

# HEIDEGGER on CARTESIAN ONTOLOGY

Carlos Ruiz – narziss@berkeley.edu

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PARMENIDES – Παρμενίδης ὁ Ἐλεάτης

Appearance is false and deceitful. Truth cannot be known through our sensory perception.

Truth can be known through Reason (λόγος). “For thought and being are the same” (from *The Way of Truth*).

Unchange is the essence of the World. The Truth (ἀλήθεια) of the world is “One Being,” which is complete, unchanging, uncreated.

Truth (ἀλήθεια) for Heidegger is not a correspondence theory of truth but an uncovering, an excavation.

CARTESIAN SUBSTANCE ONTOLOGY:

## The World → The “I” → God

Res Extensa as Ens Creatum<sup>2</sup> → Res Cogitans as Ens Creatum<sup>1</sup> → God as Ens Increatum and Ens Perfectissimus

ARGUMENT TO SUBSTANTIATE THE EXTENDED THING:

i	All Essence is unchanging and constant throughout.
ii	All phenomena reveal attributes that are prone to change.
iii	Therefore, phenomenal attributes are not Essential.
iv	All Entities in the world inevitably occupy space—they are <i>extended</i> things.
v	Thus, the only unchanging constant of the World is <i>extension</i> .
vi	Therefore, <i>extension</i> is the Essence of the World.

ex. WAX DEMONSTRATION

ex. PERFECT CIRCLE

Our *hand* cannot draw a perfect circle, but our *mind* can imagine a perfect circle.

CRITICISMS OF DESCARTES:

1	A bias toward substantiating the unchanging and eternal.
2	Inappropriate access to the essence of entities as substance.
3	Descartes uses substance to mean three distinct things without clarifying their separation

<b>IF</b>	“That which enduringly remains, really <i>is</i> ” (128).
<b>AND IF</b>	The entities of mathematics are therefore “those <i>which always are what they are</i> ” (128).
<b>THEN</b>	Abstract, conceptual thinking is the appropriate means toward the Truth of the World.

The Being of Mathematics is the 'real' Being of the world.

**ENTITIES** ←*ontic*— **AGENT** —*ontological*→ **GOD**

**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HEIDEGGER AND DESCARTES:**

	EXISTENTIAL ONTOLOGY	CARTESIAN ONTOLOGY
<b>METHOD</b>	<b>Phenomenological Method</b> The interpretive method forms itself according to the subject matter—to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself” (58).	<b>Rational Method</b> The rational method presupposes a structure before approaching and engaging the subject matter. “[T]he way to get a genuine grasp of what really is has been decided in advance” (129).
<b>ESSENCE</b>	<b>Essence is existence.</b> “The essence of Dasein lies in its existence” (67 & cf. 152).	<b>Essence is the unchanging.</b>
<b>PRIMARY SUBJECT-OBJECT RELATION</b>	<b>Readiness-to-hand</b> <i>(Zuhandenheit)</i>	<b>Present-at-handness</b> <i>(Vorhandenheit)</i>
<b>ORIENTATION &amp; DIMENSION</b>	<b>Existential Spatiality</b>	<b>Cartesian Space</b>
<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>Embodied Being-in-the-World</b>	<b>Disembodied, transcendent Mind</b>

**ex. HARDNESS**

You need a body in order to feel something as hard. As Heidegger says,

“Hardness and resistance do not show themselves at all unless an entity has the kind of Being which Dasein—or at least something living—possesses” (130).

In the Cartesian world, there is no relation that unites subject and object; instead, “the perception of something becomes a definite way of Being-present-at-hand-side-by-side of two *res extensae* which are present-at-hand” (130).

“*Readiness-to-hand is the way in which entities as they are 'in themselves' are defined ontologico-categorially. Yet only by reason of something present-at-hand, 'is there' anything ready-to-hand*” (101).

**ex. THE FALLEN TREE IN THE FOREST**