

In the past, I have criticized Descartes's definition of substance as "that which requires nothing but itself in order to exist" because it denies the essential internal relatedness of concretes to other concretes. But I now see reasons to think that the interpretation presupposed by this criticism may, in fact, be a misinterpretation.

In the course of arguing persuasively that "Whitehead is . . . in full agreement with Aristotle as to what constitutes the ultimate metaphysical problem"; and that "[i]n declaring that 'the final problem is to conceive a complete [παντελης] fact' Whitehead is placing himself fully in the great philosophical tradition," Leclerc holds—again persuasively—that "[w]hat Whitehead means by a 'complete fact' is a 'complete existent,' that which exists in the complete sense of the word 'exist.'" Whereupon he goes on to say: "This is the same as what Gilson was expressing in the passage above by 'a distinct ontological unit which is able to subsist in itself and can be defined in itself.' It is this that Descartes had in mind in defining *thet* *that* with which we are concerned as that 'which requires nothing but itself in order to exist,' Spinoza and Leibniz used very similar words in this connection. It is clear that the factor of 'being,' of 'existence,' is absolutely central. But it is not 'existence' as such, in the abstract; it is the *existence of a particular*, a 'that.' Moreover, the 'that' which is in question is the that which is possessed of 'full existence,' the that which exists 'in and of itself'" (*Whitehead's Metaphysics*: 20, 17).

If Leclerc is right about all this, as I strongly suspect he is, Descartes's point in asserting the independence of substance is essentially the same as Whitehead's in insisting—in Leclerc's words—that, "although other types of entity do exist, they are (i.e., exist as) either 'ingredients in' actual entities, or . . . 'derivative from' actual entities. So that whatever there is, in any sense of 'is' or 'exist,' either is an actual entity or has its locus in some actual entity or actual entities" (24 f.). Or it is the same as Hartshorne's point when he insists that the abstract, although real, is not actual save as somehow included in the concrete, which is the inclusive form of reality, the abstract being the included form thereof. And, of course, it is only of a piece with this insistence that Hartshorne argues (against Aristotle and the classical tradition!) for "event pluralism," rather than "substance pluralism," i.e., that the only fully

particular and concrete reality is not "substance," i.e., an individual person or thing, but rather an "event, or a "state," *in* which—and therefore in dependence upon which—individuals, as partially abstract, alone exist.

To be sure, Descartes and others may still be fairly criticized for not recognizing the primacy of "relational predicates," on which Hartshorne insists in saying, "Subjects are what they are not through mere private predicates or properties, but through the references which it is their natures to make to certain other subjects" ("Religion in Process Philosophy": 247). In other words, Descartes and others may very well perpetuate what Whitehead calls "the defect of the Greek analysis of generation" because they continue to fail "to grasp the real operation of antecedent particulars imposing themselves on the novel particular in process of creation." But it still seems that Descartes's point in the definition criticized is not simply the instance of this failure that I have misinterpreted it as being. It is the different point that Whitehead and Hartshorne also, in their ways, make—and that I, too, must make—between the utterly concrete and the more or less abstract, or, alternatively, between the fully actual and the merely real.

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