

From: Meditations on First Philosophy  
Laurence Lafleur, trans.  
Prentice Hall

SYNOPSIS OF THE SIX FOLLOWING  
MEDITATIONS

In the First Meditation, I offer the reasons why we can doubt all things in general, and particularly material objects, at least as long as we do not have other foundations for the sciences than those we have hitherto possessed. And although it is not immediately apparent that so general a doubt can be useful, it is in fact very much so, since it delivers us from all sorts of prejudices and makes available to us an easy method of accustoming our minds to become independent of the senses. Finally, it is useful in making it subsequently impossible to doubt those things which we discover to be true after we have taken doubt into consideration.

In the Second, the mind,<sup>1</sup> which in its intrinsic freedom supposes that everything which is open to the least doubt is nonexistent, recognizes that it is nevertheless absolutely impossible that it does not itself exist. This is also of the highest utility, since by this means the mind can easily distinguish between those qualities which belong to it—that is to say, to its intellectual nature—and those which belong to the body.

But because it might happen that some persons will expect me to offer at this point reasons to prove the immortality of the soul, I think it my duty to warn them now (13) that, since I have tried to write nothing in this treatise for which I did not have very exact demonstrations, I have found myself obliged to follow an order similar to that used by geometers, which is to present first all those things on which the proposition one is seeking to prove depends, before reaching any conclusions about the proposition itself.

But the first and principal thing required in order to recognize the immortality of the soul<sup>2</sup> is to form the clearest possi-

<sup>1</sup> [Latin: *mens*; French: *esprit*.]

<sup>2</sup> [L. *anima*; F. *ame*.]

ble conception of it, [10] and one which is entirely distinct from all the conceptions one can have of the body, which has been done in this Second Meditation. It is necessary, in addition, to know that all things which we conceive clearly and distinctly are true in the manner in which we conceive them, and this cannot be proved before the Fourth Meditation. Furthermore, we must have a distinct conception of corporeal nature, which we acquire partly in the Second, and partly in the Fifth and Sixth Meditations. And finally, we must conclude from all this that things which we clearly and distinctly perceive to be diverse substances, as we conceive the mind and the body, are in fact substances which are really distinct from each other; which is what we conclude in the Sixth Meditation. This is confirmed again, in the same Meditation, by the fact that we cannot conceive any body except as divisible, while the mind or soul of man can only be conceived as indivisible. For in reality we cannot conceive of half of any soul, as we can of the smallest possible body, so that we recognize that their natures are not only different but even in some sense contrary. I have not treated this subject further in this treatise, partly because we have already discovered enough to show with sufficient clarity that the corruption of the body does not entail the death of the soul, and so to give men the hope of a second life after death; and partly because the premises from which the immortality of the soul may be concluded depend upon the explanation of the whole of physics. First, (14) we must know that all substances in general—that is to say, all those things which cannot exist without being created by God—are by nature incorruptible and can never cease to be, unless God himself, by denying them his usual support, reduces them to nothingness. And secondly, we must notice that body, taken in general, is a substance, and that it therefore will never perish. But the human body, however much it may differ from other bodies, is only a composite, produced by a certain configuration of members and by other similar accidents, whereas the human soul is not thus dependent upon any accidents, but is a pure substance. For even if

all its accidents change—as, for example, if it conceives of certain things, wills others, and receives sense impressions of still others—nevertheless it still remains the same soul. But the human body becomes a different entity from the mere fact that the shape of some of its parts has been changed. From this it follows that the human body may very easily perish, but that the mind or soul of man, between which I find no distinction, is immortal by its very nature. [11]

In the Third Meditation, I have explained at sufficient length, it seems to me, the principal argument I use to prove the existence of God. Nevertheless, I did not want to use at that point any comparisons drawn from physical things, in order that the minds of the readers should be as far as possible withdrawn from the use of and commerce with the senses. There may, therefore, be many obscurities remaining, which I hope will be completely elucidated in my replies to the objections which have since been made to me. One of these obscurities is this: how can the idea of a supremely perfect Being, which we find in ourselves, contain so much objective reality, [that is to say, how can it participate by representation in so many degrees of being and of perfection,] that it must have come from a supremely perfect cause? This I have explained in these replies by means of a comparison with a very [ingenious and] artificial machine, the idea of which occurs in the mind of some worker. For as the real cleverness of this idea must have some cause, I conclude it to be either the knowledge of this worker or that of some other from whom he has received this idea. In the same way (15) it is impossible that the idea of God, which is in us, does not have God himself as its cause.

In the Fourth, it is proved that all things which we [conceive (or) perceive] very clearly and very distinctly are wholly true. At the same time I explain the nature of error or falsity, which nature we ought to discover, as much to confirm the preceding truths as to understand better those that follow. Nevertheless, it should be noticed that I do not in any way treat here of sin—that is, of error committed in the pursuit of

good and evil—but only of that which occurs in the judgment and discernment of the true and the false; and that I do not intend to speak of beliefs which belong to faith or to the conduct of life, but only of those which pertain to speculative truth and which can be known by the aid of the light of nature alone.

In the Fifth Meditation, besides the explanation of corporeal nature in general, the existence of God is again demonstrated by a new argument. There may also be some difficulties in this argument, but the solution will be found in the replies to the objections which have been made to me. In addition, I show how it is true that even the certainty of geometrical demonstrations themselves depends on the knowledge of God.

Finally, in the Sixth, I distinguish the action of the understanding from that of the imagination, and the marks of this distinction are described. Here I show that the 'mind' or soul of man is really distinct from the body, and that nevertheless it is so tightly bound and united with it that it [12] forms with it what is almost a single entity. All the errors which arise from the senses are here exposed, together with the methods of avoiding them. And finally, I here bring out all the arguments from which we may conclude the existence of material things; not because I judge them very useful, in that they prove what (16) they do prove—namely, that there is a world, that men have bodies, and other similar things which have never been doubted by any man of good sense—but because, in considering these arguments more closely, we come to recognize that they are not as firm and as evident as those which lead us to the knowledge of God and of our soul, so that the latter are the most certain and most evident truths which can become known to the human mind. That is all that I had planned to prove in these *Meditations*, which leads me to omit here many other questions with which I have dealt incidentally in this treatise. (17) [13]

## FIRST MEDITATION

### CONCERNING THINGS THAT CAN BE DOUBTED

There is no novelty to me in the reflection that, from my earliest years, I have accepted many false opinions as true, and that what I have concluded from such badly assured premises could not but be highly doubtful and uncertain. From the time that I first recognized this fact, I have realized that if I wished to have any firm and constant knowledge in the sciences, I would have to undertake, once and for all, to set aside all the opinions which I had previously accepted among my beliefs and start again from the very beginning. But this enterprise appeared to me to be of very great magnitude, and so I waited until I had attained an age so mature that I could not hope for a later time when I would be more fitted to execute the project. Now, however, I have delayed so long that henceforward I should be afraid that I was committing a fault if, in continuing to deliberate, I expended time which should be devoted to action.

The present is opportune for my design; I have freed my mind of all kinds of cares; (18) I feel myself, fortunately, disturbed by no passions; and I have found a serene retreat in peaceful solitude. I will therefore make a serious and unimpeded effort to destroy generally all my former opinions. In order to do this, however, it will not be necessary to show that they are all false, a task [14] which I might never be able to complete; because, since reason already convinces me that I should abstain from the belief in things which are not entirely certain and indubitable no less carefully than from the belief in those which appear to me to be manifestly false, it will be enough to make me reject them all if I can find in each some ground for doubt. And for that it will not be necessary for me to examine each one in particular, which would

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be an infinite labor; but since the destruction of the foundation necessarily involves the collapse of all the rest of the edifice, I shall first attack the principles upon which all my former opinions were founded.

Everything which I have thus far accepted as entirely true (and assured) has been acquired from the senses or by means of the senses. But I have learned by experience that these senses sometimes mislead me, and it is prudent never to trust wholly those things which have once deceived us.

But it is possible that, even though the senses occasionally deceive us about things which are barely perceptible and very far away, there are many other things which we cannot reasonably doubt, even though we know them through the senses—as, for example, that I am here, seated by the fire, wearing a 'winter' dressing gown, holding this paper in my hands, and other things of this nature. And how could I deny that these hands and this body are mine, unless I am to compare myself with certain lunatics (19) whose brain is so troubled and befogged by the black vapors of the bile that they continually affirm that they are kings while they are paupers, that they are clothed in gold and purple while they are naked; or imagine 'that their head is made of clay, or' that they are gourds, or that their body is glass? (But this is ridiculous;) such men are fools, and I would be no less insane than they if I followed their example.

Nevertheless, I must remember that I am a man, and that consequently I am accustomed to sleep and in my dreams to imagine the same things that lunatics imagine when awake, or sometimes things which are even less plausible. How many times has it occurred that 'the quiet of' the night made me dream 'of my usual habits;' that I was here, clothed 'in a dressing gown', and sitting by the fire, although I was in fact lying undressed in bed! It seems apparent to me now, that I am not looking at this paper with my eyes closed, that this head that I shake is not drugged with sleep, that it is with design and deliberate intent that I stretch out this hand and perceive it. What happens in sleep seems not at all as clear

and as distinct as all this. [15] But I am speaking as though I never recall having been misled, while asleep, by similar illusions! When I consider these matters carefully, I realize so clearly that there are no conclusive indications by which waking life can be distinguished from sleep that I am quite astonished, and my bewilderment is such that it is almost able to convince me that I am sleeping.

So let us suppose now that we are asleep and that all these details, such as opening the eyes, shaking the head, extending the hands, and similar things, are merely illusions; and let us think that perhaps our hands and our whole body are not such as we see them. Nevertheless, we must at least admit that these things which appear to us in sleep are like (painted) scenes (and portraits) which can only be formed in imitation of something (real and) true, and so, at the very least, these types of things—namely, eyes, head, hands, and the whole body—are not imaginary entities, but real and existent. For in truth painters, even when (20) they use the greatest ingenuity in attempting to portray sirens and satyrs in (bizarre and) extraordinary ways, nevertheless cannot give them wholly new shapes and natures, but only invent some particular mixture composed of parts of various animals; or even if perhaps (their imagination is sufficiently extravagant that) they invent something so new that nothing like it has ever been seen, and so their work represents something purely imaginary and (absolutely) false, certainly at the very least the colors of which they are composed must be real.

And for the same reason, even if these types of things—namely, (a body,) eyes, head, hands, and other similar things—could be imaginary, nevertheless, we are bound to confess that there are some other still more simple and universal concepts which are true (and existent), from the mixture of which, neither more nor less than in the case of the mixture of real colors, all these images of things are formed in our minds, whether they are true (and real) or imaginary (and fantastical).

Of this class of entities is corporeal nature in general and

its extension, including the shape of extended things, their quantity, or size and number, and also the place where they are, the time that measures their duration, and so forth. [16] That is why we will perhaps not be reasoning badly if we conclude that physics, astronomy, medicine, and all the other sciences which follow from the consideration of composite entities are very dubious (and uncertain); whereas arithmetic, geometry, and the other sciences of this nature, which treat only of very simple and general things without concerning themselves as to whether they occur in nature or not, contain some element of certainty and sureness. For whether I am awake or whether I am asleep, two and three together will always make the number five, and the square will never have more than four sides; and it does not seem possible that truths (so clear and) so apparent can ever be suspected of any falsity (or uncertainty). (21)

Nevertheless, I have long held the belief that there is a God who can do anything, by whom I have been created and made what I am. But how can I be sure but that he has brought it to pass that there is no earth, no sky, no extended bodies, no shape, no size, no place, and that nevertheless I have the impressions of all these things (and cannot imagine that things might be other than) as I now see them? And furthermore, just as I sometimes judge that others are mistaken about those things which they think they know best, how can I be sure but that (God has brought it about that) I am always mistaken when I add two and three or count the sides of a square, or when I judge of something else even easier, if I can imagine anything easier than that? But perhaps God did not wish me to be deceived in that fashion, since he is said to be supremely good. But if it was repugnant to his goodness to have made me so that I was always mistaken, it would seem also to be inconsistent for him to permit me to be sometimes mistaken, and nevertheless I cannot doubt that he does permit it.

At this point there will perhaps be some persons who would prefer to deny the existence of so powerful a God, rather than

to believe that everything else is uncertain. Let us not oppose them for the moment, and let us concede (according to their point of view) that everything which I have stated here about God is fictitious. Then in whatever way they suppose that I have reached the state of being that I now have, whether they attribute it to some destiny or fate or refer it to chance, or whether they wish to explain it as the result of a continual interplay of events (or in any other manner); nevertheless, since to err and be mistaken [17] is a kind of imperfection, to whatever degree less powerful they consider the author to whom they attribute my origin, in that degree it will be more probable that I am so imperfect that I am always mistaken. To this reasoning, certainly, I have nothing to reply; and I am at last constrained to admit that there is nothing in what I formerly believed to be true which I cannot somehow doubt, and this not for lack of thought and attention, but for weighty and well-considered reasons. Thus I find that, in the future, I should (withhold and suspend my judgment about these matters, and) guard myself no less carefully from believing them than I should from believing what is manifestly false (22) if I wish to find any certain and assured knowledge (in the sciences).

It is not enough to have made these observations; it is also necessary that I should take care to bear them in mind. For these customary and long-standing beliefs will frequently recur in my thoughts, my long and familiar acquaintance with them giving them the right to occupy my mind against my will (and almost to make themselves masters of my beliefs). I will never free myself of the habit of deferring to them and having faith in them as long as I consider that they are what they really are—that is, somewhat doubtful, as I have just shown, even if highly probable—so that there is much more reason to believe than to deny them. That is why I think that I would not do badly if I deliberately took the opposite position and deceived myself in pretending for some time that all these opinions are entirely false and imaginary, until at last I will have so balanced my former and my new prejudices that

they cannot incline my mind more to one side than the other, and my judgment will not be mastered and turned by bad habits from the correct perception of things and the straight road leading to the knowledge of the truth. For I feel sure that I cannot overdo this distrust, since it is not now a question of acting, but only of meditating and learning.

I will therefore suppose that, not a true God, who is very good and who is the supreme source of truth, but a certain evil spirit, not less clever and deceitful than powerful, has bent all his efforts to deceiving me. I will suppose that the sky, the air, the earth, colors, shapes, sounds, and all other objective things that we see are nothing but illusions and dreams that he [18] has used to trick my credulity. I will consider (23) myself as having no hands, no eyes, no flesh, no blood, nor any senses, yet falsely believing that I have all these things. I will remain resolutely attached to this hypothesis; and if I cannot attain the knowledge of any truth by this method, at any rate it is in my power to suspend my judgment. That is why I shall take great care not to accept any falsity among my beliefs and shall prepare my mind so well for all the ruses of this great deceiver that, however powerful and artful he may be, he will never be able to mislead me in anything.

But this undertaking is arduous, and a certain laziness leads me insensibly into the normal paths of ordinary life. I am like a slave who, enjoying an imaginary liberty during sleep, begins to suspect that his liberty is only a dream; he fears to wake up and conspires with his pleasant illusions to retain them longer. So insensibly to myself I fall into my former opinions; and I am slow to wake up from this slumber for fear that the labors of waking life which will have to follow the tranquillity of this sleep, instead of leading me into the daylight of the knowledge of the truth, will be insufficient to dispel the darkness of all the difficulties which have just been raised.

## SECOND MEDITATION

### OF THE NATURE OF THE HUMAN MIND, AND THAT IT IS MORE EASILY KNOWN THAN THE BODY

Yesterday's Meditation has filled my mind with so many doubts that it is no longer in my power to forget them. Nor do I yet see how I will be able to resolve them; I feel as though (24) I were suddenly thrown into deep water, being so disconcerted that I can neither plant my feet on the bottom nor swim on the surface. I shall nevertheless make every effort to conform precisely to the plan commenced yesterday and put aside every belief in which I could imagine the least doubt, just as though I knew that it was absolutely [19] false. And I shall continue in this manner until I have found something certain, or at least, if I can do nothing else, until I have learned with certainty that there is nothing certain in this world. Archimedes, to move the earth from its orbit and place it in a new position, demanded nothing more than a fixed and immovable fulcrum; in a similar manner I shall have the right to entertain high hopes if I am fortunate enough to find a single truth which is certain and indubitable.

I suppose, accordingly, that everything that I see is false; I convince myself that nothing has ever existed of all that my deceitful memory recalls to me. I think that I have no senses; and I believe that body, shape, extension, motion, and location are merely inventions of my mind. What then could still be thought true? Perhaps nothing else, unless it is that there is nothing certain in the world.

But how do I know that there is not some entity, of a different nature from what I have just judged uncertain, of which there cannot be the least doubt? Is there not some God or some other power who gives me these thoughts? But I need not think this to be true, for possibly I am able to produce

them myself. Then, at the very least, am I not an entity myself? But I have already denied that I had any senses or any body. However, at this point I hesitate, for what (25) follows from that? Am I so dependent upon the body and the senses that I could not exist without them? I have just convinced myself that nothing whatsoever existed in the world, that there was no sky, no earth, no minds, and no bodies; have I not thereby convinced myself that I did not exist? Not at all; without doubt I existed if I was convinced for even if I thought anything. Even though there may be a deceiver of some sort, very powerful and very tricky, who bends all his efforts to keep me perpetually deceived, there can be no slightest doubt that I exist, since he deceives me; and let him deceive me as much as he will, he can never make me be nothing as long as I think that I am something. Thus, after having thought well on this matter, and after examining all things with care, I must finally conclude and maintain that this proposition: *I am, I exist*, is necessarily true every time that I pronounce it or conceive it in my mind.

But I do not yet know sufficiently clearly what I am, I who am sure that I exist. So I must henceforth take very great care that I do not incautiously mistake [20] some other thing for myself, and so make an error even in that knowledge which I maintain to be more certain and more evident than all other knowledge that I previously had. That is why I shall now consider once more what I thought myself to be before I began these last deliberations. Of my former opinions I shall reject all that are rendered even slightly doubtful by the arguments that I have just now offered, so that there will remain just that part alone which is entirely certain and indubitable.

What then have I previously believed myself to be? Clearly, I believed that I was a man. But what is a man? Shall I say a rational animal? Certainly not, for I would have to determine what an "animal" is and what is meant by "rational"; and so, from a single question, I would find myself gradually enmeshed in an infinity of others more difficult and more inconvenient, and I would not care to waste the little time and

leisure remaining to me in disentangling such difficulties. I shall rather pause here to consider the ideas which previously arose naturally and of themselves (26) in my mind whenever I considered what I was. I thought of myself first as having a face, hands, arms, and all this mechanism composed of bone and flesh (and members), just as it appears in a corpse, and which I designated by the name of "body." In addition, I thought of the fact that I consumed nourishment, that I walked, that I perceived and thought, and I ascribed all these actions to the soul. But either I did not stop to consider what this soul was or else, if I did, I imagined that it was something very rarefied and subtle, such as a wind, a flame, or a very much expanded air which I penetrated into and was infused throughout my grosser components. As for what body was, I did not realize that there could be any doubt about it, for I thought that I recognized its nature very distinctly. If I had wished to explain it according to the notions that I then entertained, I would have described it somewhat in this way: By "body" I understand all that can be bounded by some figure: that can be located in some place and occupy space in such a way that every other body is excluded from it; that can be perceived by touch or sight or hearing or taste or smell; that can be moved in various ways, not by itself but by some other object by which it is touched (and from which it receives an impulse). For to possess the power to move itself, and also to feel or to think, I did not believe at all that these are attributes of corporeal nature: on the contrary, rather, I was astonished [21] to see a few bodies possessing such abilities.

But I, what am I, on the basis of the present hypothesis that there is a certain spirit who is extremely powerful and, if I may dare to say so, malicious (and tricky), and who uses all his abilities and efforts in order to deceive me? Can I be sure that I possess the smallest fraction of all those characteristics which I have just now said belonged to the nature of body? (27) I pause to consider this attentively. I pass and repass in review in my mind each one of all these things—it is not necessary to pause to take the time to list them—and I do not find any one

of them which I can pronounce to be part of me. Is it characteristic of me to consume nourishment and to walk? But if it is true that I do not have a body, these also are nothing but figments of the imagination. To perceive?<sup>1</sup> But once more, I cannot perceive without the body, except in the sense that I have thought I perceived various things during sleep, which I recognized upon waking not to have been really perceived. To think?<sup>2</sup> Here I find the answer. Thought is an attribute that belongs to me; it alone is inseparable from my nature.

I am, I exist—that is certain; but for how long do I exist? For as long as I think; for it might perhaps happen, if I totally ceased thinking, that I would at the same time completely cease to be. I am now admitting nothing except what is necessarily true. I am therefore, to speak precisely, only a thinking being, that is to say, a mind, an understanding,<sup>3</sup> or a reasoning being, which are terms whose meaning was previously unknown to me.

I am something real and really existing, but what thing am I? I have already given the answer: a thing which thinks. And what more? I will stimulate my imagination (to see if I am not something else beyond this). I am not this assemblage of members which is called a human body; I am not a rarefied and penetrating air spread throughout all these members. I am not a wind, a flame, a breath, a vapor, or anything at all that I can imagine and picture to myself—since I have supposed that all that was nothing, and since, without abandoning this supposition, I find that I do not cease to be certain that I am something.

But perhaps it is true that those same things which I suppose not to exist because I do not know them are really no different from the self which I do know. As to that I cannot decide; I am not discussing that question at the moment, since I can pass judgment only upon those things which are known to me: I know that I exist and I am seeking to discover what

<sup>1</sup> [L. sentire; F. sentir.]

<sup>2</sup> [L. cogitare; F. penser.]

<sup>3</sup> [L. intellectus; F. entendement.]

I am that "I" that I know to be. Now it is very [22] certain that this notion (and knowledge of my being) thus precisely understood, does not depend on things whose existence (28) is not yet known to me; and consequently said even more certainly, it does not depend on any of those things that I (can) picture in my imagination. And even these terms, "picture" and "imagine," warn me of my error. For I would be imagining falsely indeed were I to picture myself as something; since to imagine is nothing else than to contemplate the shape or image of a bodily entity, and I already know both that I certainly exist and that it is altogether possible that all these images, and everything in general which is involved in the nature of body, are only dreams (and illusional). From this I see clearly that there was no more sense in saying that I would stimulate my imagination to learn more distinctly what I am than if I should say: I am now awake, and I see something real and true; but because I do not yet perceive it sufficiently clearly, I will go to sleep on purpose, in order that my dreams will show it to me with more truth and evidence. And thus I know manifestly that nothing of all that I can understand by means of the imagination is pertinent to the knowledge which I have of myself, and that I must remember this and prevent my mind from thinking in this fashion, in order that it may clearly perceive its own nature.

But what then am I? A thinking being.<sup>4</sup> What is a thinking being? It is a being which doubts, which understands, which conceives, which affirms, which denies, which wills, which rejects, which imagines also, and which perceives. It is certainly not a trivial matter if all these things belong to my nature. But why should they not belong to it? Am I not that same person who now doubts almost everything, who nevertheless understands (and conceives) certain things, who is sure of and affirms the truth of this one thing alone, who denies all the others, who wills and desires to know more about them, who rejects error, who imagines many things, sometimes even against my will, and who also perceives many things, as

<sup>4</sup> [L. res cogitans; F. une chose qui pense.]

## SIXTH MEDITATION

### OF THE EXISTENCE OF CORPOREAL THINGS AND OF THE REAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE MIND AND BODY [OF MAN]

Nothing more is now left for me to do except to examine whether corporeal things exist; and I already know (for certain) that they can exist at least in so far as they are considered as the objects (of pure mathematics, for) of the demonstrations of geometry, since I conceive them in this way very clearly and very distinctly. For there is no doubt but that God has the power of producing everything that I am able to conceive with distinctness; and I have never supposed that it was impossible for him to do anything, except only when I found a contradiction in being able to conceive it well. Furthermore, my faculty of imagination, which I find by experience that I use when I apply myself to the consideration of material objects, is capable of persuading me of their existence. For when I consider attentively what the imagination is, (72) I find that it is nothing else than a particular application of the faculty of knowledge to a body which is intimately present to it and which therefore exists.

And to make this (very) obvious, I take note of the difference between imagination and pure intellection for conception. For example, when I imagine a triangle, not only do I conceive that it is a figure composed of three lines, but along with that I envision these three lines as present, by the force (and the internal effort) of my mind; and it is just this that I call "imagination." But if I wish to think of a chiliogon, I

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recognize quite well, indeed, 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 can the three of a triangle, nor, so to speak, look at them) as though they were present (to the eyes of my mind). And although, following my habit of always using my imagination when I think of corporeal things, it may happen that in conceiving a chiliogon I confusedly picture some figure to myself, nevertheless it is (quite) evident that this figure is not a chiliogon, since it is in no way different from what I would picture to myself if I thought of a myriogon or of some other figure of many sides, and that it in no way serves [58] to bring out the properties which constitute the difference between the chiliogon and the other polygons. But if it is a question of considering a pentagon, (it is quite true that) I can conceive its shape, just as well as that of a chiliogon, without the aid of the imagination; but I can also imagine it by applying my mind attentively to each of its five sides, and (at the same time) (collectively) to the area (or space) that they enclose.

Thus I recognize clearly that I have need of a special (73) mental effort in order to imagine, which I do not require in order to (conceive (or) understand), and this (special) mental effort clearly shows the difference that exists between imagination and pure intellection for conception. In addition, I notice that this ability to imagine which I possess, in so far as it differs from the power of conceiving, is in no way necessary to my (nature or) essence, that is to say, to the essence of my mind. For even if I did not possess it, there is no doubt that I would still remain the same person I now am, from which it seems to follow that it depends upon something other than my mind. And I readily conceive that if some body exists with which my mind is so joined (and united) that it can consider it whenever it wishes, it could be that by this means it imagines corporeal things. Thus this method of thinking only differs from pure intellection in that the mind, in conceiving, turns somehow toward itself and considers some one of the

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ideas which it possesses in itself, whereas in imagining it turns toward the body and considers in the latter something conformable to the idea which it has either thought of by itself or perceived through the senses. I easily conceive, I say, that the imagination can work in this fashion, if it is true that there are bodies; and because I cannot find any other way in which this can be explained (equally well), I therefore conjecture that bodies probably exist. But this is only a probability; and although I carefully consider all aspects of the question, I nevertheless do not see that from this distinct idea of corporeal nature which I find in my imagination, I can derive any argument which necessarily proves the existence of any body. (74)

But I have become accustomed to imagine many other things besides that corporeal nature which is the object of (pure mathematics for) geometry, although less distinctly, such as colors, sounds, tastes, pain, and other similar qualities. And inasmuch as I perceive those qualities much better by the senses, through the medium of which, with the help of the memory, they seem to have reached my imagination, [59] I believe that in order to examine them more readily it is appropriate to consider at the same time the nature of the sensation and to see whether, from those ideas which are perceived by the method of thinking which I call "sensation," I will not be able to derive some certain proof of the existence of corporeal things.

First, I shall recall in my memory what are the things which I formerly held to be true because I had received them through the senses, and what were the bases on which my belief was founded. Afterward I shall examine the reasons which since then have obliged me to consider them doubtful, and finally, I shall consider what I ought now to believe (about them).

First, then, I felt that I had a head, hands, feet, and (all the) other members which compose this body which I thought of as a part, or possibly even as the whole, of myself. Furthermore, I felt that this body was one of a world of bodies, from

which it was capable of receiving various advantages and disadvantages; and I identified these advantages by a certain feeling of pleasure for enjoyment, and the disadvantages by a feeling of pain. Besides this pleasure and pain, I also experienced hunger, thirst, and other similar appetites, as well as certain bodily tendencies toward gaiety, sadness, anger, and other similar emotions. And externally, in addition to the extension, shapes, and (75) movements of bodies, I observed in them hardness, warmth, and [all the] other qualities perceived by touch. Furthermore, I noticed in them light, colors, odors, tastes, and sounds, the variety of which enabled me to distinguish the sky, the earth, the sea, and I, in general, all other bodies, one from another.

And certainly, considering the ideas of all these qualities which were presented to my mind<sup>1</sup> and which alone I directly sensed, in the true significance of that term, it was not without reason that I believed I had sensory knowledge of things entirely different from my thought—of bodies, namely, from which these ideas came. For I was aware that these ideas occurred without the necessity of my consent, so that I could not perceive any object, however much I wished, unless it was present to one of my sense organs; nor was it in my power not to perceive it when it was present [60] And because the ideas I received through the senses were much more vivid, more detailed, and even in their own way more distinct than any of those which I could picture to myself (with conscious purpose) while meditating, or even than those which I found impressed upon my memory, it seemed that they could not be derived from my own mind, and therefore they must have been produced in me by some other things. Of these things I have no knowledge (whatsoever,) except that derived from the ideas themselves, so nothing else could occur to my mind except that those things were similar to the ideas they caused. And since I remembered that I had used my senses earlier than my reason, and since I recognized that the ideas I formed by myself were not as detailed as those I received through the

<sup>1</sup> [L. *cogitatio*; F. *pensée*.]

senses and were most commonly composed of the latter as parts, I easily became persuaded that I had no idea in my mind which I had not previously acquired through my senses.

It was also not without reason that I believed that this body, which by a certain particular privilege I called mine, (76) belonged to me more [properly and strictly] than any other. For in fact I could never be separated from it, as I could be from other bodies; I felt in it and for it all my appetites and all my emotions; and finally I experienced [the sensations of] pain and [the thrill of] pleasure in its parts, and not in those of other bodies which are separated from it.

But when I inquired why any particular sensation of pain should be followed by unhappiness in the mind and the thrill of pleasure should give rise to happiness, or even why a particular feeling of the stomach, which I call hunger, makes us want to eat, and the dryness of the throat makes us want to drink, and so on, I could give no reason except that nature teaches me so. For there is certainly no affinity [and no relationship], or at least none that I [can] understand, between the feeling in the stomach and the desire to eat, no more than between the perception of the object which causes pain and the feeling of displeasure produced by it. And in the same way, it seemed to me that I had learned from nature all the other beliefs which I held about the objects of my senses, since I noticed that the judgments I habitually made about these objects took form in my mind before I had the opportunity to weigh [and consider] any reasons which could oblige me to make them. [61]

Later on, various experiences gradually destroyed all my faith in my senses. For I often observed that towers which, viewed from far away, had appeared round to me, seemed at close range to be square, and that colossal statues placed on the highest summits of these towers appeared small when viewed from below. And similarly in a multitude of other experiences, I encountered errors in judgments based on the external senses. And not only on the external senses, but even on the internal ones, (77) for is there anything more intimate

for more internal than pain? Yet I have learned from certain persons whose arms or legs had been amputated that it still seemed to them sometimes that they felt pain in the parts which they no longer possessed. This gives me reason to think that I could not be (entirely) sure either that there was something wrong with one of my limbs, even though I felt a pain in it.

And to these reasons for doubting I have recently added two other very general ones. The first is that I have never thought I perceived anything when awake that I might not sometimes also think I perceived when I am asleep; and since I do not believe that the things I seem to perceive when asleep proceed from objects outside of myself, I did not see any better reason why I ought to believe this about what I seem to perceive when awake. The other reason was that, not yet knowing, or rather pretending not to know the author of my being, I saw nothing to make it impossible that I was so constructed by nature that I should be mistaken even in the things which seemed to me most true.

And as for the reasons which had previously persuaded me that sensible objects truly existed, I did not find it very difficult to answer them. For as nature seemed to lead me to many conclusions from which reason dissuaded me, I did not believe that I ought to have much faith in the teachings of this nature. And although my sense perceptions do not depend upon my volition, I did not think that I should therefore conclude that they proceeded from things different from myself, since there might perhaps be some faculty in myself even though it has been thus far unknown to me, which could [be their cause and] produce them.

But now that I am beginning to know myself better and to discover more clearly the author of my origin, I do not think in truth that I ought rashly to admit everything which the senses seem to teach us, (78) but on the other hand I do not think that I should doubt them all in general. [62]

First, since I know that all the things I conceive<sup>2</sup> clearly

<sup>2</sup> [L. *intelligo*; F. *concevoir*.]

and distinctly can be produced by God exactly as I conceive them, it is sufficient that I can clearly and distinctly conceive one thing apart from another to be certain that the one is distinct from the other. For they can be made to exist separately, at least by the omnipotence of God, and we are obliged to consider them different no matter what power produces this separation. From the very fact that I know with certainty that I exist, and that I find that 'absolutely' nothing else belongs necessarily to my nature or essence except that I am a thinking being, I readily conclude that my essence consists solely in being a body which thinks for a substance whose whole essence or nature is only to think. And although perhaps, or rather certainly, as I will soon show, I have a body with which I am very closely united, nevertheless, since on the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself in so far as I am only a thinking and not an extended being, and since on the other hand I have a distinct idea of body in so far as it is only an extended being which does not think, it is certain that this "I" [—that is to say, my soul, by virtue of which I am what I am—] is entirely and truly distinct from my body and that it can be or exist without it.

Furthermore, I find in myself various faculties of thinking which each have their own particular characteristics and are distinct from myself. For example, I find in myself the faculties of imagination and of perception, without which I might no doubt conceive of myself, clearly and distinctly, as a whole being; but I could not, conversely, conceive of those faculties without me, that is to say, without an intelligent substance to which they are attached (or in which they inhere). For in our notion of them or, to use the scholastic vocabulary, in their formal concept, they embrace some type of intellection. From all this I reach the conception that these faculties are distinct from me as (shapes, movements, and other) modes (or accidents of objects) are distinct from (the very) objects (that sustain them).

I also recognize (in myself) some other faculties, such as the power of changing location, of assuming various postures, and

other similar ones; which cannot be conceived without some substance in which they inhere, any more than the preceding ones, (79) and which therefore cannot exist without such a substance. But it is quite evident that these faculties, if it is true that they exist, must inhere in some corporeal or extended substance, and not in an intelligent substance, since their clear and distinct concept does actually involve some sort of extension, but no sort of intelligence whatsoever. [63] Furthermore, I cannot doubt that there is in me a certain passive faculty of perceiving, that is, of receiving and recognizing the ideas of sensible objects; but it would be valueless to me, and I could in no way use it if there were not (also) in me, or in something else, another active faculty capable of forming and producing these ideas. But this active faculty cannot be in me, in so far as I am a thinking being, since it does not at all presuppose (my) intelligence and also since those ideas often occur to me without my contributing to them in any way, and even (frequently) against my will. Thus it must necessarily exist in some substance different from myself, in which all the reality that exists objectively in the ideas produced by this faculty is formally or eminently contained, as I have said before. This substance is either a body—that is, a corporeal nature—in which is formally and actually contained all that which is contained objectively (and by representation) in these ideas; or else it is God himself, or some other creation more noble than the body, in which all this is eminently contained.

But since God is not a deceiver, it is very manifest that he does not send me these ideas directly by his own agency, nor by the mediation of some creation in which their (objective) reality does not exist formally but only eminently. For since he has not given me any faculty for recognizing what that creation might be, but on the contrary a very great (80) inclination to believe that these ideas come from corporeal objects, I do not see how we could clear God of the charge of deceit if these ideas did in fact come from some other source (or were produced by other causes) than corporeal objects. Therefore

we must conclude that corporeal objects exist. Nevertheless, they are not perhaps entirely what our senses perceive them to be, for there are many ways in which this sense perception is very obscure and confused; but (we must) at least admit that everything which I conceive clearly and distinctly (as occurring) in them—that is to say, everything, generally speaking, which is discussed in pure (mathematics or) geometry—does in truth occur in them.

(As for the rest,) there are other beliefs, which are very doubtful and uncertain, which are either merely particular—as, for example, that the sun is of such a size and such a shape—or else are conceived less clearly (and less distinctly)—such as light, sound, pain, and other similar things. Nevertheless, from the mere fact that God is not [64] a deceiver, and that in consequence he has not permitted any falsity in my opinions without having given me some faculty capable of correcting it, (I think I can conclude with assurance that) I have (some hope of learning the truth even about these matters (and) the means of knowing them with certainty).

First, there is no doubt but that all that nature teaches me contains some truth. For by nature, considered in general, I now understand nothing else but God himself, or else the order and system that God has established for created things; and by my nature in particular I understand nothing else but the arrangement (or assemblage) of all that God has given me.

Now there is nothing that this nature teaches me more expressly (or more obviously) than that I have a body which is in poor condition when I feel pain, which needs food or drink when I have the feelings of hunger or thirst, and so on. And therefore I ought to have no doubt that in this there is some truth. (81)

Nature also teaches me by these feelings of pain, hunger, thirst, and so on that I am not only residing in my body, as a pilot in his ship, but furthermore, that I am intimately connected with it, and that (the mixture is) so blended (as it were,) that (something like) a single whole is produced. For if that were not the case, when my body is wounded I would not

therefore feel pain, I, who am only a thinking being; but I would perceive that wound by the understanding alone, as a pilot perceives by sight if something in his vessel is broken. And when my body needs food or drink, I would simply know the fact itself, instead of [receiving notice of it by] having confused feelings of hunger and thirst. For actually all these feelings of hunger, thirst, pain, and so on are nothing else but certain confused modes of thinking, which have their origin in [and depend upon] the union and apparent fusion of the mind with the body.

Furthermore, nature teaches me that many other bodies exist in the vicinity of my own, of which I must seek some and avoid others. And certainly, from the fact that I perceive different kinds of colors, odors, tastes, sounds, heat, hardness, and so on, I very readily conclude that in the objects from which these various sense perceptions proceed there are some corresponding variations, although perhaps these variations are not really similar to the perceptions. And from the fact that some of these [various sense] perceptions are agreeable to me and others are disagreeable, [65] there is absolutely no doubt that my body, or rather my whole self, in so far as I am composed of body and mind, can in various ways be benefited or harmed by the other objects which surround it. (82)

But there are many other opinions that nature has apparently taught me which, however, I have not truly learned from her, but which were introduced into my mind by my habit of judging things inattentively. Thus it can easily happen that these opinions contain some falsity—as, for example, my opinion that all spaces in which there is nothing which [affects and] makes an impression on my senses are empty; that in an object which is hot there is some quality similar to my idea of heat; that in a white, [or black,] [or green] object there is the same whiteness, [or blackness,] [or greenness] that I perceive; that in a bitter or sweet object there is the same taste [or the same flavor], and so on for the other senses; and that stars, towers, and all other distant objects are the same shape and size that they appear [from afar] to our eyes, and so forth.

In order that there should be nothing in this matter that I do not conceive [sufficiently] distinctly, I should define [more] precisely what I properly mean when I say that nature teaches me something. For I am here using the word "nature" in a more restricted sense than when I use it to mean a combination [or assemblage] of everything God has given me, seeing that this [assemblage or] combination includes many things which pertain to the mind alone, to which I do not intend to refer here when speaking of nature—as [for example] my knowledge [of this truth:] that what has [once] been done can never [after] not have been done, and [all] [of] an infinity of other [similar] truths known to me by the light of nature [without any aid of the body]. Such an assemblage also includes many other things which belong to body alone and are not here included under the name of "nature," such as its quality of being heavy and many other similar ones; for I am not concerned with these either, but only with those things which God has presented to me as a being composed of mind and body. This nature effectively teaches me to avoid things which produce in me the feeling of pain and to seek those which make me have some feeling of pleasure [and so on]. But I do not see that beyond this it teaches me that I should ever conclude anything from these various sense perceptions concerning things outside of ourselves, unless the mind has [carefully and] maturely examined them. For it seems to me that it is the business of the mind alone, and not [66] of the being composed of mind and body, to decide the truth of such matters. (83)

Thus, although a star makes no more impression on my eye than the flame of a candle, and there is no real [or positive inclination] [for natural faculty] in me that leads me to believe that it is larger than this flame, nevertheless I have so judged it from infancy for no adequate reason. And although in approaching the flame I feel heat, and even though in approaching it a little too closely I feel pain, there is still no reason that can convince me that there is some quality in the flame similar to this heat, any more than to this pain. I only

have reason to believe there is some quality in it, whatever it may be, which arouses in me these feelings of heat or pain.

Similarly, although there are parts of space in which I find nothing that [excites and] affects my senses, I ought not therefore to conclude that they contain no objects. Thus I see that both here and in many other similar cases I am accustomed to [misunderstand and] misconstrue the order of nature, because although these [sensations or] sense perceptions were given to me only to indicate to my mind which objects are useful or harmful to the composite body of which it is a part, and are for that purpose sufficiently clear and distinct, I nevertheless use them as though they were very certain rules by which I could obtain direct information about the essence [and the nature] of external objects, about which they can of course give me no information except very obscurely and confusedly.

In the previous discussion I have already explained sufficiently how it happens, despite the supreme goodness of God, that error occurs in my judgments. One further difficulty, though, presents itself here. This concerns objects which I am taught by nature to seek or avoid and also the internal sensations which she has given me. For it seems to me that I have noticed error here [and thus that I am sometimes directly deceived by my nature]—as, for example, when the pleasant taste of some food in which poison has been mixed can induce me to take the poison, and so misleads me. (84) It is nevertheless true that in this case nature [can be excused, for it] only leads me to desire the food in which a pleasant taste is found, and not [67] to desire the poison which is unknown to it. Thus I cannot conclude anything from this except that my nature is not entirely and universally cognizant of all things. And at this there is no reason to be surprised, since man, being of a finite nature, is also restricted to a knowledge of a limited perfection.

But we also make mistakes sufficiently frequently even about matters of which we are directly informed by nature, as happens to sick people when they desire to drink or eat things which [can] [later] harm them. It might be argued here that

the reason that they err is that their nature is corrupted. But this does not remove the difficulty, for a sick man is in truth no less the creation of God than is a man in full health, and therefore it is just as inconsistent with the goodness of God for him as for the other to have a [misleading and] faulty nature. A clock, composed of wheels and counterweights, is no less exactly obeying all the laws of nature when it is badly made and does not mark the time correctly than when it completely fulfills the intention of its maker; so also, the human body may be considered as a machine, so built and composed of bones, nerves, muscles, veins, blood, and skin that even if there were no mind in it, it would not cease to move in all the ways that it does at present when it is not moved under the direction of the will, nor consequently with the aid of the mind [ , but only by the condition of its organs]. I readily recognize that it is quite natural, for example, for this body to suffer dryness in the throat as a result of a dropsical condition, and thus to produce a feeling of thirst in the mind and a consequent disposition on the part of the mind to stimulate the nerves and other parts in the manner requisite for drinking, and so to increase the body's illness [and injure itself]. It is just as natural, I say, as it is for it to be beneficially influenced to drink by a similar dryness of the throat, when it is not ill at all. (85)

And although in considering the purpose for which a clock has been intended by its designer, I can say that it is false to its nature when it does not correctly indicate the time, and although in considering the mechanism of the human body in the same way as having been formed [by God] to provide all the customary activities, I have reason to think that it is not functioning according to its nature when its throat is dry and drinking injures its chances of self-preservation, I nevertheless recognize that this last usage of the word "nature" is very different from the other. For the latter is nothing else but an arbitrary appellation [68] which depends entirely on my own idea in comparing a sick man and a poorly made clock, and

contrasting them with my idea of a healthy man and a well-made clock; this appellation refers to nothing which is actually found in the objects of which we are talking. On the contrary, by the other usage of the word "nature," I mean something which is actually found in objects and which therefore is not without some truth.

But certainly, although as far as a dropsical body is concerned, it is only an arbitrary appellation to say that its nature is corrupted when, without needing to drink, it still has a dry and arid throat; nevertheless, when we consider the composite body [as a whole]—that is to say, the mind [or soul] united with the body—it is not a pure appellation, but [truly] an actual error on the part of nature that it is thirsty when it is very harmful to it to drink. Therefore we must examine how it is that the goodness of God does not prevent man's nature, so considered, from being faulty [and deceptive].

[To begin this examination,] I first take notice here that there is a great difference between the mind and the body, in that the body, from its nature, is always divisible and the mind is completely (86) indivisible. For in reality, when I consider the mind—that is, when I consider myself in so far as I am only a thinking being—I cannot distinguish any parts, but I [recognize and] conceive [very clearly] that I am a thing which is [absolutely] unitary and entire. And although the whole mind seems to be united with the whole body, nevertheless when a foot or an arm or some other part [of the body] is amputated, I recognize quite well that nothing has been lost to my mind on that account. Nor can the faculties of willing, perceiving, understanding, and so forth be [any more properly] called parts of the mind, for it is [one and] the same mind which [as a complete unit] wills, perceives, and understands [ , and so forth]. But just the contrary is the case with corporeal or extended objects, for I cannot imagine any [ , however small they might be,] which my mind does not very easily divide into [several] parts, and I consequently recognize these objects to be divisible. This [alone] would suffice to

show me that the mind [or soul of man] is altogether different from the body, if I did not already know it sufficiently well for other reasons. [69]

I also take notice that the mind does not receive impressions from all parts of the body directly, but only from the brain, or perhaps even from one of its smallest parts—the one, namely, where the senses in common have their seat. This makes the mind feel the same thing whenever it is in the same condition, even though the other parts of the body can be differently arranged, as is proved by an infinity of experiments which it is not necessary to describe here.

I furthermore notice that the nature of the body is such that no one of its parts can be moved by another part some little distance away without its being possible for it to be moved in the same way by any one of the intermediate parts, even when the more distant part does not act. For example, in the cord A B C D [which is thoroughly stretched], if (87) we pull [and move] the last part D, the first part A will not be moved in any different manner from that in which it could also be moved if we pulled one of the middle parts B or C, while the last part D remained motionless. And in the same way, when I feel pain in my foot, physics teaches me that this sensation is communicated by means of nerves distributed through the foot. When these nerves are pulled in the foot, being stretched like cords from there to the brain, they likewise pull at the same time the [internal] part of the brain [from which they come and] where they terminate, and there produce a certain movement which nature has arranged to make my mind feel pain as though that pain were in my foot. But because these nerves must pass through the leg, the thigh, the loins, the back, and the neck, in order to extend from the foot to the brain, it can happen that even when the nerve endings in the foot are not stimulated, but only some of the [intermediate] parts [located in the loins or the neck], [precisely] the same movements are nevertheless produced in the brain that could be produced there by a wound received in the foot, as a result of which it necessarily follows that the mind feels

the same pain in the foot as though the foot had been wounded. And we must make the same judgment about all our other sense perceptions.

Finally, I notice that since each one of the movements that occurs in the part of the brain from which the mind receives impressions directly can only produce in the mind a single sensation, we cannot desire or imagine any better arrangement than that this movement should cause the mind to feel that sensation, of all the sensations the movement is [70] capable of causing, which is most effectively and frequently useful for the preservation of the human body when it is in full health. But experience shows us that all the sensations which nature has given us are such as I have just stated, and therefore there is nothing in their nature which does not show the power and the goodness of [the] God [who has produced them].

Thus, for example, (88) when the nerves of the foot are stimulated violently and more than is usual, their movement, passing through the marrow of the backbone up to the (interior of the) brain, produces there an impression upon the mind which makes the mind feel something—namely, pain as though in the foot—by which the mind is [warned and] stimulated to do whatever it can to remove the cause, taking it to be very [dangerous and] harmful to the foot.

It is true that God could establish the nature of man in such a way that this same brain event would make the mind feel something quite different; for example, it might cause the movement to be felt as though it were in the brain, or in the foot, or else in some other (intermediate) location (between the foot and the brain), or finally it might produce any other feeling [that can exist]; but none of those would have contributed so well to the preservation of the body [as that which it does produce].

In the same way, when we need to drink, there results a certain dryness in the throat which affects its nerves and, by means of them, the interior of the brain. This brain event makes the mind feel the sensation of thirst, because under

those conditions there is nothing more useful to us than to know that we need to drink for the conservation of our health. And similar reasoning applies to other sensations.

From this it is entirely manifest that, despite the supreme goodness of God, the nature of man, in so far as he is composed of mind and body, cannot escape being sometimes [faulty and] deceptive. For if there is some cause which produces, not in the foot, but in some other part of the nerve which is stretched from the foot to the brain, or even in the brain [itself], the same effect which ordinarily occurs when the foot is injured, we will feel pain as though it were in the foot, and we will naturally be deceived by the sensation. The reason for this is that the same brain event can cause only a single sensation in the mind; and this [71] sensation being much more frequently produced by a cause which wounds the foot than by another acting in a different location, it is much more reasonable (89) that it should always convey to the mind a pain in the foot rather than one in any other part [of the body]. And if it happens that sometimes the dryness of the throat does not come in the usual manner from the fact that drinking is necessary for the health of the body, but from some quite contrary cause, as in the case of those afflicted with dropsy, nevertheless it is much better that we should be deceived in that instance than if, on the contrary, we were always deceived when the body was in health; and similarly for the other sensations.

And certainly this consideration is very useful to me, not only so that I can recognize all the errors to which my nature is subject, but also so that I may avoid them or correct them more easily. For knowing that each of my senses conveys truth to me more often than falsehood concerning whatever is useful or harmful to the body, and being almost always able to use several of them to examine the same object, and being in addition able to use my memory to bind and join together present information with what is past, and being able to use my understanding, which has already discovered all the causes of my errors, I should no longer fear to encounter falsity in

the objects which are most commonly represented to me by my senses.

And I should reject all the doubts of these last few days as exaggerated and ridiculous, particularly that very general uncertainty about sleep, which I could not distinguish from waking life. For now I find in them a very notable difference, in that our memory can never bind and join our dreams together [one with another and all] with the course of our lives, as it habitually joins together what happens to us when we are awake. And so, in effect, if someone suddenly appeared to me when I was awake and [afterward] disappeared in the same way, as [do images that I see] in my sleep, so that I could not determine where he came from or where he went, it would not be without reason that I would consider it a ghost (90) or a phantom produced in my brain [and similar to those produced there when I sleep], rather than truly a man.

But when I perceive objects in such a way that I distinctly recognize both the place from which they come and the place where they are, as well as the time when they appear to me; and when, without any hiatus, I can relate my perception of them with all the rest of my life, I am entirely certain that I perceive them wakefully and not in sleep. And I should not in any way doubt the truth of these things [72] if, having made use of all my senses, my memory, and my understanding, to examine them, nothing is reported to me by any of them which is inconsistent with what is reported by the others. For, from the fact that God is not a deceiver, it necessarily follows that in this matter I am not deceived.

But because the exigencies of action frequently oblige us to make decisions and do not [always] allow us the leisure to examine these things with sufficient care, we must admit that human life is very often subject to error in particular matters; and we must in the end recognize the infirmity [and weakness] of our nature.

Now, between the Middle Ages and the Rational Enlightenment of the seventeenth century come the figures of Copernicus and Galileo--and the shift from the geocentric view of the universe (i.e., the earth at the centre) to the heliocentric view (the sun as the centre). This shift had monumental consequences for Western man's understanding of himself and his place in the world, although it was not a shift that took place easily. Much of the resistance to it came from established religion, since the heliocentric view did not fit at all well with the idea that God made man in his own image and placed him at the centre of creation (indeed Galileo was nailed by the Inquisition in 1632 for backing the heliocentric theory). It is important to have this background in mind as we consider the figure who, after Plato, has had perhaps the greatest influence on the way we understand ourselves today--namely, the French philosopher, Rene Descartes (1596-1650).

The young Descartes received an excellent education at the hands of the Jesuits and was all his life a devout Roman Catholic. However, his health was always rather poor, with the result that he spent a great deal of time in bed, even on the military campaigns on which he was obliged, as a gentleman of the upper classes, to go. This gave him ample time for philosophical reflection, and we might better appreciate the results of his meditations if we bear in mind that his ideas were for the most part conceived during prolonged periods with his feet off the ground.

This penchant for long hours in bed finally led to his undoing. Queen Christina of Sweden was so impressed by Descartes' philosophical ideas that she summoned him to her court as her personal tutor. Such was the young queen's zeal for philosophical enlightenment that she required Descartes, who was unused to ever getting up before noon, to be in her chambers well before dawn every morning. As a result of this unaccustomed regimen, Descartes contracted inflammation of the lungs and died shortly afterwards at the age of 54.

Descartes' most famous and important work is the Meditations on First Philosophy, first published in 1641. The subtitle tells us what the meditations are about: "...In which the existence of God and the real distinction between the human soul and the body are demonstrated." We do not have time to consider Descartes' famous proofs for the existence of God, but shall focus on the second topic--a topic that should remind you of Plato's concerns in the Phaedo. The important parts of the Meditations for our

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purposes can be found on pp. 1-41 and 68-85. (Descartes, Meditations, translated by Laurence J. Lafleur, The Boobs-Merrill Co. Ltd.)

Descartes' primary concern was to set philosophy of a firm foundation, and to do this he felt he had to examine with a very critical eye all the pre-suppositions upon which the philosophies of his day were founded. (The Scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages had for centuries accepted Holy Scripture and the works of Aristotle as ultimates whose authority could under no circumstances be questioned.) In order to construct a philosophy without unexamined prejudices, Descartes employed his famous method of universal doubt --that is, he set out to doubt everything that could possibly be doubted and not to admit anything into his system that was not absolutely indubitable. This method "delivers us from all sorts of prejudices and makes available to us an easy method of accustoming our minds to become independent of the senses." (p. 13--shades of the Phaedo, again) His project, then, is to doubt the existence of everything possible, and then to reconstruct philosophy anew upon the foundations of anything that may have survived the devastating onslaught of his universal doubt.

In considering the First Meditation, which is subtitled "Concerning things that can be doubted," we should note the frame of mind that Descartes thinks will be most conducive to the kind of meditation that will attain the truth--one of cool detachment. "I have freed my mind of all kinds of cares; I feel myself, fortunately, disturbed by no passions; and I have found a serene retreat in peaceful solitude." (p. 17) Note that this would appeal to the Socrates of the Phaedo but not to the Socrates of the Symposium, for whom eros in the form of passionate desire is necessary for the soul's ascent to the intelligible realm.

Descartes develops his practice of universal doubt in three stages. First, since the senses sometimes deceive us (a straight stick put in water looks bent; a square tower viewed from a distance looks round; and so forth) he considers it wise never to trust their testimony, since it could always turn out that they had been deceptive (p. 18). His doubt becomes even more encompassing when he considers dreaming. Dreams are often so convincingly like waking life that we can only tell after we have woken up that we were in fact dreaming. And so, Descartes reasoned, even the most apparently real aspects of our experience might subsequently turn out to have been dreamed (p. 19). Finally, just to make absolutely sure, he supposes that there exists an evil demon whose entire life is devoted to deceiving him (Descartes): and so he must consider whatever he believes to be certain to be merely the result of the deceiving activities of this evil demon.

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We left Descartes last time in a state of universal doubt, having succeeded in doubting all the testimony of the senses--and even whether he had a body at all. But now he has a flash of insight: even if the evil demon has managed to deceive him as to everything he thought he could be certain of, he figures that as long as he is being deceived, he must himself exist, i.e., be there to be deceived--if not be there in body (about which he could always be wrong), at least there as a mind. To put it another way: as long as he is doubting, or "thinking" in the wide sense, he must exist. Or, according to Descartes famous formulation of his insight (he originally wrote the Meditation in Latin): Cogito, ergo sum I am thinking, therefore I am. And so this, finally, is the indubitable truth for which Descartes was searching in order to base his whole philosophy on it: "I am, I exist, is necessarily true every time that I pronounce it or conceive it in my mind." (p. 24).

However, the scope of this supposedly indubitable truth is not very great, since it applies only to the "inner" or "mental" life, and still cannot afford him any certainty about the existence of anything outside his mind. In order to gain any knowledge about the outside world, he would have to show not only that the ideas he has are caused by things in the external world, but further that they are caused by things that resemble these ideas. And he is unable to do this without bringing in the idea of God, whose existence he proves later in the Meditations, as a power who guarantees that any "clear and distinct" ideas in Descartes' mind are indeed caused by things outside him that resemble those ideas.

But most important for our purposes are the ontological implications of this move of Descartes'. As a result of his insight he divides the universe into two distinct kinds, or realms, of being (and is therefore a radical dualist)--- what he calls res cogitans, or "thinking stuff", and res extensa, or "extended stuff". Res cogitans, or what we might call mind, is "inner", (I put this in quotes because it is not in space at all) indivisible and indubitable--therefore easy to know; res extensa, or matter is "outer", divisible and dubitable--therefore difficult to know. Whereas any claims we might make about the external world might turn out to be wrong (e.g., I

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Now this dualism that Descartes created has had monumental consequences for the way Western man has understood himself and his relation to the world, and is still very much a part of our thinking in the form of the dichotomy between mind and matter. You will better appreciate the importance of this move if you think back to our old friend, the spirit-matter continuum. You remember that the continuum was "held together", as it were, by mana, or in later terminology, the world soul. Now, what Descartes has done is to carry even further the stretching of the continuum that we found in Plato's Phaedo --stretching it to the point where it "snaps" into the two polar opposites of mind and matter. He did this by as it were "sucking out" all the soul from the world (he even denied that animals had souls, concluding from his experiments in vivisection that they were merely very cleverly constructed mechanisms!) and placed it exclusively inside human beings. So, rather than, as before, participating in the world in an organistic way, man now understood himself as observing a "dead" (because soul-less) and mechanistic universe--i.e., a universe that had a totally different kind of being from his own essential nature. By splitting the spirit-matter continuum into a dichotomy between mind and matter, subject and object, Descartes gave rise to the idea of the "encapsulated" self as something entirely separate from the world. (This idea should strike you as the absolute opposite of the conception of the self in Chinese philosophy.)

One last point, which would be worth bearing in mind as we move on to Nietzsche. We saw that Descartes was writing just after, or during, the shift from the geocentric to the heliocentric view of the universe. There is a sense in which Descartes' philosophy may have been a response to man's having been shifted from the centre to the periphery of the universe--in that now, the only thing that can be certain is the existence of the thinking subject. This move places man, once again, in a somewhat different sense, at the centre of creation.

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Now, between the Middle Ages and the Rational Enlightenment of the seventeenth century come the figures of Copernicus and Galileo--and the shift from the geocentric view of the universe (i.e., the earth at the centre) to the heliocentric view (the sun as the centre). This shift had monumental consequences for Western man's understanding of himself and his place in the world, although it was not a shift that took place easily. Much of the resistance to it came from established religion, since the heliocentric view did not fit at all well with the idea that God made man in his own image and placed him at the centre of creation (indeed Galileo was nailed by the Inquisition in 1632 for backing the heliocentric theory). It is important to have this background in mind as we consider the figure who, after Plato, has had perhaps the greatest influence on the way we understand ourselves today--namely, the French philosopher, Rene Descartes (1596-1650).

The young Descartes received an excellent education at the hands of the Jesuits and was all his life a devout Roman Catholic. However, his health was always rather poor, with the result that he spent a great deal of time in bed, even on the military campaigns on which he was obliged, as a gentleman of the upper classes, to go. This gave him ample time for philosophical reflection, and we might better appreciate the results of his meditations if we bear in mind that his ideas were for the most part conceived during prolonged periods with his feet off the ground.

This penchant for long hours in bed finally led to his undoing. Queen Christina of Sweden was so impressed by Descartes' philosophical ideas that she summoned him to her court as her personal tutor. Such was the young queen's zeal for philosophical enlightenment that she required Descartes, who was unused to ever getting up before noon, to be in her chambers well before dawn every morning. As a result of this unaccustomed regimen, Descartes contracted inflammation of the lungs and died shortly afterwards at the age of 54.

Descartes' most famous and important work is the Meditations on First Philosophy, first published in 1641. The subtitle tells us what the meditations are about: "...in which the existence of God and the real distinction between the human soul and the body are demonstrated." We do not have time to consider Descartes' famous proofs for the existence of God, but shall focus on the second topic--a topic that should remind you of Plato's concerns in the Phaedo. The important parts of the Meditations for our

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In the horizon of the infinite.— We have left the land and have embarked. We have burned our bridges behind us—indeed, we have gone farther and destroyed the land behind us. Now, little ship, look out! Beside you is the ocean: to be sure, it does not always roar, and at times it lies spread out like silk and gold and reveries of graciousness. But hours will come when you will realize that it is infinite and that there is nothing more awesome than infinity." Oh, the poor bird that felt free and now strikes the walls of this cage! Woe, when you feel homesick for the land as if it had offered more freedom—and there is no longer any "land."

*The madman.*— Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly; "I seek God! I seek God!"—As many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Has he got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? emigrated?—Thus they yelled and laughed.

The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Whither is God?" he cried; "I will tell you. *We have killed him*—you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.

"How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us—for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto."

Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces and went out. "I have come too early," he said then; "my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds, though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars—and yet they have done it themselves."

It has been related further that on the same day the madman forced his way into several churches and there struck up his *requiem aeternam deo*. Led out and called to account, he is said always to have replied nothing but: "What after all are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchers of God?"<sup>29</sup>

The greatest weight."— What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!"

Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: "You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine." If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing, "Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?" would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to *crave nothing more fervently* than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?

When Zarathustra was thirty years old he left his home and the lake of his home and went into the mountains. Here he enjoyed his spirit and his solitude, and for ten years did not tire of it. But at last a change came over his heart, and one morning he rose with the dawn, stepped before the sun, and spoke to it thus:

"You great star, what would your happiness be had you not those for whom you shine?"

"For ten years you have climbed to my cave: you would have tired of your light and of the journey had it not been for me and my eagle and my serpent.

"But we waited for you every morning, took your overflow from you, and blessed you for it.

"Behold, I am weary of my wisdom, like a bee that has gathered too much honey; I need hands outstretched to receive it.

"I would give away and distribute, until the wise among men find joy once again in their folly, and the poor in their riches.

"For that I must descend to the depths, as you do in the evening when you go behind the sea and still bring light to the underworld, you overrich star.

"Like you, I must go under—go down, as is said by man, to whom I want to descend.

"So bless me then, you quiet eye that can look even upon an all-too-great happiness without envy!

"Bless the cup that wants to overflow, that the water may flow from it golden and carry everywhere the reflection of your delight.

"Behold, this cup wants to become empty again, and Zarathustra wants to become man again."

Thus Zarathustra began to go under.

Zarathustra descended alone from the mountains, encountering no one. But when he came into the forest, (all at once there stood before him an old man who had left his holy cottage to look for roots in the woods. And thus spoke the old man to Zarathustra:

"No stranger to me is this wanderer: many years ago he passed this way. Zarathustra he was called, but he has changed. At that time you carried your ashes to the mountains; would you now carry your fire into the valleys? Do you not fear to be punished as an arsonist?"

"Yes, I recognize Zarathustra. His eyes are pure, and

around his mouth there hides no disgust. Does he not walk like a dancer?"

"Zarathustra has changed, Zarathustra has become a child, Zarathustra is an awakened one; what do you now want among the sleepers? You lived in your solitude as in the sea, and the sea carried you. Alas, would you now climb ashore? Alas, would you again drag your own body?"

Zarathustra answered: "I love man."

"Why," asked the saint, "did I go into the forest and the desert? Was it not because I loved man all-too-much? Now I love God; man I love not. Man is for me too imperfect a thing. Love of man would kill me."

Zarathustra answered: "Did I speak of love? I bring men a gift."

"Give them nothing!" said the saint. "Rather, take part of their load and help them to bear it—that will be best for them, if only it does you good! And if you want to give them something, give no more than alms, and let them beg for that!"

"No," answered Zarathustra. "I give no alms. For that I am not poor enough."

The saint laughed at Zarathustra and spoke thus: "Then see to it that they accept your treasures. They are suspicious of hermits and do not believe that we come with gifts. Our steps sound too lonely through the streets. And what if at night, in their beds, they hear a man walk by long before the sun has risen—they probably ask themselves, Where is the thief going?"

"Do not go to man. Stay in the forest! Go rather even to the animals! Why do you not want to be as I am—a bear among bears, a bird among birds?"

"And what is the saint doing in the forest?" asked Zarathustra.

From Walter Kaufmann translation