

Hegel's Presentation Of The Cartesian Philosophy In The *Lectures On The History Of Philosophy*

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Although Hegel considers aspects of the Cartesian philosophy in other works, his most extended treatment is in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, a work published posthumously from a disparate collection of materials. His *History* is not the neutral, dispassionate work of a scholar, a treatment he would despise as "wandering around in mausoleums".¹ It is also not without difficulty to understand what informs Hegel's presentation of the history, what in this case underlies the extraordinary statement of the Cartesian philosophy one reads in the *Lectures*. In this paper I shall indicate first what versions of the *Lectures* I use, then give a short commentary on Hegel's treatment of Descartes. Hegel uses Descartes' *Principles of Philosophy* as his text, which is problematic. In the third section of the paper, I draw out the difficulty of using the *Principles*; then in the fourth section I consider Hegel's treatment more deeply in its context, which has as consequence an insight into why he might have used that text.

A. Editions Of Hegel's *Lectures On The History Of Philosophy*.

Hegel lectured on the history of philosophy nine times, in Jena (1805-6) for which he produced a written text, twice at Heidelberg (1816-17, 1817-18) using an outline, then six times in Berlin (summer 1819, 1820-21, 1823-24, 1825-26, 1827-28, 1829-30) supplementing the Jena manuscript and the Heidelberg outline with further notes.² For the two editions of the lectures on the history of philosophy of Karl Ludwig Michelet (in Volumes 13-15 of Hegel's *Werke*, first edition 1833-36, second edition 1840-44) he had access to the Jena manuscript and notes in Hegel's own hand, documents which are now lost to us, as well as transcripts from students attending lecture series in various years at Berlin.³ He produced a fusion of all these materials, not distinguishing between what was Hegel's own and what came from other sources. It is generally conceded that Michelet's

¹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. T.M.Knox and A.V.Miller, Oxford, 1985, 100. Henceforth, Introd.

² Introduction to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, The Lectures of 1825-26*, Vol. III: *Medieval and Modern Philosophy*, ed. Robert F. Brown, trans. R.F. Brown and J.M. Stewart, Berkeley, 1990, 1-2. Hereafter, Brown.

³ Among the large number of extant auditors' transcripts, Michelet mentions only a few as ones he chiefly drew upon. See Brown, 3.

second edition is inferior to the first⁴. The standard English translation of E.S.Haldane and Frances H. Simson used Michelet's second edition, which is in general more literary than the first.⁵

There have been efforts in recent years from collaborators in the work of the Hegel-Archiv to reproduce the extant texts of Hegel's lectures. These are appearing under the general title of *Vorlesungen, Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte* (Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg). What are available of the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* are student transcripts from various series. The editors of these lectures did not feel the necessity, as in the new edition of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, to produce each series independently because they did not find the transcripts from year to year differed substantially from one another. Rather, they present the 1825-26 series because of a better stock of materials for reconstructing them—five different manuscripts, among them the ample transcript of Captain von Griesham. The new edition of the lectures on the history of philosophy, medieval and modern, has been published in German (eds. Walter Jaeschke and Pierre Garniron) and in English translation.⁶ By utilizing only the 1825-26 lectures, the new edition is not as rich in content as Michelet, especially his first edition. There is happily a recent French critical edition of Michelet's first edition, also by Pierre Garniron.⁷ Its critical apparatus identifies those elements which come from Griesham (putting them in an italic script within the body of the Michelet text) and reductively then those which most likely come from Hegel's own manuscripts.

For our purposes there are advantages in consulting all three versions: Brown is a presentation of one series of Hegel's lectures on Descartes, where the essence of the matter is there most directly and unadorned; for commentary on passages otherwise unclear in Brown, Michelet I is most useful since it puts the matter sometimes in other words, amplifies and draws into the treatment of the subject additional comments; then Michelet II, the work of an excellent student of Hegel, who himself attended the 1823-24 lectures, presents a comprehensive, fully developed version of the lectures. I shall use Brown as the basic text here, supplementing with Michelet I and Michelet II for clarification and amplification.

⁴ *Ibid.*, "The second edition is quite different and less satisfactory; it is considerably abbreviated, is much less useful in its notes and apparatus, and gives a decidedly flat impression because it does not reflect with as much authenticity the spirit of Hegel's lectures."

⁵ The English translation, *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson, 3 vols., London and New York, 1892, reprinted 1974. Hereafter Michelet II (Vol.3 unless otherwise noted). After Hegel's untimely death in 1831 there was the great desire of his students, among them Michelet, to publish Hegel's hitherto unpublished lectures. They were therefore published in some haste in that first edition.

⁶ In German, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie, Teil 4, Philosophie des Mittelalters und der neueren Zeit*, ed. Walter Jaeschke and Pierre Garniron, Hamburg, 1986 (hereafter, Jaeschke and Garniron; in English, Brown, *op.cit.*

⁷ G.W.F. Hegel, *Leçons sur l'histoire de la Philosophie, Tome 6: La Philosophie Moderne* par Pierre Garniron. Hereafter, Michelet I.

B. Hegel's Treatment Of Descartes In The 1825-26 Lectures On Modern Philosophy

Hegel's project in his lectures on the history of modern philosophy is to draw together 'subjectivity' and 'substance'. His treatment of Descartes, true to the Cartesian philosophy, situates it in that larger history. What is initially striking in the Hegelian treatment (found in every version Brown, p. 140, Michelet I, pp. 1396-1399, Michelet II, 224 and *passim*) is the revelation that in Descartes is first found the statement of the unity of thought and being, and the movement from that unity in the *cogito* to the unity of thought and being in God expressed in the ontological argument -- God as the principle of Cartesian metaphysics⁸. The movement in Descartes' philosophy is therefore a movement from the finite subject to the infinite substance

In all three versions now generally available, it is noteworthy that Hegel takes the Cartesian philosophy from the *Principles of Philosophy*, not from *Meditations*, even though references are also given to relevant pages in *Meditations*.⁹ This becomes a matter of greatest significance in Hegel's presentation of the arguments for God's existence. In the *Principles* the *a priori* argument appears first [n.14], and the principle "What is clear and distinct is true" subsequently [n.30]. In the *Meditations*, however, the *a priori* proof is a consequent of the principle "What is clear and distinct is true." It might be noted that Hegel follows an outline in his treatment of Descartes given in the opening of Part I of Spinoza's *The Principles of Descartes' Philosophy*¹⁰. The outline is skeletal only as Hegel transforms these moments to (a) a beginning with thought alone; (b) the movement to certainty in the *cogito* argument; (c) the passage from certitude to truth and objectivity in the idea of God; (d) the foundation of human understanding in the Divine veracity. There is no imposition therefore from the side of Spinoza's outline on Hegel's treatment.¹¹

⁸ Metaphysics is that which marks the transition from the subjective merely to the objective (from certainty to truth, the "I" to God): "What comes [next] is thus the transition of this certainty into truth, into the determinate; Descartes again makes this transition in a naive way, and with it we for the first time begin to consider his metaphysics." Michelet II, 233.

⁹ But these references do not appear to be Hegel's own. They are from Michelet himself. See the reconstruction in the French edition, which is able to distinguish what is from Hegel's own manuscripts, now lost, and what is added by Michelet. Jean-Luc Marion, *Questions Cartésiennes II* (Presses Universitaires de France, 1996) notes the following (p.10, n.11): "...Hegel ne cite jamais, à notre connaissance, que les textes suivants: la traduction latine (P/ de Courcelles, *Specimina*, 1644) du *Discours de la Méthode*, IV, les *Principia Philosophiae*, I, # 7 et - pris comme un texte de Descartes! Spinoza, *Principia Philosophiae Cartesianae*; les *Meditationes* semblent entièrement ignorées fait d'autant plus remarquable que Hegel est sans doute l'un des premiers à se préoccuper de lire effectivement les textes de ses prédécesseurs. C'est dire le poids de l'interprétation canonique." This is not quite accurate, although Marion's point that the *Meditations* on the face of it seems ignored is well taken. Hegel clearly refers to passages in *Rep. II Obj.* and *Rep. V Obj.*

¹⁰ Spinoza writes: "In order to proceed with his investigation with the utmost caution Descartes was compelled: (1.) To lay aside all prejudice; (2) To find the fundamental truth on which all knowledge rests; (3.) To discover the cause of error; (4.) To understand everything clearly and distinctly."

¹¹ The fourfold division according to the outline is very explicit in Michelet I and Michelet II, and fades away in Jaeschke and Garniron (hence also in Brown).

The treatment in Brown is the most economical, as one might expect in the notes of very good students. Its very economy is also a great purity. We read this in Griesham's transcript:

We come now for the first time to what is properly the philosophy of the modern world, and we begin with Descartes. Here, we may say, we are at home and, like the sailor after a long-voyage, we can at last shout "Land ho." Descartes made a fresh start in every respect. The thinking or philosophizing, the thought and the formation of reason in modern times, begins with him. The principle in this new era is thinking, the thinking that proceeds from itself. We have exhibited this inwardness above all with respect to Christianity; it is preeminently the Protestant principle. The universal principle now is to hold fast to inwardness as such, to set dead externality and sheer authority aside and to look upon it as something not to be allowed. In accordance with this principle of inwardness it is now thinking, thinking on its own account, that is the purest pinnacle of this inwardness.[Brown, 132]¹²

Descartes is described there as the true beginning of modern philosophy, he "began at the beginning, from the universal, from thinking as such, and this is a new and absolute beginning"[Brown, 137]. It is the "I think" which is the starting point, expressed by Descartes in saying we must doubt everything, not as the skeptic who rests in doubt, but in order to seek what is certain. The first point is therefore that we must renounce all presuppositions, that thinking might proceed not from anything external or foreign to itself, but from itself alone: "The demand which rests at the basis of Descartes' reasonings thus is that what is recognized as true should be able to maintain the position of having the thought therein at home with itself." [Michelet II, 226]

Thus, in seeking what is in itself certain and indubitable, Descartes is inexorably led to thinking: "What is certain is certainty itself, knowing as such, in its pure form as relating itself to itself this is thinking." [Brown, 139] Then there is the "determination of being", *cogito ergo sum*, "the determination of being is immediately bound up with the I ... in it thinking and being are thus inseparably bound together." [Brown, 141] It is not a syllogism, for there is no mediation between thinking and being, but rather simple identity [Brown, 140]¹³; moreover, "thinking" here is, as Descartes answers to Gassendi, "consciousness", to which Hegel adds: "If I say 'I see, I go for a walk,' the I is in the determination of seeing or of going, but I am in it also as thinking. When I say 'I' that *is* thinking. It is absurd to suppose that the soul has thinking in one particular pocket and sensation, seeing, wishing and the like in another. Thinking is what is wholly universal. Thought represented as what is thinking *is* the I." [Brown, 140] Thus for Hegel, as also

¹² Brown, 132. It is remarkable that what are essentially a student's notes could be so vivid. It is reported that Hegel lectured slowly.

¹³ Brown, 140; cf. *Rep. II Obj.*, AT vii, 140-41, where Descartes explicitly rejects the thought that the connection between thinking and existing involves a syllogism. But in *Principles*, there is a syllogistic argument *modus ponens*. See n. 21.

implicitly for Descartes, the "I" or "self" which is conscious is the universalizing, unifying activity -- what in Kant is called the "transcendental ego".¹⁴ But, Hegel notes, "Descartes offers no proof of this thesis of the unity of thinking and being." [Brown, 141] This observation is, while true of the *Meditations* (which does not proceed as will be shown by way of 'proof'), is not on the face of it true respecting the *Principles*: in that work there is a proof, proceeding from the major premise "whatever thinks, at the time that it is thinking, exists."¹⁵ And Hegel seems to be aware of all the subtleties here:

From the one side we view this proposition as a syllogism: being is deduced from thinking. Against this logical connection Kant objected that being is not contained in thinking, that it is distinct from thinking, and he is quite correct. They are, however, inseparable, that is, they constitute an identity. What is inseparable from another is nonetheless distinct from it, although the identity is not endangered by this difference; the two are a unity. All the same, this is not a syllogism, for a syllogism comprises three terms; needed here is a third term that would mediate between thinking and being. But that is not how it is. It is not "I think, therefore I am" the "therefore" is not here the "therefore" of the syllogism, for it expresses only the correlation by which being is immediately linked with thinking. In Descartes, therefore, we see expressed the identity of being and thinking. [Brown, 139-40]

Hegel cannot state strongly enough the importance of the Cartesian insight: "This [the unity of thinking and being] is on the whole the most interesting idea of modern philosophy, and Descartes was at any rate the first to formulate it." [Brown, 142]¹⁶ Nevertheless it is here as well that Descartes' philosophy suffers most: its determinate conceptions were not deduced from the understanding, but "taken up empirically" [Michelet II, 224], simply discovered intuitively. It is this inadequacy which Hegel's own *Logic* will overcome. Nevertheless,

"What comes third is thus the transition of this certainty into truth, into the determinate," for the truth of all knowledge rests on the proof for God's existence. Yet the

¹⁴ Hegel describes 'consciousness' as the "self-actualizing Universal"; Descartes, it is true, calls the self, which he otherwise identifies with consciousness, a "thinking thing", clinging therefore to a substantiality, a "thing endowed with a faculty of thought" [*Rep. III Obj.*, AT vii, 174.], which he himself must modify in the *Principles of Philosophy* where he recognizes that in truth only God is properly substance. [*Principles*, n. 52]

¹⁵ *Principles* I, n.7. See also the *Conversation with Burman*: "Before this inference, 'I think therefore I am', the major 'whatever thinks is' can be known; for it is in reality prior to my inference, and my inference depends on it. This is why the author says in the *Principles* that the major premise comes first, namely because implicitly it is always presupposed and prior. But it does not follow that I am always expressly and explicitly aware of its priority, or that I know it before my inference..." AT, v, 147; CSMK, 333.

¹⁶ Brown, 142. In Michelet II, 224, he says: "In order to do justice to Descartes' thoughts it is necessary for us to be assured of the necessity for his appearance; the spirit of his philosophy is simple knowledge as the unity of Thought and Being."

transition here is again, in Hegel's words, "[made] in a naive way." Consciousness in seeking to extend its knowledge, casts about and simply finds a fund of ideas -- Hegel calls them fittingly *Vorstellungen* which have nothing deceptive about them so long as it does not claim there is something objective and external to itself given in them. Hegel reminds us, "I am presenting this in the way Descartes does," for clearly this manner of simply finding and not deriving these ideas is inadequate. It is especially in the convenient appearance of the idea of God, which Descartes finds ready to hand, so to speak, that the inadequacy is most evident. "Hence we see these determinations following upon one another in an empirical and naive manner, one that is therefore not philosophically or metaphysically demonstrative." [Brown, 143] But this one idea, which for Descartes "stands out from all the others..."¹⁷ as alone having within itself 'existence', and not merely possible or contingent existence "but utterly necessary and eternal existence" [*Princ.* N.14, CSM I; AT viiiA, 10] is, as Hegel describes it, "a presupposition. We find within ourselves this idea, one would now say, as the highest, that the One is. That is then presupposed; and if we ask whether this idea exists, that is precisely what the idea is, that with it existence is posited too."¹⁸ Thus Hegel can conclude that in this idea of God no other than the same unity expressed in *cogito ergo sum*, the unity of being and thinking, is expressed.

Descartes, of course, calls the idea of God which he finds in his thinking an "innate idea", that is, an idea which I can think of at will but which has its own determinate nature which I can neither add to nor subtract from. Hegel's characterization of the idea of God as a "presupposition" in the Cartesian philosophy is an accurate description of the manner in which Descartes happens upon it, especially in the *Principles*: "The mind next considers the various ideas which it has within itself, and finds that there is one idea the idea of a supremely intelligent, supremely powerful and supremely perfect being which stands out from all the others..." With more attention to the logic of such a find, the *Meditations* raise the question where do the ideas in his thinking come from, that is, are they all founded in his thinking as derived from the *cogito* itself or found in it? It is in his search for an idea not of his creation, not merely subjective, that he inevitably will come to the idea of that which cannot come merely from his thinking, pure objectivity, the idea of God which he possesses but cannot be thought to have caused. Here too the idea of God is a "presupposition", as it turns out, "innate in me just as the idea of myself is innate in me", the "mark of the workman imprinted on his work", a mark which is not "something different from the work itself." As one scholar has noted, "...it is *on my nature*, not *in my mind* that God has imprinted his mark. That is why reflection on the self of which I am conscious yields not only the idea of what I am, but the idea of God too."¹⁹

¹⁷ *Principles*, no.14, CSM I; AT viiiA, 10.

¹⁸ "...eine Voraussetzung. Wir finden in uns diese Idee würden man jetzt sagen als die höchste, dass das Eine ist. Dies ist also so vorausgesetzt, und wenn wir fragen, ob diese Idee auch existiere, so soll gerade dies die Idee sein, dass damit auch die Existenz gesetzt ist." *Vorlesungen*, Teil 4, 96. Brown's translation was somewhat opaque here.

¹⁹ Robert McRae, "Innate Ideas", *Cartesian Studies*, ed. R.J. Butler, Oxford, 1972, 42.

There is not in the 1825-26 lectures a separation of the *a priori* proof from the other two proofs found in the *Principles of Philosophy*, from the idea of God present in the finite subject. In Descartes these have a definite importance since the *a priori* proof must be supplemented by the second proof of the *Principles*. He recognizes the certainty of the *a priori* proof while we are in the actual state of contemplating the idea of God, but "at times when we are not intent on the contemplation of the supremely perfect being, a doubt may easily arise as to whether the idea of God is not one of those which we made up at will, or at least one of those which do not include existence in their essence." In this respect, the *a priori* proof suffers the same defect as mathematics: we cannot deny that two and three added together are five while we are turned to the thing itself, but we lose that certitude as soon as we turn away from it.²⁰ There is not properly for Descartes a transition to truth, to objectivity in the *Principles*, at least for the finite subject, simply with the *a priori* proof. When one finds in his thinking an idea of God and attends to it, seeing in it necessary and eternal existence, then the mind must conclude that God exists. This is sufficient for certainty, the state of the attentive mind, but not for truth, the assurance that what the attentive mind turns away from does not disappear or change, the confidence that the clear and distinct is constant, objective, true. "Hence at times when we are not intent on the contemplation of the supremely perfect being, a doubt may easily arise as to whether the idea of God is not one of those made up at will, or at least one of those which do not include existence in their essence." [*Princ.*, n.16, AT viiiA, 11; CSM I, 198] It is for this reason that the *a priori* proof in the *Principles* must be supplemented by the proofs from "effects". A finite discursive mind turns from one idea to another, cannot hold fast to all its ideas at once. Thus Descartes asks first what is the cause of the idea of God within us, and then as supplement to that question, what is the source of our being, we who have always had the idea of a being more perfect than ourselves.²¹

The causal proofs from the "idea of God" in the finite subject is given in Michelet I and Michelet II after the *a priori* proof, as in the *Principles*. There is thus the separation of the proofs, and consequently an implicit consciousness of their role in completing the movement from certainty to truth as it is found in the Cartesian philosophy. But the importance of the proofs from the idea of God as 'effect' is not drawn out in any of the versions of the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* presently available to us. This is remarkable because Descartes shows the logic of the movement from one to the others very plainly in the *Principles*. It is all the more remarkable when one grants that it is to Hegel himself that we owe the explicit statement of the movement from certainty to truth

²⁰ As in *Meditation III*: "And whenever my preconceived belief in the supreme power of God comes to mind, I cannot but admit that it would be easy for him, if he so desired, to bring it about that I go wrong even in those matters which seemed most evident...Yet when I turn to the things themselves which I perceive very clearly, I am so convinced by them that I spontaneously declare: let whoever can do so deceive me, he will never bring it about that ...two or three added together are more or less than five, or anything in which I see a manifest contradiction." AT vii, 36; CSM II, 25.

²¹ It is evident by the *natural light*, he says, that something which recognizes something more perfect than itself is not the cause of its own being. *Principles I*, n.20, AT viiiA, 12; CSM 200.

in the Cartesian philosophy, a matter of the greatest importance in the interpretation of Descartes.²²

The fourth division of Hegel's treatment, which will discuss the implication that the divine veracity has for us, begins oddly with this quote, in part paraphrased, from Descartes: "We must believe what is revealed to us by God, although we do not directly conceive it. We must not be surprised that it surpasses our capability." Michelet II adds "It is not to be wondered at, since we are finite, that there is in God's nature as inconceivably infinite, what surpasses our comprehension." [238] These reflections are found in *Principles*, nn.24-26, and they precede Descartes' discussion there of the divine veracity and its consequence for us that "what is clear and distinct is true." Descartes says there that in order to pass from knowledge of God to knowledge of creatures, we must try to deduce from our knowledge of God an explanation of the things He has created,²³ bearing in mind as a precaution that God, the creator of all things, is infinite while we are altogether finite. On this basis, he will not in his science search for 'final causes', nor will he enter into arguments about the 'real infinite' (God) which he distinguishes from the 'indefinite', things in which we observe no limit. Hegel sets the proof of the fundamental principle of the understanding in its very proper context, for only after Descartes has entered into the metaphysics of the identity of thought and being, having shown that there is for finite thinking this identity and has drawn it into relation to the identity of thought and being in our idea of God, indeed in God himself, does he move to what is other than his thinking.

Although Descartes seems to retreat from metaphysics (at least in the *Principles*), admonishing us to leave those lofty ideas for the finite subjective cognition of the finite world, this turn to the finite is, as is clear in the structure of the *Meditations*, in thoroughgoing relation to the idea of God: "What is asserted here then is that through thinking we experience how things are in fact; God's truthfulness is made into the absolute bond between subjective cognition and the actuality of what is thus known." [Brown, 144]²⁴ Hegel continues:

We have here the antithesis between subjective cognition and actuality. At one moment we are told the two are inseparably linked, that thinking is being. The next moment they are regarded as different, so that the need to mediate them arises, and the proof of their unity rests on the mediating. Set forth here on the one side is our subjective cognition, and on the other side actuality. What mediates them is the truthfulness of God or the truth

²² A failure to make the distinction is the source of the charges of 'circularity', for example.

²³ In Part Two he will deduce, for example, the three primary laws of motion from God's immutability.

²⁴ Brown, 144. This understanding is directly opposed to those who would characterize Descartes' metaphysics as "a drape to cover the goods" [Charles Adams in AT xii, 306], "subterfuge" [Stephen Gaukroger, *Descartes, an Intellectual Biography*, Oxford, 1995, 12], "double-talk" [Hiram Caton, *The Origin of Subjectivity: an Essay on Descartes*, New Haven, 1973, chaps. 1 and 4] or "dissimulation" [Louis Loeb's thesis in several articles], that is, as having no relationship to his scientific philosophy.

of God. This truth itself is in its turn none other than the fact that the idea of God immediately contains actuality within itself as well.[Brown, 144]

The veracity of God is precisely the unity of thought and being[Michelet I, 1418], "this unity of what is thought by the subject or clearly perceived, and external reality or existence." [Michelet II, 239] Hegel criticizes Descartes for not deriving 'extension' from 'thought': "Descartes accepts Being in the entirely positive sense, and has not the conception of its being the negative of self-consciousness: but simple Being, set forth as the negative of self-consciousness, is extension." [Michelet II, 241] Descartes does however know 'extension' as the 'other' of thought 'thinking' for Descartes is absolutely what 'extension' is not. "Thought, concept, or what is spiritual, thinking and self-conscious, is what returns into itself, what is at home with itself. The opposite to thought is what is not at home with itself what has being outside itself, what is extended, what is not free... the entire sphere of extended substance (the kingdom of nature), or that of spiritual substance, constitutes a totality within itself. Each of the two, the entirety of each aspect, can be grasped without the other." [Brown, 146] But Descartes knows also the perfect reciprocity of 'thinking' and 'extension', for 'thinking' has faculties of sensation and imagination which are directed wholly to extended substance; and 'extension' has properties, number and measure, which are wholly appropriate to 'thinking'.²⁵ What is wanting is the logic of this difference and relation, for without that Cartesianism seems to be caught in the dualism which subsequently is unfairly attributed to Descartes himself.

Hegel observes the manner in which Descartes accounts for the interactions of the spiritual *cogito* and body: "But the middle term or the link between the abstract universal and the particular external [body] has to be identified. Descartes identifies it by saying that God is the intermediary, the middle term. This is what is called the system of assistance, namely that God is the metaphysical ground of the reciprocal changes..." [Brown, 151] This account is anticipated, moreover, in Descartes' acknowledgement of the divine veracity as guarantee of clear and distinct ideas:

...we saw that Descartes says of God that He is the Truth of the conception: as long as I think rightly and consistently, something real corresponds to my thought, and the connecting link is God. God is hereby the perfect identity of the two opposites, since He is, as Idea, the unity of Notion [*Begriff*: 'concept'] and reality...Descartes' conclusion is quite correct; in finite things this identity is imperfect. Only the form employed by Descartes is inadequate; for it implies that in the beginning there are two things, thought or soul and body, and that then God appears as a third thing, outside both that He is not the Notion of unity, nor are the two elements themselves Notion.[Michelet II, 251-2]

²⁵ See Meditation 6 for Descartes' appreciation of this absolute difference of 'thinking' and 'extension', and also their complete relation to each other.

To pass from metaphysics to physics, to a world of particular bodies, we must move from matter simply as extension to matter-in-motion. Hegel writes aptly: "One of Descartes' main points is that matter, extension, corporeality, are quite the same thing for thought; according to him the nature of body is fulfilled in its extension, and this should be accepted as the only essential fact respecting the corporeal world." [Michelet II, 245] But Descartes does not himself leave the matter there. To move to a world system he must hypothesize motion externally given to matter, in such a way to be sure that preserves the essential characteristic of body as 'extension', which Hegel acknowledges elsewhere: "Extension and motion are the fundamental conceptions in mechanical physics; they represent the truth of the corporeal world. ... Hence changes in matter are due merely to motion, so that Descartes traces every relationship to rest and movement of particles, and all material diversity such as colour, and taste in short, all bodily qualities and animal phenomena to mechanism." [Michelet II, 247]

C. The Difference Of Presentation Of The Cartesian Philosophy In *Meditations* And In The *Principles*.

As has been noted already, Hegel used in his exposition Descartes' *Principles of Philosophy* rather than the *Meditations*. On the face of it, this is both puzzling and problematic: puzzling because the *Meditations* is the work generally regarded as the canonical Cartesian text²⁶ and problematic because the order of presentation in the *Principles* cannot be regarded as proceeding with the same indubitability as the *Meditations*. Descartes makes it clear in his *Conversation with Burman* that for the order of discovery (hence 'indubitability'), one must look to the *Meditations*, not to the *Principles*.²⁷ But it is Descartes himself who produced his philosophy, if not *more geometrico* as in Spinoza's *Principles of the Cartesian Philosophy*, still in 'synthetic' rather than 'analytic' form. We might ask why he did this.

Descartes knew that his *Meditations* would pose difficulties for some. When the work was first released he wrote to his Jesuit friend: "One problem none the less remains, which is that I cannot ensure that those of every level of intelligence will be capable of understanding the proofs, or even that they will take the trouble to read them attentively

²⁶ It is true that some would dispute this appraisal of the *Meditations*. But its unique place in the Cartesian corpus, engaged as it is in the solution to the problems which plague Descartes' earlier works, and establishing the foundation for the structure and limits of human understanding in such a way that all subsequent work come from it as the tree from its roots, is the subject of my earlier paper in this journal, "God, the Evil Genius and Eternal Truths", *Animus*, Vol. 3 (1998), [http://www.mun.ca/animus/1998vol3/andrews3.htm].

²⁷ He says this to Burman: "In the *Meditations* that argument [the *a priori* proof of God's existence] comes later than the one here [the argument from an effect of God in the Third Meditation]; the fact that it comes later, while the proof in this Meditation comes first, is the result of the order in which the author discovered the two proofs. In the *Principles*, however, he reverses the order; for the method and order of discovery is one thing, and that of exposition another. In the *Principles* his purpose is exposition, and his procedure is synthetic."

..."[11 Nov. 1640, AT iii, 237; CSMK III, 158] By the end of the year of publication of the *Meditations* he was already planning to publish his philosophy in an easier, more available form.²⁸ The result would be the *Principles of Philosophy*, published in 1644, in four books²⁹. It is a systematic exposition of Descartes' metaphysics and his natural philosophy. He described its contents in the preface to the French edition, and there recommended, for a 'sound understanding' of his metaphysics that it would be appropriate to read first of all the *Meditations*.³⁰

But after the publication of the *Principles*, Descartes seemed to have recommended it as the preferred entry into his philosophy. Burman records him as expressing such a view:

"A point to note is that one should not devote so much effort to the *Meditations* and to metaphysical questions, or give them elaborate treatment in commentaries and the like. Still less should one do what some try to do, and dig more deeply into these questions than the author did; he has dealt with them quite deeply enough. It is sufficient to have grasped them once in a general way, and then to remember the conclusion. Otherwise, they draw the mind too far away from physical and observable things, and make it unfit to study them. Yet it is just these physical studies that it is most desirable for people to pursue, since they would yield abundant benefits for life. The author did follow up metaphysical questions fairly thoroughly in the *Meditations*, and established their certainty against the skeptics, and so on; so everyone does not have to tackle the job for himself, or need to spend time and trouble meditating on these things. It is sufficient to know the first book of the *Principles*, since this includes those parts of metaphysics which need to be known for physics, and so forth." [CB, 165; CSMK, 346-7].

Moreover, Descartes cautioned Chanut, the French ambassador to Sweden and Descartes' intermediary with Queen Christina, not to give his *Meditations* to the queen: "I will merely observe at this point two or three things which experience has taught me about the *Principles*. The first is that though the first part is only an abridgement of what I wrote in my *Meditations*, there is no need to take time off to read my *Meditations* in order to

²⁸ To Mersenne, 31 Dec. 1640: "I will not fail to answer immediately anything you send me about my *Metaphysics*. But otherwise I should be very glad to have as few distractions as possible, for the coming year at least, since I have resolved to spend it in writing my philosophy in an order which will make it easy to teach." AT iii, 276; CSMK 167.

²⁹ He had originally proposed a work in six parts, but omitted the treatment of the human body and of the passions since the work was already quite lengthy. The latter two topics appear in subsequent works, the unfinished *La Description du corps humain*, written in 1647/8 (a reworking of *L'homme*, the unpublished manuscript of 1633), and *Les Passions de l'âme* (1649).

³⁰ "I divided the book into four parts. The first contains the principles of knowledge, i.e. what may be called 'first philosophy' or 'metaphysics'; so in order to gain a sound understanding of this part it is appropriate to read first of all the *Meditations* which I wrote on the same subject. The other three parts contain all that is most general in physics .." AT ixB, 16; CSM I, 187.

understand them; many people find the *Meditations* much more difficult, and I would be afraid that Her Majesty might become bored." [26 Feb. 1649, AT v, 291; CSMK, 369]³¹

Since Descartes himself encouraged his readers to take his philosophy from the *Principles*, what objection could possibly be raised if Hegel used it as his text for the exposition of the Cartesian philosophy? It is because the order of presentation in the *Meditations* is properly the only compelling order from the subjective beginning, for it proceeds from the most extreme doubt "so that absolutely nothing is accepted unless it has been so clearly and distinctly perceived that we cannot but assent to it." [*Rep. II Obj.* AT vii, 158; CSM II, 158] A whole literature of Cartesian scholarship, centred on Martial Gueroult's *Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons* (1952), demands that the unity of Descartes' thought and the rigorous order of his arguments be paramount in any commentary on him. Descartes made this same demand in the Preface to *Meditations*:

...I do not expect any popular approval, or indeed any wide audience. On the contrary I would not urge anyone to read this book except those who are able and willing to meditate seriously with me, and to withdraw their minds from the senses and from all preconceived opinions. Such readers, as I well know, are few and far between. *Those who do not bother to grasp the proper order of my arguments and the connection between them, but merely try to carp at individual sentences, as is the fashion, will not get much benefit from reading this book.* [AT vii, 9-10; CSM II, 8; italics mine.]

Descartes does not follow what he calls the "order of topics", as so many of his commentators do³², but rather the "order of reasons": "It should be noted that throughout the work I do not follow the order of topics, but the order of reasons, that is to say that I do not attempt to say in a single place everything that pertains to the topic, because it would be impossible for me to properly prove them, there being reasons which must be drawn from sources farther off than others...The order of topics is only suitable for those

³¹ To Chanut, 26 February 1649, AT v, 291; CSMK, 369. In the dedication of *Principles* to Princess Elizabeth, he finds an altogether different spirit than he presumed in Christina. To Elizabeth he writes: "I have even greater evidence of your powers and this is special to myself in the fact that you are the only person I have so far found who has completely understood all my previously published works. Many other people, even those of the utmost acumen and learning, find them very obscure; and it generally happens with almost everyone else that if they are accomplished in Metaphysics they hate Geometry, while if they have mastered Geometry they do not grasp what I have written on First Philosophy. Your intellect is, to my knowledge, unique in finding everything equally clear; and this is why my use of the term 'incomparable' is quite deserved." He adds: "And when I consider that such a varied and complete knowledge of all things is to be found not in some aged pedant who has spent many years in contemplation but in a young princess whose beauty and youth call to mind one of the Graces rather than gray-eyed Minerva or any of the Muses, then I cannot but be lost in admiration."

³² We need only think of the numerous ahistorical commentaries in the analytic tradition, or the more ostensibly sympathetic but nonetheless unCartesian books and articles on God in Descartes, freedom in Descartes, doubt, clearness and distinctness, etc., where the treatment does not situate the topic in the architectonic of the whole but takes it up in isolation from that whole.

whose reasons are all unconnected and who can say as much about one difficulty as another." [To Mersenne, 24 Dec. 1640, AT iii, 266-7; CSMK III, 163]

But these observations are as true for the *Principles* as for the *Meditations*: both works follow the "order of reasons", both claim to put first what must be known entirely without the aid of what comes later, arranging matters "in such a way that their demonstration depends solely on what has gone before." [*Rep. II Obj.*, AT vii, 155; CSM II, 110] The two works do not, however, proceed in the same way. Descartes distinguishes two sorts of order, the analytic order and the synthetic, and situates elements of his philosophy in different places according to the whether the order of the work is analytic or synthetic. The *Meditations* proceed by way of "analysis", the *Principles* and the treatment *more geometrico* in *Rep. II Obj.* by "synthesis". In the former the *a priori* argument for God's existence is subsequent to the proof from effects and has as its premise "What is clear and distinct is true", whereas in the latter works the *a priori* proof is first and the principle of the understanding, "What is clear and distinct is true" is derived from the subsequent knowledge we have of God known to exist. These two orders coincide in an important way with the distinction drawn in Aristotle and the Scholastics between two ways in which things might be said to be known: *secundum se* and *quoad nos*. In considering whether God's existence is self-evident (*per se nota*), to use a pertinent example, St. Thomas distinguishes what is in itself most knowable from what is most knowable to us.³³ As Aristotle observes: "For as the eyes of bats are to the blaze of day, so is the reason in our soul to the things which are by nature most evident of all."³⁴ Analysis proceeds from what is more knowable *quoad nos*.

Which order is to be preferred in metaphysics? Descartes answers: "Now it is analysis which is the best and truest method of instruction, and it was this method alone which I employed in my *Meditations*. As for synthesis...it is a method which it may be very suitable to deploy in geometry as a follow-up to analysis, but it cannot so conveniently be applied to these metaphysical subjects." [*Rep. II Obj.* AT vii, 156; CSM II, 111] The reason is this:

... the primary notions which are presupposed for the demonstration of geometrical truths are readily accepted by anyone, since they accord with the use of our senses. Hence there is no difficulty there, except in the proper deduction of the consequences, which can be done even by the less attentive, provided they remember what has gone before. ... In metaphysics by contrast there is nothing which causes so much effort as making our perception of the primary notions clear and distinct. Admittedly, they are by their nature as evident as, or even more evident

³³ Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* I, q. 2, a. 1: "Respondeo dicendum quod contingit aliquid esse per se notum dupliciter: uno modo, secundum se et non quoad nos; alio modo, secundum se et quoad nos."

³⁴ *Metaphysics*, 993b10-11. Cf. *Summa Theol.* I, q. 1, a. 5 ad 1: "...nihil prohibet id quod est certius secundum naturam, esse quoad nos minus certum, propter debilitatem intellectus nostri, qui se habet ad manifestissima naturae, sicut oculus noctuae ad lumen solis, sicut dicitur in II *Metaphys.*"

than, the primary notions which the geometers study; but they conflict with many preconceived opinions derived from the senses which we have got into the habit of holding from our earliest years, and so only those who really concentrate and meditate and withdraw their minds from corporeal things, so far as is possible, will achieve perfect knowledge of them.[*Ibid.*]

The synthetic method, even in geometry, depends on the analytic as the 'method of discovery'. Its value lies in presenting things in such a way that one might have a comprehensive grasp of the whole. But in geometry, and *a fortiori* in metaphysics, the synthetic presentation depends on the analytic discovery: "Analysis shows the true way by means of which the thing in question was discovered methodically and as it were *a priori*, so that if the reader is willing to follow it and give sufficient attention to all points, he will make the thing his own and understand it just as perfectly as if he had discovered it for himself." [*Ibid.*, 155, 110] If in geometry it does not much matter whether the student give such attention, the primary notions according with our ordinary experience, in metaphysics this does matter. The *Principles of Philosophy* therefore are wholly dependent on the *Meditations* for the "deep justifications" (in Gueroult's words) of its arguments, ordered according to the requirements of our certainty, and that is why in the Preface to the *Principles* Descartes referred the reader to the *Meditations* as the proper preparation and justification for what is given in the *Principles*.

It is in the *Meditations* that Descartes gives the proper entry into his philosophy, that work alone giving authority, the authority of finite thinking, to the whole Cartesian body of work which precedes and follows it. Gueroult writes: "The *Meditations* is constantly invoked by Descartes, now as a breviary, now as the necessary and truly demonstrative introduction to the whole of his philosophy. It is to it that the first part of the *Principles* expressly refers; it is on it that he comments to the end of his life, without ever changing anything in it."³⁵ The differences between the two works, not so much in content (although that too must be noted) as in order and detail, are substantial. We have already noted that in the one the *cogito* argument is not syllogistic, in the other it is; the one places the causal arguments for God's existence first, the other the *a priori* argument; key concepts such as "clear and distinct ideas" are simply introduced by way of example or exemplars in the *Meditations*, whereas in the *Principles* there are definitions (of "clear and distinct", "substance", "mode", "attribute" etc.), premises and proofs stated simply, all of which follow from its intended use. Finally, we must mention that the *Meditations* are written in the first person singular the sure sign of the subjective standpoint from which it will move to objectivity; the *Principles* appear in an objective form, written impersonally at times or from the standpoint point of all of us: "our doubt", "our mind",

³⁵ Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons, 2 vols., Paris, 1952, trans. Roger Ariew, Descartes According to the Order of Reasons, 2 vols., Minneapolis, 1984, Vol. I, 8.

"we have within us", even "we cannot for all that suppose that we, who are having such thoughts, are nothing."

Descartes describes the work himself: "... I must tell you that I have resolved to write [the principles of my philosophy] before leaving this country, and to publish them perhaps within a year. My plan is to write a series of theses which will constitute a complete textbook of my philosophy. I will not waste any words, but simply put down all my conclusions together with the true premises from which I derive them. I think I could do this without many words. ..." [AT iii, 233-4; CSMK 156-7] It would differ from the *Meditations* in these ways: "The first part, which I am working on at present, contains almost the same things as the *Meditations* which you have, except that it is in an entirely different style, and what is written at length in one is abbreviated in the other and vice versa ..." [AT iii, 276; CSMK 167] This textbook, intended for use in the schools, would contain his entire scientific philosophy, the first part serving as the basis of the whole but not intended to stand on its own. The *Meditations* were written in the manner in which metaphysical truths are discovered; the same matters treated in the *Principles* are presented as the fruits of that discovery, in tight arguments from premises to conclusions, as a recapitulation and presentation of work thought out beforehand. If we are to think Cartesian metaphysics, to be drawn into it and convinced by it, we must turn to the *Meditations*; if we are interested simply in Cartesian doctrine, the Cartesian position on the matters he treats, whether as foundation for the physics he propounds or simply for itself, then the *Principles* is the appropriate text.

D. Descartes' Place In The History Of Philosophy

i. The double method: logic and the history of philosophy

In the various 'Introductions' to Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, he makes plain why philosophy *is* its history, why philosophy which is "the thought which brings itself into consciousness, is preoccupied with itself, makes itself its object, thinks itself, and at that, in its specific steps and stages" is identical with the process of its self-development both logically and temporally.

...the progression of the various stages in the advance of Thought may occur with the consciousness of necessity, in which case each in succession deduces itself, and this form and this determination can alone emerge. Or else it may come about without this consciousness as does a natural and apparently accidental process, so that while inwardly, indeed, the Notion brings about its result consistently, this consistency is not made manifest. ...The one kind of progression which represents the deduction of the forms, the necessity thought out and recognized, of the determinations, is the business of Philosophy; and because it is the pure Idea which is in question and not yet its particularized form as Nature and as Mind, that

representation is, in the main, the business of logical Philosophy. But the other method, which represents the part played by the history of Philosophy, shows the different stages and moments in development in time, in manner of occurrence, in particular places, in particular people or political circumstances...in short it shows us the empirical form...[Michelet II, Vol. I, 29-30]

This self-development of thought, worked out in Hegel's *Science of Logic*, is conceived by him to have made its appearance temporally, the history of philosophy thus a system of development also. But this double development is not to be understood as simply logical on the one hand and historical on the other. It is rather that there could be no *Logic* had there not been the historical development, and yet the ultimate measure of what belongs to that history is the *Science of Logic*.³⁶

Since the history of philosophy is not simply a succession of events, an "aggregation of facts ordered in some way or other" but a "development of thought, a development which is absolutely necessary" [Introd., 88], it is therefore a selection of philosophers, a self-selection as it were: "As a history of nations recognizes only the deeds of its heroes, so too in the history of philosophy it recognizes only the deeds of thinking reason." [Introd. 92]³⁷

"...even if the history of philosophy has to relate deeds, nevertheless the first question is what *is* a deed in philosophy, i.e. whether something is philosophical or not, and what place each deed occupies? ... In the history of the outside world everything is a deed (of course some deeds are important and others unimportant), but the deed is placed directly before our minds, it is a *fact*. In philosophy the opposite is the case: What a deed is and what place is to be ascribed to it, that is the *question*." [Introd. 190]

The principle by which a "philosophical deed" can be recognized is that it takes its place in the unfolding of philosophy itself. It is for this reason that the system is the measure. "The series of their deeds is indeed a series, but it is only *one* work which has been produced. The history of philosophy deals with only *one* philosophy, *one* action, though one divided into different stages. Consequently, from time immemorial there has been only one philosophy, the self-knowledge of the spirit." [Introd., 92]

For Descartes, the Cartesian philosophy is a culmination, not an event in the history of philosophy. He could not know his place in the long history of philosophy except as its

³⁶ "If the *Phenomenology of Spirit* ... can be looked on as Hegel's introduction to his *Logic*, so too can the *History of Philosophy* be considered a different sort of introduction to the same *Logic* not exhibiting the development of consciousness to the point where pure speculative thinking can begin but presenting an historical account of the development of speculative thinking itself." Quentin Lauer, "Hegel as Historian of Philosophy" in *Hegel and the History of Philosophy*, ed. Joseph J. O'Malley *et al.*, the Hague, 1974, 22.

³⁷ Introd., 92. The deeds of the history of philosophy are the works of the philosophers themselves. [Introd. 184].

completion.³⁸ But for Hegel, the Cartesian philosophy is a moment in that history. How it is treated, what is emphasized, what omitted, is determined by that history, and its relation to the present:

"...we do not have to do with the past, but with thinking, with our own proper spirit. There is therefore no proper history or it is a history which at the same time is no history for the thoughts, principles, ideas which we have before us are something present." [p. 133]

It follows that only in so far as the thought of our predecessors remains integral to our thought is it historical. Otherwise it is simply past and dead. Precisely as in the past but continuing to be part of the philosophy of the present, the Cartesian philosophy is a moment in the history of philosophy. What a particular philosopher thought of his own work, its importance and significance for philosophy as he understood it is therefore of secondary importance. Descartes is in the history because he is integral to our own philosophical thinking.

This is not merely, nor primarily, because philosophies contradict one another, subsequent philosophies refuting past philosophy (as Descartes might have thought himself to have refuted the Scholastic philosophy). In truth "no philosophy has been refuted and yet all of them have been." [Intro.95]. What has been refuted is that some particular form of philosophy should count itself as "highest now and for all time" when what is true is that it has been the highest form in its time, but now has ceased to be, given that the activity of spirit is self-developing in that history. If it is no longer regarded as the highest philosophy, still its content has not been lost. "Refutation is only setting aside one determination of it and making it a subordinate one. No philosophical principle has been lost; all such principles are retained in what follows...Refutation of this kind occurs in every development, e.g. the growth of a tree from its seed...The latest, the most modern, philosophy must therefore contain in itself the principles of all the previous philosophies and consequently it is the highest one." [Intro.95] What the Hegelian system makes of the Cartesian philosophy is therefore more significant than what Descartes made of it himself.

ii. Descartes' place historically and logically

In the groanings of the World-spirit to come into full possession of itself in the long course of the history of philosophy, it is the work of modern times, Hegel notes at the end of his history, "to grasp this idea as spirit, as the Idea that knows itself." He situates Descartes at the beginning of this period where "in order to proceed from the conscious Idea to the self-conscious, we must have the infinite opposition, namely the fact that the Idea has come to the consciousness of being absolutely sundered in twain." [Michelet II,

³⁸ Hegel observes the same about about all philosophical positions: "It certainly happens that a new philosophy makes its appearance which maintains the others to be valueless; and indeed each one in turn comes forth at first with the pretext that by its means all previous philosophies not only are refuted, but what in them is wanting is supplied, and now at length the right one is discovered." Michelet II, 17.

549] With Descartes, he says, "pure thinking rose above this cleavage that had to become self-conscious, and progressed to the antithesis of the subjective and the objective." [Brown, 272] Descartes cannot fully resolve this antithesis. His place in the history of philosophy is fixed: "Self-consciousness, in the first place, thinks of itself as consciousness; therein is contained all objective reality, and the positive, intuitive reference of its reality to the other side." [Michelet II, 549]

As we read again Hegel's treatment of Descartes, it is clear that the principle of the Cartesian philosophy, thinking, is wholly absorbed with itself, allows of no presupposition or something other than thinking, and this in the name of its freedom: "Thinking is to be the point of departure; it is the interest of freedom that is the foundation." [Brown, 139] Thought thinking itself, Spirit taking possession of itself, becoming what it is, has its proper beginning in this philosophy.

...the spirit achieves this aim and gains freedom in no other element but thought. In perception I have always an other as object, which remains other; there are objects which dominate me. So too in feeling I *find* myself dominated, I am not free in it; I am just a victim of it, I have not made myself feel. And even if I am conscious of this feeling, I still only know that I am feeling something and am compelled to feel it. Even in willing I am not simply at home with myself; I have specific interest, and these are indeed mine, but they always involve an other over against me, an other which remains other and by which I am determined in a natural way, (e.g. by impulses, inclinations, etc.) In all these, I am never completely at home with myself. Thinking alone is the sphere where everything foreign has vanished and the spirit is absolutely free, at home with itself. [Intro., 80]

Hegel repeatedly observes that Descartes presents his philosophy in an inadequate way. Here too: "In the Cartesian form the stress is not on the principle of freedom as such, but instead on reasons more popular in tone, namely that we must make no presuppositions because it is possible to be mistaken." [Brown, 139]

Thinking, as the wholly universal, absorbs 'being' within itself: "Thinking is movement within self, pure reference to self, pure identity with self. This is being too." [Brown, 141] But, Hegel observes, this identity of Thought and Being, constituting the most interesting idea of modern times, is not worked out by Descartes, as it is in the *Encyclopedia Logic*, for example. ["Preliminary Conception', nos. 20 - 24] . "He has relied on consciousness alone..." [Michelet II, 230]. In asserting that thought is more certain than body, what Descartes says more universally is this: "In this Philosophy has regained its own ground that thought starts from thought as what is certain in itself, and not from something external, not from something given, not from an authority, but directly from the freedom that is contained in the 'I think'." [Michelet II, 232]. Again Hegel notes the inadequacy: "Descartes offered no proof of this thesis of the unity of thinking and being..." [Brown, 141]

In the movement to God, Hegel has said that Descartes "presupposes" the idea of God: "Hence we see these determinations following upon one another in an empirical and naive manner, one that is therefore not philosophically or metaphysically demonstrative." [Brown, 143] It is clear now by what measure these inadequacies are discovered it is the *Logic*. What Descartes presupposes here, for example, is self-realized in that work, God, the Absolute Idea, as the unity of Subjectivity and Objectivity, "having no other content than the whole system of which we have so far been studying the development." [Encyclopedia Logic, n.237] The Absolute Idea has been there from the beginning. "In this perspective, the absolute Idea is to be compared with the old man who utters the same religious statements as the child, but for whom they carry the significance of his whole life." [Encyclopedia Logic, n.237 Add.]

One could go on, but it is now sufficiently manifest that Hegel's treatment of Descartes in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* has concretely as its paradigm the self-development of the Idea in the *Logic*. What simply appears in Descartes or is "innate", presupposed, asserted, is inadequate to the full self-determination of the absolute Idea. Yet it is a moment in that life of God in himself "The eternal life of God is to find himself, become aware of himself, coincide with himself. In this ascent there is an alienation, a disunion, but it is the nature of the spirit, of the Idea, to alienate itself in order to find itself again." [Introd., 79-80]

iii. Hegel's use of Descartes' principles of philosophy

The whole presentation of the history of philosophy in the *Lectures* is orchestrated, determined and self-actualized by the self-same movement of thought to come into its own as appears in the *Logic*, "the revelation of God as he knows himself to be" [Michelet II, 547]. The determination, we have seen, is entirely self-determination, but it is nonetheless necessary.

I maintain that the succession of philosophical systems in history is the same as their succession in the logical derivation of the categories of the Idea. I maintain that if the fundamental concepts appearing in the history of philosophy are treated purely as what they are in themselves, discarding what affects their external form, their application to particular circumstances etc., then we have before us the different stages in the determination of the Idea itself in their logical order and essence. Conversely, if we take the logical process by itself, then we have in its chief stages the progress of the historical facts; ... [Introd., 22]

The course of the history of philosophy presented in the *Lectures* is therefore *objective*. It is not "the narration of all sorts of opinions", nor of so many philosophical systems in opposition to one another; it is not Hegel's history as over against Cousin's. Hegel could be mistaken in his interpretation of this or that position, and the history of philosophy itself untouched, for it is the disclosure of the self-development of Spirit in time. [Introd., 87-88].

Descartes' philosophy in that history is presented objectively. The elements of his philosophy bring themselves forward: doubt, the *cogito*, the movement to objectivity in the idea of God, God's truthfulness as the absolute bond between subjective cognition and objective truth. If Descartes has presented these elements "naively" this is not a criticism but a clear indication of his place in the history of philosophy. In a letter to V. Cousin who had made a gift to Hegel of his eleven volume edition of Descartes, Hegel writes: "Your complete edition of Descartes, which you have given me, is a beautiful present. The naïveté of his procedure and exposition is admirable. One can regret not being given the power to force men to be introduced to philosophy by studying these treatises, at once so simple and clear."³⁹ But objectivity demands that Hegel situate them in the inexorable development of the history.

In the matter of the argument for the existence of God from the "idea of God " Hegel treats it as wholly an ontological argument. Descartes required that the *a priori* argument be bolstered by the argument from causality, because we cannot know whether the idea of God and what it implies is trustworthy until we know that what is clear and distinct is true. This is as true of his procedure in *Principles* as in *Meditations*. In presenting the *a priori* argument Hegel says: "This had already been said by Anselm, that 'God is what is most perfect'. The question then arises 'But does this most perfect being also exist?' This is an illegitimate question." Hegel's correction of Descartes is equally a correction of Kant in this matter. "For what is most perfect is supposed to be that in whose concept existence already lies. That is the definition of 'what is most perfect' existence and representation are bound up together in it." [Brown, 142] It is therefore a "presupposition" at this juncture in philosophy, this idea of God which from the side of logic has not produced itself from itself.

Why should Hegel take his presentation of the Cartesian philosophy from the *Principles* and not from the *Meditations*? In part, one could say it does not matter because the elements of his philosophy are present in both works. What is at stake though is the authority of the philosophy. Descartes proceeds subjectively in the *Meditations*, and moving solely from the certainty of the *cogito* and its ideas, finds his way indubitably to God and truth, and from there to a "science of nature". The procedure in the *Principles* forsakes that subjective movement and presents the objective results of those same *Meditations*. When Hegel situates the Cartesian philosophy in the history of philosophy, his interest is in the elements, and not in their subjective development, a development which in the course of the larger history is superceded. Spinoza also treats the Cartesian philosophy objectively, and he too uses the *Principles* as his text. The objective standpoint of the *Principles* or of Spinoza himself is only brought into view by working through the subjective standpoint of the *Meditations*. If for Descartes the causal argument for God's existence must come first in the "order of reasons", that is, subjectively, Hegel knows that in the logic of the history of philosophy, the "idea of God" is at that moment a presupposition, and in that idea is presupposed also the *a priori* proof.

³⁹ *Hegel: the Letters*, trans. Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler, Bloomington, Ind., 1984, 641..

But in truth the authority of the *Meditations* is not lost on Hegel. His discussions of doubt, of thinking, of the identity of thought and being in the *cogito*, of all the elements of the Cartesian philosophy are among the most profound reflections on the *Meditations* to have been written. Hegel is fully conversant with the philosophy of the *Meditations*, offers the deepest commentary on its elements and its originality, and could not from the *Principles* alone have come to such an appreciation of the Cartesian philosophy. Descartes is the true beginning of modern philosophy, a philosophy which begins with thought alone. That true beginning is found in the subjective reflections of the *Meditations*, not in the presentation of the *Principles*. This is manifestly not lost on Hegel.

Hegel virtually quotes from *Rep. Obj. II*⁴⁰, and therefore would know Descartes' views on the merits of "analysis". Hegel's speculative method, the dialectical method, he describes as the end of the *Logic*: "The philosophical method is both analytic and synthetic, but not in the sense of a mere juxtaposing or a mere alternation of both these methods of finite cognition; instead, the philosophical method contains them sublated within itself, and therefore it behaves, in every one of its movements, analytically and synthetically at the same time. Philosophical thinking proceeds analytically in that it simply takes up its object, the Idea, and lets it go its own way, while it simply watches the movement and development of it, so to speak. To this extent philosophy is wholly passive. But philosophical thinking is equally synthetic as well, and it proves to be the activity of the Concept itself. But this requires the effort to beware of our own inventions and particular opinions which are forever wanting to push themselves forward." [*Encyclopedia Logic*, n. 238, Add.] His description of the "analytic method" is entirely appropriate to the Cartesian philosophy as he presents it in the *Lectures*. The method is the source of the "naiveté" he detects in Descartes and appreciates fully in his letter to Cousin.

NOTES

In accordance with current practice, I use the following abbreviations for the standard editions of Descartes and Hegel:

AT Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, eds. *Oeuvres de Descartes*, 12 vols., Paris, 1974.

CB John Cottingham, trans., *Descartes' Conversation with Burman*, Oxford, 1976.

CSM John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol I and II, Cambridge, 1985.

CSMK Cottingham, Stoothoff, Murdoch, Anthony Kenny, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol III (The Correspondence), Cambridge, 1991.

⁴⁰ Michelet I, 1411, 1412 and *passim*; Brown, 140; Michelet II, 232, 233.