

Philosophy 168
Lecture Notes on *Meditation One*
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Before turning to the text of the First Meditation (M1), we will list several of the most important aims of the book as a whole. These overlapping aims should be kept in mind when reading each of the *Meditations*.

Tasks of *Meditations*

The following list contains the various descriptions made by Descartes himself of the tasks to be accomplished by the *Meditations*:

- To prove (against the atheists, skeptics and materialists) the metaphysical propositions that God exists and that the soul is separate from the body
- To refute skepticism by establishing the certainty of a number of scientific, mathematical, and metaphysical propositions
- To overcome the influence of traditional (Aristotelian) philosophy
- To free the thoughts of the mind from their dependence on the senses
- To provide a foundation for the physical sciences
- To reform psychology by separating out those of its functions which are corporeal from those which are incorporeal.
- To understand the nature of error and explain how and why it occurs
- To prove that arguments purporting to establish the existence of an external world are inferior to the arguments establishing knowledge of our own minds and of God.

The strategy of the *Meditations* is brilliant in the way in which it carries out all of these tasks simultaneously. As will be seen, in many cases the completion of one task aids in the completion of others. It can cause problems in interpretation to over-weight one task (especially the refutation of skepticism) in favor of the others.

The last of the aims is most fundamental, if we are to Descartes's own word for it: "the one thing that I set myself to prove in these *Meditations*" was that the arguments used to establish "that there really is a world, and that human bodies exist, and so on" are "not as solid or as transparent as the arguments which lead us to knowledge of our own minds and of God, so that the latter are the most certain and evident of all possible objects of knowledge for the human intellect" (Synopsis of the *Meditations*, AT VII 16, CSM II 11).

What Can Be Called Into Doubt

The sub-title of the First Meditation is “What can be called into doubt.” Toward the end of M1 Descartes gives an answer: “that there is not one of my former beliefs about which a doubt may not properly be raised” (AT VII 21, CSM II 14-15). The Synopsis gives a similar description: “reasons are provided which give us possible grounds for doubt about all things, especially material things, so long as we have no foundations for the sciences other than those which we have had up till now” (AT VII 12, CSM II 9). The qualification in the quotation from the Synopsis hints at the possibility that the doubts raised in M1 can be removed if new foundations for the sciences can be found. And indeed, Descartes intends that the doubts be removed as the *Meditations* progresses.

The motivation for Descartes to search for reasons to doubt “all things” is to bring about the removal of doubt. Thus, his goal in adducing reasons for doubt is the opposite of the goal of the skeptic, for whom doubt is the end-point of inquiry. The removal of doubt comes in two phases. The first phase is the discovery (in M2) of something that cannot be doubted. With an indubitable item of knowledge in hand, Descartes carries out the second phase, which is to remove some of the original grounds for doubt adduced in M1. “The eventual result of this doubt is to make it impossible for us to have any further doubts about what we subsequently discover to be true” (Synopsis, AT VII 12, CSM II 9).

Preconceived Opinions

The passage from the Synopsis that was just quoted is preceded by a sentence that introduces a second motivation for looking for reasons for doubt. “Although the usefulness of such extensive doubt is not apparent at first sight, its greatest benefit lies in freeing us from all our preconceived opinions (*præjudiciis*), and providing the easiest route by which the mind may be led away from the senses” (AT VII 12, CSM II 9). Descartes reiterates this theme in the Seventh Replies.

In the First Meditation I was not yet concerned with establishing any truths, but was merely setting about eradicating my preconceived opinions. I showed that these opinions, which I had been accustomed to believe quite unreservedly, could be called into doubt, and hence that I should withhold my assent from them just as carefully as I would from obvious falsehoods” (AT VII 523, CSM II 355-6).

The word ‘*præjudicium*’ was translated (with Descartes’s approval) into French as ‘*préjugés*.’ Literally, the Latin and French words mean something like “pre-judgment.” The word is most directly rendered into English as ‘prejudice,’ in the earlier translations of Veitch and of Haldane and Ross. However, the sense of “prejudice” in Latin is that of a pre-judged opinion (*opinio præjudicata*). Cottingham, Stoothoff and Murdoch translate ‘*præjudicium*’ as ‘preconceived opinion,’ and we will follow their translation in what follows.

Perhaps the best formal description of *præjudicium* can be found in the Appendix to the Fifth Replies: □gall the opinions which we have continued to accept as a result of previous

judgments that we have made” (AT IXA 204, CSM II 270). This makes clear the sense in which *præjudicium* is a “prejudgment”: previous judgments are what have given rise to a current belief or opinion. In a letter to Voetius, dated May, 1643, Descartes describes preconceived opinions as “opinions that we rashly accepted on a previous occasion” (AT VIII B 37, CSM II 221).

The problem with preconceived opinions is that holding on to them prevents one from obtaining knowledge that one otherwise might have. Descartes notes that the propositions of metaphysics are evident by their nature,

but they conflict with many preconceived opinions derived from the senses which we have got into the habit of holding from our earliest years, and so only those who really concentrate and meditate and withdraw their minds from corporeal things, so far as is possible, will achieve perfect knowledge. (Second Replies, AT VII 157, CSM II 111)

A similar passage in M5 states that Descartes would acknowledge God’s existence “sooner or more easily than anything else” if he “were not overwhelmed by preconceived opinions, and if the images of things perceived by the senses did not besiege my thought on every side” (AT VII 69, CSM II 47). The Seventh Replies speaks to the effect of preconceived opinions on the concepts we have.

I admit, however, that those who do not abandon their preconceived opinions will find it hard to acquire a clear and distinct concept of anything; for it is obvious that the concepts which we had in our childhood were not clear and distinct, and hence, if not set aside, they will affect any other concepts which we acquire later and make them obscure and confused. (Seventh Replies, AT VII 518, CSM II 352-353)

Within M1 itself, the word ‘preconceived’ occurs just once (AT VII 22, CSM II 15), though Descartes refers to “my habitual opinions” (AT VII 22, CSM II 15), “my old opinions” (AT VII 23, CSM II 15), “my former beliefs” (AT VII 22, CSM II 15), “whatever I have accepted up till now as most true,” (AT VII 18, CSM II 12), and “the large number of falsehoods that I had accepted as true in my childhood” (AT VII 17, CSM II 12). (The only other place the expression appears in the *Meditations* proper is in M5, in the passage cited above.)

The two tasks of freeing the mind from preconceived opinions and providing the easiest path for the mind to divorce itself from the senses are closely linked. In M1, Descartes tells us that “whatever I have accepted up till now as most true,” which would seem to describe his preconceived opinions, were acquired “either from the senses or through the senses” (AT VII 18, CSM II 12).

According to Descartes, the original opinions that we continue to accept are in many (or most) cases formed in childhood. We are particularly susceptible to forming opinions rashly in childhood because our minds are not yet fully developed, which results in our being heavily

dependent on the use of our senses. In the Sixth Replies, Descartes gives the example of a child who judges that a stick in the water is bent. This opinion is corrected only by the use of reason (lacking in the child), “which tells us that in this case we should believe the judgment based on touch rather than that elicited by vision” (AT VII 439, CSM II 296).

We can infer from his statements about them that Descartes thought that the preconceived opinions most harmful for metaphysics have a common structure: they generalize what holds for the senses to all things. If it can be shown that all the information we get from sense-perception is subject to doubt, then all preconceived opinion formed on the basis of perception is subject to doubt. And if we suppose (for the time being) that what is subject to doubt is false, then we can free ourselves from the sway of preconceived opinion, at least while we are able to sustain this rejection of all that has its origins in the senses.

Here are some other examples of preconceived opinions:

- Dumb animals think (Letter to More, AT V 275-6, CSMK 364-5).
- Nothing can exist or be intelligible without being also imaginable (Letter to More, AT V 270, CSMK 361-2)
- Every substance, including God himself, is imaginable. (Letter to More, AT V 342, CSMK 372-3).
- All substances, including those we deny to be bodies, are extended (Letter to More, AT V 342, CSMK 372-373)

We can see from the last three examples that Descartes did not restrict preconceived opinion to judgments rashly made by children. Our uncritical reliance on the senses leads to false opinions in the realm of metaphysics. In particular, the restriction of things to the imaginable prevents us from having a proper understanding of God and of the human soul. It should also be noted that in M1, Descartes recognizes that he himself had a long-standing opinion about God. He uses ‘*opinio*’ rather than ‘*præjudicium*’ there, so it is not clear whether he regarded his opinion about God as an omnipotent being who made him what he is as a “preconceived opinion.”

The Demolition of All Opinions

We now turn to the text of Meditation One. The first paragraph describes the task as being “the general demolition of all my opinions (*opinionum*).” The scope of the demolition is said in the second paragraph to be “all my opinions,” or “all my former beliefs.” The strategy for rejecting them is to “go straight for the basic principles upon which all my former beliefs rested.” Interestingly, Descartes does not state at any point in his carrying out the demolition exactly what these basic principles are.

As noted, one of Descartes’s opinions is “the long-standing opinion that there is an

omnipotent God who made me the kind of creature that I am,” an opinion that is “firmly rooted in my mind” (AT VII 21, CSM II 14). Descartes does not in M1 attempt to demolish this opinion. Nor, for that matter, does he give any reason to doubt some of the premises he uses in his arguments that are supposed to induce doubt in other matters. For example, later in M1 he assumes without question that there is a correlation between the degree of perfection in a cause and that in its effect (AT VII 21, CSM II 14). (A version of this principle is later used in the proof of the existence of God in M3, AT VII 40-41, CSM II 28.)

We might conclude either that Descartes was not really trying to rid himself of all his opinions, or that some of what he accepts is not properly classified as “opinion,” and thus is not a target in M1. The latter approach seems preferable, though it would have been helpful if Descartes had spelled his aim out. Perhaps he did not do so because there is a “chicken and egg” problem. He is not in a position to claim knowledge of anything until he has completed his process of doubting what can be doubted. Yet he can only make his reasons for doubting plausible (at least in some cases) if he is already in possession of some items of knowledge.

Here Descartes may be adopting the classical technique of the skeptic: it is permissible to use opinions against opinions. If a believer dogmatically holds something to be true, then that belief may legitimately be used by the skeptic to cast doubt on his other beliefs. So long as Descartes himself finds the use of the tools of demolition plausible, he is entitled to use them in the general task of demolishing all of his opinions. In the Third Replies, Descartes in fact described that argument in M1 as being presented as “merely plausible” rather than valid (AT VII 171, CSM II 121). However, this still leaves open the question of whether there remains anything that would allow Descartes to go forward after all his opinions are demolished, a point pressed especially by Bourdin in the Seventh Objections.

Finally, it may be useful to look at Descartes’s response to Gassendi in the Appendix to the Fifth Objections and Replies. The objection is that if Descartes is successful in ridding his mind of all his preconceived opinions, he would have emptied his mind altogether and would have no way forward. Descartes responds as follows:

The term ‘preconceived opinion’ applies not to all the notions which are in our mind (which I admit it is impossible for us to get rid of) but only to all the opinions which we have continued to accept as a result of previous judgments that we have made. And since making or not making a judgment is an act of will (as I have explained in the appropriate place) it is evident that it is something in our power. . . . But this does not entail that we cease to retain all the same notions in our memory. (AT VII 204, CSM II 270).

The second paragraph of M1 describes how the demolition of opinions is to be accomplished. He makes two moves that make his task manageable. First, rather than trying to discover which of his opinions are outright false, he will only look for those which “are not completely

certain and indubitable” (AT VII 18, CSM II 12). If he finds that they are uncertain, he will “hold back his assent” from them—something he thinks he can do because he regards the having of an opinion to be an act of his free will (see M4, AT VII 57-58, CSM II 40).

To establish that his opinions are uncertain, Descartes will try to discover “at least some reason for doubt” in each one of them. Second, rather than tackle each opinion individually, he will find reasons for doubting whole classes of opinions in one fell swoop. He ends the paragraph with the metaphor of a foundation. If he can find “the basic principles on which all my former beliefs rested,” he will then have undermined them, so that whatever is built upon these principles will collapse. It seems that the “basic principles” he has in mind are those which make the senses the basis of judgments about what is true and what is false.

The image of a foundation is developed extensively in the Seventh Replies, to Bourdin (AT VII 536-562, CSM II 366-383). Preconceived opinions are like a structure built upon ground—perhaps sand—that is not stable enough to support it reliably. In order for a stable structure to be erected, the building must be demolished, and moreover, the unstable ground must be removed by trenching until solid ground is reached. Upon this solid ground a foundation may be placed to support reliably a newly-constructed building.

Descartes makes another analogy in the Seventh Replies. His goal is to gain certainty, and his method is to remove from his mind all the impediments to certainty.

Suppose [my critic] had a basket full of apples and, being worried that some of the apples were rotten, wanted to take out the rotten ones to prevent the rot spreading. How would he proceed? Would he not begin by tipping the whole lot out of the basket? And would not the next step be to cast his eye over each apple in turn, and pick up and put back in the basket only those he saw to be sound, leaving the others? In just the same way, those who have never philosophized correctly have various opinions in their minds which they have begun to store up since childhood, and which they therefore have reason to believe may in many cases be false. They then attempt to separate the false beliefs from the others, so as to prevent their contaminating the rest and making the whole lot uncertain. Now the best way they can accomplish this is to reject all their beliefs together in one go, as if they were all uncertain and false. They can then go over each belief in turn and re-adopt only those which they recognize to be true and indubitable. (AT VII 481, CSM II 324).

In the third paragraph, Descartes tells us that “whatever I have up till now accepted as most true I have acquired either from the senses or through the senses.” This seems at odds with Descartes’s experience, since one would think that simple propositions of mathematics would be ones that he has “accepted as most true,” especially given his earlier work on geometry. In the Second Replies he concedes that an atheist geometer (who has not employed the method of doubt) “can be ‘clearly aware that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right

angles' ” (AT VII 141, CSM II 101). Presumably this clear perception is not acquired through the senses. On the other hand, in the Appendix to the Fifth Objections and Replies, Descartes does claim that children learn at least some general mathematical truths through sense-experience (AT IXA 206, CSM II 271).

First Phase of Demolition: Opinions About Sensible Things

Descartes's first reason for doubt is directed at the senses generally. They deceive us from time to time, “and it is prudent never to trust completely those who have deceived us even once” (AT VII 18, CSM II 12). Examples of such deception involve very small objects or objects in the distance.

But even if we cannot trust the senses completely because of their occasional deception, there do appear to be cases where there is no possibility of deception. When the object is nearby and not too small, and is the object of attention, we seem to be unable to be in error about it. Descartes uses as an example that he is sitting by the fire, clothed with a dressing-gown, with a piece of paper in his hand. Of course, he could be imagining this because he is mad, but it would be irrational for him to take madness as his model for believing. If he were mad, then the entire enterprise of searching for knowledge would be pointless.

Yet there appears to be reason why he might be deceived even in such apparently exemplary conditions. He seems to sense that he is shaking his head and stretching out his hand. Yet he has had when asleep the same experiences, with the same level of distinctness. This suggests that the kind of “distinctness” one finds in sensual experience (sleeping or waking) is not sufficient for knowledge. The problem is that “there is no sure sign by means of which being awake can be distinguished from being asleep” (AT VII 19, CSM II 13). And if there is no sure sign, there is room to doubt that he is awake at any time.

The only conclusion Descartes draws is that “I may be asleep,” a notion that is reinforced by the dazed feeling he has upon considering the argument. Since he may be asleep at the present time, he should (according to the method spelled out in the second paragraph) withhold his assent from the proposition that he is awake, and that he is seated by the fire, etc.

However, he goes further than this and supposes (for the moment, at least) that he is asleep and the “particulars” of his experience, such as moving his head, are not true. He is entitled to make such a supposition, because he may indeed be asleep. If making the supposition can give him some grounds for doubt in a class of propositions, then it is useful for carrying out his method.

In the *Discourse on Method*, Descartes had noted the similarity between waking and dreaming experience and announced his intention to behave accordingly. He wrote: “Lastly, considering that the very thoughts we have while awake may also occur while we sleep without any of

them being at that time true, I resolved to pretend that all the things that had ever entered my mind were no more true than the illusions of my dreams” (AT VI 32, CSM I 127).

In the Sixth Meditation, Descartes puts the matter slightly differently. He has no good reason to believe that things he perceives when awake are located outside him, since he can think of any sensory experience he has had when awake as occurring when he is asleep.

Every sensory experience I have ever thought I was having while awake I can also think of myself as sometimes having while asleep; and since I do not believe that what I seem to perceive in sleep comes from things located outside me, I did not see why I should be any more inclined to believe this of what I think I perceive when awake. (AT VII 77, CSM II 77).

But even upon the supposition that he is asleep (now or always), it seems that there are at least some things that are “real,” on the grounds that the dreaming images he has of a head and a hand are likeness of real heads and hands. Heads and hands are “general kinds of things” that can be real or copied in dreams.

On the other hand, it does not seem that an image of a head or hand must be a copy of a real head or hand. It may be a pure creation of the imagination, which is formed out of something more simple and more universal than heads and hands. In that case, it still appears that there must be in reality these things, which are “as it were the real colors from which we form all the images of things, whether true or false, that occur in our thought” (AT VII 20, CSM II 14). These would be “corporeal nature in general, and its extension; the shape of extended things; the quantity, or size and number of these things; the place in which they may exist, the time through which they may endure, and so on” (AT VII 20, CSM II 14). This list of “even simpler and more universal things” presages the final description of physical reality given by Descartes in M5 (AT VII 63f, CSM II 44).

Second Phase of Demolition: Simpler and More Universal Things

Since the “simpler and more universal things” are taken to be the basis for the imagining of all composite things, it seems that the sciences which treat of them specifically should be more certain than any science which treats of the composite. For we have reason to doubt of any composite thing whether it is real or the product of our dreaming imagination. This makes “physics, astronomy, medicine, and all other disciplines which depend on the study of composite things” doubtful.

But it seems to leave intact the sciences of arithmetic and geometry, which deal with the “simplest and most universal things.” Arithmetic, for example, allows proofs about numbers and geometry about extended quantities, whether or not there exist any things which have these numbers or quantities. “For whether I am awake or asleep, two and three added together are five, and a square has no more than four sides. It seems impossible that such

transparent truths (*perspecuae veritates*) should incur any suspicion of being false” (AT VII 20, CSM II 14).

At this point, Descartes introduces his “long-standing opinion (*opinio*)” that there is an omnipotent God who made him the kind of creature that he is. As noted above, it is not clear whether this is a preconceived opinion, but it is an opinion that is used to demolish other opinions, rather than being itself a target of demolition. The important point is that even as a mere possibility, it can still serve as the basis for doubt.

This opinion allows him to think it is possible that the objects he thinks exist do not in fact exist, while it appears that they do exist. The reason this is possible is that the presumed God’s omnipotence is such that he “could have created me such that I am deceived all the time (*semper fallar*).” Moreover, an omnipotent God also would have the power to make Descartes “go wrong every time I add two and three or count the sides of a square, or in some even simpler matter, if that is imaginable” (AT VII 21, CSM II 14). People do make mistakes in such matters, and God permits this to happen. It may seem inconsistent with God’s goodness to engage in such deception. But on the other hand, it is not foreign to God’s goodness to allow mistakes to be made by humans. The issue of how a supremely good God can permit humans to err will be taken up again in M4.

Descartes took some pains to note that it is only *in this context* that he is doubting simple mathematical propositions which seem very clearly to be true. His doubt is based on the supposition of God’s omnipotence, God’s having created him, and the observation of error. When he is reasoning about the possibility of error, Descartes is not attending to the mathematical objects themselves, but only considering them in relation to the supposition that God might have made him defective. As he states in M3, “The only reason for my later judgment that they were open to doubt was that it occurred to me that perhaps some God could have given me a nature such that I was deceived even in matters which seemed most evident” (AT VII 36, CSM II 25).

Descartes makes clear the dependence of the doubt on the absence of attention to the “simpler matters” themselves in his initial response to Bourdin. “In the First Meditation . . . I was supposing that I was not attending to anything that I clearly perceived” (AT VII 460, CSM II 309). Thus, when thinking hypothetically of the effect of a deceitful God on his beliefs, he could come to doubt the simpler things, but this does not preclude his having another way to ascertain their truth, through direct attention to them.

A lesser creator increases the chances that he is always deceived. It could be “fate or chance or a continuous chain of events or . . . some other means” that brought about his present state. The general principle here (which, as noted, is never subjected to doubt in M1) is that because error is a defect and imperfection, the less perfect his origin, the more likely it is that he is made in such a way “as to be deceived all the time.” The point is made as well in the Sixth

Replies: “the less power the atheist attributes to the author of his being, the more reason he will have to suspect that his nature may be so imperfect as to allow him to be deceived even in matters which seem utterly evident (*evidentissima*) to him” (AT VII 428, CSM II 289).

In M3, Descartes describes the doubt that is introduced on the basis of the supposition (not opinion) that the cause of his existence may have made him subject to deception even in the most evident matter as being “very slight and, so to speak, metaphysical” (AT VII 36, CSM II 25). Apparently, it is slight because his having been made defective is only one of many possibilities even if the opinion or supposition is correct, especially given the apparent goodness of God. It is metaphysical because it is based on a causal relation between a thing (himself) and that which brought about his existence.

Withholding Assent

This marks the lowest depths reached through the method of doubt. Descartes states that, because of the quality of the reasoning in them, “I have no answer to these arguments, but am finally compelled to admit that there is not one of my former beliefs about which a doubt may not properly be raised.” He adds that “in the future I must withhold my assent from these former beliefs just as carefully as I would from obvious falsehoods” (AT VII 21, CSM II 14). Thus it seems that Descartes thinks he has achieved the goal of showing that all his opinions are dubious.

However, in the case of his beliefs about the existence of the external world and its objects, it is hard to let go of his former opinions, because they remain highly probable. To withhold his assent, then, he makes a new supposition which undermines this probability. This supposition is that of a malicious or evil demon. This hypothetical demon is “of the utmost power and cunning [and] has employed all his energies in order to deceive me” (AT VII 22, CSM II 15). The result of this deception is that “all external things are merely the delusions of dreams which he has devised to ensnare my judgment” (AT VII 22, CSM II 15). Even if the demon did not create him, it could still ensure “that all these things appear to me to exist just as they do now” (AT VII 22, CSM II 15). The demon’s maliciousness is obviously compatible with his deception, which is not so clear in the case of God.

Note that the invocation of the demon supposition changes Descartes’s position from merely withholding assent regarding the existence of an external world to supposing actively that an external world does not exist. “I shall consider myself as not having hands or eyes, or flesh, or blood or senses, but as falsely believing that I have all these things” (AT VII 23, CSM II 15).

Bourdin charged, on the basis of the passage just cited, that Descartes adopted a “rule” whereby “I [must] say, believe and maintain the opposite of what is doubtful. . . Is it not certain that two and three make five? And should I therefore believe and maintain that two

and three do not make five?” (AT VII 456, CSM II 306). Descartes responded in forceful terms.

When I said that doubtful matters should for a time be treated as false, or rejected as false, I merely meant that when investigating the truths that have metaphysical certainty we should regard doubtful matters as not having any more basis than those which are quite false. I made this so clear that I do not think anyone of sound mind could interpret what I said in any other way; surely only someone who would not blush to be called a quibbler could pretend that it was my intention to believe the opposite of what is doubtful, let alone to believe this ‘to the extent of convincing myself that it is certain, and cannot be otherwise.’” (AT VII 460-461, CSM II 309).

Perhaps Descartes protests too much. In the Second Meditation, he attempts to divorce his notion of himself from anything requiring a body. “But what about the attributes I assigned to the soul? Nutrition or movement? Since now I do not have a body, these are mere fabrications” (AT VII 27, CSM II 18). Given his response to Bourdin, “now I do not have a body” must be taken to mean, “now I withhold judgment as to whether I have a body.” This considerably weakens the argument. The mentioned attributes might attach to the soul if he were to judge later that he has a body.

Descartes states in his interview with Burman that the introduction of the demon might be thought superfluous, but it is part of the project of raising “every difficulty that could possibly be raised” so that he can subsequently “demolish completely every single doubt” (AT V 147, CSMK 333). In the May 4, 1647 letter to the Curators of Leiden University, he states that “I was using the supposition only for the better overthrow of skepticism and atheism, and to prove that God is no deceiver, and to establish that as the foundation of all human certitude” (AT V 8, CSMK 316-317). He also writes in that letter that the demon is raised *per impossible*. His reason seems to be that given that God exists, God would not permit the demon to exist. The impossibility of the demon would be metaphysical only, and not an epistemic impossibility at the time it is raised.

Descartes contends that even if it is false (or, we might add, metaphysically impossible) that a malicious demon with such power exists, it is still permissible to assume that it does. In answer to Gassendi, he notes that it is permissible to assume falsehoods when it is useful, as with the procedures of astronomers and geometers when they add lines to given figures (AT VII 349-350, CSM II 242). (Perhaps he had in mind the lines he constructed in his *Optics* model of refraction, AT VI 93-105, CSM I 156-164.)

The demon is mentioned only twice more in the body of the *Meditations*. The first time is at the beginning of M2 (AT VII 25, CSM II 17), where Descartes maintains that the demon cannot deceive him regarding his own existence. The second is a bit later on in M2, in the discussion of the nature of the soul: “I am supposing that there is some supremely powerful,

and, if it is permissible to say so, malicious deceiver, who is deliberately trying to trick me in every way he can” (AT VII 26, CSM II 18). It is interesting to speculate as to why the demon supposition plays no further role in the *Meditations* proper, but we will not do so here. Although the demon plays only a minor role in the *Meditations*, its supposition is one of the most memorable parts of the book, and it is one that is often considered by contemporary philosophers as in need of refutation.

[Note on citations. Citations from Descartes are given first with the volume and page from the Adam and Tannery edition of Descartes’s works (*Œuvres*), which are given in the margins of the Cottingham, Stoothoff and Murdoch translations, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. The citation ‘CSM’ with volume and page numbers are to Volumes I and II of that work, while ‘CSMK’ refers to volume III, translated by Cottingham, Stoothoff, Murdoch and Kenny.]