Introduction

JOSEF SEIFERT AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL REALISM

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Josef Seifert is Europe's most illustrious phenomenological realist philosopher today. The volume *Reality, Real Being, and Phenomenological Noumenology*, which is in front of you now, epitomizes his metaphysics and epistemology. The title of the work presents itself: it is a metaphysics of the being-in-itself or the metaphysics of the *noumenon*. It is metaphysics of what Immanuel Kant claimed to be beyond the reach of knowledge. It claims the knowability of the being in itself or *the noumenon*. Of course, the work is also an epistemological one of phenomenological realism. It explores the being in itself as the cognitive object and the phenomenological method to explore it. Thus, with daring moves, Seifert also advances Husserl's motto, "back to things themselves," into "back to thing in itself," making a fully Platonic return in phenomenology and raising the stock value of the philosophy called "phenomenological realism," which he champions today. Seifert's endeavor is darling because it swims against a wave of our epoch, which many philosophers would like to claim to be postmodern and in which it is the diversity of truth and knowledge, not unity of truth and knowledge, that is advocated.

As is well known, Kant first developed the concept of *noumenon* to connote a being that exists independently of the human sense, or the thing that is contrasted to a phenomenon, which is an object of sense. In Kant's transcendental idealism, we know the phenomenon, but the noumenon would remain unknown to us, amid we know that the world of noumenon exists. Seifert's noumenology here is, of course, to dethrone Kant's outlook and to claim that we not only know the existence of the world of noumenon, but also can know the noumenon. Seifert insists that the noumenon is knowable. He also insists that knowability is a criterion indicating *the noumenon* to be a real being. He claims, "being can stand out from non-being or nothingness" in three different but interrelated ways: (1) its intelligibility (level of inner meaning and cognizability"; (2) "its value"; and (3) its "being real" and its "reality," e.g., having essence. All three moments are necessary of reality and inseparable (Seifert, 2024, 14) [1]. Noteworthy, for decades, Kant's thesis of the unknowability of the noumenon has been the bona fide of Seifert's philosophical criticism.

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[1]Josef Seifert, *Reality, Real Being, and Phenomenological Noumenology* in this volume. Hereafter referred to as Seifert 2024.

The *Noumenon*, as a being, stands out from non-being in these three ways or possession of all these three conditions/moments: its intelligibility, its value, and its being real. We should add here its objectivity. *The noumenon* is knowable, according to Seifert's phenomenological realism. This is also a thesis that Seifert has been advocating for decades. As a being, the noumenon has values and meaning. In Phenomenological realism, facts and values are integrated in being. The noumenon is real in virtue of its essence or the essential constitution of it. It is in the being in itself that the original reality of a being lies. Moreover, the noumenon is not merely an intentional existence of the consciousness. It is not even Husserlian *noemata*, which is the phenomena that appears in consciousness. Instead, it is a being in the full, proper sense and a being is knowable. Knowing *the noumenon* is the ultimate objective of knowing a thing in phenomenological realism. In a daring move, Seifert brings full stock value to the concept of the being in itself or *the noumenon*. [2]

The tenet of the knowability of the noumenon demarcates Seifert's phenomenological realism from Husserl's phenomenological idealism in two ways. First, in phenomenological realism, noumenon is an objectively existing being, independently of our consciousness. In comparison, *noemata* is given in our consciousness, not independent of our consciousness. That is to say, in phenomenological realism, the cognitive object is the being in itself, while in phenomenological realism, the cognitive object is the being in consciousness. Second, in phenomenological realism, noumenon as the being in itself is knowable. In contrast, in phenomenological realism, what we can know is *noemata*, the phenomenon of the *noumenon* that is given in consciousness. Seifert makes no bone of this difference and points out:

> Still less would transcendental idealism grant that we can know the really real existence and essence of things; for this implies that we are capable of knowing "things in themselves," which can only be reality if they are independent of being a purely intentional object of the human mind or of transcendent consciousness. According to transcendental idealism, "real beings and real existence" would also exist only "in the mind," namely as *noemata* constituted by our conscious intentional life (*noesis*) (Ibid).

Thus, Seifert indicates that Husserl's view that "all 'reality' is constituted by transcendental consciousness as the object of consciousness…contradicts real reality and the in-itself closure of the real." (Ibid) Accordingly, while Husserl's phenomenological idealism focuses on the studies of the universal feature of

[2] Of course, Seifert does not use the concept of being in itself in the same sense as Jean-Paul Sartre uses the idea of being-in-itself. Seifert's being in itself is Plato's being in itself, although Seifert does not evoke Plato's concept of form. Sartre's being-in-itself is the unconscious, thing-like being contrasted to being-for-itself, e.g., the human being.

consciousness, Seifert's phenomenological realism focuses on the studies of the universal, necessary feature of being, especially the being in itself or *the noumenon*. The shining pearls in the palm of Husserl's phenomenological idealism are *noemata*—the phenomena that appear, *noese*—the constituting acts of consciousness, and *transcendental ego*—the source of noese. In comparison, the shining pearls in the palm of Seifert's phenomenological realism are beings, especially beings in themselves, not merely beings in consciousness, and necessary and supremely intelligible essence.

The *noumenon* is a being, not a non-being in the sense that it is real. But what is being real? Seifert rejects Husserl's thesis that "the only, or at least a sufficient, characteristic of reality is its temporality." Seifert insists on two grounds. First, temporary is not a sufficient characteristic or condition of reality. X is a sufficient condition for Y in the following situation: If X, then Y; Y, not necessarily X. It is not true that a being that has temporality is real. Or it is not the case that whatever has temporality has reality. Seifert claimed, "that not everything temporal is real is already evident from the fact that even purely intentional objects, such as the events and occurrences in a novel that take place in a fictional time."(Ibid, 16) The same is true of the fact that, for example, a mentally constructed protagonist in a play may have temporality but is still not real in the sense that it does not have real existence but has only an imagined existence or intentional existence. This is also the case of intentional beings such as beings in dreams, illusion, imagination, and fantasy. Second, temporality is not a necessary condition for reality either. X is the necessary condition for Y in the following situation: If Y, then X; No X, no Y. Not every real being or a being that has reality or is real has temporality. Thus, for example, God is real and has reality, but God does not have temporality. This is also the case of universal truth, universal justice, universal beauty, universal duty, and universal virtue. What is universal is timeless and transcending above space.

Seifert also rejects Scheler and Kant' view that makes "resistance to the sense of touch to drives, expressions of will, and desires as the sole criterion" of reality. On the one hand, resistance to sense is not a sufficient characteristic or condition of reality. Objects of hallucination or psychic experiences produce resistances to senses, but they are not real; "there can be resistance of unreal objects.". Also, evidentially, "there are also many ideal laws of essences and other non-real objects which resist our imagination and volition without therefore being real in the strict sense of the primordial phenomenon of reality." (Ibid, 19) On the other hand, resistance to senses is also not a necessary characteristic or condition of reality. For example, truths or justice that we arrive at through speculative reasoning may not produce resistance to senses, will, or desires. Noteworthy, if an object can produce resistance to senses if and only if it is sensible. However, not everything real being is sensible. Scheler and Kant's view may commit the logical flaw of begging the question here: X is real because it is sensible and produces resistance to senses, and X is sensible and produces resistance to sense because it is real. Thus, resistance to senses, will, and desires is "neither exclusive criterion [of reality] nor its innermost core."

In connection with this, value is a different moment of being that is distinctive from being real. Thus, Seifert also rejects G.E. Moor's identifying of reality with good/value (Ibid, 21). The question of what is good is what is the reality of good. Moor's answer that good is good claims that good is valuable and desirable. Seifert insists that it is one thing to say that good exists and is real and thus to answer the question of what the reality of is good, the question of whether good exists or in terms of what it exists; it is quite another to claim that the property and content of good is desirable and valuable.

At the end of the day, Seifert's criterion of reality is a synthesis of the Platonic emphasis on essence and Aristotle's concept of primary substance. Seifert's approach is a phenomenological return but also a realist return. It is a phenomenological return in the sense that its method is "to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in every way in which it shows itself from itself."(Heidegger 1962, BT58/H34) [3] Its maxim is "[back] to the things themselves!"(Ibid) Seifert insisted not only back to things themselves, but also back to things in themselves—for example, not just back to things themselves in consciousness, but back to things themselves in themselves existing independently of our consciousness. It is not just back to things themselves in their phenomenal appearances, but back to things themselves independently existing as defining, distinctive, and individually real beings. Seifert's approach is realist in the sense that it insists that real beings have mind-independent existence and are not mind-dependent; real beings are real and exist even in the absence of any minds perceiving them or knowing them; real beings are what they are, not necessarily as what our minds understand them. By this token, Kand the Husserl are not realist philosophers and thus are the bona fide objects of Seifert's criticism, amid both Husserl and Seifert are phenomenologist philosophers. Both Kant and Husserl make real beings mind-dependent beings. By this token, realism is the doctrine holding that reality is mind-independent; it is independently of the mind. Seifert insisted that the reality of a being exists independently of a person's mind or any mind.

In Seifert's view, the first necessary and sufficient characteristic of reality is the essence of the being. By essence, Seifert means Platonic essence of being or Aristote's nature of being. It is the universal, defining, and fundamental property, characteristic, or condition of a being. All beings that are real necessarily have their essence or nature. All that have essences or natures are necessarily real and have reality. Seifert claims that the association between being real and essence can be seen evidentially by looking at "some modes of beings that possess their nature [essence] as living, conscious, thinking, or free beings" (Seifert, 2024, 22). We will see that such beings possess the essence or nature consisting of living, conscious, thinking, or free only if they are real; reversely, they are or exist because they have such

[3] Heidegger, Martin. 1962., *Being and Time*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco.

essences—that is, essence determines existence, not the other way around as phenomenological existentialists such as Heidegger and Sartre insist; the essence of a tomato determines its existence to be a tomato's, not a potato's.

An examination of those beings that possess the nature or essence of being living, conscious, thinking, or free reveals the following. First, "such an affiliation of being real to the essences of certain beings can be shown" to all substances, including those beings whose beings are beings-in-themselves in existence. Second, it reveals that "all material movements through space claim an autonomous real existence" that is beyond and "independent of mere possibilities, ideas" or intentionality. Third, living beings claim an independent real existence according to their essence. A person has his/her independent real existence prescribed by his/her human nature or essence and cannot have an existence of a monkey, apple tree or tomato. Fourth, "reality belongs to the essence of a person and to her unique, unrepeatable being." (Ibid, 23) On the one hand, a real person is not repeatable or duplicable. On the other hand, the nonrepeatability or non-duplicability of a person is determined by her human essence. Fifth, it reveals that God's being real and God's essence are not separable; God that does not have the essence of God is not real God—for example, God that is not omnipotent, omniscient, and all good is not real God; God that is not real cannot be God of omnipotence, omniscience, and all good. God is real in virtue of its essence.

Noteworthy, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger also proposed the human being or *Dasein* as the paradigmatic, architype of being to investigate Being. From the point of view that the human being is timely, communal, conscious, and cable of taking a stance, Heidegger put forth the memorable motto of existentialism: existence precedes essence. By contrast, from the point of view that beings such as human beings are conscious, thinking, and free, Seifert insists on a phenomenological realist stance that essence determines existence and thus precedes existence. As it will be shown immediately, Seifert does not deny that existence is a predicate to reality, but reality is first associated with essence.

Interestingly, insisting on a stronger form of phenomenological realism, Seifer brings something from Hegel, if not from Daoist philosophers. He further claims that being real or reality is known by its opposites and by what is not. The real or being real can be understood by its opposites: (1) by its opposition to the possible, (2) by its opposition to the impossible, (3) by its opposition to the merely imagined, and (4) by its contrast to the purely ideal. In short, being real is known so much for its own distinctiveness, but also by its opposites. This also rehabilitates the Platonic view that the essence of a being will not be the opposite of the being. By this token, the moment of "in-itself" does not make a being less real or unknowable but "completes the final being of being real. Thus, for example, X's *noumenon* is actually the moment that completes X as a real being. Seifert's thesis here is not so much to claim objectivity as a characteristic of reality as it is to claim that the essence of a being is a being-in-itself.

Meanwhile, Seifert's s phenomenological realism also has its unique approach to the relationship between essence and existence. Its basic thesis is that, on the one hand, real existence is not a predicate of the essence or real beings, at least of no contingent beings; on the other hand, existence is a real predicate in the twofold sense: in the sense that it adds something to a being and also in the logical sense. The phenomenological realist approach denies the phenomenological existentialist claim that existence defines essence—that is, the whatness of a being, amid it acknowledges that existence can contribute that which can be used to describe or characterize a being.

Seifert claims, "Existence is not a predicate of the whatness or essence of a real being, at least in the case of contingent beings. What we mean by the existence of something belongs neither to 'what' the being is (to its *ti einai*) nor to how it is (to its *poion einai*)." (Ibid, 28) Existence does not "add a determination of essence to the thing as such." Thus, for example, the existence of a cat indicates that an animal called "cat" is or exists, but it does not add a determination of "catness" or "animalness" to the being called "cat." This is particularly the case regarding contingent existence. A contingent existence is that it is, but it could be not; it exists, but it could exist not. If X's existence is contingent, it has nothing to do with X's essence. If X's existence has an internal relation to its essence, then X's existence is necessary, not contingent.

Notwithstanding, although existence is not a predicate of the essence of a being, in particular of contingent beings, it is a real predicate. Ontologically, "something is 'added' to a being or what it is as possible if real existence is given to it." Locally, when we say that X this or that exists", "something is 'added' to the subject term" (Ibid, 29). Moreover, that existence is a real predicate in both an ontological sense and in a logical sense can be seen in ten ways: (1) "the sense of many existential questions and judgments can only be explained if one admits that existence is a predicate in the two senses defined above" (Ibid, 31); (2) metaphysically, "no one would say that nothing is 'added' to a being at then unique moment it receives existence" (Ibid, 32); (3) "the essence of a being gets a completely new 'meaning' if this being exists"(Ibid); (4) "everything is added to a being when it receives real existence." (Ibid, 33); (5) That "existence is a real predicate" is evident in the fact that different modalities of existence which we can encounter add different things to a being (Ibid, 35); thus, a necessary existence adds things to a being that differ from what a contingent existence adds to the being (ibid); (6) unless existence adds things to a being, Kant could not reasonably claim that "every existential proposition is synthetic" (Ibid, 36); (7) "the 'exact coincidence' between real existence and possible existence shows clearly that (real) existence is a predicate"(Ibid); (8) "the exact correspondence between the 'essence of the possible and that of real" indicates that existence adds something to a being (Ibid, 37-38); (9) "the crucial difference between 'is' in the meaning of 'exists' and 'is' as a cupula" (Ibid, 38); and (10) "The distinction between potential and actual being" indicates that existence is a real

predicate (Ibid, 41) All the same, existence is a real predicate of a being, amid it is not a predicate of the essence of the being. This thesis rejects the existentialist claim that existence determines and defines essence on the one hand and recognizes that existentially, existence contributes to identifying reality and being real.

In short, the phenomenological noumenonology in this volume is metaphysically and epistemologically realist noumenology. It contends that noumenon is the knowable real being independent of our consciousness; the being in itself is not being in consciousness only. It contends that existence is a real predicate, amid it is not a predicate of the essence; existence adds meanings, values, and conditions to a being; nonetheless, it is the essence that determines existence, not the other way around; equally crucial, there are both necessary and contingent existences, as well as essential and non-essential existence. It calls for back to the being in itself, not just back to a being itself as given in consciousness. It synthesizes insights of both Plato's and Aristotle's metaphysics, and insights of both Plato's and Aristotle's epistemology. Not surprisingly, demonstrating that the being in itself or noumenon is a real being with knowability of the being in itself or *noumenon, Reality, Real Being, and Phenomenological Noumenology* recommends that the method to know the being in itself is phenomenological: that is, to see the noumenon as itself in itself; it is to let the noumenon which shows itself be seen from itself in every way in which it shows itself from itself; it is to let the being in itself to be seen in virtue of its being an essentially necessary being that embodies both the universal and the particular. It firmly defends the traditional concepts of virtues of truth and knowledge: objectivity, universality, certainty, and correspondences between the mind and reality outside the mind.

A few words about the philosopher himself are in order. One's works reveal one's character. As his writing reveals, Josef Seifert is the Socratic kind of philosopher in every sense. He lives on philosophy. He embodies what philosophy is all about loving wisdom and knowledge. He devotes himself totally to practicing philosophy and exploring philosophical truths. He had been a philosophy professor at the University of Texas at Dallas in the 1970s and early 1980s before he established the International Academy of Philosophy in Europe, modeled after Plato's and Aristotle's academies. For decades, he has been the banner holder of phenomenological realism in Europe and the world. The late Pope John Paul II famously proclaimed that Seifert was the best phenomenological philosopher in Europe.

For decades, Seifert has developed an outstanding phenomenological realist metaphysics and epistemology. He is well recognized for his contributions to making metaphysics a rigorous science of *being qua being*. His book *Back to "Things in Themselves": A Phenomenological Foundation for Classical Realism* is one of the most influential works in European philosophy. In the book, Seifert demonstrates that the original inspiration of phenomenology was the primordial insight of philosophy itself, the foundation of philosophia perennis. He frames his insights by engaging in dialogues with Descartes, Kant, Husserl, Gadamer, and various

European continental philosophers. Even in this early work, while defending Husserl's phenomenological principle of the method, "Back to things themselves," Seifert criticizes Kant's arguments that discredit the knowability of things in themselves. In *Reality, Real Being, and Phenomenological Noumenology*, in the current volume, Seifert determinedly rejected both Kant's and Husserl's thesis that *the noumenon* is unknowable.

Meanwhile, in his influential paper on metaphysics entitled "In Defense of Free Will," published in The Review of Metaphysics in 2011, Seifert defends the existence of free will with the arguments of immediate evidence, necessary evidence, and the experience of moral "ought." His three recently published books, *Metaphysics as Rigorous Science of Things in Themselves*, *Metaphysics as the Science of Being Qua Being*, and *Person as Truest Being* developed a realist phenomenological and perennial personalist metaphysics and new insights into the perfect being, e.g., the divine being. His recently published book, *The Primal Phenomenon of Reality*, is another masterpiece of phenomenological realist metaphysics.

Metaphysics as Rigorous Science of Things in Themselves, seeks a rigorous, scientific "return to things themselves". It explores necessary and supremely intelligible essences, states of affairs, and laws and refutes the reductionism of transcendental idealism, e.g., Kant's transcendental idealism. Meanwhile, Metaphysics *as the Science of Being Qua Being* proposes creatively four principles of understanding the object of metaphysics, being qua being: the principles of non-contradiction, identity, excluding the middle, and sufficient reason. It develops Duns Scotus's contribution to the metaphysics of transcendentals. Seifert points out in the book that the essential point of them is not that they are found in everything that is but rather that they do not have any intrinsic limitation (and therefore, unlike limited and mixed perfections like animal and human nature); they can also, and must even, be attributed in the primary sense, to God). He argues that besides seven "transcendental properties" found in all things, there are other transcendentals: pure perfections that are found only in some beings (life, wisdom , etc.) but are not restricted to limited spheres of being but are fully themselves only when they are infinite, which is the core of their "transcendentality"; still others are exclusively divine attributes; of all of them holds true: a pure perfection (a transcendental) is whatever is absolutely and without qualification better than beings incompatible with it.

In connection with the above, *Person as Truest Being* investigates this decisive question of what is being in the primary and most authentic sense. The center of the book consists of a carefully weighed answer to this question of *being qua being* and using a considerable number of criteria for determining what is in the primary and most proper sense among all beings on earth. It gives a very carefully reflected answer to the same question about being in the most proper sense: an answer very different from the traditional Aristotelian and Thomist one but being quite

compatible with Aquinas' deepest understanding of being qua being as a person. In the book, Seifert gives a paradigmatic definition of person: "*Person" refers to the most perfect there is in all nature, namely to what subsists in a rational nature (subsistens in rationali natura). Yet, all that is perfect should be attributed to God because His essence contains all perfection*. [4] He points out that this name [person] should thus be attributed to God; also, in the same manner, it is attributed to creatures: it will be in a more excellent fashion; to be a person (not to be this or that individual person) is pure perfection and thus must exist most perfectly in God. With these and other arguments, Seifert proves a very central thesis of the book: to be a person is to possess the being of the person and to be capable of the good in the most proper sense of the term.

For Decades, Seifert also develops an outstanding phenomenological realist philosophy of religion. He is a staunch advocate and defender of the rationality of faith, the association of faith and knowledge, the existence and nature of God, and the immortality of the soul. He has written extensively on the nature of God, the problem of evil, the relationship between faith and reason, philosophy of religion as a rigorous science, and the scientific method in religious studies. He has contributed significant insights to philosophy of religion, including our understanding of God and the perfect being. He has argued that God is the foundation of all reality and that the existence of evil does not negate the existence of God.

In *Back to 'Things in Themselves': A Phenomenological Foundation for Classical Realism, Seifert* has made other notable contributions to our understanding of religion and God as the perfect being and the source of all reality. Among the most notable contributions is his new doctrine of pure perfection. The medieval doctrine posits that God is the source of all perfections and that these perfections are simple and indivisible. Seifert has been a leading proponent of this theory and used it to explore the nature of God and the limits of human understanding. Seifert's work on pure perfections builds on the ideas of Anselm of Canterbury, who was the first philosopher to grasp the essence of pure perfections with philosophical clarity. Anselm sought a criterion for discerning which predicates are substantively or properly characteristic of the divine essence. To find a solution, Anselm first distinguished two basic types of predications: the relative and the absolute. Imbibing insights from traditional Western philosophies, Seifert has introduced corrections and clarifications to the traditional doctrine of pure perfection, as well as developed new insights into its nature. In this regard, *Seifert* develops a paradigmatic formula of pure perfection: *A pure perfection is such that the being which possesses it and which is compatible with it is, from the point of view of that perfection, necessarily more perfect than a being which in fact does not possess the given perfection, or by*

[4] Cf. Roira, Rogelio. 2017. "Perfection and imperfection of Josef Seifert's Theory of Pure Perfections," *Journal of Easter-West thought*, 7:1, pp.53-71. Indebted to Rovira's insights here.

essence cannot possess it. His second major contribution to the theory of pure perfections concerns the ways in which the actual existence of such perfections can be identified. Seifert begins by noting that pure perfection possesses an objective, essential necessity. They are indeed Urgegebenheiten, irreducible realities. Thus, their existence can be ascertained, according to Seifert, in two ways: indirectly, by negative proof, and directly, by a positive insight. His third contribution concerns the problem of knowledge of these perfections. In accordance with his manifold epistemological investigations and inquiries on the methods of realist phenomenology, Seifert defends an intuitive knowledge of pure perfection. This intuitive knowledge is certainly not direct but mediated "in the mirror" of others. This "mediated immediate" knowledge is, in Seifert's own words, an "indirect knowledge in which other, originally hidden essences, are reflected and co-given in what is more immediately present to us, sometimes as their perfect form, other times as their intelligible "opposites,"' Seifert's work shapes greatly contemporary debates in metaphysics and philosophical theology.

In the article "The Seventh Voyages of Philosophy" (*Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 1999), Seifert uses the concept of voyages of philosophy to refer to philosophical knowledge of truth, in contrast to skepticism and relativism. He designates philosophical knowledge to form the rational foundation of philosophy of religion and the application of a critical method to the central contents of studies of religion. He argues that realist phenomenology plays a key role in the seventh voyage by providing an objective foundation to *a priori* knowledge, including *a priori* knowledge of religion. The article also shows that essential necessity possesses a supreme form of intelligibility. Cognition is reached via insight and deduction; three kinds of essences explain the difference between empirical and *a priori* sciences, while the "impoverishment of *a priori*" is transcended through necessary essences. Seifert points out that rethinking Edmund Husserl's method allows access to real existence, where objective values replace axiological nihilism; rigorous philosophy is thus compatible with divinely revealed truth about the mysteries of God and man.

Seifert's three recently published books *Quinque Viae Amoris ad Deum; Five Ways from Love to the Knowledge of God*, Being and Person (Irving, TX, Gaflei, FL, Santiago de Chile, Granada, Spain, Gaming, Austria: IAP Press, 2023), *From Finite Person to the Infinite Divine Person, Being and Person*, Volume IV, (Irving, TX, Gaflei, FL, Santiago de Chile, Granada, Spain, Gaming, Austria: IAP Press, 2023) and *God as Truest Person and Infinitely Perfect Being. Metaphysics as Science of the Supreme Being in Himself*, Being and Person, (Irving, TX, Gaflei, FL, Santiago de Chile, Granada, Spain, Gaming, Austria: IAP Press, Kindle DP 2023), creatively develop a phenomenological realist account of our knowledge of God and the being of God and are truly thought-provoking and thought liberating.

Five Ways from Love to the Knowledge of God, *Being and Person* concentrates on the specific nature of the person, especially of personal love, and shows that from

it, five thoroughly personalistic ways lead to the knowledge of God. The first way applies the Aristotelian and Thomistic insight that a deep finality permeates the universe in which nothing is "in vain," without meaning and purpose, to a philosophy of love. The second way proceeds from the insight that moral values culminate in the love for God – which would be an absurdity if God did not exist. Both the inner meaning of love of God as a supreme morally good act and the necessity that all morally good persons receive their appropriate reward prove the real existence of God. The third way starts with the insight that only love can be the appropriate value response that is due to the inner preciousness of the person, a truth that grips us, particularly in the smile of a baby. The fourth way contemplates that love is pure perfection: that is a value, and perfection which to possess is absolutely better than not to possess it for whatever reason. No being could be perfectly good without being capable of loving and without actually loving. Therefore, God, who possesses all perfections in the supreme degree, i.e., in their infinitude, must love in the supreme degree and even BE LOVE ITSELF. The fifth way is prepared by the ontological proof of the existence of God, meanwhile, *From Finite Person to the Infinite Divine Person, Being and Person*, and *God as Truest Person and Infinitely Perfect Being. Metaphysics as Science of the Supreme Being in Himself, Being, and Person* explores insights of Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, and various others and, therefore, proposes a phenomenological realist defense of God as the truest person and perfect being and consciousness.

Furthermore, for decades, Seifert has developed an outstanding phenomenological realist philosophy of science and the integration of scientific studies and religious studies. One of his influential works is his 1993 paper entitled "Is 'Brian Death' Actually Death" in *The Monist*, wherein Seifert explores the phenomenon of brain death and argues that the criterion in the concept of brain death is invalid for determining death; he also explores the philosophical aspects of death, e.g., the metaphysical, ontological, and philosophic anthropological dimensions of death. Seifert's other influential work is his book, wherein he critically explores Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and proposes a realistic turn in philosophical methods to establish philosophy as a rigorous science. His book *What is Life? The Originality, Irreducibility, and Value of Life* also contribute illuminating insights into life and the relationship among philosophy, religion, and science. The book explores the concept of life from the examined philosophy of life from a scientific, religious perspective. In the book, Seifert argues that life is an ultimate datum that cannot be reduced to physical reality. It also discusses the role of consciousness in understanding life and emphasizes the objective and intrinsic value of all life, including human life.

Finally, for decades, Seifert has developed an outstanding phenomenological realist ethics and moral philosophy. One of his notable works is the book titled "Material Value-Ethics: Evaluating the Thought of Josef Seifert and John F. Crosby." In this book, Seifert and John F. Crosby present material value ethics that reject all forms of suicide, abortion, euthanasia, torture, destructive stem-cell

research, genetic enhancement, in vitro fertilization, and contraception. They also explore the philosophical foundations of material value ethics and its application to various ethical issues. Some of his notable works on ethics include (1) *The Theology of Hope*: In this work, Seifert explores the concept of hope from a moral perspective; (2) *Diktatur des Relativismus: der Kampf um die absolute Wahrheit für die Zukunft Europas*: This book delves into the topic of the dictatorship of relativism and the struggle for absolute truth in Europe's future; (3) *The Moral Action: What Is It and How Is It Motivated?* wherein Seifert examines the nature of moral action and its motivations. In the article "The Theology of Hope," published in *First Things* in 2018, Seifert presents an ethics of the intrinsically good that is always good and, in all situations, abandons the evil Machiavellian principle of private and public life.

To sum up, Josef Seifert, the philosopher who authors Reality, Real Being, and Phenomenological Noumenology in this volume, is a world-renowned phenomenological realist philosopher in Europe today. *Reality, Real Being, and Phenomenological Noumenology* is a philosophical achievement grounded in Seifert's decades-long philosophical achievements. In our epoch, in which postmodernism becomes a fashion and the ideas of universal truth, good, virtue, duty, and obligation were seriously devalued, Seifert and his phenomenological realism also swim against the wave. In an epoch of artificial intelligence, his philosophical realist noumenology both swims against the wave and sheds illuminating insights. Kant put forth his immortal motto of enlightenment: Enlightenment means having the courage to use one's own understanding. Ironically, the best defense of Seifert is from Kant, the philosopher who is the bona fide of Seifert's philosophical criticism. It is also a beauty. How much less would the world be if there were not a group of philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, and Josef Seifert, who constantly stared at the sky and stars?

Chapter One

THE PRIMORDIAL PHENOMENON OF REALITY: KNOWLEDGE OF ITS ESSENCE AND EXISTENCE AS THE INDUBITABLE FOUNDATION OF PHILOSOPHICAL REALISM

1. What are Reality and Real Existence? [5]

The unique priority and excellence of being, which can be found only in the real world of individual things and their properties, this primordial phenomenon of reality, cannot be explained by anything else. Its essence can be grasped only intuitively, and it can be understood that here we find what is "being" in the most actual sense and that here we touch real being, in comparison with which the purely intelligible objects, even the most sublime ideas, possess only a "thin" reality. The "idea" of justice or mercy as such cannot be compared in "reality" with the really existing just prophet Daniel, who saves Susanna from death; the idea of mercy lacks the reality of an act of merciful forgiveness like that of St. Stephen who forgives those who stone him.

This assertion must not be interpreted as denying that superiority of intelligibility and timelessness which we find in the "ideal essences," especially in the eÍdh, the necessary timeless essences, which are the subject of mathematical and philosophical cognition. A fortiori, we shall not speak here of the *real infinite divine justice* called "justice itself." It, of course, possesses a whole reality infinitely superior to any human real justice. We speak here only of the ideas and the eÍdh as such and say that they are inferior in their reality to any just person and her deeds or even to a fly or a piece of wood. Let us remember that being can stand out from non-being or nothingness in three completely different ways and directions: [6]

First, by its intelligibility (level of inner meaning and cognizability), and in this respect, the general "essences" (eÍdh) are, of course, incomparably superior to any finite realization of them, not to speak of the fly, a superiority which implies other ontological predicates such as timelessness, at least in the case of the necessary essences.

Secondly, a being in the most profound sense can stand out from nothingness by its value (and by its ought to be), whereby the being not only is but is something that

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[5] This text was originally written as a contribution to the workshop *"The Phenomenon of Reality,"* September 22, 2022.

[6] For a detailed account of these three "directions of being," see Josef Seifert, "Die verschiedenen Bedeutungen von 'Sein' - Dietrich von Hildebrand als Metaphysiker und Martin Heideggers Vorwurf der Seinsvergessenheit," in Balduin Schwarz, ed. *Festgabe für Dietrich von Hildebrand zum 80. Geburtstag* (Regensburg: Habbel, 1970), pp. 301-332.

ought to be and is, as it were, confirmed and enthroned in its being. In this sense, many real things that ought not to be, such as a concentration camp, lack the raison d'être and thus the most profound meaning of their being, even though they exist in a very real way, and all kinds of real atrocities occur in them. In the axiological sense of the word, even purely ideal or intentional objects like Imogen in Shakespeare's Cymbeline or Cordelia in Shakespeare's King Lear can stand out much more positively from nothingness than trivial or evil real things.

In a third sense, however, which is of particular interest to us here, mountains, flowers, lions, or human beings stand out from non-being by virtue of their being real, by virtue of their reality, and we want to penetrate this dimension of being in what follows.

2. Husserl's Twofold Error in the Characterization of "Reality"

Even among the great phenomenologists, we find various attempts to attribute this primordial phenomenon of reality to something else or to define it too vaguely by certain features that do not belong to the core of its essence. Thus, Husserl asserted in the Logical Investigations that the only, or at least a sufficient, characteristic of reality is its temporality: everything temporal is real, and everything real is temporal. Husserl expresses this alleged basis of dividing the world into ideal units of meaning and the real world with striking directness: "For us temporality is a sufficient characteristic of reality. Real being and temporal being are notidentical concepts, but they coincide in their extension." [7]

[7] Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, II, 1, ii, ch. 2. This text in its context reads thus: As a characteristic feature of reality, temporality is sufficient for us. Real being and temporal being are not identical, but concepts of equal extension [B124]. Of course, we do not mean that psychic experiences are things in the sense of metaphysics. However, they also belong to a material unity if the old metaphysical conviction is right that everything temporally existing is necessarily a thing or co-constitutes things. But if the metaphysical is to remain wholly excluded, one defines reality exactly by temporality. What matters here alone is the contrast to the atemporal "being" of the ideal. (Husserl, Edmund. Logical Investigations volume 1, International Library of Philosophy, p.520. Taylor and Francis. Kindle version.) Sonja Rinofner-Kreidl cites and interprets, in her monumental and impressive work *Edmund Husserl. Temporality and Intentionality.* PHENOMENOLOGY, Texts and Contexts. Edited by Karl-Heinz Lembeck, Ernst Wolfgang Orth, and Hans Rainer Sepp, II CONTEXTS, vol. 8, (Freiburg-Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 2000), many of Husserl's texts on reality, but not this text (although it is the only one in which Husserl gives a brief answer to the question of what reality is, even if only by naming an alleged essential feature of reality). Husserl also addresses the question of reality in other works, e.g., *Cartesian Meditations* III, § 24, 25, where he claims that every claim and right to such modes of being as reality derives from ourselves or from the transcendental ego:

In all the hundreds of *passages in which Husserl speaks of reality,* one does not *find* a single one in which Husserl presents a systematic analysis of the primordial phenomenon of reality or a revision of his cited very brief but - relatively - most detailed Husserlian characterization of reality in terms of temporality in LU. This thesis of Husserl's also influenced Heidegger's metaphysics and shaped his philosophy. [8] He less clearly formulates Heidegger's thesis of the radical temporality of Being than in Husserl's *Logical Investigations. Still, it is* especially drastically stated with respect to the "salience" of Being (in the future), which is inherent in temporality and without which Being would fall into nothingness: "But as soon as the Dasein "exists" in such a way that nothing more is outstanding at it, then it has already become one with the no longer being there." [9]

However, Husserl's thesis of temporality as an essential feature of reality, which he posits without closer investigation and rather flippantly, is doubly false.

A. That not everything temporal is real is already evident from the fact that even purely intentional objects, such as the events and occurrences in a novel that takes place in a fictional time, are very much subject to temporal changes and that a "before" and "after," "sooner" and "later" are part of their essence. To be sure, this temporality in the literary work of art is so profoundly modified by the fictional time

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It is clear that truth or true reality of objects is to be drawn only from evidence, and that it is it alone, by which really being, true, rightfully valid object, whatever form or kind, has sense for us, and with all the determinations belonging to it for us under the title of true being. Every right originates from it, originates from our transcendental subjectivity itself, every conceivable adequation originates as our proving, is our synthesis, has its last transcendental ground in us.

Husserl also distinguishes from the real "as if" reality that also corresponds to Ingarden's fourth layer of the Literary Work of Art, this sphere of purely intentional objectivities in a literary work. (Cf. Roman Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art,* translated by George G. Grabowicz, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973.

See also Edmund Husserl, *Nachlass,* IV, *Phenomenology and Epistemology* (1917), § 24, XXV169: "But this is its essence, that what it makes objectively conscious is not characterized as a real object, but as "as it were" real, e.g. the fantasized centaur as "as it were" being there, "floating ahead" in the mode of a reality-as-if, if we want to use Vaihinger's expression. (Cf. also Husserl, *Logical Investigations, Prolegomena,* ch. 7, 32 ff, 8, 46, 51.

[8] Cf. M. Heidegger, *Being and Time,* Second Section, Dasein and Temporality, where he makes temporality the basic determination of an "original existential interpretation" of man (Dasein) and thus of being in general. According to Heidegger, the structure of temporality culminates in "Being to Death" (ibid., § 46 ff., ch. 1) and in historicity (op. cit., §§ 72 ff., ch. 5).

[9] The elimination of being - standstill means the extinction of its being. As long as Dasein is a being, it has never reached its "perfection." But if it gains it, then the gain becomes the loss of the being in the world par excellence. As being it becomes then never more experienceable...The obstacle stands on the side of the being of this being. (Heidegger, Being and Time, § 46, p. 236.)

and the fictional characters and events that it even makes sense to ascribe timelessness in a sense to the derived purely intentional objects in the work of art, insofar as they timelessly represent the layer of represented objectivities in a work of art. The time of the events in a novel in which they take place is not real-time. [10] Nevertheless, fictional temporality is also a kind of temporality.

B. More importantly, the derived purely intentional and non-real objects in a literary work of art can also enter time in the form of original purely intentional objects and events [11] that take place in real-time, such as when the work is read, or a drama or opera is performed: They follow each other in the same real-time in which we read the work of art or watch a performance on stage. In this case, the purely intentional objects and events take place in real-time, no less than the conscious acts themselves in which they are given. Nevertheless, they are clearly not real but purely *intentional objects*. The same is true of the objects of the dream: just as the various phases of a dream take place in real-time, the purely intentional objects of the dream experience unfold in real-time. This is not to deny that the real-time in which dream images and events follow one another can be much shorter than the dreamed contents, times, and events themselves.

However, this applies to dreams, not fictional events that take place in real time on stage or in movies, although even in theater or film, represented a time in the world of represented objectivities makes it possible to experience 30 days of fictional time in one real hour. Such a "rushed time" is possible because purely intentional and imagined or dreamed events fill real-time in a substantially different way than real events occupy the time. Moreover, real and fictional time "overlap" here.

With regard to the opposite side of Husserl's assertion that all real processes and events are temporal, it is also obvious that real "being-in-time," like a human life with its fleeting present (which, despite its fragile and fleeting character, constitutes the *actus of* temporal reality) cannot be regarded as real in an exclusive or even

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[10] The most thorough investigation of this can be found in Roman Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art. An Inquiry into the Limits of Ontology, Logic, and Linguistic Theory.* Translated by George G. Grabowicz. Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1979).

[11] A distinction made by Ingarden in Roman Ingarden, *Das literarische Kunstwerk. Eine Untersuchung aus dem Grenzgebiet der Ontologie, Logik und Literaturwissenschaft* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1931), 3rd ed., 1972, and in Roman Ingarden, Gesammelte Werke, vol. 13, *Vom Erkennen des literarischen Kunstwerks*, eds. Rolf Fieguth and Guido Küng (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1997). Ingarden refers to "original purely intentional objects" as all objects that "live" entirely from being the object of conscious acts, while "derived purely intentional objects" are those objects that are not the object of conscious acts but correspond to word meanings, even if the objectivities described in a literary work are not actually the object of intentional acts.

primary sense; a fortiori, the no-more-being of the past and the not-yet-being of the future are not primary, and even less exclusive examples of the real. Thus, even the real "being in real time" does not simply coincide with reality but entails an enormous lack of reality, which led Augustine to say that being in time is only through the movement towards *nothingness*. Thus, since temporal beings entail a tremendous limit of "reality" in their past and their future, but also in their fleeting present, being-real does not coincide at all, as Husserl and Heidegger claim, with "being in time"; rather, being in time entails a very profound lack of full reality that brings it closer to nothingness than to supreme reality.

This leads both to the realization that the only fully real being, which not only was or will be, but in the fullest sense IS, cannot be temporal, but must be eternal, since in the mirror of the structural nullity of temporal being as well as the impossibility that temporal being is beginningless, [12] it is obvious that exclusively the simultaneous and never disappearing being and the possessing of an eternal now, in which there is no no-more-being of the past and no not-yet-being of the future, can possess the full reality of being and life. [13] Only the eternal, never the temporal, can be the reality *par excellence.* Husserl's and Heidegger's equation of reality with being in time either implies an untenable processualist conception of God, such as that of Whitehead or Hartshorne, [14] or it is (namely, if a temporal God is contradictory by its very nature, which can be proved), at least in the last analysis, atheistic. [15]

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[12] I have presented, defended and developed Bonaventure's proof of this in Josef Seifert, *Bye-bye Dawkins and Darwin. Divine Creation of the World and Man out of Nothing: Philosophical Evidence*, chs. 1-3. (Aachen-Mainz, Patrimonium Verlag 2021).

[13] I have discussed this with extensive reference to Plotinus' *Enn*. III,7 and Augustine's phenomenology of time in Book X of the *Confessions and* Bonaventura's metaphysics of time in detail in Josef Seifert, *Essere e persona. Verso una fondazione fenomenologica di una metafisica classica e personalistica*. (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1989), ch. 10. This text was published in an expanded version in English: *From Finite Person to the Infinite Divine Person, Being, and Person*, Volume IV, (Irving, TX, Gaflei, FL, Santiago de Chile, Granada, Spain, Gaming, Austria: IAP Press, 2023), ch, 1.

[14] Whitehead and Hartshorne, in their process philosophy, interpret it within the framework of a "neoclassical theism" whose God is himself conceived as temporal.

[15] Besides Essere e persona, ch.10, see Josef Seifert, Bye-bye Dawkins und Darwin. Göttliche Schöpfung der Welt und des Menschen aus dem Nichts: Philosophische Beweise. (Aachen-Mainz: Patrimonium Verlag 2021). 2nd, substantially enlarged and improved edition Bye-bye Dawkins and Darwin. Divine Creation of the World and Man from Nothing: Philosophical Evidence, op. cit. ch. 1-14. (The English edition has not yet been published.) Even if Whitehead and Hartshorne interpret God in their process philosophy in the context of neoclassical theism, whose God is himself temporal.

3. Scheler's Incorrect Assertion about Reality and its Primary Criterion and Form of Cognition.

Just as it is not possible to defend Husserl's thesis that the concept of reality has the same extension as the concept of temporality, so it is not possible, with Scheler (or even Kant in one of his arguments for the existence of the "thing-in-itself") to regard *resistance to the* sense of touch or drives, expressions of will, and desires as the sole criterion, let alone the innermost essence, of the real. For not only in touch hallucinations and in psychic phenomena of the perception of purely subjective intentional objects as if they were real, there can be resistances of unreal objects, but there are also many ideal laws of essences and other non-real objects which resist our imagination and volition without therefore being real in the strict sense of the *primordial phenomenon of* reality. Even if that special and deep resistance against the senses and against the real acts that characterize reality and which Scheler has in mind is a *consequence of* reality, it is neither its exclusive criterion nor its innermost core. Of course, no human being could perceive the reality of things as perfectly as an angelic or divine spirit, but reality would by no means resist them as it often resists us. However, the experience of reality by man is by no means primarily a kind of "running the head against a wall. "

The clear and evidential experience of the reality of our own mind has none of this, nor can the realization of the reality of other persons with whom we are united in friendship or love be reduced to, or primarily be identified with, their resistance to our whims and desires. It would be nonsensical to claim that the immediate inner experience of the reality of our own mind or the quite different perception of other persons consists primarily or even only in such resistance. [16]

[16] Sonja Rinofner-Kreidl offers an excellent analysis of Husserl's texts in which he assumes, at least ostensibly, an immediate inner perception of the reality of the conscious self. See Sonja Rinofner-Kreidl, Sonja Rinofner-Kreidl, *Edmund Husserl. Temporality and Intentionality.* PHENOMENOLOGY, texts, and contexts. Edited by Karl-Heinz Lembeck, Ernst Wolfgang Orth, and Hans Rainer Sepp, II. CONTEXTS, vol. 8, (Freiburg-Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 2000), pp. 512 ff. There she quotes a text by Husserl about the immediate and unquestionable cognition of the *reality of* the *ego cogitans,* in which there is no experience of the "resistance" of reality at all: "...in order to know that the pure I is and what it is, no accumulation of self-experiences, however great, can teach me a better than the single experience of a single simple cogito. It would be a nonsense to think that I, the pure I, is really not or is something completely different than the one functioning in this cogito. Everything appearing, everything somehow representing itself, manifesting itself can also not be, and I can deceive myself about it." "The I, however, does not appear, does not present itself merely one-sidedly, does not manifest itself merely according to individual determinations, sides, moments, which, moreover, appear merely for their part; instead, it is given in absolute selfhood and in its unshakeable unity, is to be adequately grasped in the reflective turning of

However, even if the experience of obstacles and resistance to our drives or movements is an excellent way to grasp reality, the reality of the wall itself, against which we bump our heads, is something other than such resistance: it is, among other things, the condition of the possibility of really bumping our heads against it and suffering harm, but therein does not consist its reality. My critique of Husserl's and Scheler's attempts to grasp the primordial phenomenon of reality does not deny that many or most temporal beings are real and that their resistance to our sense of touch and desires is an essential feature of reality and a critical path to its knowledge.

4. The Irreducible and Indefinable Primordial Phenomenon of Reality Enables its Grasp through its Opposites and Essential Features

When all attempts fail to explain the primordial phenomenon of reality by something else, like temporality or resistance to our senses or desires, one is led to the insight that reality belongs to those primordial data such as being, consciousness, cognition, etc., which cannot possibly be explained or defined by anything other than themselves but must be taken seriously in their self-givenness. The primordial datum of reality can only be unfolded by analyzing its properties, on the one hand, by delimiting it also from its opposites and from all that it is not, and on the other hand, by refuting those attempts of determination which do not do justice to the primordial phenomena as reality. [17] Despite the character of reality as an original reality, what G.E. Moore says about the good is not true: "If I am asked, 'What is the good?' my answer is that the good is good, and that is the end of the matter. Or if I am asked, 'How is goodness to be defined,' my answer is that it cannot be defined, and that is all I have to say about it. " There are various possibilities open to the philosopher to say more about the indefinable primordial phenomenon of reality than "reality is reality, and that is all we can say about it," some of which we will explain and apply in the following.

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the gaze back to it as a functional center. As pure I, it holds no hidden inner riches; it is absolutely simple, absolutely exposed; all richness lies in the cogito and the way of function that can be adequately grasped in it. (Id/II, p. 104 f., emphasis. S. R.). *I cannot discuss here Sonja Rinofner's extremely sophisticated discussion of Husserl's early and his later Cartesianism (in the* Cartesian Meditations*). See also Josef Seifert, 'Critique of Relativism and Immanentism in E. Husserl's Cartesian Meditations. The Aequivocations in the Expression 'Transcendental Ego' at the Basis of Any Transcendental Idealism."* Salzburger Jahrbuch für Philosophie *XIV, 1970."*

[17] In this—and not in a skepticism mistakenly but often attributed to the Socratic "I know that I do not know" - I also see the positive philosophical value of the many aporetic and negative endings of the Socratic dialogues. They refute definitions of primordial phenomena and any form of reduction to what they are not.

(i) The ideas refer to reality, which alone can be or possess that of which they are ideas

The unique advantage of "being" that only real things or persons possess over everything else is understood only when one realizes that many "ideas," intelligible and necessary "plans of being" (*rationes*) - because they determine what real things (if they exist) are, can be, or cannot be – and thus are necessarily related to, or ordered to. the real order of things. These intelligible "essences," when they refer to real beings, are related to the world of real things in that they contain, as it were, the principles and timeless "rules" or at least the "possibilities" and "meaning" of the real beings that correspond to them or rather which they are "called" to be realized in. The intelligible timeless ideas of substances, animals, or persons are realized and "fulfilled" *only* "in" the real world. For example, although the "ideal content" of justice "contains" a much loftier value than can ever be realized in a human act, the "idea of justice" does not embody this value in itself; instead, the goodness of justice *exists* only in real just acts or persons. Only these can *be* just: It is not the idea of justice as such that possesses justice or can even possess it; rather, it lies in the eternal idea of justice that exclusively real persons and acts can realize the value of justice, just as they alone can *be* just.

(ii) Some kinds of beings are themselves only when they are real

Another access to the primordial phenomenon of being real, which is not definable by anything else, can be gained by the insight that it belongs to some modes of being that possess their nature as living, conscious, thinking, or free beings *only* if they really exist.

a. Such an affiliation of being real to the essences of certain beings could be shown, e.g., for every (first) substance (*proth* oüsía), to whose "being-in-itself in being" (*inseitas)* also its self being in the sense of its reality belongs.

b. Similarly, all material movements through space claim an autonomous real existence independent of mere possibilities, ideas, or intentional objects. However, in their case, Berkeley's thesis that their being is only a being perceived (esse *est percipi*) is far less absurd and contrary to their essence than a similar notion of other persons who *can never be what they are, can never be persons unless* they really exist. Without this autonomy of reality and its difference from the purely intentional object of another conscious subject, they would not be themselves.

c. Just as much could it be shown that living beings claim an independent real existence according to their essence. They live only if they are not only imagined as living but if their life possesses selfhood in the sense of a full reality. The autonomy and selfhood of the real are necessary ontological conditions of the living, as well as of all nutrients and fluids, without which no living being can survive on earth.

d. And even more, yes, in a much higher sense, reality belongs to the essence of a person and to her unique, unrepeatable being; she lives her life consciously. Only really existing beings can be persons, and purely intentional or possible persons are not persons but only conceived as such or conceptions of persons. Likewise, all personal acts and experiences, being deceived or dreaming, are only what they are if they possess reality in the primal reality of actually being the real, which is the subject here.

e. All this applies in the highest sense to God: a God who exists only as an object of intentional acts, as a fiction, is no God at all, cannot be meaningfully addressed in supplications, and still less in acts of worship. [18]

(iii) Opposita per opposita cognoscuntur - Reality is known by its opposites and by what it is not

The "real," even if it is not definable by anything else since it is an ultimate and eo ipso undefinable phenomenon, can be further "defined" - in another sense of definition - by its opposites:

a. The real forms an opposition to the *merely* possible, which is determined both by the fact that it *can be* real and by the fact that it is not real. [19]

b. The real possesses an even stronger contrary opposite in the impossible since the latter is not only factually not real but, due to its contradictoriness or other "material" (content-related) impossibilities, necessarily excludes being real. Through this being excluded from the real, which we encounter in the impossible, the impossible in a kind of "creative negation," as William Marra calls it, opens up the

[18] This elementary and unquestionable insight would be a major criticism I would make of Kant's philosophy of religion and his conception of the postulates of practical reason, as well as of the essay "Glauben, als ob. Religion as Fiction and Narrative" by Sebastian Gäb, so far published only on his academia.edu homepage. Some philosophers, such as Robert Spaemann, believe that this is the main reason for Anselm's claim in his *Proslogion 2* that God is not that beyond which nothing greater can be thought, if he exists only "in the mind" and not also in reality. Cf. Robert Spaemann, "The Question of the Meaning of the Word 'God'" in *Communio* 1 (1972), pp. 54-72, reprinted in R. Spaemann, *Einsprüche* (Einsiedeln: Johannes-Verlag, 1977), pp. 13-35, contradicting Hermann Lübbe's claim in *Religion nach der Aufklärung* (Graz: Styria, 1986) that, after Kant, we can speak of God and religion only in terms of a fictitious God who allows us to cope with our death and other evils. This "existentialist-functionalist" conception of religion has much in common with Rudolf Bultmann's program of *demythologizing* religion.

[19] Of course, everything real is and was also possible. So the possibility can be proved by reality: ab esse ad posse valet illatio. But this is not "*merely possible*."

meaning and the essence of the real, which is clearly given in the contrast to being of the impossible that is excluded from the real. [20]

c. The real also forms an opposition to the merely imagined or to purely intentional objects, be it that these are imagined in real acts, be it that they are objects of mentally determined or linguistically expressed meaning units, for instance, in a literary work of art. Here, it is, above all, the merely "assigned being" that accrues to purely intentional objects through acts of consciousness and the meaning of texts in contrast to the selfhood of the real, which stands in contrast to the self-possessed being of the real.

d. Also, in purely ideal essences and forms (ideas in the Platonic sense) or the various kinds of ideal „essences, " we encounter a special opposition to the real. Although the timeless forms (the "ideas") possess their own being and autonomy from all our acts, they lack, as it were, the innermost moment of reality: That unique actuality of the *actus* essendi to which we will turn in the following.

This brings us to perhaps the most profound way the philosopher can fathom the essence of a primordial phenomenon like reality: namely, through an analysis of the various essential moments of the real.

(iv) The inwardness of real being phenomenon closely related to reality is the *inwardness of the being of* real beings, in contrast to all beings, such as purely intentional objects, to which their being is bestowed only from without, without belonging to them inwardly

5. The "Final Being" of the Real Beings

The autonomous selfhood and the ontic interiority of the real, which reality has in common with purely ideal beings like the eἴdh is to be distinguished from another essential moment of the real: from the moment of the "in itself completed" final being of the real being, which consists of the the fact that the objective being does not (like the possible or the purely intentional or even the purely ideal being) refer to something else that, alone, would become real. As a real being, a being possesses a specific "final character" in that it does not, like purely intentional objects or ideal essences, stand in an essential relation to something else to which it refers and in which alone its whole reality would lie. It is precisely in this "*self-containedness*" and being the final thing, the endpoint that there lies a certain primacy of reality, which does not at all coincide with an alleged closedness of real being assumed in Leibniz's dictum that monads have neither doors nor windows, of their fundamental

[20] See William Marra, "Creative Negation," in B. Schwarz, ed., *Wahrheit, Wert und Sein*, Festschrift für Dietrich von Hildebrand zum 80. Geburtstag (Regensburg: J. Habbel, 1970), pp. 75-85.

capacity to go beyond themselves, to transcend themselves in knowledge, [21] value-responses, and other ways.

(i) Being in Itself of and in All Real Beings - The Incompatibility of Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology and a Transcendental Idealism with Realism

Nothing can be real, respectively the last foundation of appearances and aspects of reality, which does not have a being-in-itself - which is not a "thing-in-itself." The An-sich character of the "primordial phenomenon of reality" cannot result from any transcendental constitution. Therefore, I would like to emphasize the absolute incompatibility of Husserl's and any transcendental idealism with a knowing and a cognition of reality: A transcendental constitution and an origin of "reality" in the intentional consciousness of man is a *contradictio in adjecto*. First of all, the term "ideal existence," of course, does not mean what the term "transcendental idealism" means in Kant, Fichte, or the late Husserl, but rather what Plato means by "ideas."

Based on transcendental idealism, it would even be impossible to speak of "ideal existence" in our sense, for this implies an objective, unchanging, timeless necessity of essence, incomparable intelligibility, apodictic and infallible certainty about the eternal *rationalities of* things transcendent to human understanding and to the contingent entities whose "primordial plans" they are. In transcendental idealism, only a "necessity" related to and constituted by human consciousness could be found.

Still, less would transcendental idealism grant that we can know the *really real* existence and essence of things, for this implies that we are capable of knowing "things in themselves," which can only be a reality if it is independent of being a purely intentional object of the human mind or transcendental consciousness. According to transcendental idealism, however, "real" beings and "real existence" would also exist only "in the mind," namely as *noemata* constituted by our conscious intentional life (*noesis*). This view was held by Husserl after 1907 and is incompatible with realism even at a more fundamental level of his philosophy. However, Husserl repeatedly speaks of "actual reality" and "true reality." However, his view that all *"reality"* is constituted by transcendental consciousness as the object of consciousness contradicts real reality and the in-itself closure of the real of which we have spoken. Existence in this sense is attributed to beings that "exist," for example, as purely intentional objects of human creativity (the scholastic or a scholastic meaning of "existence in the mind"). [22]

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[21] See Josef Seifert, Erkenntnis objektiver Wahrheit. Die Transzendenz des Menschen in der Erkenntnis (Salzburg: A. Pustet, 1976).

[22] Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer Phänomenologie (1913)*, IV, § 135, [278 ff.] p. III310 ff. Cf. Sonja Rinofner-Kreidl: *Edmund Husserl. Temporality and Intentionality.* PHENOMENOLOGY, Texts and Contexts. Edited by Karl-Heinz Lembeck, Ernst Wolfgang

Many of the contrasts with reality that we have discussed show that real beings necessarily have the fundamental character of existing in *themselves;* they exist *in themselves.* A purely intentional object, something that exists only as the object of consciousness, can never be real - even though some forms of aspects that do not belong to a being in itself participate in reality insofar as they are the human or personal "aspect" under which, for example, my person is experienced by me as "I" but presents itself to every other person as "you." That every person exists in herself is also shown in the fact that she is experienced by herself as "I" but by me as "you." She can only be you for me because she is real in herself. Its you-character belongs to a person only from my point of view of the second person but manifests her own being in herself, just like its I-aspect, which belongs inseparably to the experience of my person. At the same time, the you-aspect is constituted only when another person encounters the person. Nevertheless, the being-in-itself of a person is presupposed by both aspects and given in them.

(ii) The Actus Essendi of the Real

While the ideal being of eĺdh and other ideal essences lack self-enclosure because they refer to something else *of which they are ideas* and are already thereby clearly distinguished from the real, they differ from the latter in an even more fundamental way in that they lack another essential moment of the real: namely, the moment of actuality, that dynamics of being which the scholastics described very well by speaking of the *actus essendi* (the *act of being).* Moreover, precisely this decisive

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Orth, and Hans Rainer Sepp, II. CONTEXTS, Vol. 8, (Freiburg-Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 2000), p. 173: The phenomenologist, like the Pyrrhonian skeptic, does not judge the knowability or non-knowability of a phenomenon-transcendent reality. Sonja Rinofner-Kreidl, Edmund Husserl. (Footnote to this text: Cf. e.g. Hua VIII, p. 109. This claim, which turned skepticism into negative dogmatism, presupposed that the question would be decidable according to a criterion of truth, which, according to the skeptical objections to the dogmatists' claims to knowledge, does precisely not exist. Cf. Sextus (1993). For a more thorough critique of Husserl's transcendental turn, see Josef Seifert, "Critique of Relativism and Immanentism in E. Husserl's Cartesian Meditations. The Aequivocations in the Expression "Transcendental Ego" at the Basis of Any Transcendental Idealism." *Salzburger Jahrbuch für Philosophie* XIV, 1970. See also my *Back to Things in Themselves. A Phenomenological Foundation for Classical Realism* (London: Routledge, 1987, 2013); by the same author, *Discours des Méthodes. The Methods of Philosophy and Realist Phenomenology,* (Frankfurt / Paris / Ebikon / Lancaster / New Brunswick: Ontos-Verlag, 2009). I think that philosophical science, contrary to Husserl's view, can favor realism without a dogmatic position in the struggle between realism and idealism. On Husserl's view, see Sonja Rinofner-Kreidl, *Edmund Husserl. Temporality and Intentionality.* PHENOMENOLOGY, Texts and Contexts. Edited by Karl-Heinz Lembeck, Ernst Wolfgang Orth, and Hans Rainer Sepp, II. CONTEXTS, vol. 8, (Freiburg-Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 2000), pp. 204-205.

moment of the real, namely its *actualitas,* distinguishes the real from the possible and from other modes of being. In other words, the real existence, the *actus essendi*, constitutes the being real of the real. For the real is never real only by its essence, but consistently also by its real existence, by its *actus essendi*. The real is thus never a pure form or essence, but the real comes to a being only by its existence. This *esse*, therefore, belongs inseparably to the real being as long as it is real. [23]

Now that we have briefly examined the meaning of *reality,* we can critically examine Kant's assertion that 100 real thalers are not distinguished from 100 possible ones and that, therefore, existence is not a predicate at all, at least not a real predicate: Many of the following insights about existence can also be applied to ideal or purely intentional existence; in essence, however, the following statements apply to the primordial phenomenon of *real existence*.

(iii) Real Existence is not a Predicate of the Essence of Real Beings (at least of no Contingent Being)

Indeed, existence is not a predicate of the whatness or essence of a real being, at least in the case of contingent beings. What we mean by the existence of something belongs neither to "what" the being is (to its *ti einai*), nor to "how" it is (to its *poion einai*), whereas what we mean by "substance" or "accidents," "personal" or "impersonal being," "just" or "unjust," etc., constitutes or belongs to the essence of a thing. Predicates of this latter kind might be called "essential" predicates since they determine or constitute *what* or *how* a being is.

By "existence," however, we mean *that* a being is, without adding a determination of essence to the thing as such. By existence, we are pointing to something much more fundamental than just another determination of the *what* of a being: existence is not just one among many determinations of the whatness of a being, nor is it identical with the most critical dimensions of this "what a being is," let alone with the totality of what a contingent being is.

Accordingly, we can also understand very well *what* something is or could be without knowing its real existence. What a hundred possible or imagined thalers will correspond precisely to what they actually are if they really exist? However, the exact sense of this "correspondence" of the object *as possible with what* it is as *real* must be clearly understood. This, however, requires a prior investigation of the sense in which existence is a predicate. This investigation will show that the correspondence at issue does *not* imply *an identity of the* possible with the real being of something.

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[23] Not absolute, which applies only to God, but if and as long as it is real.

(iv) Although existence is not a "predicate of the essence" in contingent beings, it is a real predicate, an "existential" predicate. There are ten ways to understand this and in what sense existence is a real predicate

The following consideration will show that the partial truth contained in Kant's second objection to Anselm's ontological argument, namely, that existence is not a predicate of the essence, by no means implies that his first and most radical objection is correct, according to which existence is not a predicate at all and in any case, not a real predicate. Existence is a unique and fundamental real predicate of a being, albeit a "predicate" in a very different sense than a predicate that determines its essence.

What we mean by "predicate" when we say "existence is a predicate" can be explained in two ways - in an ontological sense and a logical sense:

1) Something is "added" to a being or to what is possible if actual existence is given. Alternatively, even more clearly, *not* nothing is added to a thing, as Kant claims, but something immeasurably important is given to it when given existence. In this sense, "existence" is the primary, real-ontological predicate.

2) Also, logically, "existence" is a predicate: If we say "this or that being exists," we form a meaningful judgment using the term existence. Something is "added" to the subject term when we attribute existence to the thing meant by it. If a proposition about existence is accurate, we learn something about a being. Something is said about it when we say "it exists": this baby lives and exists now, while before, it was a mere possibility that it would exist.

The claim that existence is a predicate in these two ways (ontologically and logically) radically contradicts Kant's assertion that existence is not a predicate and is also contrary to most of Gilson's theses about the *esse*. [24] That existence in these

[24] See Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952), p. 34: "It is not enough to say that essence is conceivable independently of existence; in a certain sense, we must say that essence is always conceived by us independently of existence. ... There is nothing we can add to a concept to make it represent its object as existing; what happens when we add something to it is that it represents something else." In this passage, Gilson, like Kant, seems to ignore the double meaning of existence as a real predicate and the multiple ways a concept of "existence" can be recognized and formulated as such, as we will show below. Gilson sees clearly with Kant that a general concept can never express the necessarily individual concrete existence of a being. We will return to this problem later. See also John M. Quinn, *The Thomism of Etienne Gilson. A Critical Study* (Villanova University Press, 1971), pp. 54 ff. Some of Quinn's criticisms are consistent with those I have made, although Quinn's investigation came to my attention only after I had completed this text. Quinn convincingly suggests that existence can be understood and is repeatedly captured by Gilson. He also shows that the opposite view leads to irrationalism. He convincingly shows that existence is a predicate and sharply criticizes Gilson's response to Régis' critique. Quinn's critique, however, does not take into account the *unique* sense in which existence is a predicate; his critique does not do justice to the way in

two ways is really a *real* predicate of a being can be shown above all in ten ways, by which it can also be shown that being in the sense of existence is by no means identical with the meaning of the "is" of the copula, as Kant claimed.

(v) The sense of many existential questions and judgments can only be explained if one admits that existence is a predicate in the two senses defined above

Let us imagine, for example, that we are listening to a conversation in which a person's personality is being described and passionately discussed. As long as we are unsure whether it is a character from a play or a really existing person, it is very useful to ask: "Is this person you are talking about just a fictional character from a play, or is he or she a real existing person?" This question is often asked and is obviously meaningful, but the very fact that it is meaningful necessarily implies that judgments about existence are also meaningful. It implies that existence is a predicate, in that something important is obviously "said" when the predicate's real existence is ascribed to a thing, for example, when one says, "Your first assumption was correct. The person of whom we speak is Empress Maria Theresa." Such a question and answer can have meaning only because existence is actually a predicate - both in a logical and ontological sense. This is confirmed by the fact that we could just as easily get the opposite answer: "You must know that the person we are talking about is just a character in a Shakespearean tragedy: Ophelia. She does not really exist, but Professor O. here says he would swear she was a virgin, while Professor John believes she had sexual relations with Hamlet." (I refer here to a real conversation that actually happened). Very astutely, this point is explained by G. E. Moore in terms of the negative answer to an existential question. [25]

When thinkers like N. Malcolm deny that existence is a perfection and a real predicate, it is easy to see that they speak of situations in which existence is already tacitly presupposed. Thus, Malcolm speaks of a king who, seeking new ministers, would name "existence" as one of the desirable qualities. What makes this so

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which predicates of essence are radically different from existence as a predicate, although he does articulate this fact in a few places, for example on page 61: "Actual existence is not a final addition to essence: it is the surplus of determinateness, the extra-essential act which essence cannot give, the determinant which, in the realization of essence, makes the whole true." Overall, -however, -Quinn's investigation (not to mention the contributions of some of his successors, such as John D. Beach in *The New Scholasticism*, Autumn 1976, Vol. 50, No. 4, pp. 522-528) is - characterized by a very polemical tone and spirit (despite the compliments he pays to Gilson at the beginning and end of his work) that keeps him from learning from Gilson and following what Gilson sees. Still, it is very valuable. We cannot incorporate all the beautiful insights it contains on our subject.

[25] G. E. Moore, "Is Existence a Predicate?" in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* XV (1936), reprinted in *The Ontological Argument*, ed. by A. Platinga (New York, 1965), pp. 71 ff, esp. pp. 77 ff.

surprising in a job posting is not the supposed fact that existence is not a predicate but the tacit presupposition of existence, for it is clear that the king presupposes existence from the outset when he describes his future ministers. No king wants to fill his position with non-existing or merely possible persons. [26]

However, this does not prove in the least that there are a few situations (like the conversation reported above) in which it is unclear whether a person we are talking about really exists. So, in such cases, questions and judgments about existence are quite reasonable. [27] This questioning and judging of existence take us one step further:

(vi) The metaphysical insight into the reality of the "predicate" existence

We must consider that the "what" we or any other contingent being are, or what infinitely many possible contingent beings would be and could be, has "existed" as a possibility from eternity. Nevertheless, no one would say that, in reality, "nothing happens" when such possibilities are realized by divine creation or by human action. No one would say that nothing is "added" to a being at the unique moment it receives existence. When we consider this, and especially when we gratefully acknowledge the gift of our own existence, we see that real existence is not just one among other real predicates, but that it is *per eminentiam* a real predicate. This metaphysical fact explains precisely why existential questions and judgments, as we have just seen, have meaning.

(vii) The two truths and arguments just mentioned (1 and 2) can be seen even more profoundly if we realize that the essence of a being also gets a completely new "meaning" if this being exists

Actual existence radically influences and changes the "essence" (as merely possible). [28] One can describe this change even in innumerable "essential judgments." The possibility of a being (i.e., what the being is - its essence - as merely possible) has completely different essential predicates than the real being (i.e., *what* "the same" being is as really existing). If we take a woman as an example, we could say that a

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[26] See Normal Malcolm, "Malcolm's Statement of Anselm's Ontological Argument," in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* XV (1936), reprinted in *The Ontological Argument*, ed. A. Plantinga (New York, 1965), esp. pp. 139-141.

[27] In many disciplines, such as in the science of history, where it is precisely a matter of distinguishing between merely falsely reported events and real events, judgments about the real existence of things play a decisive role. The same is true in jurisprudence when it is a matter of distinguishing the real facts of a crime from a false accusation or in geography.

[28] This has been excellently pointed out by Ingarden. See R. Ingarden, *The Controversy about the Existence of the World*, I, "Existential Ontology," p. 69 ff, esp. p. 7273.

merely possible woman cannot think, while a real existing woman can think; a possible woman (or the possibility of a woman) cannot will, is not free, cannot cause states of affairs, cannot be happy, cannot repent or build a palace; a real existing woman is capable of all these. This proves the radical difference between the possibility of a being and the real being. Real hundred thousand or 100 gold pieces are radically different from possible ones. Consequently, Kant's assertion that what are 100 real thalers is identical to 100 possible ones is false, if not absurd. One could say that existence is not only *a* real predicate but the real predicate par excellence insofar as all predicates of essence become real through it and receive a new and their own proper meaning.

(viii) The tremendous event that takes place when a possible being receives an existence is shown in many human acts that prove that not nothing, but in a certain sense, everything is added to a being when it receives real existence

The tremendous transition from mere possibility to reality, represented, for example, by the creation of a great work of art, is a justifiable cause for celebration. The unique role and ontological significance of existence are also evident in the act of gratitude - for the conception or the healthy birth of a longed-for child - or even when we become aware of the overwhelming gift character of our own existence or that of a loved one. The same results also from the opposite of such gifts of existence. There are also existential situations in which existence is something negative or is subjectively experienced as such. Such a negative judgment about existence underlies our struggle against crimes and sufferings whose existence is evil and which we want to end or prevent. [29]

In despair, we turn against our own existence and wish not only to cease to live but to cease to *exist altogether*. In despair, we experience the tremendous reality of the predicate of existence and wish - albeit powerlessly - for this: the abolition of our existence. [30] S. Kierkegaard describes in a grandiose text the terrible dichotomy of real and total despair of those persons (in hell) who reject the self they are and want to be a self they cannot be:

> The despairing man cannot die; just as „the dagger can kill the thoughts," so despair can consume the eternal thing, the self, which is the cause of despair,

[29] Sometimes we may even perceive the existence of goods as negative, either because resentment or hatred arouses in us a revolt against all harmony, beauty, or peace around us, or because false compassion or despair moves us to destroy existing goods, as when we end human life through euthanasia and suicide. Whether such judgment is right or wrong, it shows that existence is a real predicate.

[30] Socrates alludes to one form and reason for this despair in the *Apology* when he says that unjust persons want to get rid of their lives and injustice simultaneously, but this is neither possible nor a noble way to eliminate injustice.

> whose worm does not die and whose fire is not quenched. Nevertheless, despair is precisely self-consuming, but it is a powerless self-consumption, which is not able to do what it wants; and this powerlessness is a new form of self-consumption, but in which the despairing person is again not able to do what he wants, namely to consume himself. This is the despair raised to the higher potency, or it is the law of potentiation. This is the hot mainspring or cold fire of despair, the gnawing cancer that moves ever deeper inward, in impotent self-consumption. That despair does not consume him is so far from being a comfort to the despairing person that it is just the opposite, that comfort is just the agony, just that keeps the gnawing pain alive and keeps life in pain. This is precisely the reason why he despairs - not to say is in despair, because he cannot consume himself, cannot get rid of himself, cannot become nothingness. This is the potentized formula for despair, the rising of the fever in the sickness of the self. [31]

Regardless of whether or not hell and such despair exist, the very idea of it reveals the tremendous reality of the predicate of real existence.

(ix) The clear insight that existence is a real predicate can also be gained if we consider the different modalities in which existence can be encountered. Something can actually exist with necessity, or it can be completely impossible that it exists at all

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[31] Here is the full text: "The despairing man cannot die; just as „the dagger can kill the thoughts," so despair can consume the eternal thing, the self, which is the cause of despair, whose worm does not die and whose fire is not quenched. Nevertheless, despair is precisely self-consuming, but it is a powerless self-consumption, which is not able to do what it wants; and this powerlessness is a new form of self-consumption, but in which the despairing person is again not able to do what he wants, namely to consume himself. This is the despair raised to the higher potency, or it is the law to the potentiation. This is the hot mainspring or cold fire of despair, the gnawing cancer that moves ever deeper inward, in impotent self-consumption. That despair does not consume him is so far from being a comfort to the despairing man that it is just the opposite, that comfort is the very agony, the very thing that keeps the gnawing pain alive and life in pain. This is exactly why he is desperate - not to say despairing - because he cannot consume himself, cannot get rid of himself, cannot become nothing. This is the potentized formula for despair, the rising of the fever in the disease of the self." "A despairing person is despairing about something. So it seems for a moment, but only for a moment; in the same moment the true despair reveals itself, or the despair reveals itself in its true character. For by despairing of something, he is really despairing of himself, and now wants to get away from himself. So when the ambitious man, whose slogan was: "Either Caesar or nothing," does not become Caesar, he despairs about it. But this means something else, namely that precisely because he has not become Caesar, he cannot bear to be himself. So he is actually not despairing about not becoming Caesar, but he is despairing about himself because he has not become Caesar. (Soeren Kierkegaard, The Sickness unto Death, Wiseblood Classics of Philosophy Book 6, p.10. Jovian Press. Kindle version."

The "*possibility of existence*" (which is implied and presupposed in every assertion of existence) is an "existential" predicate that stands in contrast to the "impossibility of existence." *Contingency* and *necessity of* existence are also modalities of both ideal and real existence: this shows even more clearly that existence is a predicate. Not only can it be meaningfully asserted that something exists, but also that it has a certain mode of existence. Moreover, ethics also makes it clear that existence is a predicate when it examines the fact that some actions *should be* performed from a moral point of view, that they should exist, while other actions *should not* exist. Implicitly, this shows not only that the predicate "real existence" is to be distinguished from the predicate "possibility" but also that the question of whether something that ought to exist actually exists and whether something exists that ought not to exist is perfectly meaningful. In order to be able to ascribe modalities to existence at all, it is not only necessary that it be a predicate, but the various existential "modalities" and, above all, the difference between what ought to exist and what ought not to exist also show the abyss that exists between merely possible and actually existing beings. At the same time, they show the fundamental weight and meaning that comes with a judgment about existence.

(x) Even if Kant does not clearly grasp the sense in which existence is a real predicate but rejects it without closer examination, he nevertheless presupposes it at an important point of his system, namely when he rightly asserts that every existential proposition is synthetic [32]

How could this be the case if existence is not a real and logical predicate? For if existence were not a real predicate, any judgment that something exists could, at best, be an analytic judgment, in which nothing is "added" to the concept of a subject beyond what is already contained in it from the outset. [33] In other words, Kant's two claims - on the one hand, that existence is not a real predicate and that nothing is added to the concept of a thing when existence is attributed to it, and on the other hand, that any judgment about existence is synthetic a posteriori - are in stark contradiction. [34]

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[32] On the other hand, if you admit, as every reasonable man must admit, that every proposition of existence is synthetic, how will you maintain that the predicate of existence cannot be abolished without contradiction? This advantage is peculiar only to the analytic propositions since their character is based on it. (Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, B 626)

[33] If existence were *absolutely not a predicate,* how could it be contained in the subject term at all to allow for a tautology?

[34] That Dasein, in Kant's philosophy, can only be known through experience, i.e., aposteriori, is stated, for example, in his *Critique of Pure Reason* B 629. Kant does not see the glaring contradiction between the two above-mentioned statements about existence at all; indeed, for him, there is not even the problem of how they could be thought of as compatible

(xi) The already discussed fact that there are other kinds of existence besides the real existence (e.g., the ideal existence) and the correct insight into the nature of the "exact coincidence" between real and possible existence show clearly that (real) existence is a predicate

The preceding remarks in no way deny the truth, which Kant sees when he says that there is an exact coincidence between the possibility of a being (the being as it is conceived in its possibility) and its reality or that the possible can become real only if it is not another thing, but the same thing that was first possible and now exists: "Because otherwise not exactly the same, but more would exist than I had thought in the concept, or better said, than was contained in the possible being X, and I could not say that only the object of my concept existed...., but something else than was possible before (than I thought) would exist. " [35] It is true (though subject to the above remarks about the radical change of essence from the merely possible to the actual) that we do not think a determination of essence more or less in a being when we think it as possible and when we say that it now exists. However, this exact "correspondence" between each feature of the "possible being" and each feature of the existing being does not imply an identity between a given being and its possibility. "*What*" *the possible being is and* "*what the real being is*" *are not at all identical*; the properties of the possibility as such and the properties of the real being corresponding to the possibility are not at all the same. Yet the two coincide exactly. How can these two seemingly contradictory statements be reconciled?

There are many forms of exact correspondence without identity. The image in a mirror can *reflect a* face - eyes, a look, a smile, etc. - but (as such) that image of the face can neither see nor have eyes nor possess any of the other features of the real face it reflects. Similarly, our knowledge (cognition) of an animal can correspond exactly to it and grasp it as it really is, but without possessing any of the animal's characteristics; neither does the cognition live, nor leap, nor sting us nor say "mäh" nor "bah" nor resemble the nature of the goat or flea that we know in any other way.

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with each other; however, as a matter of fact, the denial that existence is in any sense a real predicate, as well as logically speaking a predicate in that it, used as the predicate in a proposition, "adds something" to the subject concept, is in direct contradiction to the nature of synthetic judgments, which add precisely to the "concept of a thing" a new predicate not yet explicitly contained in the subject concept. We can even go one step further: If existence were not a predicate at all (not only a "new" predicate in comparison to the "essential predicates"), then an existential judgment would not be an analytic judgment either, but no judgment at all.

[35] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* in Kant's Works, *AkademieTextausgabe* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1968), vol. III, B 629 (my translation).

But the animal is grasped in cognition; adequate cognition corresponds to every aspect of its object in a self-transcending receptive intentional act. [36]

Similarly, the exact correspondence between the "essence" of the possible and that of the real must be interpreted not as an identity but as a different kind of relation. The possibility of essence is entirely different from the essence of the real, yet it corresponds exactly to it. A possible being is by no means "essence minus existence." Still, there is nevertheless not a single property of a real being that would not find a correspondence in its "possibility. "

(xii) There is a crucial difference between "is" in the meaning of "exists" and "is" as a copula

Kant identifies "is" as being with "is" as a copula. [37] If Kant were right with his assumption that "to be" (exist) and the copula "is" are synonymous, then also his rejection of Dasein as a predicate would be justified because the copula "is" is indeed no predicate. This becomes clear when we consider the double function of the copula. On the one hand, the copula exercises the function of relating S to P: Both in the sentence and in the question, the "is" of the copula relates the property meant by the predicate term (or whatever other determinacy may be meant by a predicate term) to the being meant by the subject term (or to its presence, absence, etc.); on the other hand, the judgment *affirms* by means of the copula that the predicate *belongs to or does not belong the subject*. [38]

In doing so, it posits or affirms a state of affairs: that is the case that P belongs to S in any sense whatever (that it is a predicate of it, an opposite to S, similar to it, etc.) These two copula functions are unmistakably different from the predicate "existence." This becomes immediately clear from the fact that as long as "is" is meant in the sense of the copula, any judgment containing only a subject term and

[36] Cf. The Criticism of False Model Conceptions of Cognition in *Erkenntnis Objektiver Wahrheit*. The transcendence of man in cognition, ch. I,3.

[37] Neither Gilson nor Régis makes the fundamental distinction between "to be" as "to exist" and "to be" ("is") as a copula. See Gilson pp. 3 ff. where such a distinction is missing in his discussion with Kant; see also pp. 190-202 and 217-218.

[38] Cf. The masterly exposition of the nature and meaning of the copula in Alexander Pfaender's *Logik*, p. 38 ff. "Is" in its function as "copula" does not mean a predicate, as Kant rightly remarks, but has the function of ascribing a predicate to a subject, e.g. "ripe" to the subject "apple." In the question, "Is this apple ripe?" we relate ripeness to apple by means of the copula "is" (and by means of the terms that form the meaning of the words "apple" and "ripe"). This function of the copula "is" is also present in the question, "Is this apple ripe?." In the judgment, however, we encounter a second function of the copula "is," namely the assertive function. This function of the copula is not only to relate the predicate to the subject but to assert the predicate of the subject, to assert the state of affairs in question and thus the reality of the predicate.

the copula "is" would not be a judgment. For example, "This apple is...." cannot be a judgment because the exact predicate is missing here, which the copula is supposed to ascribe to the subject and assert from it. [39] Even in a complete judgment, the copula "is" can at most (in connection with its double function) ascribe "being" to a state of affairs in the broadest sense of the word. This broadest sense of being refers not only to all beings possessing the transcendental property of being but also to "be" non-existent - (for the non-existence of a thing can be asserted in a judgment), to "being" in the second sense of the word according to Aristotle and Thomas of Aquinas, which corresponds to every true proposition. [40]

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[39] In an analysis significant not only for logic but also for metaphysics, Pfänder shows that in a judgment where the copula would stand without a predicate, the predicate "existence" would not remain but only a *fragment of the judgment*. He shows convincingly that "to be" in the sense of "to exist" has a quite different sense from the copula and that it is "a predicate determinacy sui generis." Cf. p. 59 in his *Logic*.

[40] Thomas Aquinas refers in the following text to Aristotle, *De Ente et Essentia*, cap. 1, 1 ff, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 3, p. 584: "Sciendum est igitur quod., sicut in v metaphysicae philosophus dicit, "ens per se dicitur dupliciter, uno modo quod dividitur per decem genera, alio modo quod significat propositionum veritatem," ...secundo modo potest dici ens omne illud, de quo affirmativa propositio formari potest, etiam si illa in re nihil ponat, per quem modum privationes ET negationes entia dicuntur...sed primo modo non potest dici ens nisi quod aliquid in re ponat..." Thomas attributes an essence only to the essence that is distinguished by falling into one of the ten categories; the being that is only the object of true propositions and that can be purely negative or consist of privations does not necessarily possess an essence as such. (Cf. also Pfänder, *Logik*, p. 60.) Pfänder says basically the same thing in his argument against Brentano's view that the copula "is" means "to exist." Since the copula "is," *when* completed by a predicate different from it, postulates or asserts a state of affairs, it could be said of it in a certain, very general sense that it "postulates" "being." Pfänder, however, shows that the "is" of the copula does not mean "existence" in the sense of real existence. When we say: "A hundred merely possible talers differ from a hundred real talers," by "are" we certainly do not mean "exist." With the copula "are," we do not ascribe existence to the possible talers, not even in the analogous sense in which we speak of the existence of the "ideal being" of mathematical objects, nor do we imply the weak kind of existence which, radically different from real and ideal existence, objects of human imagination possess (e.g. the imagined Mr. Brown whom we imagine living on a chicken farm in South Africa). The being or "reality" that corresponds to each copula "is" (e.g., when we say, "That which you are talking about right now is unimportant, is absurd," etc.) is not even the esse that everything that "exists" in any sense of the word has, i.e., the esse *transcendentale* (in an even broader sense than Thomas Aquinas grasps this concept when he applies it to "being divided by the ten categories"). But when we speak of reality and being as the object of every proper judgment, we do not even imply this kind of being; for the proposition "I was nothing before I was conceived" is true; but the reality of my "not-being" (which corresponds to the truth of this and which is meant by the copula "was") is not a "being" that has unity, intelligibility, etc., but just "nothing."

Since the copula as such does not refer to any real being, not even to a "being" that carries the most general transcendental properties of being, it must be clearly distinguished from both. Once the necessity of this distinction becomes clear, it also becomes clear at the same time that the meaning of the copula "is" cannot serve as a starting point for a metaphysical investigation of being qua being.

This "being" which Hedwig Conrad-Martius, in her justified criticism of the inadequacy of Pfaender's determination of the sense of the copula by its double "pure function" in the judgment, calls "pure Sachverhaltssein" in her book *Das Sein, is* indeed postulated and implied whenever the copula "is" or "is not" is used in a judgment, but being in this sense is quite distinct from "real existence." "Consider sentences like the following." The possibility of something is distinct from its reality. The two functions of the copula (to refer to and to assert) are present in this judgment. We also find here the ontological meaning of "is" in the sense of pure *factual being,* the factuality of the existence of a state of affairs. But the "being" of the state of affairs is not, nor does it imply real existence; for the difference between possibility and reality cannot itself be called "really existing." Or when we say, "The possibility of a man as such is incapable of thought," we certainly do not mean that the possibility "exists" as incapable, etc. [41]

Even if we use "is" not only in the sense of copula but to ascribe "being" to a thing in a more actual sense, we by no means ascribe to that thing the unique predicate of real being. For example, when we ascribe to a being - such as a number 3 or even a mere object of our dreams - the properties of "esse *transcendentale,*" when we say that they have been in that they are not nothing, are recognizable, have a certain unity, etc., we do not imply that the number 3 or the dreamed object have real existence. But "being" is not even understood in this most general sense when we use the copula, for example, in the following sentence: "Nothingness is not knowable." Here, apparently, neither to nothingness nor to its unknowability being, even in the broadest sense, is ascribed-to.

This probably prompted the Mexican philosopher Agustin Basave, in his *treatise on metaphysics,* to introduce the Spanish term "hay" (that is, there is) and "habencia," which is even broader than the most general concept of being because it also includes all possibilities, all non-being, all deficiencies, indeed in general everything that is "there" in any sense of the word; the German expression "alles was es gibt" probably comes closest to the term "habencia."

[41] The question of the form of existence of "pure objects" that do not really exist in any sense has been examined in *detail by* A. Millan-Puelles in his book *Teoría del objeto puro.* Millán-Puelles pushes this notion of a "pure object" with no being at all too far. Cf. Josef Seifert, "Preface" to Antonio Millàn-Puelles, *The Theory of the Pure Object*, English translation by Jorge García-Gómez (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996), pp. 1-12 Cf. also Josef Seifert, *Back to Things in Themselves,* ch. 2 ff.

The distinction between "is" as copula and "is" as "really exists" becomes even clearer when we realize the many *different* kinds of existence that can be ascribed to different beings. For even the lowest one, which, for example, ascribes "being" to a pure object of intentional acts that have no extramental existence at all, surpasses the latter ontological meanings of the copula, in which only the pure "is there" (the pure "absentia") is asserted. Yes, even when we say "the number 3 exists," meaning a much higher ideal form of existence than when we ascribe existence to a merely dreamed object, we still do not assert real existence. We attribute existence to this entity only in a sense quite different from real existence, namely, in the sense of the most general features of the esse *transcendentale, which* we also find embodied in a purely fictitious object. When we say that the objects of geometry have an "ideal existence," we are undoubtedly ascribing to them an existence, but certainly not a real existence (which is our main interest in this work and which we must distinguish from the "ideal existence" of the most diverse kinds of ideal "essences" and "essential plans" of things and "essential plans" of things). In addition, there are other cases in which we can speak of a kind of existence different from both "ideal" and real existence.

(xiii) The distinction between potential and actual being (being in potentia and being in actu)

When we speak of the actuality of a thing, we often contrast it with the potency or potentiality of the same thing. For example, we refer to the trained and practicing pianist as an actual pianist as opposed to a gifted person who is a potential pianist or the mature oak tree as opposed to the seed. Within the potencies, we could further distinguish with Aristotle between active and passive potencies. An active potency we find, for example, in the seed in relation to the fully grown tree or flower. In the seed, there is not only an "abstract," indeterminate potency to become a tree but a real and, in essence, determinate tendency to become a very definite tree.

On the other hand, a passive potency is present in the marble stone in relation to the statue that can be made of it. In the case of such potency, the being in question has neither a soul nor an "entelechy," an inner form and purpose that drives it (as in the organism) from within to the realization for which it has the potency. In contrast, a passive potency is realized "from without." The form or actuality comes to the being in question as one among many possible realities. [42]

[42] The marble stone receives this actuality of form from the outside and, in a certain sense, by chance. A "passive potency" allows an inexhaustible wealth of formations and is presupposed for all art. (From another meaning of the "active potency" in Aristotle, we entirely refrain here; because this term can refer to a positive power, a "pure perfection," which is entirely compatible with the highest - even with the absolute - actuality of an omnipotent being).

This Aristotelian distinction is very important. Within the active potencies, however, another important distinction must be made: namely, the distinction between those potencies that a being has an automatic, inevitable tendency to realize and those potencies that can be realized only by free will. For example, the potencies that a person realizes in moral virtues and good actions cannot be sufficiently characterized as "active potencies." Still less can they be conceived as "passive potencies." It is only through free action that they enter the real world at all; there is no intrinsic automatic or inevitable movement in a human person to become morally good as she grows into adulthood, but the human person is nevertheless called by her nature to realize the morally good; she has not merely a passive potency to do so. [43]

With respect to all these potencies, but especially with regard to the active potencies, we can say that the term "potency" can refer to three interrelated but quite different realities. First, by the term "potency" we can mean the real capacities that actually exist in a particular being. The human person, for example, must have, from the first moment of his existence, the basic faculties of thought, will, etc., which constitute him as a rational personal being. Completely different from this are the various faculties which must be acquired and which involve a being having a certain activity at his disposal. For example, man acquires the ability to think - by virtue of the faculty of human reason - through free acts and developments. Still, he possesses the faculties underlying these from the beginning, as Crosby has shown. [44]

In the other example of the seed, we also find the existing capacity to grow. When we call such presently existing abilities, capacities, or skills "potencies," we mean that these abilities, capacities, etc., despite their indisputable existence and thus their actuality, are meant to be exercised and that through their exercise, they are

[43] It is quite different with the baby, who has a potency to grow up, which, under normal circumstances, inevitably tends toward its realization. The potency to become just, on the other hand, can only be realized through free decisions. One might, therefore, be inclined to include it among the passive potencies, for, as with a passive potency, another actuality or "form" might be realized by the person concerned, such as injustice or a life of unjust passions and vices. But the potency in question is not a passive potency, nor only an active potency of minor importance, but it is one of those active potencies in the true sense, which are entirely founded in the essence of a certain being. The Person is from her innermost being and essence to become just and morally good. This vocation belongs even more properly to the nature of a person than it belongs to the seed to become a full-grown plant. Many potencies that are realized only through freedom, as well as many other potencies realized in cognition, hope, trust, conviction, etc., differ from other active or passive potencies in another crucial respect: they are "intentional potencies" in the sense that they involve a meaningful and conscious relation to the objects of personal acts. In these cases, the reality of an act is either generated in a person by the object of which she is conscious, or it depends in some other way on the conscious intentional dialogue between the person and other beings.

[44] Cf. J. Crosby, "Evolutionism and the Ontology of the Human Person," pp. 208-243.

meant to produce a new being: actual knowledge, thought, growth, the full-grown tree, and so on.

A second meaning of potency is called "potencies," the unawakened, undeveloped layers in a given being, which are destined to awaken through the exercise of actual abilities, capacities, etc. We speak here of a somehow "dormant" side *in a* being, which must already be present in the real being but is not yet awakened until the potency is actualized and thus realized. For this second meaning of potency the Aristotelian thesis is more valid than for the first: namely the thesis that *to dynamei on* (potential being) somehow "lies between being and non-being."

The third meaning of potency refers to something that does not yet really exist in a given being but that *can* become real in him. In this sense, one can speak of a child as a "potential pianist" or a "potential great philosopher" if one means by this that from this child a great pianist or philosopher *can* become. In this sense, the adult oak already exists in the seed "*in potential*." This "potential being" lies between actual being and non-being - it is somewhat closer to non-being than to being. But it is more than a mere abstract possibility; for potential being in the third sense is based on actually existing capacities or capacities of a being. This third kind of "being *in potential*" is found above all in the active potencies and here again in a new sense in such active potencies which do not require the use of freedom for their realization. These references do not exhaust all meanings of "potency," but they are sufficient for the present purposes.

Wherever we find potency, we find these *three different data that* can be meant by the term "potency." For this reason, they are best referred to as three phases of potency, or three different states that can be called potency, rather than three *types.* In the background of this short analysis of potency, it becomes clear that potency presupposes a real existence in at least four respects. First, the being with capacities, abilities, potencies, etc., really exists. Second, the potencies in the first sense (capacities, abilities, etc.) really exist, although they are also intended to cause another reality. Third, the "unawakened layers" in a being already really exist as potentials. Fourthly, the being "to be brought into existence" already has an existence, even if it is very "weak"; it lies "between" being and non-being.

It is true that with respect to the last and, to a certain extent, with respect to the first meaning of the potency, the transition from potency to act also means a certain becoming (a beginning of being). In this realization, something becomes a full being that did not (fully) exist before. But if we further consider that real existence must be ascribed to the real being that has a potency, as well as to its potency itself, and that this real existence already precedes any actualization in the way described, we see that the understanding of this kind of actuality does not at all give us a sufficient concept of what existence means. Instead, it already presupposes the understanding and givenness of real existence's fundamental and irreducible datum.

The second misunderstanding of existence as actuality could arise from a confusion of existence with *what* we mean by the actuality of something that existed

before only as potency. *What actuality* and actualization mean is that this actualization does not yet exist. Rather we also find the real difference between what *actuality* is (the essence of actuality) and its existence. Thus, the understanding of actuality as such does not give us any information about what we mean by existence. First, not only actualized but also potential beings can really exist; potential beings presuppose real existence in four ways. Second, what we mean by existence is precisely not *what* we mean by actuality; it is not the essence of actuality.

Existence, we can say, means something different from actuality in the sense described; nevertheless, it means something analogous and closely related to it. This fact was undoubtedly in Thomas Aquinas's mind when he called existence the "act of (all) acts." [45] Real existence (being) is this unique actuality that makes both potentialities and realities (in the sense described) *real*. It marks the unique actuality of what the thing or its potentialities, a person, her cognitions, love, virtues, and actions are. The being of a being, its existence, denotes this irreducible and unique actuality, because of which we call one thing or actuality real. In contrast, we call another thing, potentiality, or actuality, only possible because it lacks real existence. Existence means this unique actuality to which we refer when we say that something is real or actually exists.

It is unique because all other acts, acts, and actualities already presuppose the existence of the subject of such acts. Real existence is an entirely different metaphysical actuality that establishes the difference between possibility and actuality wherever that difference exists. Existence is this actuality of a being, which is at the same time responsible for that tremendous change of being between the "possible being" and the "actual being" of something and the whole world. This *primordial phenomenon of reality requires a* deep philosophical wonder and a careful method that allows us to penetrate more deeply into it without explaining it away by denying any difference between the real and the possible or reducing it to something else that it is not.

Probably the philosophically most important result of our investigation of the primordial phenomenon of reality and our partial critique of its determination by Husserl, Scheler, and Heidegger was that reality does not at all coincide with being-in-time and that the equation of real being with temporal being, proved to be doubly false. Being in time, due to some essential features of temporal being, does not only not coincide with being real but possesses the essential moments of being real only in a tremendously weakened sense, which moved St. Augustine to say that temporal being is only by rushing towards nothingness (the no-more-being of the past). Thus, the primordial phenomenon of reality was shown to be primarily proper only to eternal beings. This insight overcomes the inherently atheist equation of real being

[45] Fernando Inciarte, Forma formarum. Strukturmomente der thomistischen Seinslehre im Rückgriff auf Aristoteles (Freiburg/München: Verlag Karl Alber, 1970).

with temporal being and the inversion of the first archetype of all reality from the eternal, divine to the temporal being. [46]

[46] I have developed this result much more deeply and extensively elsewhere. Cf. Josef Seifert, *God as Proof of God. Eine phänomenologische Neubegründung des ontologischen Arguments*, (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996), 2nd ed. 200; *Erkenntnis des Vollkommenen. Wege der Vernunft zu Gott*, (Bonn: Lepanto Verlag, 2010, 2nd Expanded ed. 2020) ; *Bye-bye Dawkins and Darwin. Divine creation of the world and man from nothing: Philosophical evidence.* 2nd, substantially enlarged and improved edition of Divine *Creation of the World and Man from Nothingness*, (Aachen-Mainz, Patrimonium Verlag 2021).

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.

Chapter Three

FROM CONTINGENT BEINGS TO THE MOST REAL AND ETERNAL ENS NECESSARIUM

1. From Contingent Beings to the Necessary Being

Considering the beings in the world we call real, material things, living beings, and human persons, we distinguish their nature, what they are, from their existence, from the actuality of their being. Both of these principles or dimensions of the one being (ens) are of decisive moment. What each being is, its nature accounts for the intelligible content, meaning, value, rank, fundamental mode, and form of a being and distinguishes the whole abyss of the person's being from that of a stone or a frog. Existence, however, the *actus essendi* (the *act of being*), is that in a being which makes actual what that being is. In virtue of it alone I am and thus actualize my being a person. We spoke elsewhere at length of this difference and of the relationship between *essentia* and *existentia* in the one existing being. Without repeating these analyses [111] in the present context, we wish to draw attention only to the fact that real beings in this world are in the most remarkable state of their existence. Their existence, and with it the whole actuality of their being, that unique act which places them in being at all, is neither one with their essence nor necessarily connected with it nor in any other way necessary. We say they exist contingently but should say so only with a metaphysical shudder: they (we) could all not be - we could be nothing! In this lies a most fundamental distinction between us (and the whole world) and God, who alone exists necessarily. [112]

Nothing could be instead of us being there. How do we know this that our existence is contingent? (Kant, in the 4th antinomy, would speak here of intelligible contingency whose knowledge he denies, recognizing only empirical contingency as knowable. This view, which goes back to Kant's basic epistemology, was already

[111] 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; *Sein und Wesen*, cit.

[112] See Josef Seifert: Gott als Gottesbeweis. Eine phänomenologische Neubegründung des ontologischen Arguments, (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996), 2. Aufl. 2000; Bye-bye Dawkins und Darwin. Göttliche Schöpfung der Welt und des Menschen aus dem Nichts: Philosophische Beweise. (Aachen-Mainz, Patrimonium Verlag 2021). 2nd, substantially enlarged and improved edition of Göttliche Schöpfung der Welt und des Menschen aus dem Nichts, ch. 2-4, soon in English; Antworten auf Einwände. Warum die Welt von Gott aus dem Nichts geschaffen wurde, (Aachen: Patrimonium Verlag, 2022).

criticized in my book *Back to Things in Themselves, cit.* and my books about Kant which deal with the foundation of philosophical realism. [113]

The contingency of existence is given when we consider in our imagination all kinds of merely possible beings of the human, animal, or material nature, etc. None of these beings exists really - or at least we do not know whether any of these beings which we can imagine in our fantasy do actually exist. When we reflect philosophically on this fact well-known to any child who listens to fairy tales or invents new ones, we see that co-given with this imaginability of beings of the same nature possessed by those essences that we experience as existing is the possibility of these imagined entities existing. [114] In fact, we cannot know absolutely that they do not exist just as imagined. We grasp that there is nothing intrinsic to them that would make their existence impossible. With this possibility, however, of other individual beings of the nature of which some do actually exist and others do not, we grasp the contingency and non-necessity of those beings that actually exist. We know that even biologically, billions of billions of other human beings are possible, not to speak of the infinite number of possible beings whose unlimitedness we can comprehend mentally. But if we can imagine and think of other beings that are possible but are not real, it follows that those beings that do possess the same nature as these possibles but do actually exist do not do so because of any necessity. It does not follow from their very essence and nature that they exist. Otherwise, all possible beings of the same nature would have to exist. Thus, their existence somehow falls outside of their nature and can be given or taken from any such being. Again "our nothingness" and yet the tremendous fact of being is given here. This gift character of contingent existence makes it also an object of gratitude, as expressed by Matthias Claudius:

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[113] Überwindung des Skandals der reinen Vernunft. Die Widerspruchsfreiheit der Wirklichkeit – trotz Kant, (Freiburg/München: Karl Alber, 2001) and Superación del escándalo de la razón pura. La ausencia de contradicción de la realidad, a pesar de Kant. Biblioteca filosófica "El Carro Alado." Traducción Rogelio Rovira. (Madrid: Ediciones Cristianidad, 2007).

[114] Upon deeper analysis, we add that the character of Don Quijote could have actually existed, but not exactly as was described by Cervantes because the infinitely many indeterminacy spots of any intentional object that constitutes the stratum of represented objectivities in a literary work of art could never exist in reality. For example, the question of whether Hamlet ate dinner before meeting his father's Ghost and billions of other facts remain totally indeterminate in Shakespeare's play but could never be so in a really existing Hamlet. See Roman Ingarden's masterwork, *Das literarische Kunstwerk. Eine Untersuchung aus dem Grenzgebiet der Ontologie, Logik und Literaturwissenschaft* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1931), 3. Aufl., 1972; *The Literary Work of Art*, transl. by George G. Grabowicz (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

Ich danke Gott und freue mich
Wie's Kind zur Weihnachtsgabe,
Daß ich bin, bin! Und daß ich dich,
Schön menschlich Antlitz! habe ...
I thank God and rejoice,
as does a child at gift-time on Christmas,
that I am, am! And that I have you,
beautiful human countenance. [115]

One could say that three things are grasped here simultaneously: the possibility of innumerable other beings of the same nature as those that exist in the world, the fact that, therefore, the essence (nature) of the beings in the world does not include existence and the contingency and non-necessity of their existence. These fundamental metaphysical facts are given to us when we only reflect on the essence of imagination and fantasy.

A second way by means of which we can understand contingency, is mentioned in Thomas' *De Ente et Essentia*. [116] It proceeds from the multiplicity of individuals within the same species and genus. Whenever we grasp that it is possible that the same nature be multiplied in different individuals, whenever we find in experience more than one individual member of a class of beings, we understand that no single member of that class of being, no single individual that possesses that nature must exist by necessity. This could be argued rather indirectly be making reference to the consequence that the multiplicity of individuals in the same kind, once it is given, is unlimited. Therefore, unlimited numbers (infinitely many) of individuals of the same kind would have to exist if their existence (as multipliable individually) were necessary. There is only a limited number of beings of each kind. Therefore...etc. Yet, this argument presupposes that one either has seen that there are not infinitely many individuals of a given kind or understands this as a priori impossible.

More immediate is the insight into the essential connection between a multiplicity of individual beings of the same nature and the non-necessity of existence. We understand that a nature or essence of a certain kind (for example, human nature) can exist in many individuals - without limit in principle – that does not exist. It follows precisely from this "multipliability" that the essence and nature of such a being does not include its existence. We can gain insight into the non-necessary connection between essence and existence in those beings that can be indefinitely multiplied. With all the great value of the *haecceitas*, of the unique

[115] Matthias Claudius. *Täglich zu Singen* (1. 1-4).

[116] Thomas Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia*, 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), Bd. 3, pp. 583-587. *On Being and Essence*, transl., introd. and notes by Armand Maurer, 2nd edition (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968).

flavor of each individual, of which G.M. Hopkins speaks, we grasp the mysteriousness of this unique individual existence as something which is not founded in the essence which permits more than one individual.

A more empirical way of grasping contingency is the experience of coming to be and passing away - especially of living beings and humans. Here we grasp this amazing fact: Raphaela was not here two years ago, and now she is and exists. Yet since we have no absolute empirical knowledge of coming to be and do not know with absolute certainty of a priori knowledge whether the body and soul of a new human being preexisted somewhere and somehow, we could say that we only understand here empirical contingency, not intelligible (a priori necessary) contingency. In order to delve into this metaphysical and absolute contingency of our being, we have to delve into the intelligible and essentially necessary fact of the connection between other beings of the same nature being possible and the contingency of their existence.

The contingency of existence can become also evident through a consideration of the temporality of all real beings in the universe. For their no longer being in the past and not yet being in the future shows that they could be destroyed and annihilated in principle and their temporal extension is that which is not always actual and is contingent altogether.

Of other possible sources of the knowledge of the contingency of the existence of all worldly entities we shall return in Chapter 12 to one crucial way: that from the contingency and imperfection of nature of all beings in the world. What is the contingency we discover here? Certainly, it is more than just the absence of knowing the necessity of the existence of ourselves and other entities in the world. It is not only so that we see that we exist; we do not understand that we must exist, but perhaps we do exist necessarily. No, we do not infer contingency of our existence from the mere absence of givenness of the necessity of our existence, which would be a logical mistake of inferring from "not knowing X": "not X." We also grasp more than just the non-necessity of our individual existence considered in isolation from the rest of all beings, as if we were perhaps absolutely necessary as members of the whole world-series of beings. We could distinguish between the intrinsic and extrinsic necessity of existence and say that the fact that our own being does not make it necessary that we exist, which is given with the (real) distinction between essence and existence, does not prove that our existence is absolutely non-necessary. Consider that Leibniz thought that God must create the best possible world, as whose members we, too, would exist by necessity. The question arises of whether and, if so, how we know that we are contingent in regard to our existence absolutely speaking. For the present purpose, we consider only the intrinsic contingency and non-necessity of our existence. For it alone suffices to understand that the sufficient reason for our being and for any being in the world cannot lie in the world itself.

Before proceeding from here, however, a few reflections on the principle of sufficient reason are necessary, a principle which guides all attempts to explain contingent finite beings through the infinite being. In its broadest sense as a metaphysical principle, one can formulate it as follows: every being must possess a sufficient reason both for that it is (exists) and for what it is, in one word, for all aspects of its being, essence, and existence. Formulated in this way, the *principium rationis sufficientis* excludes the question why? in reference to anything's being and nature could remain entirely unanswerable. It excludes that nothing accounts for a being or that no reason whatsoever exists for it. The necessity that the question why is it? And why is it as it is? possess an objective answer can be known as the rationality and intelligibility of being in the sense that nothing can be or happen in a way that is in no manner accounted for, explained, etc. This does not mean, of course, that the reason for a being must always be the cause of that being. While no being can be its own efficient cause, some beings must, as we shall see, possess the reason for their being within themselves. Hence, we must formulate the principle of sufficient reason by adding: "*Every being must possess for its existence as well as for every other aspect of its being, a sufficient reason which accounts for it and explains its why - whether this reason lies within a being or outside of it.*"

The principle of causality: "every change (contingent being) must have an efficient cause through whose power it comes about" is a much narrower principle that refers only to one type of being, contingent and real being, and here only to one part of its explanation, as already the other three Aristotelian causes and exemplary causality, participation, etc. show, which refer to important principles of explanation of beings outside of efficient causality.

If a being contains matter and form, its explanation must also include reference to these. If it has a purpose or end, this must be considered in the context of a sufficient explanation. The variety and extent of principles necessary to explain a being depends entirely on that being, on its type of intelligibility, structure, and meaningfulness. Causality (efficient causality) is only one among many explanations of beings, and it does not apply to all beings; in fact, it does not apply to the most important beings. The principle of sufficient reason, on the contrary, reveals itself as absolutely universal: every real and possible being and meaning requires a sufficient reason, an explanation that answers the why it is - whether this explanation lies in its own nature or in another thing. The question arises whether the principle of sufficient reason requires a good reason or even a necessary reason for everything as Leibniz suggests. That the explanation is one in harmony with principles of value, goodness, and justice is most true but not part of the first evidence of the principle that everything has an explanation. Only if one recognizes that goodness and wisdom

rule over everything can one infer (from God's existence and omnipotent sovereignty) that nothing happens or is permitted to happen without good reason. [117]

That everything has a necessary reason is maintained by Leibniz but contradicts the full datum of the contingency of the world, as we shall see, contradicting both the contingency of the world and the free will of men and of God. Thus, the sufficient reason we are interested in is not a necessary reason, and whether each being must possess a good reason will still have to be investigated.

Everything must have a reason in accordance with its own nature and with the nature of being altogether, that is, a proportionate explanation which can render intelligible the "that," "what," and "how" of things. The extent to which things are intelligible and thus have a why depends, of course, both on their own nature and structure (good or evil deeds, for example, quite differently), and it also depends on the nature of being as a whole. For if there is an infinite God, much more of a reason is necessary to look for that in a universe in which the Supreme Being could be deprived of reason, like matter.

The question arises whether the principle of sufficient reason in the broadest metaphysical sense described is the one principle that is the ground of all other principles of sufficient reason or is only one of four (Schopenhauer) or more independent irreducible forms of that principle. The epistemological principle of sufficient reason demands that each cognition have its sufficient reason in the object or subject of knowledge in order to be what it is: knowledge. The logical principle of sufficient reason demands that each true judgment, as well as each conclusion of a logical proof, demands a sufficient reason for its truth. Also, in the sphere of human action and motivation, could one speak of sufficient reason? The absolute foundation of the principle of sufficient reason is not *Zeitlichkeit* (as Schopenhauer posits it to be the schema of all-sufficient reason), [118] nor does the principle of sufficient reason say, as he maintains (p. 158), "dass immer und überall jegliches nur vermöge eines Anderen ist." ("That always and everywhere anything is only because of another one"). Both of these theses are false. Rather, the most fundamental origin of the principle consists in this: that everything (both in regard to what it is and what it is) demands - either within itself or outside itself - an explanation sufficient to account for it and to answer the question "why?."

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[117] See Josef Seifert, *Where was God in Auschwitz?* (Irving, TX/Gaflei, Liechtenstein/Santiago de Chile/Granada, Spain: The International Academy of Philosophy Press, Create Space, Kindle-Books, 2016). See also the VIth part of the present work.

[118] Arthur Schopenhauer, *Ueber die vierfache Wurzel* des *Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde.* Eine philosophische Abhandlung von Arthur Schopenhauer, Doctor der Philosophie, Rudolstadt, in Commission der Hof-Buch-und Kunsthandlung. 1813. Zweite, sehr verbesserte und beträchtlich vermehrte Auflage, Frankfurt a. M.: Joh. Christ. Hermann'sche Buchhandlung, F.G. Suchsland, 1847.

From this principle follow all the others: knowledge, in order to be and to be knowledge, demands such a sufficient reason. Logical truth of judgment (which Schopenhauer identifies with knowledge) demands a sufficient explanation for being and for being true. Real beings that come to be or change demand a power through which they are (and eventually other reasons such as purposes, etc.) and which explains again that and what they are (Schopenhauer's physical necessity of the principle of sufficient reason as the principle of causality). (Schopenhauer unduly restricts the sphere of efficient causality to the physical world, although it applies to all changes in the spiritual world, too, and the explanations of the physical world he reduces unduly to efficient causality.) The mathematical necessity of which Schopenhauer speaks, finds likewise its explanation in the widest sense in which the principle was formulated, and so does the principle of sufficient reason in the moral sphere.

The thesis that all these spheres demand necessary reasons or reasons that necessitate the *explicandum* is not only not immediately evident but evidently false. The opinion that the principle of sufficient reason demands a *necessary* reason for everything fails to see that each being, depending on whether necessary or contingent, free or unfree, meaningful or relatively meaningless and absurd, demands an explanation in accordance with its nature. Hence, we must not come with a preconceived notion that all things demand necessary reasons without first establishing what kind of being they are and, consequently, which type of explanation they demand. And if we do so, we will see that NOT all things have a necessary reason.

Returning from here to the contingency of the world's existence and the existence of any being in the world, we can concretize our understanding of the principle of sufficient reason. It is impossible that the existence of the world has no explanation, no answer whatsoever to its why. This much is absolutely certain and evident. It is equally certain that existence which could also not be, which is only a fact, a *possible*, and does not flow from the nature of the existing being, does not explain itself. Since it could also be reduced to nothing, it precisely calls for the question "why is it?" in such a manner that it itself cannot answer this question. This question poses itself against the background of its possible non-being. Why is it that we can say with Leibniz that we should expect for there to be nothing - since it would be far easier that there be nothing than that there be something? Why does the world exist when it does not have to be?

The answer to this query cannot be found in the essence of the respective being since we have seen that neither the world as a whole nor any being in it contains the reason for its existence in itself and thus would explain it sufficiently. There is not any ground in an individual, why this or that individual (*tode ti*) is while infinitely many others of the same nature are not. The being as a whole, which is the mysterious unity of a non-necessary act of existence and nature, cannot answer our question either. Thus, we have to look outside the contingent being itself. But

where? In other contingently existing beings? Certainly not, for what cannot contain within itself the reason for its own being can never provide an ultimate answer to why other beings are. But we find that all beings in the world and the world as a whole, which is also multipliable (in time at least), are contingent. Since its existence is just there without having any reason within itself for being there, it demands a reason outside itself. Sartre has well seen the contingency of the world. He says that the *être en soi* (being when all consciousness is thought away) is opaque, just there, ultimate. It is not *causa sui* which is a meaningless notion. But instead of seeing that the contingent being needs a cause outside of itself in order to exist, Sartre claims that it is gratuitous, de trop, is there without reason: "*Contingency itself is absolute and therefore perfectly gratuitous...Uncreated, without reason for being, being-in-itself is gratuitous for all eternity*."

Again, as in the case of temporality, we grasp two supreme and necessary metaphysical truths: Only a necessarily existing being can contain sufficient reason for its being within itself. Only it can give from and through itself the ultimate answer to the question: "Why is it?" Secondly, we find that it alone can provide the ultimate explanation for contingently existing beings because a) they must have a sufficient reason for their being and b) they do not possess in themselves a sufficient reason for being. Thus, only a necessarily existing being can give the ultimate explanation for why there are real beings at all. And it alone can also give the ultimate answer to why there are contingent beings.

But how is this possible? How can a being which does not begin to act in time produce temporal beings? How can a necessarily existing being perform actions that are not necessary, like His being, and create contingently existing beings? Must the absolute Being's actions not also be necessary and thus necessarily produce whatever it creates? But how can the necessarily existing God create contingently existing, let alone free beings?

Here we touch upon some of the apories which Kant mentions in the context of the fourth antinomy of pure reason and which coincide with those immense difficulties that motivated Parmenides' acosmistic position.

How can the effect caused by a necessary Being be contingent, and how can persons created by a necessary Being be free? This seems absurd and entirely impossible. Yet we know that it must be the only possible answer to why there are contingent and free beings in the world. If we cannot figure out how the eternal being produces temporal entities or how the necessary one brings fourth contingent beings, we must not be amazed, for, as Descartes says in the *Principia Philosophiae*, it should not astonish us that many things in the infinite being and actions of God surpass our understanding if we contemplate the fact that He is infinite, our understanding finite. But the finitude of our understanding does not prevent us from seeing that, indeed, no other being can possibly answer the ultimate why of being except a necessarily existing one and that this being alone can contain in His own

necessarily existing Being the answer to why it is, and that therefore this *ens necessarium* alone can explain non-necessary entities, whose being is a great puzzle and riddle and demands an explanation.

At this point, we gain another crucial insight If our insight into the contingency of the world is such that we understand that there is neither an intrinsic nor an extrinsic absolute necessity for the world's being but that it truly is contingent and non-necessary, then we also understand that the necessarily existing being must possess free will and act with freedom of choice in creating contingent beings. For if it acted by necessity, according to the necessity of its own being, it would bring forth the contingent world necessarily and the world would cease to be contingent. Then the divine action would flow from the eternal necessary essence of God and thus could only have an eternal and necessarily existing effect. Mysterious as it is to think of how an eternal and necessary God can create temporal and contingent beings, only divine personhood and freedom can possibly explain this. Of course, this freedom follows also from the consideration of the meaningfulness and purposiveness of the world but most of all from the existence of contingent persons. If there are free contingent beings, and if freedom is a pure perfection that also the absolute being possesses in the highest degree, and if, moreover, no being that does not possess free will can endow another being with free will, then certainly the cause of beings that possess free will must itself possess free will. No being besides a free one could create free will. Necessity and chance, pure nature not endowed with free will, could not be the sufficient reason for contingent free will. This, too, is evident from the very essence of contingent freedom and causality.

From the insight into the contingency of the world, one can also find one access to God as the first and uncaused cause of the universe (2nd via Thomas). For the beings that are contingent in their existence and could also not exist demand a cause through the power of which they exist and are what they are. Moreover, it is evident here, as it was from the essence of time, that this power must not only bring the non-necessary being into being but also sustain it in being. This does not immediately become evident because we cause many unnecessary objects in art without sustaining them continuously in being. But the decisive point is to comprehend the deep metaphysical level at which contingent beings need a cause for their coming to be and their continued being. The contingency of existence does make them unexplained in their own being from themselves at any moment of their existence. They call for a *causa essendi* and not only for a *causa fieri*. We speak here of an entirely non-empirical level of efficient causality that cannot be understood in terms of non-sufficient empirical causes that do not address the whole issue of the contingency of existence, which demands a similarly transcendent eternal cause as the structural temporal movement of beings-in-time of which we have spoken before.

If we consider the cause which gives being to non-necessarily existing beings, we comprehend another reason why this being can in no way be of and in the world, above and beyond the reason that no being in the world exists necessarily. But the

absolutely spiritual and omnipresent mode of acting and the production of all beings and free wills and finite persons is of such an admirable efficacy that absolutely no being in the world, even if it existed, necessarily, could carry it out. Thus, we see how we ascend from the contingency of existence to a necessarily existing being as the sole self-explanatory being and as the sole possible cause of the world and how this necessarily existing being has to be a personal being. Such necessarily existing and eternal personal beings we call God. God has to be utterly transcendent in his being, power and operation to the world. At the same time, God has to be intimately present in his creation of esse from nothing, and particularly in His act of freely producing free beings and truly contingent ones which are – while infinitely many possible beings are not – elected freely in a most mysterious manner from the unlimited possible worlds which equally could be but are not. On the background of this metaphysical knowledge, both our true contingency and its origin in a necessarily existing and freely acting being, the wonder and gift of our existence and the existence of a personal God emerges as it expresses itself in the poem cited above:

> Ich danke Gott und freue mich
> Wie's Kind zur Weihnachtsgabe,
> dass ich bin, bin! Und dass ich dich,
> Schön menschlich Antlitz! habe...
>
> I thank God and rejoice,
> Like a child upon receiving his Christmas gift,
> That I am, am! And that I have thee,
> Noble human countenance. [119]

In all its simplicity and religious tone, this *Täglich zu singen* of Matthias Claudius is a metaphysical poem and one of the few works which captures those immense truths of the tertia via.

2. From Being in Time that Moves towards Nothingness to Eternal and most Real Being

Thus far, we have fundamentally taken three steps: first, we have found that temporal being can neither explain its own existence and being through itself nor can it explain other temporal things; secondly, we have found that only eternal being is self-explanatory; thirdly, we have found that only eternal being, because it alone explains itself, can provide the ultimate reason for the finite and temporal world. The

[119] Matthias Claudius. *Täglich zu Singen* (1. 1-4).

only possible source of the existence of temporal beings, which can absolutely not account for their own existence, must thus lie in the eternal being.

At the center of this argument lies the double intuition into the necessary and intelligible essence of temporality as non-self-explanatory, which reveals through itself – and in its ontic "mirror" – the essence of eternity, which alone is self-explanatory. While we have no direct experience of eternity, we grasp the necessary essential correlation between temporality and eternity, and this implies that we possess a true knowledge of the nature of both time and eternity.

We have seen that the being that moves and is not identical with itself does not remain absolutely the same, does not possess its life perfectly, but possesses a life that always flees into the past. Therefore it can likewise never explain its own being-in-time. And in its lack of possessing the sufficient reason for its being in itself, temporal being revealed to us a radically different being that is strictly correlated to and called for by it. The insight into the fact that a temporal being cannot explain itself goes necessarily hand in hand with the insight that only an eternal being can account for its own being, containing sufficient reason for itself in itself. This self-explanatory eternal being is immovable and absolutely and perfectly identical to itself and stands firm in his life. We have come to see that temporal life which consumes itself like the flame, cannot explain itself because it is lacking in full possession of life. Therefore only eternal and eternally actual life, which never consumes itself and never passes away, can explain itself. The imperfect-finite life of a temporal being does not provide the ultimate reason for its actuality.

Only the perfect, infinite life, which already wholly is what it is, can do so; only that life in which there is nothing past nor future, and which is wholly simultaneously, can explain itself. We have found that not that being which never remains and is not the full actuality of life but passes into actuality can explain itself. Rather only that which fully remains and which is the perfect activity and actuality of life; not that which is sometimes this and sometimes that, but only that being, which does not only appear to be and to live but fully IS and lives. Not that which is sometimes not and different, but only that which is never not and never alters; not that which is changeable, but that which is unchangeable; not that which contains distinction from other phases of its being, but that which is of an indistinguishable oneness. Not that life, the actualities of which are distant from one another, but the distance-less self-possession of life can explain itself. Not that which must actualize itself and develop in time, which gets more and more extended, which has earlier or later phases, can explain itself; rather only that which is never changing, which does not know the distance between the different actualities of its being because it always and perfectly IS, which does not develop and actualize itself or get more extended in its duration, or knows earlier or later, but rather that which purely IS. Not that, which in virtue of its temporality is not fully itself, but that which is in virtue of its very own being and life and which is fully what it is.

The eternal being cannot be that which is always in the sense of a mere "being at all times," in the sense of never-ending in time, but that which possesses the "good" infinitude of being and life in such a way that it IS always. It is that which cannot and does not have to say, I was, but I AM.

The transition from the TO ESTIN (the IT IS) to the EIMI (I AM) is justified here by virtue of all the reflections that lead us to recognize that only a personal being can possess all perfection and all actuality of life. Not that being is in profound and perpetual motion, namely that which exists in time, but that which is unmoved and immovable can explain itself. Not that which never stands in its being, but that which is the self-standing and remaining. But these attributes can only be possessed by the eternal, never by the temporal that never firmly "stands" in its being. Not that which is restless, but only that which is in eternal rest, not that which cannot gather it's whole being into unity, which lives in a plurality of moments, which is divisible but that which is indivisibly one and gathers its whole actuality in an everlasting single now.

It is all-decisive to see the strict and cogent character of this classical metaphysics of time and eternity, to see that this philosophical reflection and speculative knowledge of an eternal being that is not directly accessible to our experience, is still phenomenologically grounded in the self-given and extremely intelligible nature of time and temporality, as well as in the absolute necessity which implies that temporal nature cannot explain itself. Likewise necessary and intelligible is the nature of the eternal being, which is reflected, again with essential necessity, in the essential traits of time.

And yet, in spite of the radical difference between time and eternity, the temporal being can truly be analogous to the eternal. As the eternal being gathers all past and future and exceeds them in a single NOW, the finite beings, analogously, in the extended island of lived time possess a present actuality that bridges the abyss of infinitely many distinct moments into which that temporal being cannot be dissolved. While the eternal being possesses its perfection in standing in itself, the temporal being can only imitate the plenitude of the eternal being in the duration of time, in realizing its perfection in a multiplicity of moments, in which it actualizes true and pure perfections, which are truly analogous to the perfection of infinitely self-possessing life. Also, the dynamic force of life and the being of the absolute being can be imitated and analogously represented in that actuality of existence, being, and life of the finite entity. The perfect self-possession in consciousness and personhood is truly represented analogously in the finite personhood and self-possession of human consciousness and in memory. So we can say with Plotinus [120] that the temporal being "can imitate the perfect, whole being that is gathered in itself and

[120] See Plotinus, *Ennead* III, 7, xi, 55-56.

perfectly infinite, when it, in regaining its being always again (in time), remains in being." But also this aspect of analogy between eternal and temporal being will become much clearer in the light of chapters 11 and 12. We have come to the conclusion that eternal being is not the negation of time, the simple absence, as in nothingness, but it must be conceived in the light of the all-perfect nature and is the transcendent archetype and first analogate of all temporal things. We can now also conceive that the eternal being IS present at and in all times, that it shares with the temporal being duration but possesses that duration perfectly and not imperfectly, as things temporal. Eternity is not so much the opposite of time as it encompasses within its perfect actuality all times and simultaneously transcends them because they can never actualize absolute infinity of duration.

Also, the absolute transcendence of God over the world has become clear through the metaphysical reflections of this chapter. For it is evident that no being in the world could ever possess eternity in the sense of the perfect and simultaneous possession of all life and actuality. Therefore, the entity, which alone is and can be eternal, must be radically distinct from each and every being in the world and from all entities in the world in their totality. Here, we touch on the true ontological difference between the beings (die Seienden) and the being *(das Sein)*, which Heidegger has radically falsified. Martin Heidegger, by reducing both beings and Being to the sphere of the temporal, undermined classical metaphysics and deprived himself of the possibility of recognizing the true and infinite ontological difference between entities and beings that are in time and the only full and true Being, which lives in everlasting eternity, and of which man is not the pastor. This absolute Being must be a person and does not depend on Dasein ("being there" - man), but through Him alone, Dasein (man) receives Being and the actuality of existence (Sein), which differs in all temporal entities from their essence.

About the Author

Dr. Josef Seifert was the director of the master's and doctoral programs at the Institute of Philosophic Studies at the University of Texas at Dallas, USA (from 1972 to 1981), the Rector of the International Academy of Philosophy in Irving, Texas, since its foundation in 1980, Rector of the International Academy of Philosophy (IAP) in the Principality of Liechtenstein from 1986 to 2007 and Rector of the IAP at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile in Santiago de Chile from 2004 to 2011 and held the title "Founding Rector of the IAP." From 2012 to 2017, he was Professor of Philosophy at the Academia Internacional de Filosofía - Instituto de Filosofía Edith Stein. Dr. Seifert is a full professor of philosophy and Rector of the International Academy of Philosophy in the Principality of Liechtenstein. He is the author of *Gott als Gottesbeweis* (*God as Proof of His Existence*): *A Phenomenological Defense of the Ontological Argument* (2nd ed. 2000) and over 50 books in German or English; he has also written 300 articles in 20 languages.