

Notes for “Meditations on First Philosophy” by Renee Descartes

Richard Walters, 2017

Important Points:

Descartes’ Meditations may not ultimately convince the reader out of solipsism. But, it does take a few very important leaps.

1. The general rule that the more clearly and distinctly an idea can be conceived, the more likely it is to be true is important.
 - a. In the end, it is very true that if you only base your decisions upon things clearly conceived, you will be less likely to err. This is a solid rule for governing one’s deliberations.
 - b. Careful observation, verification of the senses and memory can lead to a life less fraught with error.
2. His intellection that his will, above any other faculty his mind is closer to being divine than any other faculty is quite important.
 - a. Further, since the will is more powerful than his understanding, error springs from not restraining the will to stay within the bounds of understanding. P.40
 - b. Knowledge of what we understand ought to precede the determination of the will.
3. The use of a chiliogon (1000 sided figure) to prove that the mind can conceive of things it cannot actually visualize with the imagination. P.53 But, what is important to Descartes is that his example shows how the imagination differs from pure intellection.

Life Facts

1596-1650

1. Renee Descartes’ name rendered into Latin is “Cartesius”
2. Three dreams.. leading to search for a new method for scientific inquiry
 - a. “Rules for the Direction of the Mind”
3. Worked on mechanics, including optics, and mechanistic physics
 - a. “The World”
 - b. Did not publish “The World” because Galileo was condemned by the church for the heliocentric model, and his book did the same.
4. Analytical geometry = Coordinate geometry = Cartesian geometry (algebra+geometry)
 - a. “Dioptrique” and “Meteors”
5. Greatest works
 - a. “The Discourse on Method” (1635) – a whole other break with scholasticism
 - b. “Meditations on First Philosophy” (1641) – sensation not required for thought
6. Wrapped up everything in “Principles of Philosophy”

“Meditations” Summary in Brief

1. I can doubt everything that exists except that I think, and therefore I must exist, if only as a thinking thing.
2. This idea that I think, therefore I am, is an example of an idea that is clearly conceived, such that it cannot be false. And so, the general rule is made that anything that can be clearly and distinctly conceived must be true.
3. A thing cannot be created by something inferior to it.
4. I must find some idea of which I cannot be the cause.
5. The idea of a perfect, omnipotent, immortal being is something which my mind can conceive clearly and distinctly. And something less than perfect, omnipotent, or immortal (such as myself) could not have such an idea because a lesser thing cannot create clear and distinct ideas greater than itself.
6. God, as described above, must exist.
7. Since God is perfect, he cannot be a deceiver, because such a nature is imperfect.
8. Evil in the world comes from my own imperfection, specifically not being able to restrain my own will, which is nearly divine in its capacity.
9. I am able to intellect things beyond my imagination. For example a chiliogon.
10. The body I imagine is an extended thing, clearly distinct from the mind which exists apart from it.
11. Since God is no deceiver, some of my sensations must be true.
12. I seem intimately conjoined with a specific body. But, altering the body does not interfere with the thing that thinks, except that it must judge more carefully what it observes.
13. Through careful use of Observation, Verification and Memory, I can trust what I sense in the material world.

Meditation 1: Doubt

1. The experiment of doubt.
 - a. "Several years have now elapsed since I first became aware that I had accepted, even from my youth, many false opinions for true, and that consequently what I afterward based on such principles was highly doubtful; and from that time I was convinced of the necessity of undertaking once in my life to rid myself of all the opinions I had adopted, and of commencing anew the work of building from the foundation, if I desired to establish a firm and abiding superstructure in the sciences." P.1
 - b. "Nevertheless it must be admitted at least that the objects which appear to us in sleep are, as it were, painted representations which could not have been formed unless in the likeness of realities; and, therefore, that those general objects, at all events, namely, eyes, a head, hands, and an entire bod , are not simply imaginary, but really existent. For, in truth, painters themselves, even when they study to represent sirens and satyrs by forms the most fantastic and extraordinary, cannot bestow upon them natures absolutely new, but can only make a certain medley of the members of different animals; or if they chance to imagine something so novel that nothing at all similar has ever been seen before, and such as is, therefore, purely fictitious and absolutely false, it is at least certain that the colors of which this is composed are real." P.3
 - c. "And on the same principle, although these general objects, viz, [a body], eyes, a head, hands, and the like, be imaginary, we are nevertheless absolutely necessitated to admit the reality at least of some other objects still more simple and universal than these, of which, just as of certain real colors, all those images of things, whether true and real, or false and fantastic, that are found in our consciousness (cogitation), are formed. To this class of objects seem to belong corporeal nature in general and its extension; the figure of extended things, their quantity or magnitude, and their number, as also the place in, and the time during, which they exist, and other things of the same sort. We will not, therefore, perhaps reason illegitimately if we conclude from this that Physics, Astronomy, Medicine, and all the other sciences that have for their end the consideration of composite objects, are indeed of a doubtful character; but that Arithmetic, Geometry, and the other sciences of the same class, which regard merely the simplest and most general objects, and scarcely inquire whether or not these are really existent, contain somewhat that is certain and indubitable: for whether I am awake or dreaming, it remains true that two and three make five, and that a square has but four sides; nor does it seem possible that truths so apparent can ever fall under a suspicion of falsity [or incertitude]." P.3
2. The introduction of the malignant demon.
 - a. "If, however, it were repugnant to the goodness of Deity to have created me subject to constant deception, it would seem likewise to be contrary to his goodness to allow me to be occasionally deceived; and yet it is clear that this is permitted." P.4

- b. "... the probability of my being so imperfect as to be the constant victim of deception, will be increased exactly in proportion as the power possessed by the cause, to which they assign my origin, is lessened." P.5
- c. "I will suppose, then, not that Deity, who is sovereignly good and the fountain of truth, but that some **malignant demon**, who is at once exceedingly potent and deceitful, has employed all his artifice to deceive me; I will suppose that the sky, the air, the earth, colors, figures, sounds, and all external things, are nothing better than the illusions of dreams, by means of which this being has laid snares for my credulity; I will consider myself as without hands, eyes, flesh, blood, or any of the senses, and as falsely believing that I am possessed of these; I will continue resolutely fixed in this belief, and if indeed by this means it be not in my power to arrive at the knowledge of truth, I shall at least do what is in my power, viz [suspend my judgment], and guard with settled purpose against giving my assent to what is false, and being imposed upon by this deceiver, whatever be his power and artifice." p.6

Meditation 2: The Mind

1. The need to find one certain thing
 - a. "Archimedes, that he might transport the entire globe from the place it occupied to another, demanded only a point that was firm and immovable; so, also, I shall be entitled to entertain the highest expectations, if I am fortunate enough to discover only one thing that is certain and indubitable." P.7
2. I am deceived, therefore I exist?
 - a. "But I had the persuasion that there was absolutely nothing in the world, that there was no sky and no earth, neither minds nor bodies; was I not, therefore, at the same time, persuaded that I did not exist? Far from it; I assuredly existed, since I was persuaded. But there is I know not what being, who is possessed at once of the highest power and the deepest cunning, who is constantly employing all his ingenuity in deceiving me. Doubtless, then, I exist, since I am deceived; and , let him deceive me as he may, he can never bring it about that I am nothing, so long as I shall be conscious that I am something. So that it most, in fine, be maintained, all things being maturely and carefully considered, that this proposition (pronunciatum) I am, I exist, is necessarily true each time it is expressed by me, or conceived in my mind." p.8
3. Ego Cogito Ergo Sum
 - a. "Thinking is another attribute of the soul; and here I discover what properly belongs to myself. This alone is inseparable from me. I am — I exist: this is certain; but how often? As often as I think; for perhaps it would even happen, if I should wholly cease to think, that I should at the same time altogether cease to be. I now admit nothing that is not necessarily true. I am therefore, precisely speaking, only a thinking thing, that is, a mind (mens sive animus), understanding, or reason, terms whose signification was before unknown to me.

I am, however, a real thing, and really existent; but what thing? The answer was, a thinking thing." P.10

- b. "But what, then, am I? A thinking thing, it has been said. But what is a thinking thing? It is a thing that doubts, understands, [conceives], affirms, denies, wills, refuses; that imagines also, and perceives. In fine, I am the same being who perceives, that is, who apprehends certain objects as by the organs of sense, since, in truth, I see light, hear a noise, and feel heat. But it will be said that these presentations are false, and that I am dreaming. Let it be so. At all events it is certain that I seem to see light, hear a noise, and feel heat; this cannot be false, and this is what in me is properly called perceiving (sentire), which is nothing else than thinking." P.12
4. The essence of wax.
 - a. "What did I perceive which any animal might not have perceived ? But when I distinguish the wax from its exterior forms , and when , as if I had stripped it of its vestments , I consider it quite naked , it is certain , although some error may still be found in my judgment , that I cannot , nevertheless , thus apprehend it without possessing a human mind ." p.15
 5. Nothing is more clearly apprehended than my own mind.
 - a. "But , in conclusion , I find I have insensibly reverted to the point I desired ; for , since it is now manifest to me that **bodies themselves are not properly perceived by the senses nor by the faculty of imagination , but by the intellect alone** ; and since they are not perceived because they are seen and touched , but only because they are understood [or rightly comprehended by thought] , I readily discover that **there is nothing more Easily or clearly apprehended than my own mind** ." p.16

Meditation 3: God

7. Rule number one.
 - a. "it seems to me that **I may now take as a general rule , that all that is very clearly and distinctly apprehended (conceived) is true** . when I considered any matter in arithmetic and geometry , that was very simple and easy , as , for example , that two and three added together make five , and things of this sort , did I not view them with at least sufficient clearness to warrant me in affirming their truth ?" p.18
8. Is God an all-powerful deceiver?
 - a. "... as often as this preconceived opinion of the sovereign power of a God presents itself to my mind , I am constrained to admit that it is easy for him , if he wishes it , to cause me to err ." p.18
 - b. "Deceive me who may , no one will yet ever be able to bring it about that I am not , so long as I shall be conscious that I am , or at any future time cause it to be true that I have never been , it being now true that I am ," p.18

- c. "I must inquire whether there is a God , as soon as an opportunity of doing so shall present itself ; and if I find that there is a God , I must examine likewise whether he can be a deceiver ; for , without the knowledge of these two truths , I do not see that I can ever be certain of anything ." p.19
9. The nature of pure ideas, that they cannot be false.
- a. "... with respect to ideas , if these are considered only in themselves , and are not referred to any object beyond them , they cannot , properly speaking , be false..." P.20
10. Diverse ideas of the Sun.
- a. "... I have observed , in a number of instances , that there was a great difference between the object and its idea ." p.21
 - b. "These two ideas cannot certainly both resemble the same sun ; and reason teaches me that the one which seems to have immediately emanated from it is the most unlike ." p.22
11. The clear and distinct idea of God
- a. "... the idea by which I conceive a God [sovereign] , eternal , infinite , [immutable] , all - knowing , all - powerful , and the creator of all things that are out of himself , this , I say , has certainly in it more objective reality than those ideas by which finite substances are represented ." p.22
 - b. "Now , it is manifest by the natural light that there must at least be as much reality in the efficient and total cause as in its effect ; for whence can the effect draw its reality if not from its cause ? And how could the cause communicate to it this reality unless it possessed it in itself ? And hence it follows , not only that what is cannot be produced by what is not , but likewise that the more perfect , in other words , that which contains in itself more reality , cannot be the effect of the less perfect ; and this is not only evidently true of those effects , whose reality is actual or formal , but likewise of ideas , whose reality is only considered as objective ." p.23
12. Ideas fall short of the perfection of the objects from which they are taken.
- a. "... we ought to consider that , [as every idea is a work of the mind] , its nature is such as of itself to demand no other formal reality than that which it borrows from our consciousness , of which it is but a mode [that is , a manner or way of thinking] . But in order that an idea may contain this objective reality rather than that , it must doubtless derive it from some cause in which is found at least as much formal reality as the idea contains of objective ; for , if we suppose that there is found in an idea anything which was not in its cause , it must of course derive this from nothing ." p.23
 - b. "I am thus clearly taught by the natural light that ideas exist in me as pictures or images , which may , in truth , readily fall short of the perfection of the objects from which they are taken , but can never contain anything greater or more perfect ." p.24
13. A light at the end of the Solipsistic tunnel
- a. "... if the objective reality [or perfection] of any one of my ideas be such as clearly to convince me , that this same reality exists in me neither formally nor

eminently , and if , as follows from this , I myself cannot be the cause of it , it is a necessary consequence that I am not alone in the world , but that there is besides myself some other being who exists as the cause of that idea." P.24

14. Again, what can and cannot be clearly conceived?

- a. "As belonging to the class of things that are clearly apprehended , I recognize the following , viz , magnitude or extension in length , breadth , and depth ; figure , which results from the termination of extension ; situation , which bodies of diverse figures preserve with reference to each other ; and motion or the change of situation ; to which may be added substance , duration , and number ." p.25

15. And what about God?

- a. "By the name God , I understand a substance infinite , [eternal , immutable] , independent , all - knowing , all - powerful , and by which I myself , and every other thing that exists , if any such there be , were created . But, **these properties are so great and excellent , that the more attentively I consider them the less I feel persuaded that the idea I have of them owes its origin to myself alone . And thus it is absolutely necessary to conclude , from all that I have before said , that God exists** : for though the idea of substance be in my mind owing to this , that I myself am a substance , I should not , however , have the idea of an infinite substance , seeing I am a finite being , unless it were given me by some substance in reality infinite ." p.27
- b. "I clearly perceive that there is more reality in the infinite substance than in the finite , and therefore that in some way I possess the perception (notion) of the infinite before that of the finite , that is , the perception of God before that of myself , for how could I know that I doubt , desire , or that something is wanting to me , and that I am not wholly perfect , if I possessed no idea of a being more perfect than myself , by comparison of which I knew the deficiencies of my nature ?" p.27
- c. "The idea , I say , of a being supremely perfect , and infinite , is in the highest degree true ; for although , perhaps , we may imagine that such a being does not exist , we cannot , nevertheless , suppose that his idea represents nothing real , as I have already said of the idea of cold . It is likewise clear and distinct in the highest degree , since whatever the mind clearly and distinctly conceives as real or true , and as implying any perfection , is contained entire in this idea ." p.275

16. I am not God.

- a. "I interrogate myself to discover whether I possess any power by means of which I can bring it about that I, who now am, shall exist a moment afterward: for, since I am merely a thinking thing (or since, at least, the precise question, in the meantime, is only of that part of myself), if such a power resided in me, I should, without doubt, be conscious of it; but I am conscious of no such power, and thereby I manifestly know that I am dependent upon some being different from myself." P.31

17. Conclusion: God exists and he is not a deceiver.

- a. "... considering only that God is my creator, it is highly probable that he in some way fashioned me after his own image and likeness, and that I perceive this likeness, in which is contained the idea of God, by the same faculty by which I apprehend myself, in other words, when I make myself the object of reflection, I not only find that I am an incomplete, [imperfect] and dependent being, and one who unceasingly aspires after something better and greater than he is; but, at the same time, I am assured likewise that he upon whom I am dependent possesses in himself all the goods after which I aspire [and the ideas of which I find in my mind], and that not merely indefinitely and potentially, but infinitely and actually, and that he is thus God." P.34
- b. "And the whole force of the argument of which I have here availed myself to establish the existence of God, consists in this, that I perceive I could not possibly be of such a nature as I am, and yet have in my mind the idea of a God, if God did not in reality exist—this same God. I say, whose idea is in my mind—that is, a being who possesses all those lofty perfections, of which the mind may have some slight conception, without, however, being able fully to comprehend them, and who is wholly superior to all defect [and has nothing that marks imperfection]: whence it is sufficiently manifest that he cannot be a deceiver, since **it is a dictate of the natural light that all fraud and deception spring from some defect.**" P.34

Meditation 4: Truth and Error

1. The path forward
 - a. "... the idea I have of the human mind in so far as it is a thinking thing, and not extended in length, breadth, and depth, and participating in none of the properties of body, is incomparably more distinct than the idea of any corporeal object." P.35
 - b. "... when I consider that I doubt, in other words, that I am an incomplete and dependent being, the idea of a complete and independent being, that is to say of God, occurs to my mind with so much clearness and distinctness, distinctness, and from the fact alone that this idea is found in me, or that I who possess it exist, the conclusions **that God exists, and that my own existence, each moment of its continuance, is absolutely dependent upon him, are so manifest, as to lead me to believe it impossible that the human mind can know anything with more clearness and certitude.**" P.35
 - c. "And now I seem to discover a path that will conduct us from the contemplation of the true God, in whom are contained all the treasures of science and wisdom, to the knowledge of the other things in the universe." P.35
 - d. "I am conscious that I possess a certain faculty of judging [or discerning truth from error], which I doubtless received from God, along with whatever else is mine; and since it is impossible that he should will to deceive me, it is likewise

certain that he has not given me a faculty that will ever lead me into error, provided I use it aright.: p.35

2. Human Understanding and Will

- a. "... in truth, there is no ground to prove that Deity ought to have endowed me with a larger faculty of cognition than he has actually bestowed upon me; and however skillful a workman I suppose him to be, I have no reason, on that account, to think that it was obligatory on him to give to each of his works all the perfections he is able to bestow upon some." P.38
- b. "Nor, moreover, can I complain that God has not given me freedom of choice, or a will sufficiently ample and perfect, since, in truth, I am conscious of will so ample and extended as to be superior to all limits. And what appears to me here to be highly remarkable is that, of all the other properties I possess, there is none so great and perfect as that I do not clearly discern it could be still greater and more perfect." P.38
- c. "It is the faculty of will only, or freedom of choice, which I experience to be so great that I am unable to conceive the idea of another that shall be more ample and extended; so that it is chiefly my will which leads me to discern that I bear a certain image and similitude of Deity." P.39

3. An Omniscient God, Free Will, and Determinism

- a. "... the power of will consists only in this, that we are able to do or not to do the same thing (that is, to affirm or deny, to pursue or shun it), or rather in this alone, that in affirming or denying, pursuing or shunning, what is proposed to us by the understanding, we so act that we are not conscious of being determined to a particular action by any external force." P.39
- b. "For, to the possession of freedom, it is not necessary that I be alike indifferent toward each of two contraries; but, on the contrary, the more I am inclined toward the one, whether because I clearly know that in it there is the reason of truth and goodness, or because **God thus internally disposes my thought**, the more freely do I choose and embrace it; and assuredly divine grace and natural knowledge, very far from diminishing liberty, rather augment and fortify it. But the indifference of which I am conscious when I am not impelled to one side rather than to another for want of a reason, is the lowest grade of liberty, and manifests defect or negation of knowledge rather than perfection of will; for if I always clearly knew what was true and good, I should never have any difficulty in determining what judgment I ought to come to, and what choice I ought to make, and I should thus be entirely free without ever being indifferent." P.39

4. The source of Error found in the imbalance between Will and Understanding.

- a. "**Whence, then, spring my errors? They arise from this cause alone, that I do not restrain the will, which is of much wider range than the understanding, within the same limits, but extend it even to things I do not understand**, and as the will is of itself indifferent to such, it readily falls into error and sin by choosing the false in room of the true, and evil instead of good." P.40

- b. "... **it is a dictate of the natural light, that the knowledge of the understanding ought always to precede the determination of the will.**" P.41
- c. "... it is no imperfection in Deity that he has accorded to me the power of giving or withholding my assent from certain things of which he has not put a clear and distinct knowledge in my understanding; but it is doubtless an imperfection in me that I do not use my freedom aright, and readily give my judgment on matters which I only obscurely and confusedly conceive." P.42
- d. "... he has at least left in my power the other means, which is, firmly to retain the resolution never to judge where the truth is not clearly known to me: for, although I am conscious of the weakness of not being able to keep my mind continually fixed on the same thought, I can nevertheless, by attentive and oft-repeated meditation, impress it so strongly on my memory that I shall never fail to recollect it as often as I require it, and I can acquire in this way the habitude of not erring." P.43
- e. "... as often as I so restrain my will within the limits of my knowledge, that it forms no judgment except regarding objects which are clearly and distinctly represented to it by the understanding, I can never be deceived; because every clear and distinct conception is doubtless something, and as such cannot owe its origin to nothing, but must of necessity have God for its author...." P.43
- f. "I will assuredly reach truth if I only fix my attention sufficiently on all the things I conceive perfectly, and separate these from others which I conceive more confusedly and obscurely...." P.44

Meditation 5: Approaching Material Things

1. How to proceed?
 - a. "... what I have chiefly to do is to essay to emerge from the state of doubt in which I have for some time been, and to discover whether anything can be known with certainty regarding material objects." P.45
2. Geometry to the rescue!
 - a. "I discover in my mind innumerable ideas of certain objects, which cannot be esteemed pure negations, although perhaps they possess no reality beyond my thought, and which are not framed by me though it may be in my power to think, or not to think them, but possess true and immutable natures of their own. As, for example, when I imagine a triangle, although there is not perhaps and never was in any place in the universe apart from my thought one such figure, it remains true nevertheless that this figure possesses a certain determinate nature, form, or essence, which is immutable and eternal, and not framed by me, nor in any degree dependent on my thought." P.46
 - b. "... it is highly evident that all that is true is something, [truth being identical with existence]; and I have already fully shown the truth of the principle, that whatever is clearly and distinctly known is true." P.46

3. More on how some ideas can presuppose existence.
 - a. "I cannot conceive a God unless as existing, any more than I can a mountain without a valley, yet, just as it does not follow that there is any mountain in the world merely because I conceive a mountain with a valley, so likewise, though I conceive God as existing, it does not seem to follow on that account that God exists; for my thought imposes no necessity on things; and as I may imagine a winged horse, though there be none such, so I could perhaps attribute existence to God, though no God existed." P.47
 - b. "But the cases are not analogous, and a fallacy lurks under the semblance of this objection: for because I cannot conceive a mountain without a valley, it does not follow that there is any mountain or valley in existence, but simply that the mountain or valley, whether they do or do not exist, are inseparable from each other; whereas, on the other hand, because I cannot conceive God unless as existing, it follows that existence is inseparable from him, and therefore that he really exists: not that this is brought about by my thought, or that it imposes any necessity on things, but, on the contrary, the necessity which lies in the thing itself, that is, the necessity of the existence of God, determines me to think in this way: for **it is not in my power to conceive a God without existence**, that is, a being supremely perfect, and yet devoid of an absolute perfection, as I am free to imagine a horse with or without wings." P.48
4. A mini argument for God's existence
 - a. "I can conceive no other being, except God, to whose essence existence [necessarily] pertains; in the second, because it is impossible to conceive two or more gods of this kind; and it being supposed that one such God exists, I clearly see that he must have existed from all eternity, and will exist to all eternity; and finally, because I apprehend many other properties in God, none of which I can either diminish or change." P.49
5. Putting God together with Internal Ideas
 - a. "... when I consider the nature of the [rectilineal] triangle, it most clearly appears to me, who have been instructed in the principles of geometry, that its three angles are equal to two right angles, and I find it impossible to believe otherwise, while I apply my mind to the demonstration; but as soon as I cease from attending to the process of proof, although I still remember that I had a clear comprehension of it, yet I may readily come to doubt of the truth demonstrated, if I do not know that there is a God: for I may persuade myself that I have been so constituted by nature as to be sometimes deceived, even in matters which I think I apprehend with the greatest evidence and certitude, especially when I recollect that I frequently considered many things to be true and certain which other reasons afterward constrained me to reckon as wholly false. But after I have discovered that God exists, seeing I also at the same time observed that all things depend on him, and that he is no deceiver, and thence inferred that all which I clearly and distinctly perceive is of necessity true: although I no longer attend to the grounds of a judgment, no opposite reason

- can be alleged sufficient to lead me to doubt of its truth, provided only I remember that I once possessed a clear and distinct comprehension of it." P.51
- b. "But although, in truth, I should be dreaming, the rule still holds that **all which is clearly presented to my intellect is indisputably true**. And thus I very clearly see that the certitude and truth of all science depends on the knowledge alone of the true God, insomuch that, before I knew him, I could have no perfect knowledge of any other thing. And now that I know him, I possess the means of acquiring a perfect knowledge respecting innumerable matters, as well relative to God himself and other intellectual objects as to corporeal nature, in so far as it is the object of pure mathematics [which do not consider whether it exists or not]." P.51

Meditation 6: Material Things and Dual Nature of Man

1. The difference between imagination and pure intellection
 - a. "... when I imagine a triangle I not only conceive (intelligo) that it is a figure comprehended by three lines, but at the same time also I look upon (intueor) these three lines as present by the power and internal application of my mind (acie mentis), and this is what I call imagining. But if I desire to think of a chiliogon, I indeed rightly conceive that it is a figure composed of a thousand sides, as easily as I conceive that a triangle is a figure composed of only three sides; but I cannot imagine the thousand sides of a chiliogon as I do the three sides of a triangle, nor, so to speak, view them as present [with the eyes of my mind]." P.53
 - b. "But if the question turns on a pentagon, it is quite true that I can conceive its figure, as well as that of a chiliogon, without the aid of imagination; but I can likewise imagine it by applying the attention of my mind to its five sides, and at the same time to the area which they contain. Thus I observe that a special effort of mind is necessary to the act of imagination, which is not required to conceiving or understanding (ad intelligendum;) and this special exertion of mind clearly shows the difference between imagination and pure intellection (imaginatio et intellectio pura)." P.54
2. Pleasures, Pains, Appetites and Passions
 - a. "And certainly, considering the ideas of all these qualities, which were presented to my mind, and which alone I properly and immediately perceived, it was not without reason that I thought I perceived certain objects wholly different from my thought, namely, bodies from which those ideas proceeded; for I was conscious that the ideas were presented to me without my consent being required, so that I could not perceive any object, however desirous I might be, unless it were present to the organ of sense; and it was wholly out of my power not to perceive it when it was thus present." P.56
 - b. "I had formerly trusted to the senses, rather than to reason, and that the ideas which I myself formed were not so clear as those I perceived by sense, and that

- they were even for the most part composed of parts of the latter, I was readily persuaded that I had no idea in my intellect which had not formerly passed through the senses." P.56
- c. "... it seemed to me that all the other judgments I had formed regarding the objects of sense, were dictates of nature; because I remarked that those judgments were formed in me, before I had leisure to weigh and consider the reasons that might constrain me to form them." P.57
3. Irreconcilable errors in Sense/Judgement
 - a. "... I have sometimes been informed by parties whose arm or leg had been amputated, that they still occasionally seemed to feel pain in that part of the body which they had lost." P.57
 4. Duality of Man
 - a. "I will shortly say, although I certainly do possess a body with which I am very closely conjoined; nevertheless, because, on the one hand, I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in as far as I am only a thinking and unextended thing, and as, on the other hand, **I possess a distinct idea of body, in as far as it is only an extended and unthinking thing, it is certain that I, [that is, my mind, by which I am what I am], is entirely and truly distinct from my body, and may exist without it.**" P.59
 5. Material Objects Exist
 - a. "... as God is no deceiver, it is manifest that he does not of himself and immediately communicate those ideas to me, nor even by the intervention of any creature in which their objective reality is not formally, but only eminently, contained. For as he has given me no faculty whereby I can discover this to be the case, but, on the contrary, a very strong inclination to believe that those ideas arise from corporeal objects, I do not see how he could be vindicated from the charge of deceit, if in truth they proceeded from any other source, or were produced by other causes than corporeal things: and accordingly **it must be concluded, that corporeal objects exist.**" P.60
 - b. "... on the ground alone that God is no deceiver, and that consequently he has permitted no falsity in my opinions which he has not likewise given me a faculty of correcting, I think I may with safety conclude that I possess in myself the means of arriving at the truth." P.60
 6. The thinking thing is separate but conjoined with the body
 - a. "I am not only lodged in my body as a pilot in a vessel, but that I am besides so intimately conjoined, and as it were intermixed with it, that my mind and body compose a certain unity. For if this were not the case, I should not feel pain when my body is hurt, seeing I am merely a thinking thing, but should perceive the wound by the understanding alone, just as a pilot perceives by sight when any part of his vessel is damaged...." P.61
 7. What if the body is sick, or broken?
 - a. "... untouched, for a sick man is not less really the creature of God than a man who is in full health; and therefore it is as repugnant to the goodness of God that the nature of the former should be deceitful as it is for that of the latter to be so.

And as a untouched, for a sick man is not less really the creature of God than a man who is in full health; and therefore it is as repugnant to the goodness of God that the nature of the former should be deceitful as it is for that of the latter to be so. And as a move its nerves and its other parts in the way required for drinking, and thus increase its malady and do itself harm, as it is natural for it, when it is not indisposed to be stimulated to drink for its good by a similar cause; and although looking to the use for which a clock was destined by its maker, I may say that it is deflected from its proper nature when it incorrectly indicates the hours, and on the same principle, considering the machine of the human body as having been formed by God for the sake of the motions which it usually manifests, although I may likewise have ground for thinking that it does not follow the order of its nature when the throat is parched and drink does not tend to its preservation, nevertheless I yet plainly discern that this latter acceptance of the term nature is very different from the other: for this is nothing more than a certain denomination, depending entirely on my thought, and hence called extrinsic, by which I compare a sick man and an imperfectly constructed clock with the idea I have of a man in good health and a well made clock; while by the other acceptance of nature is understood something which is truly found in things, and therefore possessed of some truth." P.64

- b. "... although the whole mind seems to be united to the whole body, yet, when a foot, an arm, or any other part is cut off, I am conscious that nothing has been taken from my mind; nor can the faculties of willing, perceiving, conceiving, etc., properly be called its parts, for it is the same mind that is exercised [all entire] in willing, in perceiving, and in conceiving, etc But quite the opposite holds in corporeal or extended things; for I cannot imagine any one of them [how small soever it may be], which I cannot easily sunder in thought, and which, therefore, I do not know to be divisible. This would be sufficient to teach me that the mind or soul of man is entirely different from the body, if I had not already been apprised of it on other grounds." P.66

8. Trusting in God, and Using the Tools God Provided to reach certainty.

- a. Using the three following abilities:
 - i. Observation: "knowing that all my senses more usually indicate to me what is true than what is false"
 - ii. Verification: "being able almost always to make use of more than a single sense in examining the same object"
 - iii. Memory: "being able to use my memory in connecting present with past knowledge, and my understanding which has already discovered all the causes of my errors"
- b. Therefore: "I ought no longer to fear that falsity may be met with in what is daily presented to me by the senses." P.69
- c. "... if someone, when I am awake, appeared to me all of a sudden and as suddenly disappeared, as do the images I see in sleep, so that I could not observe either whence he came or whither he went, I should not without reason esteem it either a specter or phantom formed in my brain, rather than a real

- man. But when I perceive objects with regard to which I can distinctly determine both the place whence they come, and that in which they are, and the time at which they appear to me, and when, without interruption, I can connect the perception I have of them with the whole of the other parts of my life, I am perfectly sure that what I thus perceive occurs while I am awake and not during sleep. " p.70
- d. "And I ought not in the least degree to doubt of the truth of these presentations, if, after having called together all my senses, my memory, and my understanding for the purpose of examining them, no deliverance is given by any one of these faculties which is repugnant to that of any other: for since God is no deceiver, it necessarily follows that I am not herein deceived. But because the necessities or action frequently oblige us to come to a determination before we have had leisure for careful an examination, it must be confessed that the life of man is frequently obnoxious to error with respect to individual objects; and we must, in conclusion, acknowledge the weakness of our nature." P.70

Extra notes

1. Skepticism vs Rationalism vs Positivism in the Epistemological landscape
2. Ontological Argument of Anselm of Canterbury "god is that which nothing greater can be thought"
3. Aristotle's method
 - a. Does it exist?
 - b. What is it?
 - c. Does it have an essence, trim away accidents?
 - d. Why does it own these things?
4. Scholasticism
 - a. Abelard – sic et non
 - b. Descartes rejects final ends (telos) and doesn't believe that material can be separated from form
 - c. Posits analytic reasoning from effect to cause, and not synthetic reasoning from cause to effect.