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### What is the Cartesian *Cogito*?

Czym jest *cogito* Kartezjańskie?

Что такое картезианское *cogito*?

Descartes' philosophy was the object of one of the greatest 17th-century controversies already during his life-time. There was hardly a thesis in it which would not be disputed.

By 1670, that is twenty years after Descartes died and despite numerous edicts that did not permit his philosophy to be lectured<sup>1</sup>, it dominated all universities in the Netherlands. Shortly afterwards it spread to France, Germany, England, Italy, Poland, and to many other European countries where it won more and more followers. The enthusiasm which captivated the minds of the epoch did not last long, however. "Descartes survived for about thirty years in England and little more than sixty on the Continent".<sup>2</sup> As early as 1734 Voltaire wrote in his *Lettres philosophiques* that "few people in London read Descartes and his works had indeed become useless".<sup>3</sup> Was it really true that, as Voltaire and earlier Pascal<sup>4</sup> would have it, Descartes became "useless"?

On the contrary. Cartesian philosophy was and, as we will show later, still is a fact which not only could not but was not ignored.<sup>5</sup> While

<sup>1</sup> In Utrecht in 1642, in Leyden in 1648, the 1665 edict of the Dutch States. the edict of Pope Alexander VII in 1663, and also the 1671 interdiction by Louis XIV.

<sup>2</sup> E. Gilson: *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, London 1955, p. 209.

<sup>3</sup> Voltaire: *Lettres Philosophiques*, Paris 1956, p. 74.

<sup>4</sup> B. Pascal: *Pensées*, 1962, p. 363.

<sup>5</sup> First response to Descartes' philosophy on the part of naturalists — T. Hobbes, P. Gassendi; fideists — E. de la Mothe Vayer, B. Pascal; Protestant theologians — G. Voetius, J. Revius, Triglandius; Catholic theologians — Bourdain, Daniel, Hardonin.

discussing post-Cartesian systems we could even assert that until Kant only some consequences had been drawn from and various fragments of Descartes' philosophy had been developed. On the one hand the rationalists (N. Malebranche, Spinoza, Leibniz, Ch. Wolff) endeavoured to solve the problem of the union of body and soul, emphasizing the ontological aspect of the Cartesian system. On the other hand, the empiricists (Locke, Berkeley, Hume), who accepted *status res cogitans* as an ontological fact, posed the methodological problems, i.e. the origin of the contents of consciousness, as the main object of their considerations. Therefore, having disregarded many essential elements in the Cartesian system, we can find in it both Malebranche's occasionalism, Spinoza's pantheism, Leibniz's monadology, Locke's sensualism, Berkeley's immaterialism, La Mettrie's materialism, and even Kant's criticism.

The problem of *cogito*, the first principle and the most controversial question of this philosophy, was at first examined as an expression of substantial dualism. The attempts to "overcome" it took three directions: towards spiritualism (Pascal), materialism (Regius, P. S. Régis) and towards the more established dualism (L. de la Forge, J. Clauberg, G. de Cordemoy).

Some attempted to defend Descartes' dualism by trying to reconcile it with religious dogmas (A. Arnauld) while others, who preferred mechanistic physics, searched for its empirical justification (J. Roehault). Still others drew anti-religious conclusions from this philosophy (G. Voëtius, L. P. du Vaucel, Hardonin).

All those transformations led to distortions of Descartes' thought and in consequence, to the fact that "while in France the body lost its mind, in England the mind lost its body".<sup>6</sup> In general, the controversies about Descartes' philosophy, which have begun with the publication of *Mediationes de Prima Philosophia* (1641) and are still fervent today, concern three main problems. First, how to define the relationship of this philosophy to religion and scholastic philosophy (theology)? Second, what is the place and the role of metaphysical reflections in the whole of Descartes' work? Third, is this a realistic position or an idealistic one?

Answers to the first question found in Descartes' philosophy an apology of religion (Baillet<sup>7</sup>, J. Millet<sup>8</sup>), with the philosopher himself being regarded as the representative and defender of scholasticism against materialism (A. Koyré<sup>9</sup>), or they found a negation of religion or even

<sup>6</sup> Gilson: *op. cit.*, pp. 176—177.

<sup>7</sup> A. Baillet: *La Vie de Monsieur Des-Cartes*, Paris 1961.

<sup>8</sup> J. Millet: *Descartes, son histoire depuis 1637, sa philosophie, rôle dans le mouvement général de l'esprit humain*, Paris 1870.

<sup>9</sup> A. Koyré: *Descartes und die Scholastik*, Bonn 1923.

of religiousness and Descartes was called "the great destructor of metaphysical idols" (L. Liard<sup>10</sup>, P. L. Laberthonnière<sup>11</sup>). There were also attempts to reconcile the two positions (A. Espinas<sup>12</sup>) or this was regarded as a pseudoproblem because Descartes himself never posed the question of science versus religion (H. Gouhier<sup>13</sup>). In answering question two it was argued that the metaphysical reflections were only an introduction to the part "proper" that is to physics (P. L. Laberthonnière<sup>14</sup>, Ch. Adam<sup>15</sup>, E. Gilson<sup>16</sup>) or, conversely, that physics functioned as the argument for metaphysical thèses (J. Chevalier<sup>17</sup>, H. Gouhier). It was also argued that it was dualism of two independent parts of Descartes' work: the metaphysical, where he was an idealist, and the natural, where he was a materialist (L. Liard, H. Lefebvre<sup>18</sup>). The answer to question three saw idealism in Descartes' position, i.e. idealism in the spirit of Kant's criticism (P. Natorp<sup>19</sup>, E. Cassirer<sup>20</sup>, J. Segond<sup>21</sup>), subjective idealism (G. Rodriguez<sup>22</sup>) and objective idealism (L. Liard), or realism (L. Duriac<sup>23</sup>, O. Hamelin<sup>24</sup>).

These controversies lie in the diversity of meanings in Descartes' writings, which make it possible and to some extent even justify the extreme and opposing interpretations. This is connected with the so-called "question of the sincerity of Descartes' assertions". According as it was to be decided positively (L. Dimier<sup>25</sup>, G. Milhaud<sup>26</sup>) or negatively (L. Liard, Ch. Adam), Descartes' assertions were taken in their literal

<sup>10</sup> L. Liard: *Descartes*, Paris, 1882.

<sup>11</sup> P. L. Laberthonnière: *La théorie de la foi chez Descartes*, "Annales de Philosophie Chrétienne", 12 (1911), pp. 382—403.

<sup>12</sup> A. Espinas: *Descartes et la Morale*, Paris 1925.

<sup>13</sup> H. Gouhier: *La pensée religieuse de Descartes*, Paris 1924.

<sup>14</sup> P. L. Laberthonnière: *Le dualisme cartésien*, "Annales de Philosophie Chrétienne", 80 (1909), pp. 35—92.

<sup>15</sup> Ch. Adam: *Descartes, sa vie et ses oeuvres. Étude historique*, in *Descartes, Oeuvres* par Ch. Adam et P. Tannery, vol. xii, Paris 1910.

<sup>16</sup> E. Gilson: *La liberté chez Descartes et la théologie*, Paris 1913.

<sup>17</sup> J. Chevalier: *Descartes*, Paris 1921.

<sup>18</sup> H. Lefebvre: *Descartes*, Paris 1947.

<sup>19</sup> P. Natorp: *Descartes Erkenntnistheorie*, Marburg 1882.

<sup>20</sup> E. Cassirer: *Descartes' Kritik der mathematischen und naturwissenschaftlichen Erkenntnis*, Marburg 1899.

<sup>21</sup> J. Segond: *La sagesse cartésienne et la science*, Paris 1932.

<sup>22</sup> G. Rodriguez: *L'existence du monde extérieur d'après Descartes*, Paris 1904.

<sup>23</sup> L. Duriac: *Le substantialisme cartésienne et le phénoménisme criticiste*, "Annales de la Faculté de Lettres de Bordeaux", 1881, p. 473—475.

<sup>24</sup> O. Hamelin: *Le Système de Descartes*, Paris 1911.

<sup>25</sup> L. Dimier: *Descartes*, Paris 1918.

<sup>26</sup> G. Milhaud: *Descartes savant*, Paris 1921.

sense or two persons were discerned, as M. Leroy did<sup>27</sup>, in the philosopher: the "official" person for the Church and the "private" in the letters to his friends. However, in so far as the above fragments of Cartesian philosophy permit its interpretations and understanding more or less remote from Descartes' intention, the thesis of *cogito, ergo sum*, as pointed for example by P. Natorp and L. Blanchet<sup>28</sup>, breaks them down showing their groundlessness and even inner contradiction.

Although the first work devoted to the analysis of that question appeared as early as in 1845 (by P. Knoodt<sup>29</sup>), it was only in the last fifty years that the importance of the problem of *cogito* was realized: its understanding decides about the possibility of interpreting and estimating the whole of Descartes' work. This helped, on the one hand, to take up more thorough search for the sources of the Cartesian thesis in the Antiquity and in the Middle Ages (L. Blanchet<sup>30</sup>, E. Bréhier<sup>31</sup>, P. M. Schuhl<sup>32</sup>, Ch. Boyer<sup>33</sup>, D. S. Robinson<sup>34</sup>). On the other hand it helped to find the continuation of the thesis and its developments in Descartes' successors (V. Delbos<sup>35</sup>, F. Medicus<sup>36</sup>, L. Robinson<sup>37</sup>, G. E. Barié<sup>38</sup>). The thesis of *cogito* ceased to serve as an additional argument justifying a certain interpretation of Cartesian philosophy as was the case with Knoodt. The thesis became the object of separate research.

However, if we consider the works which treat the thesis as the main

<sup>27</sup> M. Leroy: *Descartes le philosophe au masque*, Paris 1929.

<sup>28</sup> L. Blanchet: *Les antécédents historiques du "je pense, donc je suis"*, Paris 1920.

<sup>29</sup> P. Knoodt: *De Cartesii sententia "cogito, ergo sum"*, Vratislavie, Breslau 1845.

<sup>30</sup> L. Blanchet: *La préparation du cogito cartésien, dans la philosophie grecque de l'antiquité*, „Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale”, 40 (1933), pp. 187—230.

<sup>31</sup> E. Bréhier: *Une forme archaïque du cogito, ergo sum*, „Revue Philosophique de la France et de L'étranger”, 67 (1942—43), pp. 143—144.

<sup>32</sup> P. N. Schuhl: *Y a-t-il une source aristotélicienne du cogito?*, „Revue Philosophique de la France et de L'étranger”, 138 (1948), pp. 191—194.

<sup>33</sup> Ch. Boyer: *Le "cogito" dans Saint Augustin*, „Cartesio nel terzo centenario del Discorso de methodo”, Milano 1937, pp. 79—83.

<sup>34</sup> D. S. Robinson: *Precursors of Descartes' cogito argument*, „Crucial Issues in Philosophy”, Boston, 1955, pp. 255—266.

<sup>35</sup> V. Delbos: *Le cogito de Descartes et la philosophie de Locke*, „Année Philosophique”, 24 (1913), pp. 1—14.

<sup>36</sup> F. Medicus: *Descartes' cogito und der Deutsche Idealismus*, „Travaux du IX<sup>e</sup> Congrès International de Philosophie”, „Congrès Descartes”, Paris 1937, pp. 55—62.

<sup>37</sup> L. Robinson: *Le cogito cartésien et l'origine de l'idéalisme moderne*, „Revue Philosophique de la France et de L'étranger”, 123 (1939), pp. 307—335.

<sup>38</sup> G. E. Barié: *Du cogito cartésien au moi transcendantal*, „Revue Philosophique de la France et de L'étranger”, 141 (1951), pp. 221—227.

object of analyses, we find a paradoxical situation. The thesis, which, according to Descartes, was to be the first and indubitable principle of the whole system, is the object of numerous controversies. This is due, I believe, to the fact that despite the declarations of researchers-historians, Descartes' thesis is rather an inspiration for the new conceptions of the world and man and, at the same time, it is to confirm the correctness or historical continuity of a developing or accepted doctrine. Cartesian philosophy is thus investigated not for itself but for the goals outside it. In short it is an instrument.

If we are to use classification again, the above-mentioned works (call them intentionally historical) could be divided into two basic groups. One comprises the works of scholars who take the position of Neopositivism, analytical school, and of all kinds of common-sense philosophy. The other comprises the works written from the position of phenomenology and existentialism or different kinds of subjective philosophy. Scholars of the first group, who follow the reductionist tendency, that is who attempt to solve philosophical problems by the methods within logical-linguistic terminology, emphasize the epistemological aspect of Descartes' thesis. They formulate it above all as the model truth while they discuss the possible ontological or metaphysical problems which cannot be excluded or avoided as the consequences of logical-linguistic analyses. They treat the transition from *cogito* to *sum* either as enthymematic inference (O. Hamelin, H. Scholz<sup>39</sup>, J. Łukasiewicz<sup>40</sup>, A. Reymond<sup>41</sup>) or as an expression of intuition (S. Czajkowski<sup>42</sup>, H. L. Miéville<sup>43</sup>, R. N. Beck<sup>44</sup>, E. W. Beth<sup>45</sup>). However, consistent analyses lead the adherents of the inferential interpretation to *petitio principii* or to *regressus ad infinitum*, or still to the assumption of freely accepted premises and axioms the attempts to justify which lead to even greater difficulties. The proponents of the intuitive interpretation, in turn, are not able (despite endeavours) to leave the framework of subjective idealism, relativism, or at best of

<sup>39</sup> H. Scholz: *Über das cogito ergo sum*, "Kant-Studien", 36 (1931), pp. 126—147.

<sup>40</sup> J. Łukasiewicz: *Kartezjusz*, „Kwartalnik Filozoficzny”, 15 (1938), pp. 123—128.

<sup>41</sup> A. Reymond: *A propos du Cogito de Descartes*, "Jahrbuch der Schweizerischen Philosophischen", 2 (1942), pp. 78—83.

<sup>42</sup> S. Czajkowski: *Intuicja twórcza w filozofii Descartes'a i znaczenie pojęcia Boga w jego teorii poznania*, "Przegląd Filozoficzny", 33 (1930), p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> H. L. Miéville: *Le cogito dans la phénoménologie de Husserl et le cogito de Descartes*, "Jahrbuch der Schweizerischen Philosophischen", 1 (1941), pp. 1—19.

<sup>44</sup> R. N. Beck: *Descartes' cogito reexamined*, "Philosophy and Phenomenological Research", 14 (1953—54), pp. 212—220.

<sup>45</sup> E. U. Beth: *"Cogito, ergo sum" — raisonnement ou intuition?*, "Dialectica", 12 (1950), pp. 223—235.

psychologism. This contradicts Descartes' declaration that the thesis of *cogito, ergo sum* is assumption-free, necessary and realistic.

G. Dreyfus<sup>46</sup> makes an endeavour to reconcile the two standpoints and to find the source of contention. Yet ultimately he blames Descartes for ambiguity the foundation of which is the dualism of "I — God" and "finiteness — infinity" contained in *cogito*.

Despite the above difficulties the Knoodt-initiated autonomization of the thesis is still continued: it is taken out of the whole system, ceasing thereby to be Descartes' thesis. Instead, it becomes one that does not belong to any philosophical system. The thesis is continued and even further developed by A. J. Ayer<sup>47</sup> and J. Hintikka<sup>48</sup>, the authors of the most famous approaches to it in the recent years. The former, who accepts the standpoint of widely-understood syntax, no longer deals with the logical value *sensu stricto* (i.e. veracity or falsity) of the thesis. Through comparative (interlinguistic) analyses he attempts to examine the validity of Cartesian reasoning, that is its consistency (or inconsistency) with the rules of correct reasoning. This leads A. J. Ayer to assert that Descartes did not start to construct his system with *cogito* but with *sum*. And that is, as C. B. Daly<sup>49</sup> rightly observes, the non-valid attribution of the phenomenological or even existential character to this philosophy. Hintikka in turn, who proposes a pragmatic approach to the problem of *cogito*, apprehends the Cartesian (thesis as the so-called performative statement). Without prior justification Hintikka assumes a division between the informative-reporting and the performative functions of statements and, also without grounds, he attributes to Descartes the Humean conception of knowledge as a set of random items of information formulated into judgments, that is the identification of knowledge with conviction.

The negation of the ontological-metaphysical structure of the *cogito* thesis in favour of the syntactic — logical structure is caused, it W. F. Niebel's view<sup>50</sup>, by the fact that Descartes himself created the possibility of such a transformation. For he closed the intention of the ontological status of *cogito* in a logical formula. L. O. Kattsoff<sup>51</sup>, the American student of the problem, defends the ontological status of the thesis from

<sup>46</sup> G. Dreyfus: *Discussion sur le "cogito" et L'axiome "pour penser il faut être"*, "Revue International de Philosophie XVI<sup>e</sup> année", 6 (1952), pp. 117—125.

<sup>47</sup> A. J. Ayer: *The Problem of Knowledge*, London 1956, pp. 44—52.

<sup>48</sup> J. Hintikka: *Cogito, ergo sum: inference of performance?*, "Philosophical Review", 71 (1962), pp. 3—32. *Cogito ergo sum as an inference and a performance*, "Philosophical Review", 72 (1963), pp. 487—496.

<sup>49</sup> C. B. Daly: *Metaphysics and the Limits of Language*, London 1961.

<sup>50</sup> W. F. Niebel: *Das Problem des Cogito ergo sum*, Frankfurt 1972.

<sup>51</sup> L. O. Kattsoff: *Cogito, ergo sum*, "Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale", 63 (1958), pp. 251—262.

yet another position. He tries to overcome the generally accepted conviction, programmatic with the Neopositivists, that if the apparatus of modern logic is employed, it will by itself rule out all metaphysics. Kattsoff regards this view as erroneous because metaphysical assertions, among which he includes the *cogito* thesis, can be sensible, since they can be verified by means of eidetic intuition. Kattsoff maintains that this thesis is the first metaphysical truth which results from the cognition of the thing itself or from the intuitive insight into "thinking" and into "I".

The last assertion, that is the emphasis upon the metaphysical aspect of the Cartesian thesis, was the point of departure and arrival for the inquiries by the authors from the other group. It consists of scholars who pursue various kinds of subjective philosophy and look upon philosophical problems through phenomenology, existentialism etc. They conceive the Cartesian thesis as the discovery of "conscious being", which was to be the argument for the anthropological (F. Alquié) or ontological (W. F. Niebel) characterization of Descartes' philosophy. For example, in Alquié's view<sup>52</sup>, *cogito* is above all the discovery of strong and lonely man in modern times.

These interpretations or rather reinterpretations are, however, a non-Cartesian turn to phenomenology and existentialism. It transforms Descartes' *cogito* into Heidegger's *Dasein* (M. Merleau-Ponty) or into Sartre's *cogito* (Sartre). The case is similar with the works by the first group.

To sum it up: while reading the literature devoted to the Cartesian philosophy (or to the *cogito* thesis) we see that not only is it not a "useless" philosophy, but on the contrary, the "older" this philosophy is, to the greater extent it becomes the object and inspiration of many new papers or even of separate philosophical trends. They either "continue" Descartes' ideas: in phenomenology (Husserl), in Neothomism (L. Noël), in existentialism (J. P. Sartre), in personalism (Mounier), in structuralism (C. Lévi-Strauss) and in linguistics (N. Chomsky); or they try to "overcome" Descartes' ideas, for example by the final solution of the problem of the dualism of "inner and outer life" known as the mind-body problem (Wittgenstein, P. Th. Geach, G. Ryle, P. F. Strawson, S. Hampshire).

This produced pure, phenomenological egology on the one hand, and the behaviourist negation of consciousness on the other. The two positions are doubtlessly remote from Descartes' intentions.

Let us therefore return to the "beginnings". For both the presented current relevance and even the renaissance of Descartes' philosophy in

<sup>52</sup> F. Alquié: *La découverte métaphisique de l'homme chez Descartes*, Paris 1950.

the 20th century together with its above-mentioned distortions in a way compel the historian to return to Descartes.

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What justifies so numerous and diverse interpretations? How is it that the same fragments of works by Descartes used as arguments for one standpoint become counter-arguments within another? Why the problem of *cogito* was and still is the inspiration for many philosophical trends and serves as the object of fierce attacks? The answers to these questions, as we have shown above, are many. We could blame Descartes and assume that he was not consistent in realizing the principle of *clara et distincta*, or we could blame the authors of interpretations for being too tendentious. We can finally regard this question as a pseudoproblem and never deal with it again, which would be the simplest way out. The thesis of *cogito* as undoubtedly the first principle and the central question of Cartesian philosophy, treated autonomously, indeed admits of a certain range of interpretations. However, to place the thesis in the systemic or socio-historical contexts, for example, confines it to one interpretation which renders the thesis most adequately. This is justified by the fact that no philosopher is ever aware of the "missing" parts of his work. In a way he automatically adds that which he knows to that which he has verbalized — he even adds that which he accepts subconsciously or that "who" he is and "where" he is. That is why, when we try to take the "mask"<sup>63</sup> off Descartes' face, we must take into consideration both the way Descartes approaches to that question and what his approach expresses.

The serious difficulty which the student of the problem of *cogito* faces is the question about which of its formulations deserves special attention. Although they deal with the same problem, each of the works by Descartes, i.e. *Recherche*, *Discours*, *Meditationes*, or *Principia* has a different character in the whole of his work. They were written in different periods of Descartes' philosophical development and the aims and motives for which they were written were also different. If Descartes only finds *cogito* in the *Recherche*, he goes much further in *Discours*, where he asks in what the validity of this truth lies. In the *Meditationes*, in turn, Descartes shifts the emphasis and shows the status of the thesis as the first principle of the whole system. Starting from the general principle discussed in the *Discours* he presents his own conception of

<sup>63</sup> See *Cogitationes Privatae*, in R. Descartes: *Oeuvres*, op. cit., vol. 10, Paris 1908, p. 213.



being. We can however assume that despite different verbalizations and graphic forms, the *cogito* and the idea contained therein is one. Let us try to find that idea and those principles, which, being obvious to their author, become the object of numerous controversies and the cause of the defeat of his conception of being. All controversies about interpretation result to a great extent, I believe, from failure to observe the presence of the above two aspects (epistemological and ontological) of the *cogito* thesis.

In the *Discours*, while emphasizing the epistemological aspect of his thesis Descartes indeed treats it, as indicated by the authors of the first group, as above all a model truth or, as E. Boutroux<sup>54</sup> calls it, "the archetype of obviousness" which realizes the obviousness belonging to necessary truths in the highest degree. The thesis thus conceived constitutes its own criterion and is the basis of the criterion of veracity and reality (it is not this criterion itself, however, as for example M. Gueroult would have it<sup>55</sup>). The search for the criterion of truth, characteristic of the whole of *Discours*, expresses Descartes' desire to find the conditions of certainty of our ideas. The epistemological aspect of the thesis is best characterized by the following: "And having remarked that there was nothing at all in the statement I think, therefore I am which assures me of having thereby made a true assertion, excepting that I see very clearly that to think it is necessary to be, I came to the conclusion that I might assume, as a general rule, that the things which we conceive very clearly and distinctly are all true — remembering, however, that there is some difficulty in ascertaining which are those that we distinctly conceive."<sup>56</sup>

If, however, we confine ourselves to the epistemological plane, we will not find the justification for the transition from *cogito* to *sum*, which makes the veracity of the thesis problematic, where the thesis is to be a model truth. At that level we can only achieve the arbitrary identification of *cogito* with *sum* (*cogitare=esse*) — as demonstrated by Ayer for example — and stop at that. For if we were to accept this criterion, we would have to be able to decide earlier whether it is true — and this leads to *petitio principii* or to *regressus ad infinitum*. We could also ask, after Hamelin, whether clarity and distinctness justify themselves and whether they are rather a conclusion drawn from a particular case, from that *cogito*<sup>57</sup>. Therefore, if we stop at the epistemological level of the

<sup>54</sup> E. Boutroux: *Des vérités éternelles chez Descartes*, Paris 1927, p. 103.

<sup>55</sup> M. Gueroult: *Malebranche*, vol. I, Paris 1955, pp. 46—47.

<sup>56</sup> *Discours de la méthode*, in R. Descartes: *Oeuvres, op. cit.*, vol. VI, Paris 1902, p. 33.

<sup>57</sup> O. Hamelin: *op. cit.*, p. 106.

thesis, we should follow Gueroult in saying that only "God's veracity" gives objective value to obvious cognition. If, however, we take the ontological plane into consideration, we can accept after Gilson<sup>58</sup> that this cognition has that value by itself (as Descartes wished).

"The ontological aspect of the thesis *cogito, ergo sum*, or its treatment as the proof and conception of being (*res cogitans*) is expressed by Descartes in the *Meditationes*: "What of thinking? I find here that thought is an attribute that belongs to me; it alone cannot be separated from me. I am, I exist, that is certain (*ego sum, ego existo; certum est*). But how often? Just when I think; for it might possibly be the case if I ceased entirely to think, that I should likewise cease altogether to exist. I do not now admit anything which is not necessarily true: to speak accurately I am not more than a thing which thinks (*res cogitans*), that is to say a mind or a soul, or an understanding, or a reason, which are terms whose significance was formerly unknown to me. I am, however, a real thing and really exist; but what thing? I have answered: a thing which thinks."<sup>59</sup>

Descartes thus includes both the criterion of veracity and the first principle of his conception of being. "The principle of clarity and distinct understanding is to serve not only to distinguish truth from falsity, but also to apprehend being in its essence. Hence it was the principle both cognitive and metaphysical"<sup>60</sup>. The transition from *cogito* to *sum*, being the object of so many interpretative controversies, is only justified when we take into consideration the transition from *cogito* to *res cogitans*.

On the formal plane, the above necessity of the inseparability of thinking and existing (*cogitare=esse*), or the intuitive formulation of *esse* into *cogitare*, can be written as a logical formula:  $p \rightarrow q \equiv \rightarrow (p \equiv q)$ . Such a possibility has its foundation in that Descartes gave intuition a rational character<sup>61</sup>. Owing to that, judgments constructed upon intuition can be presented as logical formulas.

In this formula the thesis *je pense, donc je suis* (*cogito, ergo sum, sive existo*<sup>62</sup>) is a judgment with a structure of the conditional clause "if

<sup>58</sup> E. Gilson: *Etudes sur le rôle de la pensée médiévale dans la formation du système cartésien*, Paris 1930, p. 236.

<sup>59</sup> *Meditationes de prima philosophia*, in R. Descartes: *Oeuvres, op. cit.*, vol. VII, Paris 1957, p. 27.

<sup>60</sup> L. Chmaj: *Pojęcie przyczynowości w filozofii Kartezjusza*, "Przegląd Filozoficzny", 45 (1937), p. 120.

<sup>61</sup> *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, in R. Descartes: *Oeuvres, op. cit.*, vol. X, Paris 1908, p. 368.

<sup>62</sup> Confer the Latin translation of "Discours" by E. de Courcelles, where "je pense, donc je suis" is rendered as "ego cogito, ergo sum, sive existo".

I think, then I am ( $p \rightarrow q$ )<sup>63</sup>, whose truth (certainty, necessity, objectivity) is grasped intuitively. The first constituent of this equipollence, however, can be true, as can easily be seen, even with its false antecedent, that is to say when we assume that "I do not think". With false  $p$ , also  $q$  would have to be false because  $p \equiv q$ . We can then treat the identification of "thinking" with "existing" as an equational definition, or defining *esse* through *cogitare* — and this is nothing but *res cogitans*. We write this as follows: "x is *res cogitans*" is equivalent to ("x thinks" only when "x exists"). We see that the formula  $p \rightarrow q \equiv p \rightarrow (p \equiv q)$  consists of two transitions, the first on the epistemological level: *cogito, ergo sum*, and the second on the ontological level: *cogito, ergo sum res cogitans*. (*Ego sum* discovered in *cogito* is an abbreviated notation of *(ego) sum res cogitans*. The expression *sum* (I am) functions in a double role: it serves to construct both an essential and an existential judgment. The two aspects of the thesis justify one another and cannot be separated because neither  $p \rightarrow q$  nor  $p \rightarrow (p \equiv q)$  have self-justification. Only their identification with one another permits to approach to *cogito* (the first fact) as the first principle (*cogito, ergo sum*) and as the supreme axiom (if I think, then I am).<sup>64</sup> When he confines himself to the epistemological plane, Descartes can only say *ego sum* (I am) or he can affirm the logical necessity, or the assertion *pour penser il faut être* (to think it is necessary to be), as he did in the *Discours*. The "addition" of the ontological plane allows him to go further — to ascertain real (objective) existence: *ego sum, ego existo, certum est* (I am, I exist, that is certain), that is to pass from *sum* to *existo* (from I am to I exist).

Descartes' theory of cognition cannot therefore be separated from the theory of being because it does not merely consist in creating concepts but first of all in the cognitive apprehension of "existence". Hence, only having separated the epistemological and ontological planes in the thesis *cogito, ergo sum*, can we ask a valid question about what is primary in cognition. Is it intuitive obviousness, which is guaranteed by the certainty of existence of the "meditating I", or is it the clarity and distinctness of *cogito*? In reality they are one because the act of understanding "my essence" is identical with the act of ascertaining "my existence". "Thinking" identified with being is to mean to Descartes that "thinking" and "existence" are the same. The being about which we can assert judgments that are certain (necessary) is the mind (*spiritus, mens* etc.). Its existence and action are based on thinking. The mind justifies being by thinking,

<sup>63</sup> The expression "donc" serves not only to construct inferences but also to formulate propositions about dependences.

<sup>64</sup> The distinction introduced by W. Rod in: *Zum Problem des premier principe in Descartes' Metaphysik*, "Kant-Studien", 51 (1959—60), pp. 176—195.

and being in a way gives thinking and existence to the mind because it is the object of thinking.

We thus see that the Cartesian notion of existence is not an abstract (formal-logical) category as with Aristotle because it is defined (made concrete) by *cogito*. *Cogito* in turn, which will become the formal principle (condition) of cognition in Kant, has a status of the concrete which is approached from the position of being. The problem of existence as a philosophical problem was "solved" by Descartes. It was unsolvable for Aristotle (existence was assumed) or later for Kant (existence was negated). In Descartes' view we always deal with existence defined by essence (the two concepts are inseparable) and with essence "defined" by existence. The Cartesian conception of being contains both the essentialist<sup>65</sup> and existentialist<sup>66</sup> treatment of Parmenides' being. The universe of possible and not necessary features is reduced to the constitutive feature by the criterion of clarity and distinctness. This permits to judge about the thing through the concept of existence, and even makes it necessary to recognize the real existence of the thing. Hence the thesis *cogito, ergo sum*, which is the expression of "being" discovered in human existence, is, according to Descartes, both the ultimate point of reference of all judgments and the fullest reality. It is the being which exists in a thinking way and is opposed to the being which exists in an extensive way (whose truthfulness is questioned). The necessity of the judgment *cogito, ergo sum* as a logical necessity, warranted by the necessity of God's existence, primarily a necessity in the real order. For, whether in our studies on the Cartesian philosophy we start from the ontological plane (God is the first), or from the epistemological plane (*cogito* is the first<sup>67</sup>), we emphasize either the theocentric aspect of this philosophy or the anthropocentric aspect as in this paper.

We must stress that despite dominant opinions<sup>68</sup> the Cartesian dualism is above all the dualism of the modes of existence (*modus sive*

<sup>65</sup> The essentialist version of the Parmenidean thesis is: "that which exists somehow (is some) is existence".

<sup>66</sup> The existentialist version of the Parmenidean thesis is: "that which exists is existence." This gives the notion of existence a redicative character, that is it is treated as an expression predicated about the notion of "that which" (or descriptively: only that which).

<sup>67</sup> We must distinguish between the logical precedence of these concepts from their temporal precedence. This distinction permits to refute all charges of the vicious circle in argumentation, since the vicious circle in argumentation, which is a considerable logical error, is not identical with the vicious circle in presenting the theses of the system, which cannot be avoided in many cases.

<sup>68</sup> See also Laberthonnière, *op. cit.*, A. O. Lovejoy, *The Revolt against Dualism*, Chicago 1930.

*substantia*), and in further perspective, outside the main considerations, it is indeed the dualism of beings. If we want to ascertain the ontological unity between substances<sup>69</sup> which are independent and exclude one another we must either spiritualize matter or materialize soul<sup>70</sup>. Dualism, which is the main subject of *Passions de l'âme* and the conclusion of *Meditationes*, is not the psychophysical unity of man<sup>71</sup> but the problem of knowledge, of veracity (certainty, necessity) or the correspondence of the world in the mind (the intentional object) and the real world. It is no problem for Descartes, however, whether it is possible to pass from one world to the other. The problem is how this is possible — the problem of the method. *Mathesis universalis* is an assumption that cognition should and can be certain. It is at the same time the question how to achieve this. The proof of the existence of something external does not lie in justifying the answer to the question whether this something exists but in demonstrating that what exists outside the mind is extensive.<sup>72</sup> Descartes does not want to prove the existence of *res extensa* (the world), but to show what is the character of the essence of existence which is not "my" existence. The case is similar with the widely discussed question of God. The proof of God's existence is not the answer to the question: "Does God exist?" (God's essence is existence) but "what is he?". Descartes is not interested in the Anselmian transition from "concept" to "existence" but in understanding (discovering) the mode of its existence as "existence in a perfect way". We must distinguish between the ontological controversy about the existence of the world (materialism versus idealism) and the epistemological controversy about the status of its existence (realism versus idealism). In the former Descartes takes a dualist position, in the latter he firmly supports realism.

When, in the transition through the stages of doubting, "human existence" (*res existentia*), where there are connections between the *res*

<sup>69</sup> Two main senses of "substance" function in Descartes' philosophy: a) scholastic — as being which exists by itself (*ens per se existens*) and independent of objects (features). This serves to define God, b) the concept of substance, the essence of which is entirely expressed in constitutive essence, and whose cognition is direct cognition of the thing itself (*substantia sive modus*).

<sup>70</sup> See Lettre à Elisabeth du 28 juin 1643 (Descartes: *Oeuvres*, vol. III, p. 691 and *passim* which reads that if we think of the substantial unity of soul and body, we must understand soul as material.

<sup>71</sup> See Lettre à Regius du janvier 1642 (Descartes: *Oeuvres*, vol. XII, p. 349) which reads that others do not explain what this union is, therefore he, too, has no obligation to explain this mysterious union.

<sup>72</sup> See Lettre à Mersenne du 11 mars 1640 (Descartes: *Oeuvres*, vol. III, p. 39) which says that as for physics, Descartes believes that he would know nothing in it if he was able to explain only in what way things can exist while he could not prove that they cannot exist in a different way.

*cogitans* and the *res extensa*, between idea and thing, veracity and existential truth, was broken up into two mutually exclusive and at the same time complementing elements of this existence, this made it possible for Descartes to break off with the scholastic, common-sense point of departure for philosophical reflections. It helped him thereby to reject the placement of man as a species in the world, which was confined to the description of man's history<sup>73</sup> rather than the man himself. Moreover, by transferring the Aristotelian category of *hypokeimene* (that-which-underlies-everything) from the world (the object) upon man (the subject) Descartes changed the main objective of philosophical inquiries: he replaced the outer world (the universe) with the inner world created by the acts of consciousness. In other words, anthropology dethroned cosmology. The conception of being became the conception of man identified above all with the subject of theoretical cognition. The *cogito*, which is the expression of being in a concrete existence rather than the judgment about oneself, allowed Descartes to identify "being a man" ("being the subject") with a concrete man ("a concrete subject").

When presenting the general characteristics and estimate of Descartes' philosophy, we can say that it should be opposed, though not entirely, to irrationalism alone rather than to empiricism in the controversy about rationalism. In the controversy between realism and idealism in turn, we must strongly defend the assertion that his philosophy is realistic. Nowhere does it question the existence of the world or the fact that we cognize its existence directly. It shows that what is external is cognized as external indirectly, through ideas. Within the really existing world Descartes distinguishes two modes of existence: extensive and thinking. The first, material (*corpus sive materia*), extensive mode of existence is "our" object of investigation and conquest. In the other, subjectivity is the necessary and sufficient condition of this investigation, to which it also sets the limits. Descartes' standpoint, the only position possible and natural for him, is the epistemo-ontological approach to the cosmological problems and to the "enigma of human existence". It completes the "closure of scholastic ontologism, where man is for the world or God. At the same time it "opens" the new, epistemological-subjective trend of European philosophy, where the world or God is for man. The subjectivity discovered by Descartes is still confined to the cognitive sphere, yet with time, it will be widened through Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, and especially through Marx, to comprise man in all his concrete-living dimensions.

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<sup>73</sup> This rejection is expressed in the change of the concept of soul, which (as a form of body) can be cognized only indirectly through the manifestations of life, into the concept of spirit which we cognize immediately.

To complete the present discussion we may try to find the presuppositions of the Cartesian conception of being. Their collection as a set of enthymematic premises contributed to the "defeat" of this philosophy: they made the extratemporal *cogito* the Cartesian *cogito*, to which we can revert but which should not be repeated. The most essential elements of the Cartesian paradigm are the following:

1. The assumption, common to empiricism and rationalism of his epoch, that the reality (the regularities that govern it) can be cognized, and a conviction that the starting point (senses or reason) common to all men is possible.

2. The conviction, shared by the whole post-Cartesian rationalism, that the structure of development (history) is analytic, and the attempts to reconcile non-historical truth with development understood as the emergence of the "new".

3. The deductive ideal of knowledge and the identification of veracity with necessity, and consequently with analyticity.

4. Rationalism identified with the mathematical method whereby "in this philosophy everything is mathematically proved except the thesis that everything can and should be mathematically proved" <sup>74</sup>.

5. The vision of nature as the mechanism governed by numerical laws, that is the identification of rationality (mathematicality) with reality.

6. Cognition as primary to action, despite attempts to rehabilitate their relationship.

7. The identification of "being man" with being the subject of cognition.

8. The opposition of man and the world, which is treated as the object and not as the sphere of man's activity, that is as an element of man's subjectivity.

9. The inclusion of infinity and perfection in the notion of God, which rather expresses the intensification of the notion of cognition and this need for infinity characteristic of all cognitive aspirations. <sup>75</sup>

10. The identification of the epistemological with ontological order, which is rather the identification of that which is with that which should be according to Descartes' assumptions. For he failed to notice that even his pure *cogito* was not free from the mark of history and that the essence of man should be apprehended in a historical way — not the other way round. As H. Lefebvre rightly observed, "*Je suis, moi qui pense, par et dans la pensée, c'est-à-dire dans et par la pensée humaine, un moment et un*

<sup>74</sup> Gilson: *The Unity...*, p. 133.

<sup>75</sup> H. Barth: *Descartes' Begründung der Erkenntnis*, Bern 1913, p. 55 and passim.

*aspect de son processus total, qui va de l'ignorance à la connaissance, de la sensation immédiate à la science. Mais, bien entendu, cette signification historique du Cogito échappe à Descartes, puisqu'il a coupé les relations et arrêté l'histoire de la pensée. Un acte qui est un résultat lui paraît un commencement absolu. Et la "pensée" au lieu de se manifester comme le côté universel de l'activité du sujet pensant, va se figer elle aussi — a côté du sujet qui se fixe en un acte "pur" — en une entité abstraite, la pensée en général, dont la transposition en une entité théologique sera instantanée."*<sup>76</sup>

That is why to revert to Descartes and to the *cogito* or to understand the Cartesian *cogito* as precisely Cartesian is only possible if we consider it as the expression of the tendencies of the "period of the turn of the old and the new", as the need for "new" knowledge about the "new" world and about the "new" man. Otherwise the *cogito* can be an "empty" tautology as this article has demonstrated.

#### STRESZCZENIE

Przedmiotem artykułu jest prezentacja sporów o *cogito* kartezjańskie na tle sporów o filozofię R. Descartes'a oraz podanie własnej próby odpowiedzi na pytanie zawarte w tytule. Przyjmując niewielkie uproszczenia, można powiedzieć, że argumentowanie za lub przeciw filozofii autora „Rozprawy” jest wynikiem poprzedniej odpowiedzi na pytanie o to, czy teza „*cogito, ergo sum*” posiada strukturę metafizyczną (ontologiczną), czy jedynie strukturę syntaktyczno-logiczną (epistemologiczną). Analizując odpowiednie teksty Descartes'a okazuje się, że jedynie rozpatrywanie *cogito* kartezjańskiego w obydwu aspektach, tj. zarówno ontologicznym (czym jestem?), jak i epistemologicznym (jak siebie poznaję) pozwala uniknąć wielu trudności, a przede wszystkim zrozumieć tę tezę zgodnie z intencjami Descartes'a, tzn. jako kryterium prawdziwości oraz jako pierwszą zasadę filozofii: Przejście od *cogito* do *sum*, które przysparza interpretatorom najwięcej kłopotów, jest zrozumiałe dopiero na tle przejścia od *cogito* do *res cogitans*. (Ego) *sum* rozpoznane w *cogito* jest bowiem niczym innym jak tylko skróconym zapisem (ego) *sum res cogitans*. Wynika to z tego, że kartezjańska teoria poznania nie daje się oddzielić od kartezjańskiej teorii bytu. Descartes bowiem zamyka starożytny i średniowieczny ontologizm, w ramach którego człowiek był „dla” świata lub „dla” Boga i otwiera nową epistemologiczno-podmiotową perspektywę, w ramach której świat i Bóg są „dla” człowieka. Dlatego zrozumieć *cogito* kartezjańskie to ujmować je jako wyraz dążeń epoki „przełomu starego i nowego”, gdzie starożytna i średniowieczna filozofia już nie wystarczała, ale jeszcze nie została do końca przewyżniona, a nowożytna (i współczesna) jeszcze nie było.

<sup>76</sup> L e f e b v r e: *op. cit.*, p. 281.



## РЕЗЮМЕ

В данной работе представлено спор о картезианском *cogito* на фоне споров о философии Р. Декарта, а также попытку собственного ответа на вопрос заключенный в заглавии. Вводя некоторые сокращения можно определить, что аргументировка „за или против“ философии автора „Трактата“ является результатом предыдущего ответа на вопрос имеет ли тезис *cogito, ergo sum* метафизическую структуру (онтологическую) или только синтактическо-логическую (эпистемологическую). Анализируя соответствующие тексты Декарта оказалось, что только рассмотрение картезианского *cogito* в двух аспектах, т.е. в онтологическом аспекте (кто я?) и в эпистемологическом (как я себя познаю), дает возможность избежать многих трудностей, а прежде всего понять его согласно с замыслом Декарта, т.е. как критерий правдивости и как первое правило философии. Переход от *cogito* к *sum*, причиняющий толкователям много хлопот, становится понятным только на фоне перехода от *cogito* к *res cogitans*. (*Ego sum* опознанное в *cogito* является сокращенной записью (*ego sum res cogitans*). Это вытекает из того, что картезианскую теорию познания не возможно отделить от картезианской теории бытия. Декарт закрывает древний и средневековый онтологизм, в пределах которого человек был „для“ мира или „для“ Бога и открывает новую эпистемологично-субъективную перспективу, в пределах которой мир и Бог являются „для“ человека. Чтобы понять картезианское *cogito*, нужно рассматривать его как стремление эпохи к „перелому старого и нового“; где древняя и средневековая философия уже не удовлетворяла, но еще не была совсем преодолена, а новой (современной) еще не было.

The first part of the paper is devoted to a study of the
 asymptotic behavior of the solutions of the system (1) as
  $t \rightarrow \infty$ . It is shown that the solutions of the system
 (1) are bounded and tend to zero as  $t \rightarrow \infty$ . The
 asymptotic behavior of the solutions of the system (1) is
 studied in the case when the matrix  $A(t)$  is
 asymptotically stable. It is shown that the solutions of the
 system (1) are bounded and tend to zero as  $t \rightarrow \infty$ .

The second part of the paper is devoted to a study of the
 asymptotic behavior of the solutions of the system (1) as
  $t \rightarrow \infty$ . It is shown that the solutions of the
 system (1) are bounded and tend to zero as  $t \rightarrow \infty$ .

The third part of the paper is devoted to a study of the
 asymptotic behavior of the solutions of the system (1) as
  $t \rightarrow \infty$ . It is shown that the solutions of the
 system (1) are bounded and tend to zero as  $t \rightarrow \infty$ .

The fourth part of the paper is devoted to a study of the
 asymptotic behavior of the solutions of the system (1) as
  $t \rightarrow \infty$ . It is shown that the solutions of the
 system (1) are bounded and tend to zero as  $t \rightarrow \infty$ .

The fifth part of the paper is devoted to a study of the
 asymptotic behavior of the solutions of the system (1) as
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 asymptotic behavior of the solutions of the system (1) as
  $t \rightarrow \infty$ . It is shown that the solutions of the
 system (1) are bounded and tend to zero as  $t \rightarrow \infty$ .

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 system (1) are bounded and tend to zero as  $t \rightarrow \infty$ .

The ninth part of the paper is devoted to a study of the
 asymptotic behavior of the solutions of the system (1) as
  $t \rightarrow \infty$ . It is shown that the solutions of the
 system (1) are bounded and tend to zero as  $t \rightarrow \infty$ .

The tenth part of the paper is devoted to a study of the
 asymptotic behavior of the solutions of the system (1) as
  $t \rightarrow \infty$ . It is shown that the solutions of the
 system (1) are bounded and tend to zero as  $t \rightarrow \infty$ .