

CARTESIAN AND KANTIAN REVOLUTIONS IN PHILOSOPHY

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Descartes and Kant are normally considered to be the exemplary thinkers who brought about revolutions in (Western) philosophy, not only in the realm of Epistemology but in defining philosophical thought as such and *in toto* in entirely new ways, i.e., defining origin, realm and boundaries of philosophy by means of new methods. When calling this essential reformation of philosophical tradition (traces of such a subject-based reversal can already be found in such thinkers as Augustine, Nicholas of Cusa and Gassendi) a Copernican Revolution, one refers to the Preface of the 2nd edition of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* where he compares his methodical starting-point with essence and effect of Copernicus' abandoning of the Ptolemaic geocentric view of astronomy in favour of a heliocentric planetary model, as a consequence of which and after some struggle with church authorities, man's approach to life and world underwent a thorough change.

But Descartes' and Kant's revolutions in philosophy can only be called Copernican in a formal way, i.e., with regard to their new methods and procedures of investigation, for both make man's mind with its knowing capacities the centre of philosophical world-view which, *materialiter*, is exactly the very opposite to that of Copernicus. Pertaining to Descartes and Kant, the expression "Copernican Revolution" can only rely to form and method of the process of knowing in the sense of a radical reversal of man's self and world-realisation in knowledge. To both thinkers things are not substantially or ontically but only formally or ontologically determined by the mind, so that we may call Descartes as well as Kant formal idealists but material realists. It is thus a severe misunderstanding of Descartes' skeptical and Kant's transcendental idealism to confine their investigations to the fields of logical and epistemological analyses which, no doubt, caused a vital crisis in traditional metaphysics but at the same time and in so doing paved the way to a critical ontology, principally based upon the spontaneous, *a priori* capacities of the mind, in particular in the process of comprehension. This intention of a critical reformation of classical metaphysics is, however,

not as obvious in Descartes as it is in Kant of whose *Critique of Pure Reason* Ernst Cassirer says :

an essential basic element of the First Critique is precisely that it contains as much a novel doctrine of consciousness as it does a new theory of the object.¹

Descartes' and Kant's critical approach to traditional philosophy in the shape of dogmatic metaphysics may certainly be labelled as revolutionary; but as revolutions can be initiated for various reasons and motives, using different means in pursuing the same or different aims, let us now see where Descartes and Kant differ substantially in their pursuit of philosophy as the fundamental formal *organon* of knowing in general and hence of the formal or methodical basis of all scientific knowledge. Man's pursuit of knowledge is ruled by the longing for objectively valid certainty; but in order to find out whether a particular knowledge deserves the predicate of objective, general validity, we must first investigate into origin and procedure of the process of knowing as such, in its subjective and objective components.

The Cartesian Doctrine

As the process of knowing, like any other mode of relation between an individual and other individuals or the whole of natural and social environment, takes place in the formal figure of subject-object-relation, we must first ask, as Descartes does, whether this relation is not merely a fictitious one, that is to say, whether the existence of an empirically experienced world can be demonstrated with absolute certainty. This question suggests us at least to doubt the reliability, the certainty of sensuous intuition (perception) and hence the reality of an external world. Dreams, illusions, phantasmagories and the like seem to be indicative of the doctrine that the whole realm of sensations does not furnish us with indubitable knowledge. Empirically confirmed is also our doubt about the certainty of the workings of our intellect, which is proved by such facts as the occurrence of errors due to a lack of concentration and also the wellknown slips of the memory. If one is not willing to accept the unrealistic conception of a *deus malignus*, of a tempting, misleading and deceiving demon, making us to err wherever we presume to have absolute certainty, then there is one indubitable certainty only, this being that of my own individual existence, realized in the reflection on the act of thinking wherein I experience myself as a thinking

being (*res cogitans*) : While thinking I realize myself as a thinking being, a being that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, imagines and perceives.²

But as it is indubitably certain that I am a thinking being, as experienced in the acts of self-conscious reflections, it is this that must be acknowledged as the fundamental epistemological and ontological principle of all absolutely valid knowledge. True is what is evident, and evident is what is true. That I am is evident in the acts of self-reflection, and it is true in my existence as a thinking being. Yet this statement that I am as a thinking being does not mean that my existence is guaranteed beyond doubt in the acts of thinking only; this statement rather points to that essential ontical characteristic of human existence as its being ontological, i.e. being capable to understand one's own and other things being.³ With reference to Heidegger's interpretation of Descartes, J. L. Mehta writes :

...*sum res cogitans* does not mean that I am a thing endowed with the property of thinking; it means that I am an essent whose mode of *being* consists in representing, such that this re-presenting... puts, at the same time, the presenting 'I' itself in the position of being represented.⁴

I cannot deny that I exist, since the mere denial of or doubt in my existence implies my existence. This indubitable fact A. J. Ayer expresses in the following statement :

If I am thinking, it is indubitable that I am thinking, and if it is indubitable that I am thinking, then, Descartes argues, it is indubitable that I exist, at least during such times as I think.⁵

But why draw on Heidegger and Ayer when we have Kant's critical comments in Book II, chapter 1 of Transcendental Dialectic in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in the paragraph on the "Second Paralogism of Transcendental Psychology". As against a logical paralogism which consists in the formal faultiness of a conclusion, independent of its contents, the transcendental paralogism arises from a transcendental cause which drives us to a formally false conclusion; such a paralogism has its cause in the very nature of human reason and produces an inevitable though not insoluble illusion. Pertaining to Descartes' propositions of *cogito ergo sum* and *sum res cogitans* Kant remarks :

It is manifest that if we wish to represent to ourselves a thinking

being, we must put ourselves in its place and supplant, as it were, the object which has to be considered by our subject (which never happens in any other kind of investigation). The reason why we postulate for every thought absolute unity of the subject is because otherwise we could not say of it, I think (the manifold in one representation). For although the whole of a thought may be divided and distributed under many subjects, the subjective I can never thus be divided and distributed, and it is this I which we presuppose in every thought.

Nor is it true that the simplicity of my self (as a soul) is really deduced from the proposition 'I think', for it is already involved in every thought itself. The proposition *I am simple* must be considered as the immediate expression of apperception, and the so-called syllogism of Cartesius, *cogito ergo sum*, is in reality tautological, because *cogito (sum cogitans)* predicates reality immediately.⁶

Incidentally, the famous Cartesian statement "Je pense donc je suis" is mostly presented in its Latin version as *Cogito ergo sum* by which one could be tempted to interpret thought as the cause of the thinking individual's existence, for instance as in absolute idealism's - if there has ever been any denial of the existence of an extrahuman external world. If at all my thinking might be taken to be the cause of my existence, then neither as the material nor as the efficient cause but only in the sense of the formal cause, as the mental act of self-consciousness. Yet if we take Descartes' fundamental statement in its original, not shortened Latin version, i.e. *Ego cogito, ergo sum sive existo* (I think, and hence I am existing), then it is obvious that it is meant to be the essential principle and criterion of all true knowledge which, though not particularly mentioned by Descartes, also includes my knowledge of the falsity of some of my propositions; and this was observed more than a thousand years before Descartes by St. Augustine when stating in *De utilitate credendi* (On the usefulness of religious belief), which is a staunch rejection of Manicheism: *Cogito: si fallor, sum* (I think: If I am wrong, I am).

Descartes has presented his ideas mainly in three works :

Discours de la methode (1637), which could be considered a pilot-project of *Meditationes de prima philosophia* (1641), and *Principia philosophiae* (1644), being more or less a condensed version of *Meditationes*.

What has disturbed some followers of Descartes and still irritates

scholars of Cartesian thought is the rooting of the indubitable fact of man's self-awareness as a thinking being, as well as the whole complex of clear and distinct knowledge, in the indubitable concept of the existence of an absolutely perfect being whose perfection is, to Descartes, not only the source and cause of true knowledge but also of error as a means to attain knowledge. This absolute being or God is also the primeval cause of the totality of creation, and hence of man. As to this one should follow the whole argumentation in *Meditationes* III - V, of which I cite a few passages, in English translation :

By the name God I understand a substance infinite, independent, all-knowing, all-powerful, and by which I myself, and every other existing thing, if any such there be, were created.⁷

And Descartes refers to his identification of existence and truth, the identity of being with the clear and distinct, and hence the indubitable concept of being, in a letter to Mersenne of May 6th 1630 :

God's existence... is the most eternal of all truths that can exist, and the only one from which all others proceed.⁸

And then comes that most irritating concluding statement in *Meditatio* V where Descartes seems to fall back to the position of a dogmatic metaphysic which he pretended to have overcome with his methodic doubting :

And thus I very clearly see that the certitude and truth of all science depends alone on the knowledge of the true God, insofar that before knowing him I could have no perfect knowledge of any other thing.⁹

This rooting of true knowledge in the knowledge of the existence of the true God, this return to traditional metaphysics and recourse to Christian belief makes us doubt whether Descartes' rigorous attack on previous philosophical *Weltanschauungen* was as uncompromising as one should expect from a thinker's unconditional intellectual honesty. We may ask whether this audacious attack, leading to a revolutionary turn in the methods of philosophical investigation, was only charged as long as it was unlikely to clash with the authoritative teachings of Christianity and as long as human knowledge was in conformity with divine revelation, thus acknowledging the identity of our indwelling

reasonable insight with the Christian religion.¹⁰ To this question we shall return towards the end of our paper, when mentioning Kant's reaction to the Royal Order of 1st October 1794.

The Kantian Doctrine

Whereas it was Descartes' main aim in his revolutionary egocentric turn of rooting indubitable certainty of any kind of knowledge in the knowing subject's existential self-awareness as a knowing being, and thus to provide a metaphysical justification for the particular sciences, their basic principles and propositions being *more geometrico demonstrata*, Kant's declared rigorous aim is the scientific foundation and justification of any future metaphysics as "the science of the principles of all knowledge *a priori* and of all knowledge which follows from these principles".¹¹ Kant was first in favour of Cartesio-Leibnizian Rationalism; but since 1763 we realize that Kant loses his trust in Rationalism, under the increasing influence of British Empiricism, a turn which becomes very obvious in his essay of 1766 entitled *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik* (Dreams of a Ghost-Seer, Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics). Kant accepted Hume's point of view that all hitherto metaphysics, especially all speculations about the three great traditional problems God, Freedom and the Immortality of the Soul, was a sheer waste of time and intellectual energy. In this essay we find that Kant does not stay satisfied and content with the unmasking of traditional metaphysics, but that he also wants to find out what is to take the place of traditional metaphysics when investigation into the proper and genuine task of philosophy is not to reveal the supernatural. Hence he sets out to reflect on origin, capability and limits of reason itself, aiming at a clear distinction between the realm of true knowledge and the dreamland of metaphysical fairy-tales, and this was some ten years later to become the nucleus of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

But before radically breaking away from Rationalism and Empiricism, Kant first tries to compromise by finding an answer to the question how reliable knowledge could presumably, become possible by means of a synthesis of these two systems of knowledge.

In his book *De Mundi Sensibilis atque Intelligibilis Forma et Principiis* (On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and Intelligible Worlds), and based on the clear distinction between the two main capacities of the mind, sensation (sense-perception) and reason, Kant

comes to a compromise in so far as he declares that whereas sense-perception represents and hence recognizes things only as they appear to the knowing subject, reason- by means of rational-discursive apperception provides us insight into the real structure, the essence of things. Kant, however, soon realizes that with this agreement he had again re-opened the door to call in traditional metaphysics; he becomes increasingly doubtful whether Hume's abandoning of metaphysics was better grounded and justified than the metaphysician's rejection of sense-experience as a reliable source of true knowledge. Kant realizes that Hume's skeptical interpretation of concept and principle of causality does not only eliminate metaphysics from the realm of knowledge but also the natural sciences, that is to say our scientific knowledge of natural facts and processes: To Hume there were no general principles or laws of nature but merely empirical rules of our associative combination of impressions and ideas; to him there were no necessary things nor processes in nature but factual ones only; there was no absolute certainty of knowledge but only various degrees of probability; and there was no possible explanation of things and processes over and above their empirical description.

Kant's way out of the Rationalists' and Empiricists' dilemma may be briefly described thus : Knowledge which is entirely based on experience (*a posteriori*) is but factual and does not carry or yield necessary truth; only what is in its origin independent of experience (*a priori*) leads to generally valid knowledge. The dilemma of traditional philosophy has always been that it dealt with things as if they were simply there, given to us, and hence the task of reason was that of depicting, more or less adequately, their structures and principles. This approach to the external world and even the internal world of our own *ego* has turned out to be a failure, and this being the case Kant attempts to radically change the position and with it the standpoint of the investigator :

Hitherto it has been supposed that all our knowledge must conform to the objects; but under that supposition all attempts to establish anything about them *a priori*, by means of concepts and thus to enlarge our knowledge, have come to nothing. The experiment, therefore, ought to be made, whether we should not succeed better with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition... We have here the same case as with the first thoughts of Copernicus, who, not being able to get on with the explanation of the movements of the heavenly

bodies as long as he assumed that all the stars moved around the spectator, tried whether he could not succeed better by assuming the spectator to be moving around and the stars to be at rest.¹²

This is the revolutionary new starting point of Kant's investigations, aiming at the critical (transcendental) analysis of structure, realm and limits of human knowledge, based on which alone it would be possible and justified to establish structure, realm and limitations of the objects of all possible human knowledge and in so doing to give way for a scientific foundation of metaphysics as *metaphysica generalis* or ontology. When, as Stephan Körner says,¹³ Kant's Copernican Revolution "is based on an entirely new conception of philosophy and philosophical method of investigation which Kant describes as critical or transcendental", we should briefly reflect on the proper Kantian meaning of the key-term *transcendental*.

The special meaning which Kant attributes to the term "transcendental" can best be understood by means of distinguishing it from two other terms which are closely related to it but have in the context of Transcendental Idealism at least an entirely different meaning; these are the terms "immanent" and "transcendent".

Kant calls "immanent" everything which is given within the realm of any possible sense-experience, whereby it is irrelevant whether it is actually experienced or only possible to be experienced in principle; being immanent is being within the realm of nature.

Kant calls "transcendent" that which lies principally beyond the bounds of experience, i.e., in the context of the *Critique of Pure Reason* any proposition or statement about the supra-sensible, the supra-natural, as, for instance, God or the Soul. The transcendental has in common with the immanent that it does not go beyond experience, it has in common with the transcendent that it is not itself being experienced.

In his short essay *Beantwortung der Frage: Ist es eine Erfahrung, dass wir denken?* (Answer to the Question: Is it an Experience that We Think?), 1788, we find the following explanation of the term "transcendental".

The consciousness... to experience something or to think at all is a transcendental consciousness, not experience.

And in B 25 of the *Critique of Pure Reason* he gives the fundamental

definition of "transcendental" when stating:

I call all knowledge transcendental which is not concerned with objects but with our knowledge of objects in general in so far as it is to be a *a priori* possible.

The basic idea of this transcendental method is that the question pertaining to value and validity of any real knowledge can only be answered from a reflection on its subjective, *a priori* conditions. From this it becomes obvious that in Kant's usage the terms "transcendental" and "critical" are identical in meaning.

What Kant's predecessors, whether rationalists or empiricists, had in common was that they all fell a prey to the fallacy of what he calls the amphiboly of the concepts of reflection.¹⁴

Amphiboly means ambiguity. What Kant means to brand in traditional philosophy is its epistemological confounding of the mere thought of a thing (thing in itself or *noumenon*) with its perception and comprehension as an object of experience (the thing as appearance or *phaenomenon*); and the term "reflection" he defines within the realm of transcendental philosophy as :

a state of the mind in which we set out to discover the subjective conditions under which we may arrive at concepts.¹⁵

Though the rationalists were on the whole skeptical with regard to the function of the senses in the process of knowing, holding that knowledge arises from reason, on the basis of certain innate ideas and principles, Descartes had advocated the doctrine of representative perceptions. And to another declared rationalist, Leibniz, our knowledge is entirely determined from within, and the senses give us only confused representations and obscure conceptions.

To empiricists the view that all our knowledge conforms to objects might be characteristic: things make knowledge, not knowledge things. But Hume left the beaten track in holding that knowledge is neither determined from within (Leibniz), nor from outside (Locke), and that we must be content, instead of indubitable knowledge, with a higher or lower degree of probability in our propositions.

Kant's revolutionary objection to Empiricism is that we actually possess *a priori* knowledge of objects, if we are to understand this

term "object" in the critical/transcendental sense, as appearances under the *a priori* forms of sensible intuition (space and time) and the *a priori* forms of rational thinking (categories). Though the Rationalists concede that there is *a priori* knowledge of things, Kant's revolutionary objection to them is that they failed to justify the possibility of such a knowledge in its objective validity. To Leibniz mathematical knowledge as the paradigm of any and all reliable knowledge is obtained exclusively by a conceptual analysis and not on the basis of sense-experience, and such a knowledge is nevertheless valid pertaining to objects of perception; that such an absolute distinct and clear knowledge, *more geometrico demonstrata*, of the external world is possible rests upon Leibniz' failure to distinguish essentially between perception and conception, taking perception to be a less distinct, an obscure conception, and conception to be a most distinct and clear perception, a standpoint which, as we have seen, was still held by Kant in *De Mundi...*, but in the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant distinguishes substantially between perception and conception as two different but cooperative *a priori* capacities of the human mind in its self and world-reflecting acts of knowing.

Both Doctrines in Comparison

It is true that in reflection we cannot as was done by Descartes and Leibniz abstract from, ignore sensible intuition or perception if one wants to arrive at indubitable knowledge; one can, on the other hand, just as little achieve true knowledge if one attempts, as Locke did, to deduce conceptions from perceptions. Kant's attempt in his reflections on origin, capacity and limitation of man's faculty of knowing, which is the leading objective of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is briefly explained and summarized in the chapter on the Amphiboly of the Concepts of Reflection, its final result being the restriction of all clear and distinct, scientific and hence generally valid human knowledge to the phenomenal realm of appearance. This being the case he exiles once and for all any proof of the existence of God from the realm of transcendental/critical philosophy. But it is precisely the indubitable existence of God which functions in Descartes' thought as the fundamental principle of being and hence of man's existence as a thinking being; God's existence being undoubtedly experienced in the self-reflective awareness of my own existence. So it is actually God's existence that I am aware of when experiencing myself as a

thinking being; God, who by his grace, his omnipotence and omniscience created me as the being who, in self-reflection, discovers himself as a thinking being: Thus, the idea I have of God's existence is the truest, clearest and most distinct of all the ideas of my mind.¹⁶

Descartes' proof for the existence of God (actually it is only a revised form of the ontotheological proof, after having surpassed a version of the teleotheological proof as given in *Meditatio* III) is marked by an intimate interrelation or even interdependence of epistemology and ontology.¹⁷ But he also realizes that when thinking of something it does not follow *eo ipso* that something corresponding to this thought must really exist (as Kant would say that the mere idea of something, without foregoing sensible intuition, is empty); statements of existence cannot be achieved by mere conceptual analysis. To each and every matter of fact I can think of, logically invent its contradiction; and as the question whether God exists is a question after a matter of fact, any statement about the non-existence of God need not be wrong, this was later to become Hume's argumentation in his tackling the problems, the alleged problems, of metaphysics. It seems to me advisable to cite the main sentences of Descartes' argumentation :

But though, in truth, I cannot think of God unless as existing, just as I cannot think of a mountain without a valley, it does not follow from my thinking of a mountain with a valley that there actually is any mountain in the world, and likewise it does not seem to follow from my mere thought of an existing God that God really exists, for my thought imposes no necessity on things. And as I may imagine a winged horse, though no horse has wings, so I could perhaps attribute existence to God, though no God existed.

But here a fallacy lurks under the semblance of this objection: for because I cannot think of a mountain without a valley it does by no means follow that there are any actual mountains and valleys; it only follows that mountain and valley, may they exist or not exist, are inseparable from each other, whereas on the other hand, because I cannot think of God unless as existing, it follows that existence is inseparable from God and therefore that he really exists, not as if this were brought about by my thought, or that it imposes any necessity on a thing, but on the contrary, the necessity which lies in the thing itself, i.e., the necessity of the existence of God, determines me to have such a thought;

for it is not left to my free will to think of God without existence, that is the most perfect being yet devoid of absolute perfection, as I am free to imagine a horse with or without wings.¹⁸

Descartes winds up the whole argumentation on the dependency of any indubitable, scientific knowledge on the indubitable existence of God with the statement :

And thus I very clearly see that the certitude and truth of all science depends entirely on the knowledge of the true God, inasmuch that I, before knowing him, could not have perfect knowledge of any other thing.¹⁹

Here one could, of course, object that this argumentation is caught in the logical trap of a vicious circle, an objection which was raised already by the theologian and philosopher Antoine Arnauld who was otherwise a staunch Cartesian²⁰. First Descartes deduces from the self-awareness of myself as a thinking being (substance) that everything comprehended by me in clear and distinct conceptions is true; but on the other hand our thus possible clear and distinct knowledge of God should give us the guarantee that God, as the true and benevolent absolute Being, cannot and would not deceive us in obtaining knowledge.

Descartes' argumentation could be blamed and rejected as a reactionary return to traditional metaphysics, for the simple reason that it gives predominance to a problem, namely the existence of God, which Kant later proves as an illegitimate intruder into the realm of pure reason. We may even discover a distinct connection between Descartes and medieval Scholasticism, a connection that was already pointed to by Etienne Gilson and more recently discussed in great detail by Jean-Luc Marion in his book *Sur la theologie blanche de Descartes*, 1981 (The blank Theology of Descartes).²¹

This essay is not the place to undertake a detailed critical assessment of Kant's objections to Descartes; but the above discussed turn of Descartes does not seem to justify his being lauded as a revolutionary pertaining to method and end of philosophy. And finally he even seems to completely surrender the freedom of thought to the authority of institutionalised religion, in his case that of the Roman Catholic Church. He says in *Principia philosophiae*, IV/207:

Always being aware of my insufficiency, I state nothing to be

absolutely certain but submit everything to the authority of the Catholic Church and to the discernment of more prudent men.²²

But here I am not sure whether Descartes really submits the results of his thought to a religious institution which had, in its official declarations, always demanded the position of the supreme judge in cases of doubt or even clashes between religious and philosophical (as also scientific and political) statements and decisions, or whether Descartes makes this verbal concession in order to be protected from the accusation of spreading heretic doctrines and, consequently, from persecution by ecclesiastic authorities.

This reminds us of Kant's reaction to the Royal Order of October, 1st, 1794, "to put a stop to Kant's noxious writings", by which in particular his *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*, 1793 (Religion within the Limits of Pure Reason) was meant; there he had attempted to reduce the religious doctrines of the Christian Churches to purely rational beliefs and to a refined moral consciousness. To that Order Kant replied at length arguing that every thinker was entitled to conduct and make known to the public his investigations unhindered; but he also assured the Monarch that he, as a most loyal subject, would in future "refrain absolutely from all public pronouncements on the subject of religion, whether natural or revealed, in either lectures or written works". After Kant's death, however, the following note was discovered amongst his left papers, a note that helps us judge Kant's reaction from a different point of view, for the reaction, at first sight, seemed to contradict his on the whole rigorous and non-compromising way of thinking. The note reads thus :

Recantation is despicable; but in a case like the present one it is the duty of a subject to remain silent. And while one should never speak anything but the truth, it is not, for that reason, one's duty to speak the whole truth in public.

This quotation points to a second meaning of *Copernican Revolution* in Kantian thought, namely that with reference to Practical Reason. Here the underlying aspect of Kant's investigations is to reverse the basic methods of all hitherto Moral Philosophy and its starting off from the presupposition that any ethical enquiry should commence with the definition of the good, from which the moral law and the concept of duty were to be derived. Kant, on the contrary, held that this

was precisely the source of all the confusions of philosophers in their quest of a supreme principle of morals: Instead of constantly being after an object of the will to make it the foundation of a law, their enquiries ought to have concentrated first on a law which was to determine the will *a priori*, and only then they should have identified an object suitable to it. But as there is nothing in Descartes' thought which could be compared with Kant's Practical Philosophy, its foundations and principles, this second meaning of Copernican Revolution should not be discussed here.²³

Coming to the close of our considerations, I would like to refer once more to Heidegger's understanding of Descartes. J. L. Mehta condenses Heidegger's interpretation of Descartes' revolutionary new starting point, by which the modern age in philosophy was ushered in, thus: Contrary to the ancient Greeks for whom the subject was what a proposition was about, its underlying ontical basis (*hypokeimenon*), for Descartes "the permanently present, the given is found in the *ego cogito* which thus becomes the ultimate subject, the subjectness of the ego as subject lying in the certainty of self-consciousness".²⁴ But I would not underline what Mehta presents as Heidegger's verdict on Kant's role and position in the history of philosophy, namely that :

the Kantian reason is only a more stringently formulated version of the Cartesian *ego cogito* and a more elaborately articulated and refined form of that ultimate, all-determining Cartesian ground or condition, the subjectivity of the subject.²⁵

Apart from my feeling disturbed by the word 'only' in this statement, I would interpret the distinction between Descartes and Kant not as one by degree only but as an essential, substantial distinction, in so far as under the ontological aspect Descartes' ultimate ground or condition is the objectivity of the subject, whereas in Kant's thought this is the subjectivity of the object, provided that one interprets objectivity of the subject as the existential self-awareness of the individual and that subjectivity of the object is meant to be the result of the ontological or transcendental transformation of a thing in the process of knowing.

I am in agreement with Kumud Goswami when he, in his essay 'Is Kant Really a Revolutionary Philosopher?'²⁶ doesn't restrict the revolutionary character of Kant's philosophizing to certain vital alterations in epistemological and ontological investigations and not to the rejection

of the views of his predecessors, but Kant is a revolutionary thinker "because he has introduced a radical change into the intellectual atmosphere of the philosophical circle". I would, however, extend this evaluation also to Descartes' philosophical performance though his revolutionary achievement is less obvious than Kant's causing a total transformation in philosophizing, in the West at least. That Descartes' revolution in philosophy did not turn out to be as uncompromising and rigorous as that of Kant may be due to the fact that he was still too close to the Middle Ages and their confessional restriction, and that the liberated spirit of the Enlightenment was just about to dawn.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Kant's Life and Thought*, Yale Univ. Press 1981, p. 194.
2. *Meditationes de prima philosophia*, II/8, also III/1.
3. See M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, ¶4.
4. *The Philosophy of Martin Heidegger*, Varanasi 1967, p. 426. Mehta cites here Heidegger's remarks in *Nietzsche*, vol. II, p. 162. In *Sein und Zeit*, ¶6. Heidegger blames Descartes for his still being dependent on Scholasticism and particularly for his complete failure to give a clear statement on the mode of being of his *res cogitans* or rather the ontical meaning of 'I am'.
5. *The Problem of Knowledge*, 1956, quoted from reprint 1957 as Pelican Book A 377, p. 45.
6. *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 354 f. The English version is from F. Max Müller's translation, New York/London 1905, p. 288 f. (this is a reprint with alterations of the first edition of 1881).
7. *Meditatio III* : Dei nomine intelligo substantiam quandam infinitam, independentem, summe intelligentem, summe potentem, et qua tum ego ipse, tum aliud omne si quid aliud extat quod cunque extat, est creatum.

8. l'existence de Dieu...est la plus eternelle de toutes les vérités qui peuvent être, et la seule d'ou procèdent toutes les autres.
9. Atque ita plane video omnis scientiae certitudinem et veritatem ab una veri Dei cognitione pendere, adeo ut, priusquam illum nossem, nihil de ulla alia re perfecte scire potuerim.
10. Hoc fides Christiana nos docet; hocque etiam ratio naturalis plane persuadet (*Principia philosophiae*, III/45) : This teaches us the Christian belief; and of this our natural reasoning also obviously convinces us.
11. Reflection no. 140 (while working on the *Critique of Pure Reason*).
12. *Critique of Pure Reason*, Preface to 2nd edition (B XVI).
13. In his Introduction to E. Cassirer's *Kant's Life and Thought*, p. VIII.
14. 'Von der Amphibolie der Reflexionsbegriffe', Appendix to *Critique of Pure Reason*, Transcendental Analytic, A 260-292/B 316-349.
15. *Critique of Pure Reason*. A 260/B 376.
16. *Meditationes* III/25.
17. *Ibid.* V/7 and V/10 f.
18. *Ibid.* V/9-10.
19. *Ibid.* V/16.
20. See especially his correspondence with Leibniz and his *L'art de penser*, the classical handbook of Cartesianism, which Arnauld co-authored with Pierre Nicole.
21. See Gilson's *La philosophie au moyen age*, 2 vls., 1924 (The Philosophy of the Middle Ages), and Jean-Luc Marion's *Sur l'ontologie grise de Descartes*, 1975 (The Blurred Ontology of Descartes).
22. *Ibid.* III/45, where Descartes establishes a harmonious interconnection between the truths of philosophical thought and religious belief when he, with reference to the idea of theodicy, addresses this our world as the most perfect among all possible ones and assures us that of this we are convinced on the ground of the Christian

creed as well as on that of our inborn rational capability (*ratio naturalis/lumen naturale*).

23. See John R. Silber : 'The Copernican Revolution in Ethics', in *Kant-Studien* LI/1, 1959.
24. L. c., p. 425.
25. *Ibid.*, p.61. See also my *Das Problem der Affektion bei Kant*, Kölner Univ. Verlag, 1953, § 14 (on Heidegger's understanding of Kant).
26. In *Immanuel Kant. Proceedings of the Seminars in Calcutta and Madras*, 1974. As the then Director of Max Müller Bhavan Madras, I organised these Seminars in commemoration of Kant's 250th birth-anniversary, in co-operation with the Philosophy Departments of the Universities of Calcutta (September, 21st and 22nd) and Madras (December, 6th and 7th). The *Proceedings* were published in 1975 by MMB Madras (K. Goswami's essay pp.142-156). Among the participants were such wellknown Indian philosophical scholars as R. Balasubramaniam (Madras), Margaret Chatterjee (Delhi), Pritibhushan Chatterji (Calcutta), T. N. Ganapathy (Madras), R. K. Gupta (Delhi), N. S. S. Raman (Varanasi), and the young promising lecturer in Calcutta University Kumud Goswami, of whom I have lost track.

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