Chapter Two

PHENOMENOLOGY AS NOUMENOLOGY: INDUBITABLE KNOWLEDGE OF REALITY AND "BEING-IN-ITSELF" – ACCESS TO REAL BEING AND TO NECESSARY ESSENCES IN THE COGITO [47]

1. Indubitable Knowledge of Real Being in the Cogito

In *De Trinitate* (X, X, 14), St Augustine formulates, with great precision, the manner in which the human mind, even when it finds itself threatened by the most radical skeptical doubt, can reach an indubitable certainty of knowledge which is immune to any possible skeptical objection because it reaches that which is both evident in itself and which is presupposed by any skeptical doubt. He writes:

> On the other hand, who would doubt that he lives, remembers, understands, wills, thinks, knows, and judges? For even if he doubts, he lives; if he doubts, he remembers why he doubts; if he doubts, he understands that he doubts; if he doubts, he wishes to be certain; if he doubts, he thinks; if he doubts, he knows that he does not know; if he doubts, he judges that he ought not to consent rashly. Whoever then doubts about anything else ought never to doubt about all of these; for if they were not, he would be unable to doubt about anything at all. (St Augustine, The Trinity, translated by Stephen McKenna, Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1970.)

In this and many other formulations, Augustine takes his sole starting point in doubt, more radically even than Descartes, and he overcomes this radical doubt in a more grandiose fashion than Descartes by showing that the reality of doubt itself necessarily presupposes what will turn out to be two types of indubitable knowledge. [48] On the one hand, I gain the certain knowledge that I myself am, and that thus at least one being and person really exists (who knows *vivere se*). On the other hand, inseparably linked to this knowledge, we also gain insight into the necessary essence of doubt and all those acts (of cognition, knowing, willingness, and others) that are necessarily entailed by doubt.

The starting point for this most fundamental philosophical knowledge (that we can know with certainty) is nothing more than - the doubt about *everything*. How is it possible that the most negative destructive thought, the radical skeptical doubt of all

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[47] Whereas the first chapter represents the first English version of an entirely new German text written and published in the summer 2023, this chapter two is taken from my new book jswp1

[48] See also Marie Anne Vannier, "Les anticipations du Cogito chez S. Augustin," *Rev Agustiniana* (January-August 1997), 38 (115-6), pp. 665-679.

knowledge, should lead to indubitable certainty? In what follows, we shall use the text quoted and other texts of Augustine, Descartes, and Leibniz as guides to our own discovery that indubitable knowledge of truth is indeed the condition of the possibility of radical doubt.

(i) Indubitable knowledge of real being in the cogito: cogito; ergo sum; ergo esse est.

Even if I doubt the reality of everything, in this act, I still discover with absolute certainty that I exist, that I live, and that I am conscious as the subject. This Augustinian discovery of the indubitable knowledge of my own being was also made anew by Descartes and expressed most forcefully in *Meditations* II (3), starting, too, from the most radical doubt:

> But I was persuaded that there was nothing in all the world, that there was no heaven, no earth, that there were no minds, nor any bodies: was I not then likewise persuaded that I did not exist? Not at all; of a surety I myself did exist since I persuaded myself of something [or merely because I thought of something]. But there is some deceiver or other, very powerful and very cunning, who ever employs his ingenuity in deceiving me. Then without doubt I exist also if he deceives me, and let him deceive me as much as he will, he can never cause me to be nothing so long as I think that I am something. So that after having reflected well and carefully examined all things, we must come to the definite conclusion that this proposition: I am, I exist, is necessarily true each time that I pronounce it, or that I mentally conceive of it. (René Descartes, Meditations II, 3, translated by Haldane and Ross, Cambridge University Press, 1973, p. 150.)

But granted that we know the fact of our existence with indubitable certainty, what is the nature of this knowledge? Examining this question, we have first to marvel at the datum of the *immediate experience* of myself as a unique form of getting to know and knowing myself as an *existing* subject: this is an experience of such an original structure that it is entirely irreducible to anything else. To begin with, this knowledge of myself is in no way arrived at as the conclusion of an argument, i.e., by the mediation of premises and the application of laws of logic, but it is *immediate* and not the conclusion of a logical argument. Descartes has put this well: "When someone says, "cogito ergo sum sive existo," he does not deduce existence from thinking by means of a syllogism, but he knows something known through itself (per se notum) through a simple intuition of the mind (mentis intuitu) …otherwise he would have to know first 'everything that thinks exists.'" But it is not so: "For it is the nature of our mind that it derives the general propositions from the knowledge of the particular." (René Descartes, Reply to Second Objections to Meditations, 189. (My translation - J.S.)

This text must not be read as a general rejection of a certitude obtained by means of an inference but as an assertion that the evidence of my existence in the

Cogito is not of that type of certain knowledge but possesses the character of an *immediate* cognition of reality. [49]

Leibniz formulated the immediacy of this knowledge still more clearly:

> One can always say that this proposition: I exist, is of ultimate evidence, being a proposition which could not be proven by any other one, or an immediate truth. And to say: I think, therefore I am, does not properly mean to prove existence by means of thinking, for to think and to be thinking is the same thing; and to say: I am thinking already implies: I am. ... (this) is a proposition of fact which is founded on an immediate experience. [50]

But it is not enough to characterize the inescapable givenness of my own being in indubitable knowledge by referring to the *immediacy* of the cognition of my being. We have to add that our own being is accessible to us in an entirely interior fashion - by being consciously lived from within. There is no more immediate and interior givenness of a being than this self-awareness of the person. It is decisive to see with Augustine that my being is not given here like an *object* over against me *of which* I would be conscious, as this occurs in explicit reflective self-knowledge *(se cogitare).* I know myself already prior to any such objectifying as it occurs in conscious reflection - in which my being becomes an *object of which* I gain consciousness and to which I return - in what Plotinus and Thomas Aquinas called a *reditio perfecta mentis in seipsam.* Augustine distinguishes the immediate self-awareness of my concrete individual being, which I constantly possess, and identifies it as *nosse se.* He contrasts it in another famous passage with the *cogitare (cognoscere) se,* saying that only in such a *cogitatio* can a full thematic cognition of the mind itself happen but that there is an immediate and intimate knowledge of the Self that precedes any act of reflection and cogitation:

> But so great is the power of thought that not even the mind itself may place itself, so to speak, in its own sight, except when it thinks of itself. And consequently, nothing is so in the sight of the mind, except when it thinks of it, that not even the mind itself, by which is thought whatever is thought, can he in its own sight in any

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[49] This misunderstanding is found in Mark Glouberman, "Cogito: Inference and Certainty," *Mod Sch* (January 93), 70 (2), 81-98.

[50] (My translation - J.S.) of: "On peut tousjours dire que cette Proposition: "j'existe, est de la dernière evidence, estant une proposition, qui ne sauroit estre prouvée par aucune autre, ou bien une verité immediate. Et de dire: je pense, donc je suis, ce n'est pas prouver proprement l'existence par la pensée, puisque penser et estre pensant est la même chose; et dire: je suis pensant, est déja dire: je suis…c'est une proposition de fait, fondée sur une experience immediate." (G.W. Leibniz, Nouveaux Essais, IV, vii; Die philosophischen Schriften, V, cd. C.J. Gerhardt, Hildesheim, 1965. pp. 391-2.)

> other way than by thinking of itself. But how it is not in its own sight when it does not think of itself, since it can never be without itself, just as though itself were one thing and its sight another thing, I am unable to discover. For it is not absurd to speak thus of the eye of the body, since the eye itself is fixed in its own proper place in the body, but its sight is directed to those things that are without, and reaches even to the stars. Nor is the eye in its own sight, for it does not see itself, except when a mirror is placed before it . . .; and certainly, this is not done when the mind places itself in its own sight by thinking of itself.
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> Or does the mind, then, but one part of itself see another part of itself when it sees itself by thinking, as with some of our members, the eyes, we see other members which can be in our sight? What can be said or thought that is more absurd than this? For by what, therefore, is the mind removed except by itself and where is it placed in its own sight except before itself? Hence, it will not be there where it was when it was not in its own sight, because it is put down in one place after it is withdrawn from another place. But if it has wandered away in order to be seen, where will it remain in order to see? Or is it, as it were, doubled, so that it is both there and here, that is, both where it can see and where it can be seen: in itself in order that it may see, and before itself in order that it may be seen? When the truth is consulted, it does not give any of these answers, since when we think thus, we think only through the feigned images of bodies, and that the mind is not such is absolutely certain to the few minds that can be consulted for the truth about this matter.
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> It remains, therefore, that its sight is something belonging to its nature, and the mind is recalled to it when it thinks of itself, not as it were by a movement in space, but by an incorporeal conversion; on the other hand, when it does not think of itself, it is indeed not in its own sight, nor is its gaze formed from it; but yet it knows itself, as if it were a remembrance of itself to itself. (Augustine. The Trinity, XIV, vi, 8) [51]

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[51] Erich Przywara (arr.), *An Augustine Synthesis*, originally published by Sheed and Ward 1936, 2nd ed. (New York-Evanston-London: Harper & Row, 1958). Tanta est tamen cogitationis vis, ut nec mens quodam modo se in conspectu suo ponat, nisi quando se cogitat: ac per hoc ita nihil in conspectu mentis est, nisi unde cogitatur, ut nec ipsa mens, qua cogitatur quidquid cogitatur, aliter possit esse in conspectu suo, nisi seipsam cogitando. Quomodo autem, quando se non cogitat, in conspectu suo non sit, cum sine se ipsam numquam esse possit, quasi alia sit ipsa, aliud conspectus eius, invenire non possum. Hoc quippe de oculo corporis non absurde dicitur: ipse quippe oculus loco suo fixus est in corpore, aspectus autem eius in ea quae extra sunt tenditur, et usque ad sidera extenditur. Nec est oculus in conspectu suo; quandoquidem non conspicit seipsum, nisi speculo objecto, unde jam locuti sumus: quod non fit utique quando se mens in suo conspectu sui cogitatione constituit. Numquid ergo alia sua parte aliam partem suam vidit, cum se conspicit, sicut aliis membris nostris, qui sunt oculi, alia membra nostra conspicimus, quae in nostro possunt esse conspectu? Quid dici absurdius vel dici potest? Unde igitur aufertur mens, nisi a seipsa? Et ubi ponitur in conspectum suum nisi ante seipsam? Num non ergo ibi erit ubi erat, quando in conspectu suo non erat; quia hic

Reflecting on the things themselves of which Augustine is speaking, we see first of all that the apparently quite simple knowledge of the fact that I exist includes an enormous variety of indubitable evidence of fact which are immediately known: for I could not know with evidence that I exist if I were not conscious being awakened to himself and consciously living his own being and if I had no access to the world of my conscious perceptions and acts in their immense variety. Simultaneously with the evidence that I exist, I also have the evidence that I exist as a conscious self-conscious, self-aware being. Moreover, in this evidence that I, as the subject of billions of different experiences, exist consciously, I also grasp immediately that I live, for the phenomenon of life, in its self-moving and dynamic character, is given here not only from without, as *biological life* in us or other living things, but is given from within as inseparably linked with my consciousness. Moreover, since this consciousness is given to me when I doubt, think, and gain evident knowledge about my conscious life and existence, this conscious life is also that of a thinking being, a being capable of thought, and thus an incomparably higher form of life than the sentient and therefore likewise dimly conscious life in animals that cannot think. And this much higher and fuller form of life, of *zoee*, than mere biological life, of which we can say with Thomas Aquinas: "Who does not understand, does not live entirely, but possesses only a half-life," [52] is given here from within with indubitable certainty. Compared to conscious life, which is lived and experienced from within, the vegetative life of plants can hardly be called life at all. This manifests itself even in the opinion - regrettable and erroneous though it is from other points of view - that the state when the central organ of biological life and of conscious life is irreversibly dysfunctioning can rightly be called "brain death" because it involves a permanent loss of consciousness. [53] A more metaphysical investigation would show, however,

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posita, inde ablata est. Sed si conspicienda migravit, conspectura ubi manebit? An quasi geminatur, ut et illic sit et hic, id est, et ubi conspicere, et tibi conspici possit; ut in se ipsa sit conspiciens, ante se conspicua? Nihil horum nobis veritas consulta respondet: quoniam quando isto modo cogitamus, nonnisi corporum fictas imagines cogitamus, quod mentem non esse paucis certissimum est mentibus, a quibus potest de hac re veritas consuli. Proinde restat ut aliquid pertinens ad ejus naturam sit conspectus ejus, et in eam, quando se cogitat, non quasi per loci spatium, sed incorporea conversione revocetur: cum vero non se cogitat, non sit quidem in conspectu suo, nec de illa suus formetur obtutus, sed tamen noverit se tanquam ipsa sit sibi memoria sui.

[52] Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, IX, 1.11.

[53] There is also another bio-philosophical argument for brain death which argues from the loss of integrated unity. This argument has been definitively put to rest by D. Alan Shewmon, a pediatric neurologist from UCLA, especially in his contributions to the 2nd and 3rd International Symposia on Coma and Death in Cuba. (Shewmon, in 1985 and 1987, had defended the identification of "brain death" with actual human death). In his Havana paper in

that neither the existence nor the life of the personal subject is reducible to consciousness itself which has rather the character of an actualization of this life. [54] Therefore, reflecting on consciousness and life, which are both given to us together with our being as subjects, we can gain a metaphysical insight into a very different relationship between life and consciousness to the *esse* of the personal subject which we encounter indubitably in the *Cogito* discussed below. Apart from the metaphysical fact of embodying life in a much higher sense, the conscious being and life of the human person can also be known and is experienced in a completely different and far more perfect way than vegetative life. We can gain apodictic certainty and scientific-philosophic evidence about the essence and about the being (existence) of the personal and living *Ego cogitans*, and yet being, life, and

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1996, he showed that an equally impressive list of integrated functions that involve the organism as a whole persists in the „brain dead" individual, such that there is no sound scientific reason to identify one list of integrated functions with life, the other not. In his Havana paper of 2000, he went on to show that the same degree of loss of integrated functions of the organism as a whole, which is identified with actual human death by the biological rationale for brain death, results from lesions of the upper part of the spinal cord and thus in patients who clearly live and are even conscious when their brain is stimulated.

On Shewmon's earlier defense of brain death, see D. Alan Shewmon, 1985, "The Metaphysics of Brain Death, Persistent Vegetative State, and Dementia," The Thomist 49 (1985), pp. 24-80, and 1987, "Ethics and Brain Death: A Response," The New Scholasticism 61, pp. 321-344. On his later devastating critique of "brain-death-definitions" see his "*Somatic Integrative Unity: A Nonviable Rationale for 'Brain Death',"* Second International Symposium on Brain Death, Havana, Cuba, February 28, 1996, and his "Spinal Shock and 'Brain Death': Somatic Pathophysiological Equivalence and Implications for the Integrative-unity Rationale," *Spinal Cord* (1999), 37, 313-324, as well as his paper for the Third International Symposium 2000 in Havana, Cuba, as well as his "You die only once. Why Brain Death is not the Death of the Human Being. A Reply to Nicholas Tonti-Filippini," *Communio* 39, Fall of 2012, pp. 422-494. Already at the time of the introduction of the new definition of death in 1968, Hans Jonas has rejected sharply the redefinition of death in terms of brain death. See his "Against the Stream: Comments on the Definition and Redefinition of Death," in *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man*; as well as his "Gehirntod und menschliche Organbank: Zur pragmatischen Umdefinierung des Todes"; See also some of my works on the topic: "IS 'Brain death' actually death?," *The Monist* 76 (1993), 175-202. "Is 'Brain Death' actually Death? A Critique of Redefining Man's Death in Terms of 'Brain Death'"; in: R.J. White, H. Angstwurm, I. Carasco de Paola (Ed.), *Working Group on the Determination of Brain Death and Its Relationship to Human Death*, (1989) Pontifical Academy of the Sciences (Vatican City, 1992, pp. 95-143). "On 'Brain Death' in Brief: Philosophical Arguments against Equating It with Actual Death and Responses to Arguments in favour of Such an Equation," in: Roberto de Mattei (Ed.), *Finis Vitae: Is Brain Death still Life?* Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, (Soveria Mannelli: Rubettino, 2006), pp. 189-210.

[54] Therefore, the life of an irreversibly unconscious human being is still human life.

consciousness itself are epistemologically solely given to us in and through consciousness, while our clear and distinct insight into the essence of the person unambiguously discloses that neither the being nor the life of the person are strictly speaking identical with the conscious awakened state of the subject. [55]

This mode of knowing life through the Cogito does not combine empirical observations of the signs of life with philosophical intuitions into its essence, as the knowledge of the life of plants or animals, but is based on an immediate inner experience of life as *zoee*. This also explains why my being and my life are given the same inseparable indubitable evidence as my consciousness. In this sense, Augustine has spoken of the indubitable evidence of the skeptic that he *is*, that he *lives*, and that he is conscious. [56] This life is inseparably given with our existence. In the *Cogito*, our being is precisely given with its life. The *sum* (I am) given in the *cogito* (I think) is inseparable from the life of the *Ego cogitans* (thinking I). It is the being of and in a living Self that is indubitably given in the *Cogito*. Life as an attribute of the irreducible essence found in the operations and in the being of the ego-subject of conscious acts is accessible to us entirely from within, in an experience much more intimate than introspection or inner perception, namely, in a differentiated and entirely intimate experience of consciousness and of conscious life. [57] Hence, not only my *esse* and my conscious and self-conscious being but also that superior form of *living*, which is inseparable from a conscious and understanding being, is given to me from within. These three pieces of evidence that we are, live, and are conscious as subjects refer to my conscious being, to myself as the ultimate subject of all experiences.

We have, however, a similarly evident knowledge of an immense and quasi-infinite ocean of different experiences which are not given less evidently than, but differently from, the form in which the *Ego cogitans* itself is experienced as the

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[55] See more on this in Josef Seifert, *What is Life? On the Originality, Irreducibility and Value of Life.* Value Inquiry Book Series (VIBS), ed. by Robert Ginsberg, vol 51/Central European Value Studies (CEVS), ed. by H.G. Callaway (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), chapters 1 and 3.

[56] See Augustine, *De Trinitate*, X, x, 14: "Who can doubt, however, that he lives, remembers, understands, wills, thinks, knows, and judges? For even if he doubts, he lives...." The text in Latin is the following: "Vivere se tamen et meminisse, et intelligere, et velle, et cogitare, et scire, et judicare quis dubitet? Quandoquidem etiam si dubitat, vivit; si dubitat, unde dubitet, meminit; si dubitat, dubitare se intelligit; si dubitat, certus esse vult; si dubitat, cogitat; si dubitat, scit se nescire; si dubitat, judicat non se temere consentire oportere. Quisquis igitur aliunde dubitat, de his omnibus dubitare non debet: quae si non essent, de ulla re dubitare non posset. The "knows" in this text could also be interpreted as immediate awareness of our consciousness. Cf. also the many texts of Augustine on this topic collected by Ludger Hölscher in his *The Reality of the Mind*.

[57] Cf. Karol Wojtyìa, *The Acting Person*.

subject. We experience countless sensations, perceptions, feelings, and emotions as cognitive, intellectual, volitional, and social acts. This stream of our conscious life and our many acts and experiences are not given to us as our very Self, as the *Ego cogitans*, nor as one and the same identical being (which is the way in which the *Ego cogitans* is clearly given), but as a manifold something which we undergo, have, or perform - and *in which* we are present in different forms as acting or suffering person. This overwhelmingly differentiated stream of conscious experiences, far from being identical with our conscious Self, is neither one as the Self, but many, nor is it inseparable from our being and life, which can already be seen from the fact that all our perceptions and experiences can come when we wake up and encounter the world, and go when we fall asleep or are unconscious.

If we look at these data more profoundly, we discover as well that the knowledge which we gain of our *vivere*, of our own conscious being, life, and acts, is not sufficiently characterized by the immediacy by which it distinguishes itself from inferential knowledge. This can be seen when we distinguish the knowledge in which we ourselves and our acts are known from two other forms of immediate knowledge: from sense perception and from all object knowledge.

(1) The first form of immediate knowledge, from which we must distinguish the type of incomparably more perfect immediacy of knowledge by which we know our own being and conscious life, is sense perception. Sense perception is certainly an immediate, not an inferential knowledge. In it, colors, forms, sounds, etc., are clearly given directly and immediately to our consciousness. In no way are they only inferred. When we see fire, we do not infer it as when we know it only by seeing smoke. The fire itself presents itself to our eye. Nevertheless, this experiential immediacy of our intentional contact with the objects of sense perception does not exclude a great indirectness and mediation of sense perception through our sense organs as well as through complicated physical, chemical, acoustical, and electrical events or light waves, as well as through many events in our nervous system. Given this type of mediation, many delusions are possible in dreams, schizophrenia, etc., delusions and false appearances that occasionally flaw our sense perceptions, on which we normally can fully rely as informing us of the real world, so much so that, for example in traffic, we daily stake our lives innumerable times on the validity of our sense perceptions, trusting that a truck is where we see it to be and not where we do not see any. Nevertheless, in spite of the extraordinarily high certainty we attribute to our sense perceptions, these perceptions do not reach absolutely indubitable evidence. In experiments with brain stimulation or drugs, or in dreams and schizophrenia, we can be duped by our senses. Such disturbances or delusions are to be traced back to some imperfect function or malfunction of our brain or sense apparatus or, for example, in optical illusions, to some strange aspects of the way in which the surroundings reflect light or sound waves. Moreover, the immediate knowledge contained in the senses reaches only the appearances of things and not

their underlying ontological structures, which are given to us in some further sense of mediated knowledge based on sense perception and intuition into essences.

Intellectual insight and the experience of our own being, in contrast, while they *do indeed* have certain physiological *conditions* to be possible, nevertheless reach their object with an immediacy that is evidently free from such a sense-mediation and consequently also from mediation through physical and physiological events. We do not perceive our own being and life through sense organs, nor is our grasp here mediated by long chains of physical and physiological causes. We touch our being, our life, and our consciousness themselves immediately and directly. This is why a certain source of error and deception potentially present in sense perception is here absent. We are confronted with the knowledge of "I exist, I live" with an immediacy of knowledge that differs precisely from the mediacy that characterizes human sense perception. Augustine expresses this type of immediacy, in the sense of an absence of the mediating role of our senses and physiological make-up, in a part of the text that we will examine more closely in the context of discussing insights into essentially necessary states of affairs and into the essences in which they are rooted: "But, without any delusive representation of images or phantasms, I am most certain that I am, and that I know and delight in this. In respect of these truths, I am not at all afraid of the arguments of the Academicians, who say, What if you are deceived? For if I am deceived, I am. For he who is not, cannot be deceived; and if I am deceived, by this same token I am. **"** [58]

(2) Let us now turn to the second distinct form of immediate knowledge from which we must distinguish the intimacy of our self-knowledge: namely from *all* object-knowledge found in intellectual intuitions of essences and objects. Our own being and our conscious experiences are known to us more immediately than objects are known by intuition and even than by reflective thought, which is a form of object-knowledge that is quite unique because it makes our own being and acts objects of cognition and places them as it were in front of our minds. But we know ourselves prior to turning our being into an *object* of cognition: we know ourselves, our experiences, and our very conscious life itself in the very performance of consciousness itself. We *are* our own conscious being, and we live it. In living it, it is given to us in a most interior fashion prior to any objectivizing reflection in which we think of ourselves *(cogitare se)*. We know it immediately and more immediately than anything else, in a distance-less fashion in which we do not have to make ourselves *objects* of knowledge. In being awake, we get acquainted with our very own being as subject, and in performing our conscious activations, we get acquainted

[58] sine ulla phantasiarum vel phantasmatum imaginatione ludificatoria mihi esse me idque nosse et amare certissimum est. Nulla in his veris Academicorum argumenta formido dicentium: Quid si falleris? Si enim fallor, sum. Nam qui non est, utique nec falli potest; ac per hoc sum, si fallor. (St Augustine, De Civitate Dei XI, xxvi).

with all our perceptions, feelings, cognitions, and volitions from within, prior to turning them into objects of reflection or thought.

Moreover, looking more closely at this immediate knowledge of ourselves and our conscious life, we can differentiate further and recognize that this experience of our conscious life is still a very complex phenomenon. First, we know our being and our actions in living them in a way in which consciousness is an adjectival attribute of our being and our acts, in this intimate „standing in our acts" and „living them from within" in their actual presence. But this is not the only mode of knowing our being and our acts. Rather, our actions and our being itself, so we may interpret Augustine's philosophy of consciousness in the light of the important contributions of Karol Wojtyìa, are also *reflected* by our consciousness. This knowledge cannot be equated with the intimate contact with our conscious life during its experience, for this "reflective consciousness" remains even after our experience and the mode in which we live them from within have passed away, in a *Memoria* which is again prior to any explicit act of reflection.[59] As it appears clearly in moral conscience, we remember ourselves prior to thinking *about* ourselves, as occurs in explicit reflection and self-knowledge. In fact, as Augustine puts it audaciously in the text quoted above, it is "as if we *were* the memory of ourselves." Our acts are reflected, illumined, and judged in some fashion *prior* to their becoming explicit *objects* of reflection. This is most clearly given in the phenomenon of moral conscience in which our acts are known in a semi-objective way, the distinction of which from the immediate conscious living of our acts, *Vollzugsbewußtsein,* is already clear from the fact that this reflective consciousness of moral conscience can not only accompany the consciousness of our performing an act (*Aktvollzug*) but also succeed or even precede the actual living of conscious experiences. Not only that, the reflection of our moral acts in consciousness can also be dim and virtually deadened and absent, while the inner conscious experience is always present in our acts.

Nevertheless, this likewise immediate, pre-objectivizing acquaintance with our own being in "reflective consciousness," in spite of its indubitable immediacy, which in its immediate contact with experience differs from its possible distortion in a sort of "false consciousness," [60] is not yet what occurs in the *cogitatio sui ipsius.* In spite of the primacy of the immediate direct self-consciousness, authentic self-reflection, and self-knowledge requires that we make ourselves an *object* of cognition. Only when we make our being an object of acts of reflection and thought can it be known

[59] We will examine the Augustinian text soon. Karol Wojtyìa's major philosophical work, The Acting Person (Boston: Reidel, 1979), is the text in which he examines consciousness; cf. also the corrected text, authorized by the author (unpublished), (official copy), Research Library for Realist Phenomenology, Kartause Gaming, 3292 Gaming, Austria.

[60] See Josef Seifert, „Karol Cardinal Karol Wojtyìa (Pope John Paul II) as Philosopher and the Cracow/Lublin School of Philosophy" in *Aletheia* II (1981), pp. 130-199.

fully by us. *Tanta est tamen cogitations vis* - for so great is the power of objectivizing thought that even the mind, which knows itself most immediately and by which we know everything else, can know itself only when it places itself, as it were, in front of his own thought. While on the level of such objectivizing thought about our being and life, many errors and distortions, which do not exist on the two more immediate forms of self-acquaintance mentioned before, can occur, the knowledge by reflection on our conscious life which is found when we say: "yes I exist," or "indeed, I feel pain," is not any less certain or immediate in the sense required for cognitive reliability, than the immediate knowledge of *Vollzugsbewußtsein.* It also differs entirely from errors and self-deception. [61]

Distinct from the act of reflection and pre-philosophical self-knowledge is the *philosophical prise de conscience,* the fully explicit and intellectually clear knowledge of the *Ego cogito.* This knowledge, which is expressed in the Augustinian and Cartesian Cogito, reaches even a height of explicit, clear, and lucid certitude and intellectual clarity that pre-philosophical forms of self-awareness do not possess, and it is not any less immediate or certain. In another sense than the intimate and interior self-knowledge of conscious human life and being, the philosophical knowledge of the *se vivere* is no less evident nor immediate, but in becoming aware of its own certitude and of the Archimedean point reached in this self-knowledge, possesses a higher and more rational certitude, and it is absolutely indubitable. It is indubitably certain because it makes the evident and immediate cognitive contact with our own being the starting point of the knowledge: *sum.* The philosophical *cogitatio sui ipsius* grasps the concrete fact of our own being with indubitable certainty.

In the light of some universal truths to be discussed below, we also recognize that this reality of our self, already for the reason that it is not given as an object over against our consciousness but in a most intimate fashion, cannot be an object of illusion nor a mere semblance. For this reason, Michel Henry's interpretation that the *Cogito* can be reduced to a *videor videre* (it seems to me that I see) is untenable. For the evidence of our knowledge here reaches that seeing itself which cannot be interpreted as a mere object of any seeming. Even then, at least the evidence of the

[61] See (Josef Seifert, Stephen D. Schwarz und Wolfram Schrems, Ed.), Balduin Schwarz, *Der Irrtum in der Philosophie*. 2nd ed, (Unveränderter Neudruck der ersten Aufl., mit einer neuen Einleitung der Herausgeber, drei späteren Aufsätzen von Balduin Schwarz zum Irrtumsproblem und Schriften Nicolai Hartmanns und Josef Seiferts über das Buch von Schwarz). *Realistische Phänomenologische Philosophie.* Philosophische Studien des Dietrich von Hildebrand Lehrstuhls an der Internationalen Akademie für Philosophie – Instituto de Filosofía Edith Stein Granada. Hrsg. Josef Seifert. Bd. III. Kindle Independent Publishing, 2015. http://www.amazon.com/dp/B015GHM4OQ.

fact that it seems to me that I see would have to remain intact, something Michel Henry does not recognize. [62]

It might be objected that the knowledge gained in the *Cogito* is merely subjective knowledge that we (I) exist and does not refer to the *objective* reality of the material world explored by science, the object of our sense-perception and social relations. We reply: far from establishing any merely 'subjective' knowledge, the thrust of Augustine's insight is precisely that not only is the I just as objective a reality as all the trees out there, and all the stars, and the entire material world, but the mind is also far more wonderful than all the mountains, trees, and material beings. Thus, in our own being, we touch *one objective and real being*, which is far more important and real than the whole material universe. Therefore, we can interpret Augustine with Hildebrand and say that the point of the *cogito* really is: "I am; therefore, one objective entity is; therefore, being itself is." *Cogito; (ergo) sum; (ergo) esse est.*

In this indubitable knowledge of real facts, I not only grasp that I, as a subject, exist but also that I doubt, do not know, etc. Hence, each and every act of mine is given to me with a certainty similar to the one in which I grasp the reality of the *sum* in self-knowledge in the strictest sense. And in knowing the *vivere me* as well as the existence of all the acts in me I grasp also the *truth*, *the* truth that I am, and that I think, doubt, lack certainty, judge, and so forth. This indubitable discovery of truth in the *Cogito* is explicated by Augustine in another important passage:

> Then conceive the rule itself which you see, in the following way. Everyone who knows that he is in doubt about something, knows a truth, and in regard to this that he knows he is certain. Therefore, he is certain about a truth. Consequently, everyone who doubts if there be a truth, has in himself a true thing of which he does not doubt; nor is there any true thing (verum) which is not true by truth. Consequently, whoever for whatever reason can doubt, ought not to doubt that there is truth. Where this is seen, there is a light without the spaces of place and time, and without the deceiving imagery associated with such spaces. Can these truths in any way corrupt, even if every thinker were to die or would long be in the grave? For the thinker does not make such (truths) but he finds them. Therefore, also before he finds them, they remain in themselves; but when they are found, they renew us. [63]

The truth of these facts, the truth of the proposition that I exist and doubt, is likewise discovered in the indubitably known fact that I exist. More than that, Augustine says that each of these facts and truths implies infinitely many others which follow from it:

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[62] See Morin, Yvan, "Il me semble que je vois: L'Enonce Cartesien et la Lecture qu'en fait Michel Henry", *Laval Theol Phil* (October 1995), 529-539, 51 (3).

[63] My translation (J.S.) of Augustine, De Vera Religione, XXXIX, 73, 205-7).

> But if such things alone belong to human knowledge, then they are very few; unless it be that they are so multiplied in each kind that they are not only not few, but are even found to reach an infinite number. For he who says: 'I know that I live,' says that he knows one thing; if he were then to say: 'I know that I know that I live,' there are already two things, but that he knows these two, is to know a third thing; and so, he can add a fourth and a fifth, and innumerable more, as long as he is able to do so. But because he cannot comprehend an innumerable number by adding one thing to another, or express a thing innumerable times, he comprehends this very fact and says with absolute certainty that this is both true and so innumerable that he cannot truly comprehend and express its infinite number.

Augustine applies this same knowledge also to our knowledge that we desire happiness or that we do not want to err. He writes:

> Likewise, if someone were to say: 'I do not will to err,' will it not be true that whether he errs or does not err, yet he does not will to err? Would it not be the height of impudence of anyone to say to this man: 'Perhaps you are deceived,' since no matter in what he may be deceived, he is certainly not deceived in not willing to be deceived? And if he says that he knows this, he adds as many known things as he pleases, and perceives it to be an infinite number. For he who says, 'I do not will to be deceived, and I know that I do not will this, and I know that I know this,' can also continue from here towards an indefinite number, however awkward this manner of expressing it may be. (Translated by McKenna. ibid. pp. 480-2)

Thus, from the indubitable truths of fact about my own existence and acts infinitely, many other factual truths about my knowledge follow. This fact also discloses the access to numbers, to infinite numbers, with all the necessary laws of numbers explored by arithmetic, as contained in the indubitable knowledge that is given with, and is the condition of, even the most radical skeptical doubt. Yet this leads us to a new point to which we shall instantly return: the cognition of universal necessary truths contained in the *cogito*. In the thoughts discussed thus far, Augustine and Descartes show the immediacy and indubitability of the cognition in which my own real being and life, as well as the acts performed by me, are given to me. I know them from within in performing them and in the 'memory of myself' which I, as it were, am and in which my being and acts become known to me before I turn them into objects of thoughts. Finally, I know myself indubitably in the objectifying thought, in the *cogitare se* in which my being becomes the *object* of my self-knowledge. In *philosophical* reflection on all of this, moreover, I become aware of the indubitable certainty and truth with which my existence, life, willingness (to avoid errors), and innumerable other facts about my being and acts are known to me and the infinitely many truths which follow from them.

(ii) Knowledge of Universal Necessary Truths Implied in Skeptical Doubt

Yet all of these things could not be known by me, had I not also some knowledge of universal facts, of *veritates aeternae.* In the *omnis* in the passages quoted, Augustine already refers to this fact. Indeed, without knowing such strictly necessary and universal facts, I could also not know the individual facts of the *vivere me* and all the others discussed thus far. Let us explain this, following again the lead of Augustine's and Descartes' texts. The reality of my own conscious existence and life (the *vivere me)* is known indubitably precisely because I understand that my being cannot just appear or seem to me but is *real and is in itself.* Every seeming to a subject, every "appearing" to him, presupposes the real subject to which something appears or seems. And this subject of deception cannot again be an appearance. This is a universal, essentially necessary fact, which I grasp in a synthetic a priori knowledge that is founded on the objective essence of appearing, seeming, and being. Augustine expresses this in another important passage and the best-known form of his cogito-argument, which closely resembles the one from Descartes' *Meditations* II:

> But, without any delusive representation of images or phantasms, I am most certain that I am, and that I know and delight in this. In respect of these truths, I am not at all afraid of the arguments of the Academicians, who say, What if you are deceived? For if I am deceived, I am. For he who is not, cannot be deceived; and if I am deceived, by this same token I am. And since I am if I am deceived, how am I deceived as to my existence? For it is certain that I am if I am deceived. Since therefore I, the person deceived, would be, even if I were deceived, certainly I am not deceived in this knowledge that I am. And, consequently, neither am I deceived in knowing that I know. For as I know that I am, I know this also, that I know. And when I love these two things, I add to them a third thing, namely my love, which is of equal moment. For neither am I deceived in this, that I love, since in those things which I love I am not deceived; though even if these were false, it would still be true that I loved false things. For how could I justly be blamed and prohibited from loving false things, if it were false that I loved them? But, since they are true and real, who doubts that when they are loved, the love of them is itself true and real? Further, as there is no one who does not wish to be happy, so there is no one who does not want to be. For how can he be happy if he is nothing?) [64]

My own being and acts can never be only an irreal *object* of conscious acts without really being in themselves. *Noémata* of the form of seeming and appearance have no other being except the 'thin' existence they possess as pure objects of our

[64] *Augustine*, *De Civitate Dei* XI, xxvi. Translated by M. Dods, Basic Writings of Augustine, vol. II, New York, 1948.

consciousness. Augustine's and Descartes' insight is precisely that it is impossible that our own being and acts only appear to be. They are real existing beings and part of my real being. Any possible deception, any error in which we are duped by seeming facts that are not, presupposes this absolute Archimedean point of the real being of the subject who is deceived and, therefore, cannot be deceived in the cognition that he exists.

Any form of theory that interprets the being of the subject as a *merely constituted object* of some transcendental consciousness (which would also constitute itself) falls into the same untenable contradiction pointed out by Augustine and denies the *eternal truth* that Augustine uncovers: that any possible object of thought and constitution presupposes the non-constituted reality of the subject, and therefore of *one real being*. Some of the eternal and necessary truths about essences given in or presupposed by; the *Cogito* refer to any being as such, others to the nature of the subject of conscious acts himself, and still others to the different conscious experiences and acts of that subject.

(1) Some insights into universal and necessary states of affairs in the *Cogito* refer to general metaphysical laws such as the principle of contradiction. As we shall see, we could not doubt without understanding that this most evident principle that nothing can both be and not be or that the obtaining of any state of affairs excludes its simultaneous non-obtaining in the same sense applies to the object of our doubt. But consider also the evidence of the knowledge that we as individual subjects of consciousness really exist. This knowledge is absolutely unthinkable without the insight that our being and non-being exclude each other. If we could not understand the universal ontological principle that the same thing cannot simultaneously be and not be and that no being can possess and simultaneously not possess the same characteristics, we could also not comprehend or be certain that we exist. Thus, even the evidence of the fact of our existence implies the evidence of a *ratio aeterna,* here of the principle of contradiction. As Aristotle points out, we could neither make any distinction between two things nor act without understanding that the being of B of an A and A's not being B exclude each other, nor could we avoid falling into a ditch if we could not know that to fall in and not to fall in exclude each other.

The principle of contradiction in this ontological sense also gives rise to the logical principle of contradiction, which refers to the order of propositions as when we say, "It is indubitably true that we exist." This proposition we could not judge to be true if we did not know that its truth excludes its simultaneous falsity as well as that the contradictorily opposite proposition would also be true. Thus, we could not know anything, therefore also not that we exist, nor could we hold any proposition to be true and make any judgment if we did not understand that the truth of the judgment that we exist excludes its simultaneous falsity. It excludes the truth of the contradictory proposition "I do not exist." If I were to doubt that principle, I would also have to doubt my own existence. Therefore, the cognition of the fact of our

existence includes or requires the evidence that the principle of contradiction, which Leibniz calls one of the two principles on which all our reasoning rests, is true as well. Many other pieces of evidence are presupposed by and gained simultaneously with the insight into my own existence; for example, the evidence that Scheler says precedes all other evidence: that there is something rather than nothing.

(2) Besides such universal ontological and logical principles and essentially necessary facts as the principle of contradiction we discover in the *Cogito* also many essentially necessary truths about the subject of whose existence we have become indubitably certain. We have seen that we encounter in our indubitable knowledge of ourselves reached in the *Cogito* three things about ourselves: our being and existence (*sum)*, our life (*vivere me)*, and our consciousness and knowledge of these. We could not know these without understanding many things about the essential differences and nature of these and about ourselves as subjects of them. I cannot here unfold all the things about essence and existence that can be known in the *Cogito.* [65] But we understand that our existence, our *esse* is an absolutely unique and irreducible phenomenon: the act of acts, that unique actuality which is not the act or activity of an already existing subject but which places that being into the real world and differs from the existence of mere intentional objects as well as from all acts and activities which presuppose already an existing being. The *esse me* that I understand in the Cogito, as it were, reaches that inherent source of reality and actuality, which is not that of an extrinsic cause but the innermost actuality of our being which distinguishes our being from the "inhabitant" of a merely possible world.

Reflecting on the essence of ourselves as *Ego cogitans,* we also gain many insights into the essence of the person and of the relationships between his *being*, *life*, and *consciousness.* Speaking of an equal degree of evidence and certainty found in the cognition of the *sum* and of the *life* of the Ego, we did not wish to assert an absolute identity of being, life, and consciousness of the subject. Rather, in our intuitive knowledge of the necessary essence of the person, the relationships between being, living, and consciousness to the subject of the *ego cogitans* are given to us in their difference. We gain the intuition into essences and essential states of affairs, gained in a fuller philosophical reflection on the *Cogito*, that mental life (which is distinct from the life of the body/mind unit) is an absolutely necessary condition of the being of the person, which cannot be said of consciousness. [66] Nevertheless, consciousness is in no way merely accidental to the actual being of the person but is

[65] See Josef Seifert: "Essence and Existence. A New Foundation of Classical Metaphysics on the Basis of 'Phenomenological Realism,' and a Critical Investigation of 'Existentialist Thomism'," *Aletheia* I (1977), pp. 17-157; I,2 (1977), pp. 371-459; jssw.

[66] As Bonaventure states well in his *Commentary on the Sentences* (*Opera*, vol. 3, p. 38 a): "Natura carens vita deficit ab excellentia proprietatis personalis." ("A nature which lacks life also lacks the excellence of the personal nature"). Again he implies that "...vivere [est] a substantia [animae]" ("To live is of the very substance of the soul"); *ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 170 f. 3.

presupposed for its actualization qua person: if human life were reduced forever to a mere vegetative state [67] and would lack eternally, even in forms hidden to the experience of others, the conscious life of the mind, it would virtually cease to merit the title of personal life because it would lack forever the actuality of personal life which awakens only in consciousness. While the life of the *Ego cogitans* is not simply identical with his consciousness, it is nevertheless in a unique way actualized and activated in consciousness such that we can refer to the person's being and life as a conscious being and life even if - in their "dormient" form - it is evident that consciousness is neither absolutely inseparable from the being nor from the life of a person.

Only here, in the immediate and intimate knowledge that we are and live, that we encounter directly in experience the subject and principle of life itself, and thus we discover the person as that kind of self-standing reality which Aristotle calls *substance.* In the *Cogito,* we have not only privileged access to conscious life itself but also to its subject, the Ego, which turns out to be the substantial subject itself that underlies all conscious operations and activities and could never be a mere accident of something else.

(3) Thirdly, we gain insights into essentially necessary facts regarding human acts. Yet, with equally indubitable evidence, I find, says Augustine, that I cannot doubt without remembering what I am doubting about. Again, this fact is not just found in myself as the individual *fact* of *my* own doubt discussed above. Rather, I grasp from the very essence of doubt that *no man, no thinking subject in any possible world,* could doubt without having some awareness and cognition of the object of his doubt. This *intentional structure* of doubt, as necessarily going beyond an immanent state of consciousness towards *something* that is doubted, is disclosed as belonging to the essence of doubt itself. Moreover, we can see that this object of doubt must possess a certain structure; that is, it cannot be simply a man, a rose, etc., which I doubt. Rather, only a 'state of affairs.' the 'being-b of an A' can be the object of doubt: only *that* something exists or has or does not have a certain predicate can be the object of doubt.

I doubt not simply the one state of affairs but I doubt whether *or not* it obtains. This "whether or not," which characterizes the complex object of doubt, reveals another essentially necessary fact about the object of doubt. In doubt, we always regard at least two contradictorily opposed states of affairs (Sachverhalte): that something is or is not X. Thus, the radical doubt of all truth implies that it is not certain *whether or not* there is truth. I doubt all truth; that is, I am uncertain of whether or not it is. But if this is the case, Augustine explains in an earlier version of

[67] With this term, I do not mean what is usually called "Persistent Vegetative State"(PVS), *Wachkoma,* or the "apallic state," for this state is neither vegetative (often not even unconscious) nor persistent.

his *cogito*, I grasp at the foundation of doubt also the universal principle which Aristotle calls the "first and most certain of all principles," namely the principle of contradiction. If it were not impossible that one and the same thing, A, possesses and does not possess existence, or a predicate b, then the meaning of doubt would be undermined. Doubt, in order to be meaningful at all, presupposes the absolute validity of the principle of contradiction. I grasp that *either* there is truth *or* no truth, but both cannot occur. If they could both be A and its contradictory opposite, then doubt would not make sense anymore. In *Contra Academics*, the early dialogue of Augustine, which is the first purely philosophical writing of a Christian and which presents a critique of skepticism, a view Augustine himself had once adopted, he shows that again infinitely many true disjunctive propositions follow from the truth of the principle, of contradiction:

> Count, if you can how many there are: . . . if there is one sun (only), there are not two: one and the same soul cannot die and still be immortal, man cannot at the same time be happy and unhappy; . . . we are now either awake or asleep: either there is a body which I seem to see or there is not a body. Through dialectic I have learned that these and many other things which it would take too long to mention are true; no matter in what condition our senses may be, these things are true of themselves. It has taught me that, if the antecedent of any of those statements which I just placed before you in logical connection was assumed, it would be necessary to deduce that which was connected with it. ... (St Augustine, Contra Academicos, II, xiii, 29.)

Hence the most radical sceptic sees that a thing cannot be and not be in the same sense and at the same time. The unfolding of this knowledge would make us understand how much additional evidence it implies and how all the things Husserl's *Logical Investigations* and Pfänder's *Logik* unfold about the essence of the principle of contradiction, about the distinction between its ontological and its logical sense, about the difference between the principle of contradiction and a mere psychological law, about the immediate knowledge in which it is given, about the difference between its evident objective truth and its mere presupposedness by thinking, and so on are contained within and are implicitly recognized in the most radical doubt. They form part of the nucleus of indubitable truth without which the person cannot live and perform any conscious act, including doubting.

Moreover, everybody who doubts also *understands (intelligit) that* he doubts. This implies the truth that no apersonal unconscious being could ever doubt. Doubt presupposes not only the directedness towards an intentional object of doubt but also the self-awareness and self-consciousness which permits the unique act of reflection, the *intellectio that* I think and doubt. A being that would be totally absorbed in objects and that could not take the step back involved in reflection, a being which could not bend back over itself in what Augustine calls an entirely immaterial conversion over itself and in what Thomas Aquinas called the *reditio mentis*

completa super seipsam, also could not doubt. This fascinating act, in which the subject is both subject and object of reflection, is again necessarily implied - at least as a *possibility* - by doubt. The type of consciousness which suffices for feeling physical pain, which animals undoubtedly have, would not suffice for doubt, because doubt presupposes a higher mode of personal consciousness that permits the *intelligere se dubitantem.*

Moreover, not only do I understand that I doubt, but I also know that I do not know. This *scit se nescire* refers again to the absolutely universal fact that in order to doubt I have to know that I do not know. First of all, when I doubt, at least in the sincere doubt which is not just a pretext and a rejection of knowledge, I actually do not know the fact of which I am doubting. For it is impossible for me to doubt the indubitable truths which I have just discovered. I can only doubt if my knowledge is uncertain in virtue of some deficiency and if there is, for this reason, some dubitability in my conviction about a *Sachverhalt.* But the mere lack of (certain) knowledge is not sufficient for doubt. Rather, I also have to know *that I* do not know in order to doubt. This is another reason why doubt necessarily presupposes a subject that is capable of the act of reflection and of grasping the absence or limits of knowledge. Another essentially necessary fact that is presupposed by any act of doubt is the *will* to be certain and to avoid error. Any genuine doubt presupposes the desire for knowledge. This implies again a whole world of related facts. In seeking to know, the one who doubts also understands what knowledge is and that only a *receptive-discovering* contact with being, in which that which is the case manifests itself to the spirit, is knowledge, not any mere assuming or positing that does not coincide with that which is.

Thus, the nature of *truth* is also discovered in doubt, the nature of truth as a unique sort of conformity between judgments and the states of affairs posited in them. Along with the nature of *truth* which I wish to attain, the essence of the *error* which I wish to avoid in doubt is also known. For I could not doubt if I did not wish to avoid error. Then it would make no sense to doubt. [68]

Thus knowledge, conviction, judgment, truth, error, certainty, uncertainty - all of these are given in the act of doubt, and countless further essentially necessary facts about each of their natures can be brought to evidence simply by carefully attending to the act of doubt. Insofar as doubt contains the *question* about truth, one could also unfold the necessary essence of the question both as an act and as objective thought and show that the latter cannot be true or false, and so on. Insofar as nobody doubts

[68] These points and the distinctions between the truth of propositions, cognitive truth, and ontological truth I have much further developed in Josef Seifert, *Wahrheit und Person. Vom Wesen der Seinswahrheit, Erkenntniswahrheit und Urteilswahrheit. De veritate – Über die Wahrheit* Bd. I (Frankfurt / Paris / Ebikon / Lancaster / New Brunswick: Ontos-Verlag, 2009), especially chs. 1-3.

who does not prefer knowledge to error and to doubt, I also perceive that some axiological knowledge is gained in doubt. The value of knowledge and truth, when compared to falsity and error, and the superior value of knowledge, when compared to doubt, are known in doubt. Likewise, the difference between the purely intellectual disvalue of error as opposed to the *moral* disvalue of the person who does not even *seek* truth or who lightly claims its possession can be known by delving into the nature of sincere doubt.

One can also see that, apart from their intrinsic value as a positive importance which they possess in themselves, knowledge and the desire and love of truth are goods *for* the person who possesses them, and error is evil *for* him. In order for genuine doubt to be possible, also hierarchical gradations of values and goods for the person must be known. The doubting subject must understand that it is a greater evil to err than to doubt, for, otherwise, he would have no motive to doubt rather than putting forth blind claims. He must understand that his doubt differs from a cynical rejection of truth as well as from an untrue hypocritical claim to certainty where it is lacking. Finally, *everyone* who doubts *judges* that he ought not to assent rashly. In this, again, the doubting subject has to make at least two judgments: that he does not possess sufficient knowledge to give his assent to a proposition and that he ought to abstain from judging if he possesses insufficient knowledge to warrant the judging assent. The doubt is then recognized as the response due to this situation and preferable to the *blind* assent of the one who judges too easily.

The existence and essence of time - in the transition from the moment in which I doubt to that in which I gain certainty and in the impossibility of doubting and simultaneously being certain about the same thing and in the same sense - can also be known by grasping the essence of doubt. “If these things were not, he could not doubt of anything,” formulates Augustine. The objective necessity which is found in these and other universal facts, however, needs some further explanation. Do these universal truths really possess objective necessity? Could we not be confronted here with a mere linguistic necessity or necessity of thought, a mere subjective necessity that is incorrectly projected into these “things themselves”?

At this point, we have to delve into the structure of the *veritates aeternae* and their foundation in the essences of things, unfolding again what Augustine and his followers, particularly Bonaventure, have already seen. We have now discovered that the knowledge of the *factual* truths of my existence and acts discussed before in one sense also depends on the cognition of universal truths and principles. This is of the greatest importance. The lack of a clear recognition of universal necessary truths is one of the reasons why Descartes’ *Cogito* and his inference of God have often been accused of turning into a vicious circle. For at times Descartes says that all *necessary truths* could be changed by God and that only the knowledge of the *veracity* of God would guarantee human knowledge of these necessary truths. Yet in order to arrive at the knowledge of the *cogito* itself and of the existence of God, we already have both to depend upon and *use* logical truths and many other necessary universal

principles. Descartes writes: “Perhaps a God might have endowed me with such a nature that I may have been deceived even concerning things which seemed to me most manifest. But every time that this preconceived opinion of the sovereign power of a God presents itself to my thought, I am constrained to confess that it is easy to him, if He wishes it, to cause me to err, even in matters in which I believe myself to Have the best evidence. ” (René Descartes, Meditations II, ibid., p. 158)

Other passages are even more radically voluntaristic, making the necessary truths themselves dependent on an act of divine *Fiat.* Certainly, Descartes’ position, his extension of doubt to the necessary truths which we found to be as certain as the cognition of the *fact* of my existence, and to be presupposed by the latter, is mitigated by many passages in which he seems to hold that this evidence of universal necessary truths is on a par with that of the *cogito, sum.* In the text from *Meditations* III quoted above, he continues: “On the other hand, always when I direct my attention to things which I believe myself to perceive very clearly, I am so persuaded of their truth that I let myself break out into words like these: Let who will deceive me, He can never cause me to be nothing while I think that I am, or someday cause it to be true to say that I have never been, it being true now to say that I am, or that two and three make more or less than five, or any such things in which I see a manifest contradiction.” (Translated by Haldane and Ross, ibid., pp. 158-9)

In *Meditations* (V, 15) and *Second Reply to Objections* (189), Descartes makes the point that the immediate evidence of necessary essences and necessary truths is absolutely indubitable when I fix my intuitive look upon them and that he meant solely to extend the doubt to them when they were inferred from previously established and not presently intuited premises (cf. also *Fourth Reply to Objections*, 344). There is a great number of other texts of Descartes, in *Meditations* V and elsewhere, in which he emphasizes the uninventable and absolutely necessary character of these “true immutable essences,” which we *discover* “without the slightest production of our mind, from their own nature, in which they (their marks) are linked with each other.” Nevertheless, Descartes’ position on these *rationes aeternae and necessary truths* is quite confusing, and he does not sufficiently recognize that their evidence is equal to that of the sum and even greater than the condition of the former. Because of the absolutely crucial role of these *necessary essences* for all philosophy and *indubitable* knowledge of truth, their nature has to be explored further in a way that has become possible through “phenomenological realism” and refutes any form of transcendental German idealism or Husserl’s own later “transcendental relativism.”

2. Characteristics of Essentially Necessary versus Contingent States of Affairs

The essentially necessary states of affairs we discovered, such as that nobody can doubt without existing, differ, first of all, from contingent accidental states of affairs, such as the fact that I exist. The first difference between these two states of affairs is that one is individual *(ego sum),* while the other is universal: "nobody (in no possible world) can doubt without existing." A second and deeper difference between the two states of affairs consists in this: in the first state of affairs, we find a *necessary* link between the two terms (the being that is meant by the subject-term and the predicate); *aliter esse non potest,* as Bonaventure puts it.

The second state of affairs is characterized by a *contingent link:* I exist; I could also not exist *(aliter esse potest).* In fact, in gratitude for my being, I presuppose the discovery that the fact of my existence is a surprising event, which is *not necessary* at all.

The second difference between the two types of states of affairs is still more important than the first and can be shown in another way. The *necessary* link between subject and predicate in the first type of state of affairs is found both in the *universal* fact and in the individual application of it. That my doubt presupposes my existence (although it is something individual) is as necessary as the universal fact that *every* doubt presupposes the existence of its subject. That Socrates' justice presupposes his freedom is not less evident than that justice presupposes freedom in general.

Although essential necessity (as long as we deal with beings whose *existence* is contingent) is always *grounded* in the *universal* essence *(eîdos)* and state of affairs, the necessary bond between the various moments of the essence is also found in the particular instance. One could say that the general (essentially necessary) law is of *absolute necessity* and of non-conditional necessity. It simply *is necessary.* The necessity of the individual instance of the universal law, in contrast, is conditional in regard to existence: *if* some person X exists, *his* doubt necessarily presupposes his existence, etc. Of course, the essentially necessary states of affairs are unconditionally true, too, for his *possible* being and for all possible individuals and worlds. If we speak, however, of the *absolute necessity* of the essentially necessary fact *in* the existing individual, then his *reality* and contingent existence are presupposed for this necessity to obtain actually.

An additional fact corroborates our finding that the absence or presence of an absolutely necessary connection between subject and predicate in our two sets of states of affairs is more important than the difference between the *general* nature of the first type of state of affairs and the *individual* nature of the second. Many *general* states of affairs (such as that man has ten fingers) are not necessary. This proves that *necessity* is not the same thing as generality and is not even implied by it.

(i) Essential necessity versus formal dominion of general nature

This further becomes evident through the following consideration. The essential necessity that we encountered with Augustine and which is inherent in the essence of doubt, knowledge, truth, appearance-versus-being-in-itself, and other data is completely different from what Hildebrand aptly calls the mere "formal dominion of the universal nature over the individual case." Of course, there is such a necessity. If it is true that all men are going to die and that Socrates is a man, he is going to die, too. If it is assumed as true that all crows are black, and this bird is a crow, it must also be black, and so on. This *necessity* of the *formal dominion* of the universal over the particular, however, differs profoundly from essential necessity. It is, first of all, restricted to the relation between genus or species (the general nature) and the particular. The necessity here refers exclusively to this relation and is neither found in the universal fact *as such* nor in the particular relation between *this bird* and *its* being black.

However, The essential necessity we discovered with Augustine is not restricted to the relation between the universal and the particular. It characterizes both the universal state of affairs as such and the individual state of affairs as such. Moreover, only when there is an *essential necessity* (and therefore *not* in the case of the crow or of the necessity of dying) can one say that the relationship between the universal nature and the individual case is *strictly necessary. For if there is no essential intrinsic necessity, any absolute necessity of the formal dominion is purely analytic,* quite similar to that of tautological propositions. If it is grounded in a contingent nature, the formal dominion is not absolute. Thus *(synthetic a priori) essential necessity alone can be found in the strict necessity of the dominion of the general nature over the individual instance.*

(ii) Absolute essential necessity versus necessity of nature

Apart from differing both from individual contingent (non-necessary) states of affairs, on the one hand, and from the necessity of the formal dominion of the general nature over the particular instance, on the other, essential necessity differs also from the necessity of the so-called laws of nature, such as the law of gravity, or the biological law that the human organism needs to have a heart to stay alive, or that a virgin cannot conceive without any relationship with a man. There is certainly some kind of necessity here, at least the kind Aristotle requires in the *Posterior Analytics* in order for any science to be possible. But this type of necessity differs radically from essential necessity, as Dietrich von Hildebrand has shown in the ground-breaking Chapter IV of his *What is Philosophy?*

In the first place, this necessity is *not* absolute. This can be seen as a posteriori from the fact that *exceptions* to such laws of nature occur as a matter of fact. Such

strange phenomena as "black holes," "anti-matter," and the like prove this. Likewise, miraculous events, the facticity of which no one can seriously challenge, even if he rejects their religious interpretation, bear witness to this fact. Philosophers like David Hume and atheistic scientists would agree with this fact. Modern physics even wants to go so far as to assign to laws of nature only a *statistical necessity.* But even if this position is rejected by a "classically minded physicist," the "necessity" of laws of nature is still not absolute. The idea of exceptions, as well as that of miracles, at least remains possible in regard to this "necessity of nature."

Its contingency is also confirmed by its epistemological reflection in that experiments are required in order to know these "necessities"; they cannot be grasped by the mediation of one experience only, and experience can also show deviations of individual events from these laws of nature. In distinguishing four types of necessity (and impossibility), Bonaventure calls the necessity of nature *(necessitatem propter limitationem naturae)* one which does not imply absolute impossibility and of the opposite of which it is therefore *not* true that it cannot in any manner be *(nullo modo potest).* Rather (in his *Commentary on the Sentences* I, 744 ff.), Bonaventure says that the impossibility which corresponds to this necessity of nature means that the opposite can only happen with difficulty (with exception: *difficulter fit).* The necessity of natural laws, Bonaventure says, can definitely be suspended by omnipotence. So far, we have used only a posteriori empirical argument for the non-absoluteness of this necessity, arguments taken from exceptions and from other real and possible deviations of events from laws of nature. There is, however, a deeper knowledge at the basis of the assertion of the non-absoluteness of this necessity than the fact that we experience or believe that exceptions from these laws have actually occurred.

We can, at least in many cases, gain a philosophical insight into the *datum* of the *contingency of essence,* into the non-absoluteness of the necessity of these states of affairs, as most states of affairs regarding the different species of animals. We then understand that there is nothing intrinsic to these states of affairs which would, absolutely speaking, forbid their being otherwise. They are contingent on the order of essence itself, not only on that of existence. In principle, we can distinguish three cases of knowing the contingency versus the necessity of an essence: (1) The described case in which the contingency of nature is unambiguously given that corresponds to the case in which the absolute necessity of an essence is clearly and distinctly given; (2) the case in which we know indirectly that a truth is absolutely necessary but we have to find it by empirical methods: this is often the case in chess theory but also in number theory, for example with respect to extremely high prime numbers which must be sought out empirically, etc. (3) There is thirdly the case in which we are confronted with some laws, for example regarding electricity and magnetic attraction, in which we remain uncertain whether the given state of affairs is absolutely necessary or not.

The essential necessities, on the contrary, which Augustine unfolds as conditions of doubt, are *absolute* and are *given as being absolute* in such a manner that no possible exception or power (in any possible world) could suspend them.

While this absolute necessity is never conditioned by some fact or will or power, it can be conditional or non-conditional in another sense. That moral goodness presupposes freedom and deception's real existence is of *absolute* non-conditional necessity. But that an act of promise gives rise to a moral obligation to fulfill the promise is conditioned insofar as it depends on other factors - whether or not this essentially necessary natural consequence of promising actually comes into being or is suspended by other factors, such as the immoral content of a promise or the collision of the obligation that results from a promise with a higher obligation, such as that I had to save a human life just at the same time I had promised to meet another person. The absolute essential necessity can refer, furthermore, either to the order of being (such as that doubt presupposes life) or to oughtness, such as that we ought not to give our assent to a proposition rashly or that we never are allowed to calumniate a person.

A decisive difference between the essential necessity and the necessity of nature consists in the fact that the a priori necessity is grounded *intelligibly* in the *essence* of the respective being, whereas the natural necessity does not flow simply, and in a fully intelligible way, from the essence; it is rather contingently supervenient on, and linked to, it. It does not possess the supreme ("incomparable") intelligibility of essentially necessary states of affairs.

(iii) Essential necessity versus aporetic "seeming" necessity

Essential necessity also differs from what Bonaventure calls "seeming absolute necessity," "*secundum limitationem intelligentiae nostrae.*" Such a necessity just *appears* to be absolute, for example, that one and the same identical body cannot be simultaneously in two different locations or that a free act cannot be engendered by a being totally caused by God. Similarly, it seems absolutely impossible that an infinite being creates finite beings that do not add 'more being' to it, and so on. This impossibility *(propter limitationem intelligentiae nostrae)* refers especially to what the present author has, in previous work, called "an apory" and differs from *absolute impossibility* (that is founded in *essential necessity*) mainly in that it only *seems* to be impossible; that is to say, it presents itself to our mind in such a way that *we fail to comprehend* how it could be otherwise. There is an *incomprehensibility* of "things being otherwise" and the impossibility which corresponds to this apparent necessity is *given as related* to the limitation of our comprehension. We have no apodictic certainty of the *absolute objective impossibility* of it being otherwise. We *fail to comprehend* any "otherwise" as possible. But this *lack* of seeing is not on a par with positive insight into necessity or impossibility; and such a positive insight is not

present here. More importantly, in this case, there is - accessible to our experience - a dependency of this 'necessity' and "impossibility" on the limitation of our mind. In other words, this necessity is not clearly given as *rooted* in the essence of the object in question. In some cases, the doubt may, of course, arise as to whether the object itself is not in this way necessary or impossible, but no positive insight into necessity/impossibility is reached. In other cases (like in many apories concerning freedom and its compatibility with foreknowledge, first cause, and other metaphysical and anthropological facts), both terms of the mysterious relation are given, and thus also the actual existence (and freedom from contradictions) of the apparently impossible relation; the non-givenness of absolute necessity here is thus clearly known. In this case, we know indirectly that it is possible, though it *appears to* be impossible when we look at it directly.

It is decisive to see how such an "appearing impossible," in virtue of the limits of our intellect and the lack of sufficiently penetrating the nature of the respective object, differs from an insight into an essential impossibility. To realize this is to acknowledge one of the ways in which *ignorance*, of which Socrates speaks as a distinctive mark separating the philosopher from the sophist, belongs indeed to philosophy. Any impossibility of comprehending and *seeming* necessity/impossibility is distinct from the datum of a positively given impossibility/necessity.

(iv) Essential necessity differs from psychological necessity

There are two types of psychological necessity and corresponding impossibility. Both are different from *essential* necessity in general and from essential necessities about psychological data (such as that each act of will presupposes the cognition of the willed object) in particular. There are first empirical psychological necessities such as that man cannot pay full attention to five different activities at the same time. These have the character of a 'necessity of nature' related to the human psyche and differ from essential necessity in the ways spelled out above.

The second type of psychological necessity/impossibility is present when there is an *immanent* reason *within* our psychic life for having to think or not to think, to imagine or not to imagine, and so on, something "objective." This necessity may project some merely subjective psychological connection into the objective world. In this way, a man who is told that he can make gold out of dust only if he never thinks of white bears may never be able to turn dust into gold, if only for no other reason than that, psychologically, he can no longer fail to think of white bears whenever he intends to make gold. This type of necessity is, first of all, not absolute but empirical, and even as an empirical necessity, it is less strict than that of the laws of nature. Exceptions are not only possible but it is clearly understood that there is no absolutely necessary bond between the terms which I associate or think together with psychological necessity. White bears are in no way given as necessarily connected to

gold, although the man always thinks of the one with the other. With this example, the difference between a psychological inability to imagine or to think differently is given in its distinctness from essential necessity.

Secondly, this necessity is in no way given as *rooted* in the object in question (e.g., in a connection between white bears and gold), but the necessity appears clearly on the subject side and is experienced as a *subjective lack* of ability to think or to imagine except in accordance with such a psychological necessity.

Since the most serious "subjective competitor" of objective essential necessity is not psychological necessity but what Kant and transcendental idealists call "*transcendental necessity*," and since all arguments against the identification of objective essential necessity with subjective transcendental necessity will also apply to the refutation of more empirical versions of psychologism, we move to this decisive theme.

(v) Objective essential necessity versus subjective transcendental necessity

A transcendental necessity would not be a mere empirical psychological necessity / impossibility of perceiving or thinking but an absolute necessity/impossibility of us thinking or experiencing something differently from how we actually experience or think it. Kant interprets the synthetic a priori elements presupposed by all experience as transcendentally necessary conditions of all possible experience which we find already in our consciousness "*im Gemüte bereitliegen.*" Heinrich von Kleist gives a very telling image of transcendental necessity by comparing it, on the level of mind, to the case of sense-perception in which we would be wearing green glasses and would have to see all objects green without being able to ever detect whether this green color which we inevitably perceive in objects belongs to them or only to us.

The transcendental necessity of thought, which Kant confuses with essential necessity, differs from absolute necessity because it is only a necessity of "our having to think that . . .," "having to experience this or that connection." Just as the green color is in no way given as growing out of the essence of the objects which we see, so a mere transcendental necessity of our thinking certain things could in no way coincide with an objective essential necessity that is discovered in the object of thought, in its very essence. Moreover, the transcendental necessity presents itself as a "*fact* of pure reason" factually present. There is no intelligibility here in the *object* of thought which would explain that and why the necessity flows out of the object's structure. In this regard, to which we shall momentarily return, essential necessity is quite different from transcendental necessity; it comes "from the front," i.e., it is perceived in the nature of the object in question, whereas transcendental necessity comes "from the back," from the subject's own structures of thought and imagination from which it cannot escape. For this reason, transcendental necessity also cannot be given as absolute but as something relative to our nature. We. as subjects of a certain

transcendental structure, can only perceive, imagine, and think in a certain way. How persons of another nature would think and perceive, we do not know.

Something like a "transcendental necessity" in this sense actually exists. There are 'transcendental forms of intuition' in the sense that we have to perceive objects at the same time only from a certain vantage point, in certain perspectives, and so on. Essential necessity (synthetic a priori necessity), however, is given to us precisely as dependent *not* on our subjective constitution but on the essence of a being independent of anyone's consciousness or constitution. The unique datum of *essential necessity, which Kant failed to analyze properly, by quickly explaining it through reference to a radically different type of necessity (thus explaining it away),* is brought to evidence more clearly by analyzing its further marks.

(vi) Absolute exceptionless generality

This mark of necessary essences and of essentially necessary states of affairs has already been discussed. We saw earlier that an exceptionless (synthetic) necessity with which the universal nature rules each individual case is *only* grounded in *universal* essentially necessary states of affairs as such; it is a consequence of the strict essential necessity inasmuch as it inheres in the universal essence or *eidos*, [69] but it does not belong to essential necessity per se which is also found in individual cases of essential necessities. But here, the essential necessity is linked to the individuality of being and hence not of exceptionless universal validity because there is no universality or generality. Moreover, the supreme case of essential necessity, that of the absolute being, includes unicity and excludes any generality, let alone exceptionless generality. Therefore, we have to understand that universal exceptionless generality is part and consequence of essential necessity only where we find this necessity in universals. However, every essential necessity that does not apply *exclusively* to an individual unique being has its root in a universal eidetic structure. For example, the fact that „this red spot here" is necessarily spatially extended has its root in the fact that color as such is necessarily extended in space.

(vii) Timelessness and eternity

Although essential necessity is also realized in concrete individual essences, its source, except in the case of the absolute being, lies in the general necessary essence of things. Thus even if one says with Thomas Aquinas that essential necessity

[69] See on this Josef Seifert, *Sein und Wesen.* Philosophie und Realistische Phänomenologie/Philosophy and Realist Phenomenology. Studien der Internationalen Akademie für Philosophie im Fürstentum Liechtenstein/Studies of the International Academy of Philosophy in the Principality Liechtenstein, (Hrsg./Ed.), Rocco Buttiglione and Josef Seifert, Vol. 3 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996)., ch. 1.

belongs to "nature in absolute consideration" [70] and neither to the individual essence *qua* individual nor to the general *qua* general, one has to admit that this truth does not cancel the fact that the source of the necessity does not lie in the individual temporal being but in a universal and atemporal essential form of the thing. And the absolute necessity of the *general* state of affairs is also timeless. This timelessness, interminability (without end), and beginninglessness (agenés), this timeless "eternity," and endlessness follow necessarily if absolute essential necessity is given. It is it's concomitant.

(viii) Absolute indestructibility

The essentially necessary states of affairs are timeless, not only as a mere fact but are absolutely indestructible. No power whatsoever, on earth or in heaven, could destroy an essential necessity, as we have already seen when discussing the absoluteness of essential necessity itself.

(ix) Absolute and Intrinsic Immutability

Plato, Augustine, Bonaventure, and other philosophers have perceived that if there really is an essential necessity, this necessity is also unable to be subject to any change and alteration, not only to any change in time but even to an "eternal having been different" such as God's free will to create contingent beings or a given contingent being (such as my *ego cogitans*) could indeed *not have been* God's will from eternity. This immutability of the objects known in the objective a priori knowledge of essential necessities is by no means found in *all truth* (for example, not in the truth that I exist), nor is this kind of immutability inseparable from the indubitable certainty of a priori knowledge to which we shall return shortly.

For we have seen that neither my existence nor, therefore, the truth about it is absolutely necessary, and thus also neither my existence nor the truth that I exist are intrinsically and absolutely immutable. At the same time, we have also gained the insight that we discover simultaneously in the *Cogito,* or with it, universal and absolute necessary states of affairs such as those rooted in the essence of being as such, in our nature as subjects of consciousness, and in various acts. We have also seen that these two entirely different kinds of cognition contained in the *Cogito* – the knowledge of my own contingent existence and that of universal and essentially necessary truths, essences, and states of affairs – are nevertheless inseparably linked.

[70] See the detailed discussion of this notion of Thomas Aquinas in Josef Seifert, "Essence and Existence. A New Foundation of Classical Metaphysics on the Basis of 'Phenomenological Realism,' and a Critical Investigation of 'Existentialist Thomism'," *Aletheia* I (1977), pp. 17-157; I,2 (1977), pp. 371-459.

If the one was missing, the other could not exist: The knowledge of my own existence and of the existence of my acts could never be indubitable without knowing absolutely essentially necessary states of affairs such as the principle of contradiction and the others we have mentioned. But also, these essentially necessary states of affairs could never be known indubitably by me without also knowing indubitably my own existence and the evidence of my act of knowing. Thus, on the one hand, we could not ever know the indubitable truth of our real existence in the *Cogito* without knowing some universal truths. On the other hand, we could never know indubitably these essentially necessary truths without simultaneously grasping indubitably not only our own existence as subjects of our knowledge of these truths but also the existence of our act of cognition and, much more than that, the evidence of our knowledge of the essentially necessary states of affairs.

Now we have stated that neither the fact that I exist nor the fact that many acts in me exist – both being contingent states of affairs which are, however, given indubitably within me in the *Cogito* – are absolutely immutable, nor is the truth about them absolutely immutable in the way in which the a priori and essentially necessary truths are immutable. To understand this absolute immutability of the essential necessities that we encountered in the *Cogito*, but whose existence, such as the law expressed in the principle of contradiction and any other essential necessity, is quite independent of our own existence, we have to make further distinctions:

First, we have to see that no contingent fact that comes to exist in time or that can pass away in time can itself be immutable because it's coming to be as well as passing away is a radical mutation and transition between being and non-being.

Secondly, we have to recognize that inasmuch as the truth about these facts depends on their being, these truths about contingent facts share in the mutability of the facts about which they are truth: the truth that I actually live or do not suffer head-aches at the present moment is not immutable, and this proposition may no longer be true tomorrow.

Thirdly, although not possessing immutability in the same sense, nonetheless, the truth of propositions about past events (and in a certain sense, these events *as past)* remain immutably true and real; moreover, the past, in view of its kind of reality and at the same time of non-being (as Bonaventure states), cannot be changed even by an omnipotent will.

Fourthly, the future is not in the same way immutable as the past because through our freedom or divine intervention its contents *can be* changed. [71]

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[71] See on this "To Be a Person – To Be Free," in: Zofia J. Zdybicka, et al. (Ed.), *Freedom in Contemporary Culture*. Acts of the V World Congress of Christian Philosophy. Catholic University of Lublin 20-25 August 1996, Vol I (Lublin: The University Press of the Catholic University of Lublin, 1998), pp. 145-185; "In Defense of Free Will: A Critique of Benjamin Libet," *Review of Metaphysics*, Volume LXV, Nr. 2, December 2011, pp. 377-407; "Can Neurological Evidence Refute Free Will? The Failure of a Phenomenological Analysis

Fifthly, Nonetheless, inasmuch as the future will actually be the future (and, of course, also as having been eternally possible), it must also be maintained that there are immutable truths about the future as about the past, but their immutability has an entirely different character from that of the past. For as these future facts are not yet actual and *really can be determined by free acts,* their immutability is compatible with the abstract and the real possibility of their becoming different. Their immutability is only that of the principle of contradiction that nothing will not happen that will happen. This kind of immutability also corresponds to the infallible divine knowledge of the future and does not take away freedom but even guarantees it, as Augustine says: because the future objects of an omniscient being's foreknowledge will infallibly happen but future free acts are foreseen not as fate or necessary events but precisely *as owed to our own or to divine free will.* [72] Even if we have to reject Aristotle's position that there are no true or false propositions about future contingents, however, we have to admit that these future contingent events never can have the type of immutability of the past.

Sixthly, we have to distinguish also the immutability of the contingent past from the *absolute immutability, which neither the contingent past nor any mere necessity of contingent essences and laws of nature can possess: namely,* that immutability which excludes eternally any change, which *never could have been different in any possible world.* That kind of immutability is the direct fruit and consequence of absolute essential necessity; and that immutability precisely, which no contingent fact nor any truth about non-necessary facts ever possesses, we must ascribe to the absolutely essentially necessary essences and the states of affairs rooted in them. And it is precisely this immutability that characterizes the essential necessities by their very nature.

(x) Incomparable intelligibility

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of Acts in Libet's Denial of 'Positive Free Will'", *Pensamiento. Revista de investigación e información filosófica,* vol. 67, núm. 254, *Ciencia, filosofía y religión. Serie especial no 5* (2011), 1077-1098; . "Are We Free? Are We Persons? 5 Ways to Obtain Certain Knowledge About the Existence of Free Will," Asian Perspectives in the Arts and Humanities. Bi-annual Journal of the School of the Humanities. Ateneo de Manila University. Vol. 1, No. 2 2011, pp. 39-79; . "Persons, Causes and Free Will: Libet's Topsy-Turvy Idea of the Order of Causes and 'Forgetfulness of the Person'", *Journal of East-West Thought,* Summer Nr. 2 Vol. 4, June 2014, pp. 13-51.

[72] See on this Augustine, *De libero arbitrio,* in: Eligius Dekkers, ed., Clavis patrum latinorum (C. Beyaert, Brugis - M. Nijhoff, Hagae Comitis, 1961), PL XLIV; see also Augustine, *De civitate Dei,* in: Eligius Dekkers, ed., Clavis patrum latinorum (C. Beyaert, Brugis - M. Nijhoff, Hagae Comitis, 1961), CC XLVII – XLVIII, Book V.

Another extremely important feature of essentially necessary facts, besides their absolute essential necessity itself, is the unique mode of intelligibility they possess. It is precisely this feature of essential necessity that is a guarantee of the objectivity and the absoluteness of essential necessity. In and through it, we discover the objectivity of essential necessity. In Kant's failure to recognize this incomparable intelligibility as an important characteristic of the object of a priori knowledge (restricting the characterization of synthetic a priori knowledge to necessity and apodictic certainty), we see a cardinal reason for Kant's subjectivist misinterpretation of the a priori.

Now what is intelligibility? And what do we mean by "incomparable intelligibility"? Intelligibility does not characterize essential necessity simply in itself but with reference to something else (*ad aliud*), as Thomas Aquinas keenly noted in his discussion of the transcendental verum, which he calls not a transcendental in se such as ens or res, but a transcendental "ad aliud," in relation to something else. [73] He asserts the intelligibility of all beings, which consists of all beings standing in an actual or potential relationship to a knowing intellect or soul, which is born (natum) to know being. At the same time, this ordination between being and knowledge is mutual, says Thomas, and also, being is "born to be known by the intellect." [74] Intelligibility in this broad sense thus is the openness of being to the intellect and to be known by the intellect and their mutual ordination to know and, respectively, to be known. [75]

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[73] His assertion of the intelligibility of all being (of every *ens* being also a *verum*), follows upon a double distinction: we can add to the most elementary notion of being a certain restricted mode of being (such as when we distinguish substance and accidents), or we can add to being characteristics which follow quite generally upon its character of being (*alio modo ita quod modus expressus sit modus generalis consequens omne ens)* such as when we distinguish the seven transcendentals: *ens, unum, verum, etc.* This second way of adding to the notion of being can again occur in two ways, one which attributes characteristics to all beings *in themselves* (the other in relationship to something else): *"et hic modus dupliciter accipi potest: uno modo secundum quod consequitur unumquodque ens in se; alio modo secundum quod consequitur unum ens in ordine ad aliud." Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, in: *Opera Omnia* (ut sunt in indice thomistico additis 61 scriptis ex aliis medii aevi auctoribus), 7 Bde, ed. Roberto Busa S. J. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1980), vol. III, pp. 1-186, Q. 1, art. 1, resp., p. 1.

[74] In this thesis, Thomas Aquinas refers to Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book II. See Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate,* Q. I, a. 1, ra. 5, *ibid.*, p. 1.

[75] See on this Thomas Aquinas, Quaestiones disputatae de veritatecit., Q. 1, art. 1, resp., p. 1: hoc est ergo quod addit verum super ens, scilicet conformitatem, sive adaequationem rei et intellectus; ad quam conformitatem..."sequitur cognitio rei" ; cf. also Thomas von Aquin, Über die Wahrheit, dt. Übertragung von Edith Stein, 1931, Edith Steins Werke (Louvain/Freiburg, 1952), Bd III, pp. 4 ff., sowie Miriam Ramos Gómez, Edith Stein y el "De Veritate" de Tomás de Aquino. Resúmenes, Introducciones y Comentarios de Edith Stein al

When we speak of intelligibility as an openness of being to intellect, however, we have immediately to introduce a decisive distinction made most clearly by Thomas Aquinas – a great discovery.[76] We mean the distinction between intrinsic intelligibility or evidence *in se* and the evidence and knowability of a being *for us.* This distinction is of greatest importance. [77] In other words, Thomas distinguishes the openness of being to intellection and knowledge from its openness to the intellection of *our limited and human minds.* The former contains what Thomas calls „intrinsic evidence" (and is *evidens in se*), and the latter is what he calls what is evident also to us "*evidens quoad nos*." When we speak in the following of intelligibility, we mean primarily intrinsic objective intelligibility, intelligibility and evidence *in se.* But even within this inherent intelligibility *quoad(se (which, of course, is sometimes open also to human intellects),* we find many kinds and degrees.

To begin with, it is perfectly clear that intelligibility does not pertain solely to essential necessity. In the broadest sense, everything that is videns intelligible is a *verum transcendentale*, as Edith Stein has brought out afresh by means of her phenomenological method. [78] But this knowability (capacity to be known, openness to intelligent minds) of all beings has many degrees and steps.

Within intelligibility in general, the type open to intellectual insight and proof differs decisively from others and merits the name 'intelligibility' in a fundamentally new way, which may be called "incomparable intelligibility." To see this, we have to give a brief overview of the immensely varied kinds and degrees of intelligibility, i.e., of openness of being to a knowing intellect:

"De Veritate" de Tomás de Aquino (Irving, TX, Gaflei, FL, Santiago de Chile, Granada, Spain: IAP Press, 2018).

[76] Thomas Aquinas Summa theologiae, ST 1 I a q 2 ar 1 co. Quoted after Opera Omnia (ut sunt in indice thomistico additis 61 scriptis ex aliis medii aevi auctoribus), 7 vol, ed. Roberto Busa S. J. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1980), vol II. See Thomas Aquinas, De Veritate (QDV), Qu 10 ar 12, co; Summa contra gentiles (SCG), lb 1 cp 11 n likewise. 1, ST 1 qu 2 ar 1 co: See likewise Thomas Aquinas, ST 1 qu 12 ar 1 co; qu 12 ar 2 co; qu 12 ar 4 co; ibid., ar 5 co.

[77] Thomas Aquinas applied this great discovery wrongly; however, I believe that by holding that the evidence of the ontological argument is solely intrinsic evidence, something evident quoad se but does not apply towards us, *quoad nos.* See Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super librum Boethii de trinitate*, Q. 1, a. 2: Cf. also Thomas Aquinas, *ibid.*, Q. 1, a. 3: Ad sextum dicendum quod deum esse, quantum est in se, est per se notum, quia sua essentia est suum esse - et hoc modo loquitur Anselmus, - non autem nobis qui eius essentiam non videmus.

[78] See Edith Stein, *Endliches und Ewiges Sein. Versuch eines Aufstiegs zum Sinne des Seins*, in: Edith Steins Werke, Bd. II, Hrsg. L. Gerber, 2. Aufl. (Wien, 1962); 3. Unver. Aufl. (Freiburg: Herder, 1986), pp. 273 ff.

Accidental facts and merely factually linked "unities" of elements, such as a series of objects in utter disorder or disarray, possess intelligibility only in the lowest sense that we can know them precisely as "brute facts." It is impossible here to understand them 'from within.' While it may be possible to understand some reasons that led to such contingent or accidental facts, it is impossible to understand the unity among them 'from within' because they lack any meaningful inner unity. If we compare the meaningful structure of a cow with the meaningless and accidental way in which the body parts of the cow are thrown over a street after an accident, we note the tremendous difference between meaningful and accidental unities of elements and what is meant by the pure facticity of an accidental unity. Something similar happens in the sphere of human acts. There are very irrational forms of human behavior that we cannot comprehend or understand from within, not only because of the limits of our minds but because of their total irrationality and consequent poor or non-existent quality of their inherent intelligibility.

Wholly different are the meaningful but nonetheless contingent (non-necessary) unities of form, essence, or composition of beings or elements. When they are general types found in nature, we may term them with Hildebrand "morphic unities." [79] But contingent meaningful unities comprise not solely the countless meaningful natures of natural objects, of both the appearance and the constitutive inner nature of lifeless materials and especially of living species. Also, the meaningful unities of works of art, as well as the unities of meaningful historical deeds and developments, belong to this type of meaningful but contingent such-being unities. They possess an inner meaning, finality, form, and beauty, i.e., meaning but a contingent mode of essential unity. Such meaningful unities are incomparably more intelligible than mere accidental unities. Sciences and disciplines can explore them. Many of these meaningful but contingent unities make meaningful the distinction between the general type of a given species and the properties of individuals of that species. Other contingent meaningful unities, such as those of works of art, possess a highly individual inner meaning and unity and do not form a general type, although also in art, we encounter certain universals such as those of a given art style.

Any meaningful but contingent unity of essential moments we can understand much more properly than purely accidental facts, and we can understand them 'from within.' They are intelligible in a far superior mode in comparison to that possessed by mere accidental facts. But, of course, we find many degrees and kinds of intelligibility in this realm. The *individual* meaningful unities in life (for example, human personalities), art, and history differ in many important respects from the general meaningful types found in nature, and also, the methods of knowing them differ profoundly.

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[79] See on this Dietrich von Hildebrand, *What is Philosophy?,* 3rd ed, with a New Introductory Essay by Josef Seifert (London: Routledge, 1991), Chapter 4.

But the decisive point in common to all contingent meaningful essential unities is that we are dealing here with high intelligibility, but nevertheless with the intelligibility of contingent, i.e., non-necessary natures. Within this intelligibility of meaningful but contingent natures, we encounter many kinds and degrees of intelligibility: many of the contingent laws of physics are more strictly and quasi-mathematically intelligible and more intelligible – at least to us, but maybe also in themselves than the little intelligible laws explored, for example, by chemistry. Laws governing life-less nature: physical, chemical, and electrical or magnetic phenomena, are very different with respect to the kind of their intelligibility from the laws that govern different species of organic beings or the biological processes in living organisms. Many of these laws appear less strict and certainly are less intelligible for our human comprehension and, at any rate, less precisely and mathematically describable than most laws of physics. Nevertheless, with respect to none of these morphic and meaningful but contingent natures, we can reach an ultimate understanding of *why* the object is as it is. (As we shall see, precisely this can be attained in the knowledge of a third kind of essential unity, the necessary essences and essentially necessary states of affairs.)

This limited way of the object lends itself to understanding in the sense of grasping why it is likewise present in the absolutely indubitable evidence that we exist. Also, here, a contingent fact is known indubitably, but the certainty of this knowledge is not rooted in a high degree of inherent intelligibility of the object. The *fact that I,* one of infinitely many possible persons who could exist, actually exist is a pure fact I have to recognize, gratefully, neutrally, or in despair, but it does not possess a high intelligibility. It is a unique case in which the evidence *for us (quoad nos)* is far greater than, and separated from, inherent evidence, an "evidence *quoad se*." This leads us to introduce a further distinction within that of Thomas Aquinas between evidence *quoad se* and evidence *quoad nos*. We can distinguish between intelligibility and evidence in the degree of the accessibility of a being to a given subject's *knowledge* as such and intelligibility in the sense of the accessibility of a being to an *understanding from within* or to a *comprehension* of why something is.

With respect to both of these, there is a difference between evidence *quoad se* and *quoad nos*. For example, all essential necessities are *in themselves* (*quoad se)* extremely intelligible and open to comprehension but not necessarily to us. Also, the extreme accessibility not to comprehension but to simple *knowledge* of our being may not be proper to our being *quoad se* but only in relation to our individual cognition, *quoad nos*. This leads to a further observation: The *nos* in the "evidence *quoad nos*" may refer not only to the human mind as such but also to a given human mind. In respect to an openness of being to our *own individual* knowledge, my own existence is extremely intelligible to *myself* as well as to an omniscient being but not highly intelligible or especially open to the factual knowledge of other subjects who know my being only very indirectly. With respect to intelligibility as

understandability from within or *comprehensibility in its why,* our own existence (instead of that of infinitely many other possible persons) is not highly intelligible, neither in itself nor towards ourselves. It remains thoroughly mysterious why precisely I (instead of infinitely many possible persons who do not exist) am.

With reference to the intelligibility of the essentially necessary fact that being and not being of the same thing, in the same respect, exclude each other, and to countless other necessary truths, we are confronted not only with the openness of such facts to an act of knowledge as such but also with an openness to our understanding and comprehension. Here, we can gain *insight; we* can truly *intima rei intus legere* (read the innermost nature of the thing within), as Aquinas puts it. The intelligibility of the object of such a rational insight differs radically from the intelligibility found in merely knowable facts, even in the indubitable fact of our own existence in the *Cogito*.

And it is precisely this new and incomparable type of *intelligibility* that is founded primarily on necessary essences. The reason for the unique intelligibility and understandability of necessary essences and essentially necessary facts lies in the *absolute* essential necessity found here. This climax of intelligibility could not be grounded in any other thing besides essential necessity. One could even go as far as to say that this unique intelligibility is the same thing as the absolute essential necessity of the intelligible states of affairs, except under another aspect: namely, the objective necessity under the aspect of it allowing the knowing mind to grasp it in a unique kind of penetration 'from within' is the incomparable intelligibility. This intelligibility is, as it were, the objective necessity itself emerging as a light for the mind and illuminating man's understanding. Not only does this essential necessity allow for a grasping of "yes, this is actually the case," but it also renders possible an understanding that something *must be* and *could not be otherwise.* We understand "why" it is - from within, from the fountain of its intrinsic necessity.

Incomparable intelligibility, then, characterizes the essentially necessary data in themselves, although not in themselves as such and alone, but *ad aliud,* with reference to a *possible* understanding. Since this intelligibility has reference to understanding only *in principle* but not to *actual* (human) understanding, objective intelligibility could reside in a being *without* that objective intelligibility (*quoad se*), implying its actual accessibility to our mind *(quoad nos),* which Aquinas distinguishes from the former in the context of his (in my judgment invalid) critique of Anselm's ontological argument for God's existence, as we have seen. [80] Once we understand this unique mode of intelligibility, we see that it can only be found in

[80] See Josef Seifert, Gott als Gottesbeweis. Eine phänomenologische Neubegründung des ontologischen Arguments, (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996), 2. Aufl. 2000; see also Josef Seifert, "Si Deus est, Deus est: Reflections on St. Bonaventure's Interpretation of St. Anselm's Ontological Argument," in Franciscan Studies 52 (1992), published in 1996, pp. 215-231.

essentially necessary facts because only these can make it possible for the mind to grasp their absolute necessity from within - and their incomparable intelligibility consists in that.

The necessity of the mere formal dominion of the general nature over the individual instance either has no such intelligibility at all (for a contingent nature does *not* have strict dominion over each individual instance; there could be exceptions to it), or this dominion is interpreted in the sense of a non-informative analytic necessity which goes back to the principles of identity and contradiction. It only says that each X, as long as it has all general properties of the nature of X, will necessarily have these properties. Only when the necessity of the formal dominion of the universal nature over each individual instance of this nature is grounded in objective essential necessity (beyond that of the principles which ground the truth of non-informative propositions), does it have simultaneously absolute necessity itself (which also analytical a priori propositions and their referent possess) and a necessity irreducible to that of the principles of identity and contradiction (expressed in informative synthetic propositions a priori). Only in this contentful necessity lies the source of the wealth of supreme intelligibility in necessary essences. And only inasmuch as we grasp the absoluteness of essential necessities in any possible world, because we grasp that no will, not even an omnipotent will, can change them because they are absolutely immutable and necessary, do we reach ultimate intelligibility and comprehensibility, of which Plato says in the *Phaedrus* that here lie the fields on which the soul feeds. Their knowledge, because of their supreme intelligibility, Hildebrand calls a "banquet of the intellect."

Contingent laws of nature could never possess this kind of intelligibility nor allow for such a climax of rational knowledge in the grasp of essential necessities – precisely because they are not absolutely necessary and must not absolutely be the way they are. They are contingent upon some *facts* (or upon divine freedom), allow in principle for exceptions, and can therefore never render possible the kind of rational penetration into an: "it absolutely has to be so and cannot be different than . . .," that is rendered possible only by the incomparable mode of intelligibility linked to essential necessity. "Laws of nature" are here understood as those laws which go back to the *contingent* essences in nature. We do not rule out at all that *absolutely* necessary essential laws also apply to nature, matter, movement, time, and so on, but it is not these essentially necessary laws of nature which are here meant by us with the term "laws of nature" but only the contingent, non-necessary ones. Mathematicians deal with absolutely necessary laws that also govern many processes in nature, and when physicists define speed as "distance divided by the time-unit," they seek to get at a true, essentially necessary trait of the speed of objects that move

spatially, however imperfect this "definition" is, philosophically speaking. [81] But while these laws, as essentially necessary, also possess a supreme form of intelligibility, the contingent laws of nature that occupy the experimental sciences *lack this supreme and incomparable intelligibility.*

The incomparable intelligibility, which is inseparable from essential necessity and can only be founded in it, constitutes an ultimate refutation not only of psychologism (which seeks to explain the a priori necessary facts as mere subjective necessities of thinking) but also of transcendental idealism. For a mere necessity of thinking or a necessity grounded in our human way of perceiving objects could never account for the incomparable intelligibility which is rendered possible by essential necessity when it is perceived by the mind. Any psychological or transcendental necessity could only consist in some experience of an empirical or transcendental "*fact*" of "being unable to think otherwise than in the forms of thought and intuition to which all our experiencing and thinking is bound." Transcendental necessity, by its very nature, would never permit the understanding that things are so and that they *must be* so and absolutely cannot be otherwise. But this is exactly what is understood when intelligible essential necessity is grasped, and thus Kant's explanation of synthetic a priori knowledge through reference to an alleged transcendental necessity replaces the datum of essential necessity with an entirely different type of necessity.

This is certainly due to Kant's failure to go back to "things themselves" to his failure to explore the *type* of necessity we encounter in these a priori facts. He assumes that he understands this necessity by just noticing that it is necessary and apodictically certain without taking the pain of carefully investigating the exact nature of this necessity and its intelligibility. Only in this way is it explicable that a mind of his stature could fail to see the radical difference between an entirely unintelligible transcendental necessity rooted in the subject and a supremely intelligible necessity rooted in the nature of the *object* of thought. It is very significant that Kant never mentions this *intelligibility* which we undoubtedly encounter in the experience of knowing essentially necessary facts. For had he attended to this intelligibility, he would also have found that in it, the objective necessity of the things themselves and in themselves becomes, as it were, a light that discloses this necessity to our minds as filled with inner truth and uninventable objectivity. In it, the transcendence of the human mind in knowledge becomes indubitably certain. The mind partakes in the objective intrinsic intelligibility of things. *Regulae istae mentibus rationalibus insplendentes* (these rules whose splendor shines into the rational minds), says Bonaventure, laying his finger on this unique intelligibility in which the necessity of these rules themselves shines into our

[81] Adolf Reinach, "Über das Wesen der Bewegung, " in: Adolf Reinach, *Sämtliche Werke. Texkritische Ausgabe in zwei Bänden,* Bd. I: *Die Werke*, Teil I: Kritische Neuausgabe (1905-1914), Teil II: Nachgelassene Texte (1906-1917); hrsg.v. Karl Schuhmann Barry Smith (München und Wien: Philosophia Verlag, 1989), pp. 551-588.

mind. He says again that we read these indubitable and necessary truths in *libro lucis illius quae veritas dicitur* ("in the book of that light which is called truth"). The images of reading in truth and light refer to the absence of mere facticity and the *true* and uninventably necessary and intelligible character of the essentially necessary facts, which the later Husserl and any form of transcendental idealism fail to recognize properly. The intelligibility of these facts is linked to another one of their features.

(xi) 'Injudicabilitas' and the foundation and criterion of true rational knowledge

The characteristic of *Injudicabilitas* referred to by Bonaventure and Augustine *(De Libero Arbitrio* II) can mean at least two things, both of which are true about essentially necessary facts. It can mean, first, that essentially necessary facts cannot be judged to be bad, ugly, or in any way different from what they ought to be. This is impossible in part because of their *absolute* necessity and in part because there is absolutely no other higher standard of judgment above them.

In our context, however, we are more interested in a second meaning of *Injudicabilitas* of the essentially necessary laws. As a consequence of their intrinsic, immutable necessity and incomparable intelligibility, there is no criterion outside these essentially necessary states of affairs themselves in the light of which we could judge our knowledge of them as true or untrue; they are the ultimate criteria of knowledge. There are no standards outside these necessary essences and states of affairs or laws rooted in them themselves which we could invoke as criteria of confirmation of the validity of our knowledge of them. Far more importantly, there is neither any possibility nor any need for any higher criterion in the light of which we could judge the validity of our knowledge of essentially necessary essences and states of affairs. These essentially necessary facts are, in their own intelligibility the highest criterion for truth. Spinoza's famous words apply here: *verum est index sui et falsi* ("truth is the index both of itself and of falsehood"). This does not exclude, of course, that some essentially necessary facts are not known directly through themselves but proved indirectly by others through logical arguments.

When we deal with those essentially necessary states of affairs, however, which can be directly perceived themselves as grounded in a necessary essence and in its incomparable intelligibility, then those intelligible objects are themselves *"injudicable"* and are the highest criterion for the validity of our act of knowledge.

Von Hildebrand puts this very well:

> These "necessary" intelligible unities are so filled with ratio and with intelligibility that their objective validity no longer depends upon the act in which we grasp them. We saw before that if in a dream the such-being of a triangle, of red, or of willing were clearly and unequivocally given to me, the essence itself would not be merely dreamt….We must now advance still further. With respect to the

> evident states of fact, which are necessarily rooted in these essences, any possibility of an invalidation through a distortion, or insufficiency of our mind, is excluded. Here it would be senseless to say, "Perhaps all these states of fact are not valid, perhaps the insight that moral values presuppose a personal being as bearer is only due to a distortion of our intellect, such as craziness or idiocy…." For the luminous intelligibility and rationality of such insights precisely proves that we are neither crazy nor idiots. Indeed, the extreme form of insanity would be to affirm that dogs are just, or that stones are charitable, or that Mars both exists and does not exist….The unities in which these necessary states of facts are grounded stand entirely on their own feet. All attempts to make these insights relative are dashed to pieces by the meaningfulness and power of the such-being in which they are rooted. If they are univocally and clearly given, they do not need any criterion for the integrity of the act that grasps them, but, on the contrary, they themselves justify the grasping act as not contaminated by error. (D. von Hildebrand, What is Philosophy? Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1960, pp. 115-16.)

We find here the irreducible datum of evidence, which Husserl rightly described as not being a subjective psychological character of cognitive experience, but as being the "experience of truth." This evidence does not need any proof and does not admit any proof, not because of any lack of rationality but rather because it constitutes the foundation of all rational knowledge. Saying this, we do not exclude that absolute essential necessities often are known indirectly by demonstration through evident premises. Formal logic and the methodology of mathematical induction provide the foundation for such knowledge of essential necessities through demonstrations. But any such demonstration rests on immediately known essential necessities. And their knowledge, the primary form of all rational knowledge, is our theme here.

Also, in the sense of knowledge, the immediate perception of objects, which neither requires nor demands demonstration, is the foundation of all knowledge of sensible objects. But this knowledge is not only mediated through sense organs and chains of physical and physiological causality; it is also in need of some indirect forms of confirmation in order to exclude that we might be deceived in what we perceive through our carnal eye.

Therefore, the immediacy of knowledge that has the criterion of its truth in itself, such as the rational insight into essential necessities, is very different from the immediacy of sense perception. This rational knowledge of essential necessities and the evidence that it possesses are *immediate* not only in the sense that the cognitive contact with the object is here not mediated by sense organs and causal chains but also in the sense that no other means or indirect criterion of knowledge is necessary to test the truth of this knowledge. Against the skeptical argument that no criterion for knowledge is possible because such a criterion would either have to lie in the subject (in which case it would not help in comparing subjective knowledge with the objective world) or in the object (in which case the subject could not attain it in knowledge) or between the two (in which case it would neither be graspable by the

subject nor lie in the object), we can give the following response. The criterion of the immediate knowledge of necessary essences and the states of affairs rooted in the transcending contact of the mind with its intelligible and absolutely necessary object. The mind sees this object intellectually and goes beyond itself to the uninventable and objective necessity of its object, and it knows that it reaches this objective necessity, which itself, upon being understood, *is* the ultimate criterion of the truth of knowledge and is accessible to the act of cognition.

This evidence is *immediate* also in the further sense that nothing else can be known more directly so as to "test" in its light the validity of the knowledge of essentially necessary facts. This is not so in the sense of knowledge where we sometimes – for example, in schizophrenia – have good reasons to admit that we are deceived by applying logical, ontological, and also empirical principles, which show us that what we see and hear in such experiences cannot be real. In the case of insights into essential necessities, in contrast, empirical methods of verification or falsification are unnecessary also for another reason: namely because the rational insight here grasps the object in its *absolute* necessity, and once this is really known, it does not need to be confirmed in an external manner through perceptions and empirical methods - all of which besides already presuppose a priori insights. Since the object of knowledge determines the mode of our knowledge (this is a principle of epistemology), it is quite irrational, as Aristotle pointed out in *Posterior Analytics*, to look for indirect verification and proof for objects that can only be known directly and on the immediate knowledge on which all proofs depend.

The injudicability of these essentially necessary facts means that nothing apart from them can be known with equal or greater certainty and that, therefore, we need not judge our knowledge of these truths in terms of any stronger evidence. These truths "innovate" our mind, as Augustine puts it, and prove to our mind that we are sane - at least insofar as we understand these necessary objects. Thus, these necessary truths are the judge and criterion of our minds, not vice versa. They are the source of all criteria or correctness.

Their light cannot be judged by any other light - only our knowledge can be judged in their light. The correctness of our thinking can be established in an ultimate form only by their verdict. They are the ultimate foundation of all correct judgment. Wolfgang Stegmüller is right when he says in *Metaphysik, Skepsis Wissenschaft* [82] that there is no possibility of refuting insight because any such attempt presupposes it already and is self-contradictory; he is also right when he states that there is no proof for it because any such proof would be circular and would, likewise, already presuppose insight. He falsely infers from this, however, that there is no rational criterion for insight and that insight would, therefore, have to

[82] Wolfgang Stegmüller, *Metaphysik, Skepsis, Wissenschaft* (München: Piper, 1970).

be accepted blindly in an act of irrational faith. No, the mind's transcending grasp of essential necessity and its reflective return to itself contains the fullest possible rational justification, that of evidence itself given through insight and its object. Even an omniscient and perfect knower could not possess a higher form of the criterion of truth than that which lies in the immediate intellectual seeing being and truth.

(xii) Apodictic (absolute) certainty and cognitive infallibility

Bonaventure rightly calls the *"rationes aeternae"* a *lux et veritas infallibilis* (an infallible light and truth). With *apodictic certainty,* we reach a new characteristic that lies more on the side of the subject. Whereas essential necessity (just as immutability, generality, and other characteristics) is a feature of the objects themselves (of the essences/*eîde* or the states of affairs grounded in them), intelligibility is a characteristic of the object in its relation to mind and mental grasp rather than in itself. It signifies the respective "openness" of a being to understanding, as does the *injudicability* (at least in the second sense). Absolute certainty, however, is a feature of the knowledge itself, not of its object. More exactly, it is a characteristic of our knowledge *in its relation to the object* and insofar as it reaches its object truly.

The *kind* of indubitable and infallible certainty reached here (as opposed to in which the *sum* of the *ego cogitans* is grasped) presupposes that the object itself is necessary and "certain" in a metaphysical sense inseparable from essential necessity. The certainty of knowledge of a priori knowledge is grounded, in other words, in the fixed and intrinsically "certain" being of essentially necessary states of affairs and laws, as Bonaventure, "in particular," has noted. The absoluteness of this certainty also implies that our knowledge (or rather the judgment in which it is expressed) is not just probably true. *Indubitable certainty differs from a mere dóxa* (opinion) which is most likely in harmony with reality. Rather we find here real knowledge in the strictest sense, knowing that the object of knowledge exists not only probably but certainly, that our judgement is not only probably but certainly adequate to the facts. Since this certainty refers to universal (general) facts, it also implies that the universal essence itself and *its universality are* unambiguously self-given.

Absolute certainty equally presupposes that our relation to the object is so 'ultimate' and complete that no deception or error is possible in this act of knowledge. This is what Bonaventure called *infallible* contact with being and truth. In principle, this dimension of absolute certainty can also extend to empirical facts such as our own existence, which is not necessary but is so immediately and directly present to us that deception is excluded. Finally, the absolute certainty is opposed to dubitability. Doubt is excluded except for possible psychological or moral obstacles. Doubt is repelled by the light of intelligibility and evidence.

To repeat, it is of decisive importance to see that this absolute certainty is not a mere subjective feeling or character in our act of cognition. Such merely immanent

subjective feelings are found in "false" certainty, but they differ from objective evidence. Objective certainty about essential necessities is also quite different from a mere being certain of how we are going to experience things (Kant). It also differs profoundly from the certainty of trust and faith, which is a form of "moral certainty" that goes beyond the data and implies the moment of acceptance of that which is *not* seen. The rational certainty that stems from seeing of necessary facts and from the insight into them is, so to speak, a "banquet of the spirit," something in man that is as God-like as his freedom. To describe absolute certainty further, we may say that it is inseparable from the *transcendence* of our knowledge, i.e. from its trait of going *beyond* the subjective experience itself and seeing that the *things themselves* are intrinsically so and so and that they *must* be as they are. The absolute certainty also implies a moment of reflection, a grasping of our own knowing as reliable, of our knowledge as *attaining the necessity of the thing itself*.

This indubitable certainty, moreover, is totally based on the incomparable intelligibility and necessity of the object. And as Bonaventure stated beautifully, such infallible knowledge is absolutely presupposed by any knowledge and doubt, by any good and evil in the person, and thus it belongs inseparably to the dignity of the knowing subject, of the person *qua* person.

3. Critical Reflections on the Immediate Datum of the Real Being of the Conscious Self and His Acts A Realist Phenomenological Response to David Hume's Denial of Personal Identity

(i) Overcoming the "crisis of the cogito" – replies to objections against the immediate givenness of the self and the intelligibility of necessary truths about the "ego cogitans"

Interestingly enough, the first great discovery of the cogito argument by Saint Augustine, who formulated its true meaning with the supreme clarity and brevity typical for his thought, and stayed free from ambiguities and errors mixed with the Cogito argument in Descartes, opening to us a grasp of the inexhaustible treasures of knowledge reachable through it, did not lead to any crisis nor was it menaced by a crisis caused by those who would have criticized and rejected it, which practically did not happen. Moreover, while his Cogito constituted a turning point in Augustine's own thinking, menaced by the skepticism of the Academy as Augustine himself had been, it did not have as strong and visible an echo in the philosophers who succeeded Augustine as the later one. In Descartes, in contrast, his cogito argument had a huge echo: his authentic and highly original rediscovery of it led to a new beginning of a realist and rational philosophy in such thinkers as Wolff, Leibniz, and Malebranche, overcoming the deep crisis of skepticism and relativism that marked Montaigne's thought and that of many other thinkers who started rejected the

realism of classic and medieval philosophy. At the same time, parallel to fathering modern realist philosophy, Descartes' Cogito, mainly the attempt to dispute his discovery, but also some errors of Descartes associated with his version of the *Cogito-Argument,* led to a deep crisis and a deep subjectivism of many modern and contemporary philosophies.

Therefore, we need to address some of the major objections against the evidence contained in the *Cogito* [83] in order to show that what I am calling "the fourth Cogito" can occupy a central place in the development of a realist philosophy and metaphysics and, in its true core, overcomes the new crisis of philosophy that Kant and Hume initiated, and provides a solid rational basis for a realist philosophy and metaphysics. [84]

(ii) The objections of the eliminative materialists against any givenness of consciousness and the claim that solely material phenomena are given

Eliminative materialists deny simply any givenness of consciousness and claim that all there is and can be observed are physical phenomena. But this position is too absurd and contradicts the clearest evidence to merit any serious treatment. In addition to flying reality into its face, the position is also contradictory because it presupposes obviously the perception of physical phenomena and cannot claim that this perception and knowledge of chemical objects presents itself as a physical or chemical thing. Moreover, all the further objections to the Cogito, as well as our answers to them, apply a fortiori to this position so that we will not give it further attention.

(iii) Hume's Objections against the Cogito – and replies

[83] The following discussion of the objections to insights of the Cogito have not been part of the original *Essere e persona. Verso una fondazione fenomenologica di una metafisica classica e personalistica*. (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1989) but is an addition to the English version. See also my: "The Receptive Transcendence of Knowledge and the 'Fourth Cogito': Towards a Content-full Notion of 'Early Phenomenology'." *Journal of East-West-Thought* (JET). Spring Number 1, Vol. 4, March 2014, 1-26; and "The Seventh Voyage of Philosophy," *Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, XI 1999: 83-104.

[84] See this Paul Ricoeur, "The Crisis of the 'Cogito'," *Synthese* (1996), 106 (1), 57-66. The author suggests that the fact that Descartes took the "I" for the first time in the position of "foundation," i.e., as the "ultimate" condition for the possibility of all philosophical discourse, the "crisis" of the "Cogito," opened later by Hume, Nietzsche, and Heidegger on different philosophical grounds, is already contemporaneous to the very "positing" of the "Cogito," a view with which I largely disagree.

David Hume does not doubt the givenness of conscious phenomena and events. But he raises a number of objections against any immediate givenness of the Self, at least of a Self that is more than a momentary one, [85] as the subject of consciousness. [86] He takes up four important moments given in the cogito, asserts that philosophers accept them as evident, and then denies that we immediately feel the existence of a Self or know that this Self exists and endures in existence as an identical subject, that it is simple and that all of this is certain without any need or possibility of a demonstration: "There are some philosophers. who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our SELF; that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence; and are certain, beyond the evidence of a demonstration, both of its perfect identity and simplicity. " [87]

Hume, rejecting all these assumptions, [88] goes on to say that we neither have an impression of the Self of the sort of our impressions of feelings or perceptions because there is no one feeling or perception that persists throughout our life, nor is the Self the kind of ideas produced by these. And all of this is indeed evidently true:

> ... nor have we any idea of self, after the manner it is here explain'd. For from what impression cou'd this idea be deriv'd? This question 'tis impossible to answer without a manifest contradiction and absurdity; and yet 'tis a question, which must necessarily be answer'd, if we wou'd have the idea of self pass for clear and intelligible, It must be some one impression, that gives rise to every real idea. But self or person is not any one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are suppos'd to have a reference. If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same, thro' the whole course of our lives; since self is suppos'd to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable. Pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensations succeed each other, and never all exist at the same time. It

[85] See Michael-J. Green, "The Idea of a Momentary Self and Hume's Theory of Personal Identity," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* (1999), 7 (1), 103-122. The author seeks to prove that Hume's philosophy would not have worked without the assumption of a momentary Self and that there is also textual evidence to prove that Hume actually held that such a Self exists.

[86] On the relationship between Hume and the *Cogito* see also Elizabeth-Hankins Wolgast, *Paradoxes Of Knowledge,* (Cornell-Univ-Press: London, 1977). See likewise Julius-Rudolph Weinberg, *Ockham, Descartes, and Hume: Self-knowledge, Substance, and Causality,* (University of Wiscon Press: London, 1977), as well as Bernd Magnus, James B. Wilbur (Ed), *Cartesian Essays: A Collection Of Critical Studies,* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1969).

[87] David Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature* (Green and Grose, 1886), Sect. VI.-Of Personal Identity.

[88] Unluckily, all these positive assertions are contrary to that very experience, which is pleaded for them.

> cannot, therefore, be from any of these impressions, or from any other, that the idea of self is deriv'd.

After this correct conclusion that the self must not be sought for in the same way as our joys or passions, he comes, without investigating other forms of givenness, to the momentous and evidently false conclusion: "and consequently there is no such idea." But has it not become evident to us that the conscious subject is given from within in an entirely different manner from the sort single perceptions or feelings are given, and yet that it is most clearly co-given with them as their subject, as the "I" which is given always as the same identical Self and without which and whose conscious presence in the flux and stream of perceptions and emotions even the simplest act of hearing a sentence or a melody would be unthinkable. Should not Hume have posed the question of whether his division of all experienced contents into impressions and ideas is far too rough to do justice to the immense manifoldness of data? Hume has another profound insight relevant to the cognition of concrete reality of the self and of his acts and experiences: namely that I can never get hold of the consciousness of a naked "I" which has absolutely no experience, perception, etc.: "For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception..."

Again, in the immediately following text, Hume jumps to a thesis that is in no way evident and which his very way of speaking that "he delves into what he calls himself" or that *he* cannot discover anything else refutes because by speaking of himself he has already found what he was looking for. He then proceeds to the claim that this self is nothing when asleep, a thesis which the evident necessary truths we have found regarding the necessary connection between self and life but not between the person who awakens as self and his conscious awakened state refutes. [89]

Having neither looked for carefully and with an open mind that does not press different things into the same category, nor found, an appropriate category for identifying the Self, nor searching for the knowledge wherein it is given, Hume arrives at his famous and truly absurd formulation of a consciousness that does not

[89] David Hume, *ibid.*: "…and [I] never can observe anything but the perception. When my perceptions are remov'd for any time, as by sound sleep; so long am I insensible of myself, and may truly be said not to exist. And were all my perceptions remov'd by death, and cou'd I neither think, nor feel, nor see, -nor love, nor hate after the dissolution of my body, I shou'd be entirely annihilated, nor do I conceive what is farther requisite to make me a perfect non-entity. If anyone, upon serious and unprejudic'd reflection thinks he has a different notion of himself, I must confess I call reason no longer with him. All I can allow him is, that he may be in the right as well as I, and that we are essentially different in this particular. He may, perhaps, perceive something simple and continu'd, which he calls himself; tho' I am certain there is no such principle in me. "

belong to any Self or conscious subject, floating in an anonymous and self-less, ego-less sphere so as if it were not absolutely evident that any possible act of perceiving, thinking, or feeling requires necessarily a subject *who* feels, thinks, etc., and as if ever a pure anonymous feeling or thinking process were given in our experience, instead of always an "I feel," "I think," "I love," etc.

> But setting aside some metaphysicians of this kind, I may venture to affirm of the rest of mankind, that they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement ... The mind is a. kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. There is properly no simplicity in it at one time, nor identity in different; whatever natural propension we may have to imagine that simplicity and identity. The comparison of the theatre must not mislead us. They are the successive perceptions only, that constitute the mind; nor have we the {1:535} most distant notion of the place, where these scenes are represented, or of the materials, of which it is compos'd. [90]

Now Hume does not deny "so great a propension to ascribe an identity to these successive perceptions, and to suppose ourselves possest of an invariable and uninterrupted existence thro' the whole course of our lives" (ibid.), and hence has to ask where this "propensity" might come from (which truly comes from the evidence of things themselves). He then proceeds to speak superficially of the distinct ideas of identity and diversity. [91] After this, he states that we often confuse these two ideas. Although we experience the diversity of states of consciousness, we still ascribe identity to them or to their ground because of confusion based on resemblances, which leads us almost invariantly to the "strange error of an identical Self." [92] This

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[90] Hume, *ibid.* See also the attempt to adduce certain experiences and consequences of neurological disorders in order to lend plausibility to a no-ownership theory of consciousness. Andrew Brennan, "Fragmented Selves and the Problem of Ownership," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, (1990), pp. 143-158.

[91] We have a distinct idea of an object that remains invariable and uninterrupted thro' a supposed variation of time; this idea we call that of identity or sameness. We also have a distinct idea of several different objects existing in succession and connected together by a close relation, and this, to an accurate view, affords as perfect a notion of diversity as if there was no manner of relation among the objects.

[92] Our propensity to this mistake is so significant from {1:536} the resemblance above-mentioned, that we fall into it before we are aware; and tho' we incessantly correct ourselves by reflection, and return to a more accurate method of thinking, yet we cannot long sustain our philosophy, or take off this biases from the imagination. Our last resource is to yield to it and boldly assert that these different related objects are, in effect, the same; however, interrupted and variable. To justify to ourselves this absurdity, we often feign some new and unintelligible

illusion "of something invariable and uninterrupted, or of something mysterious and inexplicable" is an inevitable illusion hard to comprehend rationally, Hume muses. He sees his main job as having to dissipate this error that conscious experiences are had by an identical Self or that other properties of material objects are inhere in an identical substance. [93]

Then Hume proceeds, in sequence, to deny the givenness of the *ego cogitans,* to a very strange and weak argument of which he claims that it in here is not only "*in my opinion perfectly decisive;*" but "*still closer and more immediate.*" This argument consists of nothing else than the supremely evident fact that the different perceptions we have are not identical to each other. But it is precisely against the obvious non-identity of these perceptions that the true identity of the conscious subject clearly asserts itself. Hume possibly recognizes this with respect to passions and particularly love, some interpreters argue, founding their judgment on a famous distinction within the *Treatise.* [94]

In fact, however, their reasoning of Hume is far from refuting the identity of the ego cogitans because it has many experiences at the same time, nor is evidence of it being that same identical subject that is given in the experience of different consecutive experiences and changes in time. It is precisely these two truths about the conscious subject that belong together: the *many diverse simultaneous and consecutive* experiences are united in the experience of the *one identical subject*. They are understood necessarily to be had by the one identical subject, without which not even the simplest experience of hearing a melody or a spoken sentence could exist. It is then in the extremely primitive general way in which Hume wishes to explain all associations of ideas that he also wishes to explain the error of personal identity, namely by "resemblance, contiguity and causation," where the latter is no

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principle that connects the objects together and prevents their interruption or variation. Thus, we feign the continued existence of the perceptions of our senses to remove the interruption and run into the notion of a soul, self, and substance to disguise the variation. But we may further observe that where we do not give rise to such a fiction, our propension to confound identity with relation is so great that we are apt to imagine I something unknown and mysterious, connecting the parts, besides their relation; and this I take to be the case with regard to the identity we ascribe to plants and vegetables. And even when this does not take place, we still feel a propensity to confound these ideas, tho' we a-re not able fully to satisfy ourselves in that particular, nor find anything invariable and uninterrupted to justify our notion of identity.

[93] Hume, *ibid.: "*Our chief business, then, must be to prove, that all objects, to which we ascribe identity, without observing their invariableness and uninterruptedness, are such as consist of a succession of related objects."

[94] See Robert S. Henderson, "David Hume on Personal Identity and the Indirect Passions," *Hume-Studies,* (1990), 16 (1), 33-44.

real relation at all according to Hume but reducible to regular temporal sequences. [95] Finally, Hume reaches a conclusion that foreshadows the reduction of essential necessities to mere linguistic habits and necessities in much of analytic philosophy, reducing metaphysical and anthropological questions to grammatical ones: Thus, Hume holds "that all the nice and subtle questions concerning personal identity can never possibly be decided, and are to be regarded rather as grammatical than as philosophical difficulties." [96]

The objections of Hume involve very much the second pillar of the *Cogito*, the necessary and universal truths about the essence of the thinking Self and of being and various kinds of relations as such, which – when explained merely psychologically by a principle of association of ideas – must fall into the fatal skepticism and relativism which Husserl has shown to be an inescapable consequence of psychologistic logic [97] Notwithstanding this attack on the a priori

[95] "But, as, notwithstanding this distinction and separability, we suppose the whole train of perceptions to be united by identity, a question naturally arises concerning this relation of identity; whether it be something that really binds our several perceptions together, or only associates their ideas in the imagination. That is, in other words, whether in pronouncing concerning the identity of a person, we observe some real bond among his perceptions, or only feel one among the ideas we form of them. This question we might easily decide, if we wou'd recollect what has been already proud at large, that the understanding never observes any real connexion among objects, and that even the union of cause and effect, when strictly examin'd, resolves itself into a customary association of ideas. For from thence it evidently follows, that identity is nothing really belonging to these different perceptions, and uniting them together; but is merely a quality, which we attribute to them, because of the union of their ideas in the imagination, when we reflect upon them. Now the only qualities, which can give ideas and union in the imagination, {1:541} are these three relations above-mention'd. They are the uniting principles in the ideal world, and without them every distinct object is separable by the mind, and may be separately considered, and appears not to have any more connexion with any other object, than if disjoin'd by the greatest difference and remoteness. 'Tis, therefore, on some of these three relations of resemblance, contiguity and causation, that identity depends; and as the very essence of these relations consists in their producing an easy transition of ideas; it follows, that our notions of personal identity, proceed entirely from the smooth and uninterrupted progress of the thought along a train of connected ideas, according to the principles above-explain'd."

[96] David Hume, *ibid.*

[97] See Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen.* Text der ersten und zweiten Auflage, Bd I: *Prolegomena zu einer reinen Logik,* hrsg.v. E. Holenstein, *Husserliana,* Bd. xviii (Den Haag: M. Nijhoff, 1975); Bd. II, 1: *Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Theorie der Erkenntnis,* 1. Teil, Bd. II,2: *Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Erkenntnis,* 2. Teil, hrsg.v. U. Panzer, *Husserliana,* Bd. xix, 1 und Bd. xix, 2 (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1984); *Logical Investigations,* transl. J. N. Findlay, (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1970), especially the extensive *Prolegomena.*

states of affairs inseparably linked to the *Cogito,* Hume attacks primarily the very foundational *experience* itself, the *experience of the Self,* and of the enduring identity of the *ego cogitans.*

In the conclusion to this part of his work, Hume engages in depicting a dreadful but adequate picture of his own philosophy and of himself as presented by his philosophy, an image Kant refers back to when trying to overcome the shipwreck of philosophy. The hopelessly stranded ship of Hume's philosophy makes himself prone to despair. And indeed, such a philosophy as Hume's, in which all the concretely existing realities and the eternal truths that shine forth from the Cogito are all thrown overboard, must drive a man to despair, as Hume himself admitted. [98]

4. Kant's Objections against the Cogito and Replies

(i) Kant's Recognition of the complete shipwreck of philosophy if the Cogito-Argument is invalid

[98] See David Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature* (Green and Grose, 1886): "Methinks I am like a man, who having struck on many shoals, and having narrowly escap'd shipwreck in passing a small frith, has yet the temerity to put out to sea in the same leaky weather-beaten vessel, and even carries his ambition so far as to think of compassing the globe under these disadvantageous circumstances. My memory of past errors and perplexities, makes me diffident for the future. The wretched condition, weakness, and disorder of the faculties, I must employ in my enquiries, encrease my apprehensions. And the impossibility of amending or correcting these faculties, reduces me almost to despair, and makes me resolve to perish on the barren rock, on which I am at present, rather than venture myself upon that boundless ocean, which runs out into immensity. This sudden view of my danger strikes me with melancholy; and as 'tis usual for that passion, above all others, to indulge itself; I cannot forbear feeding my despair, with all those desponding reflections, which the present subject furnishes me with in such abundance." "I am first affrighted and confounded with that forelorn solitude, in which I am plac'd in my philosophy, and fancy myself some strange uncouth monster, who not being able to mingle and unite in society, has been expell'd all human commerce, and left utterly abandon'd and disconsolate. Fain wou'd I run into the crowd for shelter and warmth; but cannot prevail with myself to mix with such deformity. I call upon others to join me, in order to make a company apart; but no one will hearken to me. Everyone keeps at a distance, and dreads that storm, which beats upon me from every side. I have expos'd myself to the enmity of all metaphysicians, logicians, mathematicians, and even theologians; and can I wonder at the insults I must suffer? I have declar'd my disapprobation of their systems; and can I be surpriz'd, if they shou'd express a hatred of mine and {1:545} of my person? When I look abroad, I foresee on every side, dispute, contradiction, anger, calumny and detraction. When I turn my eye inward, I find nothing but doubt and ignorance. All the world conspires to oppose and contradict me; tho' such is my weakness, that I feel all my opinions loosen and fall of themselves, when unsupported by the approbation of others. Every step I take is with hesitation, and every new reflection makes me dread an error and absurdity in my reasoning."

Though Kant recognizes the complete shipwreck of philosophy that follows from the negation of the experience of anything like a perduring subject of consciousness, this same negation that defies all evidence of our experience is also found in Kant, where he claims that the flux of consciousness provides no experiential basis of something enduring and therefore not even the ground for the application of the subjectively conceived category of substance to the *ego cogitans*, [99] although he later allows the application of the category of substance to the self, be it only in the sphere of a transcendental idea and fictitious creation of an object of reason which neither can be applied to phenomena nor possesses the type of validity of the categories when applied to appearances. [100] Nonetheless, though they are unable to rescue the ship of philosophy wrecked by Hume, a careful consideration and critique of Kant's objections, and his negation of this great double discovery in the Cogito, will take us back to the center of the *Cogito*, the inseparable connection between knowledge of fact and a priori knowledge of objectively necessary essences and states of affairs rooted in them.

(ii) Kant's objections both against the immediate givenness of the self (subject of consciousness) and against the necessary truths in the ego cogito – and replies

It is first of all noteworthy that Kant gives broad consideration to the Cogito Argument, mostly in the context of the *Transcendental Dialectics* in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. [101] Moreover, the Cogito – as likewise the two other main topics of the "Transcendental Dialectics," namely the discussion of the cosmological ideas of the world (the first "transcendental idea"), and the treatment of the third transcendental idea, the ideal of pure reason, God, as well as Kant's critique of all proofs for the existence of God – plays a crucial role in the entire project of the *Critique*, wherefore a critique of this section of Kant's philosophy seems a special condition for

[99] See Immanuel Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft: "Nun haben wir aber in //B413// der inneren Anschauung gar nichts Beharrliches, denn das Ich ist nur das Bewußtsein meines Denkens; also fehlt es uns auch, wenn wir bloß beim Denken stehen bleiben, an der nothwendigen Bedingung, den Begriff der Substanz, d.i. eines für sich bestehenden Subjects, auf sich selbst als denkend Wesen anzuwenden; und die damit verbundene Einfachheit der Substanz fällt mit der objectiven Realität dieses Begriffs gänzlich weg und wird in eine bloße logische, qualitative Einheit des Selbstbewußtseins im Denken überhaupt, das Subject mag zusammengesetzt sein oder nicht, verwandelt. "

[100] See Susan. L. Mendus, "Kant's Doctrine of the Self," *Kantstudien* (75), (1984), 55-64.

[101] See St. C. Patten, "Kant's Cogito," *Kantstudien* (66), (1975), 331-341.

overcoming his Copernican subjectivist turn and for completing our "return to things-in-themselves," our noumenological phenomenology. [102]

Kant even regards the *Cogito* as a question on which the fate of his whole philosophy depends. He admits that the validity of the evidence of the Cogito would refute his whole critique of pure reason and put an end to it. He even claims that the validity of this argument would be the only stone of refutation (Stein des Anstoßes) for his critique [103] because it would prove the attainability of metaphysical knowledge about things in themselves. [104] Thus Kant gives the Cogito a central

[102] See on the critique of the two other parts of Kant's transcendental Dialectics Josef Seifert, "Das Antinomienproblem als ein Grundproblem aller Metaphysik: Kritik der Kritik der reinen Vernunft" in *Prima Philosophia*, Bd. 2, H 2, 1989; and, by the same author, *Überwindung des Skandals der reinen Vernunft. Eine Auflösung der in der "Kritik der reinen Vernunft" behaupteten Antinomien auf realistischer Grundlage und eine Kritik ihrer Kantschen Darstellung und Lösungsversuche* (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 2000). See likewise *Gott als Gottesbeweis* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996), Chapter 2. On my general critique of Kant's philosophy, see Josef Seifert, *Erkenntnis objektiver Wahrheit. Die Transzendenz des Menschen in der Erkenntnis* (Salzburg: A. Pustet, 1976); and *Back to Things in Themselves. A Phenomenological Foundation for Classical Realism* (London: Routledge, 1987).

[103] Kant's speaking about the only refutation of the Critique of Pure Reason lying in a possible success of defending the *Cogito* is actually not correct because, in other places, Kant sees the definitive proof of his position in its overcoming the scandal of the antinomies and makes there similar claims such as that a realist solution of the antinomies would take away the only proof of the truth of his *Critique,* etc. See Josef Seifert, *Überwindung des Skandals der reinen Vernunft. Eine Auflösung der in der "Kritik der reinen Vernunft" behaupteten Antinomien auf realistischer Grundlage und eine Kritik ihrer Kantschen Darstellung und Lösungsversuche* (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 1999).

[104] See Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, in: Kants Werke, Akademie-Textausgabe (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1968), Bd. III: "Ein großer, ja sogar der einzige Stein des Anstoßes wider unsere ganze Kritik würde es sein, wenn es eine Möglichkeit gäbe, a priori zu beweisen, daß alle denkende Wesen an sich einfache Substanzen sind, als solche also (welches eine Folge aus dem nämlichen Beweisgrunde ist) Persönlichkeit unzertrennlich bei sich führen und sich ihrer von aller Materie abgesonderten Existenz bewußt sind. Denn auf diese Art hätten wir doch einen Schritt über die Sinnenwelt hinaus gethan, wir wären in das Feld der Noumenen getreten, und nun spreche //B410// uns niemand die Befugniß ab, in diesem uns weiter auszubreiten, anzubauen und, nachdem einen jeden sein Glückstern begünstigt, darin Besitz zu nehmen. Denn der Satz: Ein jedes denkende Wesen als ein solches ist einfache Substanz, ist ein synthetischer Satz a priori, weil er erstlich über den ihm zum Grunde gelegten Begriff hinausgeht und die Art des Daseins zum Denken überhaupt hinzuthut, und zweitens zu jenem Begriffe ein Prädicat (der Einfachheit) hinzufügt, welches in gar keiner Erfahrung gegeben werden kann. Also sind synthetische Sätze a priori nicht bloß, wie wir behauptet haben, in Beziehung auf Gegenstände möglicher Erfahrung und zwar als Principien der Möglichkeit dieser Erfahrung selbst thunlich und zulässig, sondern sie können

significance as a possible refutation of his subjectivist turn. Referring to an interesting and original interpretation of the history of philosophy offered by Balduin Schwarz, we could also say that not only the Augustinian (third), Cartesian (fifth), and seventh voyage in the history of philosophy, as a decisive new foundation of philosophy, but also within the tragic great sixth voyage, the attempt of Kant to restore philosophy, the Cogito becomes the starting point: this time not by its development but by its alleged refutation. [105]

(iii) The obscurity of Kant's opinion as to what kind of proposition or argument "Cogito, ergo sum" is

Not really an objection, but nevertheless, part of the critical opinion Kant has of the Cogito is his attempt to deny that the evidence of the Cogito is more than an analytical proposition or that it even makes any claim about existence. What kind of thing is the "I" and what kind of propositions form part of the Cogito: that I think and that I exist? Kant answers this question ambiguously and obscurely. [106]

It is clear that from Kant's perspective, the state of affairs that I really exist would have to be a synthetic a posteriori proposition, although Kant does not admit this clearly. In some places, he asserts that much; in others, he claims that the Cogito sum does not express any knowledge at all. Still, at others, he claims that the ultimate subject of consciousness, which constitutes all appearances, can never be given in experience but only as an object (still presupposing some experiential contact with it). Similarly, to consider the thinking subject as an object of knowledge cannot provide any knowledge of it itself. Hence the basic thesis of paralogism through equivocation of the term "subject" follows: that the experience and thinking of ourselves gives us only an empirical ego-appearance, which must not be identified with the „real" subject of all consciousness, the "Ich denke" that accompanies all conscious activities and which Kant seeks to reduce to an a priori logical form (synthetische transzendentale Apperzeption) which is no really existing being nor can be given as the object of knowledge because it lies behind all appearances and no

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auch auf Dinge überhaupt und an sich selbst gehen, welche Folgerung dieser ganzen Kritik ein Ende macht undgebieten würde, es beim Alten bewenden zu lassen. "

[105] Cf. Balduin Schwarz, (Paula Premoli/Josef Seifert ed.), *Wahrheit, Irrtum und Verirrungen. Die sechs großen Krisen und sieben Ausfahrten der abendländischen Philosophie*. (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1996); especially "Die 'Siebte Ausfahrt' als Aufgabe der Internationalen Akademie für Philosophie im Fürstentum Liechtenstein (1986-1996). Rede zur 10-Jahres-Jubiläumsfeier der Internationalen Akademie für Philosophie im Fürstentum Liechtenstein am 26. Oktober 1996," in: Mariano Crespo (Hrsg.), *Menschenwürde: Metaphysik und Ethik* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1998), S. 19-55.

[106] See Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, B404.

category or form of intuition can be applied to it. Kant does not stay at this general level of objecting against the Cogito, however, but raises a number of objections against the Cogito Argument and the evidence of the Cogito.

(iv) The correct thesis that if the cogito argument were to prove my existence through my thinking, it would be begging the question and Kant's claim that this would render the Cogito-Argument tautological

This objection is raised by Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason* in the following text: "Der Satz: Ich bin einfach, muß als ein unmittelbarer //A355// Ausdruck der Apperception angesehen werden, so wie der vermeintliche Cartesianische Schluß: cogito, ergo sum, in der That tautologisch ist, indem das cogito (sum cogitans) die Wirklichkeit unmittelbar aussagt."

This is not really an objection but the correct explanation that I do not infer my existence from the fact that I think but rather immediately become aware of my existence. Both René Descartes and G. W. Leibniz have observed this and intended their "argument" as an expression of this, Since, however, my thinking and my being do not mean the same thing, one cannot correctly call this argument an analytical proposition, first because it is not one proposition but contains different propositions "I think" and "I am," which in addition cannot be reduced in their meaning to each other, [107] secondly because indeed (under the additional premise, as Descartes noted, that "every thinking being exists") the conclusion follows logically from the premise without this being a tautology (if one does not claim that all syllogisms of the form *Barbara* are tautologies, as Kant indeed maintains in his logic), and thirdly because Descartes does not actually claim that we know our existence through an inference whose premise indeed already contains knowledge of our existence, but asserts that our existence is given to us through an "immediate perception" or cognition of our Self and of our acts. The same is taught by Leibniz. And this interpretation of their statement is certainly not a tautology. Moreover, Kant's own claim that the cogito argument, if it were true and not built in equivocations, would refute his whole *Critique of Pure Reason* proves that he himself does not seriously regard it as a tautology or analytic proposition. The truth of a tautology would certainly not overthrow his whole philosophy, nor could he criticize it as a faulty paralogism. [108]

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[107] See also Hartmut Brands, *"Cogito ergo sum." Interpretationen von Kant bis Nietzsche* (Freiburg/München: Verlag Karl Alber, 1982), pp. 84 ff., where the author notes as well that the cogito, ergo sum, consists of two propositions and can therefore not be an analytic proposition in the usual sense and even less a tautology under which he understands an explicit analytic proposition. But if we understand the "cogito ergo sum" as "I exist as thinking subject and therefore I exist," the proposition is indeed analytical, he states.

[108] The following final part of Part I of *Being and Essence* is translated from the German and was an addition written for, and inserted in, the Spanish edition.

(v) The alleged first paralogism of pure reason: that of substantiality

Kant‘s more important and original argument, however, denies simultaneously both pillars of the Cogito Argument: namely that I gain evidence of myself as subject and that the necessary synthetic propositions a priori employed in the cogito have any intrinsic validity or can be applied to the objective reality of the subject. This objection goes back to his subjectivistic interpretation of the a priori knowledge and his lack of distinguishing the objective essential necessity from a mere transcendental necessity of thinking which leads Kant to postulate a *quaternio terminorum* and an equivocal use of the term "I." Precisely because of the subjectivization of all fundamental categories of understanding and of being – including reality, existence, substance, affirmation, negation, etc. – it is clear that I can, as soon as I think myself and apply these categories to the ego, only have an appearance and a pure object of thought. Therefore, the syllogism that seeks, based on the cogito, to prove the substantiality of the soul is faulty, according to Kant.

Nevertheless, Kant does not deny any evidence of the „I think" (cogito). But he admits this evidence only in a formal-logical sense, Kant admits the evidence of the "Ich denke" which accompanies all our thinking and perceiving but claims that this ego of consciousness must not be identified with ego as substance or the ego as thought or perceived by me for several reasons above and beyond his general line of philosophy:

(1) He makes the strange claim that this "I" is given as a purely logical subject of all thought and without any distinctive individual trait (reminding of David Hume).

(2) He claims that there is no experience of something lasting to which the category of substance could meaningfully be applied.

(3) Even if I can attribute substantiality to the soul, this soul is a mere transcendental idea of which I have no experience and which is produced by transcendental subjectivity and which thus is, on the one hand, an appearance of myself (no more autonomously real than the outside world), on the other hand, as the ultimate ground of myself as the subject of reflection, as soul, a "substantial soul" is a *transcendental illusion* (ein "*transzendentaler Schein"*: thus the (real in the sense either of a thing in itself or a logical) transcendental subject and this object-idea of the soul are radically distinct, and the latter is an illusion, a position which makes authentic self-knowledge impossible and reminds of Sartre. Hence the Cogito argument confuses me as an unknowable hidden subject (transcendental ego) and myself as an object of any affirmation, existence, or substantiality, which is a mere appearance. Kant expresses himself here obscurely, trying to distinguish a conception of the "I" as the subject of all and of the subject as an object of perception and thought, claiming that these two are not identical, which follows from

his general theory but at the same time involves him in the contradiction that he himself has to speak of the "I" as an object of which he claims that it cannot become object either of perception or of thought. This entire objection not only presupposes what it denies and hence is contradictory: for it presupposes that the conscious subject itself, *as subject,* is known and can be known immediately but also as an object. Moreover, it is immediately refuted if the universal necessary categories and states of affairs at stake here are shown to possess intrinsic and absolute necessity and are not mere necessary forms of intuition and thought. Thus, we see indirectly in Kant's objections a confirmation of the centrality of the recognition of the second kind of knowledge contained in the *Cogito,* that of necessary essences.

(vi) The alleged second paralogism of pure reason: that of simplicity

Analogously, Kant criticizes the second paralogism of pure reason. Kant first admits the evidence of this argument and the impossibility that thinking could inhere in any other substance than a simple one and points out that the subject of thought can never be a composite thing such that parts of the concepts and acts of thinking would inhere in different parts. He even states that the most careful investigation cannot find a flaw in the argument and formulates it very well. But then he rejects it by applying the same ideas: He proceeds from the correct observation that the thesis that thought can only have a simple subject cannot be an analytical proposition that mereology would follow from concepts. But if the proposition is "synthetic a priori", nobody will dare to prove it who has understood Kant's general treatment of these propositions, he states. But if we reject the subjectivity of the synthetic a priori, we have no reason to be scared by his "no one will prove." He states that this necessity cannot be derived from experience (and is right if he means empirical experience of contingent facts, not if we deal with experience of necessary essences). He calls the proposition "I think" a "formalin Satz der Apperzeption" and no experience on which no such argument may be based. But all this is unintelligible and unbelievably dogmatic. This form of apperception he calls a mere "subjective condition of experience" and denies any reality to it. Then he makes many confused remarks such as the word "I" because I can apply it to anything else, has no specific content, etc.

His agnosticism leads him to claim that all the ways in which we seek to grasp the simplicity of the subject of thought refer only to appearances, and its simplicity and immateriality are only one of the appearances because the mind cannot be given as an object of external but only of inner senses and hence not as a thing in itself. Even the possibility that matter in itself and the subject in itself are identical is

formulated by Kant. [109] This follows from his subjective interpretation of the a priori but completely collapses as soon as its absolute and objective necessity is understood.

5. Knowledge of Other Persons "I" – "Thou" – "He"/ "She"

Although the indubitable knowledge of ourselves, and therefore of one real person, provides us with a most important knowledge of the real being of the person and hence with a foundation of our personalist metaphysics of "being and person," this epistemological foundation is not sufficient for our purpose. For even though this knowledge of the *cogito* is in no way restricted to pure immanence of consciousness, as many critics of the *Cogito* claim, on the contrary, entails a true cognitive transcendence in the knowledge of ourselves as being "real in ourselves," and in the insight into countless intrinsically necessary truths about being, truth, and *all* persons, it does not yet answer another epistemological question crucial for a metaphysics of *Being and Person* about the possibility and nature of our knowledge of *other* persons. Since persons are not abstract ideas or essences but unique individual beings, this question is of fundamental significance and carries problems we have not even touched yet.

As we shall see in the Third volume of *Being and Person*, the relation to other persons belongs to the essence of the person. The most important one of these relations is the one to the absolute, divine person(s): besides the ontological relation to our Creator and, as we believe as Christians, to our Redeemer and bestower of all supernatural graces and gifts, our experienced and personal relation to God both through knowledge and through many other fundamental acts of the person. We will deal later extensively, in the four last parts of this work, with the question of the existence and knowledge of a personal God. However, not only man´s knowledge and relation to God is of crucial interest for any philosophical personalism and for understanding man's being as a person. Rather, also the question of whether and how we can know other *human* persons is of decisive significance for laying the epistemological foundations for a metaphysics of the human person, who, by his very nature, is ordered to relations and community with other human persons, i.e., with real, living, spiritual beings.

The knowledge of other persons is decisive for understanding community, social acts, law, justice, gratitude, forgiveness, love, and many other parts of the interpersonal world, which is the center of a properly human world. The question as

[109] Again: Just as we have seen in detail in the case of self-knowledge and have just mentioned again, we could not know individual other persons without gaining insights into many necessary and universal truths about persons as such.

to whether and how we can reach the knowledge of other human persons, both as a "thou" that stands in direct relation to me and as, i.e., a "he" or "she," is also a crucial problem for any philosophy of religion.

This is particularly true for a philosophy of the Christian religion that believes in the incarnation of the second divine person in Jesus Christ and rests on the words the God-Man has spoken and the miracles and deeds he has performed and on the Holy Scriptures that record these words. But let us first return to the more general issue of the knowledge of other persons. For the reason of its immense significance for a realist personalist philosophy that does justice to the reality of persons, let us address at least briefly the question of how we can know other human persons. This knowledge refers to beings that can neither be directly perceived by the senses nor are accessible with absolute immediate certainty, as the *ego sum* is known through the *cogito*, as we have seen. Nevertheless, they are known with sufficient certainty and evidence to make a doubt of them a kind of mental disease. Let us briefly investigate a number of general characteristics and kinds of knowledge of other persons.

Although knowledge of other human persons begins with sense perceptions, persons are not "contained in the sensible object" such that abstracting intuition from the individual and specific characteristics of sense objects or their qualities could lead us to know other persons. Abstraction from phantasms or from sense objects cannot lead us to know other persons because persons are totally individual and basically spiritual beings irreducible to their bodies as well as to universal essences reached in abstraction. The sort of knowledge that we gain, starting from sense-perception, when we grasp "redness" or the essence of color as such, is therefore not the way to proceed from seeing a human body towards knowing the other person. Even if human persons have a body from whose sense-perception we begin to know them, our way to know them is by no means abstraction. Individual persons cannot be known in this way at all, even though, of course, we experience and know individual others persons always in the light of many universal and necessary truths about persons, just as we have found that we could not know ourselves without simultaneously knowing many universal and eternal truths.

The knowledge of human persons, inasmuch as it proceeds from sense perception does so in completely different ways from those an Aristotelian theory of intellectual knowledge by means of abstraction would assume. Rather, we know other persons through special acts of understanding and perceiving mentally unique spiritual beings, unique human actions, human emotions and their motives, expressions of the inner life and emotions of persons in the body, etc. [110]

[110] Again: Just as we have seen in detail in the case of self-knowledge and have just mentioned again, we could not know individual other persons without gaining insights into many necessary and universal truths about persons as such.

Moreover, we cannot know another human person with the same infallible knowledge with which we know ourselves. First of all, we cannot know other persons without an element of trust or belief in the veracity of our sense perceptions. This is particularly important for religious knowledge based on faith. Not only specifically religious knowledge based on faith, however, requires beliefs beyond what we strictly and intellectually speaking *know*. Rather, already prior to, and independently of, the act of faith itself, we have to believe that our senses can be trusted and that we are not perceiving illusory objects and persons that do not really exist, as patients suffering from schizophrenia do (such as represented vividly in the movie *A Beautiful Mind* that is based on the true schizophrenia of a genius and Nobel laureate of physics).

Furthermore, we have to trust and believe in what other people tell us about themselves or about third persons. In the latter case, we do not only need to trust the (third) person whom we get to know, but also his friends or acquaintances, or those who write about their lives and deeds. Even more trust and belief are required when we likewise lack any direct contact with the witnesses through whom we gain knowledge about persons with whom we have no direct contact. In that case, we have to believe in the word of witnesses we do not personally know. Such a belief can be rational either because of the credibility and coherence of what they tell us with the rest of our experience or because of a quality of inner truth of what they tell us, which is, for the Christian, the deepest reason for his faith. In any case, we have to believe that these witnesses are telling the truth.