

use of sword and pen; combining warcraft and wordcraft; either elaborating some abstruse problem in analytical geometry, which has eluded the aching brain of many a burner of the midnight oil since then, or formulating some subtle philosophic thesis in his clever system, some thing more than admiration is awakened in us, and criticism stands disarmed; although his shallow, yet doubtless well meant principles, stand painfully apparent, stripped of all their potency, and looking, as they truly are, the source of every false and corrupt school that bears its damnation on its brow. We find him in the beginning of the 17th century (the Luther of philosophy) embarking upon a course of independent observation, rejecting syllogisms, and all transmitted knowledge, and placing, as a necessary preparation for philosophical investigation, partial skepticism. Sextus Empiricus, the ancient skeptic said: "I doubt everything!" "But you know you doubt!" was answered; "No I doubt that I doubt, since if I knew I doubted, universal doubt would not exist." Descartes did not go so far, but said he knew he doubted by doubting he thought; thought is action; that acts must exist; and thus he proves man's existence by thought. And hence the watchword of Cartesianism: "*Cogito, ergo Sum.*"—Descartes reasoned from himself to external objects, denying the testimony of the senses; and finding no knowledge derivable from external objects, he consequently turned his attention inward, and investigated his own conceptions and acts of reasoning. Now he found he had an idea of God and the human soul, therefore they must exist: but by proving the existence of God and the soul from the fact that he had an idea of them, he makes all evidence purely subjective, places all truth in the intellect and not in the object, and thus lays the basis of a most advanced Idealism, making all objects depend for existence on our ideas of them. From this immediately springs Atheism; for one can say: "but I have no idea of God, nor can I have from myself therefore God does not exist for me." By asserting the proposition, that after Creation, God sent the world whirling through space to be governed only by mechanical laws, and thus giving grounds for the denial of the Divine Providence, he gives a foundation for Deism. Upon his false definition of substance, as a being existing by itself, Pantheism—making the world God—finds its support: and by making clearness of knowledge our ultimate criterion of truth, he gives a pretext for those who would hold revealed truth and the mysteries of religion as false, which leads to genuine Rationalism. Could Bonhomme Cogito's statue, as it stands upon the public square of Tours, have seen with conscious eye, the evil courses these shallow principles were made to run before the unsparing logic of misguided men, it would lift its marble hands to heaven in holy horror of the "base uses to which they were perverted."

Contemporary with Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, a Dutch Jew, who had been expelled the synagogues for

his heretical beliefs, began the study of Cartesian philosophy, and the foundation of his own, which he erected upon Descartes false definition of substance. He maintained there was but one substance, God, of which all other bodies were but accidents, or expansions of the unique substance; and since we were all but parts of God, he maintained in his moral philosophy that there was no difference between virtue and vice. In Politics he held might and right to be identical, because, he said, justice is nothing else than the measure of our power. This doctrine, the most pronounced Pantheism, is monstrous in its consequences; for then force is the supreme law in morals and politics.

During the beginning of the 18th century, Malebranche, a countryman of Descartes, took up the doctrine of his master and further developed it. Descartes had said "every time we have a clear idea we possess certitude." Malebranche asked himself why, and explained it by saying, that we saw the idea in God, thus propagating Ontologism; and he further maintained that all our actions are but the occasion for the Divine power to act through us, which gives us Occasionalism. About the same time Wilhelm Von Leibnitz introduced the Cartesian method into Germany; but by overstepping Descartes dualism of spirit and substance, he explained the composition of the world and all bodies by his system of Monads, and became the Father of German Transcendentalism. Like Descartes, his system was designed to subserve a nobler purpose, and like him, his genius was a resplendent one, whose lustre threw its light upon many and long hidden sources of knowledge, and disputed with Newton the discovery of the calculus. He taught that bodies were but an aggregation of monads, which made known their existence merely by intrinsic forces. Leibnitz' Monad was a simple being, unlike the atoms of Democritus, occupying no space, and having no extension, and in fact conveying as clear an idea to us as the sum of 0 + 0 would. The primitive Monad was God, and we were the fulgurations thrown off. This ridiculous doctrine was improved upon by his disciple Wolff, and gave the key note to the later rationalistic German schools. Occupying the ground of the Leibnitz-Wolfian School, Immanuel Kant contrived an immense philosophical fabric, introducing many principles from the Experimentalists, and the Skepticism of Hume, and becoming the actual founder of Transcendentalism. Even now we can fancy the venerable form of this German seer in his solitary meditations, underneath the ancestral oaks of Königsberg, unraveling some shadowy conception and formulating that dreamy Subjectivism which gave, "to airy nothingness, a local habitation and a name." The spirit which pervades his vast system is absolute Subjectivism; where the subject thinking, the conscious "Ego" is the criterion of knowledge; and thus the forms of bodies—for by him we can never know the real essence of objects—is the product of the mind itself.