Re-grounding the *Cogito*: Descartes and the Problem of the Baroque

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Abstract:

The dissertation offers a historically-based critique of the foundations of modernity in view of the truth claims it struggled to articulate and which continue to dominate the West.At the very core of this problem are the natural sciences, and it is from them that the dominant definition of truth in modernity emanates. Since the entrenchment of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, this definition has extended into an entire "worldview" occasioning and determining the modern mode of existence. I argue that to understand the modern foundation of science and truth (and by extension, medicine and all theoretically grounded bodies of knowledge), it is necessary to turn once again to Descartes' seminal role in the histories of philosophy and science. Recognizing Descartes' philosophy as a conceptual point of departure, I give a critical re-reading of his formulation of the *Ego cogito-ego sum* not only within the internal history of metaphysics (of which science is a part), but as a cultural-historical phenomenon. I further argue that the turn to the *Cogito*, from which the broader notion of subjectivity derives, can be understood only via the cultural horizon of the Baroque within which the *Cogito*'s criterion for meaning, significance and truth found the conditions of possibility for full expression, which moreover, established the foundation for the natural sciences.

By raising the problem of subjectivity (via the *Cogito*), along with its specific criterion for truth, I am raising the related problem of self-conception. The Baroque is a fascinatingly rich and creative cultural epoch, and reveals a number of possibilities for self-conception, as one may find, for example, in the sonnets of Shakespeare, the essays of Montaigne, and the respective "autobiographies" of Loyola and Cardano. These examples attest to the confusion and richness of such terms as: "*subiectum*", "self", "*anima*", "*spiritus*", "consciousness", "persona", etc., which exist not only during the Baroque epoch, but endure into all subsequent historical periods,

including our own. The powerful move facilitated by the *Cogito* formulation, namely the laying out of a foundation of mathematical order from which a universal science may be derived, had far-ranging and deeply penetrating implications for the modern conception of self.

On the one hand, the *Cogito* formulation effectively stabilized the variously and inwardly directed, but as yet, not strictly subjectivist conceptions of self in the early modern period, while on the other hand, it reduced selfhood to a mere abstraction. The attempt to define a self on the basis of strict theoretical terms brings forth a number of problems, not least of all the false division between subject and object (on which the sciences operate) and a perpetuation of the confusion of the terms self and subject, self and consciousness, etc. Yet, even more problematically, the *Cogito*'s legitimating criterion for truth creates in its train an inauthentic orientation of self to world as well as poses serious challenges to the possibility of being fully human in the modern world.

To my brother, Brennan, who in offering a valuable and different perspective has always—in particular and decisive ways—grounded me as a scholar.

To my advisor, Benjamin C. Sax, who taught me to think historically, to love and honor the tradition, and to understand the importance of being its worthy and dutiful heir.

To my friend, Art, whose patience and support have sustained me.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

The dissertation offers a historically-based critique of the foundations of modernity, which it does in view of the truth claims that modernity has striven to articulate, and that continue to dominate the West. At the very core of this problem are the natural sciences, and it is from them that the dominant definition of truth in modernity emanates. Since the entrenchment of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, this definition has extended into an entire worldview occasioning and determining the modern mode of existence. Indeed, it was Locke who provided the Enlightenment with an explicit method, which depended fundamentally upon the Cartesian subject, and which the likes of d'Alembert, Diderot and others fully exploited in their attempts to re-conceive knowledge and "to change the common way of thinking."[1]

To understand the modern foundation of truth—as exemplified most powerfully in the triumph of the natural sciences—it is necessary to turn once again to Descartes' seminal role in the histories of philosophy and science, and specifically his formulation of the *Cogito*. Descartes articulated most forcefully the notion of subjectivity—i.e., the *Cogito* or a consciousness thinking itself—in the mature works of the *Discourse* (1637) and the *Meditations* (1641). In doing so, he drove home what would become a decisive moment in the history of Western thought. These texts, which have long been established as canonical in the history of modern thought, serve as the conceptual point of departure from which to advance this critique.

What I offer here is a critical re-reading of the formulation, *Ego cogito—ego (existo)* along with its attendant assumptions. It must be said from the outset that many of these assumptions, if not all, undergird modernity. These assumptions are several and hinge upon a

[1] See the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and the homage given to it in d'Alembert's *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia.* Also, Diderot's entry, "Encyclopedia," outlines the goals of the Enlightenment project as one of utility, technology, and universality.

core set of Enlightenment "values" that privilege, if also unthoughtfully, such things as science, the economy, equality and democracy, etc. In their various forms, the expression of these assumptions reveals in a very complex way how foundational the *Cogito* has been (and continues to be) in determining the modern conception of truth as well as human existence in relation to it. Framing the problem of modernity is a difficult one, and yet the question of the autonomous individual (making his way within the moral universe) seems to be both fundamental and crucial to this problem. The world is in many ways validated by the experience of the individual in terms of thoughts, feelings, and indeed, a general disposition to the world in most every sphere of activity. And yet, the autonomous individual exists within a rationalized world that has determined in advance the limits of activity and, indeed the manner and extent of the expressive potential from which an individual may truly *be* an individual. Chapter 1 thus endeavors to explore the question of the autonomous individual as fundamental to the problem of modernity as I define it in the dissertation. To this end, it is necessary to engage with some of the post-modern criticism deployed in relation to the question of individualism. Though there is very little disagreement as to the nature and extent of this problem, I want to nuance the question more in terms of its historical and cultural foundations. The overriding assumption of the chapter is that we continue to be shaped by the Enlightenment's values and suppositions, which are at the very core Cartesian.

Indeed, the realization of an array of Enlightenment truths, as with those underpinning the autonomy of the individual and the progressive nature of truth, in large part depend upon modernity's understanding of having affected a decisive break with its past. To the modern mind such a break makes way for a triumphantly optimistic future. In this sense, the *Cogito* as well as the sciences that generate from it are intrinsically ahistorical. To discover the import and

significance of the *Cogito* as it appears in the mature works of the *Discourse* and the *Mediations*—and by extension the course that modernity set for itself—it must be read against these assumptions to explore the conditions of possibility that at once "ground" the *Cogito* and allow it full expression. Such a reading depends, moreover, that the *Cogito* be confronted fundamentally as a cultural-historical problem. As a cultural historical problem, we are emphatically not raising the question of the *Cogito* as a problem of philosophy, or the history of ideas or even a more broadly defined intellectual history.

As a cultural history, we present "culture" as a heuristic device. As a heuristic, cultures allow historians to raise the question of meaning as well as how meanings are created in relation to truths; or how meanings harmonize, or conflict or coincide dynamically within the realm of moral action. For the purposes of this study, cultures are not understood in terms of "high" or "low" culture, but are inclusive of the entire range of human activity expressed by it—thus cultures must be viewed as realms of moral action. And as we are concerned primarily with a question of meaning, it should be said that cultures emerge within a "horizon" of meaning, which is another heuristic device that allows us to understand the dynamics among the various claims to meaning that manifest within a culture, and especially how one claim may come to dominance over others. Yet, beyond this, the horizon allows us to comprehend the culture as a meaningful whole, and within it the various cultural forms that express that meaning.

A cultural-historical approach to the problem of modernity thus presupposes in the first instance the *Cogito's* situation within a horizon of meaning; and that the *Cogito* is itself a meaningful expression within the horizon itself. The dynamic within this horizon, which in the seventeenth century is both formative and unstable, is integral to understanding the manifestation of a Baroque culture as I attempt to define it. In particular, within this dynamic emerges a

historically unique understanding of "psychological" interiority, which not only depends upon a core-set of values, but also how those values relate in manifold and dynamic ways to a particular orientation to life. A value structure, as with one that places emphasis on a particular and historically unique type of interiority, is expressed within a cultural horizon, and which aids in the comprehension of a culture as a whole. The Baroque is one such horizon. And indeed, it is the increased legitimacy of the inner experience that in being deeply value-driven gives to the culture of the Baroque its meaning.

That modern interpretations of the *Cogito* are in large part determined by the *Cogito* itself, which is to say, by rationalist assumptions; chapter 2 endeavors to suggest the importance of a cultural-historical approach to the problem of the *Cogito,* and especially in a way that is authentic to our historicity as individuals and collectives. This is to suggest that we ourselves are historical, and that the question of any historical phenomenon depends upon a particular interpretative stance that is itself historically conditioned. A cultural-historical approach does not attempt to schematize the past in terms of progress, which unintentionally legitimizes the present. Rather, in its critically interpretative stance to the present, a cultural history seeks to probe into the past to trace the lineage of the present down various pathways to better understand the conditional dynamic that shaped the modern moment. As a historical phenomenon, the *Cogito* itself (as with any historical aspect of culture) is an open-site of investigation and presents to an historical eye through an array of competing and harmonizing aspects; all of which are charged with meaning and significance. The *Cogito* is in many ways a meaningful assemblage of a variety of knowledge traditions, inveterate cultural inclination as well as a general and novel orientation toward life. It is with this in mind that we seek to come to terms with the *Cogito* as both a living aspect of our present and our past.

What is more, it must be established from the outset that the question of Baroque culture is a complex one. To be sure, there is a historiographical problem surrounding the question of the Baroque as a cultural designation, and which scholars have struggled to articulate. If the question is raised at all, it often directs to concerns of periodization or stylistic attributes and technicalities. Moving away from this approach, the dissertation seeks to raise the very difficult and elusive problem of modernity by posing it as a cultural-historical problem; and given the dynamics by which the *Cogito* achieved dominance in the determination and grounding of truth, it is my hope to initiate a deeper sequence of thought into the dynamics of Baroque culture itself, which is I suggested above derives its meaning from an increased legitimacy to the inner experience.

Given this dominant value set hinged on the validity of the inner experience, the turn to the *Cogito* is especially warranted for it is within the domain of the inner-self that the dynamics of Baroque culture seem to usher forth. The significance I seek to illuminate is that the *Cogito* formulation represents a particular response to the changing dynamic of the relationship between man, world, and God. It was not a foregone conclusion that the *Cogito* would or should be the dominant formulation in what was nothing less than a grand cosmological reorientation. As this relates to the *Cogito*, there are three major lines of inquiry that I seek to illuminate in the dissertation: the linguistic/metaphoric; the traditional/philosophic; and the general, value-laden orientation that Europeans had towards existence, and as was expressed within a particular historical moment. The inquiry into the linguistic and metaphoric aspects of modernity is part of a larger essay that addresses Nicholaus Cusanus and Leon Battista Alberti, yet it is perhaps the most self-standing section of the dissertation and leads into the question of the *Cogito* to position it within a broader and more inclusive concern of the modern cultural epoch. The second and

third lines of inquiry are, in terms of interpretive analysis, not as easily extricated from one another. In this sense they are part and parcel of the larger dynamic of Baroque culture whereby the inner man attempted to find his way within a world of confused meaning, yet abounding possibility.

The *Cogito* and Metaphoric Possibility

I proceed fundamentally on the understanding that the dynamics of Baroque culture are thoroughly eidetic, or image-based, which in turn is "re-grounded" in Descartes' thought in a particular way.[2] This is to say, the problem of the Baroque, and by extension that of modernity, hinges upon the problem of the imagination. The larger historical question relates inextricably to the dynamics of Baroque culture; and especially as they affect an almost irresistible draw to validate the inward experience as it pertained to knowledge and truth. The ways in which this took shape in the development of Descartes' thought from the decade of the 1620s until the publication of the *Meditations* in 1641 is of considerable significance, not least of all because of the import it carries for modern science and its claims to truth. The imagination is especially significant in these developments, not only as it relates to a derivative form or intuition as expressed in mathematical formulae; but also more primordially in its relation to a type of openness toward metaphoric possibility.

Already in the *Regulae* of 1628, for example, Descartes had begun to work through the dynamics of intuition and deduction, and through which he had maintained that knowledge was

[2] It should be stated that I am working within a larger project of major historical change. At the center of the project is the question of self-conception, and though those insights should prove fruitful as the larger project takes shape, they are too nascent and inchoate for inclusion in the dissertation. I will say that larger project involves a more expansive treatment of metaphoric possibility in relation to the *vis imaginativa* and what I suggest is a radical (if tacit) reformulation of the doctrine of the *analogia entis*. These notions are worked out in the Cartesian conception of self, which is itself manifold, complex and confused. In what follows in the introduction, I would to briefly present the larger concerns within which the dissertation is a part.

intuitively initiated and deductively expanded into a set of principles—which would translate effectively into a governing *mathesis*.[3] In accordance with this criterion, Heidegger is correct to point out that the basic character of modern science is the mathematical, which does not necessarily mean mathematics in terms of the strictly numeric. He stresses the significance of the Greek terms *mathemata* and *mathesis*, by which he understands the two senses of the mathematical. He defines these as "that which is learnable" and "learning", respectively. There exists here a dialectic between these terms as well as distinguishable limit. The significance of Heidegger's observation for the modern world is that the learning (*mathesis*) is no longer a thoughtful dwelling on what is learnable (*mathemata)* as it had been for Plato or Aristotle or even the Middle Ages. In this sense the tradition was in thoughtful dialogue with itself, and therefore could re-appropriate to itself that which it already knew. Within this act or re-appropriation the early tradition was thoughtfully engaged with itself. The remarkable transformation that modern science affects in this regard is its abandonment of this sense of openness to the world so as to redefine the learnable (*mathemata*) solely in accordance with the pre-determinations of learning (*mathesis*). In other words, the *mathesis* is projected into the world without limit or measure; and not only is openness abandoned, but also the thoughtful dialogue between learner (*mathesis*) and learnable (*mathemata*). With this formulation, Heidegger could say: "*Wissenschaft denkt nicht*."[4] What is more, the projection of the *mathesis* provides the ordering frame of the representational reality, and that truth is now equated (if only tacitly) to the ongoing, theoretical manipulation of the representation.

[3] On this point, see Martin Heidegger, "Modern Science, Metaphysics, and Mathematics" in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 271-310

[4] "Science does not think."

To return to the *Regulae* and the question of intuitions as the very basis of a governing *mathesis*, Heidegger's insights into the mathematical character of modern science powerfully suggest man's reorientation to the world. Insofar as intuitions relate to arithmetical or geometric figurations, and which achieve immediacy to the intellect because they are abstracted purely from physical bodies (or nature in general), they are nevertheless derivative forms of intuition. This is to say that the intuitions that govern the certainty of knowledge in the realm of mathematics, fundamentally depend upon the distinctive power of the divine image that dwells within us. And though the "idea" of God is known, as it is in the Third Meditation through Descartes' intuitive act of knowing himself as himself (i.e., a *res cogitans*), it is the power of the image that grounds the idea. The image in serving to ground the intuitions that directly undergird the *mathesis*, mediates what Heidegger had called "givenness" (*Gegebenheiten*), and from which the full range of possibility in its finite, human mode is derived. As Descartes remarks in the Third Meditation:

> But from this one thing—that God has created me—it is very credible that I have in some manner been made in his image and likeness (*ad imaginem & similitudinem ejus factum esse*), in which the idea of God is contained, is perceived by me through the same faculty (*a me percipi per eandem facultatem*) through which I myself am perceived by me: that is, when I turn the vision of the mind into myself, not only do I then understand that I am a thing incomplete and dependent on another, and a thing indefinitely aspiring to greater and greater, or better things, but simultaneously I also understand that he on whom I depend has all these greater things in him not just definitely and potentially, but rather according to the thing itself infinitely, and thus he is God…[and] in the contemplation of God himself, to reflect within me on his attributes and to intuit, to admire and to adore the beauty of his immense light, so far as my darkened mind will be able to bear it. For just as we believe by faith that the highest felicity of the other life consists solely in the contemplation of the divine majesty, so also do we know by experience that the maximal pleasure of which we would be capable in this life can now be perceived from the same—it is granted—much less perfect contemplation.

The *Cogito*, as the ground for knowledge and truth in modernity, presupposes this fundamental intuition, which I would like to suggest is a type of poetic intuition and relates to the expressive possibility of the metaphoric. This is to suggest further that the formative dynamics behind the Cartesian project are purely "poetical," which is to say that they are eminently creative, and thus serve as a type of grounding possibility for thought and action. What is more, these formative dynamics manifest through the mediating power of the metaphor, which governs and allows a historical world not only to appear, but also allows the vibrant potentialities for an authentic human existence to manifest in myriad ways.

The mediating metaphor in question is that of the microcosm, or *parvus mundus*, as expressed famously in Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *Oratio de hominis dignitate*. The *Oratio* reveals such a metaphor at work, and which is (as I maintain) the generative and operative metaphor of the modern cultural epoch, which includes not only the Baroque, but *L'Âge classique* (its Enlightenment manifestation) as well as the age of the Renaissance. Indeed, in the *Oratio* Pico illuminates through a type of poetic intuition the means by which man extracts for himself the divine image, so as to become a type of "creator god," and who in turn directs and channels those vibrant and creative energies through the full range of human action. It is the divine image as impressed upon the souls of man (*as the Imago Dei*) that becomes operative through the modern cultural epoch, and which derives its power through the modes of the imaginative faculty; but significantly also, always within a cultural framework.

The metaphoric dynamic in its generative mode is in many ways a primordial act, and is thus done prior to the *res cogitans* or "the consciousness thinking itself." Thus the reflection upon the intuited idea of God—i.e., the meditative act that traditionally led to full contemplation of the divine majesty—is already touched by the original, poetic intuition, and moreover finds its

empowerment through the image of the microcosm. This is the purely generative imagination, and as such, it is the ground of the subjectivity that equates as the *Cogito* and makes possible the intuitive moves that undergird the method. The essence of subjectivity, which Descartes recognizes and defines as finite and non-extended, is effectively made through this primal, intuitive image to become itself the horizon to affect the infinite—which is to say, it is the ground on which knowledge advances, always in the infinite expansion and perfection of the representation. It creates in its own image; it is the subjective inversion of the *analogia entis*. The very possibility not only of the *Cogito*, but the whole of the modern cultural epoch depends upon this linguistic and metaphorical dynamic.

Re-conceiving the Inner Life

The critical effort proposed in the dissertation is in large part pursuant to the centrality in the modern world of a "metaphysics of subjectivity." We proceed, moreover, on the understanding that the "problem of the subject" (as it is known in certain circles) forms a rich sub-history within the metaphysical tradition. With the unfolding of this tradition, the *hypokeimenon*—understood here in the Aristotelian sense as "that which everywhere already lies before"—yields to a notion of subject, and thence to subjectivity. This study, however, endeavors to move beyond the internal history of metaphysics most notably deployed by Heidegger in such a way as to broaden and supplement the ambit of its primary concerns. By turning to the problem of culture, and specifically to the Baroque as a unique cultural epoch, we are posing the question of modernity in a fundamental way. To pose the problem through a cultural-historical heuristic is to acknowledge that there always exists in a specific culture an underpinning value structure, which not only determines meaning (as expressed through actions and thoughts), but also thereby delineates a specific mode of human existence. These modes are

in many ways historically unique. In raising he problem of the subject (*Cogito*) as a significant cultural-historical concern is to be in dialogue with the exceedingly rich (and related) sub-history of the *interiore homine,* or inner man. The notion of the *interiore homine* originated with Plato, found its most elaborate articulation with Augustine and; and as we shall see, has endured through the early modern period into the present.

The notion of an Augustinian conception of self, which focused especially on the triadic powers of the soul—i.e., memory, understanding and the will, and as activated (and in many ways realized) through the *imago Dei*—becomes integral to our analysis. Augustine had predicated knowledge of the divine on a detailed and rigorous exploration of the depths of the internal (*interum aeternum*). The exploration takes shape throughout the Augustinian corpus, yet it is with *De vera religione* that he articulated the notion most directly: "Do not wander outside, but return into yourself for the truth dwells in man's interiority" (*Noli foras ire, in te ipsum redi. In interiore homine habitat veritas*). Thereby Augustine established the *interiore homine* as the crucial mediating factor in the striving for and discovery of truth. Descartes and the *Cogito* are thus intimately entwined within a living tradition, which moreover, is conveyed (and in large part shaped) by an array of ever-changing cultural dynamics. What is more, by pursuing this path of inquiry opened by the *interiore homine,* we place the *Cogito* within the broad tradition of "self-writings," which occasions (and in a fruitful way, I think) the opportunity to envision a notion of selfhood within a particular historical world while taking fully into consideration the motivating value structure; its meaning and significance; and the language through which it was mediated.

As the scholarship of Gilson, Gouhier, Sirven and Menn[5] et al have shown, there is no question of the significant influence that the writings of Augustine had upon the seventeenth century in general and Descartes in particular. And recognizing that there was most certainly a tradition of Augustinianism, and with it an array of specific "Augustines" and "Augustinianisms" on which to model a concept of self, the *Cogito* is emphatically not an Augustinian self. The differences depend fundamentally upon the cultural-historical manifestation of how a self not only envisioned its world (and its place within that world), but also how it oriented to a dominant and grounding notion of truth. The resultant understanding reflects also how a particular form of self-conception understood and articulated a good life as well as envisioned a path that promised the greatest possibility for its fulfillment—namely the attainment of the Good. The way I formulate the problem of the *interiore homine* in the dissertation allows not only for an examination of the *Cogito* vis-à-vis the Augustinian model, which remained significant within the tradition; it also allows us to view that model as mediated through Scholasticism etc. so as to raise a whole different set of significant questions. In offering a strong definition of culture (as shaped by a value structure), it becomes possible to pose questions of meaning and significance, which depend fundamentally upon a value-laden orientation toward the world. Descartes' relation to an Augustinian model of self-conception—articulated either tacitly or explicitly—assumes a new significance that in turn allows for the opportunity to explore the dynamics of human existence in a markedly changing world. Despite its success or lack of success, the model presents itself in striking ways as Descartes worked through the project of establishing knowledge and truth on a new foundation. At one level the juxtaposition of an Augustinian with

[5] Étienne Gilson, *La liberté chez Descartes et la théologie* (Paris: Vrin, 1913); J. Sirven, *Les annees d'apprentissage de Descartes: 1596-1628* (Albi: Imprimerie Cooperative, 1928); Henri Gouhier, *Les premieres pensees de Descartes: Contributions a l'histoire de l'anti-Renaissance* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1958); Stephen Menn, *Descartes and Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

a Cartesian notion of self provides a sort of concrete referent, and thus bases our claims within a broad range of cultural-historical development. What is more, however, the exploration of the *Cogito* as a decisive moment within this sub-history establishes that the problem of the subject is central to the question of the Baroque.

The movement inward, and thus the validation it carries for the conditions of living and thinking, is a hallmark, if not also the underpinning assumption in the general orientation of existence during the Baroque epoch. Examples of this trend range from the "spiritual exercises" of the Jesuit novitiate, the "poem of the mind" as exemplified by any number of lyrical poets, the soliloquy in the dramatic arts, and the sense of deep emotional appeal as affected by a Caravaggio; or a stirring moment in the Jesuit street theatre. Of course, the inner validation in question extends to more intellectualist approaches as well. The emphasis that the late-Scholastics placed upon "psychological" processes, i.e., the powers or faculties of the rational soul (*animus*), is a case in point; and the continuity that Descartes bears with this tradition is especially significant. For within these late-Scholastic debates, psychological emphases (insofar as they related to the powers of intellection) subsumed the traditional language of the *subjectum*, yet in a way that bespeaks transformation of the original meaning.

For Aristotle, the *subjectum*—or in his language, the *hypokeimenon*—assumed two modal distinctions: the referential (*en hypokeimenon/de re*) and the attributive (*kath' hypokeimenon/de dicto*). The referential mode of a thing dictates that though it predicates of or may be found in a subject, it is not affirmed of it. In other words, were talking of a substance as substance. Conversely, the attributive mode asserts that both the definition and the predicates of a thing are not only affirmed of the subject, they are also, at the level of substance (*ousia*), inextricable. There is, then, with the *hypokeimenon*, a clear distinction between two modalities: the one

categorical and the other substantial. And, though substance is itself one of the categories, it also transcends them. The Scholastics, in large part, retained this distinction; yet for them Being was nevertheless unified at both the level of the categorical as well as that of substance to the extent that it was contained within a theological frame. With increased emphasis upon the intellective powers of the soul, the traditional language of the *subjectum* becomes confused and conceptually reconstituted, and to the extent that the attributive mode unified in a particular way with questions regarding the intelligibility of things as delineated and determined by the interior powers of cognition. The Cartesian notion of the *mathesis universalis* worked out in the *Regulae* is a case in point; and which is a more thoroughly detailed version of the method that appeared in the *Discourse.* The *subjectum* as it develops in the *Discourse* and *Meditations* presupposed the moves deployed in the *Regulae* in such a way that its defining attribute of "thinking" is more definitive in terms of its ability to reason well on the basis of an unshakeable foundation.

Yet, the learned approaches in defining and characterizing this inward movement were accretions, or epiphenomena, of something decidedly more manifold—even primordial. The suggestion here is that there was a larger cultural dimension in which these manifestations took root; and the specific problematic with which Descartes had begun to engage with in the late-1610s—namely a question of a unified wisdom in the sciences—was situated very much within these larger currents. His writings not only reflect these larger, cultural trends, they assumed an exceedingly influential place in the transformation of the intellectual tradition of the West wherein the conditions of truth and the principles by which they are established were redefined and reasserted in decisive ways. The resultant transformation exhibited itself in manifold and diverse ways, as for example: through the novel forms within the plastic and performative arts; the new ways of thinking and doing within the realms of the political, social and religious; and of

course in the variously new ways of being human within a world that—if upheld against its medieval precedent—found that earlier world no longer to make sense or its truths no longer to hold.

Descartes' indisputable influence upon the development of philosophy and science, and by extension modernity, reveals that he is very much our contemporary, and thus it becomes necessary to address the modern mode of existence in light of the *Cogito*. His contributions in the areas of geometry, mechanics, and metaphysics, along with the array of issues discussed with his learned correspondents regarding the natural world and its metaphysical underpinnings, in many ways set the stage for the course the modern sciences would ultimately take. Yet, the significance of Descartes vis-à-vis the overall history of the West extends even further. In the Sixth Discourse, for example, he informs us that his newly devised method had allowed him some satisfaction in resolving certain difficulties in the speculative sciences (mainly mathematics and physics) as well as providing a means to regulate his morals (*régler mes moeurs*). In what would become a complete reworking of the Aristotelian distinction of the theoretical, practical and productive sciences, Descartes thereby advanced a notion of method that served as the mediating mechanism in the acquisition of truth as well as the unifying structure that lay behind not only the multiple and ever-expanding avenues of knowledge, but also it shaped profoundly the modern mode of human existence as well as the possibilities for being fully human. The success of the method is thus connected intimately to a question of action within the world—which is to say, it is a moral concern. And as Descartes tells us, the purpose of seeking knowledge in the sciences is for the "general good of all men" (*le bien général de tous les hommes),* which again, is fundamentally a moral concern, and which is now tied intimately to the question of utility. Descartes in the *Discourse,* especially, but in relation to the other texts, gives

a particular expression of self-conception in the Baroque world. Given the broader tradition of life writings, the striking aspect of the *Cogito* is a particular type to life writing is that it is thoroughly confused by traditional precedents for truth, along with traditional models of self-conception, that couple with a sort of *joie de vivre* and revaluation of the world as well as man's place within it. In this confusion, the *Cogito* is also thoroughly misdirected.

A broader consideration of the sub-history of the *interiore homine* as it manifested and developed within the horizon of Baroque culture reveals that there were a number of "subjective," but as yet, not definitively "subjectivist" notions of self. The somewhat conflicted notions of a *subjectum* (as an essential ground or foundation) and a *subjectus* (in the sense of bringing or being under the control of) manifest in the learned discourse in a way that played homage to the traditional concerns of logic. In this discourse there was a strong thread of concern devoted to a type of logic that, though fundamentally Aristotelian became critical of the Scholastic mode of deductive reasoning as an expository device in elucidating already accepted truths. Humanist forms of logic, of which those of Philipp Melanchthon and Peter Ramus are among the most famous and influential. The humanist logicians oriented away from a strict syllogistic that referred back to established ontological categories deployed mainly as a pedagogical and rhetorical devices in the elucidation of truths, and more toward an applicable procedure—via what was known as a *thema*—for the exploration of the constituted structure of knowledge and the connections therein. Renaissance and late Scholastic forms of logic were intimately wed to a notion of memory, which where oriented to the re-discovery of ancient truths, as for example, the Lullist form. This development alone is remarkable for the direction the tradition took during a decisive moment in its history. Yet, it must be stated that during this epoch the very notion of a *subjectum* is richly confused and often difficult to delineate; which is

again evidenced in the learned treatises—as illustrated through the likes of Ramus, Keckermann and Goclenius (and even Cajetan as an earlier member emblematic of these late-Scholastic trends).

These logical-metaphysical concerns (of which he is most certainly a direct descendent as well as a contributor) are an accretion of a larger cultural dynamic. As this dynamic pertains to a notion of self-conception, however, the hallmark of experience for the "*subjectum*" is derived solely from the fact that the experience is inwardly validated. Of course, much of the Aristotelian language of the *Categories* is retained along with the basic assumptions; namely the *en hypokeimeno* in which the predicate is an individual subject (e.g. man is a mammal) as well as the *kath' hypokeimenon* in which the predicate assumes the substance of its subject (e.g., the mammal is green). In view of the culture dynamics of the modern cultural epoch (and some ways before), the traditional Aristotelian notion of the *hypokeimenon*—as the intelligible substance that accidents subject to; and "that everywhere already lies before"—became transformed and blurred as philosophers and logicians increasingly came to understand the *subjectum* as an isolated and determinate domain in which to assess and understand things (species) as they are objectively (*esse obiective*) given to the intellect (*ut datur de anima*).

Generally speaking for this late medieval and Renaissance world, the objects outside the intellect are "real" and constitutive of a metaphysical reality (*entia realia*). As such, the object as given to the intellect, via a concept, has its own power. Moreover, it moves through *aisthēsis* to determine the domain of cognition to which the intellect conforms. With Descartes—following this directive and in a decidedly Ramist vein—these distinctions play out in the *Cogito* (as a *res cogitans* or thinking substance), which collapses the traditional distinction into a defining attribute (thought) together with an array of attributive modes (believing, willing,

doubting, thinking). Nevertheless, the *subjectum,* as a substance, remains insofar as it is presupposed by that which inheres within it. The question of *subjectum* is especially interesting, and factors too into the larger considerations of Baroque culture; and which should be opened to a wider ambit of consideration in order to appreciate the radical moves undertaken through the *Cogito* formulation. With that in mind, Montaigne (and Pascal) are perhaps the leading lights.

In Book I of the *Essays,* Montaigne expressed the tension of this movement between an inner self and an outer self in the face of traditional modes of action. On the one hand, he conveys the deeps sense of obligation he had to public life as a noble dutiful subject of the king. On the other hand, he expresses the deep sense of responsibility he had to himself, especially in regard to the legitimacy of his experiences as a private person, indeed the inner "subject" within which those experiences inhered. In Book II, the relationship between the traditionally "fuller" life of the public servant and the privative one of exile (albeit to the contemplative gaze from within a library) transforms from tension to harmony. The language he uses illustrates this: "I have not made my book any more than my book has made me, a book consubstantial with its author" [*Je n'ay pas plus faict mon livre que mon livre m'a faict, livre consunstantiel à son autheur*]. It is, of course, notable that Montaigne employed the deeply significant theological term, "consubstantial" to denote the unity of this relationship. In accordance with the theological language employed, the unity is achieved because both book and author share the same substance, which is to say that the metaphysical "whatness" that "stands" under book and author is common to both. Yet, the relationship that Montaigne describes throughout the *Essais* is not at all "static," but rather, is especially dynamic. And not unlike the tensions he described between an official public role and a deeply stirred private life, Montaigne's use of the doctrinally charged term, consubstantial, reflects very much a traditional world, though one within an

exceedingly vibrant flux. The "subject" of the book and the "subject" to which the book predicates are meaningfully linked, and almost to the extent that they are interchangeable. The realization of the one is the realization of the other. The confused and yet harmonious relationship of a man and his world, as expressed through this "consubstantiality" of book and author, derives its meaning from a particular dynamic in which there is no fixed center; and thus the subject of book and author is constantly made, unmade and remade again.

The example of Montaigne serves as an alternate form of self-conception, which in the extended project serves to show how the invigoration of the faculty of the imagination—in a strikingly novel way—transforms in Baroque culture to be the ground of possibility for thought and action. The *vis imaginativa* as articulated in the *Regulae* had transformed the faculty from an imaginative-memory in which knowledge of self and God came from an ordered act of recollection, and toward imaginative-intellection where the imagination underwrites the *intuitus* and thereby engenders the possibility for knowledge of self, God and world. What is more, the reinvigoration of the imaginative is expressive in the meditative literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These meditative accounts were modeled on a fascinating array of ancient and medieval precedents, e.g., medieval saintly and mystical lives, Stoical meditative accounts, and Epicurean self-portrayals etc. And yet, these were most certainly not simple imitations of antique and medieval precedents. If there is said to be a universality of the Baroque self, it is perhaps the magnificent array of particularities by which it is expressed, and which continually change and thus force that self to a constant redefinition of itself.

Thus the *Cogito* in aligning itself in a particular way with the Augustinian model represents one possibility among many. And that there were various possibilities for self-conception within the Baroque world—as one may find, for example, in the sonnets of

Shakespeare, the essays of Montaigne, and the respective "autobiographies" of Cardano and Loyola—the suggestion is that the relationship between man and a (cultural) world is exceedingly dynamic. Why could there be so many expressive possibilities? How could several possibilities co-exist (but only for a short while)? And how could one form become dominant over the others? I suggest that this dynamical relationship fundamentally depends upon the openness to the possibilities for life as expressed through the vibrant and generative metaphor of the microcosm. Among the invigorating forces within the Renaissance and Baroque worlds—which is to say the modern cultural epoch—the *Cogito* represents one possibility of self-conception that nevertheless became dominant; and even to the extent of marginalizing other forms, if not consigning them utterly to oblivion. This is to say that through an understanding of the *in potentia* dynamics of the cultural horizon of the modern epoch, we can begin to understand and to appreciate not only the *Cogito's* criterion for meaning, significance and truth, but most especially the conditions of possibility wherein it found full expression. This becomes a fruitful avenue to begin thinking of Baroque culture in itself, as well as its comparison to the Italian Renaissance. Both are cultural expressions of the modern epoch, and are generated by the same metaphoric possibility. Whereas the Italian Renaissance was a cultural totality, the Baroque is decidedly not so. Not only should the cultural totality of the Renaissance serve as that by which other cultures should take their measure; the question of both cultures' "proximity" to the generative metaphor of the microcosm becomes problematic. In this sense, the differences cannot be merely stylistic. There is something much more elusive at work there.

On the basis of this larger question of self-conception, the final chapter of the dissertation (chapter 5) seeks to establish one way through which to examine the dynamics by which a uniquely Baroque culture came to phenomenalize. In this chapter, I turn to the dream account,

and though I do not offer an in-depth reading of the Cartesian dream of 10-11 November 1619, I seek to place it within a larger cultural frame with an eye toward a particular species of problematic dream phenomena (the demonic dream) that appeared within the early modern world. This dream reflects a larger problem where the entire cosmological edifice had been called into doubt along with the sustaining meaning structure. The Baroque world (and certainly this is true for Descartes) at once problematizes the dream (as merely an affection of consciousness). The problem forces a redefinition of what is meant by the nature of thought; which again places in doubt the whole edifice of reality (and with it an array of traditional assumptions about truth). The dream phenomenon must be addressed in view of the validity of the inner experience as well as the decaying meaningfulness of the tradition—the Cartesian dream reveals these tensions.

With this chapter I have begun to work through dynamics by which the dream brings into relief a novel orientation to life (especially in terms of the validity of the inner experience) in confrontation with a cosmological order that is not yet entirely meaningless. The dream reveals in a particular way the pre-modern confrontation with the primal forces of life in the wake of the increasing collapse of the traditional meaning structure. The confrontation occurred in direct relation to a particular set of value orientations, which were (and are) mediated through the metaphoric possibility outlined and discussed in chapter 3. What the Cartesian dream reveals is an array of traditional concerns for meaning and significance that are, alas, fluid and unanchored being adrift, as they were, from a traditional ground of truth. The dream becomes for Descartes a confrontation with moral inaction, especially as it related to the cultural problem of knowledge and uncertainty. The Cartesian dream retains (with considerable confusion) much of the significance associated with the general oneiric tradition, i.e, the construal of the dream as a

mirror, or a vision, or a portal to deeper meanings and deeper truths. Yet, when the undergirding cosmological reality was called into question—as it was with Descartes—the dream itself is left unanchored, and becomes part of the incoherent flux of the Baroque world. The dream for Descartes may or may not be of divine origin, but he certainly gives us to understand that the dream contains within it a deep-seated angst, perhaps even a particular type of tragic vision, which forced him to confront his deepest fears and desperations in the only way he saw fit to do so.[6]

What I seek to show is that the dream is a conflicted space where traditional meaning structures appear in tension against novel motivations and possibilities. The early modern dream emerges most forcefully in either of what I call a theatrical or a meditative mode, both of which had bearing on the ontological problematic as it manifested in early modernity, but in different ways. Descartes' dreams, as one might expect, are more meditative, and thus the dream problematic presents here more intimately within the tradition of the *interiore homine*.

The significance of Descartes' dream experiences hinges not only on the fact that he found himself amid ambiguity, which is itself unsettling and disconcerting (a fact not surprising considering the taxonomical class of dream Descartes experienced); but also that within the ambiguity and obscurity of the dream state, Descartes' struggled to reveal and play-out cultural tensions as to the definition of truth; how that truth is known; and how knowledge of it directs thoughts and actions. For Descartes, these early experiences seem to reveal that dreams continue to occupy for him an ontological middle ground, just as they had for his medieval predecessors. This is something that should fully call our attention.

[6] Note: I have no intention of offering a psychological reading.

The problem of the dream thus occasions the opportunity to think our way through those difficult and mysterious depths amid a moment of cultural crisis. On the one hand, and as some of the best scholarship on Descartes' dreams attests,[7] it is the dreams themselves that occupy a somewhat emblematic place in considering the foundations of modernity. Dreams are subsumed within a moment where rationalism in the form of the *Cogito* is seemingly awakened and the new conditions of truth are confidently, if inchoately asserted. On the other hand, the power of the dream lay not as much within its function as an emblem than as an allegorical representation that attempts to reveal how one should act within a confused world that in many ways no longer made sense. As Benjamin has shown in his treatment of the *Trauerspiele*, the concept of the allegorical in a Baroque mode is especially apt; and it is the relation of this notion to the dream that certain markedly epistemological concerns come into striking relief amid the broader cultural dynamics surrounding it.[8]

Benjamin's concept of the allegorical derives in the first instance from his criticism of the Romantic notion of the symbol. The Romantic notion of the symbolic requires some sense of a unified totality between the material and the transcendental realms. In contradistinction to this,

[7] On the general approach to dreams, see for instance, Siegmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans., James Strachey (New York: 1965); Carl Jung, "General Aspects of Dream Psychology" and "On the Nature of Dreams" in *Collected Works* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965); for the historical approach to dreams, especially in relation to the dreamer's "inner life," see the collection edited by Daniel Pick and Lyndal Roper, *Dreams and History: The Interpretation of Dreams from Ancient Greece to Modern Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 2004). For a recent psycho-historical approach to Descartes' dreams, see John R. Cole, *The Olympian Dreams and Youthful Rebellion of René Descartes* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992). Along these lines, the literature pertaining to Descartes' dreams, even if the question is not directly engaged, is both vast and eminently considerable. Among the influential interpretations, see Charles Adam, who in his *Vie et oeuvres de Descartes* (Paris: Vrin, 1910), articulates an overall rationalist approach to Descartes (if he has for the most part excluded treatment of the dreams). His stance, vis-à-vis the dreams, has proven influential nevertheless to subsequent interpretations. Among the most influential treatments is that of Henri Gouhier, *Les Premières pensées de Descartes* (Paris: 1958). See also, Richard Kennington, "Descartes' *Olympica*" in *On Modern Origins: Essays in Early Modern Philosophy* (Lexington Books: 2004); Gregor Sebba, *The Dream of Descartes* (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois Press,1987); David Hersh, *Descartes' Dream* (New York: Harcourt,1986); and for an insightful interpretation consonant with the early Heidegger, see Jean-Luc Marion, "Does Thought Dream? The Three Dreams, or the Awakening of the Philosopher," in *Cartesian Questions: Method and Metaphysics* (Chicago: 1999), 1-19.

[8] Benjamin, *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama in the Baroque*.

Benjamin endeavored to show the dynamic of the allegorical at the temporal level, and not necessarily as a mediator between the material and the transcendental. This, in some ways, is a reformulation of certain, old religious impulses that are given new meaning. This meaning derives not vis-à-vis a transcendent reality, but within a worldly and historical context, and especially one fraught with death, suffering and melancholia. The aura of transcendence and its relation to truth and Being, as it pertained to Dante's Beatrice, for example, is lost; and in its place, as Benjamin suggests, the "gaze" now finds in its view the *facies hippocratica*; or in other words, the petrified, fallen and sickly face of a dying and death-ridden world.[9]

Placed in relation to the tradition of the *interiore homine* the allegory pertains to the dream in a complex and dynamic way. Though the Olympic dreams present traditional allegorical signs (and often with their associated traditional meanings), they are nevertheless disjointed and diffuse being disconnected from the traditional edifice of meaning. Yet, what is most striking about Descartes' dream sequence is that, in retaining its medieval heritage, the dream becomes an allegory itself in instructing the youthful Descartes to right, moral action. Indeed, unlike a symbol, the allegory directs towards the world and commands a certain moral action. With this in mind, the Olympic dreams serve an allegorical-poetic function in what will

[9] Benjamin, 103. I agree fundamentally with Benjamin as to this basic shift; though with qualification, as shall become apparent below. The dream calls into question, and in a direct way, the epistemological problem specific to the early modern period, and thus establishes its significance as a direct heir to Parmenides and the inextricable relationship of knowledge to being. This is the path my own analysis takes given the significance of the history of metaphysics with which Descartes is not only an integral part, but thoroughly engaged. The question of aesthetic ideas and their expression in phenomena—dramatic or otherwise—as Benjamin observed in the *Ursprung* is tied at one level to the epistemological, especially when formulated in terms of a Crocean aesthetic, which places an aesthetic intuition not only at the basis of the practical and expressive forms of art forms per se, but also at the core of reality itself. However, the pervasive power of Benjamin's analysis lies deeper still—namely in the primordiality of language, which undergirds these more derivative expressions. For Benjamin and the cultural form of the *Trauerspiel*, the Baroque phenomenalizes itself in a particular way, and similar to the dream it also brings forth a particular reality—a reality which is at once confused, opaque and yet oddly familiar vis-à-vis the traditional elements contained within it. The function of the allegory in the Baroque empowers old forms in decidedly new ways. Most fundamentally, it does so as a worldly phenomenon, and serves not as a referent to a grounding supra-sensible reality or to a transcendent other. The confused world is the medium through which poetic power and potential is conveyed. In this sense, this reality—this *mundus ambiguum*—creatively lives and thrives *im Wesen des Wortes*.

develop as a creative confrontation with an uncertain world. And thus, the dream represents a complex and confused dynamic—a *mundus ambiguum*—that is worked through and resolved on the validating terms offered and demanded by the inner experience.

The *Discourse* and the *Meditations* will incorporate the dream within the "fable of modernity" as a sort of triumphal moment whereby the uncertainties expressed by the dream are overcome by the *Cogito* and its new foundation for truth. Yet, the youthful dreams relay more of a sense of a tragic vision that includes within it contradiction and uncertainty, as well as what Benjamin had described in relation to the *Trauerspiele* as montage, pastiche, and irony. The dream as a contested space presents for Descartes as a vexed attempt to reconcile the demands for certainty with particular aspects of the traditional past. The dream becomes the battleground on which to find a foundation for moral purpose, and thus occasions a definitively poetic act to overcome and save the dreamer from utter despair. The poetic act thus yields one illusion to save itself from another—the *mathesis* of modern science.

To give the reader a sense of the argument of the dissertation, the general flow of the chapters will proceed as follows. The first chapter attempts to raise the question of modernity by turning to the notion of the modern, autonomous individual. Both autonomy and individuality are among the constellation of Enlightenment values that have shaped the modern world. The undergirding assumption in this first chapter is that the individual is a theoretical abstraction, the basis of which in large part determines the modern mode of existence. The turn to Descartes in chapter two seeks to pose the problem of modernity by formulating the *Cogito* as a cultural historical problem, which it does, first, by defining the heuristic of a culture, and second, by situating the cultural-historical approach within the historiography pertaining to the Baroque. Chapter three turns to the modern cultural epoch as a whole to position the *Cogito* within the

larger cultural dynamic of the Italian Renaissance. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *Oratio* serves as the site of inquiry to open the question of possibility as mediated and actuated by the metaphor of the microcosm.

Chapter four returns to the *Cogito* in placing it within the history of self-conception, and particularly the influential sub-history of the *interiore homine* as most powerfully associated with Augustine. The tentative conclusion of chapter four finds that though the *Cogito* is expressive of the metaphorical dynamic of the microcosm, it is nevertheless not a self (but rather a subjectivity) insofar as it denies itself reciprocity with its world. The lack of reciprocity and the emergence of a hyper-subjectivity seem to force the question of a shifting cultural dynamic. Chapter five turns to the problem of the dream in early modern Europe by also looking at the specific sequence of dreams Descartes experienced in Ulm during November 1619. By raising the question of the dream, we seek not to view it at as part of a rationalist overcoming as mandated in the *Meditations*, but a particular moment in the opening of the Baroque world.

Given this introduction, I hope to have offered the reader a general sense of my larger historical concerns to rethink the *Cogito* in view of the problem of modernity, which in many ways equate to one another. By opening those concerns to the cultural problematic of the Baroque, I hope to arrive at a fuller explanation of the ground of possibilities operative within it, and which occasioned the modern self as the ground of science, truth and the modern mode of existence as a whole.

CHAPTER ONE

The Problem of Modernity

> I have no more made my book than my book has made me—a book consubstantial with its author, concerned with my own self, an integral part of my life; not concerned with some third-hand, extraneous purpose, like other books.
>
> —Montaigne[10]

Wrangling with the Question of Modernity

Despite the efforts of over two centuries of criticism, the dominance of the modern, scientific definition of truth (and indeed the whole of the Enlightenment project itself) remains largely unshaken.[11] This dominance not only serves to illustrate the persistence, but the pervasive depth to which the sustaining truth claims of modernity have penetrated the Western mind. Such claims to truth presuppose certain fundamental assumptions on which the legitimacy of those verities is determined. These assumptions are so thoroughly entrenched that together with the typically addressed modalities of the modern (rationalism, the nation state, the sciences, capitalism, etc.), it is safe to assume that the very notion of modernity seems exceedingly obvious. Whether we choose to endorse it, vehemently attack it, or merely observe it, the notion

[10] *Essays*, II.18. All references and citations from the *Essays* derive from *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976).

[11] One need only turn to the work of Weber, Heidegger, Derrida and Foucault et al to get a sense of the form these criticisms of have taken in the twentieth century. Of course, a critical note is readily discernible with Johann Herder, Goethe, Hegel, Marx and a host of others long before the postmodern criticism took form.

of modernity enjoys an uncritical familiarity. [12] Quite simply, we know already what modernity is; and with this complacency comes the usual recirculation of arguments either glorifying the benefits or condemning the detriments of the modern age—both of which, it must be said, unwittingly justify an arguably over-determined notion of truth. To illustrate this, one may turn to any number of current academic debates where considerations of what is viewed as the "dominant paradigm" of modernity are widely pervasive.[13] These considerations are supported by an array of theoretical approaches, especially vis-à-vis the recent investment in such categories as globalism and multiculturalism, and are employed not only to discredit the term entirely, but to lay siege to the normalizing, totalizing and homogenizing tendencies within the narrative of modernity itself. Despite the interrogation of modernity and the deployment of sophisticated and well-intentioned criticisms against it, the majority of recent scholarship has been unsuccessful at both defining modernity and establishing it as a problem beyond the usual and familiar formulations. The mounting criticism against modernity, especially what appears to be an effort to assault and dismantle it, remains quite ironically, an unwitting employment of the

[12] The idea of modernity is all too familiar, if not completely over-determined. Owing much to the triumphs of science, technology and medicine during the last five centuries, what it "means" to be modern is not only uttered in speech it is assumed in action, and attempts to define or deeply reflect upon it run the risk of embarking upon the most laughable excursion of redundancy. Indeed, through the presumed closeness of the modern condition, we are perhaps the most distanced from it. This dissertation is an attempt to offer one such reflection.

[13] The scholarly literature addressing modernity and its various aspects is, not surprisingly, vast, and is thus far too expansive to list, yet what is seen as the "dominant paradigm" of modernity is typically understood in the negative and usually in reference to those cultures, geographical areas, or even historical epochs that have been victimized, subordinated, or made to conform to western models of thought and practice. This is true, and in a number of ways; but I question both the depth of these analyses and the post-colonialist rhetoric in which it is often couched. See for example, Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, ed., *Alternative Modernities* (Durham: Duke, 2001) and Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Multiple Modernities* (New York: Transaction Publishers: 2002). The essays collected in these volumes represent an attempt to go beyond the standard concerns of periodization and to demonstrate both the heterogeneous and global character of modernity, and from this perspective to reconsider the normative claims of the traditional, western conception of modernity. In exploring the various "guises of modernity", it seems that both of these collections are post-colonial attempts to attack a strictly western notion of modernity, which in its various ways, has bedeviled the rest of the world. These analyses have not questioned modernity on a fundamental level nor have they endeavored to reassess the category beyond their multicultural agenda. In the end, the problem of modernity has not been raised, and moreover, the conventional category of modernity, under which these analyses operate, has been obfuscated and perhaps needlessly trivialized.

general theoretical apparatuses of modernity, which, again derive from a complex of fundamental assumptions that lay at the very core of the modern mode of existence. Modernity thus becomes justified in the very terms of modernity.[14] This is to say the problem of modernity, whether formulated in terms of history, anthropology, sociology, literature etc., effectively reduces the problem to an *object* of scholarship, whereby data and information are gathered and collected and, furthermore, made to conform to the theoretical assumptions at work (though not always consciously realized) within the various bodies of knowledge in the modern world.

What is more, modernity in its hyper-concern for the present moment and, moreover, for the realization of the possibilities within it, orders the world—indeed, reality—by dissecting and categorizing it in accordance to strictly formulated theoretical principles.[15] At first glance, this by itself is not especially unusual. Where the European mind of the seventeenth century is distinctive derives in large part from a summoning of desire to dominate, subjugate and possess; yet more significantly, the "summoning" is here understood as an act of will grounded in a subjectivist epistemology, which is further underpinned by theoretical principles of its own devising through and by which all ordering actions within the world are justified. Moreover, the driving concern for this subjectivist epistemology is the endeavor toward an objective and unbiased knowledge, the attainment of which, problematically depends upon the subject taking

[14] On this point especially, see Benjamin Sax, *The Question Concerning Modernity* (forthcoming).

[15] This is less a problem of categorization and ordering, at least in a general sense, than a problematic directly concerning that which undergirds the ordering process (*mathesis*). The ancient concept of *theōria* (θεωρία), which Plato in the *Republic* and Aristotle in the *Ethics* define in relation to *praxis*, exists in modernity not only in truncation, but assumes a highly aggressive form. Aristotle understood *theoria* as an action derivative of *nous*, and thus the best of all actions disposed in the attainment of *arête* (excellence) and *eudaimonia* (as a type of human flourishing). As Hannah Arendt has shown (see below, *Human Condition*), modernity completely divorces *theōria* from its ethical dimension, and moreover, reduces *theōria* to *hypothesis* (*ὑπόθεσις),* which is effectively a methodology, a set of axioms or a conceptual framework to which phenomena must now conform. It is no longer a question of us conforming to phenomena, i.e., as an act of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom; but rather an act of dominance and subjugation.

itself out of the world, viz., a retreat to the proverbial and "transcendent view from nowhere." This is a distanced and alienated worldview and certainly requires qualification. That modernity holds the somewhat striking conceit of its privileged status as an epoch, i.e., as historically distinct from the epochs preceding it is especially telling. The Latin term *modo*, from which the respective Latin and English words, *modernus* and modernity derive, yields a seemingly equal array of meaningful notions qualifying this conceit: the "recent" the "lately", or the "just now."

Though the significance of the sentiment of absolute novelty, along with the sense of a complete break with tradition, would not blossom fully until the eighteenth century, the general contours of such a sentiment can be felt early on. Of course, neither Petrarch nor Luther nor even the stalwartly progressive Bacon saw themselves as divorced from the tradition; but there was nevertheless something there which allowed them to see the world and themselves differently. Novelty seems a derivative concern for the problem hinges more on modernity's fundamental reflexivity, which carries with it two of modernity's most distinctive hallmarks—distance and alienation. The distance, of course, is not merely a temporal or historical distance, but is ontologically rooted and thus factors into the entirety of the modern existence from which follows, alienation. In terms of the historical age or epoch, modernity becomes a type of referential point where everything refers back to it; but this translates not only to historical epochs, but also to natural phenomena, other cultures and other peoples. Moreover, it is the standard, the gauge by which everything must be measured—but what is this measuring? Notwithstanding these trends, recent scholarship raises, albeit indirectly, important concerns about the assumptions of truth and being in modernity, and which bear heavily on any attempt to not only define it conceptually, but to reflect fruitfully on the human condition within this…the modern cultural epoch.

A Question of Meaning

As the scholarship would attest, the problem of modernity is an exceedingly difficult one to define. Despite attempts to criticize and think through the problem, we so often reaffirm modernity and its basic assumptions. An alternative approach is raise the question not of truth per se, but of meaning, and how it defines and shapes the modern world. Nietzsche and Weber, had established approaches to the question of modernity along these lines. This approach not only emphasized the significance of values or mores (*Sitten*), but viewed them as central to the life of a culture or society.[16] With Nietzsche's work, especially, we find that *Sitten* function on a preconscious level, and to the extent that they have become habitualized and integrated (in a thoroughly practical way) into the thoughts and actions of a culture. Indeed, *Sitten* comprise the very core of a culture, its ethos, its spiritual germ; and which moreover make actions and thoughts meaningful. They are the *very* determiners of meaning to which specific modes of moral action are linked and expressed. Thus, what Nietzsche (and later Weber) has done is to challenge the ubiquitous autonomy with regarding to questions of culture, value and meaning. This challenge directs most forcefully not only toward the rationalized tendency for abstraction and homogenization, but also the assumption that reason can stand outside of the realm of moral action and to adjudicate according to the theoretical standards it has established for itself. As Aristotle reminds us in the *Ethics,* moral action itself as well as its ends are not (and cannot be) derivative from theoretical reason; but are fundamentally a value concern—viz., *Sitte*. In other words, moral actions are inextricably tied to meaning. Moreover, moral actions—as with the

[16] Nietzsche, Notebook, 19[39], Writings from the Early Notebooks, ed. Raymond Geuss and trans. Ladislaus Löb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). "*Practical* morality will suffer greatly from every collapse of a religion. A metaphysics of punishment and reward seems indispensable. If we could create *custom* (*Sitte*), a powerful custom! We would then also have morality. But custom is created through the *example of powerful personalities*. I do not count on *goodness* awakening in the mass of the wealthy, but one could lead them to a *custom*, to a duty towards tradition."

various and complex ways a good man may act in the world—are not executed according to some theoretical precept, and to think that is the case is to restrict, if not diminish entirely the meaning of these actions. To move outside the realm of meaning, as a theoretically rationalized form of inquiry does, is to subordinate meaning to a theoretical truth, and to confine moral action and moral purpose to an abstract and universal theoretical standard. Modernity attempts to do just this. Any number of rationalized domains in the modern world, e.g., the political, the social, the economic, etc, have as Marx suggested, estranged and alienated us from ourselves. The problem here is that self-alienation leads to meaninglessness and ultimately to nihilism. A rationalized system such as the one that undergirds modernity—and perhaps *is* modernity—forms the basis for its own existence, and to the extent that it becomes its own purpose. In other words, moral action and its orientation to any notion of the good life are predetermined, self-generative, and increasingly meaningless and nihilistic. Within this framework not only are the wondrous and myriad possibilities for being fully human severely delimited; but perhaps also is the possibility in the first instance for a dignified human existence.

This is not to imply that a rationalized world is meaningless; indeed, this is emphatically not the case. The values that undergird modern forms of rationalism, and by extension science, e.g., objectivity, transparency; distinctiveness, are by definition meaningful. The problem, however, stems from the fact that these values comprise the dominant value set in modernity, and thereby determine meaning within an array of other meaningful domains—e.g., the moral. In taking an objectivist stance, modern rationalism denies other horizons of meaning, and given that's its own meaningful domain is cast within the relatively narrow ambit of *theōria,* and through which its constructs itself and its world, modern rationalism paves the road to an increasing meaninglessness vis-à-vis the human condition.

The following analyses of the *Cogito* and its relation to the problem of modernity thoroughly depend upon a question of meaning. In order to advance into the depths of that question, it is necessary to establish some parameters. I wish to pursue the broad problem of modernity primarily through the question of individualism. Individualism, and especially as it relates to a notion of autonomy, is a foundational assumption in the modern world. As an Enlightenment value the notion of individualism is further undergirded by an array of rationalist assumptions that play out in the modern world in a complex and problematical way. Individualism is buttressed by ideology, and vice versa, which as Marcuse has observed, denies the possibility of dialectic, and thus the possibility of transcending the stagnate rationalism of the modern world. This is but one troublesome aspect of the representational reality that we have inherited from the seventeenth century, and shall serve as the *entrepôt* to the historical analyses that follow.

The Question of the Modern Individual

Though the modern definition of science and truth is central to the dissertation's main thrust of inquiry, the crucial significance of the problem extends more deeply into the very core of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European culture.[17] There can be no doubt that this culture was exceedingly vibrant in its creativity, and through a sort of restless movement that culture—the culture of the Baroque—unfurled and revealed itself in almost endless ways. What I offer here is an attempt (an *essai*) to probe into the creative dynamics of this culture; dynamics that are both elusive and labyrinthine in their complexity. Yet it is through them that the modern truths

[17] Within historical studies, especially, the term "culture" is rife with ambiguity with any number of approaches being deemed "cultural-historical" solely on the basis of the content they seek to interpret. An alternative approach—as the one employed here—is to raise the question of culture within a horizon of meaning. Thus, it aims to interpret a particular culture with respect to how meanings and practices cohere or don't cohere; but in any case, are expressed in and through a variety of cultural forms. I will more fully articulate this approach along with its various heuristics below.

are justified and which gave and continue to give them their animating force. This is to imply that the significance of the question extends beyond Cartesian concepts strictly considered, and thus to move into a realm of understanding operative on a more fundamental level. Furthermore, in framing the problem as a historical critique we not only acknowledge a history and a tradition to which we all belong, but recognize that we our engaged with it in meaningful ways. The project thus seeks to gain understanding of the historical tradition that has occasioned our present, but does so from a critically engaged fashion so as to at once affirm our absorption within the tradition and to attain a reflective distance from it.

This approach in certain ways follows a path initially opened by Gadamer in his work on philosophical hermeneutics, and which was further developed by Paul Ricoeur.[18] In this view, and to put it simplistically, the tradition is understood as a totality of "meanings," meanings that are operative in complex and subtle ways (as understood conceptually or metaphorically, and as mediated through thought or language), and which have a conditioning effect on the various historical moments within the tradition. The critical consciousness, to use Gadamer's words, allows for an authentic awareness and understanding of the anterior influences of that awareness; yet it's only through this critical understanding of the tradition as a living transmission, as Ricoeur might add, that we can embrace and engage it in the fullness of creative possibility. There are perhaps no accidents in history; yet almost paradoxically, there are no necessities. Rather, there is an array of conditions, possibilities and alternatives that combine in dynamically creative ways to form the historical moment. With this in mind, the historical critique here employed is both a reflective and a re-collective endeavor. As reflective, it appropriately

[18] See, for instance, Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans., by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (New York, Continuum, 2004) and Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

acknowledges the historical richness and complexity of the problem at hand, while seeking to understand the reciprocity of the various concepts, influences and conditions that have together combined to create "modernity." As re-collective it seeks to provide some stability to our understanding of the crisis of our own present as that crisis relates to an authentic awareness of our past. Moreover, it seizes the opportunity to reassess ourselves as "moderns" in light of certain fundamental assumptions; assumptions that in their silence are exceedingly powerful, and perhaps even more insidious.

The underlying assumptions in modernity are several. Among them one might include the following: an almost undiminished faith in Enlightenment "values" such as tolerance, autonomy, secularism and universal rights; a utopian sense of progress to which is applied the understanding that humanity is and will be increasingly emancipated from the woes of its historical existence; an essentialist-rationalist conception of truth that can be "instrumentalized" in the direct access of reality; and the related and underpinning assumption that truth is ordered according to the principle of representation, or in other words, the tacit and unshaken belief that the more accurate the representation, the more thoroughly accurate our understanding of the truth. And yet, these assumptions—some of which manifest in consciousness more readily than others—are nevertheless united by a common thread. The thread in question is that of the individual, i.e., the very notion of individualism itself, which enlarges and amplifies what it means to be "modern." In many ways the notion of the individual is the decisive and determining factor of all that is meaningful, legitimate and true in the modern age.[19] Though I have no intention of raising the

[19] The notion of "individuality" is a somewhat loaded term with a rich semantic history. Karl Mannheim noted that "the same word, or the same concept in most cases, means very different things when used by differently situated persons." See, Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (London: Harcourt, 1960), 245. For a treatment of this history and its varied development as it manifested in modern Europe and America since the eighteenth century, see Steven Lukes, *Individualism* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985). What I contend here is that the notion of individualism (or indeed individuality) is deeply problematic, and not only for being especially imprecise. There

problem of individualism directly—as there are several first-rate texts and monographs that have done so already—I am nevertheless drawn to the term, on the one hand, because of its vagueness and nebulosity, and on the other, because in this vagueness the notion is so thoroughly penetrating into so many facets of modern life.[20] As an integral feature of the modern world, individualism conditions the general patterns of modernity, and even to the extent that a "proper" and "good" life can only be thought-of in "individualistic" terms, even when such a life is reduced to a litany of wants and desires as well as approvals and aversions.

Part of the problem with the modern notion of individualism—and especially insofar as it is linked to Enlightenment notions of liberalism—is that it is exceedingly edified by ideology.[21] This particular ideology is historically linked to the French Revolution and finds an especially lucid expression in the 1788 pamphlet by the Abbé Sieyès, *"Qu'est-ce que le tiers-état?."* (see below) As an ideology, and as all ideologies do, it invokes a particular reality.[22] The ontological ground on which ideologies function—as they can only do in modernity—enables not only that

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was certainly something approaching "individuality" in the antique and medieval worlds, yet the shape it assumes in modernity, dangerous for a variety of reasons, announces itself through the full power of ideology. The ideological dimension of the problem is significant in its own right and awaits a fuller treatment elsewhere, but for the purpose of the introduce the problem at hand, I seek merely to suggest how thoroughly pervasive is the notion in our modern world, which in turn establishes the conditions not only for how we can "be," but what we can "be."

[20] Consider, for example, the array of layered complexities in such spheres as the social, the political and the economic, all of which derive their force—if only through ideology—by tacit appeal to the value of the individual. Most often there is no questioning of what individuality means; or how it relates to these spheres of action; or how and to what extent the dynamics between individual and collective play out.

[21] In the opening lines to the Second Book of *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville writes: "I think that in the civilized world there is no country less interested in philosophy than the United States. The Americans have no philosophical school of their own and are very little bothered by all those which divide Europe; they hardly know their names"…[and yet] "they possess, without ever having gone to the trouble of defining the rules, a certain philosophic methodology common to all of them…I discover that, in the majority of mental processes, each American has but recourse to the individual effort of his own reason. America is thus one of the countries in the world where the precepts of Descartes are least studied and most widely applied. We need not be surprised by that." [Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Gerald E. Bevan, (London: Penguin, 2003), 493-4]

[22] Following Marx' larger point as advanced in the *German Ideology*, see Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, trans. G.M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2014). It would seem that the modern notion of individuality as an outgrowth of a particular type of ideological state apparatus (though I dislike the term) at the same time essentializes what we mean by an individual, and thus negates its possibility.

we live in that particular "reality," but also, as its creators, to continue to edify its deepest assumptions and thereby reduce escape from its unreflective clutches. The problem of modernity is a many-headed hydra, and this is one avenue down which to raise that question and its larger historical implications. To that we shall now turn.

That so many presumably "know" what an "individual" is, the notion of individuality nevertheless remains strange in its familiarity, a sort of *terra incognita*; and thus serves as a "point of entry" into the problem this dissertation seeks to address. There can be no doubt that people have always had some intuitive understanding of themselves as "individuals," as distinctive from other human beings and other things; yet the contemporary understanding of this distinction extends beyond a simple "otherness," as experienced between one individual and another, and now connotes, almost surreptitiously, the *raison d'être* of human existence.[23] To illustrate this, one need only glance at the modern notion of the political insofar as it, on the one hand, connotes how individuality in the modern world is conceived *prima facie*, and, on the other hand, serves in that vein as the aegis of possibility for other modes of individuality to the extent that they are conceived and developed.[24] In large part this is attributable to the hegemonic

[23] Related to this, Norbert Elias observed throughout a career devoted, in many ways, to the development of social configurations in modernity, the primacy of the "I" in relation to the "We" in questions of personal identity. Though he develops these observations in *Court Society*, translated by Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon, 1983) and *The Civilizing Process* (New York: Blackwell, 2000), he most clearly and directly articulated this idea in *The Society of Individuals*, translated by Edmund Jephcott (New York: Basel Blackwell, 1991), 156-162, *et passim*.

[24] To a large degree this is attributable to that "grand event" of modernity, the French Revolution, which among other things, has conditioned our reality in one of its dominant modes, and furthermore, and rather intrusively, determines in large part our perception of other modes of reality, i.e., in political terms. The *locus classicus* for this, in my opinion, is the Abbé Sieyès' famous pamphlet, *"Qu'est-ce que le tiers-état?,"* which provided what would become a blueprint for the Revolution itself, and indeed a veritable manifesto for modern trends yet to follow. Sieyès envisioned France not as a realm of corporative estates, as was the traditional precedent, each with its own obligations and duties, and in the specific cases of the First and Second Estates, its specific privileges. Rather, he proclaimed France a nation of individuals, and specifically an *association* of free individuals possessive of rights—in contradistinction to privileges—who live under common laws of their own making. The association of free individuals Sieyès described was, in fact, comprised of the same individuals who allowed the nation to not only survive, but to prosper. In this way Sieyès justified the nation almost exclusively on the basis of utility. Its claims to legitimacy depended upon the degree of usefulness assessed of private individuals, and to the extent that the fruits of their labors manifested in publically beneficial ways, i.e., at the level of the nation. Gone

influence of liberalism, especially its identification in the nineteenth century with constitutionalism, which in its wake has brought the question of individualism to an almost universal consciousness, and in a most formidable way.

The politicization of certain Enlightenment values, namely autonomy and the emphasis on natural rights, serves to rationally justify the individual at the level of the law, yet perhaps more importantly, it preserves and protects the individual's actions in all other spheres, which are perhaps those most significant from the modern point-of-view—the economic, the social, the religious, etc. For example, in view of the problem of the individual, and certainly as cast within the vein of liberalism, it is arguable that modern man is first and foremost a *homo economicus*, and by extension a private individual set to the task of his own comfort and well-being. To the extent the political justifies the individual at the level of the law, so does the economic justify the political at the level of utility and material gain, which is to reduce, rather problematically, politics and the individual to the terms of each other, and in a most limited way.[25] No longer does the political constitute that realm of the *vita activa* whereby an individual citizen measures and is measured by a collective sense of justice;[26] and moreover, no longer does it constitute a realm in which he is engaged with, and in the fullest way possible, the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. Rather, the political and the individual are both reduced to policy, and indeed a rationally conceived policy that is in turn rationally administered so as to affect the most utilitarian ends possible, especially as they are understood economically. Yet, the

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were the traditional, institutional frameworks of meaningful association, together with the oaths and honors, duties and obligations that had once sustained them and gave them meaning in a way that transcended the individuals themselves.

[25] On this point, see Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

[26] On the question of justice, and its relation to the good life, for example, see Aristotle's *Politics* (henceforth *Pol*.), III.1278b-1281b., *Loeb Classical Library*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

process continues only to manifest in other social spheres, which increasingly standardizes, homogenizes and otherwise delimits the possibility of human moral action and creativity. In these terms, the whole of culture has seemingly entered into a sort of ideological stagnation.

If the liberalist strand within modern culture has reduced the political and the individual to policy, and especially a policy consonant with the tactics and maneuverings of a *laissez-faire* economics, Herbert Marcuse has offered a similarly damning picture with respect to the technological-productive apparatus of modern industrial society.[27] The two are most certainly not unrelated, and together present two sides of the homogenizing and leveling tendencies of modernity; and especially in terms of reductionism, raise significant questions for the individual, and on a variety of levels. That liberalism has seemingly cast the individual as a *homo economicus*, Marcuse's analyses of modern industrial society would have him a *homo technologicus.*[28] What is striking about Marcuse's analyses of industrial society is that he casts it as an ideological critique, which takes as its theme the "instrumentalized rationality," often identified with the Frankfurt School of which he was once part, and carries it to its logical conclusion: whereby the process of rationalization finally becomes "irrational." In this view modern industrial society—both as institution and as individual—becomes a creature of the rationalized processes that underpin it; caught up in and determined by a technological framework of domination. Marcuse demonstrates that though this society is rational, and even recognized as such, the very acceptance of the rationalized structure on which it depends (and which is often an unwitting acceptance), is ironically irrational.

[27] Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991).

[28] What is significant here, as will become clear below, is that there is no marked difference between the *homo economicus* and the *homo technologicus* as they represent two variations of what Hannah Arendt called the *homo faber*, or the "man that makes things." In both instances, man is confined to that realm of action that focuses on utility, and furthermore maintains that utility is the ultimate source of value.

At this point Marcuse can raise the question of ideology, which he sees not necessarily as a distortion of reality, but in many ways constitutive of reality itself. The reality he describes vis-à-vis modern industrial culture is *status quo*, or *in stat*, which is to imply stagnation, and further suggests that the repressive dominance of its characteristic one-dimensionality, i.e., the reduction of individuals and society to the concerns of production and consumerism (on the basis of which thoughts and actions are coordinated), negates the possibility of revolution. Not surprisingly, Marcuse understands this process historically, and if the current ideology is unsurpassable in its stagnation, he maintains that it is so because the rationality of modern industrial society is sufficiently advanced to drift into irrationality, which consequently stagnates the dialectical process and furthermore denies the possibility of transcending the present historical moment.[29] In other words, modern society is an automaton reduced to the processes by which it ceaselessly and meaninglessly reproduces itself in the name of utility. Caught in its desire for the latest technological gadget, or other utile object that seemingly makes life easier, more efficient or even more novel, modern industrial society becomes objectified by the same processes it thinks it controls. If individuals within this ideological orientation perceive limitations, they are perceived merely as obstacles solvable within the framework of technology—which always implies more technology. A society that employs technology for the sake of technology is both automatonic and irrational; yet the difficulty, as Marcuse astutely perceived, relies on the fact

[29] In terms of history, Marcuse reads this problem from a Marxist, and ultimately a Hegelian perspective, which placed emphasis upon the notion of contradiction in the dialectical process. Since there is no negative or contradictory rational element within modern industrial society, at least one that is not either immediately repulsed or absorbed within it, there is no possibility of transcendence. Marcuse points out that the positivist frameworks established by the likes of Condercet, Comte and Saint-Simon represented the struggle against metaphysics and idealism etc., which they deemed regressive modes of thinking. By contrast, positivism champions the primacy of factual knowledge as a verification of cognitive thought, and from this stemmed the belief that all knowledge is progressive only insofar as it is factually certain and exact. Thus, the positivist model effectively becomes the technological reality, which harmonizes positivism's criterion for truth, facts and practice. In a reality dominated by positivism, the "creative overcoming" engendered by the dialectic is an impossibility. In this way, [p]hilosophic thought turns into affirmative thought; the philosophic critique criticizes within the societal framework and stigmatizes non-positive notions as mere speculation, dreams or fantasies." See, Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, 172.

that modern society is its own closed, experiential dimension within which the only frame of reference is itself and the technological apparatus it employs. Modern society is thus both solipsistic and ahistorical, which makes it difficult to achieve a critical and reflective distance from which to overcome it. The root of this difficulty for Marcuse is again ideological.

Whereas the traditional Marxist interpretation of ideology (as superstructure) is understood as detached from reality (as means and modes of production), and thus a distortion of that reality in false consciousness, Marcuse denies this clear-cut distinction, and understands ideology as an operational concept working within the process of production itself. With this move Marcuse refrains from a mere inversion of the traditional Marxist formulation of ideology, while allowing it a foundational role insofar as it is functionally constitutive of the social reality with which it is merged. Moreover, as an operative concept ideology now can be understood as coterminous with reality; however, because its functionality is foundational, ideology governs, and even dictates, thought and expression within the social reality, and to this extent is totalitarian.[30] Yet, the modes by which the ideology manipulates and controls society are not heavy-handed or repressive in terms of terrorism. Rather, we are to understand the totalitarian character of modern industrial society as entirely homogenous, and this homogeneity becomes justified ideologically through action, i.e., the various ways it governs the productive/technological apparatus and thereby determines the attitudes, needs and aspirations of

[30] Though I do not wish to drift into the significance of linguistics and semiotics, I should note Marcuse's recognition of the significance of language. The governance ideology has over thought and expression is achievable only at the level of language. He maintains that when language becomes closed, i.e., hypnotically and authoritatively ritualized, "it pronounces, and by virtue of the power of the apparatus, establishes facts—it is self-validating enunciation." (Marcuse, 101) Roland Barthes' influence is readily apparent in assessing the power and influence of a ritual-authoritarian language, and insofar as it is the language "*propre à tous les régimes d'autorité*… [Roland Barthes, *Le Degré zero de l'écriture,* (Paris, Editions du Seuil), 37-40]. For Marcuse "language controls by reducing the linguistic forms and symbols of reflection, abstraction, development, contradiction; by substituting images for concepts." (Marcuse, 102-3) Thus, the images are the technical apparatus itself along with the various modes by which it is operative: production, consumption, buying, selling and the otherwise active ways one participates within the structure.

individuals. In this sense, Marcuse saw modern industrial society not only as hegemonic and imperious, but uncritical and self-perpetuating; it extends imperiously into all realms of human discourse and action, shaping and determining the entirety of the world and the individuals within it, while at the it same time it repulses or absorbs the alternatives and possibilities that stand against it. Individuals thus become one-dimensional, and are fettered from the possibility of realizing themselves in any way beyond the technological apparatus.

Tocqueville's astute observations of America in the 1830s gave him occasion to reflect deeply on the ever-increasing condition of social equality and its relation to individualism while directing his eye toward specific concerns for the perversion that an individualist-inspired mode of living threatened to become. When men are no longer bound to something transcendent to themselves as individuals, e.g., an institution, a tradition, a set of customs, the attendant lack of duty and obligation implicit here thus degenerates into a most abject form of isolation, and perhaps even tends toward utter meaninglessness. And, though men may be creators of their own destinies, often in a most insignificant way, they remain imprisoned "in the isolation of their own hearts."[31] The danger here, as Tocqueville understood so well, is that modernity understands everyone as an individual, each possessing and in turn expressing that which is ostensibly unique and special to this individuality.[32] Thus, a type of egoism overtakes and replaces anything positively associated with individualism, from which it degenerates further into a perversion of self-interestedness.[33] The basic mode of being and living in the modern world hinges on the

[31] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Gerald E. Bevan, (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 589.

[32] *The Society of Individuals*, pp. 157-58. By contrast, as Elias notes, the classical, Latin notion of *persona* referred to something concrete—as with a particular instantiation of a man within a family or tribe—though there was no concept of individuality as a self-standing, independent, personal entity. There simply was no need for such a notion to be expressed in Latin; it was a world too dominated by the "we" and meaningful associations in which a citizen took part.

[33] Ayn Rand's egoistically formulated doctrine of the "virtue of selfishness," is perhaps the most contentiously famous version of the extreme individualism against which Tocqueville had so earnestly warned.

importance of individuality *qua* individuality, and is a notion so entrenched in the "collective Western unconscious" that it occasions no need for reflection, questioning or criticism. Modern individualism simply *is* and thus is left as an "un-thought-of" assumption. Beguiled by the simplicity of the question of individuality, it becomes relegated to the status of an "academic question", or worse still the status of a "non-question. Yet in the midst of this beguilement the complex, intimate, and perhaps even necessary, relation of individualism to modernity subtly begins to reveal itself to us, along with its deeper theoretical difficulties.

Depending on which side of the epochal line they privilege, historians conventionally address the question of individualism, as either a definitively modern phenomenon or one with various and definite medieval precedents.[34] In any case, the question of the individual is a deeply cultural concern and certainly one with a meaningful historical dimension. From this one might inquire: what is this modern notion of individualism, exactly? Why is it significant historically, and what makes it unique from others, e.g. the medieval or ancient? Moreover, how and by what means does the modern manifestation of individualism understand itself, and how is that understanding determined and justified? On one level, the modern formulation of individualism—and certainly in its classical Enlightenment expression—places itself in opposition to the traditional, holistic understanding of society, and to the extent that this abstract notion of individualism recognizes itself as the very ground of possibility for personal

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Proceeding from *laissez-faire* capitalism, which she saw as the only type of arrangement for maximizing the possibility of individual self-realization, Rand advocated that the individual's life (and by extension survival) not only determines value, but is the dominant value to which all other interests are subordinated. See Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness: A New Concept of Egoism* (New York: Signet Books, 1964).

[34] On the question of medieval individuality, see for example, Collin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual: 1050-1200* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) and Walter Ullmann, *Individual and Society in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press: 1966). On individuality as it manifested in the Renaissance, the classic text is still Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, tr. S.C.G. Middlemore (London: Penguin, 1990); and more recently, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1980) John Jeffries Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism* (New York: Palgrave McMillan: 2004).

independence and self realization. I would add that individualism, so conceived, further manifests not only through relations of power and influence, i.e., the general patterns of our world, but is enrooted in the very fabric of modern existence, and translates in some way or another into almost every facet of human thought, action and sensibility. Through his work on comparative anthropology, Louis Dumont observed, rather interestingly, individualism as a problem of values (a significant problem to which I will attend below), and specifically one involving the relation of values to ideas and vice versa.[35] Dumont's observations of modern societies revealed what he described as a "configuration of ideas and values" centered on individualism, and from which he concluded individualism to be the "cardinal value of modern societies."[36] The dominance of this value, as with all values, is attributable to its fundamentality, which operates not only at the level of social practice, but also on that of ideology.[37] Dumont understands ideology as a social set of representations or a set of values and ideas within a society that are configured in a particular way. In the case of modernity, as Dumont notes, the ideological configuration depends upon the dominant and valorizing feature of individualism, which is a point perhaps beyond dispute. Yet, his understanding of the modern notion of individualism raises some very important concerns, namely the treatment of modern individualism in accordance with a rise in ideological power, and second, his tracing of the historical roots of this relationship to the nominalism of the fourteenth century.

The Question of Ideology

[35] See Louis Dumont, *Essays on Individualism: Modern Ideology in Anthropological Perspective* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). Dumont observed, on a global level, a complex dynamic between "individual and traditional values," which in turn combine in novel and interesting ways. What he offers here is a history of the genesis and development of "individualism" as ideology.

[36] Ibid. pp. 16-17. The question of value is especially interesting, and is one we shall attend to below.

[37] Ibid. p. 268 *et passim.*

In terms of ideology, Dumont is correct to stress the inseparability of values and ideas, and certainly as they manifest in modern cultures. Yet, ideology is itself a derivative concern, and as such is a distinctive and defining feature of modernity with a decidedly rational basis. Though it has various meanings, the broad definition of ideology is often considered as a subjective dimension of social life, or as a type of "social consciousness," and in accordance with this broad understanding, the articulations of Marx, Durkheim and Althusser have proven influential.[38] Durkheim understood ideology as a social representation, or a collectivity of representations which he further understood as "social facts" insofar as they had "real" effects, i.e., the manifestation and development of social forms such as institutions, patterns of action and social habits etc.[39] The individual, though important in its role as the material basis, or the carrier of these collective representations, is nevertheless subordinated in significance to the representations themselves. In other words, the representations emerge through the interrelation of individuals but are significant only at the level of the collectivity or when they become "social facts." As such, they regulate the actions of individuals; and though, on a certain level, these actions may be free and autonomous, they gain their "real" significance only insofar as they are expressed collectively in a variety of social forms.[40]

In many ways, Durkheim's understanding of social representation stands opposed to what would later become known as methodological individualism. This doctrine originally emerged

[38] Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1998); Emile Durkheim, *Rules of Sociological Method* (New York: Free Press, 1982) and *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995); on the creation of the individual in a capitalist, ideological image see Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, trans. G.M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2014); Also, Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989); Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* (London: Merlin Press, 1967; For an interesting overview, though ultimately one with which I disagree, see Herman Schmid, "On the Origin of Ideology" *Acta Sociologica* 24 (1981): 57-73; also, H.M. Drucker, "Marx's Concept of Ideology" *Philosophy* 47 (1972): 152-61.

[39] *In toto*: values.

[40] Durkheim, *Rules of Sociological Method*.

in the work of the Austrian economist, Carl Menger, who endeavored to understand complex economic phenomena—and the laws that explain them—in terms of an atomistic methodology, which in simple terms emphasized the fundamentality of individual action in the economic sphere.[41] Weber applied this notion to sociology, which allowed him to see, in contrast to Durkheim, that social action and the complexes (or in Durkheim's language, social representations) that are its products, can only be understood in terms of individuals acting in particular ways. And, though social forms as institutions, social habits, or "individual types" etc., may be understood as real, in the sense that meaning is applied to them, for Weber it is the undergirding individualism of this dynamic that properly constitutes the "real."[42]

The construction of ideologies, no matter if they are viewed as anchored in social structures or formations, or individual consciousnesses, nevertheless share a common thread that dissolves the apparent opposition—consciousness.[43] For both Durkheim and Weber, their

[41] Carl Menger, *The Principles of Economics* (Auburn, Alabama: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 2007); see also, Lorenzo Infantino, "Economists and Sociologists Compared: Carl Menger and Georg Simmel, Ludwig von Mises and Max Weber" in *Individualism in Modern Thought: From Adam Smith to Hayek* (London: Routledge, 1998) and Lars Udehn, "The Changing Face of Methodological Individualism," *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002): 479-507.

[42] See Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), especially Chapter 1.

[43] I am not in any way attributing to Weber an ideological orientation; however, I simply draw the reader's attention to him vis-à-vis the question of individualism, which despite the Goethean tradition in which his education—and by extension his understanding of self and world—was cast, the modern world, I believe, has increasingly misrepresented certain fundamental points, which in turn are employed to great effect in the cultivation of modernity's hyper-individualism. *Vide*: the *homo economicus* of the Western free market economy.

Again, the literature on the question of ideology is vast, and so also is that which brings individualism within its scope, though the concern for individualism is not always cast as an ideological study *per se*. See, for example, Tibor Machan *The Moral Case for the Free Market Economy: A Philosophical Argument*, (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988). On the basis of the economic theories of Milton Friedman, Machan argues that a fundamental concern for the individual's life, liberty and property, justifies the market economy and offers the moral space for each individual to possess and exercise his moral agency in a fully respected fashion. (131) Machan's uncritical understanding of individualism tends to the pejorative side of ideology, and in its limitations even caricatures the position he endeavors to defend. For an assessment of ideology sympathetic to the concerns of methodological individualism, see Gary Alan Fine and Kent Sandstrom, "Ideology in Action: A Pragmatic Approach to a Contested Concept" in *Sociological Theory* 11(1993): 21-38. See also, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Norwell, Massachusetts Anchor Press, 1967) for a treatment of social institutions and patterns, e.g. science and ideology, as an epistemological problem and specifically one derived from phenomenology. For a position that attempts to counter

understanding of what constitutes "realness" in society depends upon consciousness, which moreover privileges the relationship between subject/object, internal/external, ideal/material, individual/collective, etc. Though he underscores the significance of structures in the formation of a social reality, Durkheim's formulation is still reliant upon a general theory of representation.[44] Similarly, the patterned action in society Weber seeks to understand is inclusive of the subjective meaningfulness as understood and justified by individuals in specific groups. To this end, and in true Kantian fashion, Weber employed the "*ideal type"* as a heuristic to aid in the interpretive understanding of social action and the subjective meaning on which it depends.

As a representation, ideology exists at the level of *theōria,* which in its modern formulation (and to some extent in the ancient) not only implies adherence to an abstract structure of ideas, but also marks a certain distance and detachment. Ideology, and in Dumont's analyses, an "individualist ideology," denotes a theoretical abstraction, which at once complicates the problem of individualism and makes exceedingly dire its implications. At the very least, theory treats of the individual as an object; itself the recipient of the calculating and

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the genesis of ideology as seated in individualism, i.e., a subjectivity, see Herman Schmid, "On the Origin of Ideology," *Acta Sociologica* 24 (1981): 57-73. Schmid goes so far as to stress that ideology is not a problem of consciousness, but one that involves "the objective social structure," which is, in part, true; yet Schmid exaggerates the Durkheimian notion that views individuals as a "material substratum" for collectivist representations, which Schmid sees as "logically prior" to ideological relations. For more historically oriented approaches see Donald Kelley, *The Beginnings of Ideology: Consciousness and Society in the French Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), which ties ideology to religious consciousness in sixteenth-century France; also, Pierre Manent, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism,* trans. Rebecca Balinski (Trenton: Princeton University Press, 1996), especially his emphasis on liberalism as a "defining attribute" in the unfolding of Western political history; and specifically in relation to the individual's endeavors to be always freer, whether such action endeavors to liberate the individual from the political power of revealed religion or from the mechanisms of the individual's own creation.

[44] "[R]epresentations, once they exist, continue to exist in themselves…they are realities which, while maintaining an intimate relation with the substratum [the individual], are to a certain extent independent of it." (Durkheim, "Individual and Collective Representations" as cited in Jan Jacob de Wolf, "Wundt and Durkheim: A Reconsideration of a Relationship," *Anthropos* 82(1987): 1-23.

measuring determinations of modern science, which in turn poses serious challenges to and delimits the possibility of being fully human.

Yet, such a path to ideological abstraction of the individual was not a necessary or forgone conclusion. The celebrated poetical and charismatic descriptions by Goethe and Burckhardt demonstrate resistance to this path and an embracing of the possibilities to what an individual might be otherwise. In their texts, one may find the individual variously characterized in terms of *Bildung* and self-formation as well as *dignitas,* autonomy, and privacy.[45] Despite the remarkable and wonderful ways a Burckhardtian or a Goethean notion of individualism focuses on and celebrates the potential by which an individual can exude and express his own unique and creative individuality, the modern individual by contrast, especially in its most recent manifestations, is predominantly—and even first and foremost—reduced to an abstraction. The political and by extension, the economic, representations of individuality (as abstractions) are the most notable and forceful in modern culture, the significance of which is brought out through the power of ideology. Indeed, and as I suggest above, much of this emanates from the French Revolution, and specifically the Abbé Sieyès' classic pamphlet of 1788-89, *"Qu'est-ce que le tiers-état?"* [*"*What is the Third Estate?"], which continues to influence the Western world in its understanding of the individual, and by extension the political and economic reality in which they take part. In this formulation the individual is by and large considered to be autonomous, i.e., a fundamentally rational individual endowed with the reflective and critical capabilities so as

[45] For Burckhardt, see the much celebrated and, perhaps equally misunderstood Part II of *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. For Goethe, the question of the individual is a veritable leitmotif, and is thus a well-developed thread throughout many of his texts; however, the notion of the individual, especially as it relates to the individual's development of himself in accordance with his inner-most nature, and for its own sake, is most famously and beautifully expressed in the autobiography, *Aus meinem Leben: Dichtung und Wahrheit* (Tübingen: 1811-33). For more specific expressions of the various characteristics of individuality, as emblematic of the Renaissance, see the Pico della Mirandola, *Oratio de hominis dignatate* (for *dignitas* and autonomy) and Leon Battista Alberti, *I Libri della famiglia* (on privacy and the "law of the household").

to realize his condition as fully as possible. Again, the autonomous individual here represented is limited to the political and the economic spheres, and when analyzed in reference to European industrial society of the nineteenth and twentieth century, as Marcuse has done, we quickly realize autonomy means the ability to freely participate in any number of stupefying activities be they political, economic, social or otherwise.[46] As Marcuse noted, this type of autonomy is only deceptively liberating, and can be made into a powerful instrument of domination.

The development of the human sciences during the nineteenth century certainly serves as a powerful *explanandum* for the increased tendency to treat of the individual abstractly in all realms of action and knowledge. [47] This begs the question: out of the all the wondrously multitudinous ways in which a human can be human, why does our understanding of humanity drift so far from the concrete, and into the realm of the abstract? Aristotle had understood politics as a realm (the polis itself) of "just" action that not only allowed the good to manifest, it enabled a citizen to measure and to assess himself freely in relation to the good so as to live the fullest life possible.[48] Modern politics, by contrast, looks to the good only insofar as it is conceived on a utilitarian foundation, which is to advance from the idea that politics is a human science, i.e., a body of theoretical knowledge that assesses man *vis-à-vis* his social and historical reality. For politics to function in terms of utilitarianism, and indeed modern politics in general, an individual must first be reduced to an abstraction where he can be assessed on the basis of value

[46] See Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*.

[47] As one might expect, the literature on the subject is vast, and thus any list is limited. On the political, see for example, Alexis de Tocqueville's classic texts, *De la Démocratie en Amérique* (1835) *and L'Ancien Régime et la Révoution* (1856), Pierre Manent, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*, translated by Rebecca Belinski (Trenton: Princeton University Press, 1994), and Michel Crozier, *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon* (Piscataway, New Jersey, Transaction Publishers: 2009); on the economic, see Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Penguin, 2002), *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press,1978); and for the Austrian School of Economics and liberalism in the economic sphere, see for example, Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics* (Liberty Fund: 2007) and F. A. Hayek, *Individualism and Economic Order* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); for religion, see Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (New York: John Knox Press, 1992).

[48] *Pol*., III.1278b-1281b, *et passim*.

and utility, affirming, in part, Foucault's technology of domination. Furthermore, to conceive of the individual in terms of politics, religion, the economy, and even morally and epistemologically, is to place him on an abstract plane effectively bound by this notion of individualism. Furthermore, the ideology translates quite powerfully into society's various realms, e.g., the political, economic, and religious, which in turn determines and justifies knowledge and action within those realms. Thus, the problem gains an epistemological and ethical dimension, which Dumont acknowledges, but does not fully exploit in his analyses. In any case, the significance of the political, and by extension the economic, is powerfully stated insofar as it creates widespread and deeply pervasive ideologies.

Theōria and the "Abstracted" Individual

Individualism in the modern world is perhaps an irresistible force enchanting us with promises of our own self governance and possibility of great progress without odious submission to tradition and collective belief. [49] One need only glance at the commonplace understanding, or rather misunderstanding, of the modern, autonomous individual. The modern understanding of the autonomous individual is somewhat of a platitude, and certainly runs counter to Kant's original formulation of the same. Kant's enthusiasm for the possibility of human action in the moral sphere expressed a similarly normative, hopefulness to place morality on a firm foundation not unlike that which he had placed the natural sciences in the *First Critique*. The realization of this possibility addressed directly a concern with self-interest and self-absorption; and it was upon this concern that Kant's understanding of the autonomous individual holds its crucial

[49] The heirs to this sentiment are many. It is perhaps most systematically expressed in the utilitarian philosophies of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, namely through Jeremy Bentham and J.S. Mill. Also, the various and enduring expressions of methodological individualism continue to preserve the sentiment, especially via the doctrinaire liberalism of the Austrian School of Economics, and those who were its leading-lights, Ludwig von Mises and F. A. Hayek).

significance. Though not a ground in itself, the notion of autonomy presupposes rationality and thus becomes regulative not only for ethical action and the possibility of a science of morality, but it significantly underpinned his idea for a universal history of mankind.[50] He asserted that humanity is an end-in-itself, and thus each individual at once has a rational obligation to himself as an individual, and a meritorious obligation—first as an idea and then as a universal law—to humanity as a whole.[51] Rather significantly Kant's rationalized autonomy delimits any one man's freedom of action insofar as he willingly submits to the "idea" of a universal law commanding benevolent action on behalf of his fellow man. The modern understanding of individuality, at least in more recent expressions, drifts far away from this Kantian sense of obligation, and has collapsed thus more and more into self-absorption, self-interest and entitlement. Kant's placement within history—at a distinct moment in the German Empire during the late eighteenth century—could still occasion, if only in an idea, an understanding of autonomy such that individuals through their various obligations to themselves and each other could exist meaningfully within the world. Though influenced by the Enlightenment ideal, Kant was sufficiently medieval in his understanding of the moral universe to still see obligations as the sustaining sinews of that universe. With that understanding, the significance of the whole of humanity, as a moral and historical totality surpassed that of any one individual.

Not so long ago Hannah Arendt reassessed the problem of the human condition in view of the tragic reality of the mid-twentieth century.[52] For Arendt the question hinged largely upon a historical treatment of certain modes of human action—labor, work, the social and the political—which she observed as increasingly overtaken by and redefined in terms of *theōria*.

[50] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, translated by H.J Paton (New York: Harper Perennial, 1964); and "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View" in *Kant: On History*, translated by Lewis White Beck (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Library of Liberal Arts, 2001).

[51] Famously known as Kant's "Kingdom of Ends."

[52] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*.

By way of a long and detailed historical trajectory, she viewed the original Platonic and Aristotelian separation of a contemplative life (*vita contemplativa*) from an active life (*vita activa*) as culminating in modernity through an abject form of world alienation. The significant problem of world alienation subsumes the concern for individuality insofar as contemplation, as *theōria* in its various forms, effectively occasioned a retreat of the world into the individual where all worldly activities, mundane and beautiful, obtained both their possibility and their value solely in terms of care and prosperity of the individual self. What is more, individuals and the broader notion of individuality became "objectified" within a larger structure of process and utility underpinned, as they are, by the various applications of *theōria.* Man is thus left utterly alienated and, even the supposed attempts that appear to save him from a despairing isolation, viz. the internet, the process of globalization and networks of association more generally, only further divorce him from fully living, moving and acting in the world. As Arendt correctly observed, the hallmark of the modern age is effectively a type of "worldlessness" occasioned on the one hand by this retreat of the world into the individual, and on the other, by an eagerness to escape the world and into a transcendence expressed in the infinite possibility of life as guaranteed by modern science.[53] In other words, life is reduced to the hegemony of an abstract and theoretically infinite process. Life effectively becomes an idea, or theoretical conception, in which the highest good is understood in terms of attaining the everlasting life of the genus

[53] With respect to the second instance, Arendt saw the launch of *Sputnik* in 1957 as a culminating moment, which along with the destructive potential of the atomic age in general, ushered forth new ways in which to reflect on the capacities of human reason. Here, *The Human Condition* extends Arendt's concern previously articulated almost a decade before in the *Origins of Totalitarianism* that "Progress and Doom are two sides of the same medal…," which is to suggest an undergirding existential significance vis-à-vis the human condition as understood in terms of theoretical possibility. See the *Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1976), p. xii. The hopefulness of this modern age expresses the belief that a notion of infinite progress will overcome the possibility of unimaginable doom; modernity does not see that both paths lead to nihilism. As this sentiment is expressed through the vision of medical science and the possibility of extreme longevity of life, Arendt notes that "[t]his future man, whom the scientists tell us they will produce in no more than a hundred years, seems to be possessed by a rebellion against existence…" (*The Human Condition*, p.2) Thus, we've exchanged the finitude of meaningful human existence for odious nihilism insofar as quantity of life substitutes for quality and the full embrace of all the dimensions of human existence.

humanity as gradually realized through the progress of science.[54] Thus, the world as the realm in which all human relationships and affairs are entwined—the very *topos* from which all human action and thought derives meaning—presents a concern for humanity only insofar as it is a creature of modern science, subordinated to its theories and processes.

Arendt's historical and phenomenological analysis of traditional forms of human activity,[55] i.e., her delineation of how these modalities originally appeared historically and, moreover, how they transformed and ultimately were misrepresented by the modern age in frightfully stirring ways, serves as a powerful exegesis of the realities of modern existence. The questions to emerge from her analyses are as rich as the descriptions she provides, and though we may know the general contours and even the specific details of the historical transformation by which the capacity for action became hopelessly separated from the capacity for thought, we need to proceed deeper into the constituent necessities on which these transformations depended and which continue to derive their animating force. Fruitful thought and reflection on the cultural complexities to which alienation and worldlessness redound is perhaps only an initiating stage, and therefore demands inquiry into the hidden dynamics of this transformation, especially as these dymanics are fundamentally operative.

Indeed, this is to probe into the *mathesis*, or the ordering schema by which knowledge and action in modernity are grounded and regulated, and by which the modern notion of individuality, for example, derives its meaning. Foucault's stratagem in the *Order of Things*,

[54] Again, Arendt is thinking of *Sputnik*, but only in its role as a powerful metaphor for the whole of modern science and its dehumanizing possibilities. On life as the highest good, see Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 313-20, *et passim*.

[55] Arendt understands human activity in relation to specific human conditions. These activities in accordance with their specific conditions are: labor/life; work/world; and action/plurality. In the last instance, she means the political and social realms as modeled on the ancient *polis*. Moreover, the *polis* is the realm of the *bios politikos*, and connotes the *sine qua non* of full human possibility, which is to say, only through participation in the life of the *polis* can citizens, in all their individualized plurality, be fully human.

arguably his most insightful work, attempted to do just this.[56] In what he called an "archaeology of the human sciences," Foucault endeavored to describe how empirical knowledge within a given time and culture attained regularity and consistency, i.e., through a relationship between facts and the ordering, yet historically varying, structure of language. To this end, his notion of the *episteme* was central, which he understood as a foundational structure that not only grounds reality (as the order of things), but determines how we reflect upon that reality. What is more, the *episteme* exists as a "positive unconscious," which at once eludes consciousness and is integral to it, and through its various modalities allows the ordering structure itself, i.e., the *episteme,* to be experienced in a powerful and unmediated way.[57] In the *Order of Things,* Foucault is concerned primarily with shifts in *epistemic* structures from the period of the Renaissance, in which knowledge was ordered by theories of correspondence, to the schemes of natural orders and theories of representation, as typified in *l'Âge classique,* and finally to the birth of the human sciences in the nineteenth century where man, in his current form (as both subject and object), makes his emerge

Foucault did not merely pose a question of changing knowledge structures and the discursive regularities occasioned by them. Rather, his project was first and foremost an historical reflection upon the emergence of modernity as expressed, especially, in the threshold between *l'Age classique* and the nineteenth century. For Foucault, the question of modernity

[56] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1994).

[57] Foucault outlines his project in the Forward to *The Order of Things*. Specifically his notion of the "positive unconscious," see p. xi. However, it was in the subsequently published *Archeology of Knowledge* where he articulated a definition of the *episteme* on this idea of a "positive unconscious." He defines it thus: "By *episteme*, we mean, in fact, the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems…[it] is not a form of knowledge (*connaissance*) or type of rationality which, crossing the boundaries of the most varied sciences, manifests the sovereign unity of a subject, a spirit, or a period; it is the totality of relations that can be discovered, for a given period, between the sciences when one analyses them at the level of discursive regularities. See, Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 191.

centers on the "recent invention" of man, which finds him as both the foundation of knowledge and the object of that knowledge. As opposed to the classical *episteme* where knowledge proceeded on the basis of a universal *mathesis* through which perceived variances are ordered and homogenized in terms of mathematics and taxonomies, Foucault saw the modern *episteme*, and moreover, its implications for man, as decidedly more problematic. With the advent of the modern *episteme* the ordering dynamic shifts from what Foucault saw as an "ideal of perfect mathematicization" to one that, by comparison, is exceedingly complex, impure and confused.[58] We're given to understand that much of the confusion stems from the intermingling within the *episteme* itself of various domains of thought, i.e., theoretical schema within a limited range of inquiry from which knowledge is obtained.[59] These domains of thought include the purely mathematical; the applied mathematical; the scientific insofar as the sciences are established upon principles that in turn establish causal relations between actions and things; and also, the domain of philosophical reflection. In other words, the modern *episteme* represents a realm where the domains of the mathematical and the philosophical combine in a problematical way, especially insofar as the most significant questions as they relate to man. This is to say that the philosophies of life and action are understood within a confused theoretical domain overwhelmingly influenced by the standards of truth imposed by the empirical and mathematical sciences. As Foucault notes, it is the complexities of the modern *episteme*, and especially those intermediary realms within the various domains of knowledge that comprise it, that the danger of

[58] *The Order of Things*, pp. 346-48.

[59] Foucault, following Husserl, refers to these dimensions as regional ontologies. The implication here is that in the specific ways by which these ontologies manifest, a thoroughly "Enlightenment" construction of the world emerges. This is to say, through the application of any number of limited theoretical schemas, not only is the *episteme* revealed as functional, but through the obtainment of knowledge, as the gradual capture of reality, the dominant definition of truth—as representation—is edified.

the modern *episteme* makes itself known—the "anthropologization" of all knowledge. [60]

Within these "dangerous intermediaries" the human sciences emerge, each anthropologically centered and each presumably finding both stability and justification through the scientific—which is to say, theoretical—domains of knowledge.[61] As man first armed himself in the seventeenth century with the appropriate methodologies through which to investigate, dominate and possess the world, and thus to become effectively the measure of all things, it is the later expressions of this modern man who finds himself irresistibility contained by the same rigorous standards. Within this troubled realm of the human sciences, not only does man at once become both subject and object to all knowledge—which again is to stress man's foundational role in the truth standards by which the world is judged and understood as well as his containment, manipulation and discipline by the same standards—but more distressingly still, it delimits the wonderful array of possibilities through which man can be fully human. Quite simply the world is a *mathesis*, cast in accordance to a radically reformulated notion of *theōria* with the concern of practical utility at its core. It is not merely that *theōria* has left behind its traditional meaningful association with a "contemplative glance" into truth and reality as given,[62] but that its practical, Baconian orientation is both aggressive and willful, determining those distinctive modes of human being—e.g., the ethical life—that were traditionally beyond its general domain. Also, it is not that mathematics and the sciences more generally cannot effectively serve as tools (*organa*) in man's various modes of action or within his general mode of being—life, labor, and language; but that he cannot be reduced to them and be operative on their terms. This is effectively a mis-positioning of man vis-à-vis the sciences whereby man risks

[60] Ibid. p. 348.
[61] Ibid.
[62] See Arendt, *Human Condition*, 278.

the danger of completely losing himself in a world of complete and utter meaninglessness. The crystallization of Enlightenment values in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries marked a decisive historical moment where in becoming both subject and object, man has unwittingly decried his alienation from himself and his world as well as his subjugation and even erasure by the sciences, if though by the very standard of truth he created.

Somewhat pessimistically for modern tastes, I'm sure, Foucault maintained that until man "disappears" into a new form of knowledge, there can be no hope of overcoming the problem of modernity, which in its way, has turned upside down the optimism associated with the Enlightenment project along with the autonomy of the individual and the fullness of human expression. With that in mind, the *Order of Things* forces to acknowledge if not confront the problem of misrepresentation in modernity as it pertains to man and world as well as that which effectively constitutes "reality." Thus by raising the problem of modernity we are implicitly raising the problem of misrepresentation. This means reformulating the problem with Descartes at the core, yet not in a way that limits the query only to the philosophy of Descartes; but rather opening it up to the broader significance of his cultural milieu. This means also a wrangling with the tradition; and in the particular way I pose the problem, it raises the question of what was the *sine qua non* that would allow certain aspects of this tradition to emerge in force, if also in particular dominance. The problem of our individuality—especially insofar as it relates to a broad history of self-conception—is a deeply rooted and inveterate concern in the history of the West. That individuality has become essentialized and abstract, the problem is especially significant for the modern epoch. To that extent, it harbors in its wake significant existential implications, not least of all the problem of an increasing isolation between individuals as well as within communities, countries and the world as a whole. By formulating the problem in a way

that centralizes the role of Descartes and his cultural milieu, we are at once wading into the troubled realm of Cartesian scholarship, yet wandering off many of its well-trodden pathways.

CHAPTER TWO

The *Cogito* and Modernity: A Question of the Baroque

'There is thinking: therefore there is something that thinks'[*cogito ergo sum*]: this is the upshot of all Descartes' argumentation. But that means positing as 'true *a priori*' our belief in the concept of substance—If one reduces the proposition to 'There is thinking, therefore there are thoughts, [*cogito, ergo cogitationes sunt*]' one has produced a mere tautology: and precisely that which is in question, the 'reality of thought,' is not touched upon—that is, in this form the 'apparent reality' of thought cannot be denied. But what Descartes desired was not that thought should have, not an *apparent* reality, but a reality *in itself*.

—Nietzsche, *Wille zur Macht*,No.484

Having identified the parameters within which to raise the problem of modernity—i.e., as fundamentally a question of the rational and autonomous individual—I would like to refine the question further as a historical and cultural problematic. Namely, I wish to re-pose the problem of the Baroque, which is a term that though not always contested, nevertheless lacks consensus as to its meaning and significance. Lack of an established consensus relates not only to the Baroque as an aesthetic phenomenon; but also, and perhaps more importantly to how it functions as a cultural dynamic; or with regard to what cultural truth or truths it speaks. I wish to raise the question of the *Cogito* so as to more deeply probe into these latter two considerations. To that end, this query is not a purely philosophical one, or even one cast within the frame of intellectual history; but rather as a culture-historical phenomenon; and indeed one that will hopefully enable more fruitful thought into the Baroque as a cultural designation insofar as it manifests within a horizon of meaning from which it truth generate. To this end, it is necessary to define my approach, and to situate it properly within the larger vista of Cartesian scholarship.

The Question of the *Cogito*

Stephen Gaukroger has recently reopened the scholarly debate on the meaning of Descartes' thought by re-examining it historically and biographically. His intellectual biography of Descartes examines the development of Cartesian thought while revealing the cultural environment in which his subject lived and worked.[63] Within the context of Ramist and late-Scholastic logic, Gaukroger has examined in a previous work Descartes' conceptions of deductive inference and intuition in relation to his work on method so as to illuminate the Cartesian position that knowledge is based on an analytic (as opposed to a synthetic) foundation, i.e., an order of discovery of causes or explanatory principles derived, ultimately, from a type of intuition.[64] By employing what may be termed a psychologico-contextualist approach to Cartesian thought, Gaukroger has challenged more traditional approaches to the history of science and philosophy (and Descartes), especially the tendency to reduce scientific development to epistemology.[65]

In addition to historically contexualized approaches, such as Gaukroger's, the notable and recent philosophical scholarship relating to Descartes is immense, detailed and often brilliant. The *Cogito* formulation, in particular, has drawn considerable attention, and Martial Gueroult

[63] Stephen Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: 1995).

[64] Gaukroger, *Cartesian Logic: An Essay on Descartes' Conception of Inference* (Oxford: 1989)

[65] What may be termed the "rationalist-realist" approach has fallen into disfavor in history of science circles. The remarkableness of the various feats of reason, which are the trademark of internalist histories of science and medicine are no longer sufficient, and require, it seems, a social, institutional or even a cultural "context" to convey the complexities and richness of the various developments within these histories. The contextualist approach in general is not without its own problems and limitations; yet, Alexandre Koyré and Pierre Duhem, though certainly highly respected within the field, are among those figures whom the current orthodoxy views as too broadly intellectualist, and thus often marginalizes these works in favor of historical studies in the sociology of scientific knowledge or more specific micro-historical concerns. See, for example, Koyré's *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1957), *Newtonian Studies* (London: 1965), and *Galilean Studies* (Hassocks: 1978). For Duhem, see *Le Système du Monde: Histoire des Doctrines cosmologiques de Platon à Copernic*, 10 vols. (Paris: Hermann, 1913-1959).

was among the first to recognize and to understand the philosophical significance of the *Cogito* relative to the entire Cartesian system.[66] In particular, Gueroult offered an analytical reading of the Meditations elaborating on Descartes' own analysis of the so-called order of reasons, which, quite significantly, is an order established by "reason for knowing" (ratio cognoscendi).[67] From this order, as Gueroult attempts to show, the foundation of truth (*Cogito*), based upon the objective validity of ideas that have both clarity and distinctness, serves to ground the certainty of the self, God and the material world. Gueroult's reading of the Meditations comes in part as a response to more contextualized approaches, namely that of Ferdinand Alquié, who argued for a psychologico-historical reading.[68] Alquié emphasized the historical development (narrowly understood) of the Cartesian corpus, which forced him to deny, for example, the presence of a worked-out metaphysics in Descartes' earlier writings, and certainly not before the Discourse and the general, theoretical project originating in the late 1620s.

Gueroult's treatment of the Meditations remains the starting point for many philosophers addressing the problem of the *Cogito*. Following his lead, more recent scholarship has sought to establish a deeper truth (or what is perceived to be) vis-à-vis the *Cogito* and what it intends to express. They have done this in accordance with Austin's speech-act theory analysis whereby they challenge the notion of the *Cogito* as a strictly defined intellectual act. Thus, they interpret it as more inclusive, as exhibited in the formulation *sum res cogitans*, which may allow for all cognitive states, e.g., willing, sensing, seeing, etc. Jakko Hintikka and other analytic philosophers, such as Jim Stone, have made the case that the *Cogito* must be understood non-

[66] Martial Gueroult, **"**Le Cogito et la notion 'pour penser il faut être," *Travaux du IXe Congrès International de philosophie*, Congrès Descartes, (Paris: 1937)**.**

[67] Martial Gueroult, *Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons, vol 1., l'âme et Dieu*, (Editions Montaigne, 1952).
[68] Ferdinand Alquié, *La découverte métaphsique de l'homme, (*1950).

inferentially, which seemingly is an attempt to avoid reducing the *Cogito* to a simple logical formulation.[69] Their readings attempt to probe the relation of *cogito* to *sum* allowing for both verbs to maintain as broad a semantic field as possible.

In a similar attempt to expand the significance of the *Cogito* formulation, not merely semantically but conceptually, Hiram Caton has offered a corrective to Gueroult by employing a hermeneutical approach to the question of foundations as deployed in the Cartesian philosophy. [70] In accordance with Gueroult, Caton maintains the *Cogito* served as a single foundation for self, God and world, yet Caton sees beyond the *Cogito* to the broader concern of subjectivity, from which a dualist physical theory is established and mediated.[71] Moreover, Caton's

[69] Jakko Hintikka, "Cogito, Ego Sum: Inference or Performance? *The Philosophical Review* 71 (1962): 3-32; and more recently, Jim Stone, "Cogito Ergo Sum" in *Descartes*, Tom Sorell, ed., Ashgate, 1999. Hintikka, in particular, argues that the *Cogito* dictum must be read "performatively," i.e., as an act which guarantees not only the indubitably of the sentence, "*cogito ergo sum*", but more importantly, existential validity.

[70] Hiram Caton, *The Origin of Subjectivity: An Essay on Descartes* (Yale: 1972).

[71] In employing a hermeneutical approach, Caton's interpretation relies upon the scrutiny of a wide range of Cartesian texts ranging chronologically from the *Regulae* to *Les Passions de l'ame*. A considerable part of his interpretation addresses the possibility of Cartesian science as expressed in terms of a dualist physical theory. Indeed, several Cartesian scholars concerned with the mind-body relation have argued for Descartes' attempt to "physicalize," though not always in terms of matter, certain traditional characteristics of the soul. They have done this largely by addressing the traditional characteristics of *animus* in terms of the physical process or the "mechanics" of the mind, e.g., the pineal gland. The confusion and lack of any clear-cut distinction as to these various faculties is an interesting and thoroughly difficult problem, especially in any attempt to articulate a modern notion of self. Notwithstanding the question of self-conception, the confusion strongly persists into contemporary scientific debate, especially as demarcated within the domains of cognitive science and the philosophy of mind. The various debates surrounding the question of physicalism, e.g., the notion of supervenient versus token physicalism is a case in point. It seems Caton views Descartes more as a "token physicalist," which is to say he acknowledges a "physical" relation between the physical object and the mental property by which that object is known, yet he observes that Descartes nevertheless understands subject and object as two distinctive ontological classes. Nonetheless, Caton's interpretation raises interesting questions. The significance of these questions, to my mind at least, hinges on the problem of representation and its related concerns, especially in questioning the ontological status of representations themselves together with the functionality of a representational theory of truth on which the very edifice of modernity depends. That the modern representational theory of truth finds its roots in Descartes' thought is nothing new; yet the full power of such a theory can only be understood in view of the cultural problem of the Baroque, which this dissertation will approach as the analytical *terminus ad quo* not only for a fruitful reinterpretation of Cartesian thought, but for an authentic understanding of the animating dynamics of the modern epoch.

hermeneutical analysis not only illuminates the question of foundations in terms of subjectivity, but reveals how the notion of subjectivity gives meaning ("as the fundamental unifying motif")[72] to the entirety of the Cartesian corpus; a point not fully recognized by the likes of Gueroult, Gouhier, Alquié, Gilson, Liard and others.[73]

Despite obvious strengths in traditional philosophical and intellectual-historical approaches, including Gaukroger's and Caton's, they are nevertheless limited. For one, they cannot adequately explain the Cartesian response to the threat of skepticism, especially the all-important move to question the entire tradition of thought up to that point; and, moreover to put in its place an alternate definition of truth grounded in the subject. Martin Heidegger's interpretation of Descartes, which he develops in a number of essays, is perhaps the most powerful account of the Cogito, and the most damning. [74] Heidegger not only reads Descartes philosophically, but historically. His historical reading peers into the long, Western metaphysical tradition where he sees Cartesian subjectivity *(Cogito*) as a distinctive moment in the waning stages of that tradition. For Heidegger, the Cartesian formulation, *"ego cogito ergo sum,"* reveals an ontological structure of meaning where the subject (*subiectum)* is both reality (in Heidegger's language, Being) and the ground of reality for the external world. The primacy of the *subiectum* in the Cartesian formulation reduces the "*ego cogito"* to "*sum"* and vice versa, from which

[72] Caton, 3.

[73] See Louis Liard, *Descartes* (Paris: Vrin, 1882); Étienne Gilson, *Études sur la role de la pensée médiévale dans la formation du système cartésien*, (Paris: Vrin, 1930); Ferdinand Alquié, *La découverte métaphsique de l'homme,* (Paris: 1950); Martial Gueroult, *Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons, vol 1., l'âme et Dieu*, (Editions Montaigne: 1952); Henri Gouhier, *La pensée métaphysique de Descartes*, (Paris: Vrin, 1962)

[74] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2006); *Being and Time,* trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: SUNY, 1996)*; What is Called Thinking?,* trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Perennial, 2004); *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Perennial, 2001); *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); "The Age of the World Picture," in the *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977). Also relevant essays within that volume include, "Nietzsche's Word: God is Dead;" and "The Question Concerning Technology," among others. "Der Neuzeitlichen Wissenschaft und Der Modernen Technik" in *Gesamtausgabe*, Band 76, 1976.

follows a characterization of the *ego (*as *subiectum)* strictly on the basis of epistemic certitude.[75] As Heidegger well understood, the modern understanding of science and truth is reliant upon the notion of a willful subjectivity endeavoring to dominate and possess the world. His understanding of the problem of technology is a case in point where the modern form of *τέχνη* (*technê*) is understood less as a type of "making" and more as a "standing reserve" (*Bestand)* existing in "readiness for" (*Bereitschaft*) the use and manipulation by a willful subjectivity or subjectivities.[76]

By introducing the problem of subjectivity (*Cogito)* as well as its placement within the history of metaphysics, Heidegger is poised to ask much deeper questions, which other approaches are incapable of answering or otherwise elude altogether. For instance, Heidegger clearly saw the problem of the *Cogito* as ontological, as a definite moment or happening (*Ereignis*) in the history of metaphysics, and to engage this problem is to think seriously about the question of reality and the condition of human beings within that reality. As his treatment of technology shows, these queries wrangle with fundamental questions that speak to our particular (modern) mode of existence in the world. Engaging the *Cogito* contextually, as Gaukroger has done, is an ontic concern, i.e., a highly complex and derivative consideration that presupposes

[75] For a recent and very insightful reading that expands Heidegger's attack on the notion of epistemic certitude, see Jean-Luc Marion, "What is the Metaphysics in the Method?: The Metaphysical Situation of the *Discourse on Method*," in *Cartesian Questions*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky, (Chicago: 1999), 20-42, and Jean-Luc Marion, "The *Ego* and *Dasein*," in *Heidegger Reexamined: Language and the Critique of Subjectivity*, (London: Routledge, 2002), 1-31.

[76] The sense of meaning Heidegger wished to convey by the terms *"Bestand"* and *"Bereitschaft"* as well as his earlier phrase, "presence-at-hand" (*Vorhandenheit)* employed in *Being and Time*, is that of objectivity; but what's more, the force of Heidegger's understanding of objectivity derives less from the Latin cognate *"Objektivität/Objekt"* than *"Gegenständlichkeit/Gegenstand"* where in the latter instance he incorporated a sense of "standing before," which is to equate, rather forcefully, objectivity with a type of ordering structure (*Gestell*). In other words, that which "stands in reserve," becomes ordered in a particular way, and is effectively the crystallized metaphysical instance of his earlier notion, "present-at-hand" (*Vorhandenheit*); but in any case, "is there" so as to meet the demands of technology, etc.

the fundamental meaning structure of the *Cogito,* yet neither realizes nor addresses that structure directly. Though the contextual relations he describes may be descriptively correct, they ultimately never penetrate into the deeper realm of meaning and significance that Heidegger's approach has endeavored to do. Though Heidegger offers an historical approach with very powerful observations on the *Cogito* and the problem of modernity more generally, his approach is nevertheless limited largely because he sees the problem of the *Cogito* cast within an internal and necessary history of metaphysics.

The Question of Culture

Gaukroger has recently expanded his work on Descartes to address the gradual assimilation of traditional Western "cognitive values" into scientific ones, which he sees (not incorrectly) as the rationale and model for all other cognitive domains.[77] Moreover, he sees this transformation within a long trajectory of development, beginning in the thirteenth century with the introduction of Aristotelian natural philosophy into university curricula, and culminating in the scientific triumphs of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Central to his argument is the Scientific Revolution, which as a unique Western phenomenon triumphantly shaped all cognitive values in accordance with its own. As the scientific enterprise took shape during this period

[77] Gaukroger, *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture: Science and the Shaping of Modernity, 1210-1685*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 17-43. Gaukroger has continued this study in the recent *The Collapse of Mechanism and the Rise of Sensibility, 1680-1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Gaukroger represents the most recent and influential attempt to raise the problem of Descartes and the *Cogito* as a cultural problem. Also, see Ofer Gal and Raz Chen-Morris, *Baroque Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); and *Science and the Age of the Baroque*, ed. Ofer Gal and Raz Chen-Morris (New York: Springer, 2012). Gal and Chen-Morris have recently endeavored to challenge what is viewed in the scholarship to be the traditional incommensurability of the Baroque with classical notions of science. To this extent they maintain that the New Science was a "Baroque phenomenon," and that its development was non-linear, tension-laden, and often somewhat paradoxical. Though this is true, and Gal and Chen-Morris challenge the traditional narrative by complicating it, they offer no sense of the Baroque, or how it relates to a broader horizon of meaning. None of the traditional claims to truth as posited by modern science are challenged by their formulation and understanding of Baroque science, and so we are left with Baroque science as being a somewhat curious version of the form into which it would later transform.

together with changing conceptions of nature and the goals of natural philosophy, so also did the *persona* of the natural philosopher, a notion which factors heavily into this and other of Gaukroger's works. [78]

For Gaukroger, Descartes is representative of this larger cultural transformation. To return briefly to the intellectual biography, Gaukroger does not offer a contextual reading of the *Cogito per se,* but builds upon his previous work on Cartesian logic to see that the *Cogito* is one aspect in a broad web of meaningful relations, which, in turn, illuminates the whole of Descartes' life and world. In particular, Gaukroger's reading argues for the development of later Cartesian thought in relation to the condemnation of the Galilean system in 1633. Science was always at the heart of the Cartesian project, or so Gaukroger maintains. On this basis he concludes that Descartes' later concerns for epistemological certainty, grounded in the *Cogito,* were directed less at the threat of skepticism and more as a tactic of obfuscated elucidation to legitimize a contentious natural philosophy.[79] The emergence of the scientific culture Gaukroger describes, of

[78] Stephen Gaukroger, "The *Persona* of the Natural Philosopher in the Early to Mid Seventeenth Century." In *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Conal Condren et al. (Cambridge: 2006), and *Descartes: A Biography* (Oxford: 1995).

[79] For an expansion of this basis idea originally posed in the above biography, see Gaukroger's *Descartes' System of Natural Philosophy* (Cambridge: 2002). He offers here a detailed analysis of the *Principia Philosophae* (1644) vis-à-vis the earlier abortive project of *Le Monde* where Gaukroger argues that the comprehensive account of natural philosophy presented in the *Principia* was couched in the language of late-Scholasticism, which Descartes seemingly employed to obscure the fact the metaphysical foundations he provided for his natural philosophy were epistemologically-driven in contrast to the theologically-driven motives of the schools. Gaukroger has re-opened an old debate that typically has run counter to the prevailing approaches to Cartesian studies. Thus, the dissimulation thesis is hardly novel, and in some cases viewed as a "rather crude hypothesis." See, Jacques Maritain, *The Dream of Descartes.* Translated by M. L. Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1945), pp. 41-42. As Hiram Caton has suggested, it may be advisable and even fruitful to pursue the question of a "hermeneutics of dissumulation." See, Caton, *The Origin of Subjectivity*, pp. 10-12. Yet, the fruitfulness of such a pursuit demands it be cast in a fashion surpassing the limits of contextualism. In any case, as Caton has observed, interpretations along these lines range from problems of misrepresentation vis-à-vis Descartes' intent associated with "exigencies of explication" to sustained and active efforts to mask what is perceived as Descartes' skepticism and agnosticism, to rhetorical strategies in the forceful presentation of the new philosophy. In respective fashion, see L. J. Beck, *The Metaphysics of Descartes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965); Maxime Leroy, *Descartes, le philosophie au masque* (Paris: Reider, 1929); and Gerhard Krüger, "Die Herkunft des philosophischen Selbstbewusstseins" in *Logos* 22 (1933): pp. 225-72. In terms of late-Scholasticism, in both its Thomist and Scotist forms, especially the perceived continuities in the development of Cartesian thought, see for example, Gilson, *Études sur la role de la pensée médiévale dans la formation du système cartésien*, (Paris: 1930); Roger Ariew, *Descartes and the Last Scholastics,* (Ithaca: 1999); Tad

which Descartes is integral, was in large part dependent upon the *persona* of the natural philosopher, especially his concern with objectivity, impartiality and credibility (traditional scientific values), all of which shaped the general cognitive domain of the Western world.

Gaukroger's argument and the conclusions he draws from it are problematic, not least of all because of a very limited understanding of culture. First, what he understands as culture is largely dependent upon a contextual reading. His contextual approach, though it assumes the contrary, ultimately collapses into a species of reductionism that is ultimately a-historical. The context becomes the source of meaning, which is itself dependent upon a network of causal relationships that are mutually reinforcing. Second, and perhaps more significantly as it relates to the historical epoch of which he is interested, Gaukroger has no clear notion of the Baroque as a cultural phenomenon. This opens another set of significant problems, not least of all those centered on the historiographical problem surrounding the Baroque as a cultural designation, which scholars have struggled to articulate.

The Question of the Baroque

There is a historiographic problem surrounding the Baroque as a cultural designation, which scholars have struggled to articulate. Though the Baroque is unchallenged and widely accepted in certain disciplines, namely art history, architecture, and music; in other scholarly areas it lacks consensus. This is most evident in the areas of literary and historical studies. Yet it was Wölfflin who in articulating the degeneration in style of the Renaissance into the Baroque,

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M. Schmaltz, *Radical Cartesianism*, (Cambridge: 2002); Tad M. Schmaltz, *Descartes on Causation*, (New York: 2008); and Peter Machamer and J. E. McGuire, *Descartes' Changing Mind*, (Princeton: 2009). For a more strictly intellectual-historical approach, see Daniel Garber, *Descartes's Methaphysical Physics* (Chicago: 1992).

also gave us the chief characteristics by which to assess and understand the Baroque.[80] In terms of style, Wölfflin's evaluative schema continues to be useful, especially in the area of art history. Among these characteristics, Wölfflin observed a supplanting of the more geometrical and linear style by the openly fluid and moving style of the painterly; the play of light and shadow (*chiaroscuro*) with the effect of revealing not what something *is*, but what it *appears* to be; the disposition toward monumentality, grandeur and a new sense of space; and the feeling of perpetual, undulating movement, often directed upward. What is more, Wölfflin was the first to define the baroque as an historical problem. Through his assessment, he came to view the Baroque style as dissonant; but perhaps more significantly, he understood it as the visual expression of the epoch's *Lebensgefühl,* or the aspiration of life. The emergent *Lebensgefühl*, he maintained, could only be understood vis-à-vis the collapse of the classical ideal of *concinnitas* together with its attendant sense of perfection and harmony. Thus, the manifestation of the Baroque is fundamentally a change in sensibility, and moreover, a sensibility that confirms and accords with its own sense of corporal presence, which it renders stylistically via materials, method and technique.

Literary critics such as René Welleck have suggested the Baroque to be a period designation dominated by certain changing literary norms; as they might pertain, for example, to marinism, gongorism, or conceptism. In the end, the Baroque for Welleck was a general and complex European movement.[81] Other literary scholars have probed deeply into the question of a Baroque poetics. Louis Martz has explored as the particularized vision of the soul (Donne), or

[80] Heinrich Wöllflin, *Renaissance and Baroque*, tr. Kathrin Simon, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979).

[81] René Welleck, *Concepts and Criticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 69-127.

meditative action and the projection into the world of a dramatized version of the self (Loyola). [82] Frank Warnke has observed a hallmark in Baroque writers the hallmark tendency toward an examination of an inner world placed in opposition to the deceptive and illusory outer world of appearances.[83] The truth of the inner life emerges through a turning away from the world of appearances as well as an emphasis on personal experience, which jointly formed the basis not only of a writer's manner of expression (which was often idiosyncratic and eccentric), but also the personal vision itself to which these expressions accorded.[84] Beyond this, literary debates seem to center on the question of changing styles and attributes movements such as the Mannerist, Baroque and Classical. Other broadly aesthetic approaches such as that of Buci-Glucksmann, have attempted to frame the Baroque in relation to the tensions between modernity and tradition, and especially insofar as that dialectic plays out through a culture of the spectacle.[85]

William Bouwsma's recent cultural history of Europe for the period 1550-1640 addresses the themes of Renaissance creativity and freedom as a counter pose to the classically dignified sense of order that came in its wake.[86] For Bouwsma, this is an angst-ridden period, and though he does not define it in terms of the Baroque, the broad cultural phenomenon he describes is very

[82] Harold Segel, *The Baroque Poem: A Comparative Study* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1974); Frank Warnke, *Versions of Baroque* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972); René Welleck, "The Concept of the Baroque" in *Concepts of Criticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963); and Louis Martz, "Meditative Action and the 'Metaphysick Style'" in *The Poem of the Mind* (London: Oxforn University Press, 1969).

[83] See Warnke, especially Chapters 2 and 3.

[84] Though some effort is acknowledged that the Baroque and Mannerist styles share a similar tendency, viz., the personal vision, no effort is made to define what is meant by personal vision; if it is limited to literary and artistic pursuit or more significantly, how and to what extent it claims legitimacy in matters of truth and meaning.

[85] Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *La Raison baroque* (Paris: Galilee, 1987).

[86] William Bouwsma, *The Waning of the Renaissance, 1550-1640*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2002). The influence of both Huizinga and Burckhardt is obvious by the title, and Bouwsma no doubt sees his project as cast within this tradition of cultural history. However, Bouwsma's tendency to "periodize" limits his interpretation, especially insofar as it remains within a linear and causal framework. With this the significance of the Renaissance (and the Baroque) as an epoch is seemingly lost, which not only limits his perspective, but prohibits him from seeing other forces at work in the shaping of the epoch as a cultural whole. In the end, Bouwsma's cultural history misses the dynamic richness of the epoch as an epoch, and really only reveals a somewhat superficial transition from instability to stability. We have no sense of the dynamics that informed this transition.

much a Baroque world. He directs the main thrust of his argument to the creative exuberance of the Renaissance, which he correlates with the liberation from medieval modes of existence. He maintains that this creative impulse was short lived on account of the angst and uncertainty it occasioned, only to redound quickly in a search for order and stability. Bouwsma characterizes this world in terms of change and flux, and perceives an almost constant "tension between the fundamental needs for both freedom and order," only to suggest that there was no clear resolution between them.[87] Though tensions were significant, and in certain ways fundamental—as between the conception of man advocated by the Schools and that which newly confirmed the freedom of the human spirit—it is important to note that an array of harmonies, discordances and contradictions constituted the moment of the late Renaissance.

Though he proceeds from Jacob Burckhardt's understanding of the age's creative possibility, Bouwsma's portrait of the late Renaissance is seemingly too reductive in its depiction of a sequence of vacillating and opposing movements—i.e., order and stability as situated in sharp contrast to freedom and creativity. Though this notion of oppositions offers a "contextual center" Bouwsma's argument seems incapable of plumbing the depths of late-Renaissance creativity and the inherently contradictory aspects of the creative impulse insofar as they reflect its characteristic variety and richness. Yet, what Bouwsma sees as a definitive expression of the late Renaissance is really an epiphenomenon, and is reliant upon a more decisive set of developments, namely a reconfiguration of the medieval ideal of the whole and within it the traditional relationship of man, God and world.

Another influential "cultural" approach is that of the Spanish historian, José Maravall. Maravall's seeks to understand the Baroque's operability, which he suggests worked on a level

[87] Ibid., 260.

of psychological motivation that stemmed from internal conflict, i.e., a struggling against self or an internal state of mixedness.[88]

Related to concerns originally addressed by Wölfflin, Gilles Deleuze has attempted to define the Baroque through Leibniz' *Monadology* and, specifically the dynamic interplay of the inner and the outer monad.[89] In doing so, he reintroduces the Wölfflinian notion of the fold. For Wölfflin, the fold served as a stylistic device, distinctive of the painterly, which gives way to a sense of layering, movement and elusiveness. Deleuze, in reference again to the monad, capitalizes on this notion with the full force of metaphor. He envisions two orders of folds, i.e. the pleats of matter (*les replis de la matière*) and the folds in the soul (*les plis dan l'âme*). These two orders are separated by yet another fold, designated by Deleuze as the Fold proper, which effectively mediates the tensions between the outer and the inner folds. In an effort to overcome the Cartesian separability of mind and matter, Deleuze sees a unity between the infinitely complex and highly individualized expressions of the two folds, and moreover understands this unity as achievable only through the mediation of the Fold. It is here that Deleuze affirms Wölfflin, and to the extent that he envisions the Baroque Fold as an operative function from which the creative possibility of the Baroque is expressed. As operative, the baroque is thus seen as an "infinite work or process," and one that is both expressive and impressive, determining and determined, etc.

In Deleuze's though-provoking approach to the Baroque, it remains a concept, and indeed the "Baroque has no reason to exist without a concept that forms this reason itself." What is

[88] José Maravall, *The Culture of the Baroque: Analysis of a Historical Structure*, trans. Terry Cochran (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

[89] Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

more, Deleuze's approach, which is largely phenomenological, cannot account for historical change.

By not formulating the problem of the Baroque historically, as Wölfflin had done previously, we've improperly distanced ourselves from it, which opens up the possibility to a whole host of pitfalls. On the one hand, efforts to define what differentiates the styles of the Baroque from the Renaissance, or for that matter, the Baroque from the Mannerist, collapse ultimately into a type of *techne* and reduce these and any artistic movement to mere categories in which facts and technical points regarding style and description are addressed. On the other hand, these stylistic and other similar queries, though perhaps correct and illuminating, fail to pose the crucial question: NOT what is the Baroque?; but rather, how does the Baroque generate meaning, and by extension truth?[90]

What I would like to suggest is that the Baroque cannot merely be a response to a philosophical, or even a social crisis; but rather a response to a general crisis of culture where traditional thought and institutions no longer held. By establishing validation inwardly on the basis of individual experiences, thoughts and desires, the Baroque offered a new sense of order. Owing a debt to Heidegger's initial insights on subjectivity, as well as those of Deleuze and Maravall on the question of the Baroque, I maintain that the problem of subjectivity has been poorly posed, if posed at all as a cultural problem. In order to do, so we must turn to a particular form of cultural history that seeks to explain how meanings are generated and expressed in a variety of practices within specifically designated realm of human existence.

[90] In general, I follow Wölfflin in his attempt to understand the baroque phenomenon vis-à-vis the collapse of the classical notion of *concinnitas* (see also, Joseph Gantner ed., *Concinnitas: Beiträge zum Problem des Klassichen* (Basel: Benno Schwabe, 1944); however, I read as reflective of a broader problematic, viz., a general crises of European culture. I also follow Deleuze in his characterization of the baroque in non-essential terms, but I diverge from his position on some very crucial points.

The Turn to Cultural History

As it is perhaps now apparent to the reader, the question of culture in general, and of the Baroque specifically, together form a major thrust of inquiry in this dissertation vis-à-vis the significance of the *Cogito* and its emergence historically. Indeed, I must here again prevent any misunderstanding stemming from a *prima facie* concern that what is before us is merely a problem in the history of philosophy; or the history of ideas; or even a more broadly conceived intellectual history.[91] Rather, I must stress this is a cultural-historical problem. As such, the problem concerns the historical manifestation of a cultural whole, i.e., the various ways of life as they exist within a horizon of meaning.[92] Within this horizon, there is a core set of moral values,

[91] For an article that highlights the general, recent tenor of Cartesian studies, see Eric P. Lewis, "Cartesianism Revisited" in *Perspectives in Science* 15, (2007): 493-522. On the one hand much of the recent scholarship depends heavily upon revisionism, and on the other hand, an attempt to reconcile a strictly (and pronouncedly a-historical) philosophical approach with one that is both contextualist and intellectual-historical in orientation. As Lewis' article makes clear, the multiple and varied approaches toward Descartes as well as the questions posed to the question of Cartesianism in the seventeenth century suggest a richness not only with respect to Descartes, but to the question of how a Cartesian was defined throughout the seventeenth century. Though Lewis is successful conveying a sense of the resultant confusedness of the various attempts to reconcile Cartesian materialism with Aristotelian hylomorphism, hermeticism, and Neoplatonism, etc., the richness of these texts remains a limited question within intellectual history, which for him depends upon historical context. Moreover, his analyses serve as a basis for attacks against modern, philosophical mis-readings of key Cartesian texts. Lewis is correct, in part, to insist upon rectifying gross mis-readings, yet the hyper-professionalism occasioning them is only part of the problem. That philosophers are selective vis-à-vis what they perceive as significant in Cartesian texts, and thus formulate the problem of Descartes in distinct ways—a-historically or not—I would argue that this suggests something about our "modernity." Lewis seemingly does not realize this, which opens his analyses to a host of mis-readings.

[92] Realizing that there is no agreed upon definition to what is meant by cultural history, I proceed in the vein of Jacob Burckhardt (whose general approach I will address below) as set forth especially in his *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien (1860)* and less formally in the *Griechische Kulturgeschichte,* yet my approach, as well as his, is more fundamentally the heir to the thought of Johann Gottfried Herder, as initially articulated in his *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (1774). As the ironical title suggests, Herder attacked the essentialist and universalist total histories of the Enlightenment, especially Voltaire, and placed in their stead a new way to envision cultures historically, and in a way that emphasized the core set of values that animated a particular culture, which in turn made them both synchronically and diachronically unique. Among the key Herderian notions is that of the "horizon,' employed as a heuristic device to understand a particular culture's total way of life and, moreover, to reveal how that life predominately shaped and characterized not only a particular culture, but also the cultures, which fall heir to it. Horizons, though centered upon a core set of values, are not completely closed, and will absorb cultural influences from other horizons, past or present, in a limited fashion and only to the extent that its value structure permits. For example, and as Herder articulated, the patriarchal and despotic inclinations of the Orient, the order and administration of the Egyptians, the lightness and gentleness of the Greeks or the law of the Romans, etc., are understood not only as the dominant expression of each respective value structure, but also in terms of the degree to which they absorbed aspects of the proceeding cultural formation, and will in turn affect those

which moreover are dominant and relate to how meanings are generated and expressed to give the sense of a culture as a relative whole. The horizon is first and foremost a heuristic that allows the culture in question to be comprehended as a whole. The whole provides a type of background (*Hintergrund*) against which interpretations of the manifold range of meanings with a culture can be read and understood.[93]

Understood in this way, a cultural history is both synchronic and diachronic in its emphases. In terms of the synchronic, it attempts to understand culture on the basis of the various interrelations of government, religion, the genres and sub-genres of art and literature, modes of intellectual activity etc., all understood as an expression of as a cultural whole. The diachronic dimension of a cultural history is in many ways dependent upon the synchronic, especially insofar as questions of synchronicity, i.e., cultural interrelations, must be understood before framing questions pertaining to the historical movement of a culture.

Thus, the cultural historical approach endeavors not only to articulate how a particular cultural manifestation gives itself meaning, but also poses questions of how the present understands this meaning. To formulate the problem of the *Cogito* culturally-historically is therefore to enter effectively into this realm of meaning and significance for it is on this basis, especially, that questions of values are supported and empowered. Since a concern with meaning lies at the center of cultural-historical inquiry, the truth of a cultural history, as Nietzsche reminds us, relies largely upon the art of interpretation, and not a science of facts. To be sure, it

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succeeding it. Viewed in these terms, cultures manifest as value-driven totalities at specific historical moments or distinct stages of formation (*Bildung*) within the universal history of humanity, which itself is a historical formation (*Menschenbildung*) that can only be understood, as Herder would argue, within the totality of providential history. But, what is more, Herder has offered us a way to think historically about the human experience, in all its complexity, not only vis-à-vis the cultural totalities of which they formed part, but also how we as "moderns" are their cultural and historical products.

[93] On this point, see, Benjamin Sax, "The Origins of Genealogy: The Problem of Culture in Nietzsche's Early Notebooks"(forthcoming); as well as "Notebook 19" *et passim*, in *Early Notebooks*, op. cit.

is the interpretative act itself that offers unity to questions oriented both toward the synchronic and the diachronic aspects of a culture. The interpretative act thus presupposes at least two things: 1) humanity's own historicity and 2) the fact we are part of a tradition or a cultural whole (with both synchronic and diachronic dimensions) that transcends any one individual; and moreover, any attempt to determine the meaning structures of a previous cultural manifestation are always limited by our own culture as a mode of interpretation. As Jacob Burckhardt noted long ago, "what belongs to the past is at least more likely to become associated with our spiritual nature."[94] In speaking thus of the classical sources to which he tendered the deepest admiration, Burckhardt framed the problem of cultural history as an open-ended concern, which rather significantly, suggests the integrality of humanity to the totality of its history—i.e., to the tradition—and vice versa. The textual sources Burckhardt mentions in the introduction to the *Griechische Kulturgeschischte* (as is true with any text or past cultural form) are themselves meaningful representatives of the "spiritual essence" of the tradition, and to engage critically with them is always to assume a meaningful role within the tradition itself. Similarly, in *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, Johan Huizinga formulated the task of cultural history as a type of engagement with "the essential content that rests in the form." Yet, with both Burckhardt and Huizinga, engagement with the tradition presupposes that we are part of the tradition, and jointly comprise the totality assumed by the cultural-historical approach, i.e., both the synchronic and diachronic dimensions. Our inquiries, as cultural historians, must always maintain, as Burckhardt suggested, "sympathy for the whole," not only for an individual epoch or epochs; but also for the entirety of the tradition of which they form part.

[94] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Greeks and Greek Civilization*, edited by Oswyn Murray and translated by Sheila Stern (St. Martin's Griffin: 1998), 9.

To frame the problem of the *Cogito* in terms of a cultural history is obviously to proceed with the understanding that Western culture is itself historical, which is to deny a delimiting of the *Cogito* to a closed history such as that of metaphysics or philosophy more generally. Rather, the manifestation of the *Cogito* forms part of a larger epochal transformation whereby certain concepts, principles, orientations, etc. assumed prominence while occasioning others into the recesses of relative obscurity. We must ask ourselves: what were the conditions of possibility, i.e., the "driving forces" within this epochal transformation that allowed not only for certain concepts, principles and orientations to emerge, but to manifest themselves in a particular way? What is more, what were the dynamics involved—morally, linguistically, ontologically— that allowed not only for a meaningful reception of these certain aspects, but for certain of them to gain complete dominance and to the extent that they become the very source of meaning? Take the notion of *theōria,* for example, which did not always connect to the type of theoretical life (*βίος θεωρητικός*) that Aristotle famously articulated in Book X of the *Nichomachean Ethics,* and which maintained that that life was constitutive of complete happiness (τέλεια εὐδαιμονία) insofar as it actuated the divine in us.[95] With variance to this, the earlier Greeks participated in the spectacle of the tragic vision as given within the confines of the *theatron* (or seeing place); its truths revealed in the "ocular center" of the *orchēstra* (or dancing place) where the action itself played out. With Aristotle as with the early Greeks, the activity of *theōria* connoted a type of disconnection from the full participation in life, where only then the truth could be viewed. Yet, it is not merely a question of withdrawal from a fuller participation in the spectacle itself, whether through the contemplation of the tragic vision of primordial life (as with the early Greeks) or of the rational vision of metaphysical truths (as with Aristotle and the medieval

[95] *Ethics*, X.6-8. See also, Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, Vol. 1, (New York: Harcourt, 1978), 92-98; and Andrea Wilson Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

tradition). Rather the manner in which the withdrawal is characterized reflects a changing notion of truth and reality as well as a general orientation to life, which is a preeminently historical concern.

The notion of *theōria* is apt in that as Burckhardt reminds us in the *World Historical Observations*, the approach to historical life (*das geschichtliche Leben*) is perhaps fundamentally a contemplative one, which is to say, the historical itself relates to a type of seeing, or to the specific way cultural phenomena appear within a historical moment.[96] As Burckhardt tells us, the grand task of the historian is to reconstruct "whole spiritual horizons of the past,"[97] but not in the sense of capturing the reality of the past in terms of some essence or formal aspect. Rather, for Burckhardt, the approach to the historical, though fundamentally contemplative, really directs itself in two fundamental ways that are at once distinct and identical. This is to say that the past presents to the historical imagination in two aspects: a spiritual aspect and one temporary (*Vorübergehendes*), which only appears to change.[98]

With these two aspects, Burckhardt wants to show a relationship between deep-seated life forces and the way those forces translate in historical existence through the appearance of cultures and the cultural forms within them. To that end, the chief heuristic that he offers is the notion of the spiritual continuum (*gestiges Continuum* or *geistige Continuität*).[99] The spiritual continuum is for Burckhardt a power (*eine geschichtliche Macht*) in the sense of potencies or possibilities; and from the depths of the continuum all forms of cultural life emerge, thrive and

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[96] *Weltgeschichtlichen Betrachtungen* (henceforth, *WB*), in *Über das Studium der Geschichte*, von Peter Ganz, (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1982), *"Diesem ganzen Wesen [das geschichtliche Leben], dem wir als Menschen einer bestimmten Zeit unvermeidlich undere passiven Tribut bezahlen, müssen wir zugleich beschauend gegenübertreten,"* 229.23-5.

[97] *BT*, 229.30, "*ganzer vergangener Geisteshorizonte gelangen."*

[98] *BT*, 228.1-17, *Denn der Geist hat Wandelbarkeit aber nicht Vergänglichkeit* [Though the spirit has mutability it does not perish].

[99] *BT*, see 165-172; 229; 249 *et passim.*

decay. To approach the historical in a way that is mindful of the spiritual continuum is also to acknowledge that the past is open-ended. The historical, when understood in the cultural terms Burckhardt suggests, is to recognize it as a central phenomenon (*Hauptphänomen*), and not merely within a particular time and place, but also with respect to the whole of historical life as it exists in a "thousand forms" (*tausendgestaltig*) within the continuum.[100] Thus, a cultural history, as defined as a contemplative approach to the broad range of the historical (*Hauptphänomen*) is a spiritual and mental possession of cultural-historical epoch, and as such, is the highest possession of any culture authentically oriented towards its historical past. Such thinking does not position the past in opposition to the present (as a scientist does with the object of his study); but finds in the continuum a living past, part of the present.

A fundamental notion that relates to the spiritual continuum is that of the *Kulturepoche*, which represents as a dynamic and interrelated moment of competing and harmonizing forces, and which further represents the condition of possibility from which cultures emerge and are constituted.[101] Burckhardt conceived of this notion of a *Kulturepoche* in a very novel and interesting way, and through it portrayed the unity of the Italian Renaissance culture as a dynamic and creative whole. As the *conditio sine qua non*, this heuristic served for Burckhardt as the basis from which to interpret the cultural phenomena of the Renaissance and moreover to determine the general character and contours of modernity. As I argue, the same forces that

[100] *BT*, 229.15.

[101] One recent approach to the question of the later Renaissance is William Bouwsma and his *The Waning of the Renaissance, 1550-1640*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). The influence of both Huizinga and Burckhardt is obvious by the title, and Bouwsma no doubt sees his project as cast within this tradition of cultural history. However, Bouwsma's tendency to "periodize" limits his interpretation, especially insofar as it remains within a linear and causal framework. The significance of the Renaissance (and the Baroque) as an epochal and cultural totality is seemingly lost, which not only limits his perspective, but prohibits him from seeing other forces at work in the shaping of the epoch as a cultural whole. In the end, Bouwsma's cultural history of the later Renaissance fails in that it misses the dynamical richness of the epoch as an epoch. It reveals only a somewhat superficial transition from instability to stability with no sense of the dynamics that informed this transition.

shaped the Renaissance world Burckhardt described so vividly were fundamentally operative within the Baroque as well, and though they manifested in decisively different ways,[102] together form part of a larger whole—the modern *Kulturepoche*.

A *Kulturepoche* is a heuristic device, and as I understand it articulates a limited meaningful horizon in which exist the conditions of possibility for a world as a culture to manifest in particular and distinctive ways. As the name implies, a *Kulturepoche* is a type of "suspension" or a "holding back." It is a device that allows historians of culture to bracket off questions, if just initially, such as those of reality, or of an overall diachronic movement, to explore a particular horizon of meaning as an intrinsic totality. Though dynamically complex and manifold, a *Kulturepoche* is also a limited and determinate moment within the broad spectrum of the historical, and within which a specific mode of human thought and action is articulated and defined.[103]

A *Kulturepoche* represents a whole with respect to itself, yet it is also part of a whole of all temporally expressed epochal transformations, and thus retains a historical relationship with the specific cultural worlds these epochs generate.[104] In other words, as limited horizons *Kulturepochen* are also permeable and thus allow for an individual *Kulturepoche* to be in dynamic engagement with its past. This dynamicism exists not only between *Kulturepochen*, but

[102] This is a question of life-orientation, which within the Baroque (unlike the Renaissance) was completely unanchored from the traditional structures of meaning.

[103] *WB*, 276.2-4, "*Die Cultur, d.h. die ganze Summe derjenigen Entwicklungen des Geistes, welche spontan geschelen und keine universale Zwangsgeltung in Anspruch nehmen*." (Culture is the sum total of those spiritual developments, which transform spontaneously and lay no claim to universal validity); also, *WB*, 276.10-11, "*sie ist derjenige millionengestaltige Proceß, durch welchen sich das Naive und Racenmäßig <Thun> in reflectirtes Können umwandelt*" (it is that million-formed process through which the naïve and indeterminate (thinking activity) of a race is transformed into deliberative action (Können)].

[104] In this sense, Burckhardt can speak of an unconscious accumulation of the vestiges of culture, [*Unzähliges lebt auch unbewusst weiter, als Erwerb, der aus irgendeinem vergessenen Volk in das Blut der Menschheit übergegangen sein kann*],*WB*, 276.19-20. This is fundamentally a Herderian notion, which Burckhardt articulated with respect to the spiritual continuum; but also Hegel in the general sense of *Geistesgeschichte*.

is expressed within each *Kulturepoche* through a fullness of dynamic possibility and the interplay of harmonies and disharmonies, agreements and contradictions. And though the *Kulturepoche* is a determinate historical moment, it is also "in-potential-to-be-expressed," and thus retains an elusive and indeterminate character.[105] This dynamical aspect—the particular way a culture transforms potency into act— effectively the culture's formative principle, its *Bildung*. Through this indeterminateness—which is to say its dynamical possibility—cultures manifest in distinctive and sublimely differentiated ways, which are also the concrete manifestations or expressive modes of the *Kulturepoche* itself. This is not to say that the *Kulturepoche* is an animating force, as in a metaphysical sense; but rather the spiritual continuum itself, which is to say the ground of possibility from which a cultural totality may be expressed concretely. As a totality, a *Kulturepoche* must be understood to be coterminous with its modal expressions and is thus all-pervasive in its allowance for cultures to reveal themselves as cultures.

In this way it is possible to speak of a "Renaissance culture" or a "Baroque culture" in terms of their respective styles, mannerisms and, indeed, the specific ways actions and thoughts are expressed and articulated; yet at the same time to understand their existence as part of the same *Kulturepoche*. The particular ways a culture manifests depends upon a dynamical relationship between culture as *Bildung*, i.e., a formation or concrete expression, as in any cultural form or structure of meaning; and the *Kulturepoche* as the horizon in which actions and thoughts are possible in the formation of a culture in it specific and concrete manifestation.[106] Through this dynamical relationship, and moreover the possibilities that emanate from it, a world may appear. Thus, on the one hand, we may speak of a "Renaissance" or a "Baroque world" as a

[105] Cultures can be said to be in a constant striving to fulfill themselves as cultures relative to the dynamical processes at work within them.

[106] In a Nietzschean sense, the *Kulturepoche* mediates life and how a specific world is actualized. We can never know these life forces directly, but only through the mediation of culture as a distinct historical moment within a *Kulturepoche*.

concrete "fact," e.g., with respect to Castiglione's understanding of self in his "autobiography," and on the other hand, as a conglomerate of dynamic possibilities, e.g., the potential for self expression in multitudinous, if even sometimes contradictory ways. Culture (*Bildung*) must always be understood in relation to the totality of the *Kulturepoche*, which is to say the dialectical relationship within the *Kulturepoche* itself as expressive of the generative potential of a cultural world. In this way worlds are allowed to appear, disappear, and reappear as in a condition of "perpetual modification and disintegration."[107] The question now emerges: what were the general conditions of the modern *Kulturepoche* that, in their relation to certain subsisting elements within the tradition as a whole, allowed for a Baroque world to shine forth in a particular way? How did these general conditions shape and, in turn, be shaped by a core set of values that came to be expressed in a variety of cultural forms? Of course, the task before us is not a search for the "origins" of the Baroque, nor does it assume the validity of an originary historical approach. As a heuristic, the *Kuturepoche* presupposes a profoundly manifold historical continuity.

Such an approach is obviously to move against empiricism—in all its various guises—where historical truth is determined on the basis of hard evidence, especially the consistency of brute facts in their adherence to a theoretical framework. The notion of a cultural totality that Burckhardt gives us, is obviously theoretical, though its employment is merely a heuristic for the interpretation of a core value-set together with its attendant meanings and significances. To probe the question of meaning vis-à-vis values is, in my view, among the chief tasks of the historian of culture, and it is from here that questions can be posed, especially with respect to

[107] *WB*, 276.5-6. Burckhardt understood two constants (*stabilien Lebenseinrichtunen*) in the life of any cultural world, "*unaufhorlich modificirend und zersetzend auf die beiden stabilien Lebenseinrichtunen.*" Nietzsche will pick up on this in his understanding of the cultural life of a people as either life affirming or life denying.

what these values engender and create. For example, one may turn (as I do in the dissertation) to the role assumed by values in the creation of a culture's dominant notion of truth, which is to address concomitantly the subordinating and even conflicting notions of truth coexisting within a cultural totality. Furthermore, concerns for value and truth must be addressed in exploring not only the creation of, but the interrelation of any number of legitimate meaning structures or cultural forms, e.g. the arts, institutions, technologies, etc.

In a recent treatment of Jacob Burckhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, Benjamin Sax has addressed the problem of cultural history in view of the question of the theoretical status of a cultural totality, which he sees "both as a heuristic device that makes cultural interpretation possible and as an 'idea' that allows the truth of a particular type of reality to emerge." In addition to the interpretive schema given by this heuristic notion of a cultural totality, and through which values are illuminated, the historian of culture further employs the heuristic to "phenomenalize" the culture, which he does initially by the act of writing. In phenomenalizing a culture, the historian creates from a unique perspective a picture that pays tribute, as it were, to the particularities of a culture (i.e., events, persons, cultural forms, and phenomena more generally) as well as to its vital and creative forces (i.e., the culture itself as a vitalizing power, and in turn, the values and truths that it engenders).[108] Though sympathy for the

[108] On the creative act of phenomenalizing a culture, especially in view of the Goethean notion of *Anschauung*, see Benjamin C. Sax, "An Acute and Practiced Eye": Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*," in *Cultural Visions: Essays in the History of Culture*, edited by Penny Schine Gold and Benjamin C. Sax (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 111-150.
On the notion of "vital forces" as that what shapes and forms a culture, see Jacob Burckhardt, *Weltgeschischtliche Betrachtungen*, *op. cit*., 254-91. Burckhardt focuses on the three historically formative and influential powers and their interrelationships: the state, religion, and culture. Though culture is here designated as one among three powers (*drei Potenzen*), it is evident that *Kultur* is the dominant of the three powers of which the other two are forceful expressions. Indeed, Burckhardt will develop the notion of *Kulturepoche*, and the generative powers associated with it, more fully in *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, and more fully still in the *Griechische Kulturgeschischte.* As I will develop below, it is the Burckhardtian notion of *Kulturepoche*, formulated as "the Baroque" (and in a related sense, modernity) that is the generative potential behind a specific value-set and its legitimating truth claims.

cultural whole is retained, the act of phenomenalizing, again, does not imply the capture of some past reality. As Sax notes, the theoretical status of a cultural totality, as expressed in Burckhardt, parallels Kant's understanding of a regulative idea, which as a transcendental principle of cognition, provides a schema for reflective judgments to be made "as if" there were such a concept as a cultural totality.[109] The heuristic or regulative "idea" here is at once the "phenomenalized" cultural totality brought to the text through writing, as well as the interpretive schema on which the phenomenalization depends. n the end, as Sax suggests, the text allows not only for a concrete articulation of a particular reality (the world of the text), but from it opens questions of possibility for this world, this reality, this present.

To understand history in terms of culture and values in dynamic interplay is to place the concerns of cultural history (*Kulturgeschischte*) at the very core of what it means to be human, not only at a given time and place, but also within the totality of the successive moments of the cultural tradition where history is allowed to unfold. By "unfolding" I mean neither to suggest a sort of linear necessity to history nor the operation of a strict logic within a broad or narrow chronology; but rather the dynamic interplay between cultures as they appear historically and the cultural-historical continuum of which they form part. In this sense, a cultural totality is not without logic, not without determinism. Yet, the crucial distinction to be made here is between a notion of cultural determinism and that of a notion of causality, and strictly speaking, a scientific causality. Though values are culturally determined, and furthermore, as human beings we exist within a culture that is historically conditioned—there is never a proverbial "view from nowhere." In the language of metaphysics, I understand values to "animate" and to "inform" the vitality of a culture from which meaningful structures are created and whose patterns can be

[109] Sax, 143.

illuminated interpretatively, which is to say hermeneutically.[110]

To problematize the *Cogito* hermeneutically is resolutely not an archival-type excavation rendered merely to accumulate information about the *Cogito* within some sort of historical context or theoretical framework, nor is it a task, launched from a limited philosophical perspective, to analyze and assess the *Cogito* as emblematic of a certain phase in scientific thought. Quite simply, when formulated within the purview of a cultural totality where the question of values is brought to the fore, along with the attendant concerns for meaning and significance, the problem of the *Cogito*, as with any authentically formulated historical problem, becomes an attempt to understand the forces and conditions at work within our own time, and thus becomes a hermeneutical project.[111] As Johann Gottfried Herder observed over two centuries ago, the move to culture enables us to articulate the basic experience of modernity, and proceeds on the understanding that we ourselves are historical beings and are thus shaped and

[110] On the cultural historian and the project of cultural history, see Karl J. Weintraub, *Visions of Culture: Voltaire, Guizot, Burckhardt, Lamprecht, Ortega y Gasset* (Chicago: University of Chicago: 1966), "The historian of civilization is interested in the total way of life, in the style of life by which men gave unified expression to their manifold activities" (p. 2); and "he sees culture not as a mere aggregate of traits but as forming an intricately interrelated pattern" (2). Also, on the question of cultural totality, though not necessarily a morally centered totality, see Wilhelm Dilthey, *Pattern and Meaning in History*, ed. Hans P. Rickman (New York: Harper and Bros., 1961), "Like the individual, every cultural system, every community, has a focal point within itself. In it, a conception of reality, valuation, and production of goods, are linked into a whole" (129-30). Also, see Johan Huizinga, "The Task of Cultural History" in *Men and Ideas: History, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance* (Trenton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 17-76.

[111] Regarding the question of a philosophical hermeneutics, though not a cultural hermeneutics, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans., by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (New York: Continuum, 2004). In terms of hermeneutics my approach is fundamentally Gadamerian, especially his development of the Herderian notion of a cultural horizon. Philosophical and historical interpretations, which are to say cultural interpretations, of another cultural-historical horizon are always cast within a horizon themselves. To be sure horizons may converge, and in a way not unlike that depicted in a Venn diagram, though interpretation is always limited by the horizon in which the interpretation is cast. To take this one step further, as Nietzsche did, the horizons are determined by the culture, which is to say by the sub-set of values in which they are manifested culturally. Most trenchantly in Nietzsche, see *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*, trans. By Walter Kaufmann (New York: 1989); and for a recent interpretation, especially as it relates to Nietzsche's problematization of moral values to truth, historically, see Benjamin Sax, "Genealogy and Truth" (forthcoming).

conditioned by the cultural forces that give form to that history.[112] A cultural historical approach, then, attempts not only to explore the "spiritual contours" of the modern epoch, but employs in the process a critical assessment of modernity by summoning into action a particular perspective or interpretative stance toward the modern experience vis-à-vis the cultural and historical conditions of possibility from which it derives.

The Question of the Modern Self

In employing a critical re-reading of the classical formulation, *Ego cogito—ego sum,* and in a distinctly Heideggerian vein, it also endeavors to explore the larger and enduring ramifications of this formulation by opening it to the question of the culture of the Baroque,[113] which I maintain is a broad and still-operative cultural phenomenon. The *Cogito*'s rise to

[112] On this basic point, see Benjamin C. Sax, "Truth and Meaning in Cultural History", in *Cultural Visions*, 19. Among other things, the cultural-historical approach, as employed by Jacob Burckhardt, Johan Huizinga and Walter Benjamin, for example, becomes a type of *Oppositionswissenschaft* (an oppositional form of knowing) not only in its attempt to break free of the hegemony established by social and political history, but to offer an aesthetic expression that resists the atomizing and simplifying tendencies common to modern approaches to history. For analyses of *Oppositionswissenschaft* and the aesthetic articulation of a cultural totality in Burckhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, see John Hinde and Benjamin C. Sax, respectively, in John R. Hinde, *Jacob Burckhardt and the Crisis of Modernity* (Montreal: McGill, 2000) and Benjamin C. Sax, "An Acute and Practiced Eye": Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, and the Problem of Cultural History", in *Cultural Visions*, 111-150. For models of this approach to cultural history from which my own is inspired, see Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S.G.C. Middlemore (Penguin: 1990); Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); and Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1998).

[113] As I shall argue below, the Baroque is not only the *conditio sine qua non* for the *Cogito* formulation, but the undergirding cultural dynamic of modernity itself. Yet, the problem of the Baroque is fraught with difficulty—the proverbial "can-of-worms"; and, if it is problematized at all, it is oftentimes formulated in technical terms, the efforts of which painstakingly detail the stylistic differences between the Baroque and the Renaissance, the Mannerist, or the Neo-classical. In addition to the plastic arts, such comparative analyses extend to the literary and performative arts with near equal ardor and enthusiasm. However, formulating the Baroque as an historical problem is somewhat less a concern. Historians typically manage to avoid, or at least, skirt around the problem of the Baroque and its various complexities, all of which defy facile and traditional historical categorizations. Yet even more disconcerting is the outright dismissal in certain historical circles of the Baroque altogether, which has redounded in its relegation to the status of a non-problem. In any case, there is no historiographical consensus as to the Baroque and how to define it. In working through the problem of the *Cogito*, I will engage deeply with the question of the Baroque while formulating it as a cultural-historical problem.

dominance must be understood in terms of the history of culture, which the forces in which provided the *conditio sine qua non* for the *Cogito* to achieve full expression together with its all-important criterion for meaning, significance and truth. Moreover, it is from the *Cogito* that the broader notion of subjectivity derives, and which directly undergirded, informed and influenced the formation and development of modern science, and by extension the very possibility of modernity itself, at least as we have come to know it since the eighteenth century. [114]

By raising the problem of subjectivity (via the *Cogito*), along with its specific criterion for truth, I am raising the related problem of self-conception. The Cartesian move to the *Cogito* cannot be understood, as Heidegger did, merely as a fated development in the history of metaphysics where the path to nihilism is pre-inscribed; rather it should be understood also as a complex and dynamic cultural movement. The Baroque is a fascinatingly rich and creative cultural epoch, and reveals a number of possibilities for self-conception, as one may find, for example, in the sonnets of Shakespeare, the essays of Montaigne, and the respective "autobiographies" of Loyola and Cardano to name just a few. These examples at once attest to the confusion and richness of such terms as: "*subiectum*", "*self*", "*anima*", "*spiritus*", "consciousness", "*persona*", etc., which manifested not only during the Baroque epoch, but endure into all subsequent historical periods, including our own—as the problem of individualism in modernity would seem to make clear. Yet, a common strand uniting these conceptions of self is the emphasis upon the value and legitimacy of the inner experience, along with a deepening notion of the possibilities of a truth gained through reflection and the widening of this "inner space." The powerful move facilitated by the *Cogito* formulation, namely the

[114] This is not to argue in a simplistic and causal fashion whereby it is maintained that Descartes, through a succession of well-articulated and highly persuasive treatises, created the modern world. Moreover, it seeks to challenge the distinctly modern notion of absolute beginnings, personified as they are, in the figure of Descartes.

laying out of a foundation of mathematical order from which a universal science may be derived, had far-ranging and deeply penetrating implications for the modern conception of self. On the one hand, the *Cogito* formulation effectively stabilized the variously and inwardly directed, but as yet, not strictly subjectivist conceptions of self in the early modern period, while on the other hand, it reduced selfhood to a mere abstraction. The attempt to define a self on the basis of strict theoretical terms brings forth a number of problems, not least of all the false division between subject and object (on which the sciences operate) and a perpetuation of the confusion between self and subject, self and consciousness, etc. Yet, even more problematically, the *Cogito's* legitimating criterion for truth creates in its train an inauthentic orientation of self to world and vice versa as well as poses serious challenges to the possibility of being fully human in the modern world. The problem of the *Cogito* must be posed again.

As a Baroque formulation, i.e., a general inward validation of experience, thought, etc., the *Cogito*—or a mind thinking itself—effectively represents Descartes' attempt to conceive a notion of self and in the process allay uncertainty while providing a firm foundation for knowledge. The move to the *Cogito*, though emanating from a more generalized and fluid, Baroque conception of self, effectively negates the idea of a self in denying reciprocity between self and world. This is to say, that a rational and willful subjectivity sees the world purely in objective terms and in so doing, removes itself from the world. The question of the subject, as formulated in the *Cogito*, its stance toward reality and the definition of truth on which it depends, all must be reconsidered not only in light of the postmodern criticism, but fundamentally as a cultural problem. In understanding the *Cogito* as a cultural construct, we are better poised to understand it as the ground of reality in modernity; its characterization in terms of epistemic certitude; and its privileged values of objectivity, clarity and distinctness.

By eschewing a strictly causal-based or reductionist reading of the *Cogito* and its relation to the emergence and consolidation of the natural sciences, I argue that the complex element of the "inner life," and specifically that which would eventually flower into subjectivity, was accentuated for a variety of reasons within the cultural horizon of the Baroque. Only by revealing the cultural dynamics through which the *Cogito*—and by extension the broader ambit of subjectivity—was operative, i.e., values, mores, discursive practices, etc., can we hope to understand not only its emergence, but the force and power given it by the culture itself, which together continue to dominate the modern epoch with significant existential implications.

CHAPTER THREE

A Metaphor for Modernity: The Microcosm and Pico's *Oratio de hominis dignitate*

Ancient ontology...is fundamentally not unimportant and can never be overcome, because it represents the first necessary step that any philosophy at all has to take, so that this step must always be repeated by every actual philosophy. Only a self-complacent modernity lapsed into barbarism can wish to make us believe that Plato, as it is tastefully expressed, is done for.

—Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*

While the men of the Middle Ages look on the world as a vale of tears, which pope and emperor are set to guard against the coming of the antichrist; while the fatalists of the Renaissance oscillate between seasons of overflowing energy and seasons of superstition or of stupid resignation, here, in this circle of chosen spirits, the doctrine is upheld that the visible world was created by God in love, that it is the copy of a pattern pre-existing in Him, and that He will ever remain its eternal mover and restorer. The soul of man can by recognizing God draw Him into its narrow boundaries, but also by love of Him itself expand into the Infinite—and this is blessedness on earth.

—Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*

The Microcosm and the Modern Moment

The modern cultural epoch, of which we are a part, began with the Italian Renaissance, and it was Burckhardt who observed in his characteristic way the moment at which the knowledge of world and man reach maturity together. In the concluding lines of the *Civilization of the Renaissance*, he notes that magnificent moment whereby man, as raised upon a mystical edifice, may reach the full range of his god-like potential. The same love that had formed the very sinews of the cosmos in the will-based mysticism of Augustine; and the same love that for

Dante had done quite the same while also moving the sun and the other stars,[115] now defined the vibrantly dynamical relationship of man and world. Man as a copy of the divine pattern—the microcosm—becomes the basis of redefining the older medieval relationship of God, man, and world. Thus, this is a poetical moment, which moreover was the creative force at work within the Renaissance. These vibrant energies now drawn into the relatively narrow boundaries of the microcosm were at the very heart of the creative moment that was the Renaissance, and indeed also, the Baroque and modernity as a whole.

The question of the microcosm metaphor[116] as expressed and acknowledged in its generative and poetic mode is crucial for reassessing the significance of the Cartesian move to put knowledge and truth on a new foundation; and moreover, to open new channels of inquiry into this, our modern world. The fruitfulness of this and related inquiries hinges chiefly upon three things: the interrelationship of language in the poetic mode (i.e., language in the generative as opposed to the descriptive metaphorical mode); the cultural conditions through which those generative possibilities were allowed to manifest; and the specific expressions of this poetic language as translated into thought and action through the mediation of culture. My aim in this section is simple: to raise the question of the microcosm as expressed in Pico della Mirandola's *Oratio de hominis dignitate* as the operative and creative metaphor of modernity. Insofar as the metaphor operates on multiple levels, it is the level of the pre-conceptual that offers the most significance to our considerations here. Though Aristotle seemingly stressed the cognitive function of the metaphor in the facilitating of learning[117]—a focus very appealing to formal

[115] Paradiso, XXXIII, 145, "*L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle*."

[116] The locus for our query into the microcosm metaphor is Pico della Mirandola's *Oratio de hominis dignitate*.

[117] *Rhetoric*, III.10.3-10.7 in the Loeb edition, translated by J.H. Freese (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926). Indeed, Aristotle acknowledges the informative (and the creative) power of metaphor, yet it is his assumption that logic may be imposed upon the metaphorical to stabilize, namely its variegated and unstable

semiotic theories as well as certain brands of literary criticism—the Ricoeurian reading of the *Rhetoric* endeavors to move beyond "psychological" interpretations to present the complexity of the metaphor in a way perhaps more faithful to Aristotle's, and indeed, the original Greek understanding.[118] The metaphor in Ricoeur's view serves not only as a lexographical figuration (*lexis*), which includes *inter alia* diction and style; but functions also semantically, i.e., at the level of meaning, so as to allow discourse (the *Λόγος*) to appear in a particular way.[119]

My own approach follows Ricoeur's basic interpretive move, especially the metaphorical operation at the level of the *Λόγος*, which is also a level of meaning. Yet, I wish to draw out more fully the integral relation of the metaphorical with respect to the moral dimension of thought and action. From here, we must endeavor to explore and, thus to articulate to a greater

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semantic field. This move not only separates *lexis* from *logos* in a particular way, it does so also to the extent that *lexis* (diction) now re-incorporates *logos* (in this sense a more purely semantical level of language) in accordance to its own terms and demands. The metaphor is still operative and power, though in a greatly limited way. This is overly and sadly simplistic statement regarding a decisive moment in the metaphysical tradition, the assumptions of which we continue to privilege and to a great extent.

[118] Readings of a psychological bent proceed under the assumption that some underpinning science or philosophy, i.e., a theory, must be present to justify and legitimate our understanding of the metaphor. Ricoeur's criticism here stems primarily from the fact that such approaches already not only impose a truth value about the metaphor, but deny it any informative or creative value. What is more, these readings assume what "meaning is" and thus reducing the question of the metaphor—insofar as it is cast within these theoretical parameters—to a certain circularity and to the extent that metaphor will always act limitedly, which is to say, lexographically. On this approach, see for example, I.A. Richards and C.K. Ogden, *The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism* (New York: Mariner Books, 1989) and I.A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965).

[119] See Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor, et passim*; and Ricoeur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling" in *On Metaphor*, edited by Sheldon Sacks (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 142. For Ricoeur semantics reflect the metaphor's capacity "to provide untranslatable information and, accordingly…yield some true insight about reality" (141). To this I will add: that though Aristotle acknowledged the informative (and the creative) power of metaphor, he nevertheless assumed that logic may be imposed upon the metaphorical, and with significant implications for the possibility of knowledge. He thus hoped to stabilize the variegated and unstable semantic field characteristic of this level of the metaphorical (*lexis*). This move not only separates *lexis* from *logos* in a particular way, it does so also to the extent that *lexis* (diction) by re-incorporating the *logos* (in this sense a more purely semantical level of language) in accordance to its own terms and demands. In other words, the assumption here is that reasoning, and by extension knowledge (*episteme*), can only be attained at the level of *lexis* (though it is understood as *logos*). Though we are still talking of the metaphorical, and moreover we can still acknowledge the Aristotelian assumption that the metaphor remains operative and powerful in the facilitation of knowledge (especially by analogy), it is nevertheless functioning in a greatly limited way. We have now entered into a new realm replete with completely novel assumptions regarding the dynamics of Being, especially as starkly contrasted with the Greeks of the Archaic Period. Indeed, this is an overly and sadly simplistic statement regarding a decisive moment in the metaphysical tradition, the assumptions of which we continue to privilege, and to a great extent.

degree, the fact that we are not only moral beings existing in a particular, historical world, but that we dwell within language in a fundamental way—the two are thus inextricable. On one level, emphasis upon the raw, creative power of the metaphorical may occasion a movement away from more stylistic, literary, and indeed decidedly conceptual renderings of the same. This is to say, we wish to move beyond a treatment of the metaphor acting merely at the level of *lexis;* or in other words, acting in the very terms articulated and granted by the metaphor in its generative mode. This is to say that though the descriptive metaphor may *convey* meaning and significance, it does not create it—it lacks authentic, poetic openness to *Λόγος*. On another level, this approach endeavors to occasion an awareness and appreciation of—though from a different angle and perspective—the elusive dynamics that underpinned (and continue to underpin) a historically specific moment in the West—the Italian Renaissance—and from which the characteristics of modernity began to assume their present form.

In other words, the intrinsic metaphorical possibilities of Pico's microcosm extend to and are operative within the entirety of the modern *Kulturepoche,* including our unique, historical placement within it. Indeed, those dawning and incipient moments of the epochal threshold (*Epochenschwelle*), as Hans Blumenberg has called it,[120] are especially interesting and problematic historically, and are perhaps crucial in the attempt to reckon and engage with the epoch's significance. In particular, the metaphor has transformed and re-transformed itself throughout the epoch in crucially important ways, a concern which therefore becomes decisive for our considerations below. In recognizing the fundamentally creative potential of language and its relation to thought and action, we are at the same time recognizing the underlying concerns of meaning and significance, which by the operative definitions of this dissertation, are

[120] Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Boston: MIT Press, 1983).

tied inextricably to culture. To pose the problem of the metaphor in this fashion is to concede awareness that an informative and creative metaphor, such as Pico's articulation of the microcosm, is constitutive and reflective of a particular mode of thought and action, which at the same time is constitutive and reflective of a particular cultural-historical manifestation. In other words, thought and action, and moreover, the cultural horizon by which these modes are allowed to appear, are fundamentally metaphorical.

By posing the problem of the microcosm metaphor as a problem in the history of culture, and vice versa, we are opening the cultural concerns of thought and action vis-à-vis their creative potential to the broader ambit of positive and "vitalizing forces" as made possible by the metaphor itself. From here the attendant questions of meaning and value can be posed and subsequently explored insofar as they sustain and condition the modern mode of existence. What is more, an attempt can be made to reveal the metaphor's creative potential, especially in its relation to the possibility for the creation of new "truths" and new structures of meaning, and indeed, the creation of a new world—none of which, in any particular instantiation, were foregone necessities in the Renaissance. This is especially important for a historically based critique—such as the one here employed—whereby the question of interpretation is of paramount importance. Therefore, an attempt can be made to question, and at several levels, the hegemonic sway of the dominant definition of truth as occasioned by Cartesianism together with the ontological stance it entails and privileges. Perhaps more importantly, it allows the opportunity to raise questions that might otherwise elude us or lay beyond our reach altogether, which are crucial to illuminating the problem of modernity as well as for fruitful reflection upon it vis-à-vis our "privileged" stance within the present. To the dynamics of those questions, and the metaphor itself, we shall now turn.

Opening the Question of the Metaphor

In order to open our analyses of the question of modernity, and the placement of the *Cogito* within, it is important to dwell briefly within the conditional moment where the germs of that history first began to unfold—the Italian Renaissance. To hold true to Nietzsche's observation that the world of the Renaissance "contained within it all the positive forces to which we owe our modern culture," it is exceedingly important to illuminate not only the Renaissance, but the Baroque as well, as twin phenomena coterminous with the broader question of modernity. [121] To entertain this ambitious question is to advance most certainly upon a large and difficult ground. One avenue through which to pursue it fruitfully, as Nietzsche himself did with respect to the trans-valuation of values in Western culture—from antiquity forward—hinged upon the significance of the metaphor. In his "defense" of the metaphor against a privative, literal meaning (which as Gadamer and Ricoeur have shown, is still metaphorical), Nietzsche endeavored to show through a number of his works that the instance of humanity as a whole—and by extension, life—is permeated in several senses by metaphors.[122] The implication being

[121] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 113. Later in the aphorism, Nietzsche states that these same forces "have *up to now* never reappeared in our modern culture with such power as they had then." Nietzsche's brief and subtle comment is more than just a passing observation, and contains within it powerful insights. He saw in these positive forces the expression *inter alia* of a general liberation in thought, the unfettering of the individual, a passion for truthfulness over appearance, and a new enthusiasm for science—all characteristics typically associated with the Renaissance. Given his own project, Nietzsche saw in the Renaissance the possibility of setting out on a new path away from the metaphysical tradition, a possibility that was never realized, and furthermore unable to be realized again, until later modernity. At this moment Nietzsche saw himself as entrusted with the obligation of revitalizing these forces in order to destroy the old value structure; and moreover through the employment of a revitalized creativity, to establish not merely another value structure, but a value structure deemed as historically authentic in addition to being a vital and life-expanding heir to the original Greek morality. See also, Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1997), on the "originary metaphor," 270-80. Also, Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche et la métaphore* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1983).

[122] On the function of the "metaphoric," see Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 2004), and the detailed expansions thereupon, see Paul Ricouer, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, translated by Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008). The question of the metaphor as it pertains to Nietzsche and his work is too rich and complex to engage satisfactorily here. For a general sketch, see for example, Lawrence M. Hinman, "Nietzsche, Metaphor and Truth" in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 43 (1982): 179-199.

that the metaphor is rich, variegated and ever-present; and moreover, defies reduction to a fixed or logically stabilized schema, as guaranteed, for example, by a referentially adequate dimension that grounds both meaning and truth.[123] In short, the metaphor mediates life.[124] And, as Nietzsche's general assessment suggests, the metaphor operates on a fundamental and pre-conceptual level where it is uniquely expressive of its creativity and generative power.[125] And yet, the metaphor acts also in accordance with a historically unique value structure, or culture (which I will address in some detail below). The metaphor mediates the potential of any number of modes of human existence and their cultural expressions. Indeed, the culture of the Renaissance (and by extension the Baroque)—together with its vibrantly affirmative expression of life—doubtless represents such a moment of fundamentally creative potential. The creativity and life-effusive impetus that animated and shaped any number of its cultural forms *was* thoroughly and authentically poetical. In this sense, poetry as a "poetical mode"—i.e., a mode of creativity or making—represents the "essence of art," especially in its ability to open-up a historical world together with the vibrant potentialities for that world.[126]

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[123] Hinman, 182 *et passim.* Also, Walter Benjamin's initial observations in the famous Epistemo-Critical Prologue (*Erkenntniskritische Vorrede*) of his *Origin of German Tragic Drama* advance along these lines, and moreover show at once the epistemological tyranny of a theory of representation while intimating broadly the fruitful possibilities of pursuing alternative philosophical forms in an authentically historical fashion. "Philosophical doctrine is based on historical codification. It cannot therefore be evoked [*ad*] *more geomtrico*. The more clearly mathematics demonstrate [in a negative sense] that the total elimination of the problem of representation—which is boasted by every didactic system—is the sign of true knowledge, the more conclusively does it reveal its renunciation of that area of truth towards which language is directed." *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. by John Osborn (London: Verso, 1998), 27.

[124] As a conditional, it is necessary, but not sufficient for the expression of the life in it various modes. The other conditional is culture, to which we shall attend below.

[125] See "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," in *Writings from the Early Notebooks*, ed. Raymond Geuss and trans. Ladislaus Löb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 253-64.

[126] On the "essence of art," see Heidegger, especially, *The Essence of Truth: On Plato's Cave Allegory and* Theaetetus trans. by Ted Sadler (New York: Continuum, 2002), 44-7. Art is here understood in the broad Greek sense of making. In my reading of Heidegger, poetry is the "essence of art" because it represents the ground of possibility, which for Heidegger is the possibility that allows beings "to be more being-ful." In no way does essence connote a metaphysical form, and in that sense, a basis for the "really real." On the opening of a world, see "The Origin of the Work of Art" in *Poetry, Language, Thought* trans. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 17-86.

Since the metaphor, as Nietzsche tells us, is itself linked to life, which in various ways extends to culture, the problem of the *Cogito* must first draw reference to the possibilities of the microcosm metaphor as established in the Renaissance, and most famously associated with Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. Only then can the question of culture vis-à-vis the full possibility of these vital and positive forces be adequately posed—and from here an historical assessment of them. Yet, a cultural-historical reading of the *Cogito*, though dependent upon the question of values—which is to say, the meaning and significance that determines and expresses the various modes of thought and action, must rely on the full ambit of metaphorical possibility. This metaphorical possibility is in many ways antecedent to the dynamic whereby cultural values shape those possibilities into definable realities, which are in turn expressed variously and vigorously in and through any number of cultural forms.

To approach the question of the metaphor in this way—which is to say at the level of the poetical—is to delve below the diction-oriented (*lexis*) expression of language.[127] At this

[127] The question of the metaphor and its relation to the problem of modernity is not new. As a host of scholars have endeavored to show, including Cassirer, Koyré, Blumenberg, and more recently Elizabeth Brient, the question of the late Renaissance, and indeed the threshold of modernity, is fundamentally a philosophical/cosmological problem. In emphasizing almost exclusively the philosophical and conceptual dimension of the problem they have turned to the metaphor of the *sphaera infinita*, or infinite sphere, to demonstrate the advent of the modern moment. Gregory of Nissa had articulated in *Contra Eunomium*, attempts to equate God with the limitless and incomprehensible, which essential attributes of the divine; and thus finite, created minds can therefore never attain an absolute understanding of God who will remain ultimately incomprehensible. See for instance, Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958); Ernst Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, trans. Mario Domandi (New York: Harper and Row, 1963); Pierre Duhem, *To Save the Phenomenon: An Essay on the Idea of Physical Theory from Plato to Galileo*, translated by Edmund Dolan and Chininah Maschler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969); Blumenberg, *Legitimacy*, *supra* note 5; Elizabeth Brient, "Transitions to a Modern Cosmology: Meister Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa on the Intensive Infinite" in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (1999): 375-400; and Brient, *The Immanence of the Infinite: Hans Blumenberg and the Threshold to Modernity*, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2002). To a large extent, reappearance of this metaphor comes in response to the uncertainties articulated in late-medieval nominalism, and most famously associated with the German mystic theologian, Nicholas Cusanus. Cusanus developed in his *De docta ignorantia* and *De Visione Dei* especially, a derivative and more technical metaphor, i.e., enfolding/unfolding—*complicatio/explicatio*, whereby the movement toward the divine infinitude, as characterized by a self-movement of mind or intellectual vision (*visio intellectualis*), is understood as an unfolding of the original, infinite force enfolded within it (*Maximum Absolutum*). It seems to me that the metaphor these scholars see as foundational already presupposes an institutionalizing poetical force through which mankind may be said to expand into the world in accordance with his *indiscretae opus imaginis*. That

derivative level of *lexis*, language interrelates and conveys meaning, though it does not create meaning; it acts provisionally, even mechanically; but not poetically. By contrast, the poetical metaphor, as Paul Ricoeur has noted, occurs as a complex "event" whereby meaning emerges within language in a powerful and creative way—in other words it "opens up a world;" or more specifically, it opens the possibility for a world to emerge.[128] That Ricoeur's philosophical project was in large part hermeneutical (i.e., through its concentration on interpretation and the understanding of meaning), the written text was crucial in his attempt to explicate a particular, human mode of being as revealed by the text.[129] What is more, the hermeneutical, or interpretative act, hinges upon the "textual world" as a type of "fictive world," which moreover, becomes effectively a "proposed world" in which to project one's possibilities in profoundly dynamic ways. This is especially the case vis-à-vis the creation of a "new world" outside the

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Cusanus' notion of *complicatio/explicatio* is cast within the frame of a traditional love-will based mysticism is not to deny the microcosm metaphor its poetical force, which I would further say, Cusanus presupposed fully.

[128] See Paul Ricoeur, "Metaphor and the Problem of Hermeneutics" in *New Literary History*, Vol. 6, No. 1, On Metaphor (1974), 95-110, especially, 97 and 110; *Rule of Metaphor, et passim.* For a structuralist account of the referential-descriptive versus the poetical function of language, which are but two of the six functions articulated by Jakobson, see Roman Jakobson, "Quest for the Essence of Language" in *Selected Writings, Vol. 2* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 345-59. Following C.S. Pierce and his understanding of an "icon of intelligible relations" and Benjamin Whorf treatment of the distinction between the "patternment" and the "lexographic" aspects of language, Jakobson adheres to a structuralist theory of language. The action of the symbol, or "symbolizing" (*tugchanon/semeiosis*), becomes decisive for Jakobson in separating the referential from the poetical function of language. The distinction is further articulated by what he terms a "double cognition," which is operative in any sign, and through which the functionality of these modes can be understood. Jakobson thus understands signs cognitively whereby the one, the poetical, is directed inwardly toward the symbol for the sake of the symbol (which effectively becomes the *essence* of language) and the other, the referential, directed outwardly toward the world and the "reality" it attempts to name and describe. Though I espouse a movement away from Jakobson's structuralist formulation, I have greater difficulty with his understanding of the operability of the metaphor on exclusively cognitive terms, which not only seems to privilege the act of cognition itself, but it does so in such a way that seems to separate language from "reality," which in its way, still maintains the validity of a representational theory of truth.

[129] "Being-in-the-world" (*In-der-Welt-sein*) is a technical term coined by Heidegger, and possesses a very rich connotation, which we will explore below. Its usage was inherited and modified by Ricoeur, but the basic thrust of its employment by both thinkers is the same: an attempt to de-center the subject and to make its significance dependent upon interrelatedness to the world and the various beings that comprise it.

text.[130] The fictive or textual world reveals to us in a profound way *our* world; or more to the point, the possibilities for our world.

It may be obvious that in using the specific notion of the "opening of a world," or world disclosure, Ricoeur owes a debt to Heidegger. And indeed it was Heidegger who articulated and defined the "opening of a world" (*Erschlossenheit*) in terms of the complex notion of *Ereignis*, i.e., an event characterized as a coming-into-view or disclosure (*Unverborgenheit*). Rather than to establish—with respect to Ricoeur's understanding —a common ground for the respective "realities" of text, metaphor and extra-textual world, employed as they were to overcome a hermeneutical problem, I want to follow a slightly different path. Though I agree with Ricoeur in viewing the interpretive moment—briefly outlined above—as an opportunity to understand ourselves and our world vis-à-vis the text and the creative possibilities it yields in their re-description, I wish to emphasize the Heideggerian notion of *Ereignis* with respect to the question of possibility *(Möglichkeit)* itself. Specifically, the question of a vibrant and creative possibility, together with its integral connection to metaphor (i.e., language in general) and culture, hinge upon the complex notion of *Ereignis* as the "event," which makes any occurrence possible.[131]

In accordance with Heidegger's frame of thought, I maintain that the historical reflection summoned through the heuristic of *Ereignis* provides in its way a stark insight into the nascent and raw vitality of the human condition (and especially vis-à-vis values, meanings and significances), which again, (and not dissimilar from Heidegger) are linked to the creative power of language. Thus, *Ereignis* is in many ways crucial in the problematization of the metaphor and

[130] See, for example, Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Volume 3*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) and "Phenomenology and Hermeneutics" trans. John B. Thompson in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 112.

[131] See, Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2002), 19.

what it purports to do in the creating of a new historical reality. The etymology of metaphor, as derived from the Greek metapherein, connotes a sense of "transference," "carrying over;" or indeed, a "changing or altering." Together, they dignify the pre-Aristotelian sense of hermeneutics, as related to the god Hermes, who was the messenger of the gods who mediated between them and humanity—or effectively, he mediated between humanity and Being. Not only is *Ereignis* an "opening of a world," (*Erschlossenheit*) it constitutes the conditional moment whereby language, in a historically unique way, creates and transforms human thought and action, and thus makes any "world opening" possible.

Laying the Ground: *Ereignis* and World Disclosure

On the very complex notion of *Ereignis*—and the attendant notion of the *Λόγος* on which the "event" thoroughly depends—a few prefatory remarks are in order. Notwithstanding the contested view that the *Ereignis* formulation was successful in overcoming Western metaphysics, as a heuristic, it is exceedingly fruitful in assaying a re-formulation of the problem of the modern cultural epoch. It must be emphasized that *Ereignis,* as an event, is not to be understood as a "factual event" expressed, for example, via a specific date, place or individual (e.g., William the Conqueror who was present at the Battle of Hastings in October of 1066); but rather, more in terms of a "clearing" (*Lichtung*). In this way a historical moment—along with the beings and things that comprise it—appear or shine forth, and thus come-into-view in a particular way. Implicitly crucial within Heidegger's notion of *Ereignis* is the act of *poíesis* (*ποίησις*), which he understood in the full Greek sense of "the poetic" viz., a "production," a "type of making" or a "bringing forth."[132] *Ereignis* is for Heidegger, arguably, the supreme

[132] On this point specifically, see for example, Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art" trans. by Albert Hofstadter in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper Collins, 1971), 15-86.

moment of *poíesis,* which furthermore, as should be stressed, is "poetic" in a very rich and complicated way.[133] The "event," in the first instance, is poetic in that it occasions the "bringing forth" of a world. This poetic "bringing forth" comprises what Heidegger understood as "unconcealment" or the shining forth of a world, a notion he articulated further in terms of the Greek λέγειν/*légein.* Through λέγειν, and its more familiarly direct connotation "to speak" or "to say," Heidegger interpreted its meaning more broadly so as to connote a type of "laying out;" or, as Heidegger states, a "letting-lie-together-before" (*bei-sammen-vorleigen-Lassen*).[134]

Decisively for Heidegger, as he indicated later in the essay, λέγειν is understood as a "gathering" (as *sammen* would seem to imply*);* and yet this "gathering," which must be emphasized, is itself a "poetic event." The world that shines forth through λέγειν, as a type of gathering, does so in a total and collective way. Yet, the event that manifests, as the gathering, is not only whole and total, but is also exceptional. As Heidegger notes in his reading of the Heraclitus fragment, the "exceptional laying that is the λέγειν…comes to pass as the *Λόγος*."[135] In other words, this is to suggest that while λέγειν allows beings and things to lie-together-before, the λέγειν relates to the *Λόγος* in a particular and special way through which the Λόγος is allowed to shine forth as "the Laying that gathers."[136] Heidegger characterizes the relationship between λέγειν and the *Λόγος* with another crucial verb—*ὁμολογεῖν/homo-legein.* The action

[133] Only a lamentably scant overview can be rendered here; but a sketching of the broad contours of what Heidegger means by the poetic/poetical vis-à-vis the *Logos* and *légein* are sufficient for the purposes of this essay. Indeed, my interpretations of the problems addressed in this section with respect to language are heavily influenced by Heidegger. For a more detailed treatment by Heidegger, see for example, "What are Poets For?" in *Poetry, Language, Thought,* 89-139; also Heidegger's "Logos (Heraclitus, Fragment B 50)" trans. David Farrell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi in *Early Greek Thinking* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984); "The Nature of Language trans. Peter D. Hertz in *On the Way to Language* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971); for a more specialized treatment with respect to Friedrich Hölderlin, see *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* trans. Keith Hoeller (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2000). In this collection, all the poems cast light upon this problem in different ways; but for the specific concerns above, see especially, "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry," 51-65.

[134] Heidegger, "Logos (Heraclitus, Fragment B 50), op. cit., 62.

[135] Ibid., 66.

[136] Ibid.

conveyed by this verb (indeed, as a type of predicate) simultaneously strengthens this relationship while allowing Heidegger to convey a sense of that type of speaking (*λογεῖν*) that harmonizes (*ὁμον*) in certain respects becomes one with the way the *Λόγος* speaks.[137]

Though *λογεῖν* is itself a type of "laying out," it attains a special significance insofar as it "lays out" in accordance with the *Λόγος*, i.e., that which is at once the "Laying that gathers." What is more, the *Λόγος*, for Heidegger, represents one expression of the *Urwörte*, or the "primal sayings of thoughts," the attunement to which allows for the articulation, in speech, of the "saying" of the *Λόγος*. As Heidegger states:

> But since the dawn of thinking 'Being' names the presence of what is present, in the sense of the gathering which clears and shelters, which in turn is thought and designated as the *Λόγος*. The *Λόγος* (λέγειν, to gather or assemble) is experienced through ᾽Α*λήθεια,* the sheltering which reveals things.[138]

The suggestion here is that within these "primal sayings of thoughts" we may engage with Being, or more specifically, the modes through which Being presents. The experience of these modes is transferred through ᾽Α*λήθεια,* or the moment of disclosure (*Unverborgenheit)* whereby the *Λόγος* is allowed to shine forth; and it is thus a moment of crucial significance by which human beings may find their authentic place within the world. And, just as λέγειν allows for ᾽Α*λήθεια* to present these modes on their own terms as an expression of the *Λόγος* (the disclosing of what is present in its presencing), it is the "middle region," characterized by *ὁμολογεῖν/homo-legein,* whereby the saying of the *Λόγος,* as it is disclosed, is put into speech and designated properly the

[137] Ibid., 67-76; and also, Heidegger, *What is Philosophy* (New York: NCUP, 1956), 47.
[138] Heidegger, "The Anaximander Fragment" in *Early Greek Thinking*, 39.

Λόγος.[139] By "designating" the *Λόγος,* through the humanly articulated λέγειν, Heidegger does not mean to suggest that Being (or reality) is somehow captured; but that the act of designation is part of the total "event," which furthermore can only be understood reflexively with respect to the event as a whole. What is more, the *Λόγος* is not understood as a static, metaphysical essence; it "is" rather, as Heidegger makes clear, both concealing and un-concealing. And, inasmuch as the *Λόγος* un-conceals (or appears or presences), it does so in such a way that it may be properly designated.[140]

Again, the "designating" in speech of the *Λόγος* is effectively the vibrant and poetical act, and is furthermore that which commands our attention in addressing the question of the metaphor with respect to the modern cultural epoch. The poetical retains here the sense of "bringing forth," and yet adds to it the equally significant poetical act of naming. The *Λόγος* brought to speech through poetry—or naming—is not an expression of Being *per se*, but a modal expression of it. The focus for us within this designating act becomes the mediating "power" (*dunamis*) of the poetical, especially as understood in terms of the *ὁμολογεῖν/homo-legein,* which puts-into-speech "the saying" of the *Λόγος* in a particular and exceptional, human way—i.e., through the gathering and laying of λέγειν.

It should be made clear that the *ὁμολογεῖν/homo-legein* represents the poetical realm—and as such is a realm of making and of creativity—that is "laid out" and in a particular way by λέγειν. As the "naming" articulates the various modal expressions of Being, it simultaneously presupposes the harmony (*ὁμολογεῖν)* with the *Λόγος*—as "the Laying that gathers"—and in accordance with the destiny (*Schicksal*) that has brought this "naming" forth and that now comes

[139] "Logos (Heraclitus, Fragment B 50)," 70-71. It shoud be noted that *ὁμολογεῖν/homo-legein* is the 'hearing' of the saying of the *Λόγος,* which through the action of mortal λέγειν is put into speech.

[140] Ibid., 73. I use the term "properly," which I mean to relate to the question of fate (*Geschick*) or destiny (*Schicksal),* both notions that Heidegger addresses. I will explicate them more fully below.

to pass.[141] The poetical, thus understood, represents an authentic expression of the *Λόγος,* as that act of disclosure by which a world is brought forth. Indeed, through his reading of these Presocratic fragments Heidegger attempts to remind us that truth, thinking and the poetical are themselves unified in their expressions of the Greek mode of Being; and to the extent that it becomes possible to think in terms of a "poetical truth," which preserves—in thinking—the authentic relationship between Being and the world it has brought forth through naming. This is to emphasize that Heidegger's engagement with the Presocratics, together with the powerfully interpretive moves he there employed, was not directed toward the thinking in the text *per se*, but rather the *Λόγος,* or "the saying," of the fragments. As he repeatedly emphasized, engagement with the fragments, and by extension any profoundly influential text in the Western tradition, occasions thinking about Being, and this is especially so insofar as this thinking aimed to recover a true sense of the fundamental character of Being.[142]

Heidegger thus reinforces the Parmenidean dictum that thinking and Being are the same. This exceedingly rich fragment underscores the dynamics not only of Being to thinking; but also later formulations of the relationship between action and thinking, which are nevertheless unified in the above sense of the poetical as an expression of Being. In this sense, poetry, as a particular type of action, intensifies and condenses through speech (λέγειν) the primal meaning and significance of the "saying" of the *Λόγος,* which is itself humanly incomprehensible before the poetic act. The *Λόγος* thus appears in a unique and exceptional way (as λέγειν); and yet the poetic act is also a thinking act in which the powers of memory and imagination (though not

[141] Ibid. 71-74. See also Heidegger's essay on the Parmenides Fragment, "Moira (Parmenides VIII, 34-41)" in *Early Greek Thinking*, 77-101, especially with respect to the fated relationship of thinking and Being to the Same as the Same, which by extension calls to thinking the relationship of Being to beings. Heidegger implies, as he articulates elsewhere, a type of unity expressed through fate (*Geschick*), destiny (*Schicksal*), and history (*Geschischte*).

[142] For an interesting treatment of this attempt at "recovery," see Daniel O. Dahlstrom, "Heidegger's Heritage" in *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 59 (2003): 981-998.

understood in a metaphysical sense) are called forth in the naming of a world as it appears before us.

This is to suggest that the relation of the twin actions of thought and poetry occur, at one level, as a type poetic intuition, i.e., the *ὁμολογεῖν/homo-legein,* which moreover is necessary for the poetic act (as λέγειν) to take place. Yet, Heidegger's readings of these fragments reveal the dynamics of poetry and thought in another light. Insofar as thinking aims at the recovery of the fundamental character of Being, it engages with the "saying" of the text in a poetical way; indeed as a thoughtful confrontation with the transcendent greatness of the Greeks from which we might fashion from their power a hewn path into the creative possibilities for the overcoming of the nihilism set upon us.

Though Heidegger's engagement with the Presocratics is certainly hermeneutical, it is also fundamentally historical in orientation. In this sense, he shares with others—namely Gadamer and Ricoeur—a great sensitivity toward the appropriative moment that characterizes this sort of engagement with a text—i.e., as a disclosure of meaning in language.[143] Gadamer had read the hermeneutical situation primarily as a fusion of "horizons," which moreover presupposed a historically grounded "horizon of inquiry," from which to offer an authentic engagement with the open meaning of a given text.[144] In a related fashion, Ricoeur placed emphasis upon the moment of "self-presentation" as manifest within the event of speech (aka, the text), which, he argued, yielded new possibilities for the reception—from the text—of a new

[143] On the question of disclosure in language with respect to Heidegger and Ricoeur, see Gert-Jan van der Heiden, *The Truth (and Untruth) of Language: Heidegger, Ricoeur, and Derrida on Disclosure and Displacement* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne, 2010).

[144] On this point, see Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 302-7 *et passim.*

mode of being outside it.[145] He argued that these possibilities depended upon the "recognition" of oneself through the acknowledgement of an individual's "capacities," which furthermore was a notion that depended upon an open and authentic orientation toward memory, i.e., history and the historical.[146]

The nuanced difference for Heidegger, as his engagements with the Presocratics reveal, lie in his attempt to revitalize an authentic philosophical vision—or more specifically the vision of the myth lover *φιλόμυθος*/*philomythos*—and by implication, the poetic act whereby the wonders (θαυμάσια) of the *Λόγος* are gathered (λέγειν) and put into authoritative speech (*μυθος*).[147] For Heidegger, the revitalization of this vision, together with the thinking that takes place within the gathering (*λέγειν*) where the vision becomes revitalized, bears an historical significance. This is the case largely because the gathering is itself an expression of fate (*Geschick*), which extends to the destiny (*Schicksal*) of the Western tradition in its entirety.

Though the texts and the sayings that they usher forth are exceedingly significant from a general hermeneutical perspective, they are not necessarily so in terms of a strict hermeneutic, so as to imply its preserve within the literary realm. Though the thoughtful confrontation that takes place between "thinker" and the "saying" of the text is derived from a convergence of

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[145] As noted (and cited) above, this is major theme in Ricoeur's hermeneutical approach. In this particular instance, see the essay "Appropriation" in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. and trans. by John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), especially pp. 192-3.

[146] The notion of recognition is pervasive in Ricoeur's works. Acknowledgement and/or recognition of one's capacities is arguably a Ricoeurian formulation of Hiedegger's "*Es gibt*," or the gift of Being. On the question of recognition, see Ricoeur's *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); on collective memory, see his *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. by Kathleen Blamely and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

[147] Upon closer inspection, it can be seen that Aristotle still retains this basic understanding, though he formulated it in terms of an onto-theology: "Now he who wonders and is perplexed feels that he is ignorant (thus the myth-lover is in a sense a philosopher, since myths are composed of wonders); therefore if it was to escape ignorance that men studied philosophy, it is obvious that they pursued science for the sake of knowledge…[a] science is divine if it is peculiarly the possession of God, or if it is concerned with divine matters. And this science [metaphysics] fulfills both those conditions…" *Metaphysics* I.II.10-14 trans. by Hugh Tredenick (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

horizons—as a necessary but not sufficient component of the thinking act—it is foremost a determinate moment in the history of Being (*Seingeschichte*). Inasmuch as this confrontation is an authentic confrontation with our history (*Geschichte*), it is simultaneously a confrontation with our destiny (*Geschick*). That the destinies of Being and Thinking are the same, this moment—with equal determinism— calls us to thought, provided we have the ears to listen. For Heidegger, this history became increasingly characterized by the nothing (*das Nichts*), a designation by which he meant the utter forgetfulness of Being (*Seinvergessenheit*); or, in other words, the historical moment where the question of Being—understood as fundamental to the essence of man and his world—could no longer be raised. The history of Being becomes synonymous with the history of metaphysics, which jointly become the history of nihilism, which moreover, for Heidegger, is an inexorable and necessary movement.

As Heidegger claimed: only by knowing the history of metaphysics can the history of Being be properly interrogated, and only then can nihilism be overcome (*aufgehoben*). The very notion of an overcoming, which Heidegger inherited from Hegel, itself implies an historical movement; and yet overcoming does not connote an action whereby something is removed, jettisoned or left aside. Rather, the moment of overcoming forms part of the larger history of Being, a history which has brought it to pass that just as nihilism is the authentic expression of Being (Being-as-absence), so is the thoughtful confrontation with the essence of nihilism. The confrontation, as part and parcel of the overcoming, does not imply merely a super-cession of nihilism *per se* in the attainment of a higher consciousness or of a mode of Being, but is construed both historically and hermeneutically to the extent that Being at long last becomes

remembered and a proper orientation to it is regained.[148] We now have a general conceptual frame in which to assess the metaphor of the microcosm as it stood before the poetic mind of the Renaissance. *Ereignis* as understood in terms of the *Λόγος*—which together constitute the poetic or language event—presupposes historical thinking insofar as it brings to bear questions of destiny (*Schicksal*) and concerns for an authentic human existence vis-à-vis that destiny. This type of thinking assumes that the very act of thinking is part of the object of that thinking, and to the extent that the one determines the other.

Ereignis arguably represents the *essence* of possibility as possibility; and yet it is language that mediates this possibility. In his later works particularly, Heidegger turned to the question of language with a keen eye toward the crucial significance it held for ontology; and specifically, fundamental ontology, which defined his overall project from at least the early lectures of the 1920s. Along these lines, the 1962 essay, *Time and Being,* is particularly significant. In that essay he endeavored once again to reformulate the relation of ontology and temporality, though this time with the powerful heuristic of *Ereignis*; again understood as the historically appropriative moment through which a world could emerge.[149] The move made in *Time and Being* is perhaps the strongest formulation of his overall attempt to counter the Western tradition of thought by subordinating Being to Time; and implicitly for Heidegger, to overcome the "essentializing" structure of an ontology understood metaphysically. His exceedingly rich declaration at the end of the essay makes exactly that claim:

[148] The above treatment of "overcoming" and super-cession vis-à-vis Hegel is ridiculously simplistic, but I want to stress that Heidegger's hermeneutical-historical approach to the history of Being is not only Hegelian, but also markedly Goethean in the seeking of an authentic relationship between one's past, present and future.

[149] *On Time and Being*, 23-24.

But if we do what was attempted, and think Being in the sense of the presencing and allowing-to-presence that are there in destiny—which in turn lies in the extending of true time which opens and conceals—then Being belongs into Appropriating [*Ereignis*]. Giving and its gift receive their determination from Appropriating. In that case, Being would be a species of Appropriation [*Ereignis*], and not the other way around.[150]

Ereignis defines (and describes) integrally the emergence or "opening of a world" as a particular, temporal moment, which becomes part and parcel of a particular expression of Being allowed to manifest in a particular way. The complex and interrelated expressions of the event (*Ereignis*) must be understood as an integral whole insofar as the event itself represents the *shining forth* of a world as well as the *condition* by which that world is allowed to shine forth. In other words, not only may an event (*Ereignis*) be understood as a totality expressed as a spatio-temporal moment (which is to say, a historical moment such as the Renaissance), it represents in addition a totality of possibility whereby a specific historical moment may create and recreate itself vis-à-vis the dynamics (*dunamis*/δύναμις) of the event as a whole, which in Heidegger's language was nothing less than the giving (*Es gibt*) of Being to beings. Yet, even more significantly for our concerns here is the various and dynamic manifestations of a world, not only as one possible world among many, but also with respect to the implicit possibilities of a specific world as mediated through and articulated by language. This is to suggest that any actual moment, or shining forth of a world, carries within it the full force of its own creative possibility, as mediated through language, and to the extent that any appropriative moment (viz. *Ereignis*) in view of the emergent world that it calls forth, be characterized as fundamentally an "event" of language (*Ereignis der Sprache*).

[150] Ibid., 21.

As an event of language, the metaphor is integral—and indeed foundational—in rethinking the emergent possibilities of the modern world. This is especially the case when considering the manifested possibilities for thought and action before they are expressed as inviolable "truths," as they would later become, for example, with the entrenchment of the natural sciences. As an important note regarding the question of dynamics integral to *Ereignis*, it must be stressed that the metaphor—as part and parcel of the totality that is *Ereignis*—is operative in a double capacity. At once it becomes expressive of possibility in its fullest form, while at the same time it serves as the vehicle through which all possibility is mediated. Pico's *Oratio de hominis dignitate*, I argue, serves our analyses as a particular instance of possibility working simultaneously as a full expression of possibility as well as its medium. What is more, since all texts are open hermeneutically, they convey their significances (along with the potentialities to rethink worlds) differently to different people and at different historical moments. The *Oratio* is one such text. Thus, it arguably becomes an indispensable text in the attempt to rethink the modern cultural epoch (*Kulturepoche*). To this extent, Pico's text not only facilitates a rethinking of the possibilities it reveals metaphorically; but also, and no less significantly, it offers an occasion to rethink those possibilities in view of the Cartesian move to ground knowledge and "reality" in terms of a thinking subject or consciousness. Let us now take a closer look at the metaphor of the microcosm as it manifests in Pico's *Oratio*.

The "Breath the of Life," the *Λόγος*, and Metaphoric Possibility in the *Oratio*

The almost undiminished adulation towards Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and his most famous text, *Oratio de hominis dignitate*, stems from the emblematic stature of both author and text in the conveyance of the essential characteristics of the Renaissance discovery of man. Since his own time, the recurrent celebration of Pico's vindication of human freedom, together

with his emphasis upon the autonomy and possibility of the human spirit, has secured the legacy of the *Oration* as the "manifesto" of the Renaissance.[151] The lines from this text that express this sentiment are so famous as to be almost commonplace:

Thou, constrained by no limits, in accordance with thine own free will, in whose hand We have placed thee, shalt ordain for thyself the limits of thy nature. We have set thee at the world's center that thou mayest from thence more easily observe whatever is in the world. We have made thee neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, so that freedom of choice and with honor, as though the maker and molder of thyself, thou mayest fashion thyself in whatever shape thou shalt prefer. Thou shalt have the power to degenerate into the lower forms of life, which are brutish. Thou shalt have the power, out of thy soul's judgment, to be reborn into the higher forms, which are divine.[152]

Though dominant strands of Neoplatonic mysticism pervade the text, especially those describing the actuation and realization of man's thoughts and affections into an angelic mode, it is the revitalization of the traditional metaphor of the microcosm that commands the greatest significance for the question at hand. As Ricoeur has noted, "metaphor has the extraordinary power of re-describing reality," which as a living, vibrant force finds itself in tension with

[151] See for example, Nesca Robb, *Neoplatonism of the Italian Renaissance* (London: 1935), "More perhaps than any other individual…he is the living symbol of his age…" p. 61; indeed, among the most influential and systematic interpreters of Pico's thought is Eugenio Garin, who in his *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: vita e dottrina* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1937) engaged the question of the worth of the human spirit in view of an overall cosmic function, i.e., the actuation and unification of all knowledge. For a treatment of man's indeterminate nature and freedom of choice see, Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought* and Its Sources (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979). William G. Craven offers a critical challenge to the mythical picture of Pico in his *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: Symbol of His Age* (Geneva, DROZ, 1981). The spirit of Garin lives on in more recent interpretations, namely the actualization of the possibility of the human attainment of an angelic way of knowing; see for example, Carl N. Still, "Pico's Quest for All Knowledge," in *Pico della Mirandola: New Essays*, edited by M. V. Dougherty (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and on the realization of the "divine image," Charles Trinkhaus, "*In Our Image and Likeness": Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), especially 505-29. Trinkhaus reads Pico's texts largely as a form of *theologia poetica*, and that the significance is more theological than ontological. This is mainly a response to Frances Yates' reading which sees Pico as Renaissance magus whose creative powers are employed to marrying earth to heaven; see *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 84-116; 111. In both cases, as either a redefinition of man in relation to metaphysical and theological possibility or a practical Cabalist magic, the full range of the *poieses* is expressed; and to be sure, Pico was probable all the things these authors describe.

[152] *Oration on the Dignity of Man* in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, tr. Elizabeth Livermore Forbes (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1948), 225.

differing lines of interpretation in the shattering and increasing of our sense of reality.[153] To reiterate, the metaphor—thus understood—acts within a pre-conceptual dimension, and in this way assumes a raw, yet highly generative potential.[154] With this in mind, the significance of Pico's text is oriented less toward a question of Renaissance self-fashioning, as cast within a Neoplatonic or mystical framework, than a setting in which to rethink the fundamental structure of man's thought and action as it transformed at the threshold of the medieval and modern worlds. Perhaps even more significantly, the occasion arises in which to rethink the myriad possibilities associated with this transformation, and specifically how these possibilities manifested with respect to a redefinition of man, world and cosmos; not only in regard to their interrelations, but also in view of other creative possibilities generated by and through these interrelations.[155]

The question of the Renaissance thus becomes a problem of reassessing a novel and creative way of being-in-the-world, and especially insofar as such potential could be expressed in any number of fertile and dynamic ways. In related fashion, the question of the Renaissance, and by

[153] Paul Ricoeur, "Word, Polysemy, Metaphor: Creativity in Language" in *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 84-5.

[154] Jacob Burckhardt in his *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* was among the first to address the generative power of the metaphor historically, and it is within this general spirit that I advance my own interpretation. He writes: "while the men of the Middle Ages look on the world as a vale of tears, which pope and emperor are set to guard against the coming of the anti-Christ…here in this circle of chosen spirits, the doctrine is upheld that the visible world was created by love, that it is the copy of a pattern pre-existing in Him, and that He will ever remain its eternal mover and restorer. The soul of man can by recognizing God draw Him into its narrow boundaries, but also by love of Him itself expand into the Infinite—and this is blessedness on earth." For a recent interpretation on Burckhardt's approach to cultural history see See Benjamin Sax, "An Acute and Practiced Eye: Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, and the Problem of Cultural History," *in Cultural Visions: Essays in the History of Culture*, ed. P. S. Gold and B. C. Sax (Amsterdam and Atlanta, Rodopi, 2000), pp. 111-50, but especially, 148-50.

[155] See Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 18-28. Pater saw the creative efforts of Pico in terms of a reconciliation of Christian thought and Greek religion, and moreover, saw the greatness of the fifteenth-century Renaissance more in its aspirations than its accomplishments. He saw in Pico (and others) more of an "initiatory idea" that awaited full realization with the Enlightenment. For a more traditional understanding of the relationship of thought and understanding, especially in terms of the philosophy of religions and the pursuit of unitary truth, see Michael Sudduth, "Pico della Mirandola's Philosophy of Religion," in *Pico della Mirandola: New Essays*, edited by M V. Dougherty (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2008).

extension the problem of the modern epoch of which it forms part, becomes inextricably linked to the question of possibilities, and moreover, how those possibilities were (and are) expressed not only in terms of their full realization, but also intrinsically in terms of their ultimate limitation. It is therefore a question of measure. The *analogia entis*, as one way in which Scholasticism had understood the notion of limitation, has seen through the *analogia imitationis*, in particular a dynamic that allowed beings of imperfect similitude to relate to (or participate in) the most perfect Being (*ens perfectissimum*) according to the determination of their form, and to the limit (or measure) of their capacity to actualize fully that form. The possibility and the full reality to which it aspires are always governed by a limit (*πέρας/peras*) as the Greeks had previously understood. Possibility, and the actuation of possibility are not only interwoven, but are governed by the mediating and measuring instance of limitation—as a form or a semblance—that lay at the very core of every possibility and every actuality. Thus the limit engendered and guided creativity.

The *Oratio* breaks from this precedent, and in a powerfully creative way. In being constrained by no prescribed limit, man was free, and in accordance with his own will [*tuo arbitrio*] to realize [*tibi illam praefinies*] his nature, and to the fullest possible extent.[156] Because he was neither purely of heaven nor purely of earth, man's intermediary position within the cosmos bestowed upon him the privilege to observe the things of this world more clearly, and indeed, to contemplate the universe [*ubi universi contemplator*] as if an angelic intelligence, or God himself.[157] But, even more significantly, in his privileged position as contemplator, man now takes his measure of all things in this world, and in the process is empowered to redefine the

[156] *Oratio De Hominis Dignitate* (henceforth, *Oratio*), 102. *De Hominis Dignitate, Heptaplus, De Ente et Uno,* ed. Eugenio Garin (Florence: Valleche, 1942). "*Definita ceteris natura intra praescriptas a nobis leges coercetur. Tu, nullius angustiis coercitus, pro tuo arbitrio, in cuius manu te posui, tibi illam praefinies. Medium te mundi posui, ut circumspicereres inde commodius quicquid est in mundo*," 106.

[157] *Oratio*, 104.

relationship of man, God and world. This effectively constitutes a poetic naming (or renaming), a laying-out of the new possibilities of moral action in accordance with the *Λόγος.* The *Oratio* in its effective renunciation of the limit derives its potency from man's indeterminate nature [*indiscretae opus imaginis*] as well as his free will [*liberum arbitrium*]; yet the moment is initiated in the image of God [*in imagine deo*]. This is the microcosm whereby man has privileged status of both creature and creator, and from whom new possibilities exude and in accordance to an as-yet undetermined measure or limit.

The metaphor of the microcosm—as expressed in the *Oratio*—reveals the metaphor "at work." The text illuminates—through poetic intuition—the means by which man extracts for himself the divine image, so as to become a type of "creator god," who in turn directs and channels those vibrant and creative energies through the full range of human action. As God had "formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life," and thus made him "a living soul," Pico enacted anew—and in a decidedly poetic way—the Genesiacal moment in terms of the Renaissance's characteristic novelty.[158] The text reveals this novelty in what scholarship has traditionally viewed to be man's godlike possibility, which furthermore, is a possibility hinged upon the dynamism of human nature itself.[159] As the scholarship further observes, the dynamic possibilities of man's newly discovered divine status are rooted in the familiar, qualifying nominatives: autonomy, freedom, creativity, self-fashioning, etc.[160] As Pico

[158] *Genesis, 2:7,* King James Translation (Cambridge edition).

[159] See, Agnes Heller, *Renaissance Man*, trans. Richard Allen (London: Routledge, 1978), pp. 450-1 *et passim.*

[160] Autonomy, freedom etc., are widely shared notions in the historiography. Again, see Heller whose classic account observed Renaissance man as fundamentally "dynamical," and whose newly vibrant nature reflected a shift in values. Heller observed a redefinition of man and society, which allowed for him to realize his destiny socially "with an infinitude of possibilities." (p. 9) Also, for a more recent example, and one that grapples with the problem of modernity more generally, see Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven: Yale, 1993), 124-5.

announces in the *Oratio* that man having an indeterminate nature [*indiscretae opus imaginis*],[161] was placed in the middle of the cosmos. And thus having neither a fixed place [*nec certam sedem*] nor a characteristic form [*propriam faciem*], nor a special mode of action peculiar to him [*munus ullum peculiare*] man could opt for himself his own placement, his own special form, and appoint to himself his own special role within the cosmos.[162]

Pico's recasting of the Genesiacal moment of creation reveals a two-fold significance, which is powerfully contained within the traditional "breath of life" motif, and which furthermore represents the transference of this god-like possibility into human form where it will be immanently and creatively expressed. The breathing motif, as I argue, is the edifice on which the microcosm metaphor in the *Oratio* gains its power. Indeed the power resides in the fact that man in being the *Imago Dei*, is also *indiscretae opus imaginis*, and thus in-potency-for a full range of creative action. In terms of the two-fold significance, Pico's creative moment, in the first instance, subsumes not only the full import of its original meaning in the Old Testament—i.e., man created in the divine image (*Imago Dei*); but also discloses man in view of his increased, "double role" as both a noble creature and a dynamic creator. Second, and on perhaps a more deeply significant level, the impetus to man's creative power—as affected in God's image, and transferred through the "breath of life"—is nothing short of the transference of the "saying of being" (*Λόγος*), which is the effective imparting to Adam of this god-like possibility.[163] Adam, as both emblematic of humanity as well as a symbol of the divine possibility cast in a human mode becomes the vehicle through which the primordial *Λόγος* is allowed to creatively manifest

[161] *Oratio*, 105.

[162] *Oratio*, 105, 106, *O Adam, ut quam sedem, quam faciem, quae munera tute optaveris, ea, pro voto, pro tua sententia, habeas et possideas*.

[163] We will attend more fully below to the crucial notion of the *Λόγος,* which is heavily influenced by Heidegger's readings of the Presocratic fragments. Also, for an interesting account with respect to Judaism and thoroughly penetrating significance of "the Word" for that tradition, see George Steiner, "'The Long Life of the Metaphor:'" An Approach to the Shoah," *Encounter* 67 (1987): 55-61; 61.

in a novel and unique way within the realm of human action. This becomes the crux of our concern—the mediating moment of the power of the *Λόγος,* and with it, the possibilities for human action—as manifest through the generative possibilities of the metaphoric.

Not only does this concern the creative potential of the Renaissance, but also that of the Baroque and, in particular, the *Cogito* formulation within. Thus this becomes a hermeneutical project insofar as it grapples with a question of meaning; and as meaning is always historically dynamic, the two cultural-epochal phenomena can neither be separated on a semantic level, nor an eidetic one.[164] We are constantly engaged with historical meaning, and with it the images of the past, which at once exert their power over us (for significant cultural-historical reasons) and in so doing provide a meaningful and significant linkage to the present. n this sense, there is something vibrantly operative within the modern cultural epoch as a whole, which in providing a degree of historical unity nevertheless conditioned the specific epochal moments of the Renaissance and the Baroque (and by extension our present) so as to manifest in markedly different ways.

In relating this notion of creative potential to the breath of life motif, we are perhaps reminded of Hellenistic and specifically Aristotelian and Stoic notions of the *pneuma*, especially as they relate to something of a vital and animating force.[165] Though Pico was no doubt aware of more strictly materialist considerations surrounding the *pneuma,* the significance here, as his usage implies, relies upon a more spiritual connotation, viz., a principle of movement (*ἀρχη κινήσεως*), or a "power" (*δύναμις/dunamis*), or even the animating character of the soul

[164] As a cultural-historical project it is thus two-pronged: the one linguistic insofar as it engages with the *Λόγος* and the metaphor; and the other cultural and semantic to the extent that it grapples with value structures and the meanings and significances attached to them.

[165] On the *pneuma*, see for example, the classic account in George Verbeke's, *L'evolution de la doctrine du Pneuma du stoïcism à saint Augustine* (Paris: Desclée de Brouer, 1945) Freidrich Solmsen, "The Vital Heat, the Inborn Pneuma and the Aether," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 77(1957): 119-23; and for its relevance to the history of science—in its Stoic forms particularly—see *Atoms, Pneuma, and Tranquility: Epicurean and Stoic Themes in European Thought*, ed. Margaret J. Osler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

(*anima*).[166] To speak thus, and in terms of a cultural history is to give account of the "life of the epoch" or the conditional force or forces by which the cultural epoch assumed its recognizable shape or *Zeitgeist*. But, this may seem too transcendent an explanation, too metaphysical; and with it an effective denial of the specific ways human beings interacted historically with their world, and the world with them. And yet, in walking this line we should not hastily deny the significance of "powers" or "forces" as heuristic devices in shaping a "vision" of the modern cultural epoch in view of the historical problems we seek to articulate and the questions we seek to answer. And even still, Pico's usage of traditional metaphysical language, motifs and metaphors are typically employed in a non-metaphysical fashion, which allows us to confront his understanding of the microcosm in terms of a new expression of *δύναμις/dunamis,* and one most certainly severed from an essentialist notion of actuality (*energeia).*[167]

That powers and forces remain our concern, albeit heuristically, the dynamics conveyed by Pico's Adam seems exceedingly appropriate in confronting historically the "spirits wafting in these sails" (*Geister in diese Segel wehten*) insofar as the spirits themselves represent the vibrant conditions through and by which the modern cultural epoch as a dynamic whole formed and continues to form itself.[168] In the midst of this dynamicism, and with it the epoch's tendency to make and unmake itself, what seems to be at stake here is not necessarily a question of forces *per se*, but their heuristic relation to the significance of value, on the one hand, and the mediating

[166] Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, trans. A. L. Peck, *Loeb Classical Library* No. 366 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943), 108, (Bekker's 1.20 729a10-11). The "principle of movement" (*αρχη κινήσεως*) as articulated here bears a fundamental similarity to later Stoic notions.

[167] My cultural-historical consideration of Pico, Descartes et al, which takes the metaphor as its point of departure, seeks to emphasize the cultural-historical phenomena of the Renaissance and the Baroque as *in potentia* manifestations of the metaphorical, which furthermore is to affect a movement away from a sole and concentrated emphasis upon *in esse* particulars, which are interpreted as hard, stubborn facts to be herded and gathered into a theoretical frame of analysis, and on which basis they are assessed in the capture of (and not merely a semblance of) a past "reality."

[168] Burckhardt' phrase is apt, and conveys (I think) the sense he wanted to convey—an unseen force, that is nevertheless "real" insofar is it known by the image or vision it creates, and furthermore, remains (image and force) in constant flux. See, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (Leipzig: Verlag von E. U. Seemann, 1899), 283.

power of language on the other. The range of the dynamic—thematic, spatial, historical—is that which is of significance, and specifically the dynamic interplay between value and metaphor, which together yield the cultural phenomena of the Renaissance and the Baroque. This dynamical relationship as expressed between value and language, meaning and memory, yields not only an imaginative conception of the past that is palpably experienced in the present, it also occasions an "historical present" whereby an authentic understanding of that history may emerge.

What I propose is that Pico's breath of life motif provides the initial means of access through which this question of a dynamical *Λόγος* can be raised. As the above qualifiers pertaining to the *pneuma* are Aristotelian (or at least Aristotelian in inspiration, i.e. the Augustinian *anima*), they rely upon an essentialist and metaphysical understanding of the *Λόγος.* What is of interest here is that while Pico's understanding—to a degree—presupposes the Aristotelian formulation of the *Λόγος*—which Aristotle understood in the more narrow sense of an ordering principle or set of principles vis-à-vis the establishment of a science—the Renaissance thinker's formulation transcends the Stagirite's strict theoretical understanding to include a more total vision of the *Λόγος*, which is to challenge the metaphysical boundaries imposed by the tradition. Though not cast in rhyme and meter, I submit that Pico's *Λόγος* is a "poetical" *Λόγος*, and reflects a totality that includes not only those modes of human existence that fall within the traditional category of reason and thinking (*theōria*), but also those of the broad categories of "practiced" action (*praxis/poiesis*) and feeling (*pathos*).[169] To see how this metaphor translates into "practiced"

[169] The categories of *theōria* and *praxis* reflect types of knowing, and are thus broadly "active" and/or modes of action, which is a broad category that includes both contemplation and practical action. The notion of *pathos* is one of the three traditional Aristotelian "appeals" as articulated in the *Rhetoric* (the others being *logos* and *ethos*). They attest to the range of human action as exhibited in *theōria* and *praxis*, as well as the passive instances upon the soul as characterized in terms of emotion or imagination.

action, let us turn to broad semantic field of the Latin verb, *invenire,* which at once connotes a sense of discovery and of creation.

Invenire and the Modal Action of the Metaphor

By unifying these broad, modal categories of human existence—which is to say theory and practice—Pico's formulation of the poetical *Λόγος* affirms what Burckhardt observed and subsequently defined as a "discovery of world and of man."(*Die Entdeckung der Welt und des Menschen*). [170] Not only is Burckhardt's overall treatment of the Renaissance a perhaps necessary point of departure from which any inquiry into the cultural history of the modern epoch may be allowed to proceed, his notion of *Entdeckung* is itself a cultural manifestation of the poetical *Λόγος* that Pico both articulates and reflects. Furthermore, as Burckardt implied and Nietzsche subsequently articulated, the *Λόγος* is never known directly, but only through the epiphenomena, or the cultural manifestations that "stand upon" it, which serves more to the point as to why a mediating metaphor becomes crucial. As with Pico's Adam, the *Λόγος*, as the "breath of life" emanating from a transcendent God implies a being, a force, or a ground etc. that can never be fully known, and is actuated only through the metaphor, i.e., the Adamic microcosm. In this sense, *Entdeckung,* or the Latin *invenire* (which I will use henceforth) is an action that mediates through the creative dynamic of the *Λόγος* and allows it to manifest. And yet, though it is a mediated action, it is emphatically a distinctively authentic mode of action for the Renaissance, which is inclusive of any number of derivatively authentic actions.

As an inclusive mode of action, Burckhardt's rich portrait of *invenire* denotes what we might call again "epiphenomena," and include within its range, for example, the "discovery" of new

[170] This famous saying entitles the fourth part of Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S. G. C. Middlemore (London: Penguin, 1990); *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (Leipzig: Verlag von E. U. Seemann, 1899); yet, the phrase was originally proffered by Jules Michelet in his *Histoire de France*. See Michelet, *Oeurvres completes,* ed. Paul Viallaneix, 21 vols (Paris: Flammarion, 1971-82), vii. 51.

worlds and peoples (as may be placed under a broad category of "otherness"); the discovery of the beauty of landscapes (*landschaftlischen Schönheit*), and indeed, his most famous and powerful characterizations regarding the discovery of man (*die Entdeckung des Menschen*), and the discovery of the world (*die Entdeckung der Welt*). As a modal category of action, *invenire* thus "phenomenalizes" the Renaissance (and by extension the modern cultural epoch, though in a decidedly different ways vis-à-vis the Baroque) as a cultural whole while making possible some revelation of the dynamic particularities that underpinned it. This is to say that though the total vision is constituted by an authentic range of actions, it simultaneously denotes the deeper significance of the poetical *Λόγος* vis-à-vis the metaphor and, especially the metaphoric power to create and to transform. This is not only an interesting, but also a decisive concern, and therefore constitutes the major thrust of this section.

To raise the question of *invenire* with respect to the metaphor is to attempt an understanding of the relationship between values—as they translate into modes of action—and the *Λόγος* itself. An exploration of this metaphorically mediated relationship may be said to represent an initial, "phenomenological" reading of the operative dynamics of the modern cultural epoch. And yet, what is both interesting and problematical is that the various modes and domains of action representative of *invenire* as a semantic whole—which is to say, inclusive of an extended range of authentic action as oriented openly to the metaphor—differ in both their Renaissance and Baroque manifestations; and which furthermore point to deeper historical concerns as to the possibility of these emergent differences. As one scholar has recently observed, these marked differences hinged upon a movement away from the type of "discovery" characteristic of the Renaissance—i.e., a mode more neutral and accidental—to a more aggressive, purposeful, and

even instrumentalized form as characterized by the Enlightenment notion of "invention."[171] The suggestion is that this movement bears considerable relevance to the development of the "scientific objectivism," together with its cold, impartial distance, which solidified during the Enlightenment. Along these lines, he further implies that this movement reflects the inexorable breakdown, or at least, a disarticulation of the fuller sense of meaning (as connoted by the Renaissance rendering of *invenire*) into a binary of related, though nevertheless distinctive meanings, i.e., discovery and invention. The latter notion of *invenire*, of course, holds a privileged status within the epistemological—and implicitly ontological—assumptions of modernity. Though I certainly do not disagree with these general assessments, are they sufficient to gain a sense of the dynamical force behind this transformation?

At once building on and moving away from some of the first rate work devoted to this problem, I seek to emphasize that such a "movement" is ultimately reflective of the particular and eminently complex orientation toward life and existence that Europeans possessed during this epoch, and that furthermore, was articulated in and through language.[172] The Italians beginning in the thirteenth century were, as Burckhardt famously noted, the "first-born among

[171] The rich notion of *invenire* (or discovery) has recently captured the interest of certain Renaissance scholars. In the introductory essay to the edited volume, *The Invention of Discovery, 1500-1700*. ed. James D. Fleming (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), Fleming has framed the problem of *invenire* as the "invention" of the early modern period. In this problematic suggestion, Fleming sees a vibrant and active Renaissance culture as the force behind the separation of the "idea of invention," on the one hand, and the "idea of discovery" on the other. The binary opposition between these ideas was solidified during the Enlightenment. His observation that a "binary" of *invenire* did not exist during the Renaissance is one with which I agree; however, there is no satisfying explanation as to why a binary emerged, which effectively separated the neutral and accidental discovery of the Renaissance from the purposeful invention of the Enlightenment. As we shall see, this a metaphorico-cultural problem.

[172] See, for example, Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004; Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982* (New York: Picador, 2005); Stephen Goldblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Robert Nichols, "Self-Interpretation and Agency in Modern Hermeneutics and Genealogy" in *Declensions of the Self: A Bestiary of Modernity*, Jean-Jacques Defert, Trevor Tchir and Dan Webb (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008).

the sons of modern Europe."[173] And, thus we are talking of a broadly conceived mode of action (and thought) as it articulates and relates itself to this orientation toward life; and if we are to assert that *invenire* is in some way "fundamental" to the modern cultural epoch in terms of this orientation, these manifest differences between the Renaissance and the Baroque not only suggest the complexity and elusiveness of modernity as a cultural-historical problem, they also reflect heuristically, at least, the semantic and cultural dynamics through which these differences were made manifest, and into which we can only begin to make inquiry.

What is more, the manifest differences, as demonstrated in terms of *invenire* as a broad mode of action, reveals to a historical consciousness not only modernity's nearness, but also its distance to that which has shaped it in terms of its cultural history. And, thus the Burckhardtian notion of *invenire* carries with it not only a semantic relevance, but also, and perhaps more importantly, an implicitly ontological one as well. Pico's articulation and employment of the breath of life motif (vis-à-vis the operative metaphor of the microcosm) implies within his text the broad modal action of *invenire*, and with it a notion of the discovery of man's potential (*indiscretae opus imaginis*), which moreover, gains meaning only in relation to a larger worldly or cosmological structure. Descartes' texts, however, reveal something quite different.

To perhaps get ahead of ourselves, the *Discours de la méthode* (1637) offers a powerful counterpoint to the modal action of *invenire*, especially as expressed in the full vibrancy of the Renaissance. As is well known, the *Discours* assumes as its primary directive a project of discovery, which in its juxtaposition with the *Oratio* begins to reveal a shifting sense of the semantics of *invenire*. Amid the distrust and doubt harbored against a larger, external edifice of meaning, the *Discours* articulates a linear, narrowly causal and altogether staggeringly willful

[173] Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. 98; "*der Erstgeborne unter den Söhnen des jetzigen Europas*…"

application of the method, which it endeavors to deploy toward its end of world discovery. With this, the Burckhardtian notion of *invenire* is seemingly reformulated. And whereas discovery and invention in the Renaissance sense are semantically linked because they emanate from and are supported by an extensive range of possible action, and thereby unify the moral realm of acting with the practical realm of making, the Cartesian sense, by comparison, seems impoverished. And though the Cartesian sense has retained the strong semantic link between discovery and invention, it has done so in a fashion that reflects strongly the modern mode of existence, especially as it has come to be characterized since the Enlightenment.[174] The redefinition of the relation of world and man is one that renders ourselves masters and possessors of nature. [175]

The *Discours* thus reinterprets in a strikingly novel way the unity of possible action as expressed in a Renaissance mode. This is to say that the Cartesian reinterpretation of this unity is increasingly understood, and thus defined, in technical terms where "discovery" is expressed fundamentally in terms of the intellectualist illumination of formal "truths," which are subsequently and deftly applied in the invention (*inventum*) of an "objective reality."[176] What is more, "discovery" in following a more literal connotation of *invenire* (at least in a broad sense) as a "coming to light" (*accederet ad lucem*) has now become more purposeful; and thus accords with Descartes' *"inquisitio veritatis per lumen naturale [rationis]"* or [the search for truth

[174] Such a characterization is decidedly problematic, and what may be deemed here as abstract and ultimately fantastical, is an effort to "phenomenalize" a cultural force as it translates to action. Notwithstanding these criticisms, the move to characterize the modern mode of existence in reference to a delimited semantic field of *invenire,* even if in reference to what may be readily observable and even a measurable phenomenon, only buttresses the point regarding that mode's power and influence. But more problematically, it effectively carries the defining and dominant "mechanism" through which the determination of an individual (with respect not only to "what" it is to be human, but also "how" and in what ways he may be human) derives its force. Only through the phenomenon may we proceed reflectively into the forceful possibilities that lay just behind it.

[175] AT VI:62, *...et ainsi nous rendre comme maîtres et possesseurs de la nature. Ce qui n'est pas seulement a desirer pour l'invention d'une infinite d'artifices, qui feraient qu'on jouirait, sans aucune peine, des fruits de la terre et de toutes les commodities qui s'y trouvent*....[and thus render ourselves masters and possessors of nature. This is to be desired not only for the invention of an infinity of artifices, which would allow one to enjoy without any trouble, the fruits of the earth and all the commodities therein].

[176] The subtleties of these distinctions I intend to bring out more fully in the analyses that follow below.

through the natural light of reason]. *Inventum*, however, intimates more the technical dimension of *invenire* insofar as it relates to the employment of skill (*artis*); *vide* Apollo's uttering in Book I of Ovid's *Metamorphosis,* for instance—*inventum medicina meum est.* And yet, it must be stressed that what are most certainly significant semantic variances at the same time transcend these transformations to reflect a more fundamental shift not only in openness toward the metaphor, but in orientation toward life (*Λόγος*).[177]

As I have attempted to argue, the question of the microcosm metaphor is fundamentally a cultural concern not only because it mediates action and thought within the modern cultural epoch; but also because it effectively establishes modern culture and grounds the range of possibilities within it. Yet, in order to pose effectively the question of the modern cultural epoch in relation to the integral role played by the *Cogito*, it is necessary to introduce the significance of the metaphor as a handmaiden in those developments, and through which the semantic transformations of *invenire* thoroughly depend. Following what is observed to be in Pico's *Oratio* a unity of potential action, and not only action expressed through the modal category of *invenire,* but also as action simultaneously mediated by the microcosm metaphor, it is here that the climacteric role of the metaphor begins to disclose itself.

As a mediator of action, the metaphor is equally a mediator of life (*Λόγος*), and as such represents what may be termed a "metaphoric space" into which the distended potential of the *Λόγος* comes into presence. In its presence through the metaphor, the *Λόγος* opens to a distinctly human possibility, which moreover, the metaphor always mediates. Thus the metaphor "carries

[177] The *Λόγος* is a complex notion, which I here (and in what follows) equate with life from which a strong definition of culture follows. My understanding of the *Λόγος* proceeds under the great influence of Heidegger's reading of the Heraclitus fragment, in particular, and his readings of the Presocratics more generally. In what follows, I will expand more fully upon what I mean by the *Λόγος* together with its decisively important relation to the metaphor on which a vibrant notion of culture depends.

over" the distended potential of the *Λόγος* into the moral realm where its conveyed potential intensifies within an almost endless variety of human action. In other words this metaphoric space, or indeed, the "dimension" of the metaphorical, effectively represents the realm of possibility itself insofar as possibility may translate into specific human deeds, thoughts and works. It is in this sense that the implications of Pico's breath of life motif gain force, especially insofar as the motif is understood in terms of the metaphorical conveyance of the primordial *Λόγος* of which Adam is the vehicle, which to say, the microcosm; and the image through which the distance of the *Λόγος* is closed and the full range of human possibility may be actuated.[178]

In the *Discours*, *invenire* is thus not a discovery of man and world *in potentia* in reference to a larger, hierarchical structure of meaning as it had been with Pico, Alberti, or Cusanus. Nor is it a discovery *in potentia* of the capability of man to know and understand himself and his world in relation to shifting centers (which is to say shifting potencies of and for a thorough and broadly poetic expression), as it had been for Montaigne. Rather, *invenire* in the *Discours* demonstrates an *in potentia* discovery hinged upon the application of the method to affect a regimented, calculated and presumably infinitely expanding knowledge (*scientia*) of nature, which moreover is an objective, instrumentalized knowledge willfully projected outward. It no longer reciprocates in the offering to man a knowledge and understanding of himself and what it means to be fully human within a world; it has lost the crucial element of authentic reflection.[179] In

[178] For an interesting and related treatment of the image as resemblance (as opposed to representation), and especially in terms of a "ground" (*fond*) and "gathering" (*rassemblment*), see Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Ground of the Image*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), especially, 7-9. "Resemblance gathers together in force and gathers itself as a force of the same—the same differing in itself from itself: hence the enjoyment [*jouissance*] we take in it."

[179] Early in the *Discours* (Part II), Descartes' remarks on the Spartan lawgiver, Lycurgus, are telling, and demonstrate the sort of linear and applied understanding of invenire, which is less a poetic discovery than a technical invention: "*Et pour parler des choses humaines, je crois que, si Sparte a été autrefois très florissante, ce n'a pas été à cause de la bonté de chacune de ses lois en particulier…mais à cause que, n'ayant été inventées que par un seul, elles tendaient toutes à meme fin"* (And, to speak of things human, I believe that, if Sparta was once flourishing,

each instance—i.e., with Pico, Alberti, Montaigne, and Descartes—the expression of invenire as a potency to be more fully actuated or realized depends fundamentally upon a (historically specific) human orientation to life and existence (which I understand here as the *Λόγος*) as well as an awareness and openness to it. From this orientation exude certain ontological assumptions that are themselves manifest through action, mediated through language and "phenomenalized" more concretely in a variety of cultural forms. In this way, the range of possibilities grounded in the metaphor—which is to say, the range of possibilities of being fully human—reveal the creative power of language as it works on a deeper level and translates to the realm of human action as manifest within the Renaissance and Baroque worlds.

As a broad mode of action, which accords with the protean power of the metaphor to assume and to characterize many derivative modes, *invenire* as an expressive action of the operative dynamics of the *Λόγος* is of crucial significance. In this vein, what is of particular concern—though not articulated directly by Burckhardt—is the "unmarked middle ground" between *invenire*, as a broad mode of action, and the wide range of potentialities as lain out by the *Λόγος*. The dialectic that occurs between the *Λόγος* and the realm of action constitutes a thoroughly creative moment where actions—both moral as well as productive—join with the full possibility of the *Λόγος*. The possibility—indeed the power—of the *Λόγος* is mediated by the metaphor, which furthermore is expressed in thought and action.[180] This is not to say that the *Λόγος* conditions necessarily thoughts and actions, and by extension culture, nor does it act as a sort of phenomenological ground; but rather its force manifests only insofar as the metaphoric "space"

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this was not because of the goodness of each one of its laws in particular…but because, having been devised by only one individual, they all tended toward the same end.

[180] For the metaphor as a mediator, and also a translator of similitude (or something analogous), Nietzsche remarked that the "[m]etaphor means treating as equal something that one has recognized to be similar in one point," which implies the metaphoric conveyance of the potential of the *Λόγος* in a particular way. See, Notebook 19[249] in *Writings from the Early Notebooks* ed. Raymond Guess et al and trans. Ladislaus Löb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 160.

is sufficiently open to convey its power. What is more, the various modes of thought and action—as broadly derivative of *invenire*—are at the same time part and parcel of this metaphoric space where they may manifest and flourish. These modes of action are at once reflective of a unique orientation toward "life" and "existence," and furthermore, presuppose a core set of values along with their underpinning meanings and significances. And, as actions and thoughts reflect the value structure that makes such actions meaningful and significant, they are always mediated through a metaphor where they are empowered in an expressive way.

We have now put forth an operative definition of a how a culture can be said to phenomenalize and thereby to open a world. This is to include those dynamics whereby value interrelates with the metaphoric to translate into meaningful thoughts and actions, which are at the same time creatively empowered. I would suggest that the interaction within this "unmarked middle ground" effectively constitutes a cultural historical moment. In such a moment not only does a culture shine forth, but also an entire world is opened to a range of novel possibilities. The inherent vibrancy of these historical moments directly relates to the operative dynamics of a generative and creative metaphor insofar as it translates or "carries" the *Λόγος* openly into an expressive potential, which may then manifest into a wide range of poetical thoughts and actions.[181]

It should be stressed that this metaphorical middle ground, especially in its generative mode, is both vibrantly unstable and eminently creative, which furthermore extends in all directions the "space" of imaginative potential.[182] Insofar as that, which we shall call the "phenomenal realm"

[181] Here, I understand the "poetic" in both a broad and a strict sense.

[182] There are some clues to this sentiment in Nietzsche's early writings on the Greek "state," which he admired. For Nietzsche, the "*bellum omnium contra omnes"* described in Hobbes' *Leviathan* also typified the inter-poleis Hellenic world, which he understood in terms of good *Eris* (strife/striving). In the intervals between war, Nietzsche noted that the striving turns inwards and thus "gives society [as culture] time to germinate and turn green everywhere, so that it can let the radiant blossoms of genius sprout forth as soon as warmer days come." See, Nietzsche, "The Greek State" (1871-2) in *Nietzsche Reader*, ed. Keith Ansell Pearson and Duncan Large (Malden:

of culture (i.e., thought and action as related to this notion of discovery) is authentically open to the possibilities of the *Λόγος*—and as mediated by the generative metaphor—can those possibilities be translated through it in a powerfully creative fashion. As with the Renaissance, new cultures emerge and furthermore assume new forms amid this creative moment. For it is those cultures which retain an authentic openness to the metaphor—e.g., archaic Greece and Renaissance Italy—that serve as models representative of a cultural totality and from which other less-unified cultures can (and should) take their measure. These models reveal a culture(s) at its most creative, especially vis-à-vis the "plastic power" they possess via this openness to the metaphor, and to the degree that it is capable of creating (*poiesis*) new cultural forms in vibrantly enduring ways.

The Three Powers (*Drei Potenzen*) and the "Phenomenalization" of the Metaphor

As *Die Kultur der Renaissance* reveals, the engagement of man with his world is itself a "poetical" act, and hinges chiefly on the reciprocity of discovery between the knowledge man gains of himself and that which he gains of his world. In the *World Historical Observations*, he had introduced what he called the *drei Potenzen*, or three powers (namely, politics, religion and culture).[183] The immediate indication is that at given moments one of the three powers holds sway over the other two, so that a particular age might be characteristically viewed as a religious age or a political age, for example. Upon closer inspection of that section, however, we learn that

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Blackwell, 2006), 88-94. This notion of "striving" relates intimately to the Greek's tremendous ability to creatively appropriate everything into an expression of life, and from which great works of art naturally emerged. In this sense, culture, for Nietzsche, becomes "the rule of art over life." See, Notebook 19[310] in *Writings from the Early Notebooks*, 162.

[183] On the three powers, see *WB*, 254-92. See also, John R. Hinde, *Jacob Burckhardt and the Crisis of Modernity*, (Montreal: McGill, 2000); and for the perceived, though tacit Hegelianism in Burckhardt, see E. H. Gombrich, *In Search of Cultural History*, Philip Maurice Deneke Lecture (London: Clarendon Press, 1969), 35. Gombrich oberves that Burckhardt found in the facts a Hegelian world of the spirit; on the three powers working in accordance to a Hegelian dialectic, see Jörn Rusen, *Konfigurationen des Historismus: Studien zur deutsche Wissenschaftskultur* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1993). Though Burckhardt acknowledged the influence upon him of certain philosophies (namely the Hegelian philosophy of history), yet given the various heuristics he employed in his method (*Anschauung*) of cultural history and the dynamics by which they operate, it seems difficult to suspect a tacit Hegelianism at work there. The movement he describes is much more Herderian than Hegelian, it seems to me.

Kultur is the constant; and moreover, that all three of the powers are different expressions of *Kultur* in a broad and deep sense. The heuristic of the three powers provided for Burckhardt a way of understanding how forces translate into action within various cultural spheres at given historical moments.

What is interesting is that the dominance of a particular power is also suggestion of a culture's vitality. The pronounced characteristic of naivete in the higher arts, as with those of the Italian Renaissance, reveals how what he called a spiritual surplus [*geistiger Überschuß*] ushered forth into a wide range of creative activities.[184] What is more, however, in its surplus, the creative spirit of the Renaissance contained that unique and elusive plastic power to create new cultural forms through which that spiritual vibrancy might be most fully expressed. As I have attempted to argue, the notion of *invenire,* both in terms of its broad semantic sense (as both a discovery and an invention) as well as the specific orientation between man and world that it implies, it becomes the "site" in and through which the full range of this spiritual surplus is translated into action. The creativity that manifests through the reciprocity of discovery of man and world, again, hinges fundamentally upon an authentic openness to the metaphor from which "poetic" action emerges in a rich and variegated way. And, since the creative powers in question—again understood as heuristic devices—are metaphorically mediated, the notion of *invenire,* especially as visualized in an historical consciousness, becomes what we might call the "vestibular threshold" through which the dynamics of the metaphor may be more thoroughly assessed.

As Burckhardt repeatedly observed, it is the arts that powerfully and enigmatically convey the extraordinarily creative potential of these plastic forces, which, for him, it seems to me, was

[184] *WB,* 279.

intimately tied to this notion of *invenire*.[185] Poetry, in the strict sense, represents the most mysterious, the most transcendent of the arts. Indeed poetry is that which is of the highest and most noble character, and which finds through culture a historical expression.[186] But, language more generally, as Burckhardt noted, represents "the most direct and specific revelation of the spirit of a people, their ideal image, their most durable material in which they encapsulate the very essence [*Substanz*] of their spiritual life [*geistigen Lebens*], and especially in the sayings [*Worten*] of their great poets and thinkers."[187] In what he termed the *drei Potenzen* (three powers), which for him comprised culture (in a strict sense) together with the state and religion, Burckhardt endeavored to show (or, indeed, to visualize) the complex set of interrelations that constitute a cultural totality, and of which language is not only the spearhead [*Spitz*]; but the "supreme manifestation of its soul."[188]

The cultural totality is also an "ideal totality," and the *Potenzen* serve as the heuristic by which to view the dynamic interplay of these forces insofar as they shaped a culture into an observable whole. As Burckhardt articulated in his *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, the historian should endeavor to study a culture's historical development in broad terms, which serves as an understanding of the historical past (and present) hinged upon an eidetic connection.

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[185] See the discussion regarding the general power of the arts (and the comparatively attenuated sciences), *WB*, 276-80. Burckhardt regarded the plastic and performative arts (indeed, poesie in its most expressive and deepest forms) as the extraordinary creations [*Künste Außerordentliche*] of a spiritual surplus [*geistiger Überschuß*]. Also, the highest arts as expressed above the baser necessities of life, in having no laws to determine [*keine Gesetze zu ermitteln*] nevertheless represent a higher life [*ein höheres Leben darzustellen*], toward which to strive (see, 278.33). With respect to the notion of "finding" in the sciences, Burckhardt's usage of *ermitteln* as opposed to *entdecken* is telling.

[186] On the historical consideration of poetry, see *WB*, 285-91. The arts, and especially poetry, arise from the most mysterious vibrations in the soul [*geheimnißvollen Schwingungen in…die Seele*], 278. As Burckhardt tells us, poetry is the most instructive of the arts in that it will rather create a new reality/world [*neues Thatsächliches schaft*] than give account to existing facts. And provided we are open to its manner of thinking and feeling [*Gedanken und Gefühlen*], poetry represents both the supreme contrast [*höchsten Gegensatz*] and the supreme complement [*höchste Erganzung*] to philosophy, *WB*, 280.4-5.

[187] Ibid. 276.30-34

[188] Ibid.,"*hochstespecifische Offenbarung des Geistes*," 276.30; also, on the visual-pictorial quality of Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance* and to his cultural histories more generally, see Karl J. Weintraub, *Visions of Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 115-60, and especially pp. 144-58.

This broad understanding is very much a Goethean understanding, which is to say that to the extent that the historical is a function of memory, it is fundamentally a memory of the ideal or eidetic whole. Consonant with this understanding, the *Potenzen* are morphological types, and thus serve as a set of guiding impetuses or drives to formation (*Bildungstrieben*). And, while Burckhardt did not understand these drives (*Trieben*) in strict reference to what Goethe had understood to be operative at their base, i.e., an archetypal phenomena (*Urphänome*) that guided development in relation to an ideal or fixed image, his understanding of the development of culture nevertheless relied intrinsically upon the "phenomenal."

The "phenomenal" is effectively the point of departure for a cultural historical analysis, and furthermore constitutes the "imaginative" reality from which a more thoroughly heuristic analysis—as the *drei Potenzen* reveal, for example—and may be allowed to proceed. The heuristic device serves to assess the images of the past in a meaningful way, which it does through the creation of a "total vision" of a culture in view of its broad contours, and from which the images derive their significance. And yet, the employment of a heuristic in the formation of a total vision is not only reflected in, but is also made possible through the creative act of historical writing. A Burckhardtian-type history, conscious as it is of its creative role within the realm of the historical more generally, underscores its significance as the creative mechanism through which a culture is "phenomenalized" to a historical consciousness in the present, which thereby connects that present in a significant (and particular) way with the past it attempts to know.

To put it another way, the total vision is constituted, in part, by the concrete expressions of the age's spiritual life as instanced by and presented through any number of its cultural forms. What is more, the concrete or "real"—manifest as it is through certain thoughts, actions and

more specific cultural forms (e.g., the lyric form of the sonnet)—integrates with the heuristic conceptualization of the operative *Potenzen*, for example, to form a total vision of the culture as mirrored through its creative expression of life, which is "phenomenalized" to an historical consciousness. Inasmuch as Burckhardt's notion of a total vision is conceptual, or even idealistic, it proceeds fundamentally from a Kantian, but more specifically a Goethean understanding of *Anschauung*—which is to say a type of viewing that *inter alia* allows for a sort of viewing-of-the-whole, which simultaneously presupposes an authentic self-world relationship.[189]

Following Goethe, Burckhardt developed what has been termed an *anschauliche*, or visually demonstrative method, to facilitate understanding of the Renaissance by way of detailed images and illustrations.[190] The "method" as deployed in *Die Kultur der Renaissance* serves the express purpose of "revealing" the Renaissance's spiritual contours (*geistige Umrisse*) in a fashion that is dymamically and meaningfully represented to our own age. The connection to our age is not only eidetic, insofar as the "concrete," "real" expressions of the Renaissance (as manifest through the cultural forms) continue to exercise upon us an imaginative power, it is also a connection of value, (i.e., a core value set of which we are not only heir, but also may continue to share). [191] Taken together—the eidetic in accordance with a core set of values—these components are fundamentally constitutive of Burckhardt's understanding of cultural history, which is similarly

[189] *Anschauung*, though literally an "on-looking," is practically impossible to render into English. The above "functional" definition shall serve for the present purpose.

[190] On the this method, and on the notion of *Anschauung* in general, see Benjamin Sax, "An Acute and Practiced Eye: Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, and the Problem of Cultural History," *in Cultural Visions: Essays in the History of Culture*, ed. P. S. Gold and B. C. Sax (Amsterdam and Atlanta, Rodopi, 2000): 111-50; and Sax, State and Culture in the Thought of Jacob Burckhardt in *Annals of Scholarship* 3(1985): 1-35. For *Anschauung* and what might be viewed as an eidetic connection between the unified vision of the Renaissance vis-à-vis the expressions it gave to life and Burckhardt's *anschauliche* method as an historical portrayal of it, see Weintraub, *Visions of Culture*.

[191] On values and the "perishable reality of harmonious life," see Weintraub, *Visions of Culture*, p. 148.

and powerfully represented in the works of Huizinga and Benjamin et al.[192] The eidetic connection characterized by a "collective" memory constituted by powerful images (*Bilden*), forms an ideal whole of a historical past and present, which moreover, gains its power and significance through the mediation of values.[193] The *anschauliche* "method," as my examination of "the poetic" will attest, was not steadfastly or irreconcilably opposed to a history extolling the "holiness of the minute particular;" but rather in its attempt to present a total vision, seeks also to visualize the "backdrop" of a culture more fully and more meaningfully from which the detailed particulars emerge in relief.[194] Thus, Burckhardt could say in reference to Machiavelli's Florentine history that "we might find something to say against every line of the *Storie Fiorentine*, and yet the great and unique value of the whole would remain unaffected."[195]

The "truth" here is a cultural-historical truth, and not an abstract, scientific one. Insofar as meaning is conveyed, on the one hand, through the historical act of articulating synchronically the spiritual contours of the Renaissance expression of life, and on the other hand, as diachronically expressed in the eidetic—and by extension, value-laden—relation to our own age,

[192] Johan Huizinga, The Autumn of the Middle Ages, trans. Rodney Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), originally published as *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (1919). Walter Benjamin, *Origin of German Tragic Drama;* but also the incomplete and richly insightful *magnum opus*, *Das Passagen-Werk* (c. 1927), translated into English as the *Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2002).

[193] Without entering too deeply into the imbroglio surrounding the proper relation of image to memory, it is sufficient to note that insofar as things (*Sachen*) are depicted in the memory, Burckhardt's understanding of *Bild* (as opposed to *Phantasie*) surpasses what Husserl understood as "presentifications" to the consciousness of things in an indirect manner. The image and the memory are for Burckhardt integrated historically, which always entails a notion of culture and the attendant value structure. For a discussion of memory and imagination, see Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), especially pp. 44-55. In a way not too distanced from Burckhardt, Ricoeur endeavors to bridge the gap between the cognitive/epistemological memory (Husserl and Bergson et al) with the practical memory, as realized through the "exercise" of the memory. For Ricoeur, as with Burckhardt, this is an historical concern, which for Ricoeur, hinges upon the attachment to memory of a notion of duty, which makes the problem of memory a moral problematic.

[194] Nietzsche's early notebooks of the 1870s, and on the basis of his observation of the necessity for an artistic drive (as opposed to one driven toward knowledge), reveal a similar sentiment. "It is the task of a *culture* to ensure that the great in a people appears neither as a hermit nor as an exile…the great effects of the smallest are the after-effects of the *great*; they have set off an avalanche." Nietzsche, Notebook 19[37] in *Writings from the Early Notebooks* ed. Raymond Guess et al and trans. Ladislaus Löb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 105.

[195] *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans, S.G.C. Middlemore (London: Penguin, 2004), 70.

a particular historical truth emerges. As the scholarship would suggest, the question of these powerful shaping forces as they pertain to the significances of the synchronic, and with it the emergence and development of a total vision of life is a difficult one to pursue.[196]

The Experience of Possibility

By turning more closely to the *Λόγος* and the mediating power of the metaphor, I seek to illuminate this question of a total vision of life, especially as it relates to the problem of the *Cogito* as coterminous with the broader question of the Baroque. The cultural dynamic as repeatedly conceptualized by Burckhardt in terms of the *drei Potenzen* is a powerful heuristic in assessing a generalized and vibrant interplay of forces insofar as they "appear" in the Renaissance with the creation of new cultural forms; the formation of new "free personalities"; and the altogether novel and spirited re-orientation of the individual to the world as well as to the generative forces within it. All of these concerns represent major descriptive threads permeating *Die Kultur der Renaissance*, and through them Burckhardt endeavored to show in striking and illuminative detail the various ways by which that culture "phenomenalized" in Italy from the mid-thirteenth through the mid-sixteenth centuries. What Burckhardt had done was to show how these powers "functioned" in an interrelated way within the closed horizon of a culture.

As it may now be obvious to the reader, my intention to assess the *Λόγος* follows a similar heuristic path, though not in terms of Burckhardt's *drei Potenzen per se*; but rather in relation to

[196] See, for example, Ernst Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, tr. Mario Domandi (Mineola, New York: Dover, 2000); Eugenio Garin, *Science and Civic Life in the Italian Renaissance*, trans. Peter Munz (New York: Anchor Books: 1969); Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); Agnes Heller, *Renaissance Man*, trans. by Richard Allen (London: Routledge, 1978); Johan Huizinga, "The Problem of the Renaissance," in *Men and Ideas: History, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance*, tr. James S. Holmes and Hans van Marle (Trenton: Princeton University Press, 1984); J.H. Plumb, *The Italian Renaissance* (New York: Mariner Books, 2001); Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* (Trenton: Princeton University Press, 1966); Gene Brucker, *Renaissance Florence* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1983); Peter Burke, *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and Society in Italy* (Trenton: Princeton University Press, 1999); and William Bouwsma, *The Waning of the Renaissance, 1550-1640* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

the power of the *Λόγος* "to lay out" the conditions of possibility for modes of living. This full possibility combines with the metaphor, which through its mediating power opens the possibility of the *Λόγος* to action. We are thus talking of "powers" on at least two fronts: first, in terms of the fullness of the *Λόγος,* and second, in terms of the mediating power of the metaphor through which the *Λόγος* is expressed. In both cases, powers relate to possibilities, or rather potentialities, which furthermore implies "openness" to them through which they may translate into acts. Both the operative metaphor and a core set of values lay at the core of a cultural horizon, which is itself a heuristic device that allows for the visualization of a cultural whole in terms of thoughts and actions as well as the way they are expressed in and through various cultural forms.

To problematize the metaphor in terms of its mediating power is a way to question, on perhaps a more intimate level, the connection of the creative potential/power of language as it appears pre-conceptually in relation to various modes of human living as they manifest within the modern cultural epoch. To pose this question is to examine it from two different angles or perspectives: 1) the *manifesting action*; and 2) its *operative potential*. Both perspectives form part of a larger vision in which they are reciprocally and dialectically involved; and as such, this total vision of a culture does not imply a hierarchy of significance or meaning, which places actions as necessarily derivative of metaphoric potential. This is to propose a type of metaphysical ground, which is emphatically not the case. Rather, the *Λόγος*, which I understand as synonymous with Nietzsche's understanding of "life," is neither an absolute nor a static notion; but rather is dynamic and vitalizing. As perhaps equally dynamic, the values that orient towards the *Λόγος*, i.e., as a vibrant unfolding of life, do not "know" or experience it directly, but rather indirectly, and only through a mediating metaphor.

The relation of the *Λόγος* to a historically specific mode of human existence is dialectical, but not in a Hegelian sense. The dialectical relation that occurs between the *Λόγος,* and the valued-based orientation to it, is affected through the dynamic of the metaphor through which creativity is made possible. It is through this creative dynamic that a culture emerges. And thus, the horizon of a culture is centered on a both a core set of values and an operative metaphor, which both mediates and empowers the full possibility of the *Λόγος* inasmuch as it is historically capable; and which furthermore, in its full, generative mode is expressive of wide range of creative thoughts and actions.

As suggested above, Burckhardt's direct and indirect application of the notion of *invenire* represents a rich and fruitful path to this end. As a broad mode of action, and with a perhaps equally as broad semantic range, Burckhardt's understanding of the term reflects at the very least, what he observed to be an authentic relationship of man, world, and God. This relationship was greatly attributable to the openness Renaissance man had toward the possibilities within his world, which was underpinned and thoroughly penetrated by this notion of *invenire* as an active and vibrant force in itself, if also the mode through which it was variously expressed. As a case in point, the usage during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of the verb *invenire*—to which Burckhardt was no doubt sensitive—reflects this "openness to the possible" in a powerful way; and with it, conveys a sense of the many vibrant options through which a world could be created, and also creatively sustained. *Invenire* thus yields a fascinating glimpse into the vital forces at work in the Renaissance insofar as they translate into actions that can be seen, measured and felt.

At this level of the phenomenal, i.e., that plane where thought and action are manifest in decidedly "real" and concrete ways, the Renaissance rendering of *invenire* begins to disclose the poignant and vital relationship between the manifest modes of life on the one hand, and on the

other hand, the creative forces—which I understand in terms of the metaphor—that gave them shape. At once the extensive semantic range of *invenire* connotes a sense of discovery that not only harmonizes with, but also includes within it a broad range of theoretical and practical actions. The meaning conveyed by *invenire* effectively unites the realms of "morals" and of "making," so that they must be understood not merely as two modes of action, but also as two modes/expressions of a larger force of potential. And thus, on the one hand, *invenire* invokes the broadly conceived moral action whereby man, in authentic attunement to the world, discovers the world and himself within it, all as part of a singularly meaningful totality. Thus, an authentic moral action is by definition an action of discovery insofar as it is "phenomenalized" in thoughts and deeds. [197] In this respect, one need only think of Goethe in *Dichtung and Warhheit* in his suggestion that he knows himself only insomuch as he knows his world, and he knows his world only insomuch as he knows himself. On the other hand, *invenire* calls within its ambit that specific action (or deed) by which man creates, produces or invents.[198] This is the realm of "making," i.e., the realm of art, where the action of discovery is directed toward the production of something, whether a painting, a sculpture or a dramatic or musical work. As a specific mode of creative, practical action, the work of art—as an *invention*—at once reveals the moral actions of thought and deed while translating them creatively into a variety of artistic forms through which those actions are affirmed and even celebrated.

[197] See, Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). Greenblatt and the New Historicists more generally have offered contextualist readings of literary texts to buttress their claims that literature cannot be read outside its "historical" context. Greenblatt's notion of self-fashioning, in particular, explains the possibility for self-conception exclusively in terms of social standards, which limits him from seeing the larger creative forces at work in the Renaissance. What's more, society and its various modal expressions are derivative concerns that are far removed from the "poetical act" with which we are primarily concerned here. On the latter point, see Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 19 *et passim*. In following Hegel, Marx, and Heidegger (all in different ways), Arendt saw the potential of human greatness—and thus as the apex of the human condition—intimately linked to its ability to "produce things" either through works, deeds or words.

[198] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 136-74.

Though *invenire* (itself a type of phenomenon), along with the actions by which it is characterized, conveys a sense of those forces in affecting an understanding of how the men of the Renaissance came to know, to create and to act within this world, it transcends it. And, as Burckhardt understood so well, the very point at which *invenire* actuates for us the phenomenon of the world of the Renaissance; articulating it into almost palpable detail, while describing the means by which man and world existed wholly and meaningfully together; it is at the same time inscrutably elusive. The phenomenon is but a glimpse of that moment—indeed, an illusion of our living, historical past—with which we must come to authentic terms in the present. The phenomenon occasions not an elusive quest for certainties in the form of undeniable facts, but a more deep probing into that larger force of potential from which not only the smallest facts, but also the defining actions of discovery derive their meaning and significance. The actions of discovery as they relate to man, world and God are subsumed within a larger dynamic, but the phenomenon that it brings forth nevertheless "sets the stage" on which deeper questions vis-à-vis the *Λόγος*—as mediated through metaphor and expressed in any number of cultural forms)—can be firmly posed, and without which the twin phenomena of the Renaissance and the Baroque are but empty shells.

With this is mind, let us for the moment, return to Pico della Mirandola. Not only does *invenire* present in the *Oratio* and other texts as the authentic mode of action for Renaissance culture in redefining the relation of man, God, and world; the action itself is effectively the experience of metaphoric possibility. In his invective against astrology, as articulated in the unfinished *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinitricem*[199] (*Disputations against Divinatory Astrology*) of 1496, Pico assessed the question of divine knowledge from a mystical edifice,

[199]*Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinitricem,* (henceforth, *Disput.*). *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinitricem* 2 vols., ed. Eugenio Garin (Florence: Vallechi, 1946-52).

which furthermore brought to consideration the possibility of a closer harmony between the immediacy of the mystical experience and the rationalized approach of traditional theology. As the more familiar example—the *Oratio*—reveals, and specifically the repeated references to Jacob's Ladder, the two approaches are not opposed. That Pico's *Oratio* is expressive of the love- and will-based mysticism that goes back to at least Augustine, it is perhaps equally informed by traditions—from Neoplatonism to late-Scholasticism—oriented toward the theoretical *knowledge* of God (as *theo-logos*). Man, through the act of creation, is an entity who simultaneously exists as the familiar of the gods (*superis familiarem*)[200] and, whose variable and unfixed (though godlike) nature within the hierarchy, confers a status upon him where he may contemplate the universe (*ubi universi contemplator*)[201] in many different ways and from many different perspectives. The point being that the mystical edifice for Pico becomes part of the larger *experience* of the divine insofar as the experience subsumes the range of human action in its various modes of theory, practice and making.

The experience *qua* experience is the crucial point of significance, for it—as a moment of totality and fullness—is both inclusive and open to an almost inexhaustible field of possible thoughts and actions, which not only comprise the "totality" of the experience itself, but also constitutes the intrinsic significance of Renaissance mysticism as a cultural form. It is here that *inventus*, in terms of the overall action of the discovery of man and of world, gains its thoroughly penetrating significance. In Pico's formulation, the experience constitutes *inventus* and vice versa; and to the extent that they are constitutive of each other, the scope of moral action and creativity *lives* fully and openly within the experience to affect the concomitant discovery of man, God and world, all within the same realm of possibility. The mystical experience—as

[200] *Oratio*, 102.
[201] *Oratio*, 105.

formulated specifically by Pico or even more expansively as a cultural form of the later Middle Ages and Renaissance—cannot be approached exclusively in terms of the *interiore homine,* or of an inner movement more generally. Though these notions are necessary to a fuller understanding of the mystical experience, they are not sufficient in terms of an appreciation for the overall significance this broader notion of mysticism holds not only for the Renaissance as a cultural epoch, but also with respect to its implicit role in the manifestation of Baroque culture and the modern mode of existence in its more recent forms.

If *invenire* in its Renaissance manifestation is constitutive of the broad experience of the divine—along with its mystical overtones—the *Oratio* may serve to show how a broadly conceived notion of "discovery," coupled with a large array of creative forces, characterized the phenomena of the Renaissance in all of its fascinating diversity. As is well known, Pico's efforts at syncretism served as the hallmark of his scholarly achievement, and his inclination to the unity of all knowledge must have produced in him the belief that he was the legitimate heir to a rich intellectual tradition, and especially insofar as this belief was marked by a religious sensibility. Notwithstanding the specific problematic of Renaissance astrology with which Pico was engaged, and which moreover, he saw as an impediment to the immediacy of the mystical experience, the "striving to find" [202] as written in the *Disputationes* (*invenire contendunt*) commands our attention. The animating sentiment, even if cast in a negative tenor, is the same that pervades the *Oratio* where an eternal striving for the truth at once transcends and eludes us while giving true value to human existence.[203] In the *Oratio* it is not so much that man will

[202] *Disput.*, 2:268. Pico writes: *Hebraeorum Magistri, sicuti imagines suas astrologi, ita suum in stellis alephetarium, hoc est suae linguae notas et elementa, invenire contendunt*..."[Just as the astrologers *strive to find* in the stars their images, so also do the Hebrew Masters *strive to find* in the stars the notes and letters (*elementa*) of their language...].

[203] Recall Lessing, *Nicht die Wahrheit, in deren Besitz irgend ein Mensch ist, oder zu sein vermeint, sondern die aufrichtige Mühe, die er angewandt hat, hinter die Wahrheit zu kommen, macht den Wert des*

ascend Jacob's Ladder to attain an angelic intelligence; for he may quite possibly descend the ladder to realize the brute within. Rather, it is that he shall endeavor to do so in a supreme act of individual willing. Indeed, it is man's striving as actuated by *his* own will—and because his being is not fully determined (*indiscretae opus imaginis*)—that has true meaning, and from which he derives an almost god-like status to create. In this way the *Λόγος* proper mediates through the metaphor of the microcosm from which new and alternative potencies now emanate.

This becomes the decisive moment of the Renaissance. What is more this is a strikingly poignant and deeply significant historical question, for Pico's Adam—and by extension humanity—serves to redefine the creation account in a powerfully new language. The microcosm, as the image of the macrocosm along with the analogous set of potentialities inherent within it, is "recreated" in Pico's account so as to speak the divine *Λόγος* in a new way; and in a powerfully unique way for a newly emerging world as manifested through the moment of the Renaissance. Man as the *Imago Dei* is radically redefined from its Augustinian precedent. For it is the image itself that has now become creative, with the divine possibility flowing through it, so as to find actualization in a variety of forms.[204] But, though Pico's Adam became

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Menschen. Denn nicht den Besitz, sondern durch die Nachforschung der Wahrheit erweitern sich seine Kräfte, worin allein seine immer wachsende Vollkommenheit bestehet. Der Besitz macht ruhig, träge, stolz—[The true value of a man is not determined by his possession, supposed or real, of Truth, but rather by his sincere exertion to get to the Truth. It is not possession of the Truth, but rather the pursuit of Truth by which he extends his powers and in which his ever-growing perfectibility is to be found. Possession makes one passive, indolent, and proud], *Anti-Goetze: Eine Duplik* [1778], tr. Scott Horton, in *Werke*, ed. H. Göpfert, 8, (1979), 32-33.

[204] It would take us too far afield here, but a fuller examination of Cusanus would be fruitful in revealing yet another way the individual—in accordance with Burckhardt's apt phrase the ge*istige Individuum*—may expand into the world or cosmos, and in a fashion the redefines the relationship of man, God, and world. *Supra*, fn., 12. The condition of the microcosm—which Cusanus understood as a Contracted Maximum—at once implies the uncertainties of the nominalist theology, and resolves them by redefining God in terms of the metaphor of the *sphaera infinita*, which allows God to have neither circumference, nor center; and thus to be omnipresent in a new way. Indeed, Newton will fashion his cosmos along similar lines.

The point here is that Cusanus presupposed the micrososm metaphor, and especially as it relates to the indeterminant nature of man, along with the god-like possibilities that dwell within him, and which await full realization. Cusan offers a way by which man may discover and thus experience the divine in a new way, and therefore the experience and discover himself in a new way vis-à-vis the cosmos as a whole:

emblematic of the revitalized Neoplatonic microcosm, the poetical forces at work in his conception transcend—though they certainly include—the familiar motif of freedom and self-fashioning. The metaphor thus opens what may be termed a "horizon of possibility" within which the modern cultural epoch emerged—and indeed, by which it is still operative in a fascinatingly unique way. By raising the question of the metaphor "essentially"—that is with an eye to its creative and expressive possibility—the question of culture *per se* can be properly addressed. And though the metaphor has ontological primacy in this particular sense, it is nevertheless inextricably entwined with a culture's core set of values on which its thoughts, actions, and indeed, all cultural forms thoroughly depend.

Indeed, in approaching the notion of the "poetic," which the metaphor most certainly is, one must certainly hearken back to the Greeks in determining its full sense. As *poíesis*/ποίησις, such action connoted for the Greeks a "making," an "artifice" or a "production," and was moreover, thoroughly inclusive of a wide range of practical and theoretical activities. The more strict consideration of the poetic—which is to say, an art form *per se*; and specifically the compositional act of articulating the metaphor into language—obviously falls within this broader ambit of meaning. Yet, what differentiates it from the more general significance of *poíesis* is the double-sense in which it operates—a sense dependent upon the simultaneous nearness and distance to the "reality" it articulates. In a word, such a sense is "metaphoric." Indeed, all

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Maxim autem, cui minimum coincidit, convenit ita unum amplecti, quod et aliud non dimittat, sed simul omnia. Quadpropter natura media, quae est medium connexionis inferioris et superioris, est solum illa, quae ad maximum convenienter elevabilis est potentia maximi infiniti Dei. Nam cum ipsa intra se complicet omnes naturas, ut supremum inferioris et infimum superioris, si ipsa secundum omnia sui ad unionem maximitatis ascenderit, omnes naturas ac totum universum omni possibli modo ad summum gradum in ipsa pervenisse constat. [*DDI*, III.3.126]. *Nicolai de Cusa: Opera Omnia, Vol. I, De docta ignorantia,* ed. Ernest Hoffmann and Raymond Klibansky (Leipzig: Meiner, 1932). [Now, it befits the Maximum—with which the Minimum coincides—to embrace one thing in such a way that it does not repel another thing but is all things together. Therefore, a middle nature, which is the means of the union of the lower [nature] which can be suitably elevated unto the Maximum by the power of the maximal, infinite God. For since this middle nature—as being what is highest of the lower [nature] and what is lowest of the higher [nature]—enfolds within itself all natures: if it ascends wholly to a union with Maximality, then—as is evident—all natures and the entire universe have, in this nature, wholly reached the supreme gradation.], trans., Jasper Hopkins, *De docta ignorantia* (Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning Press, 1985).

authentic, mytho-poetic forms are synonymous with the metaphoric, and while in one sense they articulate (in "artificing"), they simultaneously (and in another sense) reveal human imagination and capability at the very limits of the possible—which indeed is a possibility bordering on the transcendent. The medium by which meaning is articulated (and made) into language, as well as, the medium by which this revelation into the mysterious possibilities takes place, is always metaphoric. Poetic revelation itself attunes us to the metaphor's living presence along with the expressive possibilities mediated through it.

In opening a "horizon of possibility" the metaphor reveals an "essence of possibility"—which is to say the full range of poetic potential as unarticulated, but yet metaphorically mediated.[205] My assessment of the *Cogito* together with the cultural epoch of which it formed part proceeds in an interpretive vein directed by a concern for the *in potentia* historical expressions—both authentic and inauthentic—of metaphorically mediated thoughts and actions. This is to say that to frame the problem of the *Cogito* as a cultural problem, the metaphor must take precedence in relation to the modern cultural epoch as a whole. The metaphor and culture (as the phenomenalizing of its possibilities) are thus united in a unique and interesting way. In this regard the horizon of possibility, as revealed by the metaphor, consists of the primordial possibilities of human being as an "essence of possibility" in itself, which is engaged dialectically with a core set of values from which the concrete phenomenon of the modern cultural epoch (inclusive of the Renaissance and Baroque) emerges.[206]

[205] I would distinguish the "essence of possibility" from "absolute possibility," the latter understood as that which lay beyond the limits of human understanding and imagination and is akin to the metaphysical formulation as Being *qua* Being.

[206] Whereas the conventional modern sense understands the metaphor in terms of ornamented language, which is furthermore "put to use" in the service of the poet to affect something aesthetically pleasing; by contrast, the metaphor acting in a primordial sense, which is to say "essentially," reveals the essence of creative *possibility*. The poetic act proper, together with the energies and transfiguring capabilities unique to it, articulates into language a historically specific "essential possibility" through a mediating metaphor, which furthermore expresses itself poetically in and through various practical and theoretical activities.

The metaphor as representative of the "essence of possibility" is manifestly operative in both a broad and a strict poetical sense—or what I will call the derivative and the definitive, respectively. On the one hand—the derivative level—the poetical creatively expresses itself authentically in thought and in action. In this sense, the derivative function of the metaphor is constitutive of the concrete expression of a particular mode(s) of life, which it also represents through the dynamics of life properly constituted as an authentic expression of the metaphor.[207] On the other hand—the definitive level—the poetical acts in concert with a sort of primordial capability so as to define the very possibilities of actions and thoughts as they come to be (and are) expressed in a multitude of ways within a culture—i.e., cultural forms, thoughts and actions. This second, more fundamental sense—as in with the microcosm of the *Oratio*—represents the strict poetic act whereby the metaphor is "named," and in so doing, the possibilities for thought and action are articulated into language in accordance with Heidegger's treatment of the Heraclitus fragment. This represents the "essence of possibility" with which we are concerned vis-à-vis the modern cultural epoch. Thus, through the definitive function of the metaphor language is "given" in such a way that modes of thought and action can now themselves be properly "thought" and interpreted reflexively in terms of the mediating metaphor, especially with an eye to their fundamentality and creative potential.

By way of conclusion, I want to suggest—in accordance with Burckhardt's notion of the cultural continuum—that inasmuch as the metaphor functions as a mediator, the moment in

[207] Walter Benjamin articulated a similar position with respect to the "allegorical viewpoint" as expressed in the German *Trauerspiel,* which he saw as the "ideal/*Gestalt*" for understanding it, and by extension as assessment of the darkness of our own times. The allegorical, for Benjamin, served as the expression of convention itself (what I would call a specific cultural mode of action) as opposed to an "accurate" conventional representation of some notion from a distant historical past. He writes, "…it is not the conflict with God and Fate, the representation of a primordial past, which is the key to a living sense of national community, but the confirmation of princely virtues, the depiction of princely vices, the insight into diplomacy and manipulation of all the political schemes, which makes the monarch the main character in the *Trauerspiel*." *The Origin of German Tragic Drama,* p. 62.

which it is properly named allows for the full operative range of the poetic to become jointly a hermeneutic and a historical concern. In other words, the microcosm metaphor as named by Pico in the *Oratio* becomes the animating spirit of the Renaissance and through which any number of creative actions manifest. The metaphor gave the age, as it does any age, its spiritual contours. Thus, Pico's notion of the microcosm is a definitive poetic act, which articulates in language the possibilities for action and thought, which in turn (from an historical, hermeneutical standpoint) reveal the patterns of meaning in their totality, and as expressed by the metaphor in the creation of new cultural forms. The derivative operation in which *invenire* may be said to take place effectively represents the moral realm insofar as poetic function combines with a core set of values, which is a concern to which we will attend below. The definitive operation of the poetic, however, is manifestly a conditional moment insofar as the metaphor dwells almost exclusively within the realm of possibility in the shaping of modes of thought and action.[208] The grounds for this possibility—as metaphoric— surpass what may be deemed a "fundamental change in intellectual attitude," insofar as the poetical becomes powerfully linked to an almost transcendent possibility, albeit in a worldly guise where it finds unique expression. [209] In this way, Leon

[208] It should be noted that the metaphor represents one contingent and historical aspect in the shaping of the modern West. The other depends upon the dynamic of culture wherein the question of value comes to the fore in the shaping of human history. These values, in their authentic linkage to metaphoric possibility, are themselves creative; and it is through them that a culture takes shape in significant and meaningful ways. This is a rich and complex notion, indeed, and one that we will attend to below where the Baroque is problematized more directly. With the question of culture—on which the thrust of my argument depends—we enter effectively into the moral realm where the poetical (metaphorical) links with a value-determined impetus, which in turn shapes thought and action in concrete (as opposed to abstract) ways. The metaphor, in bringing to language the possibilities for thought and action, also brings them to thought, or more specifically, allows for interpretative reflection—in view of a core set of values—from which the range of human possibility can be "thought" historically with respect not only to its past, but also its present and future.

[209] On the "fundamental change in intellectual attitude," see Eugenio Garin, *Science and Civic Life in the Italian Renaissance* trans. by Peter Munz (New York: Double Day, 1969), p. 9; and Ernst Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, trans. By Mario Domandi (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 6 *et passim*. Garin, especially, sought to challenge the continuity argument waged by Haskins, Chenu et al; yet his reference to the poetical aspects of Renaissance are largely in passing and the degree to which the epoch is poetical is never really explored. On the continuity argument, especially with respect to Renaissance novelties already extant in the Middles Ages, see for example, the classic account by Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971); on "inventiveness" and creativity within the new

Battista Alberti, who though he did not speak explicitly of the infinity of man in terms of a *theosis* or full participation in the godhead, as Charles Trinkhaus would suggest with respect to Pico, he could nevertheless speak glowingly about the infinite number of possibilities available to him, whether they be in the mode of an architect, a painter, a gymnast, an administrator or a dramatist.[210]

Along these lines what is interesting—and perhaps decisive—for the problem of the *Cogito* as examined vis-à-vis the metaphor is that it is operative under the same possibilities that pervade and energize Pico's *Oratio*. Yet, at the same time, the *Cogito* formulation retains and employs many of the metaphysical presuppositions (i.e., concepts) of the tradition, which present in a complicated and confused way.[211] Of these metaphysical presuppositions, one may turn, for example, to the Scholastic interpretations of *essentia* and *existentia* as evidenced in the thought of Aquinas, Scotus and Suarez, and of whom Descartes was a direct heir. [212] As Heidegger has pointed out, the sense of actuality and existence in pre-modern philosophy was always oriented toward actualization to the extent that for a created being (*ens creatum*), existence was added to

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framework of nature, see M. D. Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); for the continuity of antiquity into the Middle Ages (and beyond), especially Platonism, see Etienne Gilson, *La philosophie au moyen âge*, (Paris: Payot, 1922) and the contributions of pagan antiquity more generally, see Melange Mandonnet, *Etudes d'histoire doctrinal et littéraire, 2 vols* (Paris: Vrin, 1930).

[210] On this notion of the "many-sided man," see for example, Garin, p.10; and more definitively, Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S.G.C. Middlemore (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 102-4. Also see Trinkhaus, *"In Our Image and Likeness,"* 518-29, *et passim*.

[211] At least part of the problem regarding the Cartesian move (as solidified in the *Meditations*) hinges on the reversal in meaning of the traditional concepts of *actualitas* and *realitas.* See, Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1982), 77-121. On the one hand, the traditional, "pre-modern" formulation of *actualitas*, and especially in its Aristotelian, form equated in meaning with a notion of existence or being. *Actualitas* accorded also with the Aristotelian notion of movement or *physis* (φύσις) expressed on its own terms. On the other hand, the pre-modern tradition had understood *realitas* in terms of "essence," or "*quidditas*," which is to place emphasis upon the first principle, i.e., the original *arche*/*ἀρχή* or underlying substance of a thing, which in turn established and determined its "whatness." The grounding of reality in modernity is subjectivity, which is a foundation determined by a specific—and limited—formulation of actuality (*energeia*/ενεργεια) as something fully existent. On this foundation is an ontological primacy on which attendant claims to truth are legitimated.

[212] On these late Scholastic distinctions, see *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 88-99; 122-76.

the actual, which is to say, a being's full existence depended upon the degree to which it was fully actualized. The essence (or potential) is actualized through the full development of a thing's (*res*) "real content" in accordance with particular type of movement (*φύσις*).[213] It is not merely that these traditional concepts are retained in *Cogito*, and even in a complicated and confused way, but rather that they are affirmed dogmatically.[214] The *Cogito* as the ground for certitude depends upon the understanding of itself as fully actualized and situated in over-and-against the world, which is to enact an inauthentic relationship between man and world.[215] Insofar as this relates to the question of metaphoric possibility as raised by the *Oratio*, the *Cogito* at the very least delimits the full range of creative possibility—if not negating it utterly—insofar as possibility lay beyond the parameters of truth and knowledge as grounded in the *Cogito* and determined on the basis of epistemic certitude.

What I wish to show in this dissertation is that the dynamic of this transformation, though presupposing the full possibility of the metaphor, resides ultimately in a question of value that bespeaks a particular orientation to the world. This, or course, is a cultural concern. Within that dynamic—that is between the *Λόγος* and a specific value orientation—the metaphor mediates the expressive possibility as lain out by the *Λόγος*. The various ways in which the metaphor mediates are effectively the *in potentia* historical expressions of a world as a world. And insofar as the entire dynamic forms part of the cultural continuum, the continuum's illumined and emphasized aspects, as much as its obscured and deemphasized aspects, are conditioned and allowed by a cultural horizon. The return to Pico's text in terms of the metaphor, as the conveyor of the vital forces that shape a world, allows us to problematize effectively the *Cogito* as a cultural concern,

[213] Ibid. 124-25.

[214] Ibid. 122-76. This section, in particular, overviews the question of dogmatism in relation to the metaphysical tradition preceding Kant.

[215] This is a common theme throughout many of Heidegger's works. For one instantiation, see *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 104-5.

and perhaps only then to reorient ourselves toward the discovery of the full range of possibilities in the modern world.

CHAPTER FOUR

"Quod Rectum Iter Veritatis?:" Subjectivity and the Cartesian Self

We have so far endeavored to show how the generative metaphor of the microcosm mediates the power of the *Λόγος* whereby that potential is expressed through the modal action of *invenire* to reveal a world as a world. The metaphoric power of the microcosm as named in the *Oratio*, in large part, derives its force through the indeterminate nature of man (*indiscreatae opus imaginis*) whereby he may expand and enfold into the world according to his will and to the full extent of his potential. As we have suggested, the microcosm effectively redefined the traditional notion of the *Imago Dei*, or divine image, in view of man's indeterminate nature to reveal his "double role" as both a noble creature and a dynamic creator. The redefinition itself presupposes the dynamic between the *Λόγος* (or life) and the value orientation towards it, and always in accordance to the full expressive possibility of the metaphor. To the extent that this expressive possibility translates into the realm of moral action, and specifically through the mode of *invenire*, the focus now directs to the question of patterns as well as the specific ways that these vital forces may shape a world.

As a question of moral action, it is also a cultural concern insofar as cultures emerge and come into view through a wide range of thoughts and actions. One way in which to grapple historically with this question, as I here propose, is to examine more closely the poetic dynamic that informed the redefinition of the *Imago Dei* in view of Pico's understanding of the indeterminate nature of man; and especially his newly privileged status as a microcosmic god

replete with creative possibility. The dynamic plays out within what may be called the tradition of the *interiore homine*,[216] which achieved its fullest development with Augustine and as was deeply pervasive throughout Western culture.[217] What is more, the tradition of the *interiore homine* effectively found new life in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as evidenced through the outpouring of various types of meditative and devotional writing, and within which parts of the Cartesian corpus are certainly characteristic.[218] Yet, I am concerned less with these meditative aspects *per se* than with the traditional model of the *interiore homine* as (by the seventeenth century) a still vibrant cultural form through which to articulate a notion of self. In this sense, meditative literature—and specifically as it pertains to Descartes in the *Discourse* and the *Meditations*—constitute a type of "life writing," which reveals not only a particular conception of self, but also its relation to the world (and God).

[216] *De vera religione*, 39.72, and specifically, *noli foras ire in te ipsum redi: in interiore homine habitat veritas.*[Do not go outside, but return into yourself: for in the *inner man* dwells the truth], emphasis mine. The connection between Augustine and Descartes is firmly established in the scholarly literature. See, for instance, Henri Gouhier, *Cartésianism et augustinisme au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1978); and more recently, Stephen Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[217] Recall Burckhardt, the spiritual continuum, as discussed above.

[218] In many ways the classic text of the sixteenth century, and especially the influential and powerfully imaginative notion of "composition of place," is Loyola's *Exercitia Spiritualia*; yet other examples abound and include *inter alia* Donne's *Holy Sonnets*, George Herbert's *A Priest to the Temple*, and Jean de La Ceppède's *Méditations sur les Psaumes* as well as his *Théorèmes sur le sacré mystère de notre redemption.* In terms of the secondary literature that addresses the meditative act, see for instance, Pierre Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, novella ed. (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002) who though establishing Loyola as the springboard for his investigations, navigates backward in time to the ancients, especially Marcus Aurelius and the Stoics and the treatment of philosophy as a mode of life and the contemplation of a moral and physical totality; Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self* (New York: Vintage, 1988); for the metaphysical poets, see the excellent treatment of Louis L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976); for continental examples, especially in reference to the notion of "moral perfection," see J. B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and for treatment of the "spiritual exercise" in an early modern, continental context, see for example, John Sellers, "Justus Lipsius *De Constantia*: A Stoic Spiritual Exercise," *Poetics Today*, 28(2007): 339-362, and the notion of *constantia* (in contradistinction to the tradition-rich notion of *consolatio*) as a form of habituation or perseverance hinged in repeated reflection in the moral perfection of the soul; similarly see Matthew L. Jones, "Descartes's Geometry as Spiritual Exercise," *Critical Inquiry* 28(2001): 40-71. Jones pursues the well-established line of moral perfection as an *askesis*, and thus sees Descartes's deployment of the exercise in terms of geometry as possessing a sort of therapeutic capacity for wisdom, moral perfection, and of course, a stable foundation on which to base judgment of all questions of knowledge and understanding.

Thus, this section proposes to advance a notion of the Cartesian self, albeit tentatively, as situated within the cultural tradition of the *interiore homine,* and as influenced (and in large part shaped) by the poetic dynamic associated with the microcosm metaphor. The whole effort is pursuant to the centrality of the metaphysics of subjectivity, which I maintain, found within the horizon of the modern cultural epoch the conditions of possibility for full expression. Directly related to the problem of subjectivity is the confused usage of such terms as "subject", "self", "soul", "spirit", "consciousness", "self-consciousness", etc., both in the Baroque period as well as subsequent periods, including our own. This is to say that by engaging the problem of subjectivity (including the *Cogito*) we are also raising the problem of self-conception, which again, is less a philosophical or psychological problem than a historical and cultural one. The notion subjectivity as it developed in the canonical texts of Descartes hinges further on the understanding that there exists a sub-history within the metaphysical tradition whereby the *hypokeimenon,* understood here in the original Aristotelian sense as that which is "neither asserted of nor can be found in the subject," yields to an inwardly oriented notion of subject, and thence to subjectivity.[219] Within the horizon of the modern cultural epoch, this history unites with and subsumes the rich tradition of the *interiore homine* in ways that will become decisive for the modern conception of truth, as well as the possibility of being fully human. I thus maintain that the notion of the subject, as conceived in largely in terms of the validity of the

[219] On the sub-history of subjectivity with metaphysics, see Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2006); *Being and Time,* trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: SUNY, 1996)*; What is Called Thinking?,* trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Perennial, 2004); *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Perennial, 2001); *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); "The Age of the World Picture," in the *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977). Also relevant essays within that volume include, "Nietzsche's Word: God is Dead;" and "The Question Concerning Technology," among others. "Der Neuzeitlichen Wissenschaft und Der Modernen Technik" in *Gesamtausgabe*, Band 76, 1976. On the *hypokeimenon, Categories* I 2a.5; and 2a.512-13; where Aristotle characterizes the *hypokeimenon* in terms of substance (*ousia*), which though a part of the a categories is also beyond them. This obviously carries on ontological significance whereby *ousia*, or substance, in "underlying" a thing can be predicated of accidents or other qualities, but is never itself a predicate. This relates to what Kant suggests in the *First Critique* that being is not a real predicate.

inner experience, is central to the question of the Baroque. It is only by gaining a sense of the historical foundations of subjectivity—and only then from a few limited perspective— that we can begin to understand Descartes' conception of self as it relates to his turn to the *Cogito* and its defining ideals, as laid out initially in the *Regulae*, of a *mathesis universalis* or a *universalissima sapientia*. For it is upon these ideals especially that the triumph of the natural sciences rests, and which in many ways underpins the dominant truth claims of modernity. Beyond this, it provides a feasible starting point from which to rethink the *Cogito* as a particular expression of metaphoric potential, especially as it becomes part of the value-centered dynamic of a cultural horizon. It is from here that we may perhaps begin to raise effectively the question of the culture of the Baroque, and the dynamics of which our modern existence is thoroughly interwoven.

The Question of the Cartesian Self: Preliminary Concerns

This inquiry into the Cartesian notion of self is admittedly the most tentative that I here advance in the dissertation. There are larger cultural-historical questions to consider quite beyond the purview of the dissertation, which relate to reformulations of traditional concepts such as eternity and the *nunc stans;* as well as a re-conception of the *analogia entis*;[220] and a restructuring of the traditional Aristotelian psychology that, in large part, entailed a fusing-

[220] I have only begun to think through this aspect of the problem; and though the initial insights will prove fruitful, they are too inchoate to include here. In any case, much of the significance regarding the late medieval debate on the *analogia entis* relates directly to Cajetan, and his *De nominium analogia.* On the question of the *analogia*, especially in its late-medieval sense to which Descartes was a direct heir, see for instance, E. J. Ashworth, "Analogy and Equivocation in Thirteenth-Century Logic: Aquinas in Context," in *Medieval Studies* 54 (1992): 94-135; Ashworth, *Les théories de l'analogie du XIIe au XVIe siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 2008); Bernard Montagnes, *The Doctrine of the Analogy of Being according to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. E.M. Macierowski (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2004); and Ralph McInerny, *Aquinas and Analogy* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1998). See also Erich Przywara's magisterial study, *Analogia Entis, Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, trans. John R. Betz and David Bentley Hart (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Erdman's Publishing Co., 2014). For a now "classical" neo-Thomist formulation of the problem with an eye to its epistemologico-ontological significance, see Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, trans. Gerald B. Phelan (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Press, 1995). Pierre Aubenque, "Les origines de la doctrine de l'analogie de l'être" in *Les Études philosophiques* 103 (1978): 3-12.

together of the intellective faculty within that of the imaginative—all with dynamic and decisive consequences.[221] Yet, we can at least provisionally advance a notion of the Cartesian self in relation to the broader tradition of the *interiore homine* within which many of the dynamical transformations, such as the invigoration of the imagination, took shape. To this extent, we are ultimately raising questions pertaining to the "cosmic implosion" of the later sixteenth century in which the medieval cosmos—as constitutive of an entire moral, physical and metaphysical totality—had effectively collapsed only to retreat into the realm of the inner experience. Yet, the broad and deep network of sustaining cultural traditions—intellectual and other—did not disappear; but rather, were redefined, restructured and given new meaning in view of a drastic reorientation to life. The reorientation of a self to life and world, as the Cartesian example certainly attests, are attempts to regain that totality, and especially the meaningful whole that it represents. Thus, this chapter inasmuch as it is provisional is also transitional in that it points to the question of a transforming reality, as addressed in the next chapter. Specifically this transformation relates to the problem of the dream, which becomes especially problematic in view of the validity of the interior experience; and in its uniquely Cartesian context, questions the confused status of consciousness. What is a dream? What is a thought? In the process the whole edifice of the traditional reality is brought into question from which I would like to suggest, is one aspect of a larger dynamic from which a Baroque culture begins to unfold. But before attending more directly to that question, let us first turn to the notion of the Cartesian self, and the centrality of the *Cogito* through which it is largely sustained and understood.

[221] On the question of the imagination, see Pierre Boutroux, *L'Imagination et les mathématiques selon Descartes* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1900); Stephen Henry Ford, *Imagination and Thought in Descartes*, (Philosophy, York University: Unpublished dissertation, 1977); Dennis Sepper, *Descartes' Imagination: Proportion, Images, and the Activity of Thinking* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Jacqueline Wernimont, "Discovery in The World: The Case of Descartes" in the *Invention of Discovery, 1500-1700,* ed. James Dougal Fleming (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011).

The Cartesian Self

The problematic notion of the Cartesian self emerges in two passages, one within the *Discourse on Method* and another in the *Mediations on First Philosophy*. Indebted in many ways to the meditative, religious literature of the age, the very structure of these works is reflective, and taken together and in their completeness reveal the meditative process aimed to determine, as he Baillet relates in his autobiography, "what road in life shall I follow [*Quod vitae sectabor iter*]…as a condition to be "on the right road of truth" [*rectum iter veritatis*].[222] Through dialogic reflection Descartes engages the question of truth through the employment of the traditional triad constituted of memory, understanding and will. Mainly as a general process of reflection, which is to say thought, the Cartesian self begins to emerge, certain not only of its existence, but the truth to which it aspires. Moreover, it rests its conclusions primarily on the certitude of the reflections themselves determined as it were by the criterion of clarity and distinctness, i.e., the essential foundation of the method. Through meditative action directed toward "the right road of truth" Descartes thus defined selfhood on the basis of epistemic certitude; and moreover, established epistemology as the edifice for modern philosophy and by extension modern science. In order to get an inkling of how Descartes envisioned his project to which the mind (and in a decisively new way) becomes foundational, let us briefly look at those passages mentioned above.

The Fourth Discourse:

[222] AT X, 186, Baillet's *Vie* (1691) represents the first definitive biography of Descartes as commissioned and endorsed by Cartesians. We will attend to certain of its concerns more fully below.

> I knew from this that I was a substance whose whole essence or nature is to think, and which, in order to be, does not need any place, nor depend on any material thing depend…and having noticed that there is nothing at all in this—*I think, therefore I am*—that assures me that I speak the truth, except that I see very clearly that, in order to think, it is necessary to be. I judged that I could take for a general rule that the things we conceive very clearly and very distinctly are true…. [223]

The Second Meditation:

> So that all things having been weighed and beyond, this statement here established that "I am, I exist" [*Ego sum, ego existo*] is necessarily true, so often as it is uttered by me or conceived by my mind…Here I find: it is a cogitation; this along cannot be rent from me [a divelli nequit]. I am, I exist; it is certain [*Ego sum, ego existo; certum est*]…I am, then, precisely only a thinking substance [res cogitans], that is a mind [*mens*], or soul [*animus*], or intellect [*intellectus*], or reason [ratio]: words with significations previously unknown to me. But I am a true thing, and truly existing. Yet what quality of thing? A thinking think, I have said. [224]

The *Fourth Discourse* contains the first uttering of the *Cogito* formulation, "*je pense donc, je suis*, suggesting that on the basis of the premise, "I am thinking" [*je pense/ego cogito*], the conclusion "I am" [*je suis/sum* or *ego existo*] logically follows. The phrase should not suffer

[223] AT VI, 33, All citations from the *Discourse* derive from *Oeuvres de Descartes*, Vol. VI, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: J. Vrin, 1982). "*je connus de là que j'étais une substance dont toute l'essence ou la nature n'est que de penser, et qui, pour être, n'a besoin d'aucun lieu, ni ne dépend d'aucune chose matérielle...Et ayant remarqué qu'il n'y a rien du tout en ceci*: je pense, donc je suis, *qui m'assure que je dis la vérité, sinon que je vois trés clairement que, pour penser, il faut être: je jugeai que je pouvais prendre pour règle générale, qui les chose que nous concevons fort clairement et fort distictement sont toutes varies."* As we shall see, the cultural problematic comes into view when Descartes continues: "*mais qu'il y a seulement quelque difficulté à bien remarquer quelles sont celles que nous concevons distinctement"* [but that there is only some difficulty in correctly recognizing what we conceive distinctly]. The significance here is that which is conceived distinctively must accord with an initial intuition from which that distinct conception will be defined.

[224] AT VII 25; 27. *Adeo out, omnibus satis superque pensiatis, denique statuendum sit hoc pronuntiatum, Ego sum, ego existo, quoties a me profertur, vel mente concipitur, necessario esse verum…Hîc invenio: cogitatio est; haec sola a me divelli nequit. Ego sum, ego existo; certum est…sum igitur praecise tantùm res cogitans, id est, men's, sive animus, sive intellectus, sive ratio, voces mihi priùs significantiones. Sum autem res vera, & vere existens; sed qualis red? Dixi, cogitans.* All citations from the *Meditations* derive from *Oeuvres de Descartes*, Vol. VII, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: J. Vrin, 1983).

a logical or inferential (or even a performative) reading;[225] rather, we should take significant heed to the fact that in both of these works Descartes had expressly established the ground for thinking (and existing) not only on the basis of the conclusion that he was a substance (*substantia*), and particularly a thinking substance (*res cogitans*); but also from what he believed to be the all too certain claim, "*Ego sum, ego existo*". This is to say that by the *Second Meditation*, the *Cogito* becomes implicit and, moreover, collapses into the *ego sum—ego existo* formulation as the ground for all truth and certitude, viz. what Heidegger had dubbed the *fundamentum inconcussum*, or unshakable ground.[226] As the Second Meditation reveals, truth and the certainty that undergirds it are to be found solely in the solipsism of the present moment; and that the proper perception cannot be found in the deceptions of the imagination or the mendacious memory (*mendax memoria*) or that of the imagination, but only insofar as it is perceived easily and evidently in the mind.[227] The striking aspect here, as we shall see, is that faculty of the memory, which in the tradition had been so central to the understanding, and therefore also its mediating role in connecting that understanding to a cosmological whole (indeed, reality itself) was reconceived as something to be distrusted. Along these lines, the necessary truth that Descartes felt poised to utter i.e., that he is a thinking substance (*res cogitans*) means, somewhat problematically, that the *ego* is interchangeable with a host of other

[225] In the case of performative readings, see, for example, Jakko Hintikka, "Cogito, Ego Sum: Inference or Performance? *The Philosophical Review* 71 (1962): 3-32; and more recently, Jim Stone, "Cogito Ergo Sum" in *Descartes*, Tom Sorell, ed., Ashgate, 1999

[226] AT VII, 25, *Quare jam denuo meditabor quidnam me olim esse crediderim, priusquam in has cogitationes incidissem; ex quo deinde subducam quidquid allatis rationibus vel minimum potuit infirmary, ut ita tantem praecise* ***ramaneat*** *illud tantùm* ***quod certum est & incuncussum***. [Which is why I shall now mediate anew on what I had once believed myself to be before I have gone into these cogitations, from which I shall then subtract whatever could have been weakened even at a minimum by the reasons brought forth, so that thus, finally, precisely only **on that which is certain and unshakeable might remain**. The modified "*fundamentum inconcussum*" is Heidegger's modification to connote not only a sense of foundations, but also the persistence of standing permanence (*Ständiger Verbleib*) as conveyed in the original text between that which remains, and that which is also certain and unshakeable. On this point see, Jean-Luc Marion, *On Descartes' Metaphysical Prism: The Constitution and Limits of Onto-theo-logy in Cartesian Thought*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999)169-75

[227] AT VII, 24; 34, "*cognosco nihil facilis aut evidentius mea mente posse a me percipi."*

"cogitatively-oriented" nouns, e.g., the *mens*, *animus*, *intellectus* and *ratio*, which the Augustinian tradition, for example, had held as separate; and furthermore, maintained that each in their different ways was crucial to the attainment of the intellectual knowledge of God as well as the proper placement of the self within a larger cosmological totality.[228]

The concern in question—both with respect to a generalized Baroque form of "life writing" and to the particular instance of Descartes—relates to the discovery of "the right path of truth" (*le droit chemin de la vérité; rectum iter veritatis*) as well as the measures to be taken that allow one to find their way upon it. The correct path and its relation to a particular conception of truth is by no means novel within the Western tradition; and in many ways, the model, at least in its Christian form—and whether it was acknowledged or not—hearkens back to Augustine.[229] In *On the True Religion* (*De vera religion*) Augustine tells us: "Do not go outside, but return into yourself: for in the inner man dwells the truth" (*noli foras ire in te ipsum redi: in interiore*

[228] Though Augustine is in certain ways integral for situating Descartes within the tradition, the Augustinian notion of self and with it the detailed consideration of the three triads, serves to again illustrate how traditional concepts, richly and densely rendered (as in Augustine) have not only broken down, but have become exceedingly problematic..

[229] Parmenides is the first to open the possibility to the type of truth (namely, Fragment 2-3, 6-7, "The Way to Truth") to which the Western tradition would orient itself; namely a "way to truth" characterized as a journey of striving and inquiry. Plato will develop this decisively throughout his dialogues as can be found in Book VII of the *Republic, Theatetus, Phaedrus inter alia* wherein it is determined that man is a lover of wisdom (*philosophia*) who shall endeavor to *be* wise. Aristotle, too, will famously initiate the *Metaphysics* in his statement that "[a]ll men by nature desire to know," which in Aristotle's understanding is to be knowledgeable of first principles and thus to obtain knowledge of substances *qua* substances. The influence of Augustine upon the tradition almost goes without saying; and how he formulates the distinction between worldly knowledge (*scientia*) and extra-worldly wisdom (*sapientia*) informs his thought throughout, whereby the ascent to knowledge of divine things through the illumination of *imago Dei* constitutes man's *summum bonum*. The greatest good, which is divine wisdom, becomes integral to man's striving, and from that path we must not diverge lest we become errant: "*in quantum igitur omnes homines appetunt vitam beatam, non errant*."(*De Libero arbitrio*, II, ix, 26.) Cusanus, in *De Docta ignoratia*, *De Sapientia* and *De Visione Dei*, formulates the movement in mystical fashion, whereby the ultimate form of God may never be known by the human intellect; and though knowledge of this fact facilitates contemplation of the One, it also happily reflects a type of learned ignorance (*docta ignoratia*) to which presumably is tied a type of blessedness, albeit in a decidedly intellectual mode. The striving thus tends to the limit, though it may never surpass it. Pascal puts it yet in another form to accommodate the infinitization of cosmos, and the problem of Cartesian dualism. The contradictory nature of man is one in which he must seek to find—through his blind and wretched state—the traces that God has left of himself. And though man may perceive an image of the truth [*une image de la vérité*], he possesses nothing but falsehood. Pascal insists that man must come to know that "man constantly transcends man" [*l'homme passé infiniment l'homme*]; and that only through the submission of his natural reason to the mystery can he really come to know himself.

homine habitat veritas).[230] Yet, it is in the *Confessions* where Augustine revealed most poignantly his path to truth; and where he recounted—in the most personal and intimate detail—this dictum as it took shape for him in practice. It must be said that the movement from the *exteriore homine* to the *interiore homine* proceeded on faith; and yet, it also constituted the initial movement into the mystery of the absolute. Along these lines we find in the *Confessions* that the entry into the region of the inner man is tinged by both familiarity and mystery. This is to say that the gift of faith by which this movement is motivated (and which is also a primal act of divine love) finds some stability through the faculty of memory whereby the act of recollection "re-presents" to the mind the divine love as manifested in and through the sensible world, and especially in pertinence to the self in question. As Augustine reminds, we become newly familiar to ourselves through an authentic act of memory (which is to say a recollection of ourselves), which in a complex dynamic engenders a new love of self because it begins to find in itself the divine love to which it aspires to be reunified. As with the faculty of memory, the faculty of understanding, too, operates through faith (*fides quaerens intellectum*) and together they comprise and fully enact the *vita contemplativa* as the definitive moral action of the *interiore homine*.

We find in Augustine that the understanding is always preliminary and provisional, and thus the divine essence to which wisdom aspires shall remain mysterious until that wisdom

[230] Augustine, *De vera religione,* 39.72. The Cartesian parallels to this Augustinian sentiment can be found variously thus, for example: 1) the "Preface to the Reader" in the *Meditations*, "*ex eo quod mens humana in se conversa non percipiant alius se esse quam rem cogitantem"* (AT VII: 7, 20) 2) and the *Meditations* themselves, "*securum mihi otium procuravi solus secede*" (AT VII: 18,1) 3) "*quas ipse prudens et sciens meditando effingebam*" (AT VII: 75-16-17) 4) and in the *Regulae*, "*vel ex sui ipsius contemplatione reflexa*" (AT: X: 422, 28). Along these lines, see Jean-Luc Marion, *On the Ego and on God: Further Cartesian Questions*, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), chapter 3. What is at issue here is the equation of truth with a particular manifestation of the *interiore homine*. The *regula generalis* as asserted in Mediation III—i.e., the "perception" [as an internal, perceptual definition of truth] of anything clear and distinct as true—is later modified with the *regula veritatis* of Mediation V, which equates truth not only in the objective idea, but that all truth is established on the subjective basis for epistemic certitude.

transforms absolutely in the super-intelligible unity of the *visio beatifica* (beatific vision). Even mystical wisdom, and with it the comparative immediacy it yields to the understanding in its possession of some small aspect of the divine essence, presents merely a taste—indeed, a fleeting and glimmering moment—of the sweetness of God, which at the same time defies all human understanding. And though the understanding attained through a contemplative life will nevertheless carry with it a portion of the divine wisdom on its graceful ascent to beatitude (engendered as it were by the divine love) Augustine gives us to understand that anything short of the beatific vision (and the "superintelligible" ecstasy it occasions) is by necessity incomplete and defective. This is to say that the essence of God transcends all the powers and capabilities of the intellect such that any wisdom of the divine is not only by definition incomplete (and thus provisional); but even more significantly, the reality that undergirds that wisdom, and indeed that which animates the striving toward it, remains in the deep shroud of mystery.

For Augustine, all intellectual activity vis-à-vis the divine essence is *per speculum in aenigmate,* yet the region of the *interiore homine* is nevertheless established as the domain where the language of truth is spoken. The language of truth as it assumes force within the domain of the inner man does so through the act of love (*amor*), which unites creator and creature. The *Imago Dei* in many ways becomes central to this, and thereby mediates the complex dynamic of *amor*. In *De Trinitate* this dynamic is detailed in the strictest intellectual rigor; and accounted for throughout the *Confessions*, and in the most intimate fashion. We learn in *De Trinitate* of the mediating and uniting power of *amor* in the both the act of loving (*amans*) and the act of being loved (*amatus*). Augustine reveals (as does the later medieval tradition) the dynamic by which the cosmos is sustained in its beautiful totality. To that extent, we are given to understand that man, though he loves himself, through the action of memory, the understanding and the ultimate

acquisition of wisdom, learns to love God even more. Thus, language and the understanding facilitated by it together inform the possibility toward absolute transcendence as well as confirm man's placement within a meaningful whole.

The Augustinian Conception of Self: *Fides Quaerens [Sapientiam]*[231]

The prayer concluding the *De Trinitate* reveals in typical fashion Augustine's gift for weaving exhortation with the most apt Scriptural reference; and though the prayer presents a reaffirmation of his faith in the Word[232], it also reiterates the nature of the problem to which he had addressed in the preceding treatise. Here Augustine pleads:

> Directing my course to this rule of *faith*, insofar as I could, and insofar as You made it possible for me, I *sought* You, and desired to see with my *understanding* that which I believed, and I have argued and labored much…Before You are my knowledge and my ignorance: where You have opened to me, receive me when I enter; where You have closed, open to me when I knock. May I *remember* You, *understand* You, and *love* You. Increase these gifts in me, until You have reformed me completely.[233]

For Augustine, though the faith was both integral and necessary in the soul's (*animus*)[234] ascent back to God, this progression was perhaps more significantly an intellectual problem. It is the intent of this essay to explore Augustine's notion of the intellectual understanding of God with

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[231] In relation to the large majority of Augustine's works, conventional scholarship views *De Trinitate* as his metaphysical masterpiece. This view is not without foundation, especially in terms of the broad philosophical categories within which historians and philosophers typically engage and interpret works of intellectual history. To be sure, the ontological concerns on which *De Trinitate* is focused together with its subtending epistemological claims make it a profoundly speculative piece; and this is to say nothing of the cosmological assumptions evident throughout, which are decidedly Neoplatonic. The speculative nature of *De Trinitate* and *Confessions*, especially insofar at they emerged during what I term Augustine's "speculative period" is an interesting theme that this essay will address.

[232] Word, or *logos*, in the Augustinan context, is taken to mean, The "Word of God", which means the absolute and eternal wisdom of God as compared to "Word made Flesh", or Jesus Christ as Mediator through which humans may come to possess the treasures of wisdom. It is these treasures that are tantamount to ultimate happiness, and to which all rational souls aspire.

[233] *De Trinitate* XIV:xxviii,51, henceforth *On the Trinity*, in Augustine, *On the Trinity*, edited by Gareth B. Matthews and translated by Steven MacKenna (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), emphases mine.

[234] Augustine placed distinction between *anima*, the soul that invigorates and provides life to all living creatures, and *animus*, which he understands as the rational soul unique to man as an earthly creature. *Mens*, or mind, is a specific property of those endowed with a*nimus*.

an eye for its importance to the problem of self conception. As others have noted, Augustine predicated knowledge of the divine on a detailed and rigorous exploration of the depths of the internal (*interum aeternum*) through which the soul having gleaned understanding proceeded upward into the Godhead.[235] This assessment is fundamentally correct; however, by focusing on Augustine's notion of the inner man (*interiore homine*) as the crucial factor in the ascent to God—from which we shall argue a conception of self is derived—it neglects the cosmological structure on which Augustine grounded his intellectual approach and from which his cultivation of self derived meaning.[236]

In a post-Cartesian world it is often the inclination to place a perhaps undue emphasis on this "inward turn", which, alas, diminishes the scope of the problem Augustine sought to address as well as the reality it presupposed. As I will argue, Augustine's motto in the *De Trinitate, "fides quaerens intellectum"*, "faith in search of understanding", fundamentally denotes an inward move, but was considerably more elaborate. As Augustine understood, the divine, mediating act of faith occasions and makes possible the striving for understanding, which for him was both a process and an end. On the one hand, viewed as an end, understanding is the ultimate fulfillment of faith when at last the soul finds that for which it sought and is fully realized and subsumed within the Godhead. Understanding at this level is entirely incomprehensible until the moment of this reunification, and I shall henceforth refer to it as ultimate understanding.

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[235] See especially, Georg Misch, *A History of Autobiography in Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 1950), especially Part II pp. 625-667 *passim*, and specifically, p. 642; Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Harvard: 1989), pp. 127-142; and Timothy Reiss, *Mirages of the Self: Patterns of Personhood in Ancient and Early Modern Europe* (Stanford: 2003).

[236] The role of the Platonists in the development of Augustine's thought cannot be underestimated. Incidentally, Karl Weintraub, who often viewed the history autobiography alongside the standard of what he believed to be the ideal form of the genre, e.g. Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, was exceedingly correct to always emphasize the cultural circumstances that informed these "autobiographies". Here, a part of the intellectual dimension of late-antique culture, manifested in Neoplatonism, is a case and point. See, Karl J. Weintraub, *The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography* (Chicago: 1978), especially, 18-48.

On the other hand, as a process, understanding involves those acts—especially the striving for knowledge (*scientia*) and wisdom (*sapientia*) of things sensible and eternal, respectively—by which the mind comes to view itself as an analogue of the divine, or more succinctly, the image of God (*imago Dei*). It is here the Augustinian self becomes manifest. It becomes so through the employment of a series of triads[237] that explore—through the action of the rational soul (*animus*)—the interrelationship of the world, the mind and God, by which the self becomes meaningful not only to itself, but in direct relation to the entire cosmological structure within which it inheres. This process is thus dependent upon what Plotinus referred to as the "integral omnipresence of the Authentic Existent", whereby the divine unity emanates forth from itself out towards the "Other Order" to what is manifest as an infinite multiplicity, albeit that which is pervaded by the divine unity.[238] Furthermore, each successive triad, moving inwardly, not only builds upon the other, but in the process realizes itself more fully; so, in knowing the world outside of itself, the mind comes to more thoroughly understand itself, which, in turn, and the through the intercession of faith[239] ultimately understands itself in relation to the entire cosmological structure, which was created in the divine image (*imago Dei*), and renewed in the mind at the conversion moment. Understanding, in this sense, is thus a definitive quality of the process of Becoming for it "still seeks Him whom it has found" and will continue to do so

[237] I shall address these mental triads directly below, but for the purposes of clarity, I state them now. The first mental triad consists of mind (*mens*), knowledge (*scientia*) and love (*amor*); the second, memory (*memoria*), understanding (*intellectum*) and love (*amor*); the third and highest, which is informed by the striving for wisdom (*sapientia*), which is to say God and things eternal, consists of memory of God (*memoria Dei*), understanding of God (*intellectum Dei*) and love in God (*amor Deum*).

[238] See, Plotinus, *Ennead VI*. v.1-3, trans., MacKenna edition, (New York: Larson: 1992).

[239] Grace (*gratia*) is also of crucial importance here, but we shall not address that notion in this essay. For one, it goes beyond the problem of intellectual knowledge of God of which we are here concerned, and second, Augustine engaged the problem of grace directly and subsequently to the writing of the *Confessions* and the *De Trinitate*. However, the dependence of the intellectual knowledge of God upon grace is here understood as crucial.

throughout its striving towards the direct, and ultimate understanding of God, as guaranteed by faith.[240]

The eminently speculative moment of the ultimate understanding, whereby faith is replaced by the complete vision of God and within which the self is subsumed, is not only beyond the scope of this essay, but quite beyond Augustine's *De Trinitate*, for as Plotinus maintained before him, "to know without image is to be".[241] Rather, it is the problem of the embodied soul within the process of Becoming—engaging with and in things both sensible and eternal—with which the *Confessions* and the *De Trinitate* are predominantly concerned. As intimated above, the idea of understanding expressed in Augustine's motto "*fides quarerens intellectum*" denotes an on-going process in which the mind shall "seek his face evermore", insofar as an individual is firm in his knowledge "that he must not cease as long as he is making progress in the search itself of incomprehensible things, and is becoming better and better in the search itself of so great a good, which is sought in order to be found, and is found in order to be sought".[242] The process is conditioned be the renewal of the image of God (*imago Dei*), which resides there as a reminder that it is both "capable of Him"[243] and "can be a partaker of Him"[244]; so in this process, the mind comes to remember (*memoria*), understand (*intellectum*) and love (*amor*) itself, it also comes to remember, understand and love Him by whom it was made.[245] It is through the operation of Augustine's second and third mental triads that the process of understanding is possible and by which the mind becomes wise. Furthermore, wisdom

[240] *De Trinitate*, henceforth, *On the Trinity*, XV:.ii,2 in Augustine, *On the Trinity*, edited by Gareth B. Matthews and translated by Steven MacKenna (Cambridge: 2002).
[241] *Ennead VI*: v, 7. (MacKenna, ed.).
[242] *On the Trinity*, XV: ii,.2
[243] Ibid., XIV:viii,11 (Matthews, ed.).
[244] Ibid.
[245] Ibid., XIV:xii.15 (Matthews, ed.).

(*sapientia*), which Augustine claims derives from knowledge and understanding, is a gift from God mediated through Christ.

The mind's cultivation of wisdom, which Augustine understood as the contemplation of eternal things, allows its participation in God Himself. In books 9-14 of the *De Trinitate*, Augustine went to considerable pains to work out the process by which the mind participates in God, via wisdom, which meant the seeking of eternal things that come to be understood through things that are created. And though Augustine contended that there could be no wisdom without understanding, I submit that in the process of seeking, wisdom serves both as the impetus for understanding, as well as the fruit of understanding through which the mind becomes better in its efforts towards the greatest good. As with understanding, I perceive a distinction between true or eternal wisdom, which is that of God and the saints; and human wisdom, understood as the higher power of the human mind whereby the contemplation of eternal things is possible. The degree to which a mind is said to be wise or in the possession of understanding is directly linked to the extent it has become and is still "Becoming". It is the seeking of wisdom as much as that of understanding that reconciles the soul back to God; and as processes, the act of understanding and the cultivation of wisdom through the participation in God are integral not only to the full realization of the self in relation to those things which are made, but also its ultimate realization within the divine. The mind, in participating in the divine, via wisdom, by extension participates in the entire cosmic process in which God called creation back to Himself, and to this we shall now turn.

The eternal life with and in God, which the moment of ultimate understanding implies, denotes the ultimate happiness toward which all rational souls (*animi*) aspire. In the concluding chapter of Book 13 of the *De Trinitate*, Augustine reflected on the just man's desire for

happiness and asserted that a life could never be truly happy unless it was eternal.[246] Similarly, as Plotinus had worked out roughly a century and a half before, the notion of the good is intimately linked to the principle of unity, e.g., the Authentic Existent, which inheres in the most essential way within all men and to which all aim to return. Furthermore, the notion of the good, as an essential quality of the Authentic Existent, resides in all and constitutes the aim to which they direct themselves.[247] Augustine, however, asserted that the condition on which a rational soul could achieve ultimate happiness was met not only by the ability to "will well, but to be able to do what one wills".[248] Thus, as Augustine understood, the purified heart "came about through a striving of the faith, which all do not will, for the happiness which no one cannot, but will".[249]

Sidestepping the specific and important issue of the will, it is apparent that the conversion experience described in Book 8 of the *Confessions* served to set up the deeper problem that Augustine addressed with some satisfaction in the concluding four books of that work, but later worked out more distinctly in the *De Trinitate*. The act of turning away from the impairing and disfiguring effects of the world begins the process whereby the will becomes "good" and directs itself towards ultimate happiness. The intellectual implications of this "turn" become the primary thrust not only in the *De Trinitate,* but in the *Confessions* as well.

Though roughly thirty-three years separated the Milan conversion experience and the completion of *De Trinitate*,[250] which included the writing of the *Confessions*, a remarkable unity persists with respect to the nature of the problems Augustine engaged. Indeed, I have chosen to treat this as his "conversion period" insofar as the *Confessions* and the *De Trinitate* may be read

[246] *On the Trinity*, XIII: viii, 11, (Matthews, ed.).
[247] *Ennead VI* : v,1 (MacKenna, ed.).
[248] *On the Trinity*, XIII:xiii, 17 (Matthews, ed.).
[249] Ibid., XIII:xx, 25, (Matthews,ed.).
[250] As is well known, the conversion in Milan likely occurred in 386. Augustine for the most part wrote nothing in the decade after his conversion experience, but became extraordinarily prolific afterwards. He undertook *Confessions* around 397 and completed it in 401. *De Trinitate* followed some eighteen years later in 419.

in tandem as twin efforts toward the same goal, which, for Augustine, meant working out the intellectual implications of the conversion experience. I suggest that the moment of conversion, aside from the obvious turning away from the sensible world and its disfiguring influence on the soul, was significant for three other reasons, which similar to Augustine's other triads are mutually dependent and reinforcing. These include: the renewal of the image of God (*imago Dei*), the reception of faith (*fides*) and the granting, by God, of grace (*gratia*). In the first instance, conversion marked the beginning of the process by which the image of God (*imago Dei*) was renewed within the mind, or to assert it differently, a renewal of the individual in the knowledge of God. As Augustine was quick to stress, the moment of conversion, unlike what the effect Baptism has for the complete remission of sin, marked only the initial stage by which an individual was to progress from the temporal to the eternal and the visible to the intelligible, etc. upward into the full and pure likeness of God.[251] The *De Trinitate* and the *Confessions*, especially the last four books, attest to the significance that the intellectual process of renewal held for Augustine; however, intellection alone was not sufficient to transform hope into the reality of oneness with the divine—and eternal happiness.

Indeed, mingling in the Truth through the contemplation of eternal things facilitated the return to God, but the gradualism of this process—let alone its culmination—required divine mediation. This mediation came through faith, which was planted in the convert by Christ, at the conversion moment, and enabled him to seek the happiness, which is incomprehensible. [252] Since the revolutionary nature of the conversion experience was not definitive, it served, in the most perfunctory sense, as the grounding point of the conversion process—a process, which could not

[251] *On the Trinity*, XIV:xvii, 23 (Mathews, ed.).

[252] Happiness for Augustine, not unlike Aquinas after him, is equated with a state of eternal life. Of course, as we shall see, that though Augustine is eminently concerned with a life eternal, he adds to it the qualities of vision and contemplation—two aspects which make this notion distinctly Augustinian.

be fully realized until the convert unified with the Godhead. It is at this point that Augustinian motto, "*fides quarerens intellectum,*" faith in search of understanding, assumes significance. As he recounted in Book VIII of the *Confessions*, "You converted me to yourself, so that I no longer desired a wife or placed any hope in this world but stood firmly upon the rule of faith."[253] The process of searching for, or rather the striving towards, eternal happiness has thus begun—a point of which he reminded his readers in the concluding prayer of the *De Trinitate*. Moreover, the conversion moment in Book VIII, though emotionally powerful and climatic, sets the stage for the subsequent five books of the *Confessions* in which Augustine, supported by faith, could begin the process of understanding.

The image born in the mind at the moment of conversion appears "not yet in vision, but in faith; not yet in reality but in hope."[254] The end of Book VIII, especially the moment in which he receives the faith, serves to unify the outer Augustine of the first eight books with the inner Augustine of the remaining five. Moreover, as he worked out in Book 13 of the *De Trinitate*, Christ is for us both knowledge and wisdom because it is through Him that faith is instilled in us regarding things temporal inasmuch as it is through Him that the truth of eternal things becomes manifest.[255] The faith, which is internal to us becomes a point of nexus between the temporal and eternal realms, and is necessary insofar as we may "obtain happiness in all the good things of human nature, that is of the soul and the body."[256]

The Ostia vision recounted in Book IX is not only a case and point regarding the mediating power of faith to which the striving toward happiness was made possible, but is also reflective of Augustine's position on the nature of wisdom and its role in the process of

[253] *Confessions*, VIII, 12. (Pinecoffin, ed.).
[254] On the Trinity, XIV:xviii, 24, (Matthews, ed.).
[255] Ibid., XIII:ixx, 24.
[256] Ibid., XIII: xx, 25.

understanding.[257] Additionally, it a transitional book in terms of the structure of the *Confessions*; but it also reflects Augustine's transition from the outer man (*exteriore homine)* to the inner man (*interiore homine*). The spectacular and thoughtful vision, which accompanied the conversation between Augustine and his mother, led him through the splendor of God's creation and ranged from the basest materiality to the wonder of the eternal Wisdom; and, thus enabled him to believe that "no bodily pleasure, however great…was worthy of comparison, or even mention, beside the happiness of the life of the saints".[258] The life to which he referred was the life of Wisdom, and though he had experienced it for one fleeting moment, it henceforth remained for him a source of intense longing. The vision together with the instilling of faith that characterized the conversion moment served to solidify his life-long striving for understanding, which at least at the journey's outset, was deeply influenced and encouraged by the life of Wisdom.

The conversion moment, which included the implanting of faith and the renewal in the mind of the image of God (*imago Dei*), contained also God's granting of grace, from which the proceeding two are derived. Indeed, grace is necessary for any individual who is renewed in the knowledge of God, for it is through grace alone that renewal is possible. It permeates the entire process by which an individual "transfers his love from temporal to eternal things, from visible to intelligible things, from carnal to spiritual things and to lessen the desire for the former, and to bind himself to the latter."[259] The bestowal of grace thus marks the moment where the human

[257] As I have suggested above, the notion of wisdom is problematic in both the *Confessions* and the *De Trinitate*. If we understand, as Augustine did, Christ to be both our knowledge and our wisdom; the Mediator through which the faith concerning temporal things in us is planted; and the manifestation of the truth concerning things eternal, wisdom is thus dependent upon Him as a gift from God. Augustine further asserted that there can be no wisdom without understanding, yet, this pertains only to true wisdom. When viewed within the realm of Becoming this something very different; and I thus argue that the notions of wisdom and understanding are mutually dependent and reinforcing in the seeking of the intellectual knowledge of God.

[258] *Confessions*, VIII, 10 (Pinecoffin, ed.).

[259] *On the Trinity*, XIV: xvii, 23 (Mathews, ed.).

will becomes God's will, and may be construed also as submission to the goodness and wisdom of God through which the soul is brought to perfection.

Perfection, oneness with God, and/or the ineffable moment of the divine vision are each intensified notions of ultimate understanding the meanings of which are further captured by the Latin adjective *intentus*, which connotes an act directed or aimed towards a specified goal.[260] Indeed, the counter adjective, *distentus,* as Augustine understood the term, characterized the state of sin, which is taken to mean a falling away from God and the eternal Wisdom. Though Augustine conceived of distinctions between inner and outer, spirit and matter, mind and body, etc.—where in each binary set the former is pure and latter corrupt—these were not hard and fast divisions. Rather, as the influence of the Platonists indicates, especially *Ennead VI,* Tractates five and six, Augustine's conception of inwardness is both complex and dependent upon Neoplatonic principles of unity and number. As Plotinus envisioned in *Ennead VI,* the universe is at once unified and numerically diverse and places the Authentic Existent, as a pure, unified and unchanging Being at its center. The Authentic Existent thus radiates Being from itself, which pervades the lower orders of Being and allows them to participate in it to the extent that they are actively coming into Being. All participants, though appearing diverse, are unified by the omnipresence of the Authentic Existent, which is wholly pervasive, which is to say, the apparent multiplicity is "absorbed by the Absolute."[261]

The image conveyed is a sequence of concentric spheres expanding outwardly and limitlessly where each sphere has its own generating center while remaining coincident with the

[260] Quite literally, *distentus* connotes a distended, swollen or outstretched state. Also, *intentus,* from *intendĕre* meaning to aim or direct.

[261] *Ennead VI:* v, 6, (MacKenna ed.). The idea of a sequence of generating centers is of some interest, especially in regard to the Augustinian conception of mind. See below.

first center, which is to say, the pure, unified Being.[262] This universe is devoid of definitive partitions or intervals and "existed," in various states of Becoming as a continuum orientated towards and away from the Authentic Existent or God. As outlined briefly above, the process of returning back to God, as expressed throughout *De Trinitate* and *Confessions* involves a complex inward movement that serves not only as an integral stage in the movement towards ultimate understanding; but presupposes the Plotinus' vision of the universe from which Augustine's conception of self derived meaning. Indeed, Augustine's entire endeavor to achieve an intellectual knowledge of God was in many ways pursuant to the concluding chapter of the Sixth Tractate in *Ennead VI* where Plotinus articulated his vision of the omnipresent power that is the Authentic Existent. He conceived of it as an "ever-fresh infinity, a principle unfailing…brimming over with its own vitality." It is only the denial of it, even though it is all-pervasive, that occasions the falling to a lesser order of Being. The contrary, however, is to turn once again to its enveloping embrace:

> In that you have entered into the All, no longer content with the part; you cease to think of yourself as under limit but, laying all such determination aside, you become an All. No doubt you were always that, but there has been an addition and by that addition you are diminished; for the addition was not from the realm of Being—you can add nothing to Being—but from non-Being. It is not by some admixture of non-Being that one becomes entire, but by putting non-Being away. By the lessening of the alien in you, you increase. Cast it aside and there is the All within you; engaged in the alien you will not find the All. Not that it has to come and so be present to you; it is you that have turned from it. And turn though you may, you have not severed yourself; it is there; you are not in some far region: still there before it, you have faced to its contrary.[263]

As is well known, Augustine, not unlike Plotinus, understood the cosmos in terms of plentitude and privation; yet the marked difference for Augustine's thought is the function of the will and the related problem of evil. Even still, evil is merely privation and not an active force. In terms of knowledge, which Augustine contended is a necessary platform in the cultivation of wisdom; it

[262] For a description of this, see *Ennead VI*: v, 4-10, (MacKenna ed.).
[263] *Ennead VI.*

must be sought in reference to and accordance with the image of God (*imago Dei*). What is more, to seek knowledge for the sake of knowledge (*vanas curiositas*)—and without the Mediator who is both knowledge and wisdom—is to fall away (*defectus*) from God and into disfigurement (*deformatio*). As Augustine remarked, [y]ou never depart from us yet it is hard for us to return to you[264]…[c]all us back to yourself...[k]indle your fire in us and carry us away".[265] As God, through Christ, called His creation back to Him, the impediment to return hinged on the incompleteness of the will, which Augustine attributed to the role of habit, which weighs down the mind by conforming it to the world.[266]

As Reiss has observed, the right path to God and the unity that waits at the end depended on Augustine's viewing of the soul (*anima*) as a "mediating prism" between the human and the divine, and as such, it accounts for Augustine's indifferent usage of the term *anima (*which could mean soul, mind, rational soul, etc.), which he believes suggests the inseparability of the embodied soul and its participation in the divine. [267] I disagree with Reiss' view that Augustine was indifferent or sloppy in his usage of the term *anima*. Indeed, Augustine was quite meticulous in differentiating the various qualities of (*anima*), which is common to all living things and refers to an animating principle or a vital spirit. As he moves further inward in his exploration of the intellectual knowledge of God, his terminology becomes more concentrated and exact. In the *De Trinitate,* Augustine was concerned less with anima *per se* than with *animus*—understood as a rational soul—which possesses the capability to engage in rational acts that are both discursive and contemplative. The mind (*mens*), however, is a particular quality of the rational soul, in which resides the image of God (*imago Dei*). The mind thus enjoyed pride of place in

[264] *Confessions*, VIII, 3, (Pinecoffin, ed.).
[265] Ibid., VIII, 4.
[266] *Confessions* VIII, 9 (Pinecoffin); and *On the Trinity*, XIV: xvi, 22, (Matthews, ed.) et *passim.*
[267] Reiss, 256-257.

Augustine's attempt to attain an intellectual knowledge of the divine, and should be understood as the nodal point between God and the surrounding physical world.

My inclination to view the mind more as a nexus between the earthy and the eternal leads me to Reiss's second observation. He is correct to observe the soul (*anima*), in a general sense, as a sort of mediating entity; however, in the *De Trinitate*, Augustine employs the term mediator (*intercessor*) in a strict sense especially insofar as it relates to a divine *act* on the soul's behalf. For example, Christ is the Mediator by which the return to God takes place and without whom the soul falls into nothingness. Mere participation in the divine *via* the mind, or the soul as Reiss understands, is not tantamount to mediation for it is only through the *act* of the divine Mediator that participation is possible. Perhaps what Reiss wants to assert relies on the notion originally articulated by Plotinus that the soul is never severed from the divine unity; and since God had always been present within the soul, what Augustine understood as a renewal of the divine image (*imago Dei*)—made possible by the bestowal of grace—may be read as an *act* of rediscovery rendered by the rational soul in which it becomes reconciled with God and His creation. Be that as it may, the action of the soul, which I understand as participation, depends upon a mediating act of the divine—grace.

Augustine nevertheless insisted that the role of habit as promoted by an incomplete will must be broken, which involved "[s]tripping yourself of the old man with his deeds" [to] "put on the new man, that is being renewed in the knowledge of God, according to the image of him who created him".[268] As we have seen above, the breaking of worldly habits rests primarily on the divinely mediating acts of faith and grace when at last the soul turns back to God. As recounted in Book 10 of the Confessions, Augustine presumably endowed with faith, nevertheless sought understanding. In seeking that "Being who is so far above [his] soul", Augustine resolved that "it

[268] *Colossians* 3: 9-10 in *On the Trinity*, XIV:xvi, 22, (Matthews, ed.).

must be through [his] soul" that he would achieve both knowledge and the ultimate vision of Him.[269] Both Gilson and Taylor view this as *the* defining maneuver in Augustine's ascent to the divine—a path characterized as "leading from the exterior to the interior and from the interior to the divine".[270] Indeed, this is significant, but what does it mean in terms of the implications for Augustine's broader project, especially is it relates to the problem of the embodied soul?

That there is a move from the exterior and ultimately to the divine does not necessarily imply that, once the rational soul resolved to move inward, the act was continuous and final. Indeed, as the *Confessions* makes clear, Augustine struggled constantly not only with earthly habits in themselves, but also with attempts to reconcile the created, physical realm of Becoming with that of eternal Being. This is to stress that a mere movement inward does not dissolve the problem that the created world held for the embodied soul. Augustine understood that any entity created by God is endowed, in varying degrees, with the divine goodness, which is to infer God's omnipresence in His creation. To return to Plotinus, this meant that any lesser-ordered being—as a product of emanation from the Authentic Existent—contained within it the divine unity that it endeavored to realize. Furthermore, we should recall Plotinus' vision of the universe as a sequence of concentric spheres radiating outwardly from the unified center where each emanated sphere has its own generating center, coincident with the unified center, and from which further, lesser-ordered emanations exude. With Plotinus' model in mind, in addition to appreciating its influence on Augustine's mature thought, the problem of the inner man (*interiore homine*) becomes considerably more complex.

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[269] *Confessions*, X: 7, (Pinecoffin, ed.).

[270] Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, (London: Golancz, 1961), 20. Taylor subscribes to this view as well; however, the "inward turn" for him is significant in reference to the historical development that this maneuver held for modern conceptions of self—especially, in his view, the extent to which it anticipates the Cartesian subject. As a shortcoming, both accounts make no effort to reconcile this move with the cosmological structure Augustine presupposed together with its inherent difficulties.

In placing emphasis on the inner man (*interiore homine*) and its orientation back to the divine, Augustine had to reconcile that move not only with the rational soul more generally, but with the created world to which it inclined. His move presupposed Plontinus' vision of a sequence of concentric spheres and radiating centers allowing him to envision the mind as a center unto itself. Having turned away from the disfigurement of the world, the mind directs (*intensio*) itself, by degrees, back towards the true unity of God; but in the effort to realize this ultimate goal, it must first realize itself. Inasmuch as the mind is a generating center (*distensio*), it is also a unified with respect to the physical, created world within which it takes part. In the process of God's recalling creation back to Him, a process within which the mind actively subsumes itself; recalls as well God's creation, which is to say it recollects itself.

Recollection, or memory (*memoria*), is obviously of significant concern in both the *Confessions* and the *De Trintate* and represents the substantive member of the second mental triad, along with the other members, understanding (*intellectum*) and the will (*voluntas*), or love (*amor*), which constitute its acts. This triad, understood in relation to the process of return, is derivative from the first triad, which is comprised of mind (*mens*), knowledge (*scientia*) and love (*amor*). Together, the first triad represents the world in relation to the mind whereby the mind senses objects from without, creates an image of them, and by an act of will, or love, unites them. The second triad, which for Augustine is more pure than the first, emerges in the mind itself whereby a bodily image is recalled from the memory, impressed by thought or understanding, and united by the attention of the will which brings them together. Yet, there is a third mental trinity, which Augustine understands to be in the image of God (*imago Dei*) insofar as it properly belongs to the realm of the inner man (*interiore homine*). Moreover, because it is

endowed with grace, which renews the image of God (*imago Dei*) within it, it also has faith which enables it to act in accordance with that image.

Having briefly described Augustine's mental triads we can now address the question of memory. Though he had resolved early in Book 10 of the *Confessions* to find God inwardly through the soul—and by extension the mind—and the "force which we call the memory", he realized that he must pass beyond it.[271] The memory that he must pass beyond is that of the outer man (*exteriore homine*) for as Augustine pointed out, it is beleaguered with images of external things, many of which the mind has forgotten. Moreover, the memory of the outer man is linked almost inextricably with the external world for the knowledge it contains is derived not only from sensible things, but is placed there by the understanding that is directed outwardly to seek knowledge for the sake of knowledge (*vanas curiositas*). Neither the memory of the outer man (*exteriore homine*) nor the knowledge contained within it could serve to achieve as a basis for the intellectual knowledge of God.

However, the knowledge derived from the memory of the inner man (*interiore homine*), as articulated in the second half of the *De Trinitate*, is something very different. The knowledge contained within his memory is the product of a mind, indeed an understanding, which has submitted to the Wisdom of God.[272] Memory is no longer understood in terms of the specific contents it presently contains or has forgotten, which is to say it is no longer solely dependent upon worldly knowledge and, by extension, vain curiosity (*vanas curiositas*). Rather, the memory of the inner man (*interiore homine*) is linked to wisdom, understanding and the turning away from disfigurement. Moreover, the act of recollection is neither dependent upon worldly

[271] *Confessions*, X: xvii, (Pinecoffin ed.).
[272] *On the Trinity*, XIV: xv, 16. (Matthews ed.).

knowledge nor the infinitude of facts that constituted it. Rather, it is the simple reminder that the soul should turn to the Lord.[273]

As Reiss has noted, memory of the inner man is sacred memory, and has further observed that Books 12 and 13 of the *Confessions* represent scriptural memory, which was necessary to ground "Augustine's telling of the human passage from the material back to the divine".[274] The memory of the inner man, I argue, is sacred insofar as it is reminded, through the act of recollection, that it is contained within the divine memory for it is "in Him that we live and move and have our being."[275] Given Augustine's understanding of this, there was no need to "ground" the last four books of the *Confessions* in this regard. As the mind of the inner man comes to remember itself, understand itself, and love itself, it continues to renew the image of God (*imago Dei*) that reposes within; and from which it comes to remember, understand and love the divine. It is therefore through the act of recollection that the image of God is more thoroughly renewed in thought and from which a greater love for Him not only comes forth to unite the two; but further directs the triad more forcibly towards eternal Wisdom. In Book 14 of the *De Trinitate* Augustine contended that:

> [I]n the hidden recesses of the mind there is a certain knowledge of certain things, and that when we think of them, they then proceed, as it were, to the center and are placed, so to speak, more clearly in the sight of the mind, for then the mind itself discovers that it remembers, understands, and loves those things of which it was not even thinking when it was thinking of something else.[276]

The memory is essential—in the technical sense of the term—for the process of understanding insofar as it is through the memory that the acts of understanding and love are possible. As the first nine Books of the *Confessions* testify, the act of recollecting his years as an adolescent and a

[273] *Acts*, 17: 27-28 in *On the Trinity*, XIV: xv, 21, (Matthews, ed.).
[274] Reiss, 244.
[275] *On the Trinity*, XIV: xii, 15, (Matthews, ed.).
[276] Ibid., XIV: vii, 9.

young adult engendered understanding and love of a God that worked through him without his knowledge. His recollections on the desires for worldly knowledge or reputation as a rhetorician, as well as the circumstances in which these desires placed him, renewed in him a love for the eternal.

What is more, in a process reminiscent of Plotinus, the act of recollection calls back—to the mind's center—knowledge of an entity acting in time, but with an understanding of the invisible things that acted through it. The mind in recollecting itself, realizes itself in the image of the divine. This is to say that the act of recollection not only serves to reveal to the mind the presence of eternal things in those things that are made; but is instrumental in solidifying an understanding of itself in relation to the divine image, which is both integral and necessary in the ascent to the ineffable and incomprehensible moment which characterizes the divine fullness and the achievement of eternal being. Until that ineffable moment the soul is in a state of Becoming and therefore seeks the divine wisdom and understanding gradually where both are mutually reinforcing not only to themselves but to the entire process of seeking.

The process of seeking the divine, characterized by the familiar Augustinian motto "*fides quarerens intellectum*" presupposed an elaborate cosmological framework whereby the intellectual soul (*animus*) is within the divine unity as well as the divine unity is within the soul. The seeking of the divine is dependent upon the bestowal of grace and the instillation of faith at which point the soul turns back toward God and the divine image is renewed within the mind. Moreover the seeking of the divine occasioned by the moment of grace not only allows for the soul to turn away from disfigurement, but commences its state of Becoming. Through the seeking of understanding the mind gradually finds wisdom, which in turn serves as the impetus for further understanding and so on. It is through the process as a whole that the mind reconciles

itself, through the act of recollection, not only with the created, physical world; but also with itself where it gains understanding of itself in relation to the divine image to which it aspires. It is here that the Augustinian self becomes manifest for it is through the intensified act of recollection that its gains a true understanding of itself, though that understanding is never directed inwardly towards itself to the extent that self-conception becomes any sort of end. Rather, its understanding always derives its meaning in relation to the divine and the cosmos that emanates from it. To put the notion of the Augustinian self into proper perspective with respect to itself, and to the cosmological whole of which it formed part, perhaps one need only turn to Plotinus's utterance in the Seventh Tractate of *Ennead VI*:

> When we look outside of that on which we depend we ignore our unity; looking outward we see many faces; look inward and all is one head. If a man could be turned about—by his own motion or by the happy pull of Athene—he would see at once God and himself and the All.[277]

Re-conceiving the "Path to Truth"

The overarching point to be made in what may be seen as an "Augustinian aside" is to reveal certain of the distinctive and influential aspects of the tradition that are forcefully revealed, and at the same time redefined in Cartesian thought in view of a particular openness to the metaphoric possibility of the modern cultural epoch. This is not to suggest that there was any sort of exact coincidence between the *Cogito* and the Augustinian *mens*; but rather as Stephen Menn has recently noted, philosophical projects in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were entwined with theological concerns to the extent that any number of "Augustinianisms" found appeal.[278] Though I don't think this can be disputed, there seems to be more of an underlying significance here, which speaks to the fact of how thoroughly Augustinian we are as a culture;

[277] Plotinus, *Ennead VI*: v.5 (MacKenna, ed.).
[278] Menn, *Descartes and Augustine.*

and that the tradition we have inherited in marked, profound and enduring ways is a dynamic itself—constantly transforming, modifying, and in some cases, reborn anew. Viewed in relief, the *Cogito* is something of a monadic totality, and thus possesses definite, singular and unique characteristics; yet at the same time, bears within itself a striking reflection of the cultural totality of which it forms part. This is to say that the familiar aspects of the tradition—Augustinian or other—are incorporated into Cartesian thought in a powerful way that at once forces redefinition of the *interiore homine*.

Such a redefinition does merely yield to the traditional notion of the *Imago Dei* in favor of that of the *indiscretae opus imaginis* as glorified in Pico's *Oratio*; and there lay part of the problematic. Recalling the solipsism of the Second Meditation, Descartes maintains that the *Ego—existo* is necessarily true (and by implication both fully real and fully actualized) only when it is brought forth or conceived by the mind [*quoties a me profertur, vel mente concipitur*].[279] With this moment of hyper-presentism not only is the faculty of memory effectively negated in its relation to truth, but also the very conditions of the *res cogitans* (i.e., thought thinking itself) suggest that it is fully determinate; and only then within the relatively narrow ambit of the order of knowing (*ordo cognoscend*). By contrast, the order of being (*ordo essendi*), as understood here in a fuller medieval and Renaissance sense, along with all the possibilities of magnitude and gradation contained within it, are now subsumed thoroughly within the representational frame of an objective reality grounded and determined by the *res cogitans.* Yet beyond this, the expressive potential of a self, so as to be truly and fully human is similarly delimited. As Louis Marin has noted, understanding and truth are achieved in the modern world only to the extent that the *Cogito* can feign its reality;[280] and thus it must deny all

[279] AT VII:25.
[280] Louis Marin, *On Representation*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 79.

affections of consciousness, save only a rationalized representation grounded in simple intuition, viz. a clear idea. Beyond intuition, the completion of knowledge, as Descartes tells us in Rule Seven of the *Regulae*, depends upon "a certain movement of thought," which will lead ultimately to a more certain conclusion of the truth.[281] This is also to imply a leading towards a more perfect representation, which again is attained by feigning a reality. And while the act of feigning (viz. the *Cogito*) functions in accordance with an act of *inventus,* it nevertheless delimits possibilities, if also denying reciprocity with its world. Thus the reality is made real by simplification as well as through the effective denial of the manifold range of possibility given it through the metaphor.

And yet, Descartes could still formulate this movement in terms of the traditional path of truth (*iter veritatis*). Insofar as the *Meditations* are cast firmly within the medieval meditative tradition, they combine within them a powerful array of components from the traditional conception of a meditative ascent; but this ascent is conceived less in terms of a *gradus attingere*, and one more in favor of the order of knowing (*ordo cognoscendi*) as articulated in the *Meditations*—i.e., knowledge of self, to God, to world. As we saw above, Augustine is perhaps the most notable in articulating the western, Christian model of the *interiore homine;* and especially in terms of the soul's ascent into the divine oneness. And of course, it is by Augustine that later writers in the western contemplative tradition were decidedly influenced; yet there were certainly precedents from antiquity that antedated Augustine, or who were more influential in the East.[282] However, the meditative project that Descartes undertook in the *Meditations*, and which

[281] AT X: 387, References to the *Regulae* derive from Adam and Tannery, *Oeuvres de Descartes*, X (Paris: Vrin, 1908), "*continuo quodam cogitationis motu*."

[282] Not only is this a question of ascent to the Divine of which these writers were all concerned, it suggests that there were an array of meditative models in the world of late antiquity in which to find in the context of the Divine Love, the spiritual ascent back to oneness with God. Among these figures, we might include. As for Augustinian precedents, Plotinus (by which Augustine was decidedly influenced) is perhaps the most famous, at least in terms of

he informs us of in the Second *Discours* is markedly Augustinian, and seemingly begins quite modestly as an attempt, as he says, "to reform my own thoughts." Yet, as soon as he admitted the purpose of his project, he broke ranks with the Augustinian tradition in a remarkable way with his admission that such a reform was necessary in order to build "on a foundation that is totally my own."[283] It is only later, and through the methodologically mediated process of reasoning (*cogitans*) that Descartes proceeds from the established foundations of the *Cogito*—together with its criterion for truth—to engage in the search for "other truths" (*d'autres vérités*). The establishment of consciousness, and specifically a consciousness defined as "thought thinking itself" (i.e., the *Cogito*) served for Descartes as the unshakable ground (*fundamentum inconcussum*) on which the methodological criterion in the search for truth is based.

The concern in the *Discourse*, and certainly in the first half of that work, hinges in the first instance on a notion of *reformatio,* or "reformation to the better" whereby reform is determined by a type of "returning" to an original or more pure form.[284] In the context of the medieval university, for example, this implied a discipline (of faculty, degree, institutional organization, etc.) as intended to actualize (in an Aristotelian sense) the macrocosm of the divine as it dwelt within it, and which furthermore always served as both the impetus and the measure for thought and action. For the medieval world, this was undoubtedly and unquestionably a corporate enterprise. However, with Descartes and the reformation he undertook vis-à-vis his thoughts, the macrocosm (though implied) was deemphasized in favor of the microcosm as a new source of light radiating to all things (and beings) so as to illuminate them within an ever-

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the development of the medieval tradition down an Augustinian path; but also, the famous example, Marcus Aurelius.

[283] AT VI:14. "*Jamais mon dessein ne s'est étendu plus avant que de tâcher à reformer mes propres pensées, et de bâtir dans un fonds qui est tout à moi*."

[284] For a brief overview of the *reformatio in melius* as it pertains to the medieval university, see Walter Rüegg, "Themes" in *A History of the University in Europe: Volume 1, Universities in the Middle Ages*, ed. Walter Rüegg (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 30-34.

enlarging ambit of truth. The dynamics of this shift are noteworthy. The Cartesian "reformation," in contradistinction to the older notion, employs an idea of obedience not to a transcendent authority by which it is measured and actuated; but rather in strict adherence to something else—namely the method.

The crucial years of the early 1630s in following the abortive project of the *Regulae* of 1628 bring into partial focus the dynamics of a shifting foundation of truth from which the *Cogito* would emerge triumphant. By the late 1620s Descartes' thought had become increasingly characterized by an attempt to achieve new certainties of knowledge and to validate them within the traditional structure of truth. As Descartes states straightforwardly in the *Regulae*, his purpose was to establish on an edifice of geometrical certainty the rules for the direction of the natural intelligence (*regulae ad directionem ingenii*). In accordance with this, he further maintained that the establishment of rules is necessary for the purpose of bringing forth solid and true judgments regarding all things that occur to it (*ad solida et vera, de iis omnibus quae occurrunt proferenda judicia).*[285] In the 1628 text, the question of knowledge, though not yet fully subjected to the criterion for epistemological certainty as mandated by the *Discours* and the *Meditationes*, nevertheless reveals Descartes' orientation to a decisively theoretical stance with respect to the realm of moral action. For with the project of the *Discourse*, Descartes established ethical knowledge (as Aristotle understood as *phronesis*) as a domain of the theoretical; and to the extent that only knowledge derived initially from simple intuition can be true knowledge, the realm of possibility for moral action belongs solely to the thoughts of the rational soul, or mind (*quae totae in animi cogitatione consistent*).[286]

[285] *Regulae*, AT.X.359, all citations refer to the original texts as published in the *Oeuvres de Descartes*, 13 volumes, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin et Ke Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1908).
[286] *Regulae*, AT.X.359.

Reform as a Question of Method

The method insofar as it is entwined with the program of epistemic certitude as deployed by the *res cogitans* becomes almost interchangeable with the Cartesian notion of self. The Cartesian mind, as directed by the method, i.e., its criterion of truth, operates within a relatively narrow and constricted conception of a *mathesis*, which is to say it operates on the basis of a strictly ordered structure of principles and concepts.[287] By operating under and accordance with principles and concepts, the *mathesis* for all intents and purposes becomes merely an ordering structure.[288] For Descartes to conduct his thoughts, as he says, in an "orderly way" he must establish first principles, which is to say, to place them on a firm, metaphysical foundation. That principle, of course, is stated first in the proposition, "I am, I exist is necessarily true every time I express it or conceive of it in my mind"; and in the concluding proposition, "I judged that I could take it to be a general rule that the things we conceive very clearly and distinctly are all true." The *ego*, as *res cogitans*, established as both the unshakeable (*inconcussum*) and the absolute ground (*absolutum fundamentum*) becomes the foundational first principle and the basis on which the truth of all subsequent propositions (including the existence of God, the world and that which exists within it) must be measured.[289] Thus, the substance-as-subjectivity (or what Heidegger would call *"Ichheit"* or *"I-ness"*), and by extension the various attributions of the *res cogitans*, serve as the *mathesis* itself, which is to say the ordering structure by which the *ego* and the world it attempts to understand derive their meaning.

[287] Martin Heidegger, "Modern Science, Metaphysics, and Mathematics" in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), especially, 273-278.

[288] Descartes works this out initially in the *Regulae* of 1628.

[289] That these propositions must be measured vis-à-vis the *res cogitans* brings in the question of hyperbolic doubt by which Descartes is commonly known. Doubting is essentially, questioning and the submitting of data, etc., to the rigors of a pre-established criterion. Present forms of scientific methodology and the hypotheses under which they operate are at their core modes of doubting.

The Cartesian sense of the *mathesis* (and later the *mathesis universalis*) reduces itself primarily to a sense of ordering, and this is perhaps most evident in the manner by which the *mathesis* is projected into the world beyond the *ego*. However, in the sense that subjectivity is understood as present to itself (*ramaneat*), i.e., to be understood as a particular manifestation of *energeia,* and thus fully actualized in the Aristotelian sense, it sees itself as the source of illumination of all truths and the ground from which all concepts and principles derive. This is to say that through the act of cogitation, and in accordance with the strictures placed upon that act by the method, Descartes was confident he could discover and thus, re-appropriate to himself sound and certain principles, and thus make knowledge in the sciences possible. For it is within the consciousness that the truth dwells…

In the *Second Discourse*, having established that the rule of clarity and distinctness was the chief methodological criterion in the ascent to truth, Descartes turned to the question of that which would serve as his instrument in the achievement of truth and certainty. He deduced that in terms of knowledge deduced from a geometric-style of reasoning, "there can be nothing so distant that one does not reach it eventually, or so hidden that one does not discover it."[290] It was, of course, the model of mathematics *per se,* and specifically geometry that would serve as the basis for intuitive clarity in his seeking of truth in the sciences. Yet, by the *Third Meditation* Descartes has fully turned to the question of ideas and how they are formed in his mind. He distinguishes here the notion of a formal and an objective reality. By formal reality it is understood that there exists, by degrees, an extra-mental reality insofar as God is *thought* to exist or that the planets or bodies exist in some form outside of our conception of them. By an

[290] (AT VI:19, "*et qu'on garde toujours l'ordre qu'il faut pour les déduire les unes des autres, il n'y en peut avoir de si éloignées auxquelles enfin on ne parvienne, ni de si cachées qu'on ne découvre*."

objective reality it is understood that anything, whether it have a corresponding formal reality or not, is simply an object of the mind, i.e, an idea.

It is here that the Cartesian Circle emerges. As a number of scholars have noted, the significant problem of the Cartesian Circle hinges on Descartes' understanding that though he does not doubt the necessity that there be a formal reality in his ideas, the ultimate formal reality (God) that legitimates all lower ordered ideas is still an object of the mind, i.e. an idea.[291] Moreover, in accordance with the *Cogito* formulation, together with its criterion for truth, the only "true" knowledge is that which emanates from an objective reality, i.e., knowledge of an idea or subjectivity in general. Thus the problem of representation further complicates the larger problem of subjectivity and by extension the Cartesian self and modernity as well.

That epistemic certitude has become the definitive condition for what is meaningful to the *Cogito* denies it the possibility of selfhood. On the basis of the objective reality the *Cogito* creates, which it does through the adjudication of its representations, it subsequently projects this reality into the world as a *mathesis universalis*.[292] The implication of this move for selfhood is dire insofar as the objective reality the *Cogito* projects into the world, in turn, forces the *Cogito* to define itself in terms of objectivity and the epistemic certitude that guarantees it. In other words, the *Cogito* takes itself out of the world, and thus very problematically, conceives of itself in terms of itself. By what is effectively an act of *asceticism*, the *Cogito,* as the newly formulated *interiore homine* denies the world. In other words, the Cartesian self effectively negates the idea

[291] See, for example, Daniel Garber, *Descartes' Metaphysical Physics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) and James Wilkinson Miller, "Descartes's Conceptualism" in *The Review of Metaphysics*, 4 (1950): 239-246.

[292] On the problem of objectivity, see, for example, Martin Heidegger, "Kant's Thesis about Being" in *Pathmarks* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and Jean-Luc Marion, "The Ego and Dasein" in *Heidegger Reexamined: Language and the Critique of Subjectivity* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

of a self in denying reciprocity between self and world, which is in complete opposition to the cosmological totality presupposed by Augustine.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Dream and the Opening of the Baroque World

Preliminary Concerns

In the last chapter, I posed the question of the Cartesian conception of self, which given its lack of reciprocity with its world, is not a self, but rather a subjectivity standing in opposition to its world so as to become its master and possessor. This chapter is in many ways a justification of the previous. In this chapter it is necessary to pose the question of the dream as the condition of possibility for the *Cogito*'s emergence, and what it perceived to be necessary in taking the particular stance it did toward the world in deploying the new conditions of truth. To that extent, the Cartesian dream forms part of a larger cultural concern towards dream phenomena during the early modern period. Within this period, people found it increasingly difficult to reconcile dream phenomena with the legitimizing demands of the inner experience. In view of the draw inward, and for a variety of reasons, the older cosmological truths no longer held, and therefore had begun to lack meaning and significance. The dream phenomenon is one expression of this larger dynamic, and in some forms—as with the *theatrum mundi*—the notion of the dream brought to the fore questions of a reality brought into doubt while at the same presenting a creative response by which to work through those concerns and difficulties. In other ways, the dream linked more closely to the meditative tradition where the dynamic of the inner experience was more clearly accentuated. Descartes' dream is to be found here. In this regard, the dream was central to the traditional cosmological order in occupying an ontological middle ground between the realms of the divine and the mundane.

Though by the early decades of the seventeenth century the ontological status of the dream was in question, it was certainly not meaningless. As I have attempted to show in the dissertation, Descartes' position in relation to the problem of modernity presupposes a broad cultural tradition, and within which dreams occupied a meaningful place. As a cultural problem it has many aspects in both a synchronic and diachronic sense, and which must be opened to a broader ambit of time. Given the changing world and a changing orientation toward it—a transformation that was in large part actuated through the metaphoric possibility of the microcosm—the dream presents an interesting and fruitful avenue through which to pursue this dynamic as a decisive episode in the history of culture. Also, given the hegemony of the *Cogito* in modernity, the Cartesian dream provides an opportunity to think our way through the difficult and mysterious depths represented by the dream phenomena in general insofar as it presents amid a moment of cultural crisis. In that sense, dreams themselves occupy a somewhat emblematic place in considering the foundations of modernity.

The larger interpretive concern that I have set with respect to the dream is that the Cartesian dream account becomes an allegorical-poetic function through which the angst of a collapsing, traditional notion of reality, along with its underpinning ontological functions, can be confronted. To read the dream under the uncritical sway of the *Cogito's* claims to truth is to diminish its significance. Thus the dream is less a "curious" episode in the movement toward a triumphal form of rationalism than an intensified expression of uncertainty—a *mundus ambiguum*. Within this moment, the new value orientation (legitimized through the inner experience) co-mingled confusedly with traditional forms of meaningful expression. In other words, the allegorical function of the dream is at once open-ended, confused, and multi-faceted; it is in an unsteady communion of the traditional and vibrantly novel; a network of the

ambiguous and unstable, within which a variety of meanings, some consonant, some conflicting, and some coincidental, unsteadily occur. The Cartesian dream, as I see it, retained its "reality" to the young Descartes, and in a very traditional way. He even admits his belief that the dreams came to him from on high. And, yet the dream insofar as it is brought into question is also a confusion of possibility rife for actualization; and on new terms, and with the full force of the metaphoric potency as emergent in the Renaissance. The dream reveals that point in the life of the young Descartes where a confused Baroque world presents in a forceful way.

The rationalist suspicions that marginalize and call into question the status and significance of dreams, which the *Cogito* represents, form only one aspect of the dream's significance vis-à-vis modernity. The dynamic of the early modern dream brings to the fore deep and powerful questions pertaining to the entirety of the cosmological order—and together with it, questions of meaning, moral action and, of course, the possibility of being authentically and creatively engaged with those possibilities, especially as they relate to being fully human. In what follows, I want to pose the problem of the Cartesian dream as a cultural problem (in view of the previous chapters) so as to set the stage for a deeper consideration of the dream both in relation to the metaphorical dynamic posed in chapter 3, and to work through more fully that problematic in the attempt to rethink the Baroque. In that regard, it is necessary to propose carefully the problem of the Cartesian dream, and also to situate it properly within the larger problematic of dreams and collapsing cosmological order.

The Problem of the Dream

Descartes gives us to understand that dreams operate ambiguously somewhere between a realm of revealed truth and one of erroneous representation. He further suggests that the

possession of truths as attained by reason—if also in a dreaming state—are more confused and obscure (*confus et obscur*), and are thus more fallible and less perfect than at those moments when we are awake.[293] His pronouncements regarding the imperfections of thought in the dreaming state aided in the Enlightenment construal of dreams purely as a type of fanciful illusion; or as *pensées un peu chimériques*, as Leibniz had characterized them in reference to the specific dreams Descartes experienced on the eve of St. Martin's, 10-11 November 1619.[294] Leibniz' somewhat curt dismissal of dreams is telling and speaks to a larger, cultural problematic; yet we are nevertheless given to understand that though dreams are technically thoughts they are nevertheless unreliable thoughts. As the dream account suggests, the question before us concerns not merely the confused status of dreams, especially insofar as they are elusive and beguiling, but also the status of thought; and specifically as the question relates to the uniquely modern conviction to establish decisively for itself, the constitutive aspects of reliable,

[293] AT VI: 39, Or at the commencement of the Fourth Discourse, "considering that all the same thoughts [*toutes les mêmes pensées*] that we have when we are awake [*étant éveillés*] can also come to us when we are asleep [*quand nous dormons*], without there being any of them, at that time, that be true, I resolved to feign that all things that had ever entered my mind were no more true than the illusions of my dreams [*je me résolus de feindre que toutes les choses qui m' étaient jamais entrées en l'espirit n'étaient non plus vraies que les illusions de mes songes*]." AT VI:32. On the lack of the distinction of truth between dreaming and waking thoughts [*en songe sont plutôt fausses que les autres*], see AT VI.38.7. On the "vivid and express" [*vivid et expresses*] qualities of both waking and dreams so as to make them indistinguishable, see AT VI.39.8. See also the Fifth Discourse regarding a reference to Descartes' systematic treatment of physiology where he purports to have shown the causes of different mental states, incuding the dream, AT VI: 55. The fullest exposition of the so-called dream argument occurs in the First Meditation (AT VII: 17-23); and the *Meditations* themselves are in large part an argument deployed against them. In the First Meditation (AT VII: 22.) Descartes associates dreams with illusion and deceptive mockeries [ludifcationes somniorum], which are caused by an evil genius most powerful and most cunning [*genium malignum…summe potentem & callidum*]. Yet there is a distinct movement in the *Meditations* that relegates dreams outside of the truth delimited by the *Cogito*, if not completely to a fictitious unreality. On the passivity of dreams in contrast to active reflection as the hallmark of true thought, see AT VII.27-28.6-7; and with respect to unified notion of self as grounded in the *Cogito*, see AT VII.90.24.

[294] Leibniz, *Die Philosophischen Schriften*, ed. C.J. Gerhardt, iv (Berlin: 1880). In a European context, this sentiment, and indeed the articulated, negative stance against dreams, became by the third quarter of the seventeenth century almost a philosophical commonplace.there are Leibniz' *Cogitationes Privatae* (1676), Adrien Baillet's *Vie de Monsieur Des Cartes* (1691), Pierre-Daniel Huet, *Nouveaux mémoires pour server à l'histoire de cartesianisme* (1693), and Christian Huygens "De la vie de M. Descartes par Baillet," Victor Cousin, ed., *Fragments philosophiques*, 3 vols. (Brussels: 1840). Also, for a hyper-skeptical account, there was of course, Hobbes. *De Corpore* (1655); but also *Leviathan* and *Elementa* treat sensation completely in materialist terms; as agitated motions and the imagination as decaying sense. *phantasmata dormientium somnia sunt; dixerimus quod compositium est ex veteribus, ut Chimaera, mons aureus et similia.*

true (and even certain) thought. Herein lay the crux of the problem.

To the late-medieval understanding, dreams occupied an intermediary realm, which outside of a direct revelation (*visio* and to some extent, *oraculum*),[295] are confused and obscure, if not completely false. The world, too, is confused and illusory, and thus one must endeavor to find meaning and truth by reading—indeed, interpreting—an enfolded, diffuse and thoroughly distended network of signatures, imprinted as it was, with the image of God (*Imago Dei*). The mediating signs within the world, and by extension dreams, were part of a *via ascensus* to spiritual illumination. The structure of which they formed part was not only exceedingly complex it was rife with meaning; mediated by a rich network of signatures, which Foucault has aptly characterized as the "prose of the world."[296] It must be added that within this network of meaning, the medieval mind understood that the "true" meaning lay hidden, and required a learned and skilled interpretation to negotiate the symbolic complexities and to unmask the deeper meaningful structure—indeed the reality—that lay beyond. The significant point here is that divinatory knowledge of any sort, as Foucault has pointed out, was not a rival form of knowledge (as opposed, for example, to the rationalist or demonstrative knowledge of the schools), but rather was part and parcel of knowledge itself.[297] Even with the changing status of dreams during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, which were made possible through a host of cultural transformations, dreams continued to occupy an ontological middle ground for

[295] The dream typology derives from Macrobius, *Commentary on Scipio's Dream*, trans. William H. Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990). He designated an apparition (*visum*) or a waking dream (*insomnium*) as false, and thus of no prognosticative significance. The "true" dreams within the typology include the prophetic vision (*visio*) where the prophesy comes to truth; the oracular dream (*oraculum*) where the possibility of right moral action is revealed by a parent, priest, revered man or god; and finally the enigmatic dream (*somnium*) in which the true prophetic meaning is ambiguously masked or veiled and must be interpreted. For a fuller description, see *Commentary*, III.1-11.

[296] On this point, see the *Order of Things*, 17-44.

[297] Foucault, *Order of Things*, 32.

discovering hidden truths and meanings.[298]

The dream, as the First and Second Meditations reminds us, is an intensely personal experience steadfastly to be overcome. The relevance the dream had, or may have had previously in reference to a larger cosmological frame of meaning is a negligible, or even non-existent concern. The Augustinian dictum "*interiore homine habitat veritas,*" which had shaped the tradition in defining the inner dynamic between God and the soul, had also shaped the undeniable Cartesian assumption that only upon the foundation of the *interiore homine* could truth be properly sought. What is more, the Augustinian model for self-conception, which had served since the Middle Ages as the preferred model in accordance with which to model a conception of self so as to find orientation within it, the world and the cosmos, was with Descartes at once retained and called into question.[299] One need only look to the First Meditation as well as the second Replies to ascertain the general tenor of the new reality Descartes embraced. In the text, Descartes adheres fundamentally to the traditional assumption of the Augustinian *interiore homine,* while maintaining the absolute necessity of the mind's abstraction from the senses [*mentem a sesnibus esse abducendam*], which he further maintained are necessary in order to understand metaphysical things [*res Metaphysicas intelligendas*].[300] As he tells us in the Second Meditation, in order to understand these higher-ordered things, one must implement hyperbolic doubt [*tanta dubatatio*] so as to lead the mind away from the senses [*ad*

[298] On this point, see Steven Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, 119-22.

[299] See especially, Guibert de Nogent, *De vita sua sive monardiarum suarum libri tres*, or the *Mondiae* (*Solitary Songs*) as it is more readily known. Also, Petrarch, *De Secretum* (and the rather telling full title, *De secreto conflictu curarum mearum*) along with the *Epistolae familiares* and the *Canzoniere* (*Rime sparse*), which together attempt to assimilate the intensity of sensual experience (in its many forms) with the traditional *vita contemplativa*.

[300] AT VII:131, *quamvis enim jam ante dictum fit a multis, ad res Metaphysicas intelligendas mentum as sensibus esse abducendam.* Among the "many others" who have said this, in addition to the Augustinian intimation, are Cicero, in his *Tusculan Disputations*, I.xvi.38, "*magni autem est ingenii sevocare mentem a sensibus et cogitationem ab conseuntudine abducere*." See, Stephen Menn's discussion of the mind's withdrawal in *Descartes and Augustine*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 220-32.

mentem a sesnibus abducendam] and its deceptions.[301] The dream, though not necessarily a sensation *per se,* is nevertheless an experience, an affective of consciousness; and given the arguments deployed in the *Meditations* and the Second Replies against the uncertainty that dreams represent, they are by definition deceptive, and must therefore be called into question, if not resolutely denied. As the *Meditations* reveal, the solution was to feign reality through representation, which problematically is itself an illusion that its implementer, the *Cogito,* fails to recognize.

Given the fundamental question as to the formidable possibility of an illusive reality [*ago ergo somniemus*][302] as confronted in the *Meditations*, Descartes engages that question both through an order of discovery and an order of exposition. The goal was to lay out those cogitations [*cogitationes*] that allowed him to arrive at a certain and evident cognition of truth [*certem & evidentem cognitionem veritatis*], and which might serve as a model to others.[303] As Jean Luc Marion has recently suggested, the question of dreams and the attendant concerns for the re-grounding of truth was for Descartes largely a matter of self-interpretation; which is a significant point to mention.[304] By the time the *Meditations* were composed (1641), the certainty of the *Cogito* was (to Descartes at least) an established fact, and therefore the dream problem presented in the First Meditation is in many ways a problem already resolved. With both the *Meditations* and the *Discourse*, the *Cogito* integrates fully with the dream problematic to serve, presumably, as the only solution. The *Cogito* occupies a significant and unique place within the variegated possibilities that characterized Baroque "space," and the culture emergent within it.

[301] AT VII.12, *viamque facillimam sternat ad mentem a sensibus abducendam*.
[302] AT VII:19, "so, therefore we are dreaming."
[303] AT VII.11.7.
[304] Jean-Luc Marion, "Does Thought Dream? The Three Dreams, or the Awakening of the Philosopher," in *Cartesian Questions: Method and Metaphysics* (Chicago: 1999),1-19. This particular aspect of Marion's conclusions vis-à-vis the dreams is not new, and proceed from the unpublished account of three dreams Descartes experienced in Ulm in November of 1619. The third dream, which scholarly convention has viewed to be the most significant, is self interpreted both during and after the dream state to suggest the "awakening" of the *Cogito*.

This is to say that the *Cogito* is a particularly Baroque response to the problem of the general chaos and uncertainty that came in the wake of widespread cultural collapse. And given the *Cogito's* demands for certainty—as mandated primarily through the legitimacy of the inner experience—it found worldly chaos and uncertainty most profoundly represented in the dream phenomenon.

As a counterpoint to the solution Descartes offered to the chaos and uncertainty posed by the dream phenomenon, one need only look to Pascal to see that a Cartesian brand of rationalism was not the only answer. With Pascal, who was writing in the 1650s and in an increasingly post-Cartesian, rationalist world, continued to struggle with his own sense of uncertainty to work through the larger, cultural question of man's separation from his God. He often employed skeptical arguments to certain Cartesian doctrines and scenarios—and namely that of the dream. Originally a man of science, Pascal revealed in his *Pensées* that his fideist and Pyrrhonian brand of piety was not mutually exclusive with rationality in the absence of verifiable proof. The *Pensées* arguably constitute his attempt to reinvigorate the dignity of man through the primacy of thought, which he did always in relation to his understanding of the omnipotence of God and the impenetrable secrecies of the universe of which reason knows not.[305] Only within the abyss of unknowing and the uncertainty that man has of his placement within the vast hidden reaches of the universe, can he truly find himself and regain his dignity. As he tells us in the *Pensées*:

> No one can be sure, apart from faith, whether he is sleeping or waking, because when we are asleep we are just as firmly convinced that we are awake as we are now [*la vie où nous pensons veiller n'est elle-même qu'un songe*]. As we often dream we are dreaming, piling up one dream on another, is it not possible that this half of our life is itself just a dream, on to which the others are grafted, and from which we shall awake when we die? That while it lasts we are as little in possession of the principles of truth and goodness as during normal sleep? [*peu les principes du vrai et du bien que pendant le sommeil naturel*] All this passage of time, of life, all these different bodies which we feel, the

[305] On this notion, see especially *Pensées* XV, "*Transition de la connaissance de l'homme à Dieu*."

> different thoughts which stir us, may be no more than illusions like the passage of time and vain phantoms of our dreams [*ces différentes pensées qui nous y agitent n'étant peut-être que des illusions pareilles à l'écoulement du temps et aux vains fantômes de nos songes*].[306]

With both Pascal and Leibniz (alluded to above), we have two divergent stances vis-à-vis dreams, and moreover, stances that are undergirded by rationalist assumptions; and yet the Cartesian solution won out.

As with Pascal, the question of repositioning man in the cosmos, if also to regain his dignity, hinged upon the primacy of thought. The problem of the dream for Descartes thus initiates as an attempt to distinguish a true (or certain) thought from a false (or delusional or fantastical) one. And though this is an important distinction in a world where the validity of the inner experience holds dominance, the question directs more crucially to the undergirding concern of what constitutes truth; and indeed, the reality on which that truth depends. This is to say that the question of the dream—to which Descartes' canonical texts (and by extension his conception of self) was largely a response—formed part of a larger cultural significance. Indeed, within the vast expanse of the onieric tradition, dreams occupied a mediating position between the dreamer and a larger cosmological structure to which meaningfulness was ultimately tied. Descartes' dream experiences together with the solution he offered to them are but one example in an array of possibilities through which to understand the general question of the oneiric experience within the Baroque world, as well as it deeper, ontological and cosmological significances.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the Cartesian dream is familiar to us mainly because of the arguments deployed against it in the *Meditations,* which represent Descartes' attempt to

[306] *Pensées,* Leon Brunschvig, ed. (Paris: 1897), VII.434 ("La morale et la doctrine"); K.J. Krailsheimer, ed (London: Penguin, 1995), VII.131 ("Contradictions").

overcome them as delusions and falsities. Indeed, the problem presents in its most articulated and straightforward form in the First Meditation with Descartes' admission of the strong possibility of being within a dream delusion [*in somnis fuisse delusum*]; and thus hinges on his remark that "there are no certain marks by means of which being awake can be distinguished from being alseep."[307] That Descartes chose the genre of the meditation through which to confront the problem of the dream is significant, and given the precedent established by Loyola in the *Spiritual Exercises* (a work with which he was no doubt familiar), the task of the meditation served as a way to thoughtfully engage with certain truths, and in a profoundly personal way. This also greatly empowered the imagination as the mediating faculty between an intellectens and the truths it sought to understand. Along these lines, it is perhaps equally significant that Descartes instituted the *Meditations* as a sort of thought experiment,[308] or contemplative exercise. In a general sense, the contemplative act allowed the understanding, by way of the imagination, to engage with a certain cardinal question in philosophy, namely the relation of God and of soul [*de Deo & de Animâ*],[309] and the opening of the possibility for redefining that relationship.

The task of the *Meditations*, I submit, was constructed to confront the false reality of dreams, and to work through the problem methodically (as by meditation) to reveal the necessity of the foundation of a wonderful science [*mirabilis scientiae fundamenta*] to which a new sense of totality might be regained as well as a viable (and even certain) basis for moral action.[310] This is to say that the attempt to regain this totality redefines the relationship of man and world, as well as the possibility for a particular type of self-conception. The uniqueness of the *Cogito* as a

[307] AT VII.19.5, *video numquam certis indiciis vigiliam a somno posse distingui*.
[308] In this sense the *Meditations* operate through an order of discovery, and not merely one of exposition as is usually maintained.
[309] AT VII:1.
[310] AT X:179.

specific type of Baroque self-conception asserts itself in search of an objective truth. Dreams are too open and too unstable to be objective; and they defy the transparency characteristic of a "true," and actively conscious thought. Thus the *Discourse* and the *Meditations* transcend the problem of the dream by incorporating it within the larger movement of the *Cogito's* search for truth. This is to suggest that the dream problematic becomes subsumed and historicized within the "fable" of the *Cogito* as it redefines itself and the world.[311] Insofar as this is true, dreams are denied any share in reality, and therefore have no claim to truth. The implications of this are significant to say the least, and I would further suggest, can only be appreciated in view of a larger cultural-historical moment.

In cultural terms, the ascendency of the *Cogito*, and its attempt to simplify reality by making it transparent, and thus its dismissal of the meaningfulness of dreams, perhaps holds the greatest significance for the question of self-conception. Indeed, the *Cogito* understood as a subjectivity places itself in opposition against the world, and thus denies itself the possibility of selfhood because it denies reciprocity between itself and its world. To this extent, the *Cogito* expresses a particular orientation to metaphoric possibility. Though it is vibrantly animated in the expression of its potential to assert itself upon the world (as its master and possessor), the dictates and conditions that the *Cogito* has set for itself through the method, nevertheless delimit

[311] Henri Gouhier, *Les Premières pensées de Descartes* (Paris: 1958), "*et la premiére moitié de la troisieme à exposer le sens et les conséquences de ces heures mémorables, comme si, dix-sept ans plus tard, il y reconnaissant encore la grâce d'une seconde naissance*," 31. In the Second and Third Discourses Descartes had felt impelled to explain "the meaning and implications of those memorable hours," which years later, as he remarked, he continued to recognize in them "the gift of a second birth." Gouhier, perhaps the greatest historical interpreter of the dream experience, still reads the dreams in an anticipatory vein leading to the rationalist triumph of the *Discourse* and *Meditations*. See also, Charles Adam, *La Vie et Oeuvres de Descartes: Étude Historique* (Paris: 1910), 55. Adam maintains that the winter of 1619-20 marked the culmination of the intellectual life of Descartes (*et le point culminant de la vie intellectuelle du philosophe*). The influential readings of Descartes' life and thought as offered by Adam and Gouhier continue to dominate the scholarly literature, if only tacitly. As their readings pertain to the dream sequence, the rigid distinction between waking and dreaming thoughts continues in full vigor, and with waking thoughts being given privileged status. Just as with Leibniz and Baillet, Adam and Gouhier read the dreams as fully fledged "Cartesians" where the assumptions of the *Cogito* operate as ingrained truths. See also, Michael Keevak, "Descartes' Dreams and Their Address for Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 53 (1992): 373-396.

and even completely obstruct the dynamic between self and metaphoric possibility. The full range of potential as implied by Pico through his understanding of man's indeterminate nature (*indiscretae opus imaginis*) becomes narrowly determinate through the *Cogito*. Within this metaphoric and worldly dynamic, which is delimited and compressed, emerges a culture of science. Such a culture, which Nietzsche broadly considered as an Alexandrian age, can only understand the one-dimensionality it has created for itself. Thus it restrains and denies the full range of artistic expression as made possible through the metaphor; as well as for those possibilities concerning self-conception and being fully human. Indeed, such a culture denigrates and even denies the metaphor itself, despite that the seemingly novel claims to the legitimacy of logic (with its various representations including science) are animated and empowered by the metaphor.

The task before us, therefore, is to pose the question of the dream not so much as a problem to be overcome by the unassailable certainty of the *Cogito;*[312] nor does it endeavor to explicate the dreams in reference to the occultist or mystical influences,[313] or as a curious "retrospective scheme" that must be reconciled with the "model life" set forth in the

[312] Again, the position advanced by Adam in *La Vie et Oeuvres de Descartes* is representative, but due mainly to uncritical modernist assumptions, a host of subsequent studies endorse this general position to a greater or lesser degree. See, for instance, Paul Arnold, "Le 'songe' de Descartes," *Cahiers du Sud*, 35 (1952): 272-91 and Roberta Recht, ":' Descartes' Dreams of 10 November 1619," *Humanities in Society* 4 (1981): 213-19. With respect to reconciling the dreams within an "unwitting" rationalist framework, see especially, Gouhier *Premières pensées* and his *Pensées réligieuse de Descartes* (Paris: Vrin, 1924).

[313] For widespread influences, including the Rosicrucians (the influences of which Gouhier was largely dismissive), see Gustave Cohen, *Ecrivains français en Holland dans la première moité du XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1920) and Maxime Leroy, *Le Philosophie au masque* (Paris: Rieder, 1929). Both Cohen and Leroy were influential in advancing the position that the dreams were under the influence of other significant preoccupations while in Holland during the wars. As Cohen remarks, "il n'est pas possible de répondre affirmativement en toute certitude à la question a-t-il été Rose-Croix?" (406). On the possibility of a correlation between the Cartesian desire to subjugate of nature to its will and a similar desire expressed in the works of the alchemists and occultists, see Père Laberthonnière, *Etudes sur Descartes* (Paris: Vrin, 1933), 27. For Gouhier's reponse (to Cohen and Leroy especially) that the apparent influence in Baillet's glossed account was largely ornamental, see *Premières pensées*, 140-41; and 150-7. For an "irrationalist" account focused on enthusiasm and inspiration, especially, see Alice Browne "Descartes' Dreams," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 40 (1977): 256-73; and in relation to the occultist and hermetical traditions as manifest in the Renaissance, see Michael H. Keefer, "The Dreamer's Path: Descartes' and the Sixteenth Century, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 49 (1996): 30-76.

Discourses;[314] but rather as a reflection of the cultural problem of the Baroque. To read the dream incorporated within the fable as deployed in the *Discourse* (or as defeated in the *Meditations*) is to deny the dream its cultural force. The dream account at Ulm, which Descartes never published, and yet retained until the end of his life, is somewhat telling. At one level, this is to suggest that the Olympic dreams of 1619 are in some way different than the dreams he described in the later texts. The earlier dreams suggest that Descartes possessed perhaps a larger vision that held both a mundane and a divine significance, and within which the many aspects of human possibility might achieve full actualization. It is perhaps lamentable that his reluctance to make the dream account more widely known has now become part of the familiar problematic as it unfolded during the 1620s-1640s, and from which the hegemonic formulation of the *Cogito* would emerge. An attempt to remove ourselves from a rationalist framework, the Olympic dreams, in many ways, reflect the existential angst so characteristic of the Baroque world; and perhaps all the more so for being an intensely personal gaze into the abyssal chaos of uncertainty.

As one example within the rich array of oneiric phenomena to manifest during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Cartesian dream sequence, I wish to suggest, allowed for the reality of this uncertain, Baroque world to be experienced in a particular way. Within that moment, Descartes seems to have been struck by a deep feeling of misdirection and uncertainty despite the apparent resolution offered during the dream's interpretive phase. This is not an attempt to psychologize[315] the moment as if we've somehow penetrated into the depths of

[314] Especially, Gouhier *Premières pensées.*

[315] On this general approach, see for instance, Siegmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans., James Strachey (New York: 1965); Carl Jung, "General Aspects of Dream Psychology" and "On the Nature of Dreams" in *Collected Works* (Princeton: 1965); and as the psycho-historical approach pertains to Descartes, see John R. Cole, *The Olympian Dreams and Youthful Rebellion of René Descartes* (Urbana: 1992). The Freudian and post-Freudian approach to dreams has placed their significance not merely within the depths of the inner man, but often in relation to its most primitive and primordial aspects as expressed in either instinctual or spiritual terms. Such positioning—

Descartes' thinking during a vexing moment, but it would seem that the young Descartes was deeply affected by moral inaction, and that the dreams somehow drew out this feeling. The dreams together with the awakened reflection and interpretation speak directly to a question of action in the face of uncertainty. Specifically, how does one act within this world, this *mundus ambiguum?* As the Ausonius text had suggested, all things are at once "Yes" and "No" [*Est et Non cuncti*]; and yet to a mind weaned on the metaphysical systems of Suarez and Scotus, the Ausonian expression of the primordial contradiction was unacceptable. With that utterance, Ausonius had expressed the Anaxogorean notion that all is in all, and from all comes everything.[316] A systemizing mind as Descartes' most certainly was must have simultaneously been paralyzed by this, and yet impelled to confront it.[317] Yet, no matter how fictionalized or contrived the dream may (or may not) be as an apologetic for the new science, they nevertheless suggest a connection between a perceived chaos and a purported discovery deployed to overcome it. In this sense, the dream seems to retain its mediating status between uncertainty and truth, though now cast in predominantly mundane terms. The confrontation with uncertainty engenders the possibility to articulate a viable and aesthetic response to it. The ultimate response, of course, was the construction and deployment of an objective reality grounded in subjectivity,

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however it is cast—no doubt served as a counterpoint to the willful consciousness of modernity insofar as actions and motives in a civilized society are attributed to dynamics that diverge from the strictly rational or intellectualist. Yet in the attempt to circumvent a rational and willful consciousness, twentieth-century dream interpretation has at the same time reaffirmed modernity, especially in its appeal to some primordial ground of individuality from which these drives and inclinations took their cue (and in the most remarkably individual way). What is significant here is that the individual is that which has primacy—not life, not being, not even nature. The primacy of the individual—even on the primordial level of instinct and drive—holds sway for Freud as the "reality" on which civilization depends, especially in view of the dynamic of intra-individual forces that shape society. He cannot see past the individual, and so dreams in all their complexity always refer inwardly to the dynamics of individuality.

[316] *Eclog.*, IV:3, "*omnia in his et ab hi sunt omnia*."

[317] The letters to Beeckman during the spring of 1619 seem to suggest his ardor for finding a unifying order in certain mathematical questions; and moreover his hope to offer an entirely new science in opposition to Ramon Llull's *Ars brevis* on memory. *Et certe, ut tibi nude aperiam quid moliar, non Lullij* Artem brevem, *sed scientiam penitus novam, qua generaliter solvi possint quastiones omnes, quae in quolibet genere quantitatis* (AT X: 156-7). "So that you are in no doubt as to the goal of my endeavor [what I would like to present] is not Lull's Ars brevis, but an entirely new science, which will allow us to answer any question posed to us about any kind of quantity whatsoever."

which having been projected into the world as an ideal representation forces all phenomena into conformity with it.

To pose this question in relation to the oneiric sequence, we seek not to offer a psycho-historical explanation of the life of Descartes in relation to his thought; nor is the main objective of this treatment an attempt to establish the philosophical worth of the dreams, especially as the decisive moment in modern philosophy in securing the "essence" of a subjectivist rationalism; and lastly, established in the *Discours*. Even with the method in place and the search for truth initiated, it is perhaps not surprising that obscurity and confusion remained always for Descartes the counterpoints to clarity and distinctness; and he thus continued to consider himself as a man who "walks alone and in the shadows" (*marche seul et dans les ténèbres*), but always with resolution and circumspection.[318]

Thus, the dream sequence constitutes a type of contested "space" where several dynamics are brought to bear in a most significant way; and in a way that somehow reflects the dreamer's nostalgic (and even reverential) position toward the tradition, but also a certain resolute disposition to overcome the tradition, if also to dispense with it entirely. The novel orientation to life that had typified the Renaissance, and especially its emphasis on the validity of the inner experience, had not so completely nor decisively dissociated itself from sensibility. There was as yet no clear-cut distinction between the inner and the outer life, nor a reflective, inner gaze through which to ground in some definitive way contemplation and adjudication insofar as they pertained to the nature of the truths that defined those relationships.[319] And thus this "new life,"

[318] AT VI: 16.

[319] In terms of self-conception, Montaigne is perhaps the most striking example, and especially with respect to the role of the essay as a cultural form to mediate the unstable dynamic between self and world. As Jean Starobinski has noted, Montaigne played with the traditional scholastic notion of form (*essentia*) that transcended a notion of essence as something unchangeable or static. The counterpoint that Starobinski draws forth hinges on the "movement" inherent in the creation of a work of art, which is not only a movement to "perfection," but also a dialogical movement between self and world. As Starobinski notes, "Are we, on the contrary [to a scholastic notion

as defined by its novel orientation to the world, still retained (if also in varying degrees of intensity) a longing for the old ways and the truths represented by them, which it still, in some deeper sense, felt intrinsically a part of; and which it expressed variously through nostalgic tones, or a stoic resoluteness, or even also a melancholic emptiness.

It is within this confused dynamic that we might point to some of its general features: 1) the tradition itself (as expressed most sharply through the *interiore homine*); 2) an uncertain and angst-ridden disposition toward the traditional notion of reality and its related truths; 3) an increasing adherence to a type of rationalist individualism, and 4) an orientation to Life that placed special emphasis upon the validity of the inner experience. With these factors, I would

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of form], legitimately entitled to participate in the constitution of our form? Are we allowed to 'perfect' ourselves? In that case, it is by giving form to a work in the external world that we gain the opportunity to give form to ourselves." See, Starobinski, *Montaigne in Motion*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 96. Similarly, the English tragic drama in the examples of Shakespeare or Webster (but others as well) relates the problem to a dominant, traditional notion of truth. Working through the powerful metaphor of the *theatrum mundi*, the play forces us to reflect upon the relation of truth and illusion on not only an epistemological level, but an ontological one as well. The play is in "movement" in its opening-up to a broad array of imaginative possibilities that includes the spectators and well as the players on stage. The *theatrum mundi* metaphor, as Howard Pearce has noted, "partially reveals the structures to which we appeal in our efforts to understand and interpret our condition." On this point and the *theatrum mundi* more generally, see Howard D. Pearce, "A Phenomenological Approach to the *Theatrum Mundi* Metaphor," *PMLA, 95* (1980): 42-57; 44. The partial revelation of these structures comes through the metaphor's ability to "dimensionalize" categorical schema—e.g., hierarchies, strata, or other fixed relations—which is to say, the metaphor's ability to temporalize and make concrete these schema and thus remove them from their "essentialized" status. Having done so, an opportunity emerges for reflection upon them—and their relations—in an (authentically) existential way. Pearce sees the *theatrum mundi* as consistent with the interpretive world, or horizon of Dasein (which phenomenalizes in a particular way), though other bases for Pearce's phenomenological interpretation are in some ways well established. On the theatrical experience, see Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958); on imaginative possibility vis-à-vis the imagination as a metaphorizing faculty, see Wallace Stevens, *The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination* (New York: Random, 1951); on the "reflective" aspect of modern theater, see Lionel Abel, *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963). More recently, William Egginton, who also interprets the Baroque theater consistently with the Heidegger of *Being and Time* (i.e., Dasein), sees the theater as a type mediating structure. See, Egginton, *How the World Became a Stage: Presence, Theatricality, and the Question of Modernity* (Albany: SUNY, 2003). Indeed, theatricality is a "historically-specific form of mediation that structures the spatiality of Dasein's experience in the modern world" (137). By defining a notion of theatrical space, which he opposes to a conceptual space, we are given to understand that theatricality in the Baroque theater, especially, is the experience of space as medium of interaction to reveal how the "world worlds." Egginton thus offers a move against what he sees as essentialist notions of theatricality, whether they be notions of "personhood," the political or social order, or other structures constitutive of the range of human existence. Egginton maintains that the structure of truth for the Baroque is theatrical (or the theatrical experience of space), which problemitizes the relation between truth and illusion as mediated by the stage. See, William Egginton, *The Theater of Truth: The Ideology of (Neo)Baroque Aesthetics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

like to add that the space is fundamentally metaphoric (in the sense suggested above); and because of the inherently unstable, though remarkably creative "essence" of the generative metaphor and the space that it opens, the dream space itself is also fundamentally creative and unstable. In it the dreaming Descartes met with a persistent, though fragmented tradition, which was also, in large part, meaningful. And despite what meaning the tradition had for him the visions he encountered in the dream nevertheless threw him back into himself, away from the tradition. Thus, at once acting under the powerful influences of the microcosm metaphor, and with the perhaps equally powerful impulse to confront, so as to guard against the uncertain vision of the first two dreams, the chosen response was to fall back into the perceived stability of himself, and to articulate ultimately a logical thematic designed to re-unify wisdom in terms of the new science. And thus that which emerged from that evening's initial angst and subsequent realization of *"les fondemens de la science admirable"* becomes effectively an illusion to guard against an illusion.[320]

On one level—and indeed, a broader, more inclusive level—the Baroque dream vision in its way represents a peering into a vibrant fullness of possibility, which manifests the unique dynamics at work within a particular cultural-historical moment. Not only does the Baroque dream represent a significant episode within the larger eidetic tradition to which a dominant notion of truth is linked, it is perhaps the relation of the dream to the sub-history of the *interiore*

[320] AT X.181. Both Baillet and Leibniz claimed to have constructed their accounts of the dreams on the basis of an extensive and detailed culling of the notes Descartes had made in the *Olympica.* Leibniz' text, which is both in French and Latin reads thus: "s'étant couché *tout rempli de son enthousiasme*, & tout occupé de la pensée *d'avoir trouvé ce jour là les fondemens de la science admirable*, il eut trois songes consécutifs en une seule nuit, qu'il s'imagina ne pouvoir être venus que d'enhaut." ["Having gone to bed *completely filled with Enthusiasm*, and wholly occupied with the thought *of having found that very day the foundation of a wonderful science*, he had three consecutive dreams in the same night, which he imagined could only have come down from on high." (Baillet's emphases). In addition, the section entitled "Olympica" from which the above texts derives initiates with the Latin texts reads: "*coepi intelligere fundamentum Inventi mirabilis scientiae*" [I began to understand the foundations of a wonderful science] and "*cum plenus forem Enthusiasmo, & mirabilis scientiae fundamenta reperirem*" [full of enthusiasm I discovered the foundations of a wonderful science], AT X:179.

homine that should call our attention. Here the dream becomes at once problematic and significant for the question of modernity. As we have seen with Augustine, the notion of the *interiore homine* assumes a crucial place within the history of metaphysics, which furthermore, manifested during the early modern period with decisive consequences for the modern notion of self. With this in mind, what we intend to show here is that the dream becomes especially problematic not only with respect to a new understanding of the *interiore homine*, and especially *vis-à-vis* a reconceptualization of the psychological faculties and their respective potencies, but also within a broader horizon of transformations where the validity of the inner experience was allowed to hold sway.

This inner experience—broadly conceived—along with its conditions for validation thereby confronted a transforming, if not completely reformulated understanding of the cosmos and man's placement within it. It must be stated that dream visions[321] along with the worlds that emerged from them—in either antiquity or the Middle Ages—were not problematic in the same ways, as we shall see, as they would become during the early-modern period. It almost goes without saying that the general category of dreams, especially their placement within the broader metaphysical tradition and its emphasis upon a transcendent notion of truth, provided a rich characterization of dreams. Of the influential categorization of dreams articulated by Macrobius

[321] I distinguish here a *dream vision* from a *dream world*—a distinction that Nietzsche implied, if he did not fully articulate in the *Birth of Tragedy*. The dream vision, as a type of intuition (indeed poetic intuition), links with the Dionysian drive; and the dream world with the Apollonian. For the early Greeks, the dream world was linked to *poíesis*, or the creative, Apollonian drive through which the cultural world emerges. Both drives are inextricably related; and with respect to both the dream vision and the dream world, there is never a direct access to reality (understood as life in its full, primordial essence); it's always a removal by degrees.

The Middle Ages implies a similar distinction, though it does allow for an occasional (though especially rare) access to truth, usually through the *visio*, or type of mystic vision. Generally speaking, the medieval dream accords with the Greek understanding that reality is veiled and mediated by and through images. Another notable distinction regarding the medieval dream is that a dream state (indeed a dream world) is more real than those moments when we are awake. The Gothic cathedral, itself an emblem of this world, plays out this reality in its being laced with mediating images and symbols that at once exalt and direct the spirit to heaven while bringing heaven to earth. The spiritual vision (in contrast to the intellectual) is often more keen in the dreaming state, and thus declares the opposite of the modern notion of consciousness.

in the early fifth century, the medieval mind took the greatest interest in those dreams (*somnium*) that were the most ambiguous and obscure in nature. The *somnium* was a "true" dream, but nevertheless lacked the immediate awareness of the truths dispensed by a vision (*visio*). The *somnium* comports rather well with the vast array of mediating structures evident throughout medieval culture. The dreams thus occupy a "middle" realm. For within this middle realm, which Augustine had characterized in prognosticative terms, especially in relation to its obscure meanings and figurative utterances,[322] nevertheless linked the mundane and the divine realms and imparted integrity to the cosmos as a whole. The dream realm for Augustine, and indeed his later medieval successors, was fundamentally a spiritual realm, and despite its darkness and confusion, was more "real" than the awakened state or the realm of corporeal action. We see the corporeal only to see past it—to envision the spiritual plane, as it were—and only then to make judgments upon the higher truths encountered there.[323] Dante's *Commedia* is perhaps the most striking example of this in its later medieval form. Indeed, the whole of the *Commedia* is a visionary moment—a dream—where the truths of the moral universe are revealed.

Given its privileged reality, the medieval dream was largely unproblematic, at least in terms of any modern misgivings that would subvert its ontological significance. If the medieval dream was problematic at all, the problem directed to the determination of the verity or falsification of its purported prognosticative truths. Yet, such a concern was included within the larger significance of the medieval dream phenomenon as a cultural form, and was thus

[322] *De Genesi ad litteram*, XII.18.39, "*obscuris significationibus et quasi figuratis locutionibus praenuntiata*."

[323] Augustine designates three types of vision, and in ascending order of significance they are: corporeal, spiritual, and intellectual. As he tells us (*De Genesi*, XII.24.51), the corporeal vision perceives bodies in the world to the degree that they are capable of being known. The spiritual vision perceives likenesses of bodies. And the intellectual vision, or mind (*animus*), perceives, which is to say, understands realities that are neither bodies, nor likenesses. The soul is deceived by the images of things (*De Genesi*, XII.25.52), and insofar as dreams, whether somatically or psychologically inspired, occur at the level of the spirit, confused dreams are nevertheless higher-order confusions because they deal with spiritual truths.

unproblematic.[324] The dream was, to be sure, grounded in a larger cosmological whole, and the thoughts experienced as well as the knowledge gained in a dreaming state tended toward universal, overarching truths; and were thus implicitly unified with those truths. What is more, the dream (as a species of vision) participated in the larger cosmological vision.

By contrast, the early modern dream lacks this unity. In this sense the dream was no longer grounded in a meaningful whole, and thus the dream vision now emerges within a contested ontological space. Within this space, the nature of thought is brought into question as well as the whole edifice of reality and its undergirding truths. Though the medieval instantiations reveal certain attendant ambiguities of the dream image, and through which one must negotiate, the ambiguities themselves reflected the middle status of the dream, located as it was between the realms of the mundane and the divine, which by its nature was confused. Such ambiguity was coterminous with the fallen state of the world (and of nature), which in its misalignment from the ground of a transcendent truth was by definition opaque and obscure.[325] The dreamer might here find himself on a spiritual pilgrimage directing himself upward to a fuller and truer understanding of the divine (citation); or the dream might prophesize the future through a skillful reading of its symbols; or it might offer a grander more inclusive vision of one's proper moral conduct in the civic realm (Cicero/Macrobius) or within God's cosmos (Dante) more generally.[326] The early modern dream was an intensely private experience, and all the more so because for all intents and purposes the dream experience at become alienated from the meaningful whole of the cosmos. Dreams become intensely terrifying because this isolation now

[324] See Jacques Le Goff, "Christianity and Dreams," in *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[325] Foucault is especially good on this point. He notes that the realm of Nature is that thin, dark "space" between the sign and the interpretation of them. This is a condition of Nature's falleness, which is to imply that "everything would be manifest and immediately knowable if the hermeneutics of resemblance and the semiology of signatures coincided without the slightest parallax." (*Order of Things*, 30).

[326] Kruger, 135.

couples with an ambiguity that directs nowhere but to itself. The early modern dream problematizes—and in a deeply existential way—the modern historical moment together with its angst and frightful confusion; which is to say, its gaze into the abyss.[327] The rawness of the Cartesian dream in particular—even despite the editorial niceties, annotations and glosses[328] to which it has become known to the world—forced Descartes to confront the shambles of a collapsed tradition; to approach an edifice of truth that no longer held; and perhaps to lament a structure of meaning that was not only ambiguous, but in certain respects utterly meaningless.

Cultural Angst and the Deception of Dreams

The dream is in many ways integral to an appreciation (and perhaps only then, a nascent understanding) of the rich array of possibilities that lay before the world—both creatively and morally. The dream phenomenon thus bears a crucial relation to an understanding of the Baroque notion of self, which with the increased emphasis on the validity of the inner experience shaped the self's moral orientation to its world as well as determined the aesthetic possibilities within it. The dream image not unlike its medieval and antique predecessors assumed many different

[327] "Blick in den Abgrund," *GT*, 9.68, *et passim*. The glance itself is a decisive moment for Nietzsche insofar as he understands the creativity of the Greeks of the tragic age; but (in his estimation) this is implicitly true for any historical epoch faced with the primordial reality of nature (its deep suffering and self-abnegation) and the related creative response, i.e., Shakespeare, respectively, vis-à-vis *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Winter's Tale*, and *Tempest*. The *Olympica*, as the dream text has come to be known from the Stockholm Inventory of 1650, should give us cause to rethink the significance of Descartes' dream vis-à-vis his philosophy and by extension the whole of modernity and its truth claims. The specific dream sequence as it pertains to Descartes defies the optimism of the Enlightenment and challenges its rationalist premises. The workable solution to the dreams is to marginalize them as curiosities or to elaborately psychologize them (as is often our wont) with a broader, rationalist frame of significance. Even at this level, the fact remains that Descartes thought never publishing his account kept it closely within his possession, which well might suggest his own ambiguous stance the status of dreams more generally.

[328] Namely Leibniz' annotations (1676), which obtained from Descartes' originals as obtained by Pierre Hector Chanut in the Stockholm Inventory (1650), subsequently edited by Claude Clerselier in Paris, and glossed by Baillet in his *Vie* (1691).

forms in the Baroque world, and thus related to a host of moral actions that included *inter alia* the religious, political and the uniquely personal.[329]

The early modern dream commentary also followed tradition, especially in regard to its fundamental adherence to an Artemidorian or Macrobian categorical and interpretive structure.[330] As Stuart Clark has recently suggested, the manner in which the commentary here took shape—in both its Artemidorian and Macrobian contexts—effectively entailed a rethinking of the oneiric experience, which implies a rethinking of the structures of meaning through which the dream derived its force.[331] Given his work on the history of demonology, Clark wants to show how deeply enmeshed were discussions of demonology with respect to concerns about the workings of nature, religious purity, political and religious authority etc.[332] Along these lines, Clark observes a particular and dominant type of dream interpretation emergent in the latter sixteenth century, which moreover hinged upon demonic delusion and deception. His emphasis

[329] That the early modern dream assumed a confessional character cannot be disputed. The best recent account pertaining to the Holy Roman Empire is Claire Gantet, *Der Traum in der Frühen Neuzeit: Ansätze zu einer Kulturellen Wissenschaftgeschichte* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010). Such questions as entertained across confessional lines pertained to the moral verity or falsity of dreams, and by extension, raised the question of their demonic or divine origin. For one such interpretation—decidedly under a psychoanalytical sway, see Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Religion and Sexuality in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 1994); and for an account grounded in the "idea" of demonology in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), especially 300-28.

[330] Macrobius (along with Artemidorus before him) gave to the tradition the dream taxonomy, which would endure in practice well into the seventeenth century, if with less verve than its medieval predecessors. The *phantasma*, or *visum* (along with the *insomnium*) are of a lower-order oneiric experience, to which he ascribed no prophetic significance, and thus no basis in truth. The dreams that Descartes experienced seem to correspond more to these lower-ordered dreams, though they are not completely unrelated to the Macrobian *somnium*, or enigmatic dream, the most common of true dreams. References from Macrobius are derived from *Commentary on Scipio's Dream*, trans. William H. Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), I.3.7.

[331] Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, 308-10. Clark is not original in observing in the early modern dream certain epistemological tensions—namely between what could be discerned as truth and what as illusion. Clark's he observations on the emergence from these tensions a dominant category of dream—namely the *demonic* dream—stems from his pervious (and magisterial) *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). See also, Robert Muchembled, *Popular and Elite Culture in France, 1400-1750*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), and Muchembled, "Satanic Myths and Cultural Reality," in *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); and Carlo Ginzburg, "Deciphering the Sabbath," in *Early Modern European Witchcraft*.

[332] *Thinking with Demons*, viii.

upon these aspects has forced him to take an epistemological approach to demonology and witchcraft to probe into the dissembling effects exerted by evil forces on contemporary interpretation and knowledge of the world.[333] Macrobius designated an apparition (*visum*) or a waking dream (*insomnium*) as false, and was of no prognosticative significance. The "true" dreams within the typology include the prophetic vision (*visio*) where the prophesy comes to truth; the oracular dream (*oraculum*) where the possibility of right moral action is revealed by a parent, priest, revered man or god; and the enigmatic dream (*somnium*) in which the true prophetic meaning is ambiguously masked or veiled and must be interpreted. III.1-11. In the *Commentary*,

The reality that Clark wants to describe is a confused one, which reveals the varied threads in a complex fabric of belief, which bear heavily upon the epistemological concerns at the core of his study. For the reason, his approach has taken him away from specific concerns of demonological practice or its relevance within more traditional domains of inquiry.[334] Though Clark is not attempting a cultural-historical approach to demonology, or for that matter the early modern dream phenomenon, the question of an epistemology of dreams in direct relation to a widespread concern with demonology is of considerable importance. Indeed, the problematic

[333] On the point of epistemology, Keith Thomas' thesis remains influential, if also contested. See, for instance, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Penguin Global, New Edition, 2012). In terms of a "rationalized" state apparatus in the question of witchcraft and heterogeneous belief more generally, see Muchembled *Popular and Elite Culture in France* as well as his more focused study, *Les dernier bûchers: un village de Flandre et ses sorcières sous Louis XIV* (Paris: Editions Ramsay, 1981); on the question of the heterogeneity of religious practice as well as its deep pervasion of most of sixteenth-century French culture, and thus making the question of "unbelief" not only an impossibility, but a fascinating cultural-historical problem, see Lucien Febvre, *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century*: *The Religion of Rabelais*, trans. Beatrice Gottlieb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[334] The scholarship on demonology and witchcraft is notably vast. See for instance, Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (London: Longman, 1987). As one of the reigning authorities on the subject of European witchcraft during the early modern period, Levack approaches his subject within familiar interpretative categories, e.g., social and economic change; intellectual and legal concerns; and the practical dynamics of witch-hunting. Also, on witchcraft and the history of *mentalité*, see Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. Anne and John Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983).

surrounding the "demonic" dream that he has observed in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries carries with it distinctive and penetrating theological features of the late medieval world, which we will address more fully below.

The demonic dream is particularly apt given the broader question of the Baroque, which reflected the general concern of the dream state—namely the extant ambiguity between reality and illusion. Again, as Clark has recently noted, the commentary of the demonic dream allowed an interpreter to pose the question of epistemological ambiguity without a moral or ethical risk.[335] This is to say that by rendering interpretation into a category of dream traditionally designated as false, the oneirocritic was not violating or putting into question the natural or divine order of things, especially as it related to God's total vision (*nunc stans*), and within which all prophesy was rooted. At least from late antiquity when dreams were first formerly classified,[336] the question of the verity or falsity of dreams was always a concern, and the placement of the demonic within a broad array of dream contexts was very similar. Since dreams are largely imagistic, the significance of the demonic dream, as with all dreams, derives from the power entrusted to it by the whole of the eidetic tradition in which truth is grounded.[337] Though the Devil could not create or place new images within the imaginative faculty of the dreamer, he or his minions could manipulate and distort images already there in the imagination or memory, and thus induce a delusion. This is, of course, nothing less than an altering of reality, or at least the perception thereof. In the transforming relation of man to nature, this could not be before

[335] Clark, *Vanities of the Eye*, 309-10. I agree with Clark's approach to go beyond the interpretation of witches as a type of scapegoat or enemy at the margins because of their difference of anti-authoritarianism. To be sure these were crucial in the early modern communities throughout Europe where the persecution of witches reaffirmed belief and increased solidarity. Yet, the epistemological aspect he discusses—together with its ontological implications—is certainly a rich avenue down which to explore witchcraft in both idea and practice.

[336] See Artemidorus, *Onirocriticon*, or the *Interpretation of Dreams*, which Macrobius was largely indebted.

[337] Unlike the Hebraic tradition where truth is in large part heard, the truth as it descends from the Greek tradition is largely associated with sight, lucidity, light, clarity, etc.—all of which are eidetic qualifications.

more significant. With Burckhardt's incommensurably artistic descriptions of Pius II in the Tuscan countryside as given in the *Civilization of the Renaissance,* we find that nature had value in itself, as something beautifully expressive of which man was an intrinsic part, and it of him. Though Italy was in many ways exceptional, the forces shaping these transformations were by no means unfelt in the more northerly reaches of Europe. To this extent man did not wholly shun nature as a *status defectus,* and though it was understood as a complex and difficult network of signatures to be interpreted through a combination of skill and blessedness, nature nevertheless possessed intrinsic value as part of God's cosmic order. Even as Augustine reminds us, nature was an integral part of man's recollecting of himself; as through the dynamic of memory where he became newly familiar to himself while reaffirming his placement within the continuum of God's created order and the ascent into beatitude. And though Augustine could affirm a connectedness that intimately and meaningfully linked—through an act of will—the states of fallenness and blessedness, what had for so long been deemed as fallen was not so easily redeemed, even through eyes more focused on the ends of this world—and not the next. And so older medieval notion of nature, sin, and the Devil himself (as their axial point) understood as the three cardinal instantiations of fallenness retained their significance, but in a newly confused way. Could it be that nature so lush and beautiful on the outside was merely a deceptive rouse. Here was the devil's playground.

Within the Macrobian dream typology the apparition (*visum*) and a waking dream (*insomnium*) were from a prognosticative perspective deemed as false. [338] Because of their

[338] Macrobius, *Commentary*, III.1-11. The *Commentary* remained the dominant categorical source for medieval dream books and was that from which the early modern commentaries took their cue. In the *Commentary*, Macrobius designated an apparition (*visum*) or a waking dream (*insomnium*) as false, and was of no prognosticative significance. The "true" dreams within the typology include the prophetic vision (*visio*) where the prophesy comes to truth; the oracular dream (*oraculum*) where the possibility of right moral action is revealed by a parent, priest,

falsity, and because they possessed no true relation to destiny or man's individual fate, they were in a particular way outside of God's purview and providence, and thus more easily manipulated. Indeed, the concern of so many of these early modern dreams, as Descartes' experience certainly attests, directed less to one's fated placement within the divine framework, and more to the fundamental question of whether one's perceived reality was an illusion. In general, these false dreams, as Macrobius tells us, present at the moment "between wakefulness and slumber" where the dreamer would think he was fully awake, though he be nevertheless within the first cloud of slumber.[339] The danger emerges in that the dreamer, thinking himself fully awake, might concern himself less with decipherment of portents or divine announcements should they appear, as in the *somnium*. Rather, the dreamer's immediate sense that he was awake would make his encounter with the apparitions—either terrifying or delightful—seem more on the order of a prophetic vision (*visio*) or an oracular dream (*oraculum*). This is not to suggest that questions pertaining to the fate of one's immortal soul were any less significant, but it certainly raises questions as to the nature of the reality in which an individual destiny was to take shape. And, if the reality itself is called into question, so might destiny, and so might any individual easily play into the hands of the Devil.

Certeau's observations of the demonic possessions at Loudun in 1634 in many ways illuminate these fears. What we find in Loudun is that diabolically induced delusions—perhaps on the level of the Macrobian lower order of dreams—resembled the dreaming state to such an extent that the two were almost undistinguishable. Certeau observed that the possessions manifested within a heterogeneous structure of belief with religious, medical, or administrative

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revered man or god; and the enigmatic dream (*somnium*) in which the true prophetic meaning is ambiguously masked or veiled and must be interpreted.

[339] Macrobius, *Commentary*, III.7.

dimensions. Within such heterogeneity, there was no consensus as to how the possessions should be approached, which ultimately (and significantly) raised the question of the meaningfulness (or lack thereof) of language.[340] What did it mean to be possessed? Was it a question of cause; and if so, were those causes visible or hidden; and what was their provenance? The question of power is also raised, which problematizes authority vis-à-vis a notion of cultural "otherness," but more than anything, the possessions themselves accentuate the problematic interrelation of psychology, theology and the application of the art of medicine (or exorcism for that matter) with a contested framework of meaning. And though mediated through language, the meaning of these various domains along with their tensioned interrelations reveal how thoroughly disconnected these domains were from each other as well as from the traditional ordering structure of reality. Indeed, the meaningful structure that united and sustained the cosmos (and especially the moral action within) no longer cohered. The very real danger of diabolical delusions and what they meant vis-à-vis salvation seems to suggest that the traditional reality—even if in question—still maintained within a cultural "reality" while certain of its assumptions were in danger of impending collapse. The traditional medieval concerns of justification and temptation further complicated this, which were increasingly coming into line with a conscious-centered morality—and the increased validity of the inner experience—as believed to be the very basis on which to work through the dynamics of the inner struggle.[341]

In the case of witchcraft where the possessed were thought to be in a sort of dream state, the ambiguity of the experience could extend quite powerfully from the individual dreamer to the

[340] See Michel de Certeau, *The Possession at Loudun*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[341] On this point see Heiko Obermann, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 102-6 *et passim*.

dreamer's community.[342] Through spells and imprecations an entire collective could be included within the confused delusion of the initial dreamer (i.e., the one possessed). Even in an age tinged by the new learning and thus an increased emphasis upon the wonders of the natural world, we need not remind ourselves that the manipulative transformation of species and similitudes (as by some demonic agency) was still a question of "spiritual" significance.[343] As the Stoic doxographer Äetius tells us demons were "psychic entities" (*ουσίαι ψυχικάι*),[344] and it was through the spiritual regions (of which the dream was integral) that they would affect the most power and influence. And though God was for the most part hidden (and the "experience" of him largely a concern of faith), the divine power could still be revelatory and direct. Yet, the Devil could in a variety of ways distort faith as much as he could distort a sign, and perhaps even distort reality itself on which dreams stood and derived their significance. Descartes is still within the clutches of this older structure of meaning, as his references in the *Meditations* to the *malin génie* would seem to suggest.

The significance of these developments was widespread; and because of the conflicted currents of meaning through early modern European culture, the question of the dream was almost by definition a question fraught with difficulty and confusion. What I have attempted to suggest thus far is that the "source" of this confusion derives from a fundamental orientation to the life, which in profound ways relates to a newfound meaningfulness in the experience of this world. What may be seen a tentative or hesitant, if not a critically suspicious stance toward

[342] Michel de Certeau, *The Possession at Loudun.* Certeau's is among the most famous (and in some ways the most powerful) account of such an incident. The work is atypical given Certeau's other works, but his recounting of and commentary on the incident is effective given the cultural problematic it represents.

[343] On the deep-seated epistemological aspect of this problem, see Foucault, *History of Madness*, ed. Jean Kalpha and trans. Jonathan Murphy (New York: Routledge, 2006), as well as Robert Mandrou, *Magistrats and sorciers en France au XVIIe siècle: Une analyse de psychologie historique* (Paris: Seuil, 1980).

[344] Äetius, I.8.6 in *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, ed. Hans von Arnim, (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1946), II, 1101.

dreams was at one level a questioning, especially in relation to their traditional importance as a prophetic medium (and all that it implied).[345] Yet, on a more profound level, the general orientation toward dreams called into question their ontological status, and with it the foundation of truth and the entire reality on which that truth depended. Truth claims in relation to dreams no longer hinged upon a notion of prophecy or revelation, nor did questions relative to the acquisition of truth depend upon the knowledge of the proper, divinatory art (*technē*) through which to detect truth, especially in its more enigmatic manifestations.[346]

Though a range of influential oneiric taxonomies had regarded the dream as both a mysterious and a meaningful realm, the rationalist currents of the later seventeenth century saw fit, and with an ever-increasing vigor, to view with suspicion the dream's claim to truth and meaning. Newly formulated metaphors of light and vision—themselves rooted in the late-medieval world—identified truth with transparency, and while the opacity of the dream ran counter to this understanding, the clouded realm of the dream state was, quite simply, something that must be steadfastly overcome, especially if the new conditions of truth were to prevail.[347] To be sure, questions regarding the mysteries of this earth, which concerned less of the heaven beyond, could no longer rely upon a matter of interpretation—articulated as they were—through

[345] As to the verity or falsity of dreams with respect to the relative dynamic of divine and mundane worlds, see Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, Calcidius, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, and Augustine, especially *De Genesi ad literam, XII;* regarding a skeptical, though ultimately ambivalent position of the divine status of the dream, see Cicero, *De Divinatione* and Petrarch, *Rerum memorandum libri*. On Albertus Magnus' commentary on Aristotle's notion of dreaming, in which he takes a similar line as Petrarch regarding the particular quality of vision that brings forth divination, see *De somno et vigilia—qualibus simulacris consistit somnium de quo debet esse divinatio*, in Borget (ed.), *Opera omnia, IX.3.1*, 178.

[346] As, for example, the Augustinian *"obscuris significationis et quasi figuratis locutionibus praenuntiata;"* or the Artemidorian *"allēgorikoi oneiroi"* or the Macrobian *"somnium;"* or the Calcidian *"visum."*

[347] On this point, the extended title of the posthumously published *Recherche de la Vérité* is suggestive: *Recherche de la Vérité par la Lumière Naturelle: Qui toute pure, et sans emprunter le secours de la relgion ni de la philosophie, détermine les opinions que doit avoir un honnête homme, touchant toutes les chose qui peuvent occuper sa pensée, et pénétre jusque dans les secrets des plus curieuses sciences*. The title holds both an epistemological as well as a moral significance, and proposes that by the of purity the natural light of reason alone, and without the guidance of religion and philosophy, can an honest man direct his opinions, and in all things that may occupy his thoughts, so as to penetrate the secrets of the most obscure sciences.

dims and obfuscations. In other words, these faint, oneiric moments just like the larger, meaningful framework of which they formed part, offered no definitive demarcation between what was obscure and confused and that which was clear and distinct. That the mind/soul dwelt among enigmatic images (and were even subject to them) was to offer no basis for truth and knowledge. Truth must be seized, and the realm of the mysterious must at once be brought within the ambit of reason—subjected, as it were, to the active powers deployed now by a fully conscious faculty of the understanding (*intellectus*). To the extent that consciousness supplied the very capacity for true knowledge, so also was truth—and by extension, reality established on the conditions of *conscientia*, which was understood increasingly as a unified, rational faculty that defines the object of its knowledge, and is not in any way defined or affected by that object as the Aristotelian model had in large part supposed. As a culture of rationalism, modernity has no place for dreams, and had exiled them with ever greater suspicion and disdain to the realms of the strange and fantastical. Indeed, the "canonical" Descartes of the *Discourse and Meditations* is uncritically placed within these larger currents, if also viewed as their instigator; yet a deeper probing into the dream phenomena of the earlier modern world as well as a general openness to the peculiarities of a transforming structure of meaning, may perhaps present the *Olympica* in a new light.

Cosmological Uncertainties

What I mean to suggest through this brief treatment of the demonic dream is this: if we adhere for interpretive purposes to the Macrobian dream taxonomy, and thus the relegation of the demonic dream to the lower orders within that taxonomy, we are by extension addressing the broader question of falsities and deceptions. What the demonic dream had done was not merely

to call into question the dream, but the whole of the reality that sustained the dream phenomenon itself. This is a significant cosmological concern to which we should now briefly turn.

The vibrant debates surrounding the meaning and significance of the *potentia absoluta* that grew up within the nominalist and voluntarist theological discourse of the late-medieval world is by now firmly established in the scholarly literature.[348] Emergent questions within these nominalist debates contributed powerfully, if also frighteningly to a culture of skepticism where concerns pertaining to salvation as well as the natural order (*potentia ordinata*) were increasingly brought into doubt. To be sure, demons fell within the ordered structure of the cosmos, and were perfectly consistent with the medieval understanding of nature. So also was the understanding that though God executed his power within the ordained frame, given the fact of absolute will (*potentia absoluta*) he could just as easily have acted otherwise so as to violate his own laws, and thus to render effects from disconnected, non-correlative, or even contradictory causes. It should also be noted that this omnipotent, voluntarist God was also a hidden God (*deus absconditus*); yet at the same time, he was everywhere for no one or no thing was outside God's will or power. And though creation always remained present to him—as again, a condition of his omniscience and omnipotence—by contrast the human condition as it pertained to the rational, moral, and physical realms was ultimately one of complete alientation. Indeed, the existence of the *deus absconditus* would occasion Pascal to utter "*Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie*"

[348] Such trends relate to Blumenberg's broad notion of "theological absolutism," as integral to the self-assertive dynamic of the modern age, (see *Legitimacy*). On the visible characteristics of the influential nominalism of Gabriel Biel—especially as it related to justification, sin (and the absolution thereof), and the infusion of grace, see Carl Feckes, *Die Rechfertigungslehre des Gabriel Biel und ihre Stellung innerhalb der nominalistischen Schule* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1925). For some of the best treatments of nominalism in medieval theology and philosophy, see for instance, Heiko Oberman, *Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000); Gordon Leff, *William of Ockham: The Metamorphosis of Scholastic Discourse* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975); Francis Oakley, *Omnipotence, Covenant, and Order* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984) and Leonard Kennedy, "Late-Fourteenth-Century Philosophical Skepticism at Oxford," *Vivarium*, 23 (1985): 124-51.

for how could man determine either his limit or his measure in the absence of God?[349] For all intents and purposes, God lay beyond the impenetrable veil of revelation and was thus unreachable and unknowable to the human mind. To this end the prose of the world that had sustained a meaningful communion between creator and creation was left unanchored and a whole of angst-ridden possibilities emerged in its wake. To be sure, the departure of the creator from creation did not negate the divine order or render it unreasonable. Yet, demons as entities that were far from unnatural or in violation of the cosmos were, in God's seeming absence, allowed to walk more unrestrictedly about the earth, to manipulate and to dissemble, to make God even more inaccessible; and to jeopardize one's eternal soul.

What emerged in the midst of this problematic was the ongoing attempt to reconcile this notion of God's omnipotence with that of his created and perceived order, so that man in his limited knowledge might make sense of his place within a transforming cosmos, and to find his way. Yet, such a reconciliation—namely that of preserving God's transcendent uniqueness without alienating completely his creation—had been resolved previously. The resolution in question was the doctrine of the *analogia entis,* which perhaps only temporary, and articulated in decidedly different terms, found vibrant and meaningful expression within the intellectual currents of late Scholasticism.[350] The myriad and complex concept of the *analogia entis*—at least as it pertained to the "imitative" and "attributive" relation between beings and essence—was constructed fundamentally, and certainly in its Thomist formulation, on the assumption of the unity and totality of Being. As such, the medieval cosmos depended upon two metaphysical

[349] *Pensées*, Fr. 206, ed. Léon Brunschvicg (Paris: Hachette, 1897). "The eternal silence of these empty spaces frightens me."

[350] The concept of the *analogia entis* is varied and complex, and found expression *inter alia* within the thought of Aquinas, Scotus, Henry of Ghent, and Cajetan.

doctrines: a metaphysics of causality and a metaphsyics of participation.[351] From the point of view of created beings, the question of imitation and participation was part and parcel of a *via ascensus*. The *analogia imitationis* thus allowed beings of imperfect similitude to relate to (or participate in) the most perfect Being (*ens perfectissimum*) according to the determination of their form and the limit (or measure) of their capacity to actualize fully that form. What is effectively a metaphysics of participation unites the various (and multiple) modalities of being to a primary instance (*ens perfectissimum*) to preserve the univocity (or full essence) of Being within the totality and unity of a theological (and ultimately Neoplatonic) frame.[352] What is more, the *analogia imitationis* served as the mediating dynamic or *via media* between univocity and equivocity (i.e., the existence of beings in multiplicity in both matter and form). By admitting into the medieval cosmos a "common form" (i.e., univocity), which was mediated through analogy, medieval theologians overcame a serious theological problematic. In particular, the participatory dynamic of the *analogia imitationis* preserved the full and unique essence of a transcendent God without distancing him from the variegated forms within his creation.[353]

[351] The twin notions of causation and participation are complex, and discussion of them here would take us too far afield. Suffice to say that causality in metaphysics presupposes a specific dynamic with respect to reality and especially to beings vis-à-vis that reality. The science of nature (*φύσις/physis*), for example, is effectively a science of movement (*κινησις/kinesis*) that explains the domain of being between coming-to-be and passing-away. The movement in question is fundamentally and intrinsically one of privation (*στέρεσις/sterēsis*) toward a fuller realization (*ἐνέργεια/enérgeia*) of being. See *Phys*., II.194b.23-34 as the *locus classicus* for the four causes; and *Meta*., I.981a.28-30. That privation is intrinsically a part of this moment, for Scholasticism the realization of the form is integral. Aquinas' introduction to the four causes of an ultimate cause was done under the influence of Neoplatonism to which participation and causation became inextricably linked. The basic notion of participation—that is the sharing or taking part in a metaphysical simple, or transcendental—is fundamentally Platonic. See, for instance, *Protagoras* 322a; *Symposium* 208b; *Parmenides* 132d; *Republic* VI.486a; and *Timaeus* 77b.

[352] *Nota bene*: the *analogia imitationis* is one aspect of the dialectic; the other the *analogia attributionis.* The two *analogiae* are thus constitutive of a metaphysics of causality and participation which is not only central to the dynamic of the medieval cosmos, but allowed it cohesion and unity with respect to the univocity and equivocity of being.

[353] The three types of semantic analogy—or how analogies are said, *dicitur*) are *analogia proportionalitas, analogia attributionis,* and *analogia imitationis*. These analogies were especially useful in Scholastic discussions of metaphysical and logical problems, all of which to a greater or lesser extent derived from Aristotle. See for instance

With the collapse of the medieval cosmos and with it the emergence of the epochal understanding of a *deus absconditus*, meaning and truth became disjointed from the world along with the mediating structures that once connected and unified it. Only with this in mind can we fully appreciate Donne's expressed angst in the "Anatomy of the World"—"tis all in pieces, all coherence gone." Descartes who still operated very much within a late-medieval world—despite the cultural pull that increasingly drew him inward—could still adhere to the idea of a cosmological totality, even if the structure itself lacked the manifold range of meaningfulness that had once so fully characterized it. It is not difficult to see that the Cartesian texts,[354] and in particular those most significant for the solidification of the epistemology during the years 1628-

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E.J Ashworth,"Analogy and Equivocation in Thirteenth-Century Logic: Aquinas in Context," *Mediaeval Studies* 54 (1992): 94–135 and Ashworth; and "Analogical Concepts: The Fourteenth-Century Background to Cajetan," *Dialogue* 31 (1992): 399-413. The classic study of Thomistic analogy is still Bernard Montagnes, *La doctrine de l'analogie de l'être d'après Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Philosophes médiévaux 6, Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1963); See also Ralph McInerny's nuanced readings of the *analogia* in Aquinas and Cajetan in "The Analogy of Names is a Logical Doctrine," in *Being and Predication: Thomistic Interpretations*, Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 279–86; "Aquinas and Analogy: Where Cajetan Went Wrong," *Philosophical Topics*, 20 (1992): 103–124; and *Aquinas and Analogy* (Washington, D.C., The University of America Press, 1996).

The *analogia proportionalitas*—the most straightforwardly logical of the three—asserts a ratio of simititude between two different proportions, e.g., as a point is to a line, so is a spring to a river. For more expressly metaphysical questions as those, for example relating to medieval cosmology, the *analogia attributionis* and *analogia imitationis* were more central to those discussions, especially the former. The *analogia attributionis,* which Aristotle called *pros hen* predication, and Aquinas, analogy *per prius et posterius.* Both speak of the ordered relation between things vis-à-vis a "primary thing." The example that Aristiotle employed (*Meta.,*IV 1003a.33-1003b.18) concerns "health" (as the primarly analogate) with respect to the various ways health can be attributed of a being, i.e., preservation (food); production (medicine); symptom (urine); and capability (inherent nature to attain health). The medievals who spoke in terms of analogy *per prius et posterius* could say, like Aristotle, that health is the primary analogate (*per prius*), which is something in the subject (*de re* or *in subiecto*). The various ways that health may pertain to or be said of a subject (*de dicto*) are attributive are thus posterior (*posterius*) to the primary analogate. In the *Sentences*, Aquinas speaks of this in relation to the true: Verum per prius dicitur de veritate intellectus, et de enuntiatione dicitur inquantum est signum illius veritatis; de re autem dicitur, inquantum est causa (*Sent*., I d. 19. Q.5. a.1. s.1, p 184). The *analogia* in the sense Aquinas speaks of it is not only a formal relationship, but causal as well, which further corroborates the dictum: omne agens agit sibi simile (*Sent.,* IV., dist.1, q.1, a.4, ad.4; and *Sum. Theol*., I, q.19, a.4)

The *analogia imitationis* is as the name suggests a semantic relation of similitude; or in other words, how one essence reflects and/or participates in another essence, i.e., between creator and creature.

[354] *Regulae* (1628) and the *Discourse* (1637).

37, stilled assumed a medieval orientation vis-à-vis the pursuit and attainment of truth; and especially in relation to the medieval meditative tradition. It is the gradual disjunction of meaning from the traditional cosmological truths that occurred within the late-medieval world, and from which the nominalists had in many ways taken their cue.

A major point that Heiko Oberman has made (and with which I wholeheartedly agree) is that in the reform of and revolt against the Church through what were perceived to be medieval excesses, the emergent "new piety" came to advocate strongly for personal experience (if perhaps on the model of the *Devotio Moderna*),[355] in articulating their understanding of Jesus' life and suffering. Indeed, it was such experience that legitimized and designated a true Christian. As a widespread cultural phenomenon, the emphasis on experience extended into other knowledge domains with transformative, and sometimes revolutionary consequences.

Medieval science is one such domain. Medieval natural philosophy as cast primarily in accordance with the critical function of faith had allowed for "imaginative thought experiments." These experiments explored certain conceptual possibilities with respect to natural and celestial phenomena, as experienced or possibly experienced. The medieval thought experiment found expression most famously through the *Quaestiones disputatae,* and thus gave shape to the increased tendency to find conformity between possibilities as expressed in the thought experiments themselves [e.g., whether (*utrum*) the universe is infinite; or whether there exists a diurnal movement of the earth etc.,] and the specific models or predictive mechanisms to which the experiments relate. What is more, the *quaestio* allowed for a dynamic engagement with the authority, namely Aristotle, to probe the boundaries of what was known and accepted given the

[355] Gerhard Grote (1340-84) was perhaps the most influential of the primary figures of this movement, especially through his founding of the *Fratres Vitae Communis* in the Netherlands. Also the movement was strong in Germany as with, for example, Thomas à Kempis, the probable author of the *Imitatio Christi.*

established body of natural knowledge.[356] Though the thought experiments may have revealed exceptions or contradictions to the established doctrines, they ultimately served to reaffirm the faith and indeed the dynamics of the medieval cosmos itself.

And yet, it was also within the context of the *quaestio* and Aristotelian natural philosophy that Buridan would pose the question (among others) regarding the possibility of whether God could move the heavens faster than they actually move [*Utrum sit dare maximum in quod potentia est*].[357] Unlike the standard move to probe the boundaries of the God's ordained frame (*potentia ordinata*); but not to transgress it, Buridan engaged the possibilities through the text to accentuate not what Aristotle *hadn't* said; or *could* have said; but *what* he should have said. This is a major shift in the nominalist discourse, which points also to the fundamental orientation man had to the cosmos. As Oberman has pointed out, and to which the Buridan example thoroughly attests, this late-medieval conception of the *potentia ordinata* increasingly conceived of the notion in terms of the "present order;" or in the words of Nicole Oresme, "*le cours de nature*."[358] With Buridan's move, and others as well, we see the seeds of a not-so-distant movement that in its influences will transform what were previously formulated in terms of "expectations" as to how natural phenomena manifest to become formulated hypotheses and later into principles that not only predict, but answer absolutely for the infinitude of possibilities that lay in the universe; and thereby brought within an increasingly perfected (and indeed actualized) representation of the human *intellectens*.

[356] On this general point, see Heiko Obermann, "Reformation and Revolution: Copernicus's Discovery in an Era of Change" in *Cultural Context of Medieval Learning*, Dordrecht: Reidel Publishing, 1975.

[357] Jean Buridan, *Quaestiones super libris quattor de caelo et mundo*, I. q. 17, ed. E. A. Moody (Cambridge: Medieval Academy of America, 1942). Also, for a discussion of these movements within the context of late-medieval nominalism more generally, see Blumenberg, *Legitimacy*, 181-206.

[358] Oberman, "Reformation and Revolution," 409.

Oresme had suggested this in the *Tractus de commensurabilitate vel incommensurabilitate motuum celi.* The text presents a technical matter regarding the proper proportionality between heavenly motions, which to the later medieval mind extended, almost as a matter of course into the domain of the reality of heavenly phenomena. The attempt here was to discover the *ratio motuum machinae mundi* in accordance with certain geometric and arithmetical precepts, which Oresme ultimately was hesitant to do because it traversed beyond the *potentia ordinata*. The interesting aspect of this problem is that Oresme, rather than working toward a conclusion in accordance with the systematic *tractus*, appeals to the dream. In the end, Oresme resigns himself to the fact that God's mysteries shall remain as such. What is noteworthy is that the dream as set within a nominalist context reveals the interplay, if also the tensions, between a humanity searching for truth and an enigmatic and mostly hidden cosmos. And though these hidden depths are forbidden on the grounds of *vanas curiositas*, it is a self-asserted human reason that finds itself increasingly impelled to traverse the limit.[359]

Though the Oresme of the *Tractus* was reluctant to traverse the limit, the Oresme of *De causis mirabilium* was quite different. In that text, the author proposed to show the causes of some effects, which *only seem* to be marvels; and to show that the effects occur naturally, as do many other effects at which we commonly do not marvel.[360] There is no reason, says Oresme, to appeal to the heavens, to demons, or to God. He proceeds to show by appeal to a number of *notabilia*, the causes of certain marvels as contingencies of vision [*causis mirabilium circa visum contingentium*], as demonstrated by the likes of Alhacen, Roger Bacon and Witelo. The

[359] On this point, and the late medieval dream more generally, see Steven F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 83-149, and with respect to science, see especially, 140-9.

[360] *De causis mirabilium, "aliquorum que mirabilia videntur causas proposui hic declarare et quod naturaliter fiant sicut ceteri effectus de quibus communiter non miramur, Incipiunt quodlebeta"* (Prologue), *Nicole Oresme and the Marvels of Nature. A Study of his* De causis mirabilium *with Critical Edition, Translation and Commentary*, ed. and trans., Bert Hansen (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1985).

demonstrations allowed Oresme to surmise, if not to conclude absolutely, that certain optical and visual theories can explain the marvelous in terms of the natural. The significance here is that the boundary into the *potentia absoluta*—as the ground of possibility as affected through the action of the divine will—has already been crossed. With Oresme, the "explainable" is already admitted, if not fully drawn into the conditions established by reason and its operative (mathematical) framework. The function of the medieval thought experiment as articulated in the *Quaestiones* had provided the general structure to probe these boundaries, if not crossing them entirely. It seemed only a matter of time before what was explainable, known, and ultimately truthful would depend upon the conditions of a rational framework, which emphasized with an ever-greater demand for certainty, the correspondence between it and the phenomena experienced.

With the angst and uncertainty that accompanied a collapsing, medieval cosmos, a whole range of incongruities and violations, if not yet complete contradictions had began to shine forth within that structure. The mediating discourse had begun to break down, and bringing with it a whole host of uncertainties. As with Buridan and Oresme in their attempts to probe more deeply into the realm of the *deus absoluta,* and to loose a range of theological and moral concerns on account of it, we find in the late medieval world an increasing epistemic demand to reconcile physical and celestial phenomena with the principles that endeavored to explain them. In a general sense, we see in the nominalists a modification of the notion of conformity (*aedequatio*) between understanding (*intellectus*) and thing (*res*) so as to give way to a more exacting notion of equation (*aequatio*) between understanding and thing. In other words, we observe a demand for an increased degree of certitude between phenomena and explanatory principle. The redefinition of this relation was striking enough, but more so the presumption behind it, which

effectively constituted a redefinition of reality. This is to say that the point of reconciliation between *intellectus* and *res,* whether through general conformity (*adequatio*) or equation (*aequatio*), is of only secondary significance. The nominalists in various ways had already broken with the resplendently meaningful totality of the medieval cosmos within which conformity was always *concordia adaequatio,* and which entailed an intrinsic harmony not only with the *ens perfectissimum,* but with all of creation and the cosmos as a whole. The reality that the nominalists had abandoned was, as Heidegger suggests, a *realitas actualis.*[361] As a reality of actuality this did not entail *per se* a reality of things actualized, but rather it entailed fundamentally the *possibility* of actualization, and to the fullest possible extent that the "real" within any given entity or thing could be actualized. The significance of the nominalist move to emphasize a *realitas objectiva,* which Descartes himself will privilege in the *Meditations,* and especially on the basis of the proofs deployed in the Third Meditation,[362] hinged primarily on a question of truth; and, specifically *that* truth from which epistemological realism descends—namely that a thing *is* an entity insofar as that thing exists in the idea.[363]

Inasmuch as truth can be said to give to the world Beauty, such can also be said that the true gives to the understanding the knowledge of that Beauty as it relates to the totality of the medieval cosmos and man's placement within it. In this sense, the Scholastic (and specifically Thomistic) definition of the relationship between *res* and *intellectus* extends in a more general sense to characterize the relation between world and man, and indeed the cosmos as a whole. In

[361] On this point, see Heidegger, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 38. Also, for the classic treatment in English of objective being in Descartes, see Timothy J. Cronin, *Objective Being in Descartes and in Suarez* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1966); and Jean-Francois Courtine, "La doctrine cartésienne de l'idée et ses sources scholastiques," in *Les categories de l'être: Etudes de philosophie ancienne et médiévale* (Paris: PUF, 2003). Cronin following Gilson has looked to Scholastic precedent in certain of the notions associated with Descartes. I approach this with qualified assent, and though there may anticipations or similarities with respect to objective being, they are different. The difference owes itself ultimately to a question of foundations.

[362] On *realitas objectiva* in the *Meditations* see AT VII.41-42; 45; and in the First Objections, AT VII.92; and for the definition Descartes offers in the Second Replies, AT VII.161.

[363] AT VII;161, *intelligo entitatem rei repraesentatae per ideam, quatenus est in idea.*

the Thomistic understanding of the knowledge of the cosmos, which is an almost complete inversion of the Cartesian understanding of the same, the knower (following an Aristotelian precedent) always assimilates to the thing known.[364] This is to say that the essence of knowledge does not reside in the mind, as in a Cartesian, subjective sense where objects are made to conform to a representation in the understanding, which in turn is projected into the world. Rather, the essence of a thing (i.e., a thing's formal reality or its real content)—understood especially insofar as that thing may be fully actualized *in potentia*—is prior to its truth in the understanding. The understanding, in its assimilation to the thing-to-be-known, presupposes its placement within a larger cosmological (and by extension ontological) whole in which it seeks to be more fully integrated within that whole. What does this mean? Such a statement has a distinctively alien import to the modern mind, and yet nevertheless forcefully bespeaks an entirely different orientation to reality. The act of assimilation (*assimilationem*) is effectively the mediating dynamic that conforms the intellect to thing, so as to fully and harmoniously integrate within the cosmological whole.

The assimilation of the intellect to the thing known, which St. Thomas understood in terms of the *intellectus agens*, or active intellect, implied an act of formal determination between the understanding and the thing. Within this dynamic the entity communicates a species of itself (which is to say, the formal *specification* of itself as a subject), which the knowing power (*intellectus agens*) subsequently assimilates to (*formaliter ratio*) within the understanding. Once the *intellectus agens* assimilates to the thing (*res*), which again, is a formal relation, the similitude (or likeness of the thing) forms the basis of knowledge, which in its determination is

[364] *Quaestiones Disputatae de veritate*, (henceforth *De Ver.)*, I., q. 1, a.1. *Omnis autem cognitio perficitur per assimilationem cognoscentis ad rem cognitam, ita quod assimilatio dicta est causa cognitionis*. All inclusions of *De Veritate* from derived from *Sancti Thomae de Aquino, Opera omnia iussa Leonis XIII*, P.M. edita (Romae: Ad Sactae Sabinae, 1970), XVI.

subsequently realized in the passive intellect (*intellectus possibilis*). The realization of knowledge, or its perfectibility in the *intellectus possibilis*, implied for Aquinas, a type of movement. In a more immediate sense, the movement originates with the assimilation to species in the understanding, but more importantly, movement originates ultimately in the formal, first cause of the divine intellect in which the transcendentals (i.e., the Good, the True and the Beauthiful) and all their similitudes are grounded.[365] The basis of relation, or rather, the harmony—the *concordia adaequatio*—implicit in knowledge (and the subsequent perfection thereof) hinges in the first instance (*per prius*) upon the common term "truth" in expressing the harmony between being and the intellect.[366]

Though the true may not give to being in some fundamental ontological sense, the "whatness" of a being is nevertheless presupposed by a perfect and full sense of truth in its adequation, or conformity to the understanding. Within this conformity (*adequatio*) is the perfect form of the true.[367] What is more, the formal (*formalis*) constituent of the true effectively mediates between being and the understanding in its giving to the understanding of a particular (and true) notion of thingness, which moreover, exists truthfully between them because of the verity of the similitude in the first instance. As Aquinas tells us, knowledge is an effect of truth,[368] which is also to say that knowledge is the gift of being to the understanding through the

[365] The basic notion derives from Arisotle, *De Anima* III.427a-429a., and specifically the movement implicit in the soul's perception, or *aísthēsis/αισθησις*. For Thomas, not unlike Aristotle, this involves a perception and knowing of the form as the similitude moves from the *intellectus agens* to the *intellectus possibilis.* However, as Thomas notes, the full realization of knowledge (that is to the extent to which a thing can be known fully in its nature) depends upon the form or nature of the *intellectus,* and thus upon the degree to which it is capable of realizing the form as given in the similitude of representation (*similitude repraesentationis*). Knowledge (*per prius*) does not require an identity of *intellectus* and *res* in terms of conformity in nature, but only in similitude of representation—"*Ad cognitionem non requiritur similitudo conformitatis in natura, sed similitude repraesentationis tantum.*" (*De Ver.,* II, a.5, ad.5)

[366] *De Ver.*, I., q. 1, a.1., *convenientam vero entis ad intellectum exprimit hoc nomen verum*.

[367] *De Ver*., I., q. 1, a.1., *et in hoc formaliter ratio veri perfeciter*. It is in fact *forma* in terms of *formalis* of the truth that is here formally accounted for in perfection, and also inasmuch as *formalis* is tantamount to *quidditas* of things and their intended species.

[368] *De Ver*., I., q. 1, a.1., *cognitio est quidam veritatis effectus.*

expression of truth in adequation. The crucial significance of the Scholastic formulation is in fact the *concordia adequaetio,* which must be understood in terms of the totality of the medieval cosmos. And moreover, that the perfectibility of knowledge in the *intellectus possibilis* is also a harmonious movement toward Being in its fullest and truest form, God.

The nominalist emphasis to reconcile principle with phemomena in presuming (the as-yet-articulated) conditions of a new reality—which is to say a steadfastly Cartesian reality—was nevertheless mediated through a novel conception of truth, and especially as that truth was reflected by a novel orientation to life. The nominalist understanding of *realitas objectiva,* despite its emphasis upon the "reality" of the phenomena as increasingly identified—in truth—with the principles deployed by the understanding, does not in any way equate to the notion of the true as expressed within the Thomistic dictum: *verum per prius dicitur de veritate intellectus.*[369] The point being that the reality in which celestial and physical phenomena were said to exist (including the moral realm of human action) was increasingly thought to equate identically (and not merely conform) with the reality articulated by theoretical knowledge.[370]

The problem surrounding the Osiander Preface to *De Revolutionibus,* and Copernicus' ensuing outrage is a case in point.[371] Copernicus had insisted not only on the reality of the

[369] *Sent., I.* d. 19. Q.5. a.1.

[370] On this point see Blumenberg, *Legitimacy*, 229-41. Such a theoretical reality was "to open up and make perspicuous for human action" so as to fulfull Descartes' promise "of the definitive morality as the consequence of the perfection of physics." (239)

[371] The realist versus the fictionalist/instrumentalist question, especially in terms of *apparentias salvare*, is perhaps as old as the inquiry into natural phenemena itself. See Pierre Duhem, *To Save the Phenomena: An Essay on the Idea of Physical Theory from Plato to Galileo*, trans. Edmund Doland and Chaninah Maschler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969); G.E.R. Lloyd, "Saving the Appearance," in *Classical Quarterly*, 28 (1978): 202-22; for a late-medieval treatment that special influence on Copernicus and the problem with which we are here engaged, see Peter Barker, "The Reality of Peurbach's Orbs: Cosmological Continuity in Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century Astronomy" in *Change and Continuity in Early Modern Cosmology*, ed. Patrick J. Boner (New York: Spinger, 2011), 7-32. Things are not as they seem, which is a point that Ptolemy reminds us of in the *Almagest*; the real structure of the universe is hidden from our bodily senses, and can only be revealed through the eyes of the mind. Mathematical models are thus instituted to save the phenomena insofar as they represent certain eternal truths—e.g., harmony, uniformity, and the unchangeable. Georg Peurbach (1423-61) in his *Theoricae novae*

phenomena described, but the truth of the descriptions. In addition, the well-worn assumption regarding the experimentalist program in England during the later seventeenth century—i.e., as steadfastly Baconian and inductive—was in Newton both corroborated and betrayed. Such was Newton's achievement in the *Principia* that it no longer sufficed merely to penetrate into the dark reaches of nature to learn her secrets piecemeal, and to replicate the experience of natural phenomena through a working hypothesis. In the "General Scholium" of the 1713 edition of the *Principia,* Newton famously expressed his *"hypotheses non fingo."* This was the culminating moment of the late-medieval demand for certainty as it emerged from the attendant angst of a *deus abscondita*; and specifically its *aequatio* of the understanding to the phenomena. With the *Principia*, the question of pertaining to terrestrial and celestial physics was not merely that the "*experience* of the phenomena"—i.e., the force of gravity (*vis gravitates*)—could both be explained and legitimated by the schema imposed upon it; but perhaps more significantly that the mathematical schema itself (which Newton claims to have understood in an almost mystical sense) could claim with authority to have an unmediated access to reality, and thus no need for hypotheses. Newton was still sufficiently medieval that a cosmological totality for him was still possible. Even still, the supremeness of the Newtonian achievement was mediated and legitimated by the *Cogito*, and its assumptions of truth and reality.

Just as the humanists had returned to the sources (*ad fontes*) in revitalizing learning and, indeed, articulating for the world the *studia humanitatis* to dignify human existence, so it was Copernicus who proceeded in the same spirit to revive the old astronomical observations (*observationibus…restituit*) in light of the new. Similarly, Newton endeavored to recover the ancient wisdom (*prisca sapientia*) not only to reinvigorate, but also to "re-deify" the cosmos in

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planetarum (1454) provided a systematic presentation of the various orb models in which the reality of the orb is assumed.

light of God's active will—*deitas est dominatio dei…dominatio entis spiritualis deum constituit*—a concern that the "General Scholium" makes very clear.[372] It seems, then, that the emergent problematic as it developed from the late Middle Ages to Descartes (and certainly as extended to Newton as well) depended not simply upon a question of sources (*fontes*), but on the very notion of a "source" itself, which we might dub the "domain of experience." It is within this domain that the relationship of knower (man) and known (world) was redefined. As part and parcel of a nascent and creative historical moment, the domain of experience here understood equates in a very real sense with "possibility;" or perhaps even the "experience of possibility" (*experientia possibilis*), which is to say, in the modern world is the source of the imagination—and especially insofar as that faculty acts in a productive and intuitive mode. It is here within this domain of experience together with its implied dynamic of possibility that dream itself must be encountered. It is not merely that the dream confuses the distinction between illusion and reality, but an entire cosmological dynamic. Indeed the dream represents the *sine qua non* of oneiric uncertainty in the early modern period, but also a certain fullness of possibility.

The Olympic Dreams

Descartes experienced his famous "Olympic" dreams on the night of November 10-11, 1619. We know of these dreams primarily through Leibniz' *Cogitationes Privatae* (1676), as well as from Adrien Baillet's 1691 biography, *Vie de Mr. Des-Cartes.* As Descartes tells us in the *Discourse* (and which Baillet corroborates), he experienced a sequence of dreams while in Ulm, which moreover, marked the precise moment where he found a new direction in life; the famous "right path of truth" (*rectum iter veritatis*). For it was upon this path that Descartes found the conviction to pursue the foundations of a wonderful science *mirabilis scientiae fundamenta*;

[372] See *Principia*, "General Scholium," 1713 edition, 482.

the broad contours of which (if still mostly opaque) had appeared also during the course of the dream sequence. As the *Discourse* suggests, it was the dream and its revelation of a particular truth that righted his path, and allowed for him to establish the unshakeable foundation (*fundamentum inconcussum*) on which he would ultimately seek to ground the sciences. As intimated above I do not intend here to offer a close, line-by-line interpretation of the dream sequence, but merely to open the question of the Cartesian dream in view of a larger cultural problematic, which at the same time bore a direct significance on the perceived necessity to turn to the *Cogito*. Yet, for the purpose of what follows, it is perhaps appropriate to briefly outline the broad contours of those three dreams, so as to have common frame of reference.

The first dream conveys a deep sense of confusion and angst.[373] A whirlwind blows Descartes through the streets, and he is beset by a general sense of misdirection. He encounters a familiar man, whom he knows, but there is no exchange of greetings between them. The dreamer is indecisive as to approach the familiar man, or otherwise enter into a church to escape the wine. The angst in question seems to be a moral angst Descartes confronts face-to-face the problem of inaction. There is another man in the streets who claims he has something to give Descartes, who believes it is a melon from a strange land. As people begin to gather around him, Descartes takes notice that though they are standing upright, he is bent over. He awakens to a severe pain in his left side; and after praying to God to save him from the evil effect of the dream, he meditates for two hours and sleeps again. At the commencement of the second dream, he hears a sharp explosive sound (which he took for a clap of thunder) at which moment he was awakened to see many sparks scattered about the room (*beaucoup d'étincelles de feu répandues par la*

[373] AT X:181-2. *Oeuvres de Descartes*, Vol. X, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: J. Vrin, 1908.) The text derives from Adrien Baillet's *Vie de Mr. Des-Cartes* (1691), which parallels Leibniz,' *Cogitationes Privatae* (1676), which scholarly consensus maintains was a verbatim copy of Descartes' "Little Notebook," as catalogued and preserved by Hector-Pierre Chanut (1601-62) as "Item C" of the Stockholm Inventory.

chambre).[374] We are given to understand that such an experience was somewhat familiar to the dreamer, who having recourse to philosophy was able to calm himself and to fall back to sleep. In the third and final dream, Descartes encounters two books on a table—a dictionary and the *Corpus Pöetarum.*[375] He finds in the poetry volume two verses, both from Ausonius: "*Quod vitae sectabor iter*;" and "*Est et Non*."[376] There appears a man in his dream, who in encountering Descartes inquires (among other things) as to where he had encountered the volume; a question to which Descartes replied with uncertainty. A variety of confusion ensues, with the books in the dream disappearing and then reappearing; a seeming incompleteness to the dictionary; and finally Descartes' inability to find again the Ausonius verses that had posed to him the remarkable question. The dream account concludes with an interpretative act. Thus, the decisive moment in the third dream centers on two episodes of self-interpretation: one "while still asleep,"[377] and second, after the dreamer had awakened, to continue "along the same lines." What is more, the account reveals the problematic and obscure boundaries between thinking and dreaming; but also the indication that the inherent difficulties can seemingly be overcome by conscious reason, even in a dreaming state. The interpretations suggest that the encountered mental agitations, or the vision itself, centered on a question of Enthusiasm, and from which the truth was revealed. The following textual extracts from both Baillet's *Vie* and Leibniz' *Cogitationes Privatae* convey the general sense:

Baillet's French:

[374] AT X: 182.
[375] AT X: 182-6.
[376] *Eclogues*, Liber VII.2; VII.4. *Loeb Classical Library*, trans. Hugh G. Evelyn White (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).
[377] AT X:184. Toward the end of the dream narrative, Baillet continues: "What is singular and remarkable here is that in wondering whether he had seen a dream or a vision, [Descartes] decided while still asleep that it was a dream, interpreting it before sleep had left him."

Il attribuait cette merveille à la divinité de l'enthousiasme, et à la force de l'imagination, qui fait sortir les semences de la sagesse (qui se trouvent dans l'esprit de tous les hommes comme les étincelles de feu dans les cailloux) avec beaucoup plus de facilité et beaucoup plus de brillant même, que ne peut faire la raison dans les philosophes.[378]

And Leibniz' Latin*:*

poetae per enthusiamum et vim imaginationis scripsere: sunt in nobos semina scientiae, ut in silice, quae per rationem a philosophis educuntur, per imaginationem a poetis excutiunture magisque.[379]

The comments upon the dreams as revealed in the *Cogitationes Privatae,* and even in Baillet's subsequent glosses, reveal a certain candidness and open humility that one finds only in the midst of their deepest and most private thoughts. The openness here, as in a confession, is decidedly striking and poignant, if difficult to formulate in precise and exacting terms. And aside from the broad parallels exhibited in the *Cogitationes Privatae* with those encountered in Baillet's later account both texts nevertheless convey, and in a significant way, a sense of the author's openness to the possibilities found within a vibrant and confused world. Such was this world, as Baillet's account surely suggests, that it at once yielded promise and vexation, triumph and despair, and even truth and falsity. It is perhaps the crude richness of the accounts themselves—and this is not a detraction—that reveals the deeper forces arrayed within what I view to be a specific, cultural-historical moment. Such a moment, in its confusion, ambiguity and fantasticality, is thoroughly and altogether Baroque. The dreams convey a sense of a disjointed and dismembered world. The dreams at once harbors within it elements of the tradition in sort of

[378] AT X:184, "He attributed this marvel to the divinity of enthusiasm, and the force of the imagination, which bring out the seeds of wisdom, which dwell in the minds of all men—as sparks of fire in a flint stone(*les cailloux*)—more easily and more brilliantly than can the reason of the philosophers."

[379] AT X: 217, "poets have written by enthusiasm and the power of the imagination: that there are in us seeds of knowledge, as in a flint. Philosophers produce them by reason, but poets drive them out by imagination, and more effectively."

morphogenesis as well as an array of life affirming possibilities. Even in the interpretive moment, Descartes attributed his insights to a "divine marvel and the force of enthusiasm" (*merveille à la divinité de l'enthousiasme).*[380] The divine marvel of enthusiasm is a rich notion vis-à-vis the tradition and, connotes what Cicero termed a divine *afflatus/adflatus*,[381] which is likened to a possession, or an inspiration, and which furthermore, in terms of Descartes' dream sequence, combined with the force of the poetic imagination.

Descartes' account of the dream adheres to a traditional notion of divination, and one that depended upon the inspirational moment (*ἐνθουσιασμός/enthousiasmós*) whereby an individual in being quite overtaken by the divinity, was brought more fully into the truth of the divine vision. Within the larger interpretive frame, I would like to suggest that the dynamics of this enthusiasm work themselves out poetically, and in accordance with Pico's breath of life motif as introduced in the *Oratio*. The traditional notion of the *Imago Dei* now takes the form of "seeds of wisdom" (*les semences de la sagesse*) and which are contained within the minds of all men (*l'esprit de tous les hommes comme*). This is why the *Discourse* becomes so significant, viz. insofar as it offers a method for conducting one's reason well (*pour bien conduire sa raison*). The directive proceeds on the fundamental assumption of the now modified notion of the *Imago Dei;* and in accordance with the first sentence of the *Discours*, which reads: "Good sense (which Descartes comes to view as synonymous with reason) is the best distributed thing in the world."[382] It is not merely that the uniqueness of the divine afflatus is made common, but that all the creatively expressive potential of man is made subject to discipline. Creativity is deemed good only insofar as it is properly channeled. But, these are concerns beyond the ambit of this

[380] AT X:184.
[381] *De natura deorum*, II.167.
[382] AT VI: 1. *"Le bon sens est las chose du monde la mieux partagée."*

dissertation, but nevertheless relate quite significantly to the dream sequence of November 1619. Having sketched these larger concerns it would seem that the problem of the Olympic dreams Descartes is less a curiosity within a larger rational movement than an originary moment within which the specific form of our modernity began to take shape.

EPILOGUE

That Descartes assumed a particular prominence in the emergence of modern science is to suggest his historical timeliness. This is not a causal claim, but relates intimately to the conditions of possibility within which a particular historical moment was allowed to emerge. Such a statement applies not only to the closed history of metaphysics (of which science is part), but also to that of the cultural history of the West that subsumes metaphysics within it. To suggest timeliness is not to put forth the claim (again not in some causal sense) that he or his thought squares in some absolute way with notions of salvation or triumph any more than those of nihilism or despair. Both may be true (and perhaps both are) to varying degrees or orders of significance. Rather, in speaking of timeliness we proceed here, as Descartes himself did, in close regard to a notion of foundations, which pertains not only to the metaphysics that grounds the modern age (as Heidegger observed), but also, and perhaps most importantly, to a broader notion of culture where the very possibility of moral action dwells and thereby a culture manifests.

Our concern here has thus been to attempt a possible definition of modernity—which powerfully relates to a designated cultural phenomenon. Baroque culture is not a cohesive totality as had been the cultures of Archaic Greece and Renaissance Italy; but it nevertheless constitutes a whole of various meanings, which harmonize, conflict and coincide. The question of the Baroque and by extension modernity hinges not so much on "what is the Baroque?" as "how does the Baroque generate meaning, and by extension truth?" Much of what we consider "true" in the modern world derives considerably from the Cartesian notion of subjectivity as fully articulated in the *Discourse* and the *Meditations,* though Descartes most certainly expressed, developed, and validated the notion (however inchoately) within other published and

unpublished texts. What I have sought to do here is to place in relief within a larger cultural-historical dynamic the Cartesian notion of subjectivity as rendered famously in the dictum *Ego cogito—ego existo.* Not unlike the iconography carved in the principle doorway of a Gothic cathedral that one would find, for example, at Chartres, Amiens or Notre Dame, there is with the *Cogito* a centrality of focus, and if that focus is not part of some deep and perfect harmony, it nevertheless forms part of a whole. Within the culture of the Baroque—as within any culture—there abound intrinsic analogies between disparate phenomena, which manifest as cultural forms. Furthermore, these forms can be read and interpreted hermeneutically against the background of culture as determined by a core-set of moral values (*Sitten*). These values, again, determine the horizon of meaning through which thoughts and actions manifest in a habitual and unconscious fashion. These cultural forms reveal the patterns of culture and its subtending truths as they exist within a particular horizon. The horizon of meaning, as well as the related forms, together provide a heuristic that allows us to comprehend a culture as a meaningful whole.

The *Cogito* as it took shape, especially, in the *Regulae,* the *Discourse,* and the *Meditations* tends to a foundational role, and as such, it most certainly "gives to modernity the basis upon which it [modernity] is essentially formed."[383] Yet, such a claim should come with qualification. When viewed within the closed history of metaphysics, Heidegger has disposed us to read that history as a sort of unfolding of the destiny of the West, and therefore we are given to understand that it is a history bound by necessity. The move to culture, as I have attempted to show, forces us to raise questions regarding the foundational role of the *Cogito* beyond the history of metaphysics; and to suggest that the move to the *Cogito* was not a foregone

[383] Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," op. cit. In this essay, he offers another forceful treatment of the modern notion of "*Gestellung*" or enframing, though this time as it relates to modern existence as a sort of "world picture" (*Weltbild*). The modern world as cast in a Cartesian mold reduces world (*Welt*) to an ordering (*Gestellung*) and a representation (*Vorstellung*) whereby things (*Gegenstände*) are properly put into place. Such is "*der Grund seines Wesensgestalt*."

conclusion. And if not bound entirely by an assumption of necessity, the turn to culture nevertheless adds dimension to a marked episode within the history of being that Heidegger has defined primarily in terms of the *Seinsvergessenheit* of modernity.

The necessary and closed history of the "unfolding" of western metaphysics in view of a cultural-historical approach now yields to new questions pertaining to the cultural conditions of possibility. Indeed, it is was these conditions that allowed for the emergence of the *Cogito* in the unique form that it ultimately assumed as both a cultural form of the Baroque and a motivating force within it. These questions occasion a deep reflection regarding the privileged place of the *Cogito,* which it enjoys largely at the denial of other, inwardly directed, conceptions of self; and which were thoroughly present during the early modern period. These vibrant and expressive avenues for self-conception—the *Cogito* included—were opened by the cultural phenomenon of the Renaissance and extended themselves into the Baroque, and in a way that would have profound and enduring transformations for Europe. Within the dynamics of Baroque culture, these varied avenues towards self-expression were delimited and defined by an increasingly well-developed discourse of the subject that either claimed hegemony (as with the *Cogito*), or were otherwise cast to the margins, if not relegated to utter obscurity. Though the history of metaphysics is integral to this story, it obscures the richness of human possibility during a sublimely creative and formative moment in the history of the West.

As I have set about to show in chapter 3, the vibrant energies of the *Λόγος* were drawn into the boundaries of the microcosm to form the very heart of the creative moment that was the Renaissance; and indeed also, the Baroque and modernity as a whole. In this sense, Heidegger's observations on the poem by Stefan George, "The Word," are particularly apt. As he tells us, the "Word," or *Λόγος,* gives us occasion to think about the total experience that is language and our

submission to it.[384] Yet, perhaps more poignantly for the question of the microcosm and the creative moment that it ushered forth, the total experience—i.e., the event of language—as occasioned by metaphorical possibility allowed for the powerful poetical act to define (or redefine) the relation of the world to the *Λόγος.* As Heidegger's analysis makes very clear, the *Λόγος* is that by which the whole of things (i.e., the world) is upheld and kept from sinking into obscurity.[385] Language—in its essence (i.e., *Λόγος*)—can never be known directly; and yet we are always within its power and are shaped by it; and yet humans are an integral part of that dynamic, which occurs through the mediating action of the metaphor.

By moving away from a definitively philosophical approach or one otherwise cast in an intellectualist vein, a cultural history can open the question of modernity as a poetical moment. The microcosm metaphor of the *Oratio* is a generative or fresh (as Ricoeur calls them) metaphor; and insofar as it was enmeshed within a novel orientation to life it also reinvigorated language and extended its creative possibilities into any number of spheres of human action. The poet thus redefined the relation of world and man, but so also was this redefinition intrinsically one of discovery (in the broadest semantic sense). It is within the profound, poetic experience of language that one may be touched by it, if only fleetingly and at a distance. In this moment, language is the most creative, and thus the microcosm as a generative metaphor had the ability to transform profoundly the relation of world to the *Λόγος*. And though this metaphoric possibility expressed itself in a unified and total way during the Italian Renaissance, it was no less dynamic in it extension to the Baroque. As an event of language, the microcosm metaphor is integral—and indeed foundational—in rethinking the emergent possibilities of the modern world. This is

[384] Heidegger, "The Nature of Language" in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 73.
[385] Ibid.

especially the case when considering the manifested possibilities for thought and action before they are expressed as inviolable "truths," as they would later become, for example, with the entrenchment of the natural sciences. With this in mind, the significance of Pico's text is oriented less toward a question of Renaissance self-fashioning, as cast within a Neoplatonic or mystical framework, than a setting in which to rethink the fundamental structure of man's thought and action as it transformed at the threshold of the medieval and modern worlds.

The *Cogito*'s emergence within a distinct historical moment presupposed in a profound way this metaphoric possibility, which came to translate into a specific manifestation of the modal action of *invenire*—now relatively narrowly defined. The *Cogito* in its equation to science (and a mediating method) becomes in an interesting way both the ground of possibility as defined within the narrow confines of *theōria,* as well as an exceedingly expressive cultural form. As a cultural form, the *Cogito* thus assumes less a foundational status in the overall cultural phenomenon of the Baroque than a status that is qualitatively representative of it. It is only foundational in its application to science and as a metaphysical ground. As the dynamics of the Baroque unfolded historically, the *Cogito* became integrally representative only within a specific moment of that unfolding, and in such a way that the history of metaphysics becomes hegemonic. At the most basic level, this heuristic of culture—and specifically the cultural horizon—allowed for the cultural form (the *Cogito*) and the dynamics of culture that informed it (the surroundings) to remain integral to one another, and in such a way as to delimit the possibility of superficial abstraction and objectification.

Yet, this is not to contextualize the *Cogito*. Contextualization in the conventional sense seems to reduce historical significance to a network of causal relations and interrelations, whereby historical meaning—though seemingly expanded and enriched—is nevertheless limited

to what we may call the "context of the context." In other words, the problem here is that the context itself becomes an objectified phenomenon within which causal explanations—themselves the conditions from which the significance is allowed to emerge—are imposed upon historical phenomena in a closed, causal frame that is ultimately ahistorical. This is why Gaukroger's intellectual history of Descartes, though rich in details, ultimately fails as a cultural history.

The objectification of the context—which is to say its abstractedness (and closed-ness) moves away from the full possibilities of historical thinking—and not only hinders the possibility of an open past and an open present, it also disallows for an authentic historical interpretation to emerge in the space that this openness occasions. The past is a living past, and we engage with it in a living present. Thus, again, the cultural-historical approach, as I have discussed above, is a movement away from a linear, causal explanation of certain decisive developments in the early modern period. By raising the question of culture, I have sought to examine the emergence of modern science (and the *Cogito* within) as a complex cultural form, which as I maintain, is an accretion not only from a dominant claim to truth, but also the underpinning value structure that conditions those claims and shapes that truth.

As we have seen, the move beyond a network of causation and context is to reorient altogether the question of the *Cogito* and its significance for modernity. That being said, the dissertation has emphatically not set out in a quest for "origins" as they may relate to exact essences, purest possibilities or an instituting activity (*Entstehung*);[386] yet the overarching task in

[386] On the point of genealogy, see especially Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1989) and Foucault's commentary, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984). On origins, see Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (New York: Verso, 1998).

the dissertation (and as it evolves henceforth) nevertheless hinges upon questions pertaining to an "originary" moment (*Ursprung*).[387] As they pertain to the world of the Baroque—whose image we have attempted to "phenomenalize" if only in outline—it perhaps goes without saying that these originary moments are historical grey areas, which is to say, rich, elusive, raw and unpredictable. In that sense, the Olympic dreams of November 1619 are especially apt. The dream, along with the culture of the Baroque of which it formed part, is alien and queer to our modern, rationalist predispositions. Their characteristic strangeness is unsettling, being perhaps very much akin to Freud's depiction of the dream landscape as *das Unheimlichkeit*, or the "uncanny." The feeling of being-not-at-home is by definition unsettling—and attendant to it is the characteristic angst-ridden-ness along with the elusive array of striking peculiarities, which for better or for worse, force the realization that the world is somehow different. This is the "world," the *mundus ambiguum* that Descartes encountered in the dream—at once strange and familiar. And yet, in confronting it, he somehow felt the perhaps inexplicable desire to guard against its uncertainties and confusions. A moral existence, and with it the possibilities for right action in determining one's path within the world, could not depend upon the interpretation of a confused network of signs and signatures. The truth could no longer subordinate (as it could for Augustine or Dante) to various layers of meaning and significance, which comprised the world and the cosmos as a whole. Rather, the truth, even in questions of moral action, must be always certain, lucid, and literal; and thus the door is opened to a tyrannizing form of *theōria*.

The Olympic dreams thus bring into relief the originary moment of the Baroque as a whole, and in a way that nevertheless proved decisive for the direction to which the culture was then oriented. With this in mind the dreams must not be confronted under the uncritical sway of

[387] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama.*

the *Cogito* insofar as they are subsumed within the fable of modernity as articulated in the *Discourse* and the *Meditations*. An authentic historical sense, which hinges on the fact that the past is open and thus shares a common corridor with the present, allows for inquiries into the swirling eddy of the originary as represented by the dream, but also with any cultural aspect of the historical Baroque. The past is still very much the present.

It perhaps goes without saying that such queries into the originary do not constitute a sustained attempt to find any sort of a decisive break from modernity's ancient and medieval past, any more than the miraculous appearance of a formative genesis as revealed by the truths of modern science. At the very heart of these assumptions, it would seem, are the fully incorporated (and indeed legitimatizing) presuppositions of modernity itself, which prides itself on distinctness and novelty. Yet, there can be no question that there is continuity between the originary moment and what preceded it; and in the case of Descartes, continuity exists, if only so superficially as his employment of the technical apparatus and terminology of the Schools. Even where the influences of continuity are deep, as with the marked strands of Augustinianism, Thomism, Scotism, and Stoicism etc., and which pervade extensively the Cartesian corpus, it is not sufficient to claim merely a continuity of the tradition.

A close reading of Descartes' works reveals that he employed the effects of an array of very influential, traditional texts—sometimes consciously, sometimes not—but he employed them always in creative and innovative ways. This should be our concern. Is there, for example, a "spirit of Augustinianism" in Descartes' writings? There is, most certainly, as chapter 4 would seem to suggest. And yet, though there may be striking, core similarities—which is perhaps the obvious result of a shared tradition—the path that Augustine followed toward an intellectual knowledge of God [*Deus summa pulchritudo*] was no more that of Descartes than the move to

the *Cogito* was that of Augustine. The point to be made here insofar as researches pertain to Descartes is that one must perhaps incorporate within their analyses the distinctive and influential aspects of the tradition, yet with the proviso that we constantly raise the question as to why certain theologico-philosophical elements *inter alia* may have found appeal with Descartes and his contemporaries; and moreover, how the transformations therein shaped the tradition we have inherited in marked, profound and enduring ways. The core concern here hinges upon those aspects of which Descartes may have been less conscious—the familiar aspects of the tradition serving as a dress and a livery of something more vital—yet were nevertheless incorporated into his thought no less forcefully. It is perhaps impossible to know the "forces" directly, but we can know significances through the patterns by which they are expressed. And thus, we may gain some insight into the human condition and its orientation towards its world along with the shifting edifice of meaning set about during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

We have attempted to show (and at best only superficially) the array of linguistic and cultural forces that at once comprise the centerpiece of our research and its peripheries. Again, as viewed in relief, the *Cogito* is something of a monadic totality, and thus possesses definite, singular and unique characteristics; yet at the same time, bears a striking reflection of the cultural totality of which it is part. And, as it is part of the history of metaphysics, which again is subsumed within the cultural-historical whole of the West, the *Cogito* forms an integral part of the grand, cultural continuum, which shall always make relevant Descartes' appeals to Augustine, Aquinas, Bonaventure, Cicero and others. Tracing the significance of the *Cogito* is to necessarily raise the significance of the whole, which as Burckhardt said in regard to the Greeks, is to deal with a "gigantic continuum which might be best symbolized by the map of the stars; the attempt to trace it is continually confused, as the single object appears now on the periphery

and easily accessible, now more remote, and now in the very centre."[388] This is to say, we seek to understand the dynamics of emergence (*Ursprung*) amid a process of shadowed confusion (*Verwirrunghen*) and raw possibility when after at least two millennia the ancient cosmos was abandoned.[389]

[388] Burckhardt, *The Greeks and Greek Civilization*, 7.

[389] To some extent, my interpretation of the Baroque takes certain cues from Benjamin, especially his understanding of the world of the *Trauerspiel* as "originary." These are his terms.

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