached to the two words *understanding* and *will* more distinct and even more familiar. It should be noted only that these comparisons between mind and matter are not entirely appropriate, and that I compare them only in order to make the mind more attentive, and, as it were, to illustrate my meaning to others.

Matter or extension contains two properties or faculties. The first faculty is that of receiving different figures, the second, the capacity for being moved. The mind of man likewise contains two faculties; the first, which is the *understanding*, is that of receiving various *ideas*, that is, of perceiving various things; the second, which is the *will*, is that of receiving *inclinations*, or of willing different things. We shall first of all explain the analogies found between the first of the two faculties belonging to matter, and the first of those that belong to the mind.

Extension can receive two kinds of figure. Some are external only, like the roundness of a piece of wax; others are internal, and characterize all the particles of which the wax is composed, for all the particles that make up a piece of wax undoubtedly have figures quite different from those that make up a piece of iron. Figure that is external, then, I call simply *figure*, and I call *configuration* that figure which is internal and which is necessary to all the parts of the wax in order for it to be what it is.

We can likewise say that the soul's perceptions of ideas are of two kinds. The first, which are called pure perceptions, are, as it were, superficial to the soul: they do not make an impression on it and do not sensibly modify it. The second, which are called sensible, make a more or less vivid impression on it. Such are pleasure and pain, light and colors, tastes, odors, and so on. For it will be seen later on that sensations are nothing but modes of the mind [*manieres d'être de l'esprit*], and it is for this reason that I call them *modifications* of the mind.

Inclinations of the soul might also be called *modifications* of the soul. For since it is certain that the inclination of the will is a mode of the soul [*maniere d'être de l'ame*], it can be called a *modification* of the soul, just as motion in bodies being a mode of those bodies, we might say that motion is a *modification* of matter. Nevertheless, I do not call inclinations of the will or motion in matter

modifications, because these inclinations and instances of motion are ordinarily related to something external, for inclinations are related to the good, and motion is related to some foreign body. But the figures and configurations of bodies and the sensations of the soul have no necessary relation to anything external. For just as a figure is round when all the exterior parts of a body are equally distant from one of its parts called its center, independently of any external body, so all the sensations of which we are capable could subsist without there being any object outside us. Their being contains no necessary relation to the bodies that seem to cause them (as will be proved elsewhere), and they are nothing but the soul modified in this or that fashion; consequently, they are indeed *modifications* of the soul. Let me therefore so name them in order to clarify matters.

The first and principal agreement found between the faculty that matter has of receiving different figures and configurations and that which the soul has of receiving different *ideas* and *modifications* is that just as the faculty of receiving different figures and configurations in bodies is entirely passive and contains no action, so the faculty of receiving different ideas and modifications in the mind is entirely passive and contains no action; and I call that faculty, or that capacity which the soul has of receiving all these things, **UNDERSTANDING**.

From this it must be concluded that it is the understanding that perceives or that knows, since only it receives ideas of objects; for it is the same thing for the soul to perceive an object as to receive the idea that represents the object. Also, it is the understanding that perceives modifications of the soul, or that senses them, since I understand by this word *understanding* that passive faculty of the soul by means of which it receives all the modifications of which it is capable. For it is the same thing for the soul to receive the mode called pain as to perceive or sense pain, since it cannot receive pain in any other way than by perceiving it. From this it can be concluded that it is the understanding that imagines absent objects and senses those that are present, and that the *senses* and the *imagination* are nothing but the understanding perceiving objects through the organs of the body, as we shall explain later on.

But because when we sense pain, or anything else, we ordinarily perceive it through the mediation of the *sense* organs, men ordinarily say that the *senses* do the perceiving, without knowing distinctly what they mean by the word *sense*. They think there is some faculty distinct from the soul that enables it or the body to sense, for they believe that the *sense* organs really take part in our perceptions. They imagine that the body so aids the mind in sensing that if the mind were separated from the body, it could never sense anything. But they believe all these things only through prejudice, and because in our present state we never sense anything without the use of the *sense* organs, as we shall explain elsewhere at greater length.

In order to conform to the ordinary way of speaking, we shall say in what follows that the *senses* do sense; but by the word *sense* we mean nothing other than that passive faculty of the soul we have just spoken about, that is, the understanding perceiving something upon occasion of the appropriate natural events taking place in the organs of its body, as will be explained elsewhere.

The other agreement between the passive faculty of the soul and that of matter is that as matter is not really altered by any change in its figure—I mean, for example, that as wax receives no considerable change for being round or square—so the mind receives no significant change through the diversity of ideas that it has, i.e., though in perceiving a square or a circle it receives the idea of a square or a circle, the mind is not thereby significantly changed.

Furthermore, as matter can be said to receive significant change when a piece of wax changes into fire and smoke by losing the configuration appropriate to the parts of wax in order to receive the configuration appropriate to fire and smoke, so the soul might be said to receive quite significant change when it alters its modifications and suffers pain after having sensed pleasure. From this it must be concluded that pure perceptions are to the soul roughly what figures are to matter, and that configurations are to matter roughly what sensations are to the soul. But it must not be imagined that the analogy is exact; I propose it only in order to make the notion of this word *understanding* perceptible to the senses. The nature of ideas I shall explain in the third book.

## *II. The nature and properties of the will, and freedom.*

The other faculty of matter is that it is capable of receiving various *instances of motion*, whereas the other faculty of the soul is that it is capable of receiving various *inclinations*. Let us compare these *faculties*.

Just as the Author of nature is the universal cause of all *motion* found in matter, so is He also the general cause of all natural *inclinations* found in minds; and just as all motion proceeds in a straight line [*en ligne droite*] unless it encounters particular external causes that influence its course and that by their opposition alter it so that it proceeds in a curved path, so all the inclinations that we have from God are right [*droites*] and could have no other end but the possession of good and of truth were there not some external cause that directed the impression of nature toward evil ends. Now it is this external cause that is the cause of all our evils, and that corrupts all our inclinations.

For a proper understanding of this, it must be realized that there is a very significant difference between the impression or motion that the Author of nature produces in matter, and the impression or impulse [*mouvement*] toward the good in general that the same Author of nature continuously impresses in the mind. For matter is altogether without action; it has no force to arrest its motion or to direct it and turn it in one direction rather than another. Its motion, as has just been said, always proceeds in a straight line; and when it is impeded from continuing in this way, it describes the greatest possible circular path and consequently most approximates a straight line, because God impresses its motion on it and controls its direction. But such is not the case with the will,<sup>a</sup> which in a sense can be said to be active, because our soul can direct in various ways the inclination or impression that God gives it. For although it cannot arrest this impression, it can in a sense turn it in the direction that pleases it, and thus cause all the disorder

<sup>a</sup>See the *Elucidations* [1].

---

## BOOK ONE: THE SENSES

### Chapter Four



*I. The occasional causes of error; that there are five principal ones. II. A general plan of the whole work, and a specific plan of the first book.*

We have just seen that we fall into error only because we do not use our freedom as we should, that we err for failure to regulate the eagerness and ardor of the will for the mere appearances of truth, and that error consists only in consent of the will when extended beyond the perception of the understanding, because we would not err at all were we to judge only about what we perceive.

*I. The occasional causes of error: that there are five principal ones.*

Although, properly speaking, only the misuse of freedom is the cause of error, it can nevertheless be said that we have many faculties that are causes of our errors—not real causes, but causes that might be called *occasional*. All our ways of perceiving are to us so many occasions of error, for since our false judgments include two things, the consent of the will and the perception of the understanding, it is quite clear that each of the ways in which we perceive can provide us with an occasion for error, since they can lead us to precipitous consent.

But because the mind must first be made aware of its weaknesses and aberrations in order to acquire the proper desire to deliver itself from them and more easily discard its prejudices, we shall try to give a precise division of the ways it perceives, which will be the headings under which the different errors to which we are subject will be grouped in what follows.

The soul can perceive things in three ways, by the *pure understanding*, by the *imagination*, and by the *senses*.

By the *pure understanding* it perceives spiritual things, universals, common notions, the ideas of perfection and of an infinitely perfect being, and generally all its thoughts when it knows them through self-reflection. By the *pure understanding* it even perceives material things, extension with its properties; for only pure understanding can perceive a perfect circle, a perfect square, a figure of a thousand sides, and similar things. These sorts of perceptions are called *pure*

*intlections, or pure perceptions*, because the mind need not form corporeal images in the brain to represent all these things.

Through the *imagination* the soul perceives only material beings, making them present when in fact they are absent, by forming images of them, as it were, in the brain. It is in this way that we imagine all sorts of figures: a circle, a triangle, a face, a horse, cities, and the countryside, whether we have already seen them or not. These sorts of perceptions might be called *imaginings*, because the soul represents these objects to itself by forming images of them in the brain; and, since images of spiritual things cannot be formed, it follows that the soul cannot imagine them (and this should be noted well).

Finally the soul perceives by the *senses* only sensible and gross objects, either when, being present, they make an impression on the external organs of its body and this impression is communicated to the brain or, when in their absence, the flow of animal spirits makes a similar impression in the brain. In this way the soul sees plains and rocks before its eyes, knows the hardness of iron, the point of a sword, and similar things; and these sorts of perceptions are called *feelings* [*sentimens*] or *sensations* [*sensations*].

The soul, then, perceives only in these three ways, which can easily be seen if it be considered that the things we perceive are either spiritual or material. If they are spiritual, only the pure understanding can know them. But if they are material, they will be either present or absent. If they are absent, the soul ordinarily represents them to itself only through the imagination; but if they are present, the soul can perceive them through the impressions they make on its senses. Thus our souls perceive things in only three ways, by the *pure understanding*, by the *imagination*, and by the *senses*.

These three faculties, then, can be considered as reliable headings under which men's errors and the causes of these errors might be grouped, and thus we can avoid the confusion into which their great number would inevitably plunge us were we to speak of them without ordering them.

But our *inclinations* and *passions* also act very strongly on us; they dazzle our mind with false lights, cover it, and fill it with shadows. Our inclinations and passions involve us in an infinite number of errors when we follow this false and deceptive light they produce in us. They must be considered, then, along with the three faculties of the mind, as sources of our aberrations and errors; and the errors attributable to the passions and inclinations must be added to those of the senses, the imagination, and the pure understanding. Thus, all the errors of men and their causes can be grouped under five headings, and they will be treated according to this classification.

## II. General plan of the whole work.

First, the *errors of the senses* will be discussed; Second, the *errors of the imagination*; third, the *errors of the pure understanding*; fourth, the *errors of the inclinations*; fifth, the *errors of the passions*. Finally, after having tried to relieve

---

# BOOK THREE

## PART TWO: THE PURE UNDERSTANDING.

### THE NATURE OF IDEAS

#### Chapter One



*I. What is meant by ideas. That they really exist and are necessary in order to perceive any material object. II. A classification of all the ways external objects can be seen.*

##### *<I. What is meant by ideas. >*

I think everyone agrees that we do not perceive objects external to us by themselves. We see the sun, the stars, and an infinity of objects external to us; and it is not likely that the soul should leave the body to stroll about the heavens, as it were, in order to behold all these objects. Thus, it does not see them by themselves, and our mind's immediate object when it sees the sun, for example, is not the sun, but something that is intimately joined to our soul, and this is what I call an *idea*. Thus, by the word *idea*, I mean here nothing other than the immediate object, or the object closest to the mind, when it perceives something, i.e., that which affects and modifies the mind with the perception it has of an object.

It should be carefully noted that for the mind to perceive an object, it is absolutely necessary for the idea of that object to be actually present to it—and about this there can be no doubt; but there need not be any external thing like that idea. For it often happens that we perceive things that do not exist, and that even have never existed—thus our mind often has real ideas of things that have never existed. When, for example, a man imagines a golden mountain, it is absolutely necessary that the idea of this mountain really be present to his mind. When a madman or someone asleep or in a high fever sees some animal before his eyes, it is certain that what he sees is not nothing, and that therefore the idea of this animal really does exist, though the golden mountain and the animal have never existed.

Yet given that men are naturally led, as it were, to believe that only corporeal objects exist, they judge of the reality and existence of things other than as they should. For as soon as they perceive an object, they would have it as quite certain that it exists, although it often happens that there is nothing external. In addition, they would have the object be exactly as they see it, which never happens. But as for the idea that necessarily exists, and that cannot be other than as it is seen, they

ordinarily judge unreflectingly that it is nothing—as if ideas did not have a great number of properties, as if the idea of a square, for example, were not different from that of a circle or a number, and did not represent completely different things, which can never be the case for nonbeing, since nonbeing has no properties. It is therefore indubitable that ideas have a very real existence. But now let us examine their nature and essence, and let us see what there can be in the soul that might represent all things to it.

Everything the soul perceives belongs to either one of two sorts: either it is in the soul, or outside the soul. The things that are in the soul are its own thoughts, i.e., all its various modifications—for by the words *thought*, *mode of thinking*, or *modification of the soul*, I generally understand all those things that cannot be in the soul without the soul being aware of them through the inner sensation it has of itself—such as its sensations, imaginings, pure intellections, or simply conceptions, as well as its passions and natural inclinations. Now, our soul has no need of ideas in order to perceive these things in the way it does, because these things are in the soul, or rather because they are but the soul itself existing in this or that way—just as the actual roundness and motion of a body are but that body shaped and moved in this or that way.

But as for things outside the soul, we can perceive them only by means of ideas, given that these things cannot be intimately joined to the soul. Of these, there are two sorts: spiritual and material. As for the spiritual, there is reason to believe they can be revealed to the soul by themselves and without ideas. For although experience teaches us that we cannot communicate our thoughts to one another immediately and by ourselves, but only through speech or some other sensible sign to which we have attached our ideas, still it might be said that God has established this state of affairs only for the duration of this life in order to prevent the disorder that would now prevail if men could communicate as they pleased. But when order and justice reign, and we are delivered from the captivity of our body, we shall perhaps be able to communicate through the intimate union among ourselves, as the angels seem to be able to do in heaven. Accordingly, it does not seem to be absolutely necessary to have ideas in order to represent spiritual things to the soul, because they might be seen through themselves, though in imperfect fashion.

*I shall not inquire<sup>a</sup> here how two minds can be united, or whether they can in this way reveal their thoughts to each other. I believe, however, that the only purely intelligible substance is God's, that nothing can be revealed with clarity except in the light of this substance, and that a union of minds cannot make them visible to each other. For although we may be closely joined together, we are and shall be unintelligible to each other until we see each other in God, and until He presents us with the perfectly intelligible idea He has of our being contained in His being. Thus, although I may seem to allow that angels can by themselves show to each other both what they are and what they are thinking (which I really do not believe), I warn that it is only because I have no desire to dispute the*

<sup>a</sup>This paragraph is italicized because you may omit it as being too difficult to understand unless you know my views about the soul and the nature of ideas.

*point—provided that you grant me what cannot be disputed, to wit, that you cannot see material things by themselves and without ideas.*

In the seventh chapter I shall explain my view on how we know minds, and I shall show that for the moment we cannot know them entirely by themselves, although they might be capable of union with us. But here I am speaking mainly about material things, which certainly cannot be joined to our soul in the way necessary for it to perceive them, because with them extended and the soul unextended, there is no relation between them. Besides which, our souls do not leave the body to measure the heavens, and as a result, they can see bodies outside only through the ideas representing them. In this everyone must agree.

### *II. A classification of all the ways external objects can be seen.*

We assert the absolute necessity, then, of the following: either (a) the ideas we have of bodies and of all other objects we do not perceive by themselves come from these bodies or objects; or (b) our soul has the power of producing these ideas; or (c) God has produced them in us while creating the soul or produces them every time we think about a given object; or (d) the soul has in itself all the perfections it sees in bodies; or else (e) the soul is joined to a completely perfect being that contains all intelligible perfections, or all the ideas of created beings.

We can know objects in only one of these ways. Let us examine, without prejudice, and without fear of the difficulty of the question, which is the likeliest way. Perhaps we can resolve the question with some clarity though we do not pretend to give demonstrations that will seem incontrovertible to everyone; rather, we merely give proofs that will seem very persuasive to those who consider them carefully, for one would appear presumptuous were one to speak otherwise.

---

## BOOK THREE: PART TWO

### Chapter Two



*That material objects do not transmit species resembling them.*

The most commonly held opinion is that of the Peripatetics, who hold that external objects transmit species that resemble them, and that these species are carried to the common sense by the external senses. They call these species *impressed*, because objects impress them on the external senses. These impressed species, being material and sensible, are made intelligible by the *agent*, or *active intellect*, and can then be received in the *passive intellect*. These species, thus spiritualized, are called *expressed* species, because they are expressed from the impressed species, and through them the *passive intellect* knows material things.

We shall not pause here to further investigate these lovely things and the different ways different philosophers conceive of them. For although they disagree about the number of faculties they attribute to the interior sense and to the understanding, and although there are many of them who doubt whether an *agent intellect* is needed in order to know sensible objects, still they practically all agree that external objects transmit species or images that resemble them, and with only this as their basis, they multiply their faculties and defend their *agent intellect*. As this basis has no solidity, as will be shown, it is not necessary to pause further in order to overthrow everything that has been built upon it.

We assert, then, that it is unlikely that objects transmit images, or species, that resemble them, and here are some reasons why. The first is drawn from the impenetrability of bodies. All objects (such as the sun, the stars, as well as those closer to our eyes) are unable to transmit species of a nature other than their own. This is why philosophers commonly say that these species are gross and material as opposed to the expressed species, which are spiritualized. These impressed species are therefore little bodies. They therefore cannot penetrate each other or the whole of the space between the earth and the heavens, which must be full of them. From this it is easy to conclude that they must run against and batter each other from all directions, and that hence they cannot make objects visible.

Furthermore, a great number of objects located in the sky and on earth can be seen from the same place or the same point; the species of all these objects would

then have to be capable of being reduced to a point. Now since they are extended they are impenetrable; therefore . . . and so on.

But not only can a great number of very large objects be seen from the same point; there is no point in the universe's vast stretches from which an almost infinite number of objects cannot be discovered, and even objects as large as the sun, moon, and heavens. In the entire world there is no point<sup>a</sup> where the species of all these things ought not meet—which is contrary to all indications of the truth.

The second reason is based on the change that occurs in the species. It is certain that the closer an object is, the larger its species must be, since we see the object as larger. Now, I do not see what can make this species diminish or what can become of the parts composing it when it was larger. But what is even harder to understand on their view is how, if we look at this object with magnifying glasses or a microscope, the species suddenly becomes five or six hundred times larger than it was before, for still less do we see with what parts it can so greatly increase its size in an instant.

The third reason is that when we look at a perfect cube, all the species of its sides are unequal, and yet we see all its sides as equally square. And likewise when we look at a picture of ovals and parallelograms, which can transmit only species of the same shape, we see in it only circles and squares. This clearly shows that the object we are looking at need not produce species that resemble it in order for us to see it.

Finally, it is inconceivable how a body that does not sensibly diminish could continually emit species in all directions, or how it could continually fill the vast spaces around it with them—and all this with inconceivable speed. For a hidden object can be seen at the very moment of its discovery from several million leagues away and from every direction. And, what seems stranger still, very active bodies, such as air and a few others, lack the force to emit images resembling them—as coarser and less active bodies, such as earth, stones, and almost all hard bodies do.

But I do not wish to linger to adduce all the reasons opposed to this view, since it would be an endless task and the least mental effort will yield an inexhaustible number of them. Those we have just given are enough, and even they are not necessary after what was said about this subject in the first book, where the errors of the senses were explained. But so many philosophers hold this view that I thought it necessary to say something about it in order to provoke them to reflect on their thoughts.

<sup>a</sup>To see how the impressions of visible objects, however opposed, can be communicated without being diminished, read the last two Elucidations found at the end of this work.

---

## BOOK THREE: PART TWO

### Chapter Three



*That the soul does not have the power to produce ideas. The cause of our error in this matter.*

The second view belongs to those who believe that our souls have the power of producing the ideas of the things they wish to think about, and that our souls are moved to produce them by the impressions that objects make on the body, though these impressions are not images resembling the objects causing them. According to them, it is in this that man is made after the image of God and shares in His power. Further, just as God created all things from nothing, and can annihilate them and create new things in their place, so man can create and annihilate ideas of anything he pleases. But there is good reason to distrust all these views that elevate man. These are generally thoughts that come from his pride and vanity, and not from the Father of lights.

This share in God's power that men boast of for representing objects to themselves and for several other particular actions is a share that seems to involve a certain independence (as it is generally explained). But it is also an illusory share, which men's ignorance and vanity makes them imagine. Their dependence upon the power and goodness of God is much greater than they think, but this is not the place to explain the matter. Let us try only to show that men do not have the power to form ideas of the things they perceive.

Since ideas have real properties, no one can doubt that they are real beings, or that they differ from one another, and that they represent altogether different things. Nor can it be reasonably doubted that they are spiritual and are very different from the bodies they represent. This seems to raise a doubt whether the ideas by means of which bodies are seen are not more noble than the bodies themselves. Indeed, the intelligible world must be more perfect than the material, terrestrial world, as we shall see in what follows. Thus, when it is claimed that men have the power to form such ideas as please them, one runs the risk of claiming that men have the power of creating beings worthier and more perfect than the world God has created. Yet this is never thought about, because an idea is fancied to be nothing since it cannot be sensed—or if it is considered as a

being, it is only as a meager and insignificant being, because it is thought to be annihilated as soon as it is no longer present to the mind.

But even if it were true that ideas were only lesser and insignificant beings, still they are beings, and spiritual beings at that, and given that men do not have the power of creation, it follows that they are unable to produce them. For the production of ideas in the way they explain it is a true creation, and although they may try to palliate the temerity and soften the harshness of this view by saying that the production of ideas presupposes something whereas creation presupposes nothing, still they have not resolved the fundamental difficulty.

For it ought to be carefully noted that it is no more difficult to produce something from nothing than to produce it by positing another thing from which it cannot be made and which can contribute nothing to its production. For example, it is no more difficult to create an angel than to produce it from a stone, because given that a stone is of a totally contrary kind of being, it can contribute nothing to the production of an angel. But it can contribute to the production of bread, of gold, and such, because stone, gold, and bread are but the same extension differently configured, and they are all material things.

It is even more difficult to produce an angel from a stone than to produce it from nothing, because to make an angel from a stone (insofar as it can be done), the stone must first be annihilated and then the angel must be created, whereas simply creating an angel does not require anything to be annihilated. If, then, the mind produces its own ideas from the material impressions the brain receives from objects, it continuously does the same thing, or something as difficult, or even more difficult, as if it created them. Since ideas are spiritual, they cannot be produced from material images in the brain, with which they are incommensurable.

But if it be said that an idea is not a substance, I would agree—but it is still a spiritual thing, and as it is impossible to make a square out of a mind, though a square is not a substance, so a spiritual idea cannot be formed from a material substance, even though an idea is not a substance.

But even if the mind of man were granted a sovereign power of annihilating and creating the ideas of things, still it would never use it to produce them. For just as a painter, no matter how good he is at his art, cannot represent an animal he has never seen and of which he has no idea—so that the painting he would be required to produce could not be like this unknown animal—so a man could not form the idea of an object unless he knew it beforehand, i.e., unless he already had the idea of it, which idea does not depend on his will. But if he already has an idea of it, he knows the object, and it is useless for him to form another idea of it. It is therefore useless to attribute to the mind of man the power of producing its ideas.

It might be said that the mind has general and confused ideas that it does not produce, and that those of its own making are clearer, more distinct, particular ideas. But this amounts to the same thing. For just as an artist cannot draw the portrait of an individual in such fashion that he could be certain of having done a

proper job unless he had a distinct idea of the individual, and indeed unless the subject were to sit for it—so a mind that, for example, has only the idea of being or of animal in general cannot represent a horse to itself, or form a very distinct idea of it, or be sure that the idea exactly resembles a horse, unless it already has an initial idea against which it compares the second. Now if it already has one idea, it is useless to form a second, and therefore the question about the first idea, . . . , and so on.

It is true that when we conceive of a square through pure intellection, we can still imagine it, i.e., perceive it by tracing an image of it for ourselves in the brain. But it should be noted, first, that we are neither the true nor the principal cause of the image (but this is too long a matter to be explained here), and second, that far from being more distinct and more accurate than the first idea, the second idea accompanying the image is accurate only because it resembles the first, which serves as a model [*regle*] for the second. For ultimately, the imagination and the senses themselves should not be taken as representing objects to us more distinctly than does the pure understanding, but only as affecting and moving the mind more. For the ideas of the senses and of the imagination are distinct only to the extent that they conform to the ideas of pure intellection.<sup>a</sup> The image of a square that the imagination traces in the brain, for example, is accurate and well formed only to the extent that it conforms to the idea of a square we conceive through pure intellection. It is this idea that governs the image. It is the mind that conducts the imagination and requires it, as it were, to consider occasionally whether the image it depicts is a figure composed of four straight and equal lines, and exactly right-angled—in a word, whether what one is imagining is like what one conceives.

After what has been said, I do not think anyone can doubt that those who claim the mind can form its own ideas of objects are mistaken, since they attribute to the mind the power of creating, and even of creating wisely and with order, although it has no knowledge of what it does—which is inconceivable. But the cause of their error is that men never fail to judge that a thing is the cause of a given effect when the two are conjoined, given that the true cause of the effect is unknown to them. This is why everyone concludes that a moving ball which strikes another is the true and principal cause of the motion it communicates to the other, and that the soul's will is the true and principal cause of movement in the arms, and other such prejudices—because it always happens that a ball moves when struck by another, that our arms move almost every time we want them to, and that we do not sensibly perceive what else could be the cause of these movements.

But when an effect does not so frequently follow something not its cause, there are still people who believe it to be caused by that thing, though not everyone falls into this error. For example, a comet appears and a prince dies, stones are

<sup>a</sup> "Tanto meliora esse judico quae oculis cerno, quanto pro sui natura viciniora sunt iis quae animo intelligo." Aug. *Vera religione*, ch. 3. "Quis bene se inspiciens non expertus est, tanto se aliquid intellexisse sincerius, quanto removere atque subducere intentionem mentis a corporis sensibus potuit." Aug. *De immortalitate animae*, ch. 10.

exposed to the moon and are eaten by worms, the sun is in conjunction with Mars at the birth of a child and something extraordinary happens to the child. This is enough to convince many people that the comet, the moon, and the conjunction of the sun and Mars are the causes of the effects just noted and others like them; and the reason why not everyone is of the same belief is that these effects are not always observed to follow these things.

But given that all men generally have ideas of things present to the mind as soon as they want them, and that this occurs many times daily, practically everyone concludes that the will attending the production, or rather, the presence of ideas is their true cause, because at the time they see nothing they can assign as their cause, and because they believe that ideas cease to exist as soon as the mind ceases to perceive them and begin to exist again when they are represented to the mind. This is also why some people judge that external objects transmit images resembling them, as we have just pointed out in the preceding chapter. Unable to see objects by themselves, but only through their ideas, they judge that the object produces the idea—because as soon as it is present, they see it; as soon as it is absent, they no longer see it; and because the presence of the object almost always attends the idea representing it to us.

Yet if men were not so rash in their judgments, they would conclude from the fact that the ideas of things are present to their mind as soon as they wish, only this, that in the order of nature their will is generally necessary for them to have these ideas, but not that the will is the true and principal cause that presents ideas to their mind, and still less that the will produces them from nothing or in the way they explain it. They should conclude not that objects transmit species resembling them because the soul ordinarily perceives them only when they are present, but only that the object is ordinarily necessary for the idea to be present to the mind. Finally, because a ball does not have the power to move itself, they should not judge that a ball in motion is the true and principal cause of the movement of the ball it finds in its path. They can judge only that the collision of the two balls is the occasion for the Author of all motion in matter to carry out the decree of His will, which is the universal cause of all things. He does so by communicating to the second ball part of the motion of the first, i.e., to speak more clearly, by willing that the latter ball should acquire as much motion in the same direction as the former loses, for<sup>a</sup> the motor force of bodies can only be the will of Him who preserves them, as we shall show elsewhere.

<sup>a</sup>See chapter 3 of the second part on Method, and the Elucidation of this chapter [15].

---

## BOOK THREE: PART TWO

### Chapter Four



*That we do not perceive objects by means of ideas created with us. That God does not produce ideas in us each time we need them.*

The third view is held by those who would have it that all ideas are innate or created with us.

To see the implausibility of this view, it should be considered that there are in the world many totally different things of which we have ideas. But to mention only simple figures, it is certain that their number is infinite, and even if we fix upon only one, such as the ellipse, the mind undoubtedly conceives of an infinite number of different kinds of them when it conceives that one of its diameters may be infinitely lengthened while the other remains constant.

Likewise, an infinite number of different kinds of triangles can be conceived, given that the altitude can be infinitely increased or decreased while the base remains the same; moreover, and this is what I ask be noted here, the mind to some extent perceives this infinite number of triangles, although we can imagine very few of them and cannot simultaneously have particular and distinct ideas of many triangles of different kinds. But it should be especially noted that the mind's general idea of this infinite number of different kinds of triangles suffices to prove that if we do not conceive of all these different triangles by means of particular ideas, in short, if we do not comprehend the infinite, the fault does not lie with our ideas, and that our failure to grasp the infinite is only for lack of capacity and scope of mind. If a man were to apply himself to an investigation of the properties of all the different kinds of triangles, and even if he should continue his investigation forever, he would never want for further particular ideas. But his mind would exhaust itself for no purpose.

What I have just said about triangles is applicable to figures of five, six, a hundred, a thousand, of ten thousand sides, and so on to infinity. And if the sides of a triangle can have infinite relations with each other, making an infinity of different kinds of triangles, it is easy to see that figures of four, five, or a million sides can have even greater differences, since they can have a greater number of relations and combinations of their sides than can simple triangles.

The mind, then, perceives all these things; it has ideas of them; it is certain that

it will never want for ideas should it spend countless centuries investigating even a single figure, and that if it does not perceive these figures in an instant, or if it does not comprehend the infinite, this is only because of its very limited scope. It has, then, an infinite number of ideas—what am I saying?—it has as many infinite numbers of ideas as there are different figures; consequently, since there is an infinite number of different figures, the mind must have an infinity of infinite numbers of ideas just to know the figures.

Now, I ask whether it is likely that God created so many things along with the mind of man. My own view is that such is not the case, especially since all this could be done in another, much simpler and easier way, as we shall see shortly. For as God always acts in the simplest ways, it does not seem reasonable to explain how we know objects by assuming the creation of an infinity of beings, since the difficulty can be resolved in an easier and more straightforward fashion.

But even if the mind had a store of all the ideas necessary for it to perceive objects, yet it would be impossible to explain how the soul could choose them to represent them to itself, how, for example, the soul could make itself instantly perceive all the different objects whose size, figure, distance and motion it discovers when it opens its eyes in the countryside. Through this means it could not even perceive a single object such as the sun when it is before the body's eyes. For, since the image the sun imprints in the brain does not resemble the idea we have of it (as we have proved elsewhere), and as the soul does not perceive the motion the sun produces in the brain and in the fundus of the eyes, it is inconceivable that it should be able to determine precisely which among the infinite number of its ideas it would have to represent to itself in order to imagine or see the sun and to see it as having a given size. It cannot be said, then, that ideas of things are created with us, or that this suffices for us to see the objects surrounding us.

Nor can it be said that God constantly produces as many new ideas as there are different things we perceive. This view is refuted well enough by what has just been said in this chapter. Furthermore, we must at all times actually have in us the ideas of all things, since we can at all times will to think about anything—which we could not do unless we had already perceived them confusedly, i.e., unless an infinite number of ideas were present to the mind; for after all, one cannot will to think about objects of which one has no idea. Furthermore, it is clear that the idea, or immediate object of our mind, when we think about limitless space, or a circle in general, or indeterminate being, is nothing created. For no created reality can be either infinite or even general, as is what we perceive in these cases. But all this will be seen more clearly in what follows.

---

## BOOK THREE: PART TWO

### Chapter Five



*That the mind sees neither the essence nor the existence of objects by considering its own perfections. That only God sees them in this way.*

The fourth view is that the mind needs only itself in order to see objects, and that by considering itself and its own perfections, it can discover all external things.

It is certain that the soul sees in itself, and without ideas, all the sensations and passions that affect it at the moment—pleasure, pain, cold, heat, colors, sounds, odors, tastes, its love and hatred, its joy and sadness, and all the rest—because none of the soul's sensations and passions represent anything resembling them outside the soul, and are but modifications of which a mind is capable.<sup>a</sup> But the difficulty lies in knowing whether the ideas representing something outside the soul and resembling them to some extent (such as the ideas of the sun, of a house, a horse, a river, etc.) are merely modifications of the soul, as a result of which the mind would need only itself in order to represent all things external to itself.

There are some people who do not hesitate to affirm that with the soul made for thinking, it has within itself all that it needs to perceive objects, i.e., by considering its own perfections, because given that the soul is indeed more noble than anything it distinctly conceives of, it can to some extent be said to contain them *eminently*, as the School would put it, i.e., in a way more noble and sublime than they are in themselves. They would have it that higher things contain the perfections of lower things in this way. Thus, given that they are the noblest creature they know of, these people claim to have within themselves in a spiritual way all that exists in the visible world, and to be able to modify themselves in such fashion as to perceive all that the human mind is capable of knowing. In a word, they would have the soul be like an intelligible world, which contains in itself all that the material and sensible world contains, and indeed, infinitely more.

But it seems to me rash to wish to maintain this view. Unless I am mistaken, it is natural vanity, love of independence, and the desire to be like Him who contains in Himself all beings that confound the mind and lead us to fancy that

<sup>a</sup>See Arnauld's *Dex vrayes et des fausses idées* [ch. 27].

we possess what in fact we do not. "Say not that you are a light unto yourself," says Saint Augustine,<sup>a</sup> for only God is a light unto Himself and can see all that He has produced and might produce by considering Himself.

It cannot be doubted that only God existed before the world was created and that He could not have produced it without knowledge or ideas; consequently, the ideas He had of the world are not different from Himself, so that all creatures, even the most material and terrestrial, are in God, though in a completely spiritual way that is incomprehensible to us.<sup>b</sup> God therefore sees within Himself all beings by considering His own perfections, which represent them to Him. He also knows their existence perfectly, because given that they depend for their existence on His will, and given that He cannot be ignorant of his own volitions, it follows that He cannot be ignorant of their existence, and consequently, God sees in Himself not only the essence of things but also their existence.

But such is not the case with created minds, which can see in themselves neither the essence nor the existence of things. They cannot see the essence of things within themselves since, given their own limitations, created minds cannot contain all beings as does God, who might be termed universal being, or simply, *He Who is*,<sup>c</sup> as He calls Himself. Therefore, since the human mind can know all beings, including infinite beings, and since it does not contain them, we have a sure proof that it does not see their essence in itself. For the mind not only sees things one after another in temporal succession, but it also perceives the infinite, though it does not comprehend it, as we have said in the preceding chapter. Consequently, being neither actually infinite nor capable of infinite modifications simultaneously, it is absolutely impossible for the mind to see in itself what is not there. It does not see the essence of things, therefore, by considering its own perfections or by modifying itself in different ways.

Nor does it see their existence in itself, because they do not depend for their existence upon its will, and because the ideas of things can be present to the mind though the things themselves might not exist. For everyone can have the idea of a golden mountain without there being a golden mountain in nature, and although one may rely on the reports of the senses to judge the existence of objects, nevertheless reason does not assure us that we should always believe our senses, since we clearly detect that they deceive us. When a man's blood is heated, for example, or simply when he is asleep, he sometimes sees country scenes, battles, and other such things before his eyes that are not present nor perhaps ever were. Undoubtedly, then, it is not in itself or through itself that the mind sees the existence of things, but rather it depends on something else for this.

<sup>a</sup>See the *Réponse aux vrayes & aux fausses idées*, & the *Réponse à une 3e Lettre de M. Arnauld*, in the fourth volume of my *Replies*. "Dic quia tu tibi lumen non es." Serm. 8. *De verbis Domini*.

<sup>b</sup>"Cum essentia Dei habeat in se quidquid perfectionis habet essentia cuiusque rei alterius, & adhuc amplius, Deus in se ipso potest omnia propria cognitione cognoscere. Propria enim natura cuiusque consistit, secundum quod per aliquem modum naturam Dei participat." St. Thomas, I. P. q. 14. art. 6.

<sup>c</sup>Exod. 3:14.

---

## BOOK THREE: PART TWO

### Chapter Six



*That we see all things in God.*

In the preceding chapters we have examined four different ways in which the soul might see external objects, all of which seem to us very unlikely. There remains only the fifth, which alone seems to conform to reason and to be most appropriate for exhibiting the dependence that minds have on God in all their thoughts.

To understand this fifth way, we must remember what was just said in the preceding chapter—that God must have within Himself the ideas of all the beings He has created (since otherwise He could not have created them), and thus He sees all these beings by considering the perfections He contains to which they are related. We should know, furthermore, that through His presence God is in close union with our minds, such that He might be said to be the place of minds as space is, in a sense, the place of bodies. Given these two things, the mind surely can see what in God represents created beings, since what in God represents created beings is very spiritual, intelligible, and present to the mind. Thus, the mind can see God's works in Him, provided that God wills to reveal to it what in Him represents them. The following are the reasons that seem to prove that He wills this rather than the creation of an infinite number of ideas in each mind.

Not only does it strictly conform to reason, but it is also apparent from the economy found throughout nature that God never does in very complicated fashion what can be done in a very simple and straightforward way. For God never does anything uselessly and without reason. His power and wisdom are not shown by doing lesser things with greater means—this is contrary to reason and indicates a limited intelligence. Rather, they are shown by doing greater things with very simple and straightforward means. Thus, it was with extension alone that He produced everything admirable we see in nature and even what gives life and movement to animals. For those who absolutely insist on substantial forms, faculties, and souls in animals (different from their blood and bodily organs) to perform their functions, at the same time would have it that God lacks intelligence, or that He cannot make all these remarkable things with extension alone. They measure the power and sovereign wisdom of God by the pettiness of

their own mind. Thus, since God can reveal everything to minds simply by willing that they see what is in their midst, i.e., what in Him is related to and represents these things, there is no likelihood that He does otherwise, or that He does so by producing as many infinities of infinite numbers of ideas as there are created minds.

But it should be carefully noted that we cannot conclude from their seeing all things in God in this way that our minds see the essence of God. God's essence is His own absolute being, and minds do not see the divine substance taken absolutely but only as relative to creatures and to the degree that they can participate in it. What they see in God is very imperfect, whereas God is most perfect. They see matter that is shaped, divisible, and so on, but there is nothing divisible or shaped in God, for God is all being, since He is infinite and comprehends everything; but He is no being in particular. Yet what we see is but one or more particular beings, and we do not understand this perfect simplicity of God, which includes all beings. In addition, it might be said that we do not so much see the ideas of things as the things themselves that are represented by ideas, for when we see a square, for example, we do not say that we see the idea of the square, which is joined to the mind, but only the square that is external to it.

The second reason for thinking that we see beings because God wills that what in Him representing them should be revealed to us (and not because there are as many ideas created with us as there are things we can perceive) is that this view places created minds in a position of complete dependence on God—the most complete there can be. For on this view, not only could we see nothing but what He wills that we see, but we could see nothing but what He makes us see. "Non sumus sufficietes cogitare aliquid a nobis, tamquam ex nobis, sed sufficientia nostra ex Deo est."<sup>a</sup> It is God Himself who enlightens philosophers in the knowledge that ungrateful men call natural though they receive it only from heaven. "Deus enim illis manifestavit."<sup>b</sup> He is truly the mind's light and the father of lights. "Pater lumen"<sup>c</sup>—it is He who teaches men knowledge—"Qui docet hominem scientiam."<sup>d</sup> In a word, He is the true light that illuminates everyone who comes into the world: "Lux vera quae illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum."<sup>e</sup>

For after all, it is difficult enough to understand distinctly the dependence our minds have on God in all their particular actions, given that they have everything we distinctly know to be necessary for them to act, or all the ideas of things present to their mind. And that general and confused term *concourse*, by means of which we would explain creatures' dependence on God, rouses not a single distinct idea in an attentive mind; and yet it is good that men should distinctly know that they are capable of nothing without God.

<sup>a</sup>2 Cor. 3:5.

<sup>b</sup>Rom. 1:19.

<sup>c</sup>James 1:17.

<sup>d</sup>Ps. 93:10.

<sup>e</sup>John 1:9.

But the strongest argument of all is the mind's way of perceiving anything. It is certain, and everyone knows this from experience, that when we want to think about some particular thing, we first glance over all beings and then apply ourselves to the consideration of the object we wish to think about. Now, it is indubitable that we could desire to see a particular object only if we had already seen it, though in a general and confused fashion. As a result of this, given that we can desire to see all beings, now one, now another, it is certain that all beings are present to our mind; and it seems that all beings can be present to our mind only because God, i.e., He who includes all things in the simplicity of His being, is present to it.

It even seems that the mind would be incapable of representing universal ideas of genus, species, and so on, to itself had it not seen all beings contained in one. For, given that every creature is a particular being, we cannot say that we see a created thing when, for example, we see a triangle in general. Finally, I think that sense can be made of the way the mind knows certain abstract and general truths only through the presence of Him who can enlighten the mind in an infinity of different ways.

Finally, of the proofs of God's existence, the loftiest and most beautiful, the primary and most solid (or the one that assumes the least)<sup>a</sup> is the idea we have of the infinite. For it is certain that (a) the mind perceives the infinite, though it does not comprehend it, and (b) it has a very distinct idea of God, which it can have only by means of its union with Him, since it is inconceivable that the idea of an infinitely perfect being (which is what we have of God) should be something created.

But not only does the mind have the idea of the infinite, it even has it before that of the finite. For we conceive of infinite being simply because we conceive of being, without thinking whether it is finite or infinite. In order for us to conceive of a finite being, something must necessarily be eliminated from this general notion of being, which consequently must come first. Thus, the mind perceives nothing except in the idea it has of the infinite, and far from this idea being formed from the confused collection of all our ideas of particular beings (as philosophers think), all these particular ideas are in fact but participations in the general idea of the infinite; just as God does not draw. His being from creatures, while every creature is but an imperfect participation in the divine being.

Here is an argument that may prove demonstrative for those accustomed to abstract reasoning. It is certain that ideas are efficacious, since they act upon the mind and enlighten it, and since they make it happy or unhappy through the pleasant or unpleasant perceptions by which they affect it. Now nothing can act immediately upon the mind unless it is superior to it—nothing but God alone; for only the Author of our being can change its modifications. All our ideas, therefore, must be located in the efficacious substance of the Divinity, which alone is intelligible or capable of enlightening us, because it alone can affect intelligences. "Insinuavit nobis Christus," says Saint Augustine,<sup>b</sup> "animam

<sup>a</sup>This proof will be found treated at greater length in chapter 11 of the following book.

<sup>b</sup>*Tract. 23 on St. John.*

humanam & mentem rationalem non vegetari, non beatificari, NON ILLUMINARI  
NISI AB IPSA SUBSTANTIA DEI."

Finally, God can have no other special end for His actions than Himself. This is a notion common to all men capable of a little reflection, and Sacred Scripture allows no doubt that God made all things for Himself. Therefore, not only must our natural love, i.e., the impulse He produces in our mind, tend toward Him but also the knowledge and light He gives it must reveal to us something in Him, for everything coming from God can be only for God. If God had made a mind and had given the sun to it as an idea, or immediate object of knowledge, it seems to me God would have made this mind and its idea for the sun and not for Himself.

God can make a mind in order for it to know His works, then, only if that mind to some extent sees God in seeing His works. As a result, it might be said that if we do not to some extent see God, we see nothing, just as if we do not love God, i.e., if God were not continuously impressing upon us the love of good in general, we would love nothing.<sup>a</sup> For, given that this love is our will, we could neither love nor will anything without it, since we can love particular goods only by directing toward these goods the impulse of love that God gives us for Himself. Thus, as we love something only through our necessary love for God, we see something only through our natural knowledge of God; and all our particular ideas of creatures are but limitations of the idea of the Creator, as all the impulses of the will toward creatures are only determinations of its impulse toward the Creator.

I do not think there are any theologians who will disagree that the impious love God with this natural love I am speaking about, and Saint Augustine and several other Fathers maintain as indubitable that the impious see eternal truths and moral rules in God. Accordingly, the view I am expounding should upset no one.<sup>b</sup> Here is how Saint Augustine expresses it:

Ab illa incommutabilis luce veritatis etiam impius, dum ab ea avertitur, quodammodo tangitur. Hinc est quod etiam impii cogitant aeternitatem, & multa recte reprehendunt, recteque laudent in hominum moribus. Quibus ea tandem regulis judicant, nisi in quibus vident, quemadmodum quisque vivere debeat, etiam si nec ipsi eodem modo vivant? Ubi autem eas vident? Neque enim in sua natura. Nam cum procul dubio mente ista videantur, eorumque mentes constet esse mutabiles, has vero regulas immutabiles videat, quisquis in eis & hoc videre potuerit. . . ubinam ergo sunt istae regulae scriptae, nisi in libro lucis illius, quae veritas dicitur, unde lex omnis justa describitur. . . in qua videt quid operandum sit, etiam qui operatur injustitiam. & ipse est qui ab illa luce avertitur a qua tamen tangitur.<sup>c</sup>

Saint Augustine has an infinity of such passages by which he proves that we already see God in this life through the knowledge we have of eternal truths. The truth is uncreated, immutable, immense, eternal, and above all things. It is true by itself. It draws its perfection from no other thing. It renders creatures more

<sup>a</sup>Bk. I, ch. 1.

<sup>b</sup>See the preface to the *Dialogues on Metaphysics*, and the *Réponse aux vraies & fausses idées* chs. 7 & 21.

<sup>c</sup>Book 14, *De Trin.* ch. 15.

perfect, and all minds naturally seek to know it. Only God can have all these perfections. Therefore, truth is God. We see some of these immutable, eternal truths. Therefore, we see God. These are the arguments of Saint Augustine—ours are somewhat different, and we have no wish to make improper use of the authority of so great a man in order to support our own view.

We are of the opinion, then, that truths (and even those that are eternal, such as that twice two is four) are not absolute beings, much less that they are God Himself. For clearly, this truth consists only in the relation of equality between twice two and four. Thus, we do not claim, as does Saint Augustine, that we see God in seeing truths, but in seeing the *ideas* of these truths—for the ideas are real, whereas the equality between the ideas, which is the truth, is nothing real. When we say, for example, that the cloth we are measuring is three ells long, the cloth and the ells are real. But the equality between them is not a real being—it is only a relation found between the three ells and the cloth. When we say that twice two is four, the ideas of the numbers are real, but the equality between them is only a relation. Thus, our view is that we see God when we see eternal truths, and not that these truths are God, because the ideas on which these truths depend are in God—it might even be that this was Saint Augustine's meaning. We further believe that changeable and corruptible things are known in God, though Saint Augustine speaks only of immutable and incorruptible things, because for this to be so, no imperfection need be placed in God, since, as we have already said, it is enough that God should reveal to us what in Him is related to these things.

But although I may say that we see material and sensible things in God, it must be carefully noted that I am not saying we have sensations of them in God, but only that it is God who acts in us; for God surely knows sensible things, but He does not sense them. When we perceive something sensible, two things are found in our perception: *sensation* and pure *idea*. The sensation is a modification of our soul, and it is God who causes it in us. He can cause this modification even though He does not have it Himself, because He sees in the idea He has of our soul that it is capable of it. As for the idea found in conjunction with the sensation, it is in God, and we see it because it pleases God to reveal it to us. God joins the sensation to the idea when objects are present so that we may believe them to be present and that we may have all the feelings and passions that we should have in relation to them.

We believe, finally, that all minds see eternal laws, as well as other things, in God, but with a certain difference. They know order and eternal truths, and even the beings that God has made according to these truths or according to order, through the union these minds necessarily have with the Word, or the wisdom of God, which enlightens them, as has just been explained. But it is through the impression they constantly receive from the will of God, who leads them toward Him and who tries, as it were, to make their will entirely like His own, that they realize that the immutable order is their own indispensable law, an order which thus includes all eternal laws, such as that we ought to love good and avoid evil, that justice should be prized more than all riches, that it is better to obey God than

to command men, and an infinity of other natural laws. For the knowledge of all these laws, or of the obligation minds are under to conform to the immutable order, is not different from the knowledge of this impression, which they always feel in themselves, though they do not always follow it through the free choice of their will, and which they know to be common to all minds, though it is not equally strong in all minds.

It is through this dependence, this relation, this union of our mind with the Word of God, and of our will with His love, that we are made in the image and likeness of God. And though this image may be greatly effaced through sin, yet it must subsist as long as we do. But if we bear the image of the Word humiliated upon earth, and if we follow the impulses of the Holy Ghost, this union of our mind with the Word of the Father, and with the love of the Father and the Son, will be reestablished and made indelible. We shall be like God if we are like the God-man. Finally, God will be entirely in us, and we in Him in a way much more perfect than that by which we must be in Him and He in us that we might subsist.

These are some of the reasons that might lead one to believe that minds perceive everything through the intimate presence of Him who comprehends all in the simplicity of His being. Each of us will judge<sup>a</sup> the matter according to the inner conviction he receives after seriously considering it. But I do not think there is any plausibility in any of the other ways of explaining these things, and this last way seems more than plausible. Thus, our souls depend on God in all ways. For just as it is He who makes them feel pain, pleasure, and all the other sensations, through the natural union He has established between them and our bodies, which is but His decree and general will, so it is He who makes them know all that they know through the natural union He has also established between the will of man and the representation of ideas contained in the immensity of the Divine being, which union is also but His general will. As a result of this, only He can enlighten us, by representing everything to us—just as only He can make us happy by making us enjoy all sorts of pleasures.

Let us hold this view, then, that God is the intelligible world or the place of minds, as the material world is the place of bodies; that from His power minds receive their modifications; that in His wisdom they find all their ideas; that through His love they receive their orderly impulses, and because His power and love are but Himself, let us believe with Saint Paul, that He is not far from any of us, and that in Him we live and move and have our being. "Non longe est ab unoquoque nostrum, in ipso enim vivimus, movemus, & sumus."<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>See the *Elucidations* [4]. The *Réponse au livre des vrayes & fausses Idées*. The *1ère Lettre contre la Défense* against this *Réponse*, the first two *Dialogues on Metaphysics*. The *Réponse à M. Régis*, and especially my *Réponse à une 3e Lettre de M. Arnauld*. There perhaps my view will be found more clearly demonstrated.

<sup>b</sup>Acts 17:28.

---

## BOOK THREE: PART TWO

### Chapter Seven



*I. The four different ways of perceiving things. II. How we know God.  
III. How we know bodies. IV. How we know our own souls. V. How we know  
pure spirits and the souls of other men.*

In order to clarify and simplify the view I have just laid out concerning the way in which the mind perceives all the various objects of its knowledge, I must distinguish its four ways of knowing.

#### *I. The four ways of perceiving things.*

The first is to know things by themselves.

The second is to know them through their ideas, i.e., as I mean it here, through something different from themselves.

The third is to know them through *consciousness*, or inner sensation.

The fourth is to know them through conjecture.

We know things by themselves and without ideas when they are intelligible by themselves, i.e., when they can act on the mind and thereby reveal themselves to it. For the understanding is a purely passive faculty of the soul, whereas activity is found only in the will. Even its desires are not the true causes of ideas—they are but the occasional or natural causes of their presence as a result of the natural laws concerning the union of our soul with universal Reason, as I have explained elsewhere. We know things through their ideas when they are not intelligible by themselves, whether because they are corporeal or because they cannot affect the mind or reveal themselves to it. Through consciousness we know everything that is not distinct from ourselves. Finally, through conjecture we know those things that are different both from ourselves and from what we know either in itself or through ideas, such as when we believe that certain things are like certain others we know.

#### *II. How we know God.*

Only God do we know through Himself, for though there are other spiritual beings besides Him, which seem intelligible by their nature, only He can act on our mind and reveal Himself to it. Only God do we perceive by a direct and

immediate perception. Only He can enlighten our mind with His own substance. Finally, only through the union we have with Him are we capable in this life of knowing what we know, as we have explained in the preceding chapter; for He is the only master, according to Saint Augustine,<sup>a</sup> ruling our mind without the mediation of any creature.

I cannot conceive how a created thing can represent the infinite, how being that is without restriction, immense and universal, can be perceived through an idea, i.e., through a particular being different from universal and infinite being. But as far as particular beings are concerned, there is no difficulty in conceiving how they can be represented by the infinite being that contains them in His most efficacious and, consequently, most intelligible substance. Thus, it must be said that (a) we know God through Himself, though our knowledge of Him in this life is very imperfect, and (b) we know corporeal things through their ideas, i.e., in God, since only God contains the intelligible world, where the ideas of all things are located.

But while we can see all things in God, it does not follow that we in fact do so—we see in God only the things of which we have ideas, and there are things we perceive without ideas, or know only through sensation.

### *III. How we know bodies.*

Everything in this world of which we have some knowledge is either a mind or a body, a property of a mind or a property of a body. Undoubtedly, we know bodies with their properties through their ideas, because given that they are not intelligible by themselves, we can perceive them only in that being which contains them in an intelligible way. Thus, it is in God and through their ideas that we perceive bodies and their properties, and for this reason, the knowledge we have of them is quite perfect—i.e., our idea of extension suffices to inform us of all the properties of which extension is capable, and we could not wish for an idea of extension, figure, or motion more distinct or more fruitful than the one God gives us.

As the ideas of things in God include all their properties, whoever sees their ideas can also see all their properties successively; for when we see things as they are in God, we always see them in perfect fashion, and the way we see them would be infinitely perfect if the mind seeing them were infinite. What is lacking to our knowledge of extension, figures, and motion is the shortcoming not of the idea representing it but of our mind considering it.

### *IV. How we know our own soul.*

Such is not the case with the soul, [which] we do not know through its idea—we do not see it in God; we know it only through consciousness, and because of this, our knowledge of it is imperfect. Our knowledge of our soul is limited to what we sense taking place in us. If we had never sensed pain, heat, light, and such, we would be unable to know whether the soul was capable of sensing these things, because we do not know it through its idea. But if we saw in

<sup>a</sup>Humanis mentibus nulla interposita natura praesidet. <sup>11</sup> Aug. *De vera relig.* ch. 55.

God the idea corresponding to our soul, we would at the same time know, or at least could know all the properties of which it is capable—as we know, or at least can know, all the properties of which extension is capable, because we know extension through its idea.

It is true that we know well enough through our consciousness, or the inner sensation we have of ourselves, that our soul is something of importance. But what we know of it might be almost nothing compared to what it is in itself. If all we knew about matter were some twenty or thirty figures it had been modified by, we certainly would know almost nothing about it in comparison with what we can know about it through the idea representing it. To know the soul perfectly, then, it is not enough to know only what we know through inner sensation—since the consciousness we have of ourselves perhaps shows us only the least part of our being.

From what we have just said it might be concluded that although we know the existence of our soul more distinctly than the existence of both our own body and those surrounding us, still our knowledge of the soul's nature is not as perfect as our knowledge of the nature of bodies, and this might serve to reconcile the differing views<sup>a</sup> of those who say that nothing is known better than the soul, and those who claim to know nothing less.

This might also serve to prove that the ideas which represent to us things outside us are not modifications of our soul. For if the soul saw all things by considering its own modifications, it would have to know its own nature or essence more clearly than that of bodies, and all the sensations or modifications of which it is capable more clearly than the figures or modifications of which bodies are capable. However, it knows itself capable of a given sensation not through the perception it has of itself in consulting its idea but only through experience, whereas it knows that extension is capable of an infinite number of figures through the idea it has of extension. There are even certain sensations like colors and sounds which are such that most people cannot tell whether or not they are modifications of the soul, but there is no figure that everyone, through the idea he has of extension, does not recognize as the modification of a body.

What I have just said also shows why the modifications of the soul cannot be made known through definition; for since we know neither the soul nor its modifications through ideas but only through sensation, and since such sensations as, for example, pleasure, pain, heat, and so on, are not attached to any words, it is clear that if someone had never seen color or felt heat, he could not be made to know these sensations through any definition of them that might be given him. Now, given that men have their sensations only on account of their body, and given that their bodies are not all disposed in the same way, it often happens that words are equivocal, that the words we use to express the modifications of our soul mean just the opposite of what we intend, and that we often make people think of bitterness, for example, when we believe we are making them think of sweetness.

<sup>a</sup>See the *Elucidations* [11].

Although our knowledge of our soul is not complete, what we do know of it through consciousness or inner sensation is enough to demonstrate its immortality, spirituality, freedom, and several other attributes we need to know. And this seems to be why God does not cause us to know the soul, as He causes us to know bodies, through its idea. The knowledge that we have of our soul through consciousness is imperfect, granted; but it is not false. On the other hand, that knowledge we have of bodies through sensation or consciousness, if the confused sensation we have of what takes place in our body can be called consciousness, is not only imperfect, but also false. We therefore needed an idea of the body to correct our sensations of it—but we need no idea of our soul, since our consciousness of it does not involve us in error, and since to avoid being mistaken in our knowledge of it, it is enough not to confuse it with the body—and reason enables us to do this since our idea of the body reveals to us that the modalities of which it is capable are quite different from those we sense. Finally, if we had an idea of the soul as clear as that which we have of the body, that idea would have inclined us too much to view the soul as separated from the body. It would have thus diminished the union between our soul and body by preventing us from regarding it as dispersed through all our members, though I shall not further explain the matter here.

*V. How we know other men's souls.*

Of all the objects of our knowledge, only the souls of other men and pure intelligences remain; and clearly we know them only through conjecture. At present we do not know them either in themselves or through their ideas, and as they are different from ourselves, we cannot know them through consciousness. We conjecture that the souls of other men are of the same sort as our own. We suppose them to feel what we feel in ourselves, and even when these sensations have no relation to the body, we are certain we are not mistaken because we see in God certain ideas and immutable laws from which we know with certainty that God acts uniformly in all minds.

I know that twice two is four, that it is better to be just than rich, and I am not mistaken in believing that others know these truths as well as I do. I love pleasure and good, I abhor pain and evil, I want to be happy, and I am not mistaken in believing that all men, the angels, and even demons have these same inclinations. I even know that God will never make a mind that does not desire to be happy, or that can desire to be unhappy. But I know this with evidence and certainty because it is God who teaches it to me—for who else but God could reveal to me His designs and volitions? But when the body plays a part in what happens in me, I am almost always mistaken in judging others by myself. I feel heat, I see something of a certain size, a certain color, I taste such and such a flavor upon the approach of certain bodies—but I am mistaken if I judge others by myself. I am subject to certain passions, I have a liking or an aversion for such and such things, and I judge that others are like me—but my conjecture is often false. Thus, the knowledge we have of other men is very liable to error if we judge them only by the sensations we have of ourselves.

If there are beings different from God and ourselves, as well as from bodies and pure spirits, they are unknown to us. I can hardly persuade myself of their existence, and after examining the arguments of certain philosophers holding that there are these things, I have found them unsound. This reinforces our view that since all men have the same nature, we all have the same ideas, because we all need to know the same things.

---

## ELUCIDATION TEN



*On the nature of ideas, in which I explain how all things, eternal laws, and truths, are seen in God.*

I hoped that what I said about the nature of ideas would have been enough to show that it is God who enlightens us, but experience has taught me that there are many people who are incapable of sufficiently close attention to understand the arguments that I have given for this principle. What is abstract is incomprehensible to most men. Only what is sensible awakens them, and fixes and sustains their mind's perception. They cannot consider and hence cannot understand what does not come under the senses or the imagination. This is something that I have said often, but that bears repetition.

It is evident that bodies are not visible by themselves and that they cannot act on our mind or represent themselves to it. This needs no proof—it can be seen through simple perception with no need of reasoning, for the slightest attention of the mind to the clear idea of matter suffices to show it. This is infinitely more certain than that bodies communicate their motion when they collide; but it is certain only to those who silence their senses in order to listen to their reason. Thus, everyone believes, though utterly without foundation, that bodies can move one another, because the senses say so; but no one believes that bodies are by themselves entirely invisible and incapable of acting on the mind, because the senses do not say so and seem to say the contrary.

Nonetheless, there are some people whose firm and steadfast reason rises to the most abstract of truths; they meditate attentively and they courageously resist the impression of their senses and imagination. But the body gradually weighs down the mind, and they fall back. These ideas vanish, and as the imagination stirs up livelier and more sensible ideas, the ideas of abstract truths then seem to be only wraiths exciting fear and mistrust.

We are easily led to mistrust people or things with which we are unfamiliar, or which do not afford us some sensible pleasure, for it is pleasure that wins the heart and familiarity that calms the uncertain mind. Thus, those who are unaccustomed to abstract or metaphysical truths are easily persuaded that we are trying only to lead them astray when we would enlighten them. With mistrust and with

a kind of loathing do they look at non-pleasant, non-sensible ideas, and the love they have for repose and felicity soon delivers them from this troubling perception that seems incapable of satisfying them.

If the question before us were not of the greatest importance, the reasons I have just given (as well as certain others I need not relate) would preclude further discussion—for I can see that whatever I might say on this topic will never penetrate the minds of certain people. But it seems to me that the principle that only God enlightens us, and that He enlightens us only through the manifestation of an immutable and necessary wisdom or reason so conforms to religion, and furthermore, that this principle is so absolutely necessary if a sound and unshakable foundation is to be given to any truth whatsoever, that I feel myself under an indispensable obligation to explain and defend it as much as I possibly can. I prefer to be called a visionary, or one of the Illuminati, or any of the lovely things with which the imagination (always sarcastic in insignificant minds) usually answers arguments it does not understand and against which it is defenseless, than to agree that bodies can enlighten me, that I am my own master, reason, and light, and that in order to be well-versed in anything I need only consult myself or other men who can perhaps fill my ears with noise, but who certainly cannot fill my mind with light. Here, then, are several more arguments for the view I proposed in the chapters on which I am now writing.

No one disagrees that all men can know the truth, and even the least enlightened of philosophers agree that man participates in a certain *Reason* that they do not determine. This is why they define man as *animal RATIONIS particeps*; for everyone knows, at least in confused fashion, that man's essential difference consists in the necessary union he has with universal Reason (although it is not generally known who it is who contains this Reason, and little effort is made to find out).<sup>a</sup> I see, for example, that twice two is four, and that my friend is to be valued more than my dog; and I am certain that no one in the world does not see this as well as I. Now, I do not see these truths in the mind of other people, just as other people do not see them in mine. There must, therefore, be a universal Reason that enlightens me and all other intelligences. For if the reason I consult were not the same that answers the Chinese, it is clear that I could not be as certain as I am that the Chinese see the same truths as I do. Thus, the Reason we consult when we withdraw into ourselves is a universal Reason. I say, when we withdraw into ourselves, because I am not here talking about the reason followed by a man in passion. When a man values the life of his horse more than the life of his coachman, he has his reasons for doing so; but they are particular reasons that every reasonable man abhors. They are reasons that at bottom are unreasonable, because they do not conform with Sovereign Reason, or the Universal Reason that all men consult.

I am certain that the ideas of things are immutable,<sup>b</sup> and that eternal laws and

<sup>a</sup>"Si ambo videmus verum esse quod dicis, & ambo videmus verum esse quod dico, ubi queso id videmus? Nec ego utique in te, nec tu in me, sed ambo in ipsa quae supra mentes nostras est incommutabili veritate." *Conf.* of St. Aug. bk. 12. ch. 25.

<sup>b</sup>See Aug. *De libero arbitrio*. bk. 2. ch. 8 ff.

truths are necessary—it is impossible that they should not be as they are. Now, I see nothing in me of a necessary or immutable nature—I am able not to be, or not to be such as I am; there might be minds unlike me, yet I am certain that there can be no mind that sees truths and laws different from those I see—for every mind necessarily sees that twice two is four, and that one's friend is to be valued more than one's dog. It must be concluded, then, that the reason consulted by all minds is an immutable and necessary Reason.

Furthermore, it is evident that this Reason is infinite. The mind of man clearly conceives that there are, or can be, infinite numbers of intelligible triangles, tetragons, pentagons, and other such figures. Not only does it conceive that it will never lack for ideas of figures, and that it will always discover new ones, even if it were to attend only to these kinds of ideas for all eternity; it even perceives infinity in extension, for the mind cannot doubt that its idea of space is inexhaustible. The mind clearly sees that the number which when multiplied by itself produces 5, or any of the numbers between 4 and 9, 9 and 16, 16 and 25, and so on, is a magnitude, a proportion, a fraction whose terms have more numbers than could stretch from one of the earth's poles to the other. The mind sees clearly that this proportion is such that only God could comprehend it, and that it cannot be expressed exactly, because to do so, a fraction both of whose terms were infinite would be required. I could relate many such examples demonstrating not only that the mind of man is limited but also that the Reason he consults is infinite. For, in short, the mind clearly sees the infinite in this Sovereign Reason, although he does not comprehend it. In a word, the Reason man consults must be infinite because it cannot be exhausted, and because it always has an answer for whatever is asked of it.

But if it is true that the Reason in which all men participate is universal, that it is infinite, that it is necessary and immutable, then it is certainly not different from God's own reason, for only the infinite and universal being contains in itself an infinite and universal reason. All creatures are particular beings; universal reason, therefore, is not created. No creature is infinite; infinite reason, therefore, is not a creature. But the reason we consult is not only infinite and universal, it is also independent and necessary, and in one sense, we conceive it as more independent than God Himself. For God can act only according to this reason; He depends on it in a sense—He has to consult and follow it. Now, God consults only Himself and depends on nothing. This reason, therefore, is not different from Himself; it is, therefore, coeternal and consubstantial with Him. We see clearly that God cannot punish innocence, that He cannot subject minds to bodies, that He is constrained to observe order. We see, then, the rule, the order, the reason of God—for what wisdom other than God's could we see when we dare to say that God is constrained to follow it?

But, after all, is any wisdom other than God's conceivable? Does Solomon, who describes it so well, distinguish two kinds of wisdom? Does he not teach us that the wisdom that is coeternal with God Himself and by which He established the order we see in His works is the same wisdom that presides over all minds and is consulted in the legislation of just and reasonable laws. One need only read

the eighth chapter of Proverbs to be convinced of this truth. I know that Sacred Scripture speaks of a certain wisdom it calls the wisdom of the age, the wisdom of men. But this is because it speaks of things according to appearance, or in a popular vein, for elsewhere it teaches us that this wisdom is but folly and abomination, not only before God, but before all men who consult Reason.

Surely, if eternal laws and truths depended on God, if they had been established by a free volition of the Creator, in short, if the Reason we consult were not necessary and independent, it seems evident to me that there would no longer be any true science and that we might be mistaken in claiming that the arithmetic or geometry of the Chinese is like our own. For in the final analysis, if it were not absolutely necessary that twice four be eight, or that the three angles of a triangle be equal to two right angles, what assurance would we have that these kinds of truths are not like those that are found only in certain universities, or that last only for a certain time? Do we clearly conceive that God cannot stop willing what He has willed with an entirely free and indifferent will? Or rather, do we clearly see that God could not have willed certain things, for a certain time, for a certain place, for certain people, or for certain kinds of beings—given, as some would have it, that He was entirely free and indifferent in His willing? As for me, I can conceive no necessity in indifference, nor can I reconcile two things that are so opposite.

Yet I will suppose that we clearly see that God through an entirely indifferent will has established eternal laws and truths for all times and for all places, and that they are now immutable because of His decree. But where do men see this decree? Has God created some being representative of this decree? Will they say that this decree is a modification of their soul? They clearly see this decree, for they have learned from it that immutability attaches to eternal laws and truths; but where do they see it? Certainly, unless they see it in God, they do not see it; for this decree can be only in God, and it can be seen only where it is. Philosophers can be certain of nothing, then, unless they consult God and He answers them. Their protests here are in vain—they must either submit or remain silent.

But at bottom, this decree is an unfounded product of the imagination. When we think about order and eternal truths and laws, we do not naturally seek their cause, for they have none. We do not clearly see the necessity of this decree, nor do we immediately think about it—rather, we see with evidence through simple perception that the nature of numbers and of intelligible ideas is immutable, necessary, and independent. We clearly see that it is absolutely necessary that twice four be eight and that the square of the diagonal of a square be double that square. If anyone doubts the absolute necessity of these truths, it is because he looks away from their light, reasons on some false premiss, and seeks their nature, immutability, and independence elsewhere than in the truths themselves. Thus, the decree of immutability for these truths is a fiction of the mind, which, supposing that it does not see what it perceives in God's wisdom, and knowing that God is the cause of all things, feels itself constrained to imagine a decree in order to ascribe immutability to certain truths it cannot fail to recognize as immutable. But the supposition is false and must be guarded against. Only in the

wisdom of God do we see eternal, immutable, and necessary truths. Nowhere else but in this wisdom do we see the order that God Himself is constrained to follow, as I have just indicated. The mind is created only for this wisdom, and in a certain sense the mind can see only it; for if the mind can see creatures, it does so only because He whom it sees (though in a very imperfect way during this life) comprehends all creatures in the immensity of His being in an intelligible fashion suited to the mind, as I have indicated elsewhere.

It seems clear to me that if we did not have within us the idea of the infinite, and if we did not see everything through the natural union of our soul with infinite and universal Reason, we would not be free to think about all things. For the mind can will to apply itself only to the things of which it has some idea, and it now has the power to think about only those things to which it can will to apply itself. Thus, man is stripped of his freedom to think about all things if his mind is severed from Him who contains all things. Furthermore, given that we can love only what we see, it is clear that if God gave us only particular ideas He would determine all the impulses of our will in such a way that we could love only particular beings. For in the final analysis, if we did not have an idea of the infinite, we could not love it; and if those who assert that they have no idea of God spoke the truth, I would not hesitate in saying that they never have loved God, for it appears to me quite certain that one can love only what one sees.

Finally, if order and eternal laws were not immutable by the necessity of their nature, the foundation of the clearest and strongest arguments of religion would seemingly be destroyed, as well as freedom and the most certain of the sciences. For it is certain that the Christian religion, which offers us the mediation and reparation of Jesus Christ, assumes the corruption of nature by Original Sin. Now, what proof can we have of this corruption? The flesh struggles against the mind, you will say, the flesh subjugates and dominates the mind. I agree. But this, a libertine will answer, is no disorder. It pleases God, He has ordained it thus, He is the master of His decrees, He establishes whatever order pleases Him amongst His creatures. How will you prove to him that it is a disorder for minds to be subordinated to bodies unless you have a clear idea of order and its necessity, unless you know that God Himself is constrained to follow this order by the necessary love He bears for Himself? Besides, if this order depends on God's free decree, it will always be necessary to call upon God to learn of His decree; God will always have to be consulted (in spite of the disliking certain learned people have for appealing to Him); we shall have to yield to this truth, that our instruction depends upon God. But this free decree that caused order is, for the reasons I have already given, a fiction of the mind.

If it is not a necessary order according to which man be made for his Author and that our will conform to the order that is the essential and necessary rule of God's will, if it is not true that actions are good or evil as they conform or not with an immutable and necessary order and that this same order requires that the former be rewarded and the latter punished, finally, if all men do not naturally have a clear idea of order, but an order that is such that God Himself cannot will otherwise than as this order prescribes (because God cannot will disorder), then

surely I can see nothing but universal confusion. For how could we criticize the most infamous and most immoral actions of pagans to whom God has not given any laws? What reason will dare to judge them if there is no sovereign reason that condemns them, if there is no immutable order or indispensable law according to which they should be judged?

There was a poet<sup>a</sup> who said that it is impossible to distinguish what is moral from what is immoral. There was a philosopher<sup>b</sup> who said that it is a weakness to be ashamed of infamous actions. Similar paradoxes are often proposed as a result of a heated imagination or in a fit of passion. But why will you condemn these opinions unless there is an order, a rule, a universal and necessary reason, that is always present to those who know how to retreat within themselves. In many instances we have no hesitation in judging ourselves and others, but by what authority do we act unless the Reason that judges in us when it seems to us that we pronounce judgments against ourselves and others is sovereign over us and all other men?

But if this Reason were not present to those who retreat within themselves, and if pagans too were not naturally united to some extent with the immutable order I am speaking of, what sin or what disobedience would they have been guilty of, and according to what justice would God punish them? I say this because there is a prophet<sup>c</sup> who tells me that God Himself wills men to be His arbiter between Him and His people provided that they judge them according to the immutable and necessary order of justice. Nero killed his mother, granted. But in what did his evil consist? He followed the natural impulse of his hatred. In no way did God forbid him in this. The law of the Jews was not given to him. Perhaps you will say that the natural law prohibits such actions and that this law was known to him. But what proof have you of this? For my part, I agree, because this indeed is an irresistible proof that there is a necessary and immutable order and that every mind knows this order more clearly as it is more closely joined to the universal reason and as it is less sensible to the impressions of its senses and passions—in short, as it is more reasonable. But I must now explain as clearly as I can the view I have of order and the divine or natural law, for the difficulty in agreeing with what I say perhaps springs from failing to perceive distinctly my thought.

It is certain that God contains within Himself in an intelligible fashion the perfection of all the beings He has created or can create, and that through these intelligible perfections He knows the essence of all things, as through His volitions He knows their existence. Now, these perfections are also the human mind's immediate object (for the reasons I have already given). Therefore, the intelligible ideas or perfections that are in God and that represent to us what is external to God are absolutely immutable and necessary. Now, truths are but relations of equality or inequality between these intelligible beings (since it is true that twice two is four or that twice two is not five only because there is a

<sup>a</sup>"Nec natura potest justo secernere iniquum." Lucretius. [Horace; *Satires* I, 3, v.113.]

<sup>b</sup>Diogenes.

<sup>c</sup>"Nunc ergo habitatores Jerusalem & viri Juda judecate inter me & vineam meam." Isa. 53 [5:3].

relation of equality between twice two and four, and one of inequality between twice two and five). Truths, therefore, as well as ideas, are necessary and immutable. It has always been true that twice two is four and this cannot become false. This is clear, without it being necessary that *God as sovereign legislator has established these truths*,<sup>a</sup> as Descartes has asserted in his reply to the sixth objections against his metaphysical meditations.

We understand easily enough what truth is, but we have some difficulty in conceiving what the necessary and immutable order is, or what the natural and divine law is that God necessarily wills and that the righteous likewise will. For what makes a man moral is that he loves order and conforms his will to it in all things—just as the sinner is such only because he does not find order pleasing in all things and because he would have order conform to his own wishes. Yet it seems to me that these things are not as mysterious as might be imagined, and I think the reason why they are found so troublesome comes from the mind's difficulty in raising itself up to abstract and metaphysical thoughts. Here, then, are some of my thoughts on order.

It is evident that the perfections in God that represent created or possible beings are not all equal insofar as they represent these beings, and that those, for example, that represent bodies are not as noble as those that represent minds, and furthermore, that even among those that represent only bodies or only minds, there are infinite degrees of perfection. All this is easily and clearly conceived, although there is a great deal of difficulty in reconciling the Divine Being's simplicity with this variety of intelligible ideas that He contains in His wisdom. For it is clear that if all God's ideas were in every sense equal, He could not distinguish among His works, since He sees His creatures only in what in Him represents them, and if the idea of a watch that shows, besides the hour, all the different motions of the planets were not more perfect than the idea of a watch that shows only the hour, or than the idea of a circle or of a square, then a watch would not be more perfect than a circle. For one can judge the perfection of works only through the perfection of the ideas one has of them; and if there were no more intelligence or mark of wisdom in a watch than in a circle, there would be no greater difficulty in conceiving the most complex machines than in conceiving a square or a circle.

If it is true, then, that God, who is the universal Being, contains all beings within Himself in an intelligible fashion, and that all these intelligible beings that have a necessary existence in God are not in every sense equally perfect, it is clear that there will be a necessary and immutable order among them, and that just as there are necessary and eternal truths because there are relations of magnitude among intelligible beings, there must also be a necessary and immutable order because of the relations of perfection among these same beings. An immutable order has it, then, that minds are more noble than bodies, as it is a necessary truth that twice two is four, or that twice two is not five.

So far, order seems to be more of a speculative truth than a necessary law. For

<sup>a</sup>Art. 6 and 8.

if we consider order as we have just done, we clearly see, for example, that it is a truth that minds are more noble than bodies, but we do not see that this truth is at the same time an order that has the force of law and that we are obliged to prefer minds to bodies. It must be considered, then, that God loves Himself with a necessary love, and that thus He loves what in Him represents or contains greater perfection more than what contains less—so much so that if we wish to suppose an intelligible mind to be a thousand times more perfect than an intelligible body, the love by which God loves Himself would necessarily be a thousand times greater for the intelligible mind than for the intelligible body; for God's love is necessarily proportionate to the order among the intelligible beings He contains, since He necessarily loves His own perfections. As a result of this, the order that is purely speculative has the force of law with regard to God Himself, given, as is certainly the case, that God necessarily loves Himself and that He cannot contradict Himself. Furthermore, God cannot love intelligible bodies more than intelligible minds, although He can love created bodies more than minds, as I shall soon show.

Now, this immutable order that has the force of law with regard to God Himself clearly has the same force with regard to us. For, since God has created us in His image and likeness, He cannot will that we love more what deserves to be loved less—He wills that our will conform with His and that here below we freely and hence meritoriously render things the justice that He necessarily renders them. His law, the immutable order of His perfections, is therefore also ours; and this order is not unknown to us, and even our natural love excites us to follow it when we retreat within ourselves and our senses and passions leave us free—in short, when our self-love does not corrupt our natural love. Given that we are made for God and cannot be entirely separated from Him, we see this order in Him and we are naturally led to love it, for it is His light that illuminates us and His love that animates us (although our senses and passions obscure this light and turn the impression we have for loving Him according to this order against order itself). However, in spite of concupiscence, which conceals order from us and prevents us from following it, order is always a law that is essential and without exception with regard to us, and not only with regard to us but to all created intelligences and even the damned—for I do not think that they are so removed from God that they do not yet have some faint idea of order in which they find some beauty and that they are not perhaps even ready to conform themselves to it in certain particular cases where their self-love is not at stake.

Corruption of the heart consists in opposition to order. Therefore, given that the evil or the corruption of will is not equal even among the damned, it is clear that they are not equally opposed to order, and that they do not detest it in everything, unless they do so as a result of their hatred of God. For just as one cannot detest the good considered simply as such, one can detest order only when it seems to be contrary to our inclinations. But even if it should appear contrary to our inclinations, it still remains for us a law that condemns and even punishes us by a worm that never dies [Mark 9:44].

Perhaps, then, we can now see the nature of the immutable order of justice and

how this order has the force of law through the necessary love that God has for Himself. We can conceive how this law is universal for all minds as well as for God Himself, why it is necessary and absolutely without exception. We can see clearly (provided that what I have just said is seriously considered) that to maintain that ideas that are eternal, immutable, and common to all intelligences, are only perceptions or momentary particular modifications of the mind, is to establish Pyrrhonism and to make room for the belief that what is moral or immoral is not necessarily so, which is the most dangerous error of all. Finally, we can easily conceive in general that this law, the immutable order, is the principle of all human and divine laws, and that it is according to this law that all intelligences are judged and all creatures given the rank they deserve.

I admit that it is not easy to explain all this in detail, and I shall not risk the undertaking. For if my intention were to show the connection between certain particular laws and the general law, or between certain ways of behaving and order, I would necessarily become involved in difficulties that I could not perhaps resolve, and that would lead me far from my topic.

Nonetheless, if you consider that God has not and cannot have any law other than His wisdom and the necessary love He has for it, you will easily judge that all the divine laws must depend on it. And if you take note that He created the world only in relation to this wisdom and love (since He acts only for Himself), you will have no doubt that all natural laws must tend to the preservation and perfection of this world according to indispensable order and depending upon necessary love—for the wisdom and will of God rule all things.

I need not explain this principle at greater length. What I have said is enough for the following conclusion, that as nature was first instituted, minds could not have been subordinated to bodies. For since God cannot act in ignorance and in spite of Himself, He created the world according to wisdom and through the impulse of His love—He made all things through His Son and in the Holy Spirit as Scripture teaches us. Now, in the wisdom of God, minds are more perfect than bodies; and as a result of the necessary love that God has for Himself, He prefers the more perfect to the less perfect. Thus, minds could not have been subordinated to bodies as nature was first instituted. Otherwise we would have to say that in creating the world God did not follow the direction of His eternal wisdom, nor the impulses of His natural and necessary love, which is inconceiveable and which even contains a manifest contradiction.

It is true that the created mind is now subordinated to the body, but this is because order considered as a necessary law would have it so. This is because God, whose self-love is a necessary love and is always His inviolable law, cannot love minds that are opposed to Him; consequently, He cannot prefer them to bodies in which there is nothing that is evil or that He hates. For God does not love sinners in themselves; they subsist in the universe only through Jesus Christ. God preserves and loves them only so that they might cease being sinners through the grace of Jesus Christ, or, if they remain sinners eternally, so that they might be eternally condemned by the immutable and necessary order and by the

judgment of Jesus Christ (through whose power they subsist for the glory of divine justice, for without Jesus Christ they would be annihilated). I mention this in passing to remove certain difficulties that might remain from what I said elsewhere about Original Sin or the general corruption of nature.

It seems to me worthwhile to point out that the mind knows objects in only two ways: through illumination [*par lumiere*] and through sensation. It sees things through *illumination* when it has a *clear idea* of them, and when by consulting this idea it can discover all the properties of which these things are capable. It sees things through *sensation* when it finds no clear idea of these things in itself to be consulted, when it is thus unable to discover their properties clearly, and when it knows them only through a confused sensation, without illumination and without evidence. Through illumination and through a clear idea, the mind sees numbers, extension, and the essences of things. Through a confused idea or through sensation, it judges about the existence of creatures and knows its own existence.

The things the mind perceives through illumination or through a clear idea it perceives in very perfect fashion, and it even sees clearly that whatever obscurity or imperfection there is in its knowledge is due to its own weakness and limitation or some lack of attentiveness on its part, and not to the imperfection of the idea it perceives. But what the mind perceives through sensation is never clearly known to it, not because of some lack of attentiveness on its part (for we always attend closely to what we sense), but because of the inadequacy of the idea, which is extremely obscure and confused.

From this we can judge that it is in God or in an immutable nature that we see all that we know by means of illumination or clear idea—not only because through illumination we see only numbers, extension, and the essences of things, which do not depend on a free act of God, as I have already pointed out, but also because we know these things in very perfect fashion, and because we would even know them in an infinitely perfect fashion if our capacity for thought were infinite, since nothing is lacking to the idea representing them. We must also conclude that everything we know through sensation is seen in itself. However, this is not to say that we can produce in ourselves any new modification, or that our soul's sensations or modifications can represent objects upon whose occasion God excites them in us, but only that our sensations (which are in no way different from us, and which as a result can never represent anything different from ourselves) can, nonetheless, represent the existence of beings or, rather, make us judge that they exist. For as God, upon the presence of objects, excites our sensations in us through an insensible action that we do not perceive, we imagine that we receive from the object not only the idea that represents its essence but also the sensation that makes us judge that it exists—for there is always a *pure idea* and a *confused sensation* in the knowledge we have of the existence of beings, the knowledge of God and of our soul excepted. I exclude the existence of God, which we know through a pure idea and without sensation, because His existence depends on no cause and is contained in the idea of an

infinite and necessary being, for as I have proved elsewhere,<sup>a</sup> if He is thought of, He must exist. I also exclude the existence of our soul, because we know through inner sensation that we think, will, and perceive, and because we have no clear idea of our soul, as I have sufficiently explained in the seventh chapter of the second part of the third book and elsewhere.

Here are some of the arguments that can be added to those I have already given to prove that only God enlightens us and that the immediate and direct object of our clear and evident knowledge is an immutable and necessary nature. Several objections are commonly raised against this view; I shall now try to answer them.

### *Objections*

*Against what has been said: that only God enlightens us and that we see all things in Him.*

#### *First Objection*

Our soul thinks because of its *nature*. In creating it, God gave it the *faculty* of thinking and it needs nothing more; but if it does need something, let us stick to what experience teaches us about our senses, i.e., that they are the cause of our ideas. To argue against experience is a bad way of philosophizing.

#### *Reply*

I am amazed that the Cartesian gentlemen who so rightly reject the general terms *nature* and *faculty* should so willingly employ them on this occasion. They criticize those who say that fire burns by its *nature* or that it changes certain bodies into glass by a natural *faculty*, and yet some of them do not hesitate to say that the human mind produces in itself the ideas of all things by its *nature*, because it has the *faculty* of thinking. But, with all due respect, these terms are no more meaningful in their mouth than in the mouth of the Peripatetics. True, our soul is what it is by its *nature* and necessarily perceives what affects it, but God alone can act on it; He alone can illuminate it, affect it, or modify it through the efficacy of His ideas.

I realize that the soul can think, but I also know that extension can have figures; the soul is capable of volition as matter is of motion. But just as it is false that matter, although capable of figure and motion, has in itself a *power*, a *faculty*, a *nature* by which it can move itself or give itself a figure that is now round, now square, so it is false that the soul, although naturally and essentially capable of knowledge and volition, has any *faculties* by which it can produce in itself its own ideas or its own impulse toward the good,<sup>b</sup> for it necessarily wishes to be happy. There is a big difference between being mobile and moving oneself. Matter is by its *nature* mobile and capable of figure; it cannot even subsist without figure. But it cannot move itself, it cannot shape itself, and lacks a faculty to do so. The mind is by its *nature* capable of impulses and ideas, I agree.

<sup>a</sup>Bk. 4, ch. 11.

<sup>b</sup>As opposed to particular goods; see the first Elucidation.

But it cannot move itself, it cannot enlighten itself—it is God who works everything of a material nature in minds as well as in bodies. Can it be said that God works the changes that take place in matter but not those that take place in the mind? Is it to render to God His due to leave these latter beings to their own devices? Is He not equally the master of all things? Is He not the creator, preserver, and true mover of minds as well as of bodies?

But if you would have it that creatures have the faculties they are ordinarily conceived to have,<sup>a</sup> or that natural bodies be said to have a *nature* that is the principle of their motion and rest (as Aristotle and his followers would have it), all my ideas would be overthrown. But I would rather agree to this than to say that the mind enlightens itself, or that the soul has the power to move the members of its body in various ways and to communicate to them feeling and life, or that it is the soul that gives heat to the blood, motion to the spirits, and its size, disposition, and figure to the rest of the body—I would rather all this than to say that the mind gives itself its own impulse and light. If God does not do all things, let Him do at least what is greatest and most perfect in the universe. And if creatures do something, let them move bodies and order them as they will, but let them not act on minds.

Let us say that bodies move each other after being moved themselves, or, rather, let us ignore the cause of these different dispositions of matter, which does not concern us. But let our minds not be ignorant of Him from whom their enlightenment comes, the *Reason* to which they are essentially related, the Reason that is spoken about so much and understood so little. Let our minds know Him from whom they receive everything capable of making them happier and more perfect, and let them realize the full extent of their dependence on God, who continually gives them all that they now have, for as a great saint says in another context,<sup>b</sup> *it is culpable pride to use the things that God gives us as if they were natural to us*. Above all, let us not imagine that the senses instruct reason, or that the body enlightens the mind, or that the soul receives from the body what it itself lacks. It is better to believe that one is self-dependent than truly dependent on bodies; it is better to believe oneself one's own master than to seek one's master among creatures that have no value to us. But it is best to accede to the eternal truth, which assures us in the gospel that only it is our teacher,<sup>c</sup> than to rely on the reports of our senses or of men who dare to speak to us as our teachers. Experience, whatever is to be said of it, does not encourage prejudice, for our senses are but the occasional causes of God's action on us. Our teachers are only prompters—they too are but the occasional causes of the instruction that eternal wisdom gives us in the most secret recesses of our reason. But because this wisdom enlightens us in a completely non-sensible way, we fancy that our eyes, or the words of those who reverberate the air against our ears, produce this

<sup>a</sup>See the last Elucidation concerning the efficacy of secondary causes [15].

<sup>b</sup>“Est quippe superbia & peccatum maximum uti datis tanquam innatis.” St. Bern. *De diligendo Deo*.

<sup>c</sup>Matt. 23 [vv. 8–10]. See St. Augustine's *De magistro*.

illumination, or express the intelligible voice that instructs us inwardly. It is for this reason, as I have pointed out elsewhere, that Jesus Christ was not satisfied with instructing us through His divinity in an intelligible way; He wished further to instruct us in sensible fashion by His humanity; He wished to teach us that He is our master in every way. And because we are unable without difficulty to retreat within ourselves in order to consult Him as the eternal truth, the immutable order, the intelligible light, He made the truth sensible through His words, order worthy of love through His example, and light visible through a body that adapts it to our weakness. And yet we remain ungrateful, immoral, stupid, and insensible enough to consider (against His express prohibition) as our teachers or the cause of our knowledge, not merely other men, but perhaps even the vilest and most despicable of bodies.

### *Second Objection*

Given that the soul is more perfect than bodies, why can it not contain what represents them? Why could the idea of extension not be one of its modifications? Only God acts on it and modifies it—granted, but why should it see bodies in God if it can see them in its own substance? The soul is not material, admitted. But God, though He is a pure spirit, sees bodies in Himself; why could not the soul, then, see them by considering itself, even though it itself is spiritual?

### *Replies*

Do you not see that there is this difference between God and the human soul, that God is a being without restriction, a universal and infinite being, whereas the soul is a kind of particular being? It is a property of an infinite being to be simultaneously one and all things, compounded, as it were, of an infinity of perfections, and to be so simple that each perfection it possesses contains all other perfections without any real distinction; for since each divine perfection is infinite, it constitutes the entire divine being. But as the soul is a particular being, a limited being, it cannot have extension in it without becoming material, without being composed of two substances. God, then, contains bodies within Him in an intelligible way. He sees their essences or ideas in His wisdom, and their existence in His love or volitions. We must speak this way because God made bodies, and because He knew what He made even before anything was made. But the soul cannot see in itself what it does not contain; it cannot even see clearly what it does contain, which it can only sense in a confused way. Let me explain this point.

The soul does not contain intelligible extension as one of its modes because this extension is not perceived as a mode of the soul's being, but simply as a being. This extension is conceived by itself and without thinking of anything else; but modes cannot be conceived without perceiving the subject or being of which they are modes. We perceive this extension without thinking about our mind; we cannot even conceive that this extension could be a modification of our mind. A figure is disclosed in it when this extension is conceived as limited; but the mind's limits do not serve to give it figure. Since this extension has parts, it

can be divided in the same sense that it is extended, i.e., into intelligible parts; but we see nothing in the soul that is divisible. The extension we see, then, is not a mode of the soul, and therefore it cannot be seen in it.

But, you will say, for these same reasons God would not be able to see His creatures in Himself. This would be true if ideas of creatures were modifications of His substance, but the Infinite Being is incapable of modifications.<sup>a</sup> God's ideas of creatures are, as Saint Thomas says, only His essence, insofar as it is participable or imperfectly imitable, for God contains every creaturely perfection, though in a divine and infinite way; He is one and He is all. Thus, He can see them in Himself and only in Himself, for His knowledge is drawn only from Himself. But the soul, however it might sense itself, does not know either itself or its modifications, the soul which is a particular being, a very limited and imperfect being. Certainly it cannot see in itself what is not there in any way at all. How could we see in one species of being all species of being, or in a finite and particular being a triangle in general and infinite triangles? For the soul indeed perceives a triangle or circle in general, while it is a contradiction that the soul should be able to have a modification in general. The sensations of color that the soul ascribes to figures makes them particular, because no modification of a particular being can be general.

To be sure, we can assert what we clearly conceive. Now, we clearly conceive that the extension we see is something distinct from ourselves. We can say, then, that this extension is not a modification of our being, and that it is indeed something distinct from ourselves. For it should be noted that the sun that we see, for example, is not the one we look at. The sun, and everything else in the material world, is not visible by itself. This I have proved elsewhere. The soul can see only the sun to which it is immediately joined, only that sun that like it occupies no place. Now, we see clearly and perceive distinctly that this sun is something distinct from us. Thus, we speak contrary to our light and consciousness when we say that the soul sees in its own modifications all the objects it perceives.

Pleasure, pain, taste, heat, color, all our sensations and all our passions, are modifications of our soul. But be that as it may, do we clearly know them? Can we compare heat with taste or smell with color? Do we know the relation between red and green, or even between two shades of green? Such is not the case with different figures, which we can compare with each other; we know their relations exactly, we know precisely that the square of the diagonal of a square is double that square. What relation is there between these intelligible figures, which are very clear ideas, and our soul's modifications, which are but confused sensations? Why suppose, then, that these intelligible figures cannot be perceived by the soul unless they are its modifications, since the soul knows nothing of what happens to it through a clear idea, but only through consciousness or inner sensation, as I have proved elsewhere and as I shall again prove in the following Elucidation. If we could see the figures of bodies only in ourselves,

<sup>a</sup>See my *Réponse* to the third posthumous letter of Arnauld.

they would be, on the contrary, *unintelligible*, for we do not know ourselves. We are but shadows to ourselves; to see ourselves, we must look beyond ourselves, and we shall never know what we are until we view ourselves in Him who is our light and in whom all things become light. For only in God are the most material beings perfectly intelligible; but outside of Him the most spiritual of substances become utterly invisible. For only what is intelligible can affect intelligences. Surely, only God, only His always efficacious substance, can affect, enlighten and nourish our minds, as Saint Augustine says. It is not possible that we should, I do not say, sense, for we can sense ourselves only in ourselves, but clearly know ourselves, i.e., discover the nature and properties of our soul, elsewhere than in our divine and eternal model, that is, elsewhere than in the always luminous substance of the divinity, insofar as it can be participated in by a spiritual creature, or insofar as it is representative of such a creature. We know clearly the nature and properties of matter, for the idea of extension that we have in God is very clear. But as we do not see in God the idea of our soul, we sense both what we are and whatever actually takes place in us. But it is impossible for us to discover clearly what we are, or any of the modifications of which we are capable.

### *Third Objection*

Nothing in God can be moved, nothing in Him can have figure. If there is a sun in the intelligible world, this sun is always equal to itself. The visible sun appears greater when it is near the horizon than when it is at a great distance from the horizon. Therefore, it is not this intelligible sun that we see. The same holds true for other creatures. Therefore, we do not see God's works in Him.

### *Reply*

A sufficient reply to this would be that nothing in God is really figured and thereby capable of motion, but that there are in God figures that are intelligible and, consequently, intelligibly mobile. For it cannot be doubted that God has the idea of the bodies He has created and constantly moves, that He can find this idea only in His substance, and that He is at least able to inform us of it. But to clarify this matter, it must be realized that God contains in Himself an ideal or intelligible infinite extension; for since He has created it, God knows extension, and He can know it only in Himself. Thus, since the mind can perceive a part of this intelligible extension that God contains, it surely can perceive in God all figures; for all finite intelligible extension is necessarily an intelligible figure, since figure is nothing but the boundary of extension. Furthermore, we see or sense a given body when its idea, i.e., when some figure composed of intelligible and general extension, becomes sensible and particular through color or some other sensible perception by which its idea affects the soul and that the soul ascribes to it, for the soul almost always projects its sensation on an idea that strikes it in lively fashion. Therefore, there need be in God no sensible bodies or real figures in intelligible extension in order for us to see them in God or in order for God to see them in Himself. It is enough that His substance, insofar as it can be participated in by the corporeal creature, should be able to be perceived in different ways.

Likewise, if, as it were, a figure of intelligible extension made sensible by color should be taken successively from different parts of this infinite extension, or if a figure of intelligible extension could be perceived as turning on its center or as gradually approaching another, we would perceive motion in an intelligible or sensible figure without there being any actual motion in intelligible extension. For God does not see the actual motion of body in His substance, or in the idea He has of them in Himself, but only in the knowledge He has of His volitions with regard to them. Even their existence He sees only in this way, because only His will gives being to all things. God's volitions change nothing in His substance, they do not move it. In this sense, intelligible extension cannot be moved even intelligibly. But although we might suppose that the intelligible parts of the idea of extension always maintain the same relation of intelligible distance between them and that this idea therefore cannot be moved even intelligibly, nonetheless, if we conceive of a given created extension to which there corresponds a given part of intelligible extension as its idea, we shall be able through this same idea of space (though intelligibly immobile) to see that the parts of the created extension are mobile, because the idea of space, although assumed intelligibly immobile, necessarily represents all sorts of relations of distance and shows that the parts of a body can fail to maintain the same situation relative to each other. Furthermore, although we do not see bodies in themselves, but only through intelligible extension (let this extension be assumed intelligibly immobile or not), we can through it actually see or imagine bodies in motion because it appears mobile to us due to the sensation of color, or the confused image remaining after the sensation that we successively attach to different parts of the intelligible extension that furnishes us with an idea when we see or imagine the motion of some body. It is easier to understand all this than to give an unambiguous explanation of it.

From what I have just said, you can understand why you see the intelligible sun now greater, now smaller, although it is always the same with regard to God. All that is needed for this is that we sometimes see a greater part of intelligible extension and sometimes a smaller. Since the parts of intelligible extension are all of the same nature, they may all represent any body whatsoever.

It should not be imagined that the intelligible world is related to the sensible, material world in such a way that there is an intelligible sun, for example, or an intelligible horse or tree intended to represent to us the sun or a horse or a tree, or that everyone who sees the sun necessarily sees this hypothetical intelligible sun. Given that all intelligible extension can be conceived of as circular, or as having the intelligible figure of a horse or a tree, all of intelligible extension can serve to represent the sun, or a horse or a tree, and consequently can be the sun or a horse or a tree of the intelligible world and can even become a visible and sensible sun, horse, or tree if the soul has some sensation upon the occasion of bodies to attach to these ideas, i.e., if these ideas affect the soul with sensible perceptions.

Thus, when I said that we see different bodies through the knowledge we have of God's perfections that represent them, I did not exactly mean that there are in God certain particular ideas that represent each body individually, and that we see such an idea when we see the body; for we certainly could not see this body

as sometimes great, sometimes small, sometimes round, sometimes square, if we saw it through a particular idea that would always be the same. But I do say that we see all things in God through the efficacy of His substance, and particularly sensible things, through God's applying intelligible extension to our mind in a thousand different ways, and that thus intelligible extension contains all the perfections, or rather, all the differences of bodies due to the different sensations that the soul projects on the ideas affecting it upon the occasion of these same bodies. I have spoken in a different way, but you should realize that I did so only to make certain of my arguments stronger and more intuitive, and you must not think on the basis of what I have just said that these arguments no longer obtain. If it were necessary, I could give the reasons for the different ways in which I have explained myself.

I shall not venture to treat this subject in depth<sup>a</sup> for fear of saying things either too abstract or out of the ordinary, or, if you will, in order not to risk saying things I do not know and cannot discover. Here instead are several passages from Scripture that seem contrary to what I have just asserted. I shall try to explain them.

#### *Fourth Objection*

In his gospel and the first of his epistles, Saint John says *That no one has ever seen God*, “DEUM nemo vidit unquam,<sup>b</sup> unigenitus qui est in sinu patris ipse enarravit.<sup>c</sup>

#### *Reply*

I answer that seeing His creatures in Him is not really seeing God. Seeing the essences of creatures in His substance is not seeing His essence, just as merely seeing the objects it represents is not seeing a mirror. Seeing the essence of God, not in its absolute being, but in relation to creatures or insofar as it is representative of them, is not seeing the essence of God.

Nothing precludes us from agreeing with Saint Paul,<sup>d</sup> Saint Augustine, Saint Gregory, and several other Church Fathers, that we see God even in this life, though in very imperfect fashion. Here are the words of Saint Gregory in his *Homilies on Job*:<sup>e</sup> “A luce incorruptibili caligo nos nostrae corruptionis obscurat; cumque & videri aliquatenus potest, & tamen videri lux ipsa sicuti est non potest, quam longe sit indicat. Quam si mens non cerneret, nec quia longe esset videret. Si autem perfecte jam cerneret, profecto hanc quasi per caliginem non videret. Igitur quia nec omnino cernitur, nec rursum omnino non cernitur, recte dictum est quia a longe Deus videtur.” Although Saint Gregory, to explain the passage of Job “Oculi ejus a longe prospicunt,” says that in this life we see

<sup>a</sup>See my *Réponse aux vrayes & fausses idées*, my first *Lettre touchant la défense & especially my Réponse à une 3<sup>e</sup> lettre posthume de M. Arnauld*, as well as certain other passages that can perhaps eliminate all the difficulties the most attentive and most careful reader might form.

<sup>b</sup>Ch. 1. 18 [Ep. (1), 4, 12].

<sup>c</sup>Ch. 4. 12 [Ev. 1. 18].

<sup>d</sup>To the Corinthians, ch. 13 [1 Cor. 13:12].

<sup>e</sup>Bk. 31, ch. 20 [in c.39 Job. cap. 51].

God only from a distance, this is not because God is not very present to us, but because the clouds of our concupiscence conceal Him from us, "caligo nos nostrae corruptionis obscurat." For in other passages he compares, following Saint Augustine, the light of God, which is God Himself, to the light of the sun that surrounds us, but that we do not see if we are blind or if we close our eyes because overwhelmed with its brilliance, "In sole oculos clausos tenemus."

Saint Augustine<sup>a</sup> goes even farther than his faithful follower Saint Gregory. For although he agrees that we now know God only in very imperfect fashion, he nonetheless claims in several passages that God is better known to us than the things we imagine we know best. "He who made all things," he says, "is closer to us than the very things He made, for it is in Him that we live and move and have our being. The greater part of the things He made are not suited to our mind because they are corporeal and of a kind different from it." And further on: "Those who have known the secrets of nature are justly condemned in the Book of Wisdom, for if they can have penetrated what is most hidden from men, how much more easily should they be able to discover the Author and Sovereign of the universe? The foundations of the earth are hidden from our eyes, but He who has cast down these foundations is close to our minds." This is why the holy doctor believes that he who has charity can know God better than he knows his brother. Says he, "Ecce jam potest notiorem Deum habere quam fratrem. Plane notiorem, quia praesentiorem: notiorem, quia interiorem: notiorem, quia certiorem."<sup>b</sup> I shall relate no further proofs of Saint Augustine's view. If you wish them, you will find all sorts of them in the learned anthology Ambrosius Victor made of them, in volume two of his *Philosophia Christiana*.

But to return to the passage from Saint John, "Deum nemo vidit unquam." I believe that the evangelist's aim, when he says that we have never seen God, is to point out the difference between the Old and New Testaments, between Jesus Christ and the prophets and patriarchs, of whom it is written that they saw God. For Jacob, Moses, Isaiah, and the others saw God only with the eyes of the body and under a different form. They did not see God Himself, "Deum nemo vidit unquam." But the only Son of the Father who is in His bosom has told us of what He saw: "Unigenitus qui est in sinu Patris: ipse enarravit."

#### *Fifth Objection*

Writing to Timothy [1, 6:16], Saint Paul says that God dwells in an inaccessible light that no one has ever seen, nor ever can see. If the light of God is inaccessible, we cannot see all things in it.

<sup>a</sup>"Propinquior nobis qui fecit, quam multa quae facta sunt. In illo enim vivimus, movemur & sumus" [Paul, Act. 17, 28]. "Istorum autem pleraque remota sunt a mente nostra propter dissimilitudinem sui generis. Recte culpantur in libro sapientiae inquisitores hujus saeculi. Si enim tantum, inquit potuerunt valere ut possent aestimare saeculum, quomodo ejus Dominum non facilius invenerunt?" [Sap. 13, 9]. "Ignota enim sunt fundamenta oculis nostris & qui fundavit terram, propinquat mentibus nostris." Lib. imp. de Gen. ad lit. bk. 5. ch. 16.

<sup>b</sup>*De Trinitate*, bk. 8, ch. 8. See the preface of the *Dialogues on Metaphysics*, or the *Réponse aux vraies & fausses idées*, chapters 7 & 21, where I prove my view through the teaching of St. Augustine.

*Reply*

Saint Paul cannot be in disagreement with Saint John,<sup>a</sup> who tells us that Jesus Christ is the true light that enlightens all men coming into this world. For the mind of man that several<sup>b</sup> Fathers call an illuminated or enlightened light, "lumen illuminatum," is enlightened only by the light of eternal wisdom, which these same Fathers therefore call illuminating light, "lumen illuminans." David exhorts us to draw near God in order to be enlightened by Him: "Accedite ad eum, & illuminamini" [Ps. 33, v.6]. But how can we be enlightened by Him if we cannot see the light by which we are to be enlightened? Thus, when Saint Paul says that this light is inaccessible, he means to the carnal man<sup>c</sup> who does not retreat within himself to contemplate it. Or, if he is speaking of all men, the explanation is that there is no one who fails to be distracted from perfect contemplation of the truth because our body constantly upsets the mind's attention.

*Sixth Objection*

In answering Moses, who had wished to see Him, God said, "You cannot see my face; for no man shall see me and live. NON videbit me homo & vivet" [Exod. 33:20].

*Reply*

It is clear that the literal sense of the passage is in no way contrary to what I have said up till now. For I do not maintain that we can see God in this life in the way in which Moses wished to do so. Yet I make this reply, that in order to see God it is necessary to die, for the soul is joined to the truth to the extent that it is released from the body. This is a truth that we do not think about enough. Those who follow the impulses of their passions, those whose imagination is tainted by the enjoyment of pleasures,<sup>d</sup> those who have increased the union and correspondence of their mind and body, in a word, those who *live*, cannot see God, for they cannot retreat into themselves in order to consult the truth. Happy, therefore, are those of a pure heart, of a disinterested mind and clear imagination, and who are in no way dependent on the world and hardly at all on their body; in a word, happy are those who are *dead*, for they will see God. Wisdom has said<sup>e</sup> this publicly on the mountain and it says it secretly to those who consult it by retreating within themselves.

Those who constantly awaken their concupiscence of pride, whose ambitious intentions know no bounds, who join and even subjugate their soul not only to

<sup>a</sup>Ch. 1 [v.9].

<sup>b</sup>St. Cyril of Alexandria on the words of St. John, "Erat lux vera" [John 1:9]. St. Augustine *Tract.* 14 on St. John [c. 3]. St. Gregory, c. 27, on ch. 28 of Job.

<sup>c</sup>"Inaccessibilem dixit sed omni homini humana sapienti. Scriptura quippe sacra omnes carnalium sectatores humanitatis nomine notare solet." St. Gregory, ch. 28, on ch. 28 of Job.

<sup>d</sup>"Sapientia non invenitur in terra suaviter viventium." Job 18 [28:12-13].

<sup>e</sup>Matt. 5:8.

their own body but also to those surrounding them, in short, those who *live* not only the life of the body but also the life of the world, cannot see God, for wisdom dwells in the most secret recesses of reason, while they are forever spreading themselves externally.

But those who constantly mortify the activity of their senses, who carefully preserve the purity of their imagination, and who courageously resist the impulses of their passions, in short, those who sever the bonds that make others slaves of the body and of perceptible grandeur, can discover countless truths as well as see that wisdom which is<sup>a</sup> "hidden from the eyes of all the living." To a certain extent they give up *living* when they retreat into themselves; they leave the body when they draw near the truth. For the human mind is so situated between God and bodies that to recede from the one is to draw near the other; it cannot leave bodies without approaching God, just as it cannot pursue bodies without withdrawing from Him. But because we cannot entirely leave the body before death, I admit that before death we cannot perfectly unite ourselves with God. According to Saint Paul<sup>b</sup> we can now see God in confused fashion as through a reflecting glass, but we cannot see Him face to face: "Non videbit me homo, & vivet." But we can see Him *ex parte*, that is, in a confused and imperfect way.

It should not be imagined that *life* is the same in all *living* men, nor that it consists in an indivisible point. The body's domination over the mind, which prevents us from uniting ourselves with God through knowledge of the truth, can vary. The soul is not equally joined in all men to the body it animates through its sensations, nor to those toward which it is led by its passions, and there are people who so mortify their concupiscence of pleasure and pride that they are hardly bound any longer either to their body or to the world. They are, as it were *dead*. Saint Paul gives us a good example of this. He chastized his body and reduced it to servitude [1 Cor., 9:27], and he so humiliated and annihilated himself that he no longer thought about the world, nor did the world think about him; for the world was crucified and dead for him as he was crucified and dead for the world.<sup>c</sup> It was because of this, says Saint Gregory, that he was so aware of the truth and so disposed to receive the divine lights contained in his Epistles,<sup>d</sup> which, however dazzling they may be, strike only those who, like him, mortify their senses and passions. For as he himself says, the carnal and sensual man cannot understand spiritual things because worldly knowledge, contemporary tastes, polite conversation, refinement, liveliness and beauty of imagination, and the things by which we live for the world and the world lives for us, induce in our

<sup>a</sup>"Abscondiat est ab oculis omnium viventium." Job 28:2 [28:21].

<sup>b</sup>"Videmus nunc per speculum in ænigmate, tunc autem facie ad faciem. Nonc cognosco ex parte." 1 Cor. ch. 13 [v.12].

<sup>c</sup>Gal. 16:14 [6:14].

<sup>d</sup>"Animalis homo non percipit ea quæ sunt spiritus Dei, stultitia enim est illi." 1 Cor. 2:14. "Ad moysen dicitur, non videbit me homo & vivet; ac si aperte diceretur. Nullus unquam Deum spiritualiter videt qui mundo carnaliter vivit." St. Gregory, c. 28, on ch. 28 of Job.

mind a dull and frightening stupor with regard to every truth that we understand perfectly only in the silence of our senses and passions.

We must, therefore, wish for the death that unites us with God, or at least for the image of this death, the mysterious sleep during which all our external senses are deadened and we can listen to the voice of inner truth, which is heard only in the silence of night, when darkness hides sensible objects from us, and, as far as we are concerned, the world is, as it were, dead. "It is thus," says Saint Gregory, "that the bride had heard the voice of her bridegroom as if in her sleep, when she said, 'I sleep but my heart keeps watch' [Song of Sol. 5:2]. Externally I sleep, but inwardly my heart keeps watch, because with neither life nor feeling with regard to visible objects, I become extremely sensitive to the voice of inner truth which speaks to me in the most secret recesses of my reason. HINC est quod sponsa in canticis cantorum sponsi vocem quasi per somnium audierat, quae dicebat: 'Ego dormio, & cor meum vigilat.' Ac si diceret, dum exteriores sensus ab hujus vitae sollicitudinis sopio, vacante mente, vivacius intema cognosco. Foris dormio, sed intus cor vigilat, quia dum exteriora quasi non sentio, interiora solerter apprehendo. Bene ergo Eliu ait quod per somnium loquitur Deus." Morals of Saint Gregory on chapter 33 of Job.

---

## ELUCIDATION ELEVEN



*On the seventh chapter of the second part of the third book, where I prove that we have no clear idea either of our soul's nature or of its modifications.*

I have said in a number of places, and I even think that I have sufficiently proved in the third book of the *Search after Truth*, that we have no *clear idea* of our soul, but only *consciousness* or inner sensation of it, and that thus we know it much less perfectly than we do extension. This seemed to me so evident that I did not think it necessary to argue so at further length. But the authority of Descartes,<sup>a</sup> who clearly says that *the nature of the mind is better known than the nature of any other thing*, has so prejudiced some of his disciples that what I wrote on the topic has served only to make me seem a person of weak character who cannot grasp and hold fast to abstract truths incapable of arousing and maintaining the attention of those who consider them.

I grant that I am extremely weak, sensuous, and coarse, and that my mind depends on my body in more ways than I can express. I know this and I feel it; and I work incessantly to increase this knowledge I have of myself. For if we cannot avoid being miserable, at least we must know and feel it. We must at least be humbled at the sight of our inner miseries and recognize the need we have of being delivered from this body of death that injects trouble and confusion into all the soul's faculties.

Yet the present question is so suited to the mind's capacity that I do not see the need for any great effort to resolve it (which is the reason I did not pause over it). For I think I can say that the ignorance of most men with regard to their own soul, of its distinction from the body, of its spirituality, immortality, and other properties, is enough to show clearly that they have no clear and distinct idea of it.

We are able to say that we have a clear idea of the body because in order to know the modifications it can have, it suffices to consult the idea representing it. We clearly see that it can be round or square, in motion or at rest. We have no difficulty conceiving that a square can be divided into two triangles, two parallelograms, two trapezia. When we are asked whether something does or does not

<sup>a</sup>Reply to the fifth objection against the second Meditation, toward the end.

belong to extension, we never hesitate in our response, because as the idea of extension is clear, we see without any difficulty through simple perception what it contains and what it excludes.

But surely we have no idea of our mind which is such that, by consulting it, we can discover the modifications of which the mind is capable. If we had never felt pleasure or pain we could not know whether or not the soul could feel them. If a man had never eaten a melon, or seen red or blue, he would consult this alleged idea of his soul in vain and would never discover distinctly whether or not it was capable of these sensations or modifications. I maintain, furthermore, that even if one is actually feeling pain or seeing color, one cannot discover through simple perception whether these qualities belong to the soul. One imagines that pain is in the body that occasions it, and that color is spread out on the surface of objects, although these objects are distinct from our soul.

In order to determine whether sensible qualities are modes of the mind, we do not consult the alleged idea of the soul—the Cartesians themselves consult, rather, the idea of extension, and they reason as follows. Heat, pain, and color cannot be modifications of extension, for extension can have only various figures and motion. Now there are only two kinds of beings, minds and bodies. Therefore, pain, heat, color, and all other sensible qualities belong to the mind.

Since we have to consult our idea of extension in order to discover whether sensible qualities are modes of our mind, is it not evident that we have no clear idea of the soul? Would we otherwise ever bother with such a roundabout way? When a philosopher wishes to learn whether roundness belongs to extension, does he consult the idea of the soul, or some idea other than that of extension? Does he not see clearly in the idea itself of extension that roundness is a modification of it? And would it not be strange if, in order to learn of it, he reasoned as follows. There are only two kinds of beings, minds and bodies. Roundness is not the mode of a mind. It is therefore the mode of a body.

We discover by simple perception, then, without any reasoning and merely by applying the mind to the idea of extension, that roundness and every other figure is a modification belonging to body, and that pleasure, pain, heat, and all other sensible qualities are not modifications of body. Every question about what does or does not belong to extension can be answered easily, immediately, and boldly, merely by considering the idea representing it. Everyone agrees on this subject, for those who say that matter can think do not believe that it has this faculty because it is extended; they agree that extension, taken precisely as such, cannot think.

But there is no agreement on what should be believed about the soul and its modifications. There are people who think that pain and heat, or at least color, do not belong to the soul. You even make a fool of yourself before certain Cartesians if you say that the soul actually becomes blue, red, or yellow, and that the soul is painted with the colors of the rainbow when looking at it. There are many people who have doubts, and even more who do not believe, that when we smell carrion the soul becomes formally rotten, and that the taste of sugar, or of pepper or salt, is something belonging to the soul. Where, then, is the clear idea of the

soul so that the Cartesians might consult it, and so that they might all agree on the question as to where colors, tastes, and odors are to be found?

But even if the Cartesians should agree on these difficulties, we could not conclude from their agreement that they have a clear idea of the soul. For if they agree finally that it is the soul that is actually green or red when we see greenness or redness, they will do so only as a result of lengthy arguments. They will never see it through simple perception; they will never arrive at this by consulting the supposed idea of the soul, but rather, by consulting the idea of body. They will maintain that sensible qualities belong to the soul only because these qualities do not belong to extension, of which they have a clear idea. They will never convince anyone of this whose insufficiency of mind precludes complex perceptions or reasoning, or rather, anyone who does not stop to consider the clear idea of body and who confuses everything. There will always be peasants, women, children, and perhaps savants and doctors, who will have doubts about it. But women and children, the learned and the ignorant, the most enlightened and the most dense, have no difficulty in conceiving through the idea they have of extension that it can have all sorts of figures. They clearly understand that extension is incapable of pain, taste, odor, or of any sensation, when they faithfully and attentively consider the single idea that represents it. For there is no sensible quality contained in the idea that represents extension.

It is true that they might have doubts as to whether or not body is capable of sensation, or of receiving some sensible quality; but this is because they understand body as something other than extension, and because they have no idea of body taken in this sense. But when Descartes, or the Cartesians to whom I am speaking, assert that we know the soul better than body, they mean by body only extension. How, then, can they maintain that we know the nature of the soul more clearly than that of body, since the idea of body or extension is so clear that everyone agrees on what it contains and what it excludes, whereas the idea of the soul is so confused that the Cartesians themselves constantly dispute as to whether modifications of color belong to it.

"We know the nature of a substance more distinctly," say these philosophers following Descartes,<sup>a</sup> "as we know more of its attributes. Now there is nothing whose attributes we know more of than our mind, because as many attributes as we know in other things can be counted in the mind from the fact that it knows them. And thus its nature is better known than the nature of any other thing."

But who does not see that there is quite a difference between knowing through a clear idea and knowing through *consciousness*? When I know that twice two is four, I know this very clearly, but I do not know clearly what it is in me that knows it. I sense it, granted; I know it through consciousness or inner sensation. But I have no clear idea of it as I have of numbers, between which I can clearly discover relations. I can *count* that there are in my mind three properties: that of knowing that two times two is four, that of knowing that three times three is nine, and that of knowing that four times four is sixteen. If you wish, an infinity of

<sup>a</sup>In the passage just cited.

properties in me can thus be counted, since these three properties are different from each other. But I deny that the nature of the things thus capable of being *counted* can be known *clearly*. To be counted, they need only be sensed.

We can be said to have a clear idea of a being and to know its nature when we can compare it with others of which we also have a clear idea, or at least when we can compare the modifications of which the being is capable. We have clear ideas of numbers and of parts of extension because we can compare these things. We can compare two with four, four with sixteen and each number with every other. We can compare a square with a triangle, a circle with an ellipse, a square or a triangle with every other square or triangle, and we can thus clearly discover the relations between these figures and between these numbers. But we cannot compare our mind with other minds in order to discover clearly some relation between them. We cannot even compare the modes of our mind, its own perceptions. We cannot discover clearly the relation between pleasure and pain, heat and color, or to speak only of modes of the same kind, we cannot exactly determine the relation between green and red, yellow and violet, or even between violet and violet. We sense that the one is darker or more brilliant than the other, but we do not know clearly either by how much, or in what being darker or more brilliant consists. We therefore have no clear idea either of the soul or of its modifications, and although I see or sense colors, tastes, odors, I can say, as I have, that I do not know them through a clear idea, because I am unable to discover clearly their relations.

It is true that I can discover exact relations between sounds, that the octave, for example, is two to one, the fifth three to two, the fourth four to three. But I cannot know these relations through the sensation I have of them. If I know that the octave is two to one, it is because I have learned through experience that a given string sounds the octave when, having been plucked at full length, it is then plucked after having been divided into two equal parts. It is because I know that there are twice as many vibrations in an equal amount of time, or something like this. It is because the disturbances in the air, the vibrations of the string, and the string itself are things that can be compared through clear ideas, and because we know distinctly the relations that can obtain between the string and its parts as well as between the rates of different vibrations. But the sounds cannot be compared in themselves, or insofar as they are sensible qualities and modifications of the soul. We cannot know their relations in this way. And although musicians distinguish different consonances very well, this is not because they distinguish their relations through clear ideas. For them, the ear alone judges the difference in sounds; their reason knows nothing. But the ear cannot be said to judge through a clear idea or otherwise than through sensation. Even musicians, then, have no clear idea of sounds taken as sensations or modifications of the soul. Consequently, neither the soul nor its modifications is known through a clear idea, but only through consciousness or inner sensation.

Furthermore, we do not know what the soul's dispositions consist in which make it readier to act and represent objects to itself. We cannot even conceive what such dispositions could consist in. I say further that through reason we

cannot ascertain whether the soul when separated from the body or taken in isolation from the body is capable of having any habits or memory. But how can we be ignorant of these things if the nature of the soul is better known than that of the body? We have no difficulty in seeing what constitutes the animal spirits' readiness to be distributed in the nerves in which they have already flowed many times. Or at least we have no difficulty in discovering that as the passages in the nerves become larger and their fibers relax in a certain way, the spirits can easily pass through them. But what could conceiveably increase the soul's readiness for action or thought? For my part, I admit that I understand nothing of this. In vain do I examine myself in order to discover these dispositions; I have no answer for myself. I cannot enlighten myself on the matter, even though I have a very lively sensation of the readiness with which certain thoughts are excited in me. And if I did not have good reasons that lead me to believe that I do in fact have such dispositions (although I am not aware of them in me), I would judge by consulting only inner sensation that my soul has neither habits nor a spiritual memory. But our hesitation in this is a sure sign that we are not as enlightened as we might say, for doubt does not agree with evidence and clear ideas.

It is certain that the most enlightened man does not know with evidence whether he is worthy of love or hatred, as the wise man says.<sup>a</sup> The inner sensation we have of ourselves cannot decide. Saint Paul says that his conscience gives him no reproach,<sup>b</sup> but he does not claim that because of this he is justified. He claims, on the contrary, that this does not justify him and that he dares not judge himself because it is the Lord who judges him. But given that we have a clear idea of order, if we also had a clear idea of the soul through our inner sensation of ourselves, we would know clearly whether the soul conformed to order; we would know whether we are righteous or not. We would even be able to know with precision all its inner dispositions toward good and evil when having a sensation of them. But if we could know ourselves as we are, we would not be so liable to presumption. And it is likely that Saint Peter would not have said to his Master, whom he was soon to deny,<sup>c</sup> "Why cannot I follow you now, I will give my life for you, Animam meam pro te ponam." For with an inner sensation of his own strength and good will, he would have been able to see clearly whether he had the strength or courage to conquer death, or rather the insults of a maid and a few servants.

If the nature of the soul is better known than the nature of any other things, if the idea we have of it is as clear as the idea we have of the body, then I ask only this: how is it that there are so many people who confuse the two? Is it possible to confuse two entirely different clear ideas? Let us do justice to everyone. Those who are not of our opinion are as reasonable as we, they have the same ideas of things, they participate in the same reason. Why, then, do they confuse what we

<sup>a</sup>Eccles. 9:1.

<sup>b</sup>"Sed neque meipsum judico. Nihil enim mihi conscient sum: sed non in hoc justificatus sum: qui autem judicat me Dominus est." 1 Cor. 4:4.

<sup>c</sup>John 12:37.

distinguish? Have they on any other occasion ever confused things of which they have clear ideas? Have they ever confused two different numbers? Have they ever taken a square for a circle? Yet the soul is more different from the body than a square is from a circle, for they are substances that agree in nothing, and yet these people confuse them. There is, then, some difficulty in recognizing their difference. Their difference is not found by simple perception, and reasoning is required to conclude that the one is not the other. The idea of extension must be carefully consulted, and it must be seen that extension is not a mode of bodies but body itself (since it is represented to us as a subsisting thing and as the principle of everything we clearly conceive in bodies); and thus, since the modes of which a body is capable are in no way related to sense qualities, the subject of these qualities, or rather, the being of which these qualities are modes, must be very different from body. Such arguments must be produced in order to avoid confusing the soul with the body. But if we had a clear idea of the soul, as we do of the body, we certainly would not have to take such a roundabout way to distinguish it from the body. We could do so at a single glance, as easily as we see that a square is not a circle.

I shall pause for no further proof that we do not know the soul or its modifications through clear ideas.<sup>a</sup> We come to realize this no matter how we look at ourselves, and I add this to what I have already said in the *Search after Truth* only because of the criticism it received from certain Cartesians. If this does not satisfy them, then let them show me this clear idea of the soul that, no matter how I try, I cannot find in myself.

<sup>a</sup>You might see the ninth of the *Meditations chrétiennes*.