
A STRANGE CASE AT THE ORIGIN OF MODERN METAPHYSICS (*EXEMPLI GRATIA*: DESCARTES)

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(Received 5 February 2010)

Abstract

Doubt, certainty, God and the soul are Descartes' favourite subjects, at least in *Discourse on Method* and *Metaphysical Meditations*. These subjects are, also, Augustinian. Hence the attempt of bringing the two closer and of obliging, not in excess, Descartes to Augustine. In 1694 appears one of the first exaggerations: Descartes is nothing else but an insolent plagiarist of Augustine. Descartes cannot be understood by simply opposing him to scholasticism. But such an opposition is not, after all, compatible with the method. Regarding scholasticism, Descartes is the farthest from being a *deus ex machina*. If modern Philosophy begins with Descartes, it is impossible for him not to be a scholastic. The modernity of Cartesianism does not cancel his scholastic progress not even in the matter of method. Here, as well as in other places, Descartes disguisedly advances. His subjects are scholastic, his solutions are scholastic. To oppose Descartes to scholasticism is nonsense. Descartes' modernity is ideologically overbid. Towards a certain scholastic tradition Descartes is critical, no doubt, but he is not an ungrateful son as well. Descartes bets on the brother of the prodigal son and when he looses he finds refuge in dream. Paradoxically, modern Philosophy is being claimed from a strange series of dreams. The dreamer is Descartes, the last scholastic and the first modern, at least chronologically, which does not mean, at best, big deal.

Keywords: Metaphysics, Philosophy, Theology, Christianity, method, cogito, doubt, dream, truth

1. Identifying the problem: Augustine – the premises of *Cogito*

Everyone agrees that the critical spirit is an essential feature of philosophical truth and a typical characteristic of modern thinking. If so, then Saint Augustine fully deserves the title of philosopher and is, definitely, the first among moderns. The grounded rejection of scepticism appears at him as being the compulsory starting point of the intellectual effort. Scepticism's critique leads to the assertion of the possibility of knowing something surely, of reaching the truth.

Augustine fights the scepticism of the New Academy and claims for intelligence a 'real' certainty. He first seeks the certainty of first, fundamental truths. Here he finds the principle of contradiction (the certainty to which I

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consent is that the world is one or is not one) [Saint Augustine, *Contra Academicos*, III, 10, 23] and the eternal mathematic truths. Understanding is always a perception of truth. “The one who is wrong upon reality does not understand anything; if he understands it, he reaches the truth” (*aut si intelligit, continuo verum est*) [Saint Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, XII, 14, 29; *De Trinitate*, XV, 10, 17]. *Contra Academicos* clarifies things: if something is known, it cannot be falsely known, which is the same with saying that all the known is true, otherwise it would not be known. Therefore: no one knows the error, no one wants to deceive us; we are not deceived otherwise but against ourselves and from ourselves. It is not convenient to call understanding (*intelligere*) as the act through which we see error as stupidity (*stultitia*), because error is the main obstacle of understanding. The error is just the unintelligible [De ordine, II, 3, 10]. It follows that understanding is infallible, it touches reality that, in itself, understanding is perfect. Understanding (certainty) does not need help, or outside guarantor. To raise awareness, the light (truth) is to itself own witness (*et sibi ipsa testis est ut cognoscatur lux*) [Saint Augustine, *Tractatus in Ioannis Evangelium*, Homily 35, 4].

Then, before Descartes and to reach the objectivity of our knowledge, Augustine starts from Psychology, from knowing the ego that feels, thinks, lives. Doubt itself becomes ground of certainty for at least two reasons:

- first of all, the doubt known through knowledge becomes first truth. We read in *De vera religione* (39, 73): *omnis qui se dubitantem intelligit, verum intelligit, et de hac re quam intelligit, certus est*. The idea had already appeared in *De libero arbitrio* (II, 3, 7): “all those who doubt, understand, truly understand, and all the things that they understand are certain”;
- secondly, no one doubts otherwise but in the virtue of a previous certainty, one which shows to the one who doubts the danger of a premature statement. In *De Trinitate* (X, 10, 14) Augustine says: *etiam si dubitat, vivit; si dubitat, cogitat, scit se nescire; si dubitat, iudicat non se temere consentire oportere* (“even if I doubt, I live; if I doubt it means that I know that I do not know; if I doubt it means that I realize that I cannot accept everything without thinking”). In Augustine’s complete formula it is about doubt, feeling, memory, understanding, desire, thinking and judgment. All these respond (or are given in the account!) to the soul.

Another problem: Augustine establishes for the intellectual certainty the limits and claims for will an overwhelming influence over the statements of rational spirit. The problem is the following: are religious truths so clear and obvious that they train spontaneously and necessarily our adhesion or does will exercise an active role? Augustine seems to reconcile the extremes, so that he is at an equal distance both from the excessive intellectualism of those who did not want to admit anything else but those certainties which are necessarily imposed to spirit by the force of logical evidence, as well as from the sentimental mysticism that wanted to impose a complete and irreversible adhesion. What does Augustine say? On the one hand, by creatures, we rise to God and our reason is convinced by His existence; on the other hand, Augustine clearly

marks the limits of our demonstration and makes room for the mystery even in a purely philosophical order. The mystery surrounds us and keeps us from being stimulated by evidence, if will does not intervene. There are five reasons which request this from us:

1. without the moral qualities of the heart, the spirit never reaches the truth. God gives the truth to the one who seeks it *pie, caste et diligenter*, and that is why pride is the great obstacle in conquering truth;
2. the religious truth does not reveal itself to man as a cold, impersonal doctrine, i.e. religion is not just a doctrine, but a way of being of our soul;
3. the knowledge of truth is the fruit of virtue, not its cause;
4. our knowledge of God is always a mysterious one;
5. we find the mystery right in Philosophy, and this mysterious character, without destroying the value of our evidence, leaves in the rational spirit a certain indetermination and leaves will the freedom of adhesion.

We have the immediate evidence of things by their logic form, first of all, and then through the medium of senses. Why and how? Here is an example: my sensorial impression is that I see a man, but, when I get closer, I realize that it is a tree. Therefore, scepticism is preferable to all things. The logical and the perceptive evidence are not evidence. How do we remove, in these conditions, the doubt regarding reality? We must begin by doubting everything, this is the formula. It is not Descartes who uses it first, or Augustine, as a matter of fact. The issue is as it follows: is there somewhere a ground for certainty? Augustine answers: are you aware that you think? If yes, then get inside yourself, go down there, because the rational spirit does not know anything else but what is present in it and nothing is more present to the spirit than it itself. But this means, for the sceptical ones, that the fixed point (*prius*) is my immediate knowledge of myself: the world reacts regarding to soul, because is the only certain thing, the soul, not the world. This resembles to what Descartes calls *cogito*. The difference is that, in Descartes, the certainty that the Ego has of itself is the principle of mathematical evidence, while, in Augustine, the inner evidence (certainty) consists of the immediacy of God's certainty.

In *Contra Academicos* appears the idea according to which if I doubt, I exist, because the one who does not exist can no longer doubt; therefore I am by what I doubt and exist, since this doubt exists in me and I notice it. The consequence is: we cannot doubt on the immediate facts of conscience. Doubt as such has a triple result:

- the certainty of conscience by that of knowing the conscience;
- the state of existence of the one who doubts;
- previous certainty, in the virtue of which any doubt is only possible and subsequent.

We see that, in the matter of truth, Saint Augustine starts from doubt and this will lead him to the self-certainty of the thinker subject. At the edge of doubt any scepticism stops and again here the spirit becomes aware of its powers. Everything can be put into question, but not the fact that the one who doubts exists, thinks and wants. The limit of the sceptical is: the sceptical makes out of

doubt a certainty and reaches thus a contradiction, because if doubt is certain, it is no longer sceptical; and if doubt itself is doubtful, it suspends itself and scepticism as such disappears [1, 2].

For Augustine, when the soul doubts it means it lives, and if it doubts it means that it understands that it doubts; if it doubts it means that it realizes that it does not have to accept without thinking everything, so that any man who doubts does not have to doubt everything from above. If it was not so, then no one could doubt about anything [*De Trinitate*, X, 10, 14]. But “if we could find something that not only we do not doubt that it exists, but we are sure that it is beyond reason, will you hesitate in calling God this something, whatever it might be?” [Saint Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, II, 6, 14].

2. Masked Scholasticism

Doubt, certainty, God and the soul are Descartes' favourite subjects, at least in *Discourse on Method* and *Metaphysical Meditations*. These subjects are, also, Augustinian. Hence the attempt of bringing the two closer and of obliging, not in excess, Descartes to Augustine. In 1694 appears one of the first exaggerations: Descartes is nothing else but an insolent plagiarist of Augustine. One of the most recent attempts on this subject belongs to Zbigniew Janowski [3]. The author, with a PhD in Descartes' theodicy presented at J.-L. Marion, reinstates an older problem: has Descartes known Augustine's works or was he influenced only by the Augustinian tradition? And that because one of the difficult problems of Cartesianism is that of establishing if there are connections between Augustine's theology and Descartes' philosophy. The time of the debut of such 'investigation' is to be found in 1637 and its protagonists are Marin Mersenne, Andreas Colvius, and Antoine Arnauld (who is the first Augustinian that notices similarities between Descartes' metaphysic and Augustine's thinking). Here is Janowski's conclusion: the problem is not if Descartes read Augustine; he did it for sure. The problem is *the time* of reading; and there are mentioned three such moments: before 1630 (the doctrine of eternal truths), before 1637 (the publication of *Discourse*), before 1641 (the publication of *Meditations*). Janowski quotes in his *Index* eleven Augustinian works and, on three columns, he arranges them temporarily in the way, according to his criteria, Descartes would have read them *certain*, *très probable* and *probable*. The question however remains: why has not Descartes ever admitted that he had read Augustine's works? Janowski finds three explanations:

- the first is connected to personal psychology and personal nature of the Cartesian project. Descartes realizes that he is about to conduct a revolution and, as any revolutionary, does not trust anyone;
- the second one has to do with Descartes' general attitude, namely that he never answered directly regarding the problem of the relations between his thinking and Augustine's;
- thirdly, it is about not mixing Theology with Philosophy [3, p. 11, 12, 164-166].

Janowski's paper, Gilsonian in its background, is convincing and tells us in the end that neither Descartes' genius and nor the originality of his thinking are diminished by the fact that his own metaphysics owes so much to Augustine's thinking. It must be added however that without Augustine, the French philosopher would have never created his own philosophy like we know it, just like without Cartesianism the history of European thinking would not be what it is [3, p. 173].

Descartes cannot be understood by simply opposing him to Scholasticism. But such an opposition is not, after all, compatible with the method. Regarding Scholasticism, Descartes is the farthest from being a *deus ex machina*. If modern Philosophy begins with Descartes, it is impossible for him not to be a scholastic. The modernity of Cartesianism does not cancel his scholastic progress not even in the matter of method. And here as well, Descartes seems to 'disguisedly advance'. His subjects are scholastic, his solutions are scholastic. To oppose Descartes to scholasticism is nonsense. Descartes' modernity is ideologically overbid. Towards a certain scholastic tradition Descartes is critical, no doubt, but he is not an ungrateful son as well. He travels, does not scatter and he does not do it precisely because he has what to scatter. Descartes bets on the brother of the prodigal son and when he quarrels his father, in reality, he confirms him. And if it is for me to be Cartesian, the author of the *Discourse* does not even bet. When he is in this situation, he prefers taking refuge in dream.

In the end, everything starts from a place in Descartes' *Discourse*: *dubitare plane non posse quin ego ipse interim esse. Et quia videbam veritatem huius pronuntiati: Ego cogito, ergo sum, sive existo* – "But, soon afterwards I realized that, because I had rejected all the others as being false, I cannot doubt the fact that I myself exist meanwhile; and, because I saw that the truth of this saying: *I think, therefore I am or exist* is so certain and obvious" [4, 5] - , the author accepts it as first principle of Philosophy (*ut primum eius, quam quaerebam, Philosophiae fundamentum, admittere*). It should be remembered that the *Discourse* is published in 1637 in French; in 1644 is printed the Latin version of Father Étienne de Courcelles. There has been raised the following issue: which of the two versions of the *Discourse* is 'final'? The Latin version (*Dissertatio*) in its first form was, according to Descartes, 'too literal', and that is why he will intervene himself to improve not the words of the Father translator, but his thoughts as author [6, 7]. In 1641 *Meditations* are published, and from here we can conclude (since the issue of *cogito* appears in *Meditations* as well) that the final text can be considered the Latin one, also revised by R. Descartes. I draw attention upon the fact that in the Latin version (1644) the formula is *Ego cogito, ergo sum, sive existo*, while in the initial formula of the *Discourse*, the one written in French (1637), this text was like this: *Je pense, donc je suis*. It is about an addition – *sive existo*. Gilson [4, p. 162] comments that the addition *existo* is explained by the difficulty of using the verb *sum* with the absolute meaning of 'to exist' (*exister*). Descartes needs this specification to move from 'thinking' to 'existence'. The formula of *cogito* is now: *I think, therefore I am, therefore I exist*. It would be about the passing from conscience's lucidity to the

objective existence, a passing which the French philosopher never explained it convincingly. As a matter of fact, he did not even really propose himself this! *Cogito* is not even an argument. It could not have been something like that, since *cogito* is previous to any argument. *Cogito* is entirely anti-sceptical and what is being researched in it is not so much a particular truth (the personal existence of the one who thinks), as it is the certainty of truth's existence. The sceptical doubts to doubt, Descartes does not doubt but for reaching the truth.

I mention, in passing, that the argument *cogito* appears in Meditation IV as well [8]. The presentation from *Meditationes* (1641) is more 'comprehensive', meaning that not only doubt, but thinking in general founds the existence of the one who thinks. In Descartes' way I can say that dream itself is a derived form of *cogito*, for it cannot dream but the one who exists and who dreams something. Who dreams exists and the content of the dream is always more than the dream itself. I dream, therefore I exist; it can no longer dream the one who had ceased to exist.

Cogito ergo sum has been suspected ever since that age (P. Gassendi) of being a simple syllogistic reasoning in which the major premise ('everything that thinks, exists'), implied, is no longer demonstrated. The Syllogism (or syllogistic deduction) does not exactly enter in the register of Cartesian favourites. Two critics does the philosopher bring to the syllogistic attitude: he accuses syllogism of being an unwise mechanism and, then, the fact of supposing the truth as being already discovered instead of discovering it. Octave Hamelin presents this problem by quoting, together with the *Discourse, Regulae ad directionem ingenii* (rules X, XII, XIV) [9]. According to Hamelin, the change made by the author of *Discourse* is that between a logic of extension, which Descartes refuses, and one of comprehension, which he proposes.

In fact, *cogito* is not an abbreviated syllogism (as it has been thought because of *ergo*), even for that it links only two terms. What *ergo* does here is to give the expression of inseparability between 'I think' and 'I feel'. *Cogito* does not imply as major – 'anyone who thinks, exists', no!, *cogito*'s principle is other: 'to think, it is necessary for you to exist', and this eternal truth does not give us any knowledge of any existing thing (Descartes, as a matter of fact, has often been "held to account for his philosophical blunders" and Russell has emphasized the erroneous character of Descartes' formula) [10, 11].

On the other hand, Arnauld draws Descartes' attention upon the fact that the starting point of his philosophy is the same with Saint Augustine's philosophy and that "it would be good to specify that only in matter of sciences, and not of faith, there are required the things that are clear and distinct formulated. In this matter it is good to recall the distinction that Augustine made among to understand, to believe and to have opinions". Descartes answers him: "The author (it is an auto-referential author here – *n.m.*) is pleased to find out that he has on his support the teaching of Saint Augustine" [8, p. 334, 340].

‘Clear and distinct’ is that the doubt that ends with intuiting the ego was nothing new in the history of Philosophy. It can be found in Saint Augustine, and it is not at all ‘clear and distinct’ if at the level of *Discourse* (including its Latin version), Descartes knew this, although it might be said that this is less important as long as Descartes founds on *cogito* not the idea of Trinity (like Augustine), but the idea of spiritual substance whose attribute is thinking (and, as an immediate consequence, the total separation of body from soul). At the accusation that he would have taken over *cogito* from Saint Augustine, Descartes answers in a letter, however, without giving a formal denial, proving only the differences of conception between him and Augustine. Here is what he says: “indeed, Augustine uses this principle (*cogito – n.m.*) to prove the certainty of our existence and then to see that there is in us an image of Trinity, while I use this principle to prove that this *ego* that thinks is an immaterial substance” [12].

Arnauld, who cherished a lot Augustine’s teaching, quotes *De libero arbitrio* and the dialogue between Alypius and Evodius in order to highlight the amazing proximity between Descartes and Augustine. Augustine’s text says: “I ask you if you yourself exist; and, of course, do not be afraid to doubt. For, if you do not exist, then you cannot doubt.” [*De libero arbitrio*, II, 3, 7] A similar text we find in *Contra Academicos* (III, 9): “if I doubt, I exist, for that him who does not exist, cannot doubt, therefore I am by what I doubt”. Arnauld’s critique, because it is one, wants to state that ‘distinction’ and ‘clarity’ are valid criteria, but only in philosophical knowledge, not being the same when we move from Science to faith. In Augustine, *cogito* appears in the following formula as well: *Quid, si falleris? Si enim fallor, sum. Nam qui non est, utique nec falli potest: ac per hoc sum, si fallor* (“so what if I doubt? For, if I doubt, I exist. For, that who does not exist, he cannot, of course, doubt”) [Saint Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XI, 26]. Similar texts we find in *Soliloquies* (II, 1, 1) and *De Trinitate* (XV, 12, 21): *quandoquidem etiam si dubitat, vivit* (“I know I exist, because whoever doubts, exists”). Gilson emphasizes the special relationship of the Cartesian *cogito* with *si enim fallor, sum*. For the two philosophers, says Gilson, the sceptical doubt is a disease whose cure is given by thought’s clarity, and this first certainty opens the path which, by the demonstration of soul’s spirituality, leads to proving God’s existence. This way truth and certainty belong to the area of wisdom. Truth does not need any external criteria, clarity being enough, because understanding (*intelligere*) is perfect and no understanding could be surpassed by another one.

From where does error come then?

Its first cause is *intellectual pride*, words which Augustine does not use, formally, anywhere. Saint Ambrose had already fined the wisdom of philosophers on the ground that they create their own object. If Plato could return in the world, says Augustine, only intellectual pride could stop him from becoming a Christian (*in superbia et invidia remanentes*). The path towards truth is humility. To Consentius, a philosopher, Augustine writes in *Letter CXX*: “you have enough talent to explain your thinking, but do you also have so much

humility to deserve to think the truth?”. Pride is translated in philosopher by excessive self-confidence; humility is the availability to subject oneself to the divine authority. Regarding the proud, God is scornful. Augustine does not ask the Neo-Platonists to give up wisdom, but only to make Christian wisdom, to love more than they understand.

The second source of error is *imagination*. Augustine remembers how for a long time the excess of imagination made his effort of knowing useless [Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, III, 7, 12]. Imagination constrains people to bodily conceive the soul itself. If we ask people to think of the soul without corporal representation, they would imagine it as something that is not complete. Imagination disturbs clarity and nothingness is given to imagination. The feeling of mystery is essential precisely because reason encounters mystery everywhere: *intellige quid non intelligas, ne totum non intelligas* (“if you do not understand all that you do not understand, you do not understand anything”).

Descartes does not remain a stranger to this problem. He deals with it in *Meditationes de prima Philosophia*, meditation IV entitled exactly ‘Truth and Falsity’. Here is what he says: everything that we perceive clearly and distinct is true because that kind of ideas (clear and distinct) come from the perfect being which is God, and God cannot be a cause of error. Man has, therefore, the faculty of knowing the truth. But because this faculty is limited, it frequently appears the error that is not the result of any special faculty with which divinity might have endowed us. The error is a negation, a deprivation, a lack of a knowledge that we should have owned. In this case, the error is nothing else but the consequence of our dubitative nature and its place is to be found in the mismatch between intellect (which is finite) and will (which is infinite). Error appears when the will goes beyond intellect’s limits. Being infinite, will is, in a certain way, perfect, therefore it cannot be the cause of our errors. On the other hand, error cannot spring from thought either, because it comes from God. The conclusion that is required is that will also expands to some things which, not knowing them, cannot understand either. What follows is that man carries within not only God but also the opposite, i.e. man is something in the middle between God and nonentity. Therefore, as far as I am created by the Supreme Being I cannot fail, exactly as far as I take part to nonentity (because I am created out of nothing) it is no wonder that I am mistaking. The faculty of thinking and knowing the truth is given to me by God, but since it is not infinite as well, I fail. We are not being deprived of truth, we are only deprived of its understanding. Exactly like Augustine, Descartes also promotes *the principle of divine veracity* according to which error cannot come from God. Because error is present, Descartes searches its sources and proposes two alternatives:

- implies the existence of an evil genius (*genium malignum*), a metaphor, in fact;
- we find the source of error in the relation between will and intellect. When the will chooses and decides in the damage of intellect only by random it can be accompanied by truth. When intellect controls will, it certainly reaches truth.

3. Descartes: *Opinio Somnii* – Prolegomena

Descartes knows that if an idea is new it can be expressed in a very simple way. The philosopher himself is not ashamed to admit that, “if I write in French, which is the language of my country, instead of writing in Latin, which is the language of my listeners, this is due to the fact that I hope that those who serve only by their natural reason will judge better my opinions than those who believe in nothing else but old books. As far as for those who combine common sense with study – the only ones that I want as my judges – I am sure that they will not be so partial with Latin, so that they refuse to listen and understand my arguments only because I explain them in the vulgar language” [4, p. 155]. This also justifies, partly, a certain kind of accessibility of the Cartesian text. Descartes knows how to capture reader’s goodwill. He gives him the impression that only by random the honourable reader has not also written what he reads. It is a kind of perversity here, a kind which Descartes likes. And if so, in the way above, he ends the *Discourse*, it is not accidental that he begins it likewise, moving somehow, although a little bit hypocritical, from the democratization of dream to the democratization of philosophy. At the beginning of the *Discourse* he writes: *nulla res aequabilis inter homines est distributa quam bona mens* (“no other thing is more equally divided among people than wisdom”). Therefore, it is not possible that everyone is wrong [4, p. 113]. And, very important for Descartes’ dream, we further read: “this proves that the ability to judge right and to distinguish truth from false, namely what we call common sense or reason is naturally the same for all people” [4, p. 113]. The situation is, in a certain way, identical with an Augustinian theme and which can be assimilated to ‘the problem of languages’ in Augustine. The same is ‘the problem of languages’ in Descartes as well. Augustine knew Greek, not good, but enough to check and translate philosophical texts. He did not think about mastering Greek. Descartes knew Latin; he wanted to write for the majority. The *Discourse* is published in 1637, at Leyda, without signature, in French, and the first three copies were saved for Prince of Orange, King Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu. Only in 1644 does the *Discourse* appear translated in Latin, and Descartes is careful to put in the opening of the discourse a health wish for the reader. In this preamble Descartes justifies himself. Here is what he says: *Haec specimina Gallice a me scripta, & ante septem annos vulgata, paullo post ab amico in linguam Latinam versa fuere* (“these attempts written in French by me and made known to everybody seven years ago, have been translated shortly after in Latin by a friend”) [5, p. 7]. On the Latin version Descartes works and he is trying to straighten his own thinking, not the words of the one who translated (*ego vero sententias ipsas saepe mutarim, & non ejus verba, sed meum sensum emendare ubique studuerim*).

An issue that might explain something (regarding the ‘problem of languages’ in Descartes) regards Augustine’s reluctance towards the Greek language, reluctance that might also be connected with the recoil of Homer’s language in Africa between the years 200-400. The Latin people of those times

did not want to discover anymore that Virgil, their hero, owed that much to Homer. Then, the local patriotism of classical Greek authors irritates the Roman citizen who was already used to see the universe as his own motherland.

Mutatis mutandis, Descartes acts the same and, besides, starting with the XVIIth century, the philosophical production in national languages will surpass Latin writing. This remains language for the office, the language for correspondence. Not farther than this, Descartes was not comfortable with seeing his *Discourse* in Latin. The fashion of the time prevailed. To prove I say that, in 1647, *Meditationes* and *Principia philosophiae* are translated in French (*specimina Gallice*). As in Augustine's case one gets the feeling, with Descartes that he does not address to scholars, but to any man, at random. That is why, perhaps, their philosophy, if it is not exactly accessible, is, from the beginning, attractive. Both of them, subtle psychologists, know that it is best to tell man things that he believes he understands! It is not less true that Descartes' opponents denounce, starting from the dream, the perversity of his spirit. It must be especially mentioned Jacques Maritain who sees in Cartesian rationalism the 'original sin' of modern Philosophy.

In our cultural space the episode is seen with reservation as well: "How many assumptions were different commentators of Descartes to make around this issue, of mysticism's spring rather than Philosophy's!" [13]. The same declares Anton Dumitriu, according to whom there has been already too much discussion around the Cartesian dream. The argument used by Anton Dumitriu is: "if Descartes' <<dream>> have had a mystical symbol, and was supposed to mean <<a revelation>> of this kind, it is not clear why did not he return on these possibilities of the intellectual device to capture the truth in a mysterious manner" [12, p. 105]. I do not think Anton Dumitriu is right. Augustine did not return to the dream from *Confessions* either and no one thought about throwing this Augustinian chapter in the basement just because the bishop does not make the effort to come back, somewhere else, on it. Just because Descartes does not go back, at least not in the *Discourse*, which is also an autobiographical text, to the dream, this does not make the dream (dreams) an insignificant episode.

It is well known that for Augustine is Monica who dreams, and she dreams in a Christian manner. Her dream transfers to her son a code, the Christian code. I believe that during the dream Descartes does not dream Christian. I mean with all these that Descartes does not randomly dream. There is a *praeparatio* of Cartesian oneirology. One which, shortly, begins with Descartes' 'languages', continues with the History, Theology and Philosophy of the bishop. Like Augustine, Descartes had, in the manner of the first, access to Greek. He did not give great importance to knowing that particular idiom, as neither is Latin essential for him in terms of message transmission. Knowing ancient languages (with the clarification that Latin was not at all in this situation) is important and not really. In *Discourse* he says: "I have been studying letters ever since childhood; and since I was told that through them I could gain a clear and certain knowledge of everything that is useful in life, I was ruled by the desire to study them. But as soon as I have finished these studies, from which

you are counted among *the learned ones*, I have completely changed my opinion” [4, p. 115]. From the period of studies Descartes gets a habit, a retrospective one to the *Discourse*, a prospective one to himself: “I got the habit of judging the others alone, noticing that there is not in the world any doctrine as I would have expected it to be” [4, p. 115]. It is a kind of Cartesian impertinence: *quae omnia mihi audaciam dabant de aliis ex me iudicandi, & credendi nullam in mundo scientiam dari, illi parem cuius spes facta mihi erat* (“all these gave me the courage to judge on the other starting from myself and to believe that there is not given in the world no science equal to the one that I had some hope on”). No science is equal to the one upon which Descartes had made a certain hope. It was not the moment yet, because ‘the adventurer’ of spirit does not neglect the studies (*non tamen idcirco studia qmnia ouibus operam dederam in scholis negligebam* – “however, I have not neglected for this reason all the studies for which I had given the trouble in schools”).

Descartes sees then History as a cultural route and he agrees that reading the ancient ones (“to speak to the people of other centuries”) is like travelling. Yes, he says, but “when you travel too much, you become a stranger in your own country” [4, p. 116].

Towards Theology, Descartes is slippery: *theologiam nostram reverebar* [14]. This means that he shyly respects Theology, he is being shy, he respects it, it is nothing irrational in his gesture, he is not an atheist, he is just ceremonious towards Theology [15]. Descartes is afraid, he is cautious, he needs a certainty that would go beyond his ego and to strengthen it. He knows, unless he does it with a ‘mask’, the following: to examine the revealed truths you need a special help, a help of Heaven. He speaks here about *temeritas*, and takes into account not so much the thoughtless courage as the disobedience that is brought along with it. Descartes knows well that Christian’s sin is not so much ignorance as it is disobedience, insubordination. I do not know if Maritain is completely right, at least at the level of *Discourse*, when he says that Descartes drags and falsifies the scholastic manner of regarding Theology, that he *materializes* an older manner of acting towards Theology (the scholastic one, especially) [16]. In fact, Descartes is still a scholastic, even if he is a fearful one. He does not like, as he admits it, to sail against the wind [*Lettre à Pollot*, 1.01.1644].

To know through faith means to know imperfectly (because the testimony is founded in God, not in the object itself), but true (*intelligere divinum; ad oculos Dei*). Descartes is here in a perfect Thomistic tradition. Maritain runs on the enemies’ horses when he invokes will to separate Descartes from the scholars (especially from Thomas) [16, p. 83-88, 311]. According to Descartes, “the statement that we cannot know anything before knowing that God exists was not made but in connection with the science of conclusions” [8, p. 318]. But the fact that ‘I think’ is not a syllogism, is an *in-spection*, a mirror view, an intuition, and intuition cannot be wrong. It is or it is not, but if it is, it cannot go together with the nonentity. You cannot make a sacrifice to truth with a doubtful heart. Of course, anyone could reproach me that error is born from an inadequacy of will with intellect. But how testamentary, patristic and scholastic

is here Descartes! He is interested in the second degree of truth. The first degree is not even brought up. It does not belong to ‘the science of conclusions’, and precisely about such science Descartes speaks. When he calls it universal, he does not think about God, but about man. That is why I do not believe in Maritain!, not all the way and neither unconditioned. This is how I understand Descartes’ respect, fear and shyness towards medieval Theology and ontology.

Arnauld, in ‘The Fourth Set of Objections’, asks Descartes: “it would be better to clarify that only in the matter of sciences and not of faith [...] things are asked to be conceived clearly and distinctly. In this matter it is good to recall [...] the distinction that Saint Augustine made among to understand, to believe and to have opinions”. Descartes notices the irony and replies: “the author (Descartes – *n.m.*) is pleased to find out that he has on his support the teaching of Saint Augustine” [8, p. 339].

It is not without importance the fact that, in *Discourse*, Descartes connects Philosophy with Theology when he speaks about his formation. He dispatches, another very significant thing from the perspective of intentionality, Theology in the following manner: “and it seemed to me that anyone who would try to dedicate oneself to knowing and interpreting them (it is about revealed truths – *n.m.*) should be on top of common people’s destiny” [4, p. 117]. And this is said by Descartes after the oneiric episode and, in *Discourse*, before going to Philosophy towards which he is not in any way gallant.

De Philosophia nihil dicam (“you cannot say anything about Philosophy”)! What can you say about an area cultivated by the finest spirits and in which one must see as false everything that does not arise only as credible? *Unum dicit Plato, aliud Aristoteles*. Nobody understands anything anymore, not even Descartes! It is time for something to happen. And it happens. In Descartes’ case, it does retrospectively [17]. In the *Discourse*, Descartes forsakes: “as soon as age allowed me to get out from under teachers’ guardianship, I have completely abandoned the study of letters. Deciding not to search any other science than the one that I could find inside myself or in the great book of the world, I used the rest of my life for travelling [...]. I have always had the great desire to learn to distinguish truth from false.” [4, p. 117].

Eram tunc in Germania, this is how the second part of the *Discourse* begins. This is the only indication regarding the dream. Taken as such, it does not say anything about the dream. Others are the places which respond for this episode. It is important to notice that precisely then is when the main rules of method (all four of them) gain consistency. Cartesian pragmatism is, why not?, also the result of an oneiric episode.

In 1618, 10th of November, Descartes meets Isaac Beeckmann, a Dutch doctor concerned with Physics and Mathematics. It was happening in Netherlands, at Breda. A year later (10.XI.1619), in Germany, near the city Ulm, there is an event that the commentators, from Adrien Baillet forward, keep on examining, without much use. Frankly speaking, in the spring of 1619, Descartes writes to Beeckmann about the unique method of solving mathematical problems, that is after the philosopher had dedicated to the Dutch doctor a paper

(*Compendium musicae*, 1618) in which he discussed the relationship between sounds and numbers. Ever since the spring of 1619, Descartes was talking about a completely new science, one that might solve all the problems regarding discreet and continuous quantities. To Beeckmann, Descartes says that his mind starts to be enlightened by a *ray* and that he hopes, with the help of the light thus spread, to disperse the darkness. The dream was not coming unbidden; maybe it came unexpectedly but not unprepared as well.

The dream does not appear in any of the known works of Descartes. It was recovered by A. Baillet, in the biography he makes to Descartes, after a record with parchment papers, lost, dated in *January 1619*. The pages regarding the dream are arranged under the title of *Olympica*. Leibniz himself copied some fragments from this register.

The event belongs to what Leszek Kolakowski calls ‘the fear of Metaphysics’. He defines it like this: “if nothing really exists besides Absolute, then Absolute means nothing; if there is really nothing other than myself, then I myself mean nothing” [18]. Kolakowski’s idea is that dream’s argument (*opinio somnii*) appears in *Meditations* as an invention of logic with the purpose of leading on circular way to the restoration of world, of the reality of world. Aware that this assuming of position is excessively harsh, the author concedes that *opinio somnii* appears in Descartes as a result of a concerning experience and which starts already from the awareness of the difference dream – wakefulness. Very subtle *positio quaestionis*: “Descartes did not imagine that he could have dreamt continuously; his idea was only that at no particular time he could not have been sure that he does *not* dream” [18]. What is aimed at in dream is “the recycle of *cogito*” [18, p. 53]. Kolakowski’s caution is related to the fact that Descartes, to affirm *cogito ergo sum*, should have known what *cogito* means and what *sum* means. Descartes does not explain this, he just pronounces it, but “pronounced, the world is never pure” [18, p. 56]. What is left in this case? What the author calls “De-Cartesianization” [18, p. 65]. The premise of the *ego* is a ‘black hole’, ‘it has no referent’. The conclusion: Cartesianism denies itself since it divides reality and thus the Cartesian world is destroyed. This is how I understand Descartes’ cautious withdraw as well, from everything that could have meant theological dispute.

4. On how Descartes dreams significantly (*somnio, ergo sum*)

Here is Baillet’s story [16, p. 4; 19]: at 10.XI.1619, very enthusiastic, Descartes discovers the fundamentals of the admirable science and, at the same time, this calling is revealed to him by means of a dream (*X Novembris 1619, cum plenus forem Enthusiasmo, et mirabilis Scientiae fundamenta reperirem*; in exact translation: “X November 1619, while I was very enthusiastic, and on the verge of discovering the fundamentals of an admirable science”). A year later, Descartes writes, in *Olympica*, the following note: *XI Novembris 1620, coepi intelligere fundamentum inventi mirabilis. Somnium 1619 Novembris in quo carmen 7 cuius intium: Quod vitae sectabor iter?*. “In the year 1620 I started to

understand the fundament of a wonderful discovery. The dream from 1619, November, in which appears poem 7 whose beginning is: <<What path of life will I follow?>>” The fragment about which Descartes speaks we find in Ausonius, *Edyllia*, page 655 of the second part of the first edition or page 658, second edition. Thus the first lines of *Ex Graeco Pytagoricum, de ambiguitate eligendae vitae*, *Edyllium XV* go like this [20]:

*“Quod vitae sectabor? Si plena tumultu
Sunt fora...”*

And the next one:

“Non nasci esse bonum, natum aut cito morte potiri”

However, Gaston Milhaud, in *Revue de Méthaphysique et de Morale* (March-April, 1918) says that this ‘admirable invention’ is, in fact, the approach telescope [16, p. 292].

This verse, of Ausonius, reminds me of a similar episode and which it is impossible for me not to mention. In *Confessions* (VIII, XII, 29), Augustine hears a voice similar to a song and which was saying: “take it and read; take it and read”. And Augustine opens the book of the Apostle at *Romans* 13.13, 14. In this place of the letter, Augustine finds the path that he will follow. As far as Baillet’s position, he wrote in 1619 that Descartes’ notation, from 1620, still gives work to the curious ones!

Ergo: very enthusiastic, alone and in dark, Descartes searches for the veritable method, which goes back to searching for a new science. This is the context in which he dreams. He has a dream in three parts or, others say, three dreams connected among them. They would seem insignificant to us, maybe even absurd. The philosopher sees them as being of a supernatural order. Let me summarize the dreams and their interpretation [12, p. 100; 16, p. 4; 21].

First dream: Descartes dreams that he was walking on a street towards the school’s church where he had studied, to say his prayer. There was a very strong wind. He passes by a man without saying hello. He realizes that he is an acquaintance, wants to return to end the natural moment of politeness, but the strong wind pushes him violently towards the church. Somebody from college’s court makes a sign to him and tells him that an acquaintance has something to give him. He wakes up because of a pain and turns on the other side.

Second dream: falls asleep again and has a dream that terrifies him. He hears a noise which he considers to be a thunder, wakes up during the thunder and sees a lot of sparks of fire spread around the room.

Third dream: Descartes sees on the desk a book which he did not know, a *Dictionary*, and another one, as inexplicable appeared, a *corpus poetarum* opened (or which he opens!) at a fragment from Ausonius: *quod vitae sectabor iter?* (“What path will I follow in life?”). In the dream an unknown man appears who praises one of Ausonius’ poems, which begins with *Est et Non*. Descartes searches the poem in *Corpus poetarum*, does not find it, and then speaks to the unknown man about the beauty of the one who begins with the verse: *quod vitae*. He does not find this one either and, browsing the *Corpus*, realizes that he is

holding an unusual edition, anyhow not the edition he usually consulted. Right then, the two books, just like the unknown man, disappear.

This is the first part of the third dream. The second part of dream three is *the interpretation* of the first part of dream three. Baillet takes notice of the fact that it is interesting that Descartes, *in his dream*, decides that everything he had seen *is a dream*. *In his dream*, the dream is interpreted by the philosopher. It is an interpretation of the dream in a sleeping state, a dream interpreted in succession of sleep. How does Descartes interpret the *Dictionary* and *Corpus*?

- a. *The Dictionary* answers for the reunion of sciences ('toutes les sciences ramassées ensemble');
- b. *Corpus poetarum* (with the complete title: *Corpus Omnium Veterum Poetarum Latinorum*) marks in a distinct manner how Philosophy and Wisdom remain together;
- c. The verse: *quod vitae sectabor iter?* is an appropriate advice and it is given by a wise person or it is, perhaps, the actual Moral Theology.

Here the interpretation from the dream is over. The philosopher wakes up, continues his interpretation without knowing very well whether he is awake or asleep. He is, so to say, *dozy*. In this state, he concludes:

- a. The *Corpus* corresponds to the enthusiasm that had taken him over and to the revelation that absorbs him;
- b. The verses that begin with *Est et Non* represent Truth and Falsity in human knowledge and profane sciences. *Est et Non* is the expression of Pythagoreans (besides, in the board of the ten Pythagorean oppositions, *yes and no*, this opposition is not present). Ausonius thinks that human language no longer has a meaning if we remove 'yes' and 'no' from language;
- c. The strong wind from the first dream is the evil genius; it must be noted the fact that in the first dream the wind behaves, so to say, 'with two sides'. First it stops the advance of Descartes, so strong it was. Moreover, this first wind makes him twist to the left (and the way is other than the one Descartes tries to induce by saying that he felt a pain on the right side). Then, the violent wind pushes him towards the church of the school where he had studied. In both cases, what unites the wind is its violent character, but when Descartes will say that the strong wind from the first dream is the evil genius, to which of the two (winds) would he have referred? Of course, to the first one and which pushes him on the opposite side of the Church (to the left), as the dreamer recorded by Baillet said: *A malo spiritu ad Templum propellebar*;
- d. The melon that he should have received from the acquaintance from the first dream is associated to the love of solitude which the researcher needs;
- e. The thunder from the second dream is the 'Spirit of Truth' that descends over the philosopher in order to possess him;
- f. Fear is the equivalent of the remorse that he feels over his sins.

All these together are the Spirit of Truth and the thunder is the announcer of this Spirit. Descartes sees the first dreams as a warning for his past life, while the last one is the committing revelation, intentional, and he does not doubt that the Spirit of Truth showed him, in dream, all the treasures of sciences. “And the next day, still impressed by the dream, he prays God to enlighten him and he promised to the Blessed Virgin to make a pilgrimage to Notre-Dame de Lorette, as the good Catholic that he was or aspiring now to be” [16, p. 292]. Only after five years will he keep his promise (1624). Besides, even though it might be too much said, Maxime Leroy and K. Jungmann believe that Adrien Baillet sort of ‘sanctifies’ Descartes’ biography. Leroy even denies the fact that such pilgrimage would have had taken place [22].

As a parenthesis, I mention that Freud himself was consulted on the Cartesian dream. In chapter VI of his book, Maxime Leroy makes Freud’s opinion public. Leroy starts from the fact that the dream denounces not so much an intellectual crisis, as a moral one and, taking into account this premises, he asks for Freud’s opinion. The Viennese’s response, which draws attention on the insignificant character of the results of the dream interpretation otherwise than if the one who dreamed might be asked, the response I mean, does not have anything worthy to specify. Besides some gratuities regarding the melon and the remark by virtue of which Descartes’ dream belongs to a category of dreams whose content is close to the concerns from the wakeful state of the ‘dreamer’, Freud does not say something significant.

Beyond Freud’s opinion, it is important what Descartes himself believed about his own dream. It is, however, for most, extremely unpleasant to find at the origin of modern Philosophy a simple ‘cerebral episode’ and nothing more! A certain Malebranche brands *La vie de M. Descartes* of Adrien Baillet on the ground that this writing makes ridiculous both Descartes and the philosophy he proposes and practices. The trade with demons, a trade in dream, is suspect. On the other hand, and closer to us, Charles Adam and Gaston Milhaud accept a mystical crisis in and at the origin of Cartesian philosophy [16, p. 9].

Such mystical crisis is of the kind of that follows the sacred dreams or the ones sent by God [23]. Charles Adam comments that the beginning of Descartes’ isolation was marked by a capital event and that will make epoch in the philosopher’s life: the dream, and this is the main object of the opusculum *Olympica* [7, p. 179]. It is about three consecutive dreams or about a dream in three parts and which seems to be sent by/from Heaven or from Olympus. Hence a tripartite Cartesian division: the area of the sensible ones or the area of experience’s things also called *Experimenta*; on top of it we find the area of Muses – *Parnassus*; in the uppermost place we find the superior area of divine things – *Olimpyca*. This is the moment of Cartesian enthusiasm and which somehow amuses Huygens and Leibniz. Charles Adam speaks here about a mystical crisis and which is, perhaps, the condition of all great discoveries. An interpreted dream in this manner is nothing less than a divine order and as gratitude for this favour he promises the pilgrimage to Notre-Dame de Lorette [7, p. 49].

Gaston Milhaud makes a certain inventory of the interpreters of the event taken here into consideration. He mentions Foucher de Careil (the dream is the sign of the discovery of method in its own entire kind), Millet (Descartes finds out at that date the fundamentals of method), Liard (after the discovery of method and of universal mathematic Descartes has terrifying dreams), Hamelin (the idea of method) and Adam (the universal mathematic and the following mystical crisis). Milhaud concludes: I believe that all these interpretations are inaccurate! Everything starts from Baillet about whom Milhaud says that he does not make just a translation of the Cartesian text, but an interpretation, which was assumed regarding all that is revolving around the mystical crisis of Cartesian type. More clearly, he does not believe in it. He rather connects the Cartesian behaviour with the huge pride of the philosopher and his faith in the mission of building sciences on their new basis. Descartes' mystical crisis? Let's not insist!, says Milhaud. It is rather about inspiration, spontaneous imagination, intuition, natural light or the need that Descartes felt regarding the divine guarantee [14, p. 47].

It is clear that Descartes, as he also confessed it, was in a special mood: 'very enthusiastic' and where 'human spirit' had no contribution. Anton Dumitriu believes that Descartes is not far from a kind of primitivism if he relates in this way to the premonitory dreams. If there is something that might save Descartes, the Romanian thinker says, is the fact that the dream and revelation were experienced in the wakeful state, before sleep, in doiness and then, after all, all these talks are based on some personal simple notes [12, p. 106]. There is no need however to exonerate Descartes. Here I am on Noica's side: "no, the dream is not important in itself. But its meaning [...] is the meaning of the beginning of life of Descartes himself [...]. The dream is only a signal. The signal is that Descartes has to leave sooner or later from among people and to deny their teaching, if he wants to do something for them." [21, p. 26]. Descartes falls in himself, closes in himself (*clauso ostio, in abscondito*). Many before him have done the same. Saint Paul, Anthony, Augustine, just for a quick reminder of the great. A not very well known thing belongs to an information that I take from Brunschvicg [24]. It is about Descartes' funerary inscription from Church Saint-Germain-des-Prés from Paris. The mortal remains of the philosopher rest in the chapel Sacré-Coeur of the church starting with the 18th of February 1819. Here is the inscription, translated in French (which, of course, is in Latin): „*A la mémoire de Descartes, excellent par dessus tout pour la profondeur de la doctrine et la subtilité du génie, qui, le premier depuis la renaissance des Belles-Lettres en Europe, a revendiqué et assuré les droits de la raison humaine, tout en sauvegardant l'autorité de la foi chrétienne. Maintenant il jouit de la contemplation de la vérité, qui était l'unique objet de son amour*”.

Jacques Maritain, who is persistent in not forgiving Descartes, reproaches him that he does not do this to pray but to think, not for *oratio* but for philosophize. Maritain's reproach goes like this: Descartes transfers illicitly and curiously a process of Christian spirituality in the area of nature and reason [16, p. 44], Descartes is guilty and responsible for confusing praying with Philosophy

and peace with a hidden God. Maritain is decisive and unequal: the philosophical truth that Descartes reaches becomes the vehicle of an error. Although Descartes' intention is honourable, that for Maritain means realistic, he, Descartes, ends up founding the principle of modern idealism [16, p. 47]. Maritain believes he had found an ally in Boutroux, according to whom the central problem of Cartesian metaphysics is the passing from thinking to existence. Thinking alone is inherent to itself; how can we confirm, starting from here, the existences? Existence, which for the ancient ones is a gift, becomes now an object for interpretation. The, Boutroux does not refer by 'les anciens' to the Cartesian tradition that is absolutely Christian especially in its rising, but to the 'old ones' as such, to Greeks especially. No, Descartes is definitely not one of those who belong to Bovarism. Those are not marked by uniformity, he is a man of the second rank, he sees himself differently than he is. "One of the signs by means of which we may recognize the people of first rank is, apparently, a certain stamp of uniformity, by which all of their works are marked. This uniform character translates what is spontaneous and necessary in them. While those of second rank have the power to vary themselves by imitating different models, the great man, who does not imitate at all, remains a slave of the imperious law of his genius. The same gift that awakes in him an original and new vision constrains him to apply this unique vision incessantly." [25]

Descartes is one of those who belong to Bovarism, claims Maritain, he wears a mask. Not far from this, he makes use of a curious procedure. He declares, for instance, that the idea of God is the clearest and most distinct of all our ideas (and here he inclines towards ontologism), so that he can then affirm that the infinite cannot be an object of Science (and here he inclines towards agnosticism). On Maxime Leroy's line, Maritain concludes: clear and distinct is that Descartes bluffs, he is a philosopher with mask.

It is true that a Cartesian text could lead to this idea. It is a lost text, copied by Leibniz [12, p. 107]. Descartes says in this text that, "as actors, when they are called on stage, for hiding the embarrassment of their faces, put their mask on, so do I, when I go on the world's stage where until today I have been a spectator, I go forward masked" (*larvatus prodeo*). Maritain is satisfied now. Cartesian philosophy is one with mask and the truths of the Cartesian reform 'mask' a hidden principle. Descartes is not, perhaps, a hypocrite, but that does not stop him from being ambiguous, especially since his cautions are excessive [16, p. 38]. Maritain's conclusion is the following: masked thinking is a characteristic of Cartesian thinking itself. Descartes wants to hide something! What?

- the excess of scientific (in part VI of the *Discourse* he hints at what happened to Galilei, condemned on 22nd of June 1633). In fact, *Le Traité du monde ou de la lumière*, a treatise that he had finished, is withdrawn from printing and the author will never publish it (the treatise appears posthumously, in 1664);
- doubt itself; Descartes *pretends* only that he doubts, 'cheats', 'masks', is skilful;

- Descartes intensively practices both the consolation speech as well as its reverse; he says that he goes in the world as a soldier and traveller, even though he is the owner of an exceptional discovery;
- *larvatus prodeus* hides (masks) Descartes' affiliation to Rosa-Cross;
- it is not about *larvatus prodeus*, but about *larvatus pro Deo* (masked for God). Descartes himself says in *Cogitationes privatae* that: *Les Sciences sont actuellement masques* [20, p. 215]. Charles Adam says that letters R-C, associated with Rose-Croix are, no doubt, a simple coincidence [7, p. 148].

It can be here about, after all, an 'extroversion of spectacular type', a 'Histrionic mentality' quite spread in the XVIIth century. It is about a 'transfiguration' in Descartes' case, one that "could give form to a more unusual pride of the originality, or, on the contrary, to hide the insularity of the one known continentally" [26]. Descartes 'advances masked' and, I believe, this 'masked advance' served for the pilgrimage which he had proposed to himself as soldier, wandering or simple traveller. In 1637 is published, in French, without a signature, at Leyda, the *Discourse*. Then, in 1641, in Latin, are published the *Meditations*, and the translation of *Meditations* in French is revised by the philosopher. In 1644 is translated in Latin the *Discourse*, still under Cartesian 'censorship'. It is not exactly by chance, perhaps, that in 1647, when *Meditations* are translated in French, Descartes is accused of Pelagianism. Also now he meets Pascal. Together, these are 'linguistic masks' of Descartes behind which he does not hide. If Descartes 'advances masked', and he does it, no doubt, the language, as mean of communication, is an accessory. For Descartes, *bona mens* is not a mask, *bona mens* is a sign of recognition, a code, although a hidden one, and only here Descartes might be suspected of hypocrisy (the first paragraph from *Discourse* is 'un-masked' witness).

It has been said that Descartes does not return in any other place of his texts on the dream. He does not do it explicitly and it was not even necessary such a recapitulative form. But what if he does it implicitly? Here is the ending of *Meditation I*: "just as the slave, who was enjoying, perhaps, an imaginary freedom in sleep, is afraid to wake up, when he begins suspecting that he is sleeping, and dreads awakening, in the middle of sweet delusions, so do I fall back, unwillingly, in my former beliefs, and I fear to arise myself, lest the gentle rest to be succeeded by a laborious wakefulness, which I shall spend not within a certain light, but among the impenetrable darkness of the now disturbed difficulties" [8, p. 251]. Who knows the dream well may recover 'the sleep', 'the awakening', 'the dreading', 'the laborious wakefulness', 'the light' and 'the impenetrable darkness'. After all, 'clear and distinct' is not even in this obsessive phrase Descartes, moreover, with one of Broglie's ideas, there is nothing more misleading in Descartes than a clear and distinct idea!

5. Conclusion

Descartes thus becomes a rationalist *a posteriori*, one by consequence, not by premise, and the dream here is an extra argument. Descartes' strategy is very clear: Aristotle seems to have won by the end of scholastic. Descartes is not an Aristotelian. The path to follow in order to defeat Aristotle is not logical, is psychological. Augustine used it, and now Descartes uses it. He credited poets just as, despite all, Plato did it (namely 'hidden'). Descartes' dream announces to the world *scientia mirabilis*. Descartes' autobiography oscillates between fiction and/or history and the author himself is, with one hard word of Pascal, "inutile et incertain" [27, 28]. Jean-François Revel believes that, with the exception of mathematical work, Descartes is a confused and arbitrary spirit, and the Cartesian method is reduced to little. The mentioned commentator is malicious: the only specific truth is the fact that we think and we exist at least as long as we think; thinking is the proof of existence and this is certain; even in dream there must be a thinking subject that would formulate nonsense. And in the XVIIIth century, Revel says, no one related to Descartes anymore otherwise than as to an 'archaeological curiosity'. Descartes is discredited by Newton's work and contested by Locke in the theory of knowledge. There is announced a Cartesian ending as well – 1734, when Voltaire's text appears – *Lettres anglaises* [28, p. 77]. This proves a very simple fact: there is a Cartesianism of Descartes and one of the Cartesians [29]. Descartes' Cartesianism is useless; the one of the Cartesians is unsure. Of course, for everyone Descartes is guilty. And then he also dreams, which makes him completely unpleasant. That is why, maybe, as a late revenge, Descartes is criticized in France for the exclusivity of his rational demonstration [30], which suits perfectly a German author (of course) who notes, pulling a long nose to those from the other side of Maginot line, that, in reality (and thanks to Descartes), all the modern Metaphysics derives directly from Christianity [31].

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