

MEDITATIONS ON METAPHYSICS
(Meditations sur la métaphysique)

ABBÉ DE LANION

Meditations sur la métaphysique was included by Pierre Bayle in his *Receuil de quelques pièces curieuses concernant la philosophie de Des Cartes*, Amsterdam, H. Desbordes, 1684. This work of Abbé de Lanion, was, however, published privately even earlier in 1678 in Paris under the pseudo-authorship of Guillaume Wander and circulated privately amongst the scholars of the times. The work evoked a great admiration from Leibnitz. In fact, Leibnitz at first thought that the author of that work was Malebranche. Refer to the letter dated 22nd June 1679 from Leibnitz to Malebranche and latter's response dated 31st July 1679. In his letter dated 4th August 1679 addressed to Malebranche, Leibnitz expressed his desire to know more about Lanion. This letter, it seems, brought to a close the second exchange of letters between them and we do not know if Malebranche ever wrote to Leibnitz to give any information about Lanion. See pages 121-130 of A. Robinet's *Malebranche et Leibnitz*, Paris, J. Vrin, 1955, for this interesting correspondence and the comments of Leibnitz on Lanion's work.

Very few biographical details are available on Lanion. He belonged to the latter half of the 17th century and early decades of the 18th. He was a mathematician and though a staunch disciple of Malebranche to begin with, his relations with Malebranche, it is said, were greatly estranged towards the end of the 17th Century.-

Translator.

Notice

One will possibly be surprised to see that someone ventures to undertake writing on metaphysics, especially after one of the most knowledgeable persons in the world has already worked on that subject and that too with great success. It is true the *Meditations* of Mr. Descartes ought to be regarded as one of the most splendid and useful works that have ever appeared, being full of admirable reasoning and of thoughts that are extremely just and solid. But it is also necessary to acknowledge that there are a few things in that work, which are

not so exact as one would expect them to be. If one takes the trouble of examining the said work even casually, one will not fail to agree with me that the author wished to establish and prove at many places, so many things at one time, that it is impossible for mind to follow them; that at other places, he uses the terms and the reasonings of the School in a manner that is so much so muddled and confused that one can hardly understand them; and lastly at many places, he advances such things as are either in need of better explanation or he has accepted them simply on faith. They will not be found to be tenable by those who will examine them closely.

I have no doubt at all that the zealous or ardent Cartesians will have great difficulty in admitting that which I come to say in the following pages. However, if they read carefully and with concern Descartes' *Meditations*, I believe that they will come to notice before long, that I am not so much mistaken as they are likely to think. But for those who follow Descartes only upto a point which one can follow without haste I am sure that they will be all on my side. I pray these people to read this small book with thoughtfulness and with cool deliberations with themselves althrough. Because as the subject that one deals with here is abstract and as one has to be brief in these matters for enabling mind to have time to compare that which it reads with that which reason dictates inwardly from within, those who will go through this writing only cursorily, will face trouble in comprehending the truths which one propounds here and will derive for themselves from such a reading very little benefit.

First Meditation

Since I feel that I am born free, I believe that for making a right use of my liberty, I ought to doubt everything until and unless entire evidence obliges me, inspite of myself, to accord my consent. It seems to me that I ought to doubt everything since I have often realised falsehoods amidst the things that I have already accepted as true and the most assured ones. Even though it appears to me at first to be absurd and ridiculous, I ought to doubt that these hands, these eyes and everything of my body which I have always regarded as a part of me-myself, exist in reality. For, being subjected to sleep, I have often believed to see during the sleep certain things as clearly and as distinctly, just as I see presently that I have legs, eyes and

a body, and in the meantime after I am awake, I come to realize that I was mistaken. Who will then let me know presently (i.e., when I am awake) that I am not mistaken at all when I assert that I have the legs, the eyes and a body-- that which I do not know at all as when I am asleep? After— all, the things that I see in dream affect me very sensitively and they even excite me, sometimes more than the things that I believe to see while I am awake.

I can also doubt each of the most simple things such as those that are extended in general, those that have quantity, those that are in space and in time, etc. and even the truths which one claims Arithmetics and Geometry to contain, then those that I have on hearsay; that there is God; i.e. to say, I know not what an all powerful Being is. For, what do I know if He does not Himself by giving me the sensations of all those things, (although in effect, this will mean that there is not anything which exists beside myself), He does not amuse Himself in deceiving me all the time, that I make calculations or that I solve the Problems?

I thus believe that for establishing certain things firmly and solidly in the sciences, I ought to doubt every-thing and pretend for the time being that all the opinions that I have come to possess upto this time, are false or uncertain.

Second Meditation

As I do not claim to doubt simply for the sake of doubting but for discovering some truth which I could not possibly doubt, I ought not to remain reposed and take pleasure in my doubting. But I ought to examine all the things, keeping in view the purpose of doubting them, so that amidst all the things, that I doubt, there is at least something which I should be obliged to recognize as existing despite all the efforts that I make to doubt them. Thereby I get myself out of all my doubts or if I find nothing of the sort after having them all fully examined, I shall get myself plainly convinced that there is nothing that is sure and certain.

I then assume further that the body, the figure, the extension and in general, everything that I come to know through the intervention of the senses, is only a fiction (i.e., invention) of my spirit. But wherefrom do those thoughts (ideas) come to me? Do they come from

God? But that is not necessary. Because possibly may I not be capable of producing them myself and, possibly, even, there is no God at all. Although I do not think a bit as to who their author is, nor of the manner in which they are produced, I cannot doubt that I perceive them. For perceiving however, it is necessary to be; there I am then sure of something, which is that I am. But what am I? I wish to examine myself for having knowledge about me myself, and for executing my design in a better way, I wish to doubt at the very outset, whether I am that which I have always believed myself to be.

I have believed uptil now that I am composed (constituted) of two parts; the one that I have named as body, or extended substance, and the other to which I have given the name— the soul, from where come the subtle and tender elements, spread in my more gross parts. But I have supposed that each of those things is really nothing, and without going beyond that supposition, I have found that I have existed, I can then believe that I exist independently of any of those things or I can doubt at least that any of those things belong to my nature.

It appears however that I have not made much of an advance in the knowledge of my nature; that is to say, of that which truly distinguishes me from every other thing. For, what is it that I am? A thing that thinks. But what is that thing which thinks, a thing which understands, conceives, affirms, denies, desires, does not desire, and which also imagines and feels? I am convinced through an internal sentiment that all those things (acts) take place in me and that all those are only different affections (ways or manners of expression) of me-myself or different modes of thinking. But it seems to me that I do not conceive clearly the nature of that which is in me, that which thinks, desires and feels etc. For, although I know my pain through sensation that I have, I can see that I do not know clearly at all, what its nature is, since I attribute it quite often to my body. Thus what else can I conclude from all that I have said so far, except that I see my existence with greater clarity and distinctness than ever before and that my own existence is more clearly known than the existence of bodies and that of any other being either? Since all the things are amidst those that I can doubt and as for me, who doubts, I am sure that I am, even through the fact that I doubt.

Third Meditation

I withdraw within and represent to myself that which I have learnt through the preceding Meditation. Right at the outset, I come to realize that its necessary for me to detach myself completely from senses, and raise as many doubts as is possible for me to do doubt everything. It is not however possible to doubt that I am and that I think. I know very well that to deny, to doubt, to affirm and even to imagine and to feel are only different sorts of thoughts which belong to me and which assure me of my own existence.

In fact, I know very little about those things; but by following the same path which has brought me to their knowledge, may be, I can discover some other truth. Here is the order that I had followed. At first I wished to doubt everything but came to see that I cannot doubt that I am. It is the same thing as to say that I have conceived clearly and distinctly that I exist. I can then admit as a principle: whatever I conceive clearly and distinctly is true and indubitable. I shall be able to make the same very principle to serve me as an infallible rule for finding out if there does not exist anything that is different from me myself.

I have judged that there are besides me, the actually existing beings on the basis of diverse thoughts that I have, which represent to me several things that appear to me to be very very different from me myself. Thus for finding out whether my judgments are true, I shall do well to divide all my thoughts into many different categories (kinds) and, consider if I can prove through them the existence of the things which they stand for.

I notice in me many different thoughts of which the principal ones are as the images of things or the objects that are immediate and the closest ones to my spirit, when I perceive some thing and it is to those alone that I give the name : *Ideas*. I get aware further in me of two other modes of thought; one is a certain impression or natural movement which draws me towards the things and towards the good in general— that is what I call as my will; and the other is in a word, a decision with regard to or adherence to some particular object; it is that which I call judgment and love (for that object).

I see clearly that amidst my ideas and volitions, considered in themselves and independent of other thing, there cannot be any error as such, for, were I to have an illusion or were I to desire for a thing which never existed, it is nevertheless always true that I imagine and that I desire.

It is only then in my individual judgment that one can trace the errors. The ones which I come across normally consist in that which I judge, for example, the idea that I have of a square, is similar to some other square which exists outside me, although it can happen that, that there isn't any square that exists in reality outside me.

And in order to know certainly if of all those ideas that I find in me, whether there isn't a single one from which I can conclude the existence of some thing distinguished from me I shall have to address myself carefully to consider them,

First of all, if I notice them all simply as the modes of my own being, I find that they are all similar but if I take into account those things which they represent to me, I see clearly and distinctly that they are very different. Because I cannot doubt that the idea which represents to me Being infinitely perfect should be quite different from that which represents to me a being, finite and limited or conditioned.

But wherefrom comes to me that idea? It is manifest through the natural light (insight) that there ought to be at least as much reality and the perfection in the cause from which it proceeds (comes) as in itself. For the same natural insight informs me that there ought to be as much reality in the efficient and total cause as in the effect since it cannot transpire that the more perfect should be a consequence of a less perfect and that a being which has, e.g. a cent percent reality or perfection, should be the effect of a cause which has 80% reality and perfection. Because in that case, it will necessarily happen that it has taken 20% of its reality and perfection from nothing.

I ought to then conclude from this principle that having in me the idea of a Being infinitely perfect, which could not have been assuredly formed by me since I am finite and conditioned, it is necessarily necessary that the infinitely perfect being exists. It is from him that I receive the idea of an infinity of perfections since it is necessary that there has to be as much reality in the cause as in the effect.

And as I understand by God the same as infinitely perfect being, from the fact that I have in me the idea of the infinite, I ought to conclude that God exists, for if he were not to exist, I would have to develop from nothing, the idea of an infinity of perfections and as for the idea of nothing, I do not find it in myself.

But as one could have the idea of any privation's (short-comings) only through the idea of perfections of which they are privations, I conceive infinite as a veritable idea and not through the negation of the finite. Thus the finite substance having more of reality than the finite substance, I have rather in me myself, the notion of the infinite than of the finite, that is to say, of God rather than of myself. For, I understand myself not as an all perfect being; that, because I have in me the idea of a being more perfect than me, I cannot have, as I shall come to say, idea of any privation, from the ideas of perfections of which it is a privation. But while I say that I have an idea of infinite, it's not that I wish to be understood as saying that I comprehend the infinite, that is to say, that I fully grasp in my thought all the properties of Infinite, since that is beyond the capacity my spirit which is finite. But I do conceive the Infinite, since all that I have of it by way of clear and distinct ideas, is entirely included in the idea of the Infinite.

Fourth Meditation

After I managed to doubt everything, I have been able thus far to assure myself only of my own existence and that of God or of a Being infinitely perfect. And as the idea of this infinite perfection has made me aware that there are several short-comings in me, I shall better examine with care the cause of my errors, before extending my knowledge any further.

For proceeding always in a systematic order and for passing step by step from things best known to the things least known, I distinguish within me two modes of my own being, the one I call understanding and the other, will; that is to say, in so far as I consider myself perceiving and receiving ideas and sensations, I call it understanding, and in so far I am drawn and directed towards those ideas, I name it as 'will'.

But I see clearly that my understanding cannot be the cause

of my errors and that on many occasions, when I simply perceive certain ideas which present themselves to me without there being any comparisons, whatsoever at the moment, I cannot be mistaken at all. For, I cannot perceive them as having relations, which they don't possess. It's only when I judge that the ideas have certain relations which they do not in fact have, that I am mistaken. Thus I am deprived of some clear sensations that I could have had if I make in haste my judgement on same ideas present to me without allowing myself any leisure for taking into account different sides of the things represented, for getting to know the relations among them. Lack of any direct evidence, then forces me to accord my consent (to erroneous judgment).

Finally, I ought to establish as a principle a general rule, that in order to avoid any error, I ought to judge things only when they are represented to me so clearly and so distinctly through understanding that it should be no more in my power to withhold my consent.

Fifth Meditation

God being an infinitely perfect being, I shall not undertake to consider each of his perfections in particular, because, for doing it, there will have to be an infinite capacity in my spirit, which I do not have. Thus I believe that I shall do well to address myself to the subjects that are reasonably within my powers and not to postpone any more my efforts to get out of all the doubts in which my first *Meditation* has placed me.

I have in me ideas that are clear and also those that are confused; I have a clear idea when I perceive distinctly the realations which it has with one or more other ideas. And I have a confused idea when I know imperfectly those realtions. Such is for example, the awareness of me myself, which I had uptill now through the internal sentiment and not through any clear idea since I don't have any idea of my thought.

But it is not the same in respect of the idea that I have of the extension in length, width and depth because I see everything in one view and without having any knowlege other than the properties of being moved, figured, measured etc. as belonging to it. That appears

to me with such evidence, that it is not within my power not to believe it, although I do not at all think that there exists some extended substance outside me. For, everything that I conceive clearly and distinctly as appertaining to a thing belongs to Him in effect and although I cannot infer existence of the extension from that of which I have a clear and distinct idea, the judgment, however, which I come to make, that the properties of being moved, figured and measured etc. appertain to the extension, through which alone I conceive clearly and distinctly that they belong to Him, this judgement, I say, serves still further for me to prove the existence of God. Because the existence appears to me so evidently included in the idea that I have of the infinitely perfect being, that the length, breadth and depth or the properties of being moved, figured etc. are contained in the idea of extension. Since the existence is a perfection, it is necessarily included in Him who has them all (i.e., all perfection's) and that which makes this demonstration invincible comes not from me who am conditioned and finite— I cannot be the author of that idea which I have of the Infinite Being— as I have proved already in the third *Meditation*. Further, since the essence and the existence of the infinitely perfect being, cannot be conceived, one without the other, —from the sole fact that I have the idea of the infinitely perfect being, I cannot escape myself from the conclusion regarding His existence. In the other case, I can very clearly conceive the extension in length, breadth and depth without forcing myself to conclude it's existence, because the essence and the existence of extension could be conceived separately.

Sixth Meditation

I have convinced myself in the preceding *Meditation* that from the clear and distinct idea of extension that I have, I cannot infer its existence (outside).

I also see quite clearly that I cannot infer the existence of any thing (outside), which my ideas represent to me, if one makes the only exception of the existence of an infinitely perfect being. It is certain that I am not at all the author of my ideas since they often come to me in my spirit against my will (literally, 'in spite of myself'). They are not any more produced in me by the physical objects (bodies), that surround me. Because I don't think that the extension, whether round or square, or figured in some other manner, can have in itself

the ability to render itself intelligible and to make itself sensible to my spirit. It has to be therefore necessarily God, that is to say, an intelligent and infinitely powerful Being should be the source and origin of all my ideas. That being the case, can He not place in me all ideas without there being objects in reality—the objects which the ideas represent. It is true I have initially some difficulty in believing that; because it appears to me that I could accuse Him of deception, of giving me thus the ideas which represent certain things as existing outside me, when in reality they do not exist at all. But when I come to reflect in the idea of the Sun that I have or on the object that is immediate and nearest to my spirit when I see the Sun, I find that it differs entirely from me myself, since I very well sense that I am not the Sun that I see. I also consider that that idea is not the Sun which lights up the world; since the immediate object of my spirit, ought to be intelligible, and however, that which is there is material; I am obliged to believe that everything that I see is of the same kind that I see it; that is to say, of an intelligible kind in the substance of God himself. Thus instead of calling God as a deceiver because it's He who gives me the ideas of all the things, I ought to accuse myself of an error for having judged with too much of haste that there existed external to me some thing other than Him.

Nevertheless there's a good appearance that the extension does exist external to me, —although I cannot present an absolute proof of that. For, everything which the Nature intimates to me, either through instinct or otherwise, contains in itself some truth since by Nature, I do not understand anything else than the God himself, acting through his creatures. Now, the nature seems to inform me that I am united to a body, that is to say, I have very close relations with a certain extended substance, which is well or ill disposed when I experience pleasure or pain; that the same nature further seems to make me believe that there are several other bodies which environ me and whose continuous existence or pursuit is necessary for the conservation of my life. It is then highly probable that the extended substance exists external to me in a manner that my idea represents to me.

It is true that I have heard people saying that the nature excites certain patients called 'hydropiques' to drink although it would be entirely harmful to them. It is better that I should not add anything of my

own to that which nature intimates to me, since that could sometimes mislead (deceive) me. But it is of great grandure and of great wisdom on the part of God to act always through the most simple ways, and to make least number of laws (decrees), which is of course within His power, Besides that, He is obliged to exercise His will for the conservation of my body, so that whenever He excites on His own certain movements in my throat, it's enough for me to find something to drink. It could however happen, that for executing his decrees and following the laws which He has Himself imposed, He will be obliged to excite in me the thirst-sensation at a time when for the conservation of my body, it would be dangerous to drink. Were it not for that, I could accuse Him of injustice and deception; because, being the general and universal cause He ought not to have particular acts or will in respect of all the particular cases.

I ought to take note however that all my sensations which appear to be produced in me alone, on occasions when I have different modes of Extension, serve me more to prove the existence of God than that of the Extension. For, all my sensations are only different modifications of me myself; I feel that they belong to me and that I know them only through interior sentiment and not through any clear idea as such. Now, they are not produced in me by myself. Because if I were to produce them myself, I should produce always only those that are agreeable to me and those which would always make me happy. They do not however come from exterior objects either, since it would necessitate that they (i.e., external objects) exercise some force to make me happy or unhappy, which force, I fail to notice in me myself. It is necessary then God should be their Author as being the only one who can create my felicity. Thus my sensations prove to me very clearly that God exists and prove the existence of external objects only in the most imperfect manner. Since God always acts through the most simple ways; and since He is the immediate cause of all modification's in me, I am inclined to think that it would be too long a detour for that infinitely wise Being to create first extended bodies in order to give me sensation's, which they could not produce on their own. Thus it is not absolutely necessary, that the extension (i.e., external material world) exists.

I shouldn't any more conclude that extension exists thinking that I could myself be such an extended substance. Because it is enough

that I can clearly and distinctly conceive one thing from the other, in order to be certain that one is distinct and different from the other. Thus in the same way, I conceive with certainty that I exist and although I do not notice at all that nothing except thought alone belongs necessarily to my essence or to my nature, I conclude very well that my essence consists in that alone; that I am a thing which thinks. Although possibly it can happen that there exists some extended body to which I have a particular relation, nonetheless, because on the one hand I do not have at all any clear idea of myself but only an interior sentiment that assures me that I am a thing which thinks and not an extended substance, and on the other hand I have a clear and distinct idea of body such that it's only an extended object which does not think at all, it is certain that myself, that is to say, my spirit, or my soul through which I am what I am, is entirely and truly distinct from my body.

In the end, when I consider myself as a substance that thinks, I cannot distinguish within me myself, either length or width, or depth, I conceive however that I am a thing absolutely and entirely one and that feeling and willing are not at all different parts of my being, since it is always the same spirit in me which applies itself entirely in willing, as also in feeling. But that is not the case with extended object. For I cannot imagine anything (extended), howsoever small it may be, which my spirit cannot divide very easily into many parts and consequently cannot conceive any thing that would make difference with its nature.

I can then presently conclude from all that I have come to say so far, that it's impossible for me to demonstrate the existence of Extension; and that we are naturally disposed to believe that there are very few things of which we have most certain and evident knowledge.

Seventh Meditation

I have known everything I could possibly know, for surpassing the doubts which my first *Meditation* had flung me into. But the more I enforce myself to find a demonstration for the existence of Extension, the more I get myself convinced that it's an enterprise beyond my capabilities. For, when I come to consider that whatever I see ought to be intelligible or rather that I can only see the

substance of God alone, as representing that which I see, and that God, having only a very few decess, ought always to act through the shortest and simplest ways, and further, that it is He who gives me directly all my thoughts, all my ideas and all my sensatons, I see so little of a connection between the manner in which, it appears to me, God ought to act and the long detour which it would be necessary for him to take in creating extension first and then causing me to see it, that I ought to accuse myself of imprudence for having judged formerly that there existed external to me some reality other than God and of persistent stubbornness for having held the view that there do exist extended bodies a view which I find it extremely painful to desert. So even the faith which is beyond my reason does not ordain me to believe in the existence of extended substance.

Further, God being infinitely good and essentially lovable, has created me only for loving Him, not however for the love that is compulsive and motivated by some (self) interest but for love that is free and worthy of Himself. Thus when He makes me to have agreeable sensations, it is with the intention that I should love Him with love of choice, giving up the pleasure that I find in the sensations, thus detaching me from myself for attaining unity with Him. I wish to say that God, having given me enough of impulse for getting closer to Him, further being omnipresent and entirely benevolent, has nevertheless permitted me to have the ability to repose myself if the sensible and particular goods, so that I could avail myself fully of that impulse for reaching out to Him at times when I can withhold myself from pursuits of those other goods. I can certainly prefer Him to those goods and love Him consequently from the love of choice. Likewise, without assuming any extension as such, it is not difficult to explain why God gives me all my sensations.

Eighth Meditation

While I address myself to consider the Extension, I do not extend very much my knowledge about it, since I cannot be sure myself of its existence. I believe that I shall better reflect on myself and regard me as a pure spirit having no relation whatsoever with any body. So I do not know at all if there do exist any beings similar to me, nor do I know if my own spirit will or will not be annihilated some day.

I do not know through any idea that there exist spirits different from that of mine because I do not have any ideas of spirits. If I were to see in God, the ideas which respond to those spirits, I would know them immediately or I would know all the properties which they are capable of having. I do not know any more the spirits by themselves; for, I cannot conceive that there is some being other than God, which penetrates my spirit and which exposes itself to Him. I cannot also know through an internal sentiment or through consciousness, existence of spirits other than mine, because there is me alone, whom I can know in that manner and I can sense only that which belongs to me. It is then only through conjecture that I can judge that there exist spirits outside me. And that which makes me conjecture that they exist, it's because on some occasions, thoughts which are not the results of my will's participation, do reach me; they are accompanied by certain sensations which I call sounds, of which I am not the cause or occasion and which appear to me to have such rapport and liaison with my own thoughts that they respond to them exactly. It is true that God could directly and all alone by Himself, undertake the exchange of those thoughts with my spirit. But those thoughts are such that they naturally induce me to believe that there is some spirit similar to that of mine, which has conceived those thoughts and which has decided that they be communicated (or transmitted) to me fully.

Next, it only remains for me to examine now if my spirit and all others that I guess to exist are immortal; that is to say, whether they would not change at all some day their form or whether they will not be completely annihilated. On this question, I would like to note carefully that my spirit is not extended at all since I can know with certainty that I exist and that I do not at all notice that something other than thought belongs necessarily to my essence or to my nature. There isn't any extension in me; neither length, nor breadth, not depth; and consequently I am not at all composed of parts, so that I shall never have any change of form. I can conceive change of form only through the separation of parts, which the spirit is not capable of having.

I will not be annihilated either; for, if I were at first to take into account the forces of nature, I do not understand how it can come to happen naturally that something becomes nothing. Similarly, I cannot think

that it should be naturally possible that nothing can become something. For if there is an infinitely Perfect and Powerful Being, who can create all the things through a single act of volition, I cannot conceive through which force, myself and all other finite spirits that exist presently, could be annihilated, since for annihilation, it is necessary to have an infinite force, as powerful as for creating them.

When I say that I do not understand how that can come to happen in the course of nature, I do not believe that those who will contemplate with me on that issue, will conceive any thing more than what I have done. Because, in the end, many of the small changes that take place in nature are not the events of destruction, as may be believed by those who observe the things only superficially. It needs a bit of concentration to see that the fire to which one puts a log of wood will make it reduce to particles, make them subtle and change their figure only.

The things, because of all the reasons that I come to adduce, could not then be destroyed through the forces of the nature; it is necessary that there is God alone, that is to say, an Infinitely Powerful Being, who alone has that power. Now it is not apparent that God who is so immutable in his decrees should create something to destroy it. For, He extricates from nothing, spirits alone to enable them to love Him, and bodies only for manifesting His glory. Since He is lovable for ever, and also worthy of glory, why should He annihilate the beings that are capable of loving Him? And why should He destroy the creatures who ought to work eternally for ever, to make his grandure and power spread all over? And for annihilating them, will it not require that He was capable of change? Will it not be necessary that He should repent himself for having created the beings? This is certainly not conceivable in respect of God.

Ninth Meditation

As I have tried as much as it's possible for me, to lead my thoughts in orderly manner and without stepping aside from the same path, I have satisfied myself on the majority of abstract metaphysical questions; I believe that it will be easier for me to solve those questions which depend on them; for example, I can discover without much difficulty whether the beasts have soul.

But as ambiguities are often the cause of my mistakes, I believe that it is in the fitness of things to explain the word 'soul'. By 'soul' I understand something corporeal spread entirely over the body which gives it the movement and the life, or else understand something that is spiritual. There are then two things to be examined in respect of that question. The first thing to know is whether the soul of the beasts is solely something corporeal spread in the whole body which gives it the movement and the life or whether the soul of the beasts is something spiritual like the one that I sense in me myself.

I see at first that I cannot deny to the beasts something corporeal which should be the principle of their life or of their movements since I cannot deny that even in respect of monsters. But I see nothing in the beasts which should enable them to feel pain or some pleasure, to see colours and to understand the sounds.

For example, when I am near the fire, the particles of wood come to impinge on my hand, they set in motion the nerve-fibres, the stimulation is carried upto the brain which in turn determines the animal-spirits that are there to spread all over in the exterior parts of the body, in a manner suitable for the withdrawal of hand and then those in the heart and the viscera, in a manner necessary for placing the body in a disposition which it should have through its relation to the object that is present. I see well that all those things or similar ones can be encountered in respect of animals. They are truly encountered in them because all those things are the properties of bodies. Coming to the stimulation of the fibres of my brain which is accompanied by sensation of heat and to the course of animal spirits towards the heart and towards the viscera which is followed by the passion of hatred or aversion, I see nothing of the sort in the beasts which compells me to believe that they feel heat, as good as I feel it and that they have like me, aversion for things which cause them discomfort. Nor are they capable of all the passions that we resent. For, I see clearly that the beasts do not feel pain or pleasure; they neither love nor hate anything. Uptil now, I have not conceded anything like that, in respect of matter and I do not think that those sentiments, nor those passions, should be the properties of matter so as to affect its nature. For, if I think within and consider with all the attention I am capable of, the idea that I have of the matter, I do not conceive at all that the matter figured in a particular

manner such as, square, round or oval, should be in pain or in pleasure, hot or coloured, or should have odour or sound. I cannot be sure that the soul of the beasts which is only pure matter should be capable of sensing and as I cannot conceive that, I do not wish to assure that as well. I ought to assure only that which I can conceive. Thus, just as I do not conceive of the matter stirred up from low to high and from high to low in circular, spiral, parabolic or in elliptical lines, to have love, hatred, joy or grief, I believe that I am obliged to assume that the beasts do not have the same passions as those of mine and when I further consider with some more attention the ideas of matter that I have, I do not think at all that the movement of matter could be a love, or a joy or a desire; a trace or an image which the spirits form in the brain; or that it should be a thought. I do not conceive at all that all my reasonings should consist of only different arrangements of small bodies which occur by themselves diversely in my head.

But possibly, the soul of the beasts is spiritual and indivisible as that of mine. Is it not the case that dogs do know their masters? They do give them the signs of friendship; they also do suffer with patience the blows which they receive from them, because they judge that it is to their advantage not to miss them at all. While the cats, which are really inobedient animals, cannot enjoy fondling by the strangers do accustom themselves to live with their masters and treat with fondness those who take their care. The birds who make their nests with some skill on the end portions of branches, show enough signs of understanding that certain animals do not destroy them. Aren't there just those spiders and smaller insects which give the signs that they have some intelligence which animates them? One cannot prevent oneself from admitting the behaviour of animals to be intelligent, although totally blind, yet it finds a way of overtaking others that have eyes and from whom even the big ones cannot seek self-protection.

After all these convincing proofs, I cannot deny that the movements of beasts reveal that they have intelligence. Because everything is regulated as a marker— a watch is also a marker— it is impossible that there should be any chance element in composing the wheels; it is necessary that there should be an intelligence which has regulated their movements. The plants also reveal intelligence; they get themselves tied up in knots at intervening places for protecting themselves; they cover their

seed by sharp thorns and by a skin for conserving it. Thus everything that happens to the plants and beasts certainly reveals intelligence.

But it is still necessary to avoid ambiguity. The movements of matter mark an intelligence; but an intelligence that is distinguished from the matter and the beasts just as the one who arranges wheels of a watch is distinguished from the watch itself. Because in the end, that intelligence appears infinitely wise, infinitely adroit, infinitely powerful—the same which forms my body in the womb of my mother and which gives me further growth to which some effort that I make really adds nothing.

Thus, in the dogs, cats, and other animals, there is neither intelligence, nor soul, contrary to one's normal supposition. They eat without pleasure; they scream without pain; they cross without any awareness of it; they have desire for nothing; they do not know anything; and if they act with any skill and in a manner which reveals intelligence, it is that God who designed them like that for their conservation. He has adjusted their bodies in such a way that they evince mechanically without knowledge of that which is capable of destroying them and that which they seem to fear. Otherwise, it would be necessary to say that there is more of intelligence in the smallest of animals, or even in a single plant than in the most spiritual of the men. Because it is certain that they have more of different parts and that they produce more of regulatory movements than I am capable of knowing. I ought not to be surprised to see that God makes those machines to act in a manner which is highly regular. I am convinced that He works out in me as well, things that are more surprising, and that which presents to me so much of difficulty in persuading myself that the beasts are pure machines, comes from the fact that I have always believed that my soul produces in my body all the movements and all the changes which occur in it. I had falsely associated with the word 'soul', the idea of production and of the conservation of body, imagining to myself that my soul ought to produce in me all that is absolutely necessary to the conservation of my life. Thus I had judged that it would be absolutely necessary, that there has to be in the beasts a soul for producing in them all the movements and all the changes that occur in them, which are quite similar to those which God causes in our body, because we are entirely similar to them in respect of body. But since I have recognized that soul

in itself does not have any action, any power, any movement, and that it does not even know how the body to which it is united is made, nor in the least how its own movements come to occur, I see very clearly that it would be useless and even ridiculous to attribute to beasts a soul for explaining all the movements which we observe in those machines. Even if the spiritual and thinking substances were to be united to those machines, it would still be necessary to take recourse to God for explaining all their movements.

Why then attach to those small bodies the spiritual and immaterial souls capable of love of God, born for being eternally happy or unhappy and what reasons do we have to believe that they exist? I cannot affirm that there is some other thinking substance in the world although I am certain that I think. I do not know through any idea that there exist spirits different from mine, since I do not have any idea of spirits, and if I see in God the idea which responds to those spirits, I would at once know the properties of which they are capable. I do not know any more the spirits by themselves either. For, I cannot conceive that there is some being other than God who penetrates my spirit and who thus exposes itself to me. I cannot know either through interior sentiment or through consciousness itself the existence of spirits other than mine; because there is only me whom I can know in that manner and I can sense only that which belongs to me. It is only through conjecture that I can judge that there exist the spirits outside me and that which leads me to conjecture to that effect is that on some occasions, thoughts come to me from outside to which my volition is not a party at all. These thoughts are accompanied by certain sensations, which I call sounds, which are not caused by me at all. They appear to me to have such a rapport and such a liaison with my own thoughts that they respond to them exactly and those thoughts are such that they bring me naturally to believe that there is some spirit similar to that of mine, which has conceived them, intending that they be communicated to me. But if I withdraw within myself and consult my inner self for finding out if the beasts think, I see evidently that I do not have at all with them the liaison of thoughts, nor of any long chain of reasonings, since I perceive in them only certain external signs which appear to me to come from God for the conservation of those machines. Thus nothing leads me invincibly to judge that they are thinking beings. I can very well

conceive that God can move beasts in all those manners in which they appear to me to be moved, without there being any need for Him to unite those machines with the spiritual and thinking beings; since in my own respect, though united to a body, I do not know how the body is made, nor how God produces in me the slightest of those movements.

Tenth Meditation

The more I meditate on thinking-nature of my own, the more am I convinced that I am entirely and absolutely dependent upon God. And it follows so evidently from the preceding *Meditations*, that I have in me myself, neither action, nor movement, that it is not possible for me to doubt my absolute dependence on God. For, I have neither any impulse, nor any inclination towards any object, either general or particular, except those which come to me from God. I cannot know any object if the God does not make it known to me. All the thoughts that I have presently, the ones which I now meditate upon, and generally all those which occur in my spirit, come to me directly from God. I comprehend only such ideas as are presented to me by Him and those alone He makes me comprehend. And as I have already proved elsewhere, if I were to give myself my thoughts and my ideas I would give me only those that are agreeable since I am always carried towards only that which can make me happy. I do not conceive that some one other than God can be the efficient and total cause, i.e., the source and the origin of my thoughts and ideas. If that were the case, He would Himself alone can make it that some being other than Him can alone be my bliss and happiness—which is of course not conceivable. I add to this that which is represented to me through my ideas nothing else than the substance of the same God. This I have proved elsewhere. It would then be necessary that all my ideas and all my thoughts come to me directly from Him and that He should be their only author. Thus since I cannot act on my own, i.e., I cannot form for myself any determinate thought, neither to represent to myself the idea of any determinate being; nor to understand it, nor consequently to have any impulsion towards some object, if God were not to bring about all those things in me. Am I not for myself, without action and without movement, and can I not compare myself to a block of marble which is disposed to receive

all the different figures which the sculptor wishes to give it and which is incapable on its own to give to itself any one of those figures?

But what about that which appears to me be clear and evident? It has always appeared to me that I was free. It is an opinion which I have held firmly since my childhood; that is to say, I have always believed that I had the power to will certain things or not to will them—to do them or not to do them. I have been at least believing that I am not at all invincibly forced to do them or not to do them. I have so often got myself disturbed on that question that I do not believe to find any other subject that is more worthy of contemplation.

My volition, as I have already defined, is an impression or an impulse which God has put in me through which He drives me towards Himself as being my Supreme Good and whole Being. Now, it is evident that I ought to follow that impression or impulse necessarily, since it comes to me from God and it is not conceivable that I myself, who do not have even the slightest force to act on my own, could have the force to resist the impressions and impulses which come to me from Him. It then only remains to be known further if I am induced likewise to love the particular objects or goods.

God has given me an impression and an impulse for moving towards Him as being Supreme Good and Whole Being, and it is this which I call volition (will), as a consequence of which He gives me the idea of particular goods. It is thus through the same impression by which I am driven towards the good in general, that I am also driven towards particular good. Upto this, I have admitted nothing that does not come from God. Now, it would be necessary for being free in the sense in which one understands that word in the School—that is to say, a choice made with indifference—that I do not follow the impression which God has given me and gives me without gap, and that I make an effort on my own to prevent myself from a certain particular good rather than from some other. But where from should I have that impulse? Since in me myself, I have neither any action nor any impulse, I am simply a subject disposed to receive all the impressions from the Author of the Nature. Nevertheless action would be necessary and impulse also, to prevent me from the course of impressions which God gives me and to consider a particular good. It would be necessary to have a force to determine for me a particular

good rather than an another one. But how can that force emerge on its own? I have in me neither any action, nor any movement. I cannot even know by myself any particular good, nor can I have an idea of it by myself. I cannot even think of it myself; the impulsion that I have in me towards it, comes to me from God, since all that which is in me comes directly from God.

Thus, how can I stop myself from considering particular goods if God drives me towards them? If that be the decree of God, I cannot go against His Will which makes the order. Wherefrom have I to draw the force to prefer certain particular goods to the others and how to conceive that the force of human will is greater than that of the Divine? If for warding off any determination it would be necessary to have force to hamper its duration and conservation, how can the force of human will ward off the smallest of His impressions? It is a divine operation to change the state of one thing and to replace it by an another one and to conserve the same.

Nevertheless, because I feel inwardly within me that I am free from all sorts of hindrances in respect of that which I wish to do or in respect of that which I desire, that is to say, because I feel that I do only that which I wish, I am constrained to aver that I am free, or which is the same thing, that God only drives me invincibly towards the particular goods, which makes me desire them. That is to say, I sense inwardly within me that God does not cause me at all to love particular good, that he does not at the same time push me towards the particular good, or which is the same thing, He does not force me to love willingly any particular good. Thus, I ought not to be surprised at all if I sense within me inwardly that I am not constrained or refrained from any of my actions, since God accords my will with my actions always. With His Will, He enables me to will always everything that He causes me to do.

Finally, the impression that God gives me about the Supreme Good and the Total Being which in turn makes my will, serves to enable me to know that I am not invincibly carried to the particular goods. For example, if God gives me an idea of a particular good, viz., A, and an idea of an another good, viz., B, and if in the good A there is four degrees of perfection and in the good B, there is only two degrees, then it is indubitable that God will impell me

infallibly towards the good A, rather than towards the good B, because the good A approaches nearer to the good in general; the Supreme Good and the Total Being-- than the good B, since there are more degrees of perfection in the one than in the other; though however, I should not have been invincibly carried towards one or the other, since neither one nor other is the Supreme Good and Whole Being. The impression which God gives me only impels me invincibly towards that which is Supreme Good and Whole Being. If God comes to give me the ideas of two equal goods and if I am not invincibly compelled to choose the one, nor the other since neither one nor the other is Supreme Good and Whole Being, I feel within myself that as a consequence of the impression that I have for attaining the Supreme Good and Whole Being, God will make me hesitate in the choice of one or of the other without enforcing compulsion for one or the other. Thus I am well aware that the God will allow me the power to choose and to make use of my liberty and that through the impression, the movement and the action which He gives me for realising the total good and the whole Being, I shall have enough action for choosing one or the other of those particular goods.

Nevertheless, all that I have come to advance is not without some or the other difficulty. For, afterall, how can I prevent myself from pursuing a particular good—me who have the impulse of attaining the Supreme Good and the Whole Being? How not to follow that impulse and how to prevent myself from a particular good at the moment when God is driving me on to Supreme Good and whole Being? But do I not feel inwardly that at a time when I prevent myself from a particular good, I have some impulse for going further and that I am not compulsively driven towards the particular good? The particular good is not the Supreme good and I am compulsorily driven only towards that which is Supreme and Universal Good.

Finally, I have some difficulty in understanding how in respect of myself, I who am without action and without impulse, can stop myself from pursuing a particular good. But it is enough to notice that I sense within myself a power to get myself convinced on that point.

However, when God gives me the idea of two particular goods that gets me driven neither towards one nor towards other, I am strongly

inclined to believe that I cannot choose one, nor the other, because left to myself, I can do nothing. But I ought to follow always the impulse and the impression which God gives me for moving towards the Supreme Good and the Whole Being, which impression is however invincible. For the same reason persuades me still that I can act only when I am invincibly driven towards some particular good, If I were not driven towards some particular good, I would not ever choose anything. Myself being without action and without any impulse, I can do nothing on my own. Should I not believe in this respect my own internal sentiment which is stronger than the most solid reasonings in the world and which suffices for convincing me that I can hesitate in the choice of two particular goods? We haven't any proof stronger than the one which comes to us through the internal sentiment. Thus, just as in respect of that which I feel as cold and as hot, I cannot deny that it is me who am cold and hot, red and green and I conclude very well that it is me, that is to say, my soul that is cold and hot, red and green, inspite of some difficulty that I have in convincing myself about it. Similarly, in respect of that which I sense in me, that I can hesitate concerning the choice of particular goods when they are of equal worth, I conclude very well that I am free, whatever reason I may have to persuade myself to the contrary.

[All these Meditations which are originally in French, are translated by S. V. Bokil.]