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*Descartes and the Fable of the Grounded Self*

Excerpted from a chapter which also examines Kant, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Freud and Heidegger, this initial section on Descartes looks closely at the argumentation of the *Discours de la method* in terms of its narrative framework: presented as it is as a *fabula*, or fable. In doing so, Costa Lima identifies a ‘crack’ running through the cogito wherein the tension between two meanings of ‘representation’ are operating, the first related to *imitatio* or limited resemblance, associated more with the ‘hard sciences’, while the other, related to *mimesis* is associated more with the so-called ‘social sciences’.

This current discussion on Descartes would, in many ways, fit nicely between the first and second chapters of Costa Lima’s *The Limits of Voice* (1996), the first chapter dealing with Montaigne (excerpted in this Special Issue as “Montaigne and the Consecration of the Individual”), and the second chapter dealing with Kant and the Romantics.

Excerpt from *Mimesis: desafio ao pensamento* (p 84-99) © 2000 by Luiz Costa Lima, Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira. This book is not currently translated in English. This excerpt has been translated exclusively for this Special Issue of *Crossroads* by Jane Lamb-Ruiz.

## DESCARTES AND THE FABLE OF THE GROUNDED SELF

Although not immediately, our proposition is to focus on the fifth part of the *Discours de la méthode*. This will, in fact, be a two-pronged proposition. On the one hand, it will make evident the conversion of knowledge about nature (*Naturerkenntnis*) into research (*Forschung*), unhitching this knowledge from a theologically guaranteed certainty. On the other, as it is subordinated to a narrative that flows uninterruptedly throughout the *Discours*, its argument is shown at the outset as a *fibula* (fable); as such, an act of mimesis, with a “few examples that may be imitated.”<sup>i</sup> Now, the minor story set out in this chapter, that have *subject* and *representation* as protagonists, has no other proposition than to – at the opportune moment – come to my particular hobby-horse, i.e., to characterize mimesis in finer terms. To do so, we shall count on the support of a study by Louis Marin from here on in.

In “Mimesis et description”, Marin points out that, although mimesis and representation in Descartes continued the association that classically tied them to each other, not even this stopped them from taking on a very different meaning – were this not the case, it may be observed, knowledge about nature would not have transformed itself into research. The passage below is long but sheds light on this issue:

The Cartesian world is the world of representation for certain. But that the representative *signifies* what is represented visually does not mean in any way that the representative is a *copy* of the represented. Nature grants man, his body and his spirit, institutional language the paradigms of which are geometrical. But if such are the principles of knowledge about nature and if the postulate of a physical-psychological semiology must be kept – under the heading of an eidetic phenomenology and with the greatest possible certainty – the contact of the spirit with things, breaking *at this level* with the mimetic relationship of resemblance as constituting the natural sign, there remains in the Cartesian perspective the issue of founding, entirely legitimately, the discourse of physics at the level of critical epistemology, securing the science of nature on an irrefragable base, in short, constructing a system of Nature. What will the Cartesian procedure be here? It will consist of constructing a representative model of Nature that has no mimetic relationship of resemblance with the real world.<sup>ii</sup>

The disdain for “resemblance as constituting the natural sign” affects poets’ imaginative fables as much as it affects alchemists’ promises, astrologists’ predictions, magicians’ impostures, and the exaggerated verbiage “of those who profess to know more than they actually know.”<sup>iii</sup> None of these is any different either from “the more faithful stories [that] though they neither change or increase the value of things, make them more worthy of being read, [and] at least almost always omit more debased and less illustrious circumstances from them.”<sup>iv</sup> The scorn for works that are self-satisfied by wielding the word, the “natural sign”, range from works of rhetoric to works that today would be called historical accounts. For Descartes, ancient knowledge merely fed the fire of uselessness. When, due to the coalescence of forces of the times, he could explicitly denounce this, such knowledge was sent to Coventry. (With the Logic of Portroyal and Malebranche<sup>v</sup>, these cares diminished and the cult of reason would make imagination into something more suspicious.) But in which case was mimesis used?

The fact it was used at the very beginning of the *Discours* could lead one to think that it is only lightly banished from thought. Marin’s passage shows the deception of cogitation. The *fabula* is now merely an artifice and even a method of defense: the *fabula* Descartes narrates does not intend to be a model, or an example to be followed, but merely the opportunity for usefulness; unlike what a theologian might think of his own treatises, the author of the *Discours* takes modesty as a tone: so that each of them may make use of what seems best to him. This was a clever artifice that, in clashing with classical knowledge, impinges on the practices and customs of the community:

Custom and example are much likelier to persuade us than any knowledge and . . . the plurality of voice is no proof that one thing is valid for truths that are more painstaking to discover, for it is much more likely that a man on his own has found them rather than an entire people.<sup>vi</sup>

Under the apparent innocence of artifice, a new form of certainty begins circulating. A new form that meanwhile was denouncing the artifice it was making use of. Who could advocate on its behalf other than those – and only those - who were capable of showing what was indubitable? Mathematicians were the only ones included in this lot – the only ones “that could find some demonstrations, that is, some correct and evident reasons.”<sup>vii</sup> The new truth was accompanied by the separating out of the new ones who were “just”. They were no longer being defined by faith, by belief in the revealed word but rather by the cold capability demonstrated in correct language.

Mimesis, or better yet, *imitatio* (because this is really what Descartes was thinking about) turns into a poor guide, a mere rhetorical helper at the service of eulogizing geometrical observation and mathematical calculation. In the scope of the new certainty, there was no room for the old, harmful association with resemblance. That's why the senses, as voices of the body, and the imagination, the demon temptress of the mind, are removed as a burden on the man addressed by the Cartesian *fabula*: "Because our senses sometimes deceive us, I wanted to assume [*je voulais supposer*] that there is nothing that is like what they make us imagine."<sup>viii</sup> In a similar manner, he will repeat this in the *Méditations*: although we all know that the change of aspect of a common substance such as wax does not affect its permanence, the sensation of something different is the effect of the action of the senses "since all things that come under taste or odour or sight or touch or hearing show themselves as changed."<sup>ix</sup> Against the insecurity of this world enslaved by deceptive impressions of the senses, against this paraphernalia of appearances, what may I count on if not knowing that I am real in constancy? And where else is constancy to be found, if not in my being "*une chose qui pense*"?<sup>x</sup> So the certainty of being "a true thing" "in some way depends on things, whose existence are still not known to me; nor, consequently, and more correctly, of any of those that are pretended or invented by the imagination."<sup>xi</sup> These things, indeed are idle things even if "I imagined to be something other, for imagination is none other than contemplating the figure or the image of a corporeal thing."<sup>xii</sup> It is on the basis of this certainty that the *cogito* would be formulated.

. . . considering that all the same thoughts that we have when we are awake we may also have when we are asleep, I decided to pretend that all of the things that had ever entered my spirit were not true things, but illusions of my dreams. But immediately after this I realized that, while I wanted, in this way, to think that everything was false, it would be necessary for me, who was thinking it, to be some thing. And noting that this truth: *I think therefore I am* was so firm and secure that the most extravagant suppositions of sceptics would not be capable of bringing it down, I judged that I could greet it without scruple as the first principle that philosophy had been seeking.<sup>xiii</sup>

The certainty proposed to modern man involves suspicions about the body, taken as a place merely as a space for action of the mind. The nihilism that would be talked about so much in the coming centuries started out in the name of the new certainty; from the spiritualization or immateriality of the *cogito*. The classical separation between body and soul is once more reiterated. But in the name of a different aim, and even hostile to the religious *telos*. And the ancient recourse to pretending, now scorned in the name of certain knowledge, would still be used to a great extent for other purposes.

. . . examining attentively what I was and seeing that I could pretend that I didn't have any body, and that there was no world's nor any place where I existed; but that to do so, I could not pretend that I did not exist at all; and that, on the contrary, from the fact that I was thinking to doubt the truth of other things stemmed from the obviousness and certainty that I was; instead of which, had I merely stopped thinking, even if all the rest of what I had imagined had been true, I had no reason to believe that I had been; I learned from this that I was a substance the entire essence or nature of which is none other than to think, to be, no place at all is needed, nor does this depend on any material thing.<sup>xiv</sup>

Science, usufruct of the world seen as the reason of research (*Forschung*), is part of an inferiority reserved for the body of the world. Knowledge, whether of bodies or things, is part of the assertion of the incorporeality of he who knows. A third element was thus introduced that would potentially go beyond the shredding that accompanied Greek thought. This shredding, as Hans Blumenberg has shown<sup>xv</sup>, is summarily presented by the comparison of the chorus' speech in *Oedipus at Colonus* – "Not to be born at all /Is best, far best that can befall, /Next best, when born, with least delay /To trace the backward way." [F. Storr] (Sophocles: 1437-40) – to the passage attributed by Aristotle to Anaxagoras, who responded that it was better to be born "so the heavens and the entire order of the universe be seen."<sup>xvi</sup> Tragedy and the contemplation of the starry sky, the staging of the experience of human life and contemplation (*theoria*) enclosed the shredding of the Greeks between an obscure vision and a light-filled contemplative route. In modern thought, Descartes introduces a third term – reason – whose exploration by man would offer a meaning to life. Science was born with the hope of being much more than knowledge of particular things.

The partition, thus, between *cogito* and the senses allows the philosopher to advance: the *cogito* is the receptacle of ideas and notions as they are "real things," that, coming from God, and insofar as they are "clear and distinct, may not be other than true."<sup>xvii</sup> God is thus first invoked on the basis of the clarity with which He invests us with regard to things, a guarantee of the veracity of something, as opposed to the contingent aspect of doubts and uncertainties. God continues to be involved as the source of a second type of experience – that of the false and the confused. If this experience also affects us, that is because, contrary to the nature of God, we are not endowed with perfection. Even though modern knowledge starts from the determination of an unmistakable (unequivocal) certainty, that exalts the *cogito*, the spirit and its capacity for calculation, no less salient in that

modern knowledge is the determination of partitioning between the perfect being, God, which the pure *cogito* seeks to be close to, and the imperfect, fallible human. Yes, even in its initial, glorious moment, the elegy of the subject assumed its internal partitioning:

And it is manifest that there is no less contradiction in the proposition that falsity and imperfection as such come from God, than there is in the proposition that truth or perfection come from nothingness. But if we did not know that everything that is real and true in us comes from a perfect and infinite being, then, no matter how clear and distinct our ideas were, we would have no reason to be assured that they possess the perfection of being true.<sup>xviii</sup>

Let's consider for a moment this partition between the perfect and the fallible. The usual reading of Descartes here will point out the groundedness [*solaridade*] of the being of the *cogito*, as it is this that is conjugated to reason, to the detriment of the imagination and the senses. "Whether we are awake or asleep, we should never allow ourselves to be persuaded unless it is by evidence of our reason."<sup>xix</sup> Recently, however, Jean-Louis Chédin has bestowed another approach on the fact that Cartesian thinking is founded on knowledge of the relationship between the finite and the infinite. Descartes encounters here a difficulty that has mostly gone unnoticed until now:

As only the infinite is primary and positive, insofar as the ontological status of finitude is of a secondary and derivative substance, how then, could one make the infinite depend on the finite (or its idea)? . . . fall into the impossible intention of equating or engendering the infinite by multiplying or stretching out the finite indefinitely? . . . This is necessary were one not already ensuring, indirectly, that the linking of finite and infinite, insofar as it is the foundation of a conscious being, should be in essence, reciprocal in structure.<sup>xx</sup>

As we are not intending to accompany Chédin in the metamorphoses that modern thinking suffered from the time of Descartes to the time of idealism, always carried out, or accomplished, under the sign of dissolution of finitude in infinitude, we shall limit ourselves to pointing out, with the author, that the constitution of the modern subject brought with it the assumption of the permanence of a tense, fractured relationship.

The finite-infinite opposition may not be introduced (*a fortiori*, be represented or conceptualized) except with the condition of an activity and of "disquiet" working on the totality that unifies the interdependent elements. It is the totality that finds and discovers its own finitude, as well as its dependence on the component parts and in relation to the infinite environment, that pull it in the opposite direction. In sum, the unfolding (in unity) of the finite and the infinite, which is essential to conscious form, is premised on the condition of a (relative) unfolding between all the parts; the finite-infinite relationship could not be brought up to date nor impose itself immediately as such without this condition.<sup>xxi</sup>

Let's try to incorporate more explicitly Chédin's contribution to our view. The contextual examination that Descartes' interpreters have given us, point out the opposition he was facing. On the one hand, were the skeptics, as Montaigne had been, and the libertines, atheists or theists, who were always dogma contrarians. On the other, the Church, with all its intellectual and material power. Pressured by both sides, it was not possible for Descartes to wound some flank that would weaken reason. This would have been the case if the Church was taken simultaneously as a partisan of faith and affirmative of its own autonomy. That's what Descartes knows he should not do:

The Cartesian project consists, nevertheless, in a decision in favor of reason, a choice to determine the conditions of true knowledge without submitting to any authority, not even the one that ruled his era: theology.<sup>xxii</sup>

Due to this state of affairs, the affirmation of strong reason would be necessarily compromised in the event it was not accompanied by the affirmation of a central subject. This subject is all the more unifying, the greater contrary contextual pressure is exerted. On this front, we would not have any way of questioning the Cartesian conception of a grounded subject (*um sujeito solar*): such a conception gets the upper hand either because such is his thinking or because the context does not allow him a weaker one. But the weapons of the philosopher need not have lain unused based on viewing a specific situation: that of distinguishing between body and soul whence he derived the difference between his physics and metaphysics:

The soul is liberated from the mechanism of nature, relating to another principle of being, such that its criteria of knowledge do not result from experience, the dominion of which pertains to space and time pertain, thus what is relative.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Considering the difference of the criteria of knowledge, the emphasis on physics could only be fulfilled by affirmation of the finite/infinite duality, in which reason, now, without admitting itself to be weak, was not and should not have had all the territory at its disposal. What before was strategically undesirable – establishing limits to reason – now, inversely, became necessary i.e., recognizing that its agent, the subject, has a crack running through it. The extraordinary skill Descartes shows would lie in the fact that his defense of physics worked as an argument in favor of – theologians: “Knowledge of the possible immortality of the soul is the counterpoint of the mechanistic physics of bodies.”<sup>xxiv</sup> Whence it is inferred that theological knowledge of the supra-sensible attains the upper hand over the subject of the cogito by the latter’s coming to recognize itself as finite, yet, limited:

Locating itself at the level of awareness that the spirit has of itself, the idea of the “I” is part of finiteness, the very temporality of its act of self-recognition, such that this idea of the “I” remains, so to speak, exposed to the discontinuity constituting the activity of thinking.<sup>xxv</sup>

Briefly, the idea of a fracture is implied, and, simultaneously, is sewn up by the proximity of the theological. *The fact that neither Descartes, nor his closest followers, were interested in having attention drawn to the limits of reason does not mean that its existence could not be discerned inside his own system.* It is the very changing of temporal parameters that allows, nay requires, this other emphasis. It would not be necessary if the fight for the “death of mankind” continued to be a good fight. It is also not that those who fight it are now receiving other adherence from other quarters. To rethink the issue of the subject assumes recognizing an impasse at the moment of globalization.

As we said, our foregoing development appears necessary to us precisely because – to use Chédin – our proposition is much more modest: while he seeks to renew the problematic of the subject by introducing “self-limitation” “in finiteness itself”, i.e., making of the infinite, both quantitative and qualitative (God), a property of the finite, our target is merely to point out how it is possible for one to discover a fractured subject under the grounded *cogito*. Whence, in this specific context, the importance that the reading of the fifth section of the *Discours* takes on. It is in this reading that the *fabula* we referred to at the outset, acquires meaning and concreteness.

As his writing of the *Traité du monde* (which would be published posthumously in 1664) was interrupted, due to Descartes’ fear that the proceedings brought against Galileo would be repeated for him, the philosopher sought to disclose only those basic ideas of his that would not spark the ire of the theologians. Comparing himself to a painter who represents only the principal parts of solid bodies, leaving the other parts in shadow, “I decided to leave this entire world for them [the learned] to dispute and only discuss what would arise in a new one” that God might decide to create, “with the various parts of this matter [acting] in a different and disorderly manner, such that a chaos so confusing that poets might pretend it existed might spring up from it” and afterwards do nothing more than “allow nature to take its ordinary course and allow it to act according to the laws it established.”<sup>xxvi</sup>

Under a heading halfway between ironic and prudent that describes a world in the event God chose to create a new one, Descartes was performing an exact equivalence of *imitatio*. This is how it happens because, even if God “had created various worlds” in no such worlds, could one fail to observe the natural laws that the *Discours* shows are present. As Marin put it so well, in Cartesian mimesis, geometric instrumentalization hinders recourse to similarity. This distancing establishes the equivalence of mimesis to *imitatio* since, on the basis of the certainty that tie the laws of nature together, the new world *fabula* showed it to be identical to the old world or known one or that was not better known because theologians had not accepted to gaze at it through the Galilean lens. Insofar as mimesis was a process branching off from *imitatio*, it would come to be mistaken for chaos that only poets could figure. Divine intervention, in exchange, would be subject to dealing with the order of an immutable nature arising from “poetic” chaos. This means: liberating research from nature – versus what until then had been considered its knowledge – is accomplished down a pathway so imperious that it would impose itself on the will of God himself, on the basis of the allegation that it would be mistaken for nature. Descartes begins with the assumption that reason – though belonging to a finite being – keeps with it the perfection attributed to the Creator. On the basis of *mathesis*, the penetration of the infinite in this manner occurred in the finite being of matter such that what is seen, or geometrized, and calculated by the human agent could not be contradicted by God himself. The grounded *fabula* contained a series of dogmas that was no less consistent than that of the theological series of dogmas.

The real, infallible conjunction is thus established between cogito and representation. In the materialities between which the *cogito* moves, it is a *sui generis* finite entity: immaterial materiality that, invested with

*mathesis*, is wide-reaching in certainty about itself and of that which is represented clearly. This construction is revolutionary for sure. The fact the construction of its argument depends on a classical resource, the *fabula*, used to make it palatable to its adversaries, merely reveals the astuteness of the author. (It is curious how mimesis had authors for enemies who knew how to use it so well, Plato being the other example of this.) The extraction of the *fabula* from its past environment had been so astute that it now would be domesticated, tamed, imprisoned and controlled, only to be admissible (allowed) when it was not at the service of the pretend chaos – dear to imaginative users – among which there were not only poets as far as Descartes was concerned.

It may be assumed that the reference to the world according to the pretend chaos of the poets had the function of uttering the first stage of an evolutionary world, possibly acceptable to theologians who were not paying attention to the accusation against poets. Though a viable route, this is not the one we are interested in here. For the argument we are developing here, what is important is to assert the banishing of mimesis and its full “recouping” by *imitatio*, transformed into the Caliban of the scientific view of the world. This banishing, as we see it, was not accomplished without an extremely daring theological gesture. The gesture is reiterated in an even more audacious manner in the assumption of *mauvais génie*. We consider one of its formulations.

Therefore, I will suppose that, not God who is the source of truth but some evil demon, who is all powerful and cunning, has devoted all their energies to deceiving me. I will imagine that the sky, air, earth, colours, shapes, sounds and everything external to me are nothing more than the creatures of dreams by means of which an evil spirit entraps my credulity. I shall imagine myself as if I had no hands, no eyes, no flesh, no blood, no senses at all, but as if my beliefs in all these things were false. I will remain resolutely steady in this meditation and, in that way, if I cannot discover anything true, I will certainly do what is possible for me, namely, I will take great care not to assent to what is false, nor can that deceiver – no matter how powerful or cunning they may be – impose anything on me.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Even Descartes assumes the human subject was conceived by a demon that was so evil that one is always attempting to deceive him, and only in one case could such a demon not impose itself on its creature: in the one consisting in the capacity of the subject of cogito to keep being able to recognize that the evil creator intended to cheat it. Thus, though still a body, the subject is *une chose qui pense*, immaterial materiality. That’s why my property par excellence, i.e., ideas, are not similar in nature or do not have the same form as things “that are outside of me.”<sup>xxviii</sup>

Now, order seems to require that I classify all my thoughts into certain kinds and that I find out in which kinds truth and falsehood are properly found. Some thoughts are like the images of things, and the term ‘idea’ applies in a strict sense to them alone: for example, when I think of a person, a chimera the sky, an angel or God. Other thoughts, however, also have additional forms; for example, when I will, fear, affirm, or deny, I always grasp something as the subject of my thoughts but I include in my thought something more than a resemblance of the thing in question. Some of these thoughts are called volitions or emotions, and others are called judgements.<sup>xxix</sup>

The passage implies that the idea is bastardized when it is tied to affect. This would be the Achilles heel of the Cartesian theory of representation.<sup>xxx</sup> As Descartes clarified in a letter to Father Mersenne of July 1641:

Thus, simply, I do not call images that are depicted in fantasy ideas; on the contrary [*sic*], in no way do I call them by that name, insofar as they are in the corporeal fantasy; but I call everything generically that is in our spirit by the name of idea, when we conceive of something, whatever the manner in which we conceive it.<sup>xxxi</sup>

While – as it might be hoped – he associates images with products of fantasy, images do not enter the noble quarters of ideas. Is this then the reason for excluding images from the representation of the subject?

We are dealing here with an abyss similar to the one we find between the Heideggerian *Vorstellung* and the idea of value in Weber – with the obvious difference that Heidegger did not expose the “image of the world” as belonging to this philosophy! In the same way that value goes contrary to inflexibility and the constancy of scientific representation, so too does the image of the body act as an obstacle to glorifying representation par excellence of the *cogito*, the idea. For the Cartesian subject to be a *chose qui pense*, it needs to be mistaken for the constancy of stable representations, not subject to the mobility of affects.

Raising the Achilles’ heel matters in terms of introducing rectification into the proposition of representation. This emphasis, in fact, matters less for the schematic exposition we are undertaking than for the reason we are doing it: to extract from Cartesian thinking not only the outline of another conception of the subject but also another representation of it. (The importance of the latter to our argument will only be recognized little by little).

Although rarely mentioned, the term “representation”, in fact, has two meanings, not only one:

a) In its privileged form, based on the de-sacralization of nature by Descartes, representation means the equivalence established, by means of geometry, between an initial empirical scene and a scene that is produced and projected, i.e., capable of reproducing it and, thereby, able to dominate it technically. It is important to consider that even this first meaning does not mean that representation necessarily supposes similitude with what represents it (the geometrical representation of a body does not assume similitude with the way in which the body is seen). Despite the hiatus introduced at that point, it does not affect the Cartesian conception of truth, which continues to be understood as *adequatio*.

b) In its classical secondary form, representation means equivalence between a primary scene and the *subjective response* it provokes. In the first meaning, representation has the feature of *aspect* (objective). In the second, one of effect (*Wirkung*) – the identification of effect with the subjective response is temporary. The first one satisfies and is required by the hard sciences. The second spans broadly the historical sciences (more commonly called social sciences), reaches daily situations and includes responses to works of art. Not making a distinction between these meanings makes the task easier as much for those who reject bringing the representation and reality of the work of art closer to each other, as, inversely, it does for those who intend to see a representation of reality in a work of art.

Finally, in its first meaning, we point out that representation has nothing to do with mimesis, but at the most with the domesticating disposition of mimesis (*imitatio* or limited resemblance), which Descartes wields skilfully, as noted. When it then comes to relating representation to mimesis, this shall always be while taking into account its second meaning: its continued clandestine existence in what is today’s classic framework of modern times. Though banished from Cartesian thinking, the use of the second meaning would not be disposed of by modern thinking. Whence arises a problem that shall prove particularly arduous to historians. In the face of history’s now classical status, how can a practitioner of it accept the diminution of status that, from the classical point of view, comes from admitting (allowing) the second meaning of representation? Or, to say this more directly, how can the historian accept that his or her “science” confers extraordinary relevance to a concept, the “clandestine” meaning of which showed itself to be contaminated by affect?

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<sup>xxv</sup> Ibid, 144.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Descartes, R. *Discours de la méthode* (1637), p142.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Descartes, R. *Méditations métaphysiques* (1673), p17-18. In an essay both modest and strikingly intelligent, Étienne Gilson - returning to the well-known topic of the proximity of the formulation of the cogito with passages already formulated by St. Augustus, above all in *De civitate Dei* and *De Trinitate* – observes that with Arnauld one errs when the influence of Augustus is maximized as much as when with Pascal it is minimized. These doctrines come close to one another because in both the Platonic tradition of a “metaphysics of the intelligible” is chosen over the Aristotelian “metaphysics of the concrete” (Gilson, É.: 1030, 199], There, however, they go their separate ways. In St. Augustine, the “metaphysics of the intelligible” leads to “testing the spirituality of the soul”, the subject aimed at is God and the way is that of faith. In Descartes, on the other hand, although the assertion of the spirituality is retained, the subject is human and the way is that of reason. Whence the secondary position of the subject in St. Augustine and the strength that, in contrast, it takes on in Descartes. Coming to the argument that is of particular interest to us, from here one might as well conclude that the parallelism between these two thinkers explains the groundedness that will be associated with the Cartesian subject or that the difference of the planes on which two subjects are – divine and human – calls for the first to keep its difference from the latter. To accentuate this difference, nevertheless, as we seek to argue, would be to weaken its cause from the outset. For that reason, the difference of plane of the human subject, its fractured character, will be made much less explicit.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>xxix</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>xxx</sup> This is what the analysis – too lengthy to be presented here - of the manner in which the Jansenists Arnaud and Nicole received Descartes’ *La Logique ou l’art de penser* (1662-1683) would show. Agreeing with the positive role played by clear ideas, these authors, nevertheless, verify the upset caused by images, arising from passions and affects, in the last analysis of the state of sin in which man has lived since his fall. Clarity is thus diverted in the representation made by the subject of himself, where he sees himself according to what is seen as large or small, good or evil. Whence, as Louis Marin beautifully put it: “I identify well with my representation of myself, but this representation is the representation of all the others, and, simultaneously, this identification is my definitive alienation” (Marin, L.: 1975, 225). This is the same as saying that, contemporaneously to Descartes himself, the question was already being raised that implied “the high impossibility of articulating knowledge of oneself to a general theory of representation” (idem, ibidem). That is to say, representation through images – very close to what we shall call representation-effect – already had a theologically justified fracture within the supposed grounded subject.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Descartes, R. “Descartes à Mersenne” (1641). In *Oeuvres de Descartes*, Adam & P. Tannery, vol III, Vrin, Paris, 1996, p392.