

7 第一哲学沉思集

论上帝的存在和人的灵魂与肉体
之间的实在区别

第一个沉思

论可以引起怀疑的事物

由于很久以来^①我就感觉到我自从幼年时期就把一大堆错误的见解当做真实的接受了过来，而从那时以后我根据一些非常靠不住的原则建立起来的东西都不能是十分可疑、十分不可靠的，因此我认为^②，如果我想要在科学上建立起某种坚定可靠、经久不变的东西的话，我就非在我有生之日认真地把我历来信以为真的一切见解统统清除出去，再从根本上重新开始不可。可是这个工作的规模对我来说好像是太大了，因此我一直等待我达到一个十分成熟的年纪，成熟到我不能再希望在这以后还会有更合适于执行这项工作的时候为止，这就使我拖延了如此之久，直到我认为如果再把我的余生不去用来行动，光是考虑来、考虑去的话，那我就铸成大错了。

① 法文第二版：“并不是从今天起”。
② 法文第二版：“从那时起我就认为”。

而现在，由于我的精神已经从一切干扰中解放了出来^①，我又在一种恬静的隐居生活中得到一个稳定的休息，那么我要认真地、自由地来对我的全部旧见解进行一次总的清算。可是，为了达到这个目的，没有必要去证明这些旧见解都是错误的，因为那样一来，我也许就永远达不到目的。不过，理性告诉我说，和我认为显然是错误的东西一样，对于那些不是完全确定无疑的东西也应该不要轻易相信，因此只要我在那些东西里找到哪管是一点点可疑的东西^②就足以使我把它们全部都抛弃掉。这样一来，就不需要我把它们拿来一个个地检查了，因为那将会是一件没完没了的工作。可是，拆掉基础就必然引起大厦的其余部分随之而倒塌，所以我首先将从我的全部旧见解所根据的那些原则下手。

直到现在，凡是我当作最真实、最可靠而接受过来的东西，我都是从感官或通过感官得来的。不过，我有时觉得这些感官是骗人的；为了小心谨慎起见，对于一经骗过我们的东西就决不完全加以信任。

可是，虽然感官有时在不明显和离得很远的东西上骗过我们，但是也许有很多别的东西，虽然我们通过感官认识它们，却没有理由怀疑它们：比如我在这里，坐在炉火旁边，穿着室内长袍^③，两只手上拿着这张纸，以及诸如此类的事情。我怎么能否认这两只手

① 法文第二版：“而今天对于实行这个计划是再好不过了，因为我的精神已经从各种各样的顾虑中摆脱出来，幸而我在情绪上又没有感到有任何激动。”

② 法文第二版：“假如在每一个东西里边找到什么怀疑的理由”。

③ 指在室内穿的长便服。很多人把 robe de chambre 译为“睡衣”，错了，因为欧洲十七世纪还没有睡衣，欧洲人那时习惯于脱光了衣服睡觉，所以笛卡尔，在下一段里说：“一丝不挂地躺在我的被窝里”。

和这个身体是属于我的呢，除非也许是我而那些^①疯子相比，那些疯子的大脑让胆汁的黑气扰乱和遮蔽得那么厉害，以致他们尽管很穷却经常以为自己是国王；尽管是一丝不挂，却经常以为自己穿红戴金；或者他们幻想自己是盆子、罐子，或者他们的身子是被玻璃的。但是，怎么啦，那是一些疯子，如果我也和他们相比，那么我的荒诞程度也将不会小于他们了。

10 虽然如此，我在这里必须考虑到我是人，因而我有睡觉和在梦里出现跟疯子们醒着的时候所做的一模一样、有时甚至更加荒唐的事情的习惯。有多少次我夜里梦见我在这个地方，穿着衣服，在炉火旁边，虽然我是一丝不挂地躺在我的被窝里！我现在确实以为我并不是用睡着的眼睛看这张纸，我摇晃着的这个脑袋也并没有发昏，我故意地、自觉地伸出这只手，我感觉到了这只手，而出现在梦里的情况好像并不这么清楚，也不这么明白。但是，仔细想想，我就想起来我时常在睡梦中受过这样的一些假象的欺骗。想到这里，我就明显地看到没有什么确定不移的标记，也没有什么相当可靠的迹象^②使人能够从这上面清清楚楚地分辨出清醒和睡梦来，这不禁使我大吃一惊，吃惊到几乎能够让我相信我现在是在睡觉的程度。

那么让我们现在就假定我们是睡着了，假定所有这些个别情况，比如我们睁开眼睛，我们摇晃脑袋，我们伸手，等等，都不过是一些虚幻的假象；让我们就设想我们的手以及整个身体也许都不是像我们看到的这样。尽管如此，至少必须承认出现在我们的梦

① 法文第二版是：“某些”。

② “也没有什么相当可靠的迹象”，法文第二版缺。

里的那些东西就像图书一样，它们只有摹仿某种真实的东西才能做成，因此，至少那些一般的東西，比如眼睛、脑袋、手，以及身体的其余部分^①并不是想象出来的东西，而是真的^②、存在的東西。因为，老实说，当画家们用最大的技巧，奇形怪状地画出人鱼和人羊的时候，他们也究竟不能给它们加上完全新奇的形状和性质，他们不过是把不同动物的肢体掺杂拼凑起来；或者就算他们的想像力达到了相当荒诞的程度，足以捏造出来什么新奇的东西，新奇到使我们连类似的东西都没有看见过，从而他们的作品给我们表现出一种纯粹出于虚构和绝对不真实的东西来，不过至少构成这种东西的颜色总应该是真实的吧。

同样道理，就算这些一般的東西，例如眼睛^③、脑袋、手、以及诸如此类的東西都是幻想出来的，可是总得承认有^④更简单、更一般的東西是真实的、存在的，由于这些東西的掺杂，不多不少正像某些真实的颜色掺杂起来一样，就形成了存在于我们思维中的東西的一切形象，不管这些東西是真的、实在的也罢，还是虚构的、奇形怪状的也罢。一般的物性性质和它的广延，以及具有广延性東西的形状、量或大小和数目都属于这一类東西；还有这些東西所处的地点，所占的时间，以及诸如此类的東西。

这就是为什么我们从以上所说的这些将做出这样的结论也许是不会错的：物理学、天文学、医学、以及研究各种复合事物的其他一切科学都是可疑的、靠不住的；而算学、几何学，以及类似这样性

① “的其余部分”，法文第二版缺。

② 法文第二版：“实在的”。

③ 法文第二版是：“例如身子、眼睛……”。

④ 法文第二版：“至少还有其他”。

质的其他科学,由于他们所对待的都不过是一些非常简单、非常一般的東西,不大考虑这些東西是否存在于自然界中,因而却都含有某种确定无疑的東西。因为,不管我醒着还是睡着,二和三加在一起总是形成五的数目,正方形总不会有四个以上的边;像这样明显的一些真理,看来不会让人怀疑有什么错误或者不可靠的可能。

虽然如此,自从很久以来我心里就有某一种想法:有一个上帝,他是全能的,就是由他把我像我现在这个样子创造和产生出来的。可是,谁能向我保证这个上帝^①没有这样做过,即本来就没有地,没有天,没有带有广延性的物体,没有形状,没有大小,没有地点,而我却偏偏具有这一切东西的感觉,并且所有这些都不是像我所看见的那个样子存在着的。还有,和我有时断定别的人们甚至在他们以为知道得最准确的事情上弄错一样,也可能是上帝有意让我^②每次在二加三上,或者在数一个正方形的边上,或者在判断什么更容易的東西(如果人们可以想出来比这更容易的東西的话)上弄错。但是也许上帝并没有故意让我弄出这样的差错,因为他被人说成是至善的。尽管如此,如果说把我做成这样,让我总是弄错,这是和他的善良性相抵触的话,那么容许我有时弄错好像也是和他的善良性绝对^③相反的,因而我不能怀疑他会容许我这样做。

这里也许有人宁愿否认一个如此强大的上帝的存在而不去相信其他一切事物都是不可靠的。不过我们目前还不要去反对他

① 法文第二版:“可是我怎么知道是否他……”。

② 法文第二版:“我怎么知道上帝是否让我也在……”。

③ “绝对”,法文第二版缺。

们,还要站在他们的方面去假定在这里所说的凡是关于一个上帝的话都是无稽之谈。尽管如此,无论他们把我所具有的状况和存在做怎样的假定,他们把这归之于某种命运或宿命也罢,或者归之于偶然也罢,或者把这当作事物的一种连续和结合也罢,既然^①失误和弄错是一种不完满,那么肯定的是^②,他们给我的来源所指定的作者越是无能,我就越可能是不完满以致我总是弄错。对于这样的一些理由,我当然无可答辨;但是我不得不承认,凡是我早先信以为真的见解,没有一个是我现在^③不能怀疑的,这决不是由于考虑不周或轻率的原故,而是由于强有力的、经过深思熟虑的理由。因此,假如我想要在科学上找到什么经久不变的^④、确实可信的東西的话,我今后就必须对这些思想不去下判断,跟我对一眼就看出是错误的東西一样,不对它们加以更多的信任^⑤。

但是,仅仅做了这些注意还不够,我还必须当心把这些注意记住;因为这些旧的、平常的见解经常回到我的思维中来,它们跟我不相处的长时期的亲热习惯给了它们权利,让它们不由我的意愿而占据了我的心,差不多成了支配我的信念的主人。只要我把它们按照它们的实际情况那样来加以考虑,即像我刚才指出的那样,它们在某种方式上是可疑的,然而却是十分可能的,因而人们有更多¹⁵的理由去相信它们而不去否认它们,那么我就永远不能把承认和

① 法文第二版:在“既然”之前,还有“或者最后用其他的什么方式也罢”。

② “肯定的是”法文第二版缺。

③ “现在”在法文第二版里是“有点”。

④ “经久不变的”在法文第二版里是“可靠的”。

⑤ “我今后……信任”在法文第二版里是:“今后我就应该和对显然是错误的東西一样,不轻易下判断”。

信任它们的习惯破除。就是因为这个原故,我想,如果我反过来千方百计地来骗我自己,假装所有这些见解都是错误的,幻想出来的,直到在把我的这些成见反复加以衡量之后,使它们不致让我的主意偏向这一边或那一边,使我的判断今后不致为坏习惯所左右,不致舍弃可以导向认识真理的正路反而误入歧途,那我就做得更加慎重了。^①因为我确实相信在这条路上既不能有危险,也不能有错误,确实相信我今天不能容许我有太多的不信任,因为现在的问题还不在于行动,而仅仅在于沉思和认识。

因此我要假定有某一个妖怪,而不是一个真正的上帝(他是至上的真理源泉),这个妖怪的狡诈和欺骗手段不亚于他本领的强大,他用尽了它的机智来骗我^②。我要认为天、空气、地、颜色、形状、声音以及我们所看到的一切外界事物都不过是他用来骗取我轻信的一些假象和骗局^③。我要把我自己看成是本来就沒有手,沒有眼睛,沒有肉,沒有血,什么感官都沒有,而却错误地相信我有这些东西。我要坚决地保持这种想法;如果用这个办法我还认识不了什么真理,那么至少我有能力不去下判断。就是因为这个原故,我要小心从事,不去相信任何错误的东西,并且使我在精神上做好准备去对付这个大骗子的一切狡诈手段,让他永远没有可能

① 法文第二版是:“就是因为这个原故,我想假如我故意采取一种敌对的情绪,我自己骗我自己,假如我一时假装所有这些见解完全都是错误的、幻想出来的,直到终于把我的旧的和新成见……那么就做得很好了”。

② 法文第二版:“我要假定,用尽全部机智来骗我的,不是上帝(他是非常善良的,并且是至上的真理源泉)而是某一个恶魔,他的狡诈和欺骗手段不亚于他本领的强大”。

③ 法文第二版:“……以及其他一切外界事物都不过是他用来骗取我轻信的一些假象和梦幻”。

强加给我任何东西,不管他多么强大,多么狡诈。

可是这个打算是非常艰苦吃力的,而且由于某一种惰性使我不知不觉地又回到我日常的生活方式中来。就像一个奴隶在睡梦中享受一种虚构的自由,当他开始怀疑他的自由不过是一场黄粱美梦而害怕醒来时,他就和这些愉快的幻象串通起来,以便得以长时间地受骗一样,我自己也不知不觉地重新掉进我的旧见解中去,我害怕从这种迷迷糊糊的状态中清醒过来,害怕在这个休息的恬静之后随之而来的辛勤工作不但不会在认识真理上给我带来什么光明,反而连刚刚在这些难题上搅动起来的一切乌云都无法使之晴朗起来。

第二个沉思

论人的精神的本性以及精神 比物体更容易认识

我昨天的沉思给我心里装上了那么多的怀疑，使我今后再也不能把它们忘掉。可是我却看不出能用什么办法来解决它们：我就好像一下子掉进非常深的水潭里似的，惊慌失措得既不能把脚站稳在水底也不能游上来把自己浮到水面上。虽然如此，我将努力沿着我昨天已经走上的道路继续前进，躲开我能够想像出有一点点可疑的什么东西，就好像我知道它是绝对错误的一样。我还要在这条路上一直走下去，直到我碰到什么可靠的东西，或者，假如我做不到别的，至少直到我确实知道在世界上就没有什么可靠的东西时为止。

阿几米德只要求一个固定的靠得住的^①点，好把地球从它原来的位置上挪到另外一个地方去。同样，如果我有幸找到哪管是一件确切无疑的事，那么我就有权抱远大的希望了。

因此我假定凡是我看见的东西都是假的；我说服我自己把凡是假装了假话的记忆提供给我的东西都当作连一个也没有存在过。我认为我什么感官都没有，物体、形状、广延、运动和地点都不是在我心里虚构出来的东西。那么有什么东西可以认为是真实

的呢？除了世界上根本就没有什么可靠的东西而外，也许再也没有别的了。

可是我怎么知道除了我刚才断定为不可靠的那些东西而外，还有我们不能丝毫怀疑的什么别的东西呢？难道就没有上帝，或者什么别的力量，把这些想法给我放在心里吗？这倒并不一定是这样；因为也许我自己就能够产生这些想法。那么至少我，难道我不是什么东西吗？可是我已经否认了我有感官和身体。尽管如此，我就犹豫了，因为从这方面会得出什么结论来呢？难道我就是那么非依靠身体和感官不可，没有它们就不行吗？可是我曾说服我自己相信世界上什么都沒有，没有天，没有地，没有精神，也没有物体，难道我不是也曾说服我相信连我也不存在吗？绝对不；如果我曾说服我自己相信什么东西，或者仅仅是我想到过什么东西，那么毫无疑问我是存在的。可是有一个我不知道是什么的非常强大、非常狡猾的骗子，他总是用尽一切伎俩来骗我。因此，如果他骗我，那么毫无疑问我是存在的；而且他想怎么骗我就怎么骗我，只要我想到我是一个什么东西，他就总不会使我成为什么都不是。所以，在对上面这些很好地加以思考，同时对一切事物仔细地加以检查之后，最后必须做出这样的结论，而且必须把它当成确定无疑的，即有我，我存在这个命题，每次当我说出它来，或者在我心里想到它的时候，这个命题必然是真的。

可是我还不大清楚，这个确实知道我存在的我到底是什么，所以今后我必须小心从事，不要冒冒失失地把别的什么东西当成我，同时也不要在我认为比我以前所有的一切认识都更可靠、更明显的这个认识上弄错了。

^① 法文第二版：“不动的”。

就是为了这个原故，所以在我有上述这些想法之前，我先要^①重新考虑我从前认为我是什么；并且我要把凡是可以被我刚才讲的那些理由所冲击到的^②东西，全部从我的旧见解中铲除出去，让剩下的东西恰好是完全可靠和确定无疑的。那么我以前认为我是什么呢？毫无疑问，我想过我是一个人。可是一个人是什么？我是说一个有理性的动物吗？当然不；因为在这以后，我必须追问什么是动物，什么是有理性的，这样一来我们^③就将从仅仅一个问题上不知不觉地陷入无穷无尽的别的一些更困难、更麻烦的问题上去了，而我不愿把我剩下的很少时间和闲暇浪费在纠缠像这样的一些细节上。可是我要在这里进一步思考从前在我心里生出来的那些思想（那些思想不过是在我进行思考我的存在时从我自己的本性中生出来的），我首先曾把我看成是有脸、手、胳膊，以及由骨头和肉组合成的这么一架整套机器，就像从一具尸体上看到的那样，这架机器，我曾称之为身体。除此而外，我还曾认为我吃饭、走路、感觉、思维，并且我把所有这些行动都归到灵魂上去；但是我还没有进一步细想这个灵魂到底是什么；或者说，假如我进一步细想了，那就是我曾想像它是什么极其稀薄、极其精细的东西，好像一阵风，一股火焰，或者一股非常稀薄的气，这个东西钻进并且散布到我的那些比较粗浊的部分里。至于物体，我决不怀疑它的性质；因为我曾以为我把它认识得非常清楚了，并且如果我要按照我那时具有的概念来解释它的话，我就会这样地描述它：物

① 法文第二版：“现在先要”。
② 法文第二版：“多少冲击到的”。
③ 法文第二版：“我”。

体，我是指一切能为某种形状所限定的东西；它能包含在某个地方，能充满一个空间，从那里把其他任何物体都排斥出去；它能由于触觉，或者由于视觉，或者由于听觉，或者由于味觉，或者由于嗅觉而被感觉到；它能以若干方式被移动，不是^①被它自己，而是被在它以外的什么东西，它受到那个东西的接触和压力，从而被它所推动。因为像本身有自动、感觉和思维等能力的这样一些优越性，我以前决不认为应该把它们归之于物体的性质^②，相反看到像这样一些功能出现在某些物体之中，我倒是非常奇怪的。

可是，现在我假定有某一个极其强大，并且假如可以这样说的话，极其恶毒、狡诈的人^③，它用尽它的力量和机智来骗我，那么我到底是什么呢？我能够肯定我具有一点点我才归之于^④物体性的那些东西吗？我在这上面进一步细想，我在心里把这些东西想来想去，我没有找到其中任何一个是我可以说存在于我心里的。用不着我——列举这些东西。那么就拿灵魂的那些属性来说吧，看看有没有一个是在我心里的。首先两个是吃饭和走路；可是，假如我真是没有身体，我也就真是既不能走路，也不能吃饭。另外一个感觉；可是没有身体就不能感觉，除非是我以为以前我在梦中感觉到了很多东西，可是醒来之后我认出实际上并没有感觉。另外是思维。现在我觉得思维是属于我的一个属性，只有它不能跟我分开。有我，我存在这是靠得住的；可是，多长时间，我思维多长

① 法文第二版：“实际上不是”。
② 法文第二版：“本身有自动的能力，同时也有感觉或者思想的能力，我以前决不认为这是属于物体的性质的”。
③ 法文第二版：“某一个妖怪”。
④ 法文第二版：“我刚才说过属于”。

时间,就存在多长时间;因为假如我停止^①思维,也许很可能我就同时停止^②了存在。我现在对不是必然真实的东西一概不承认;因此,严格来说我只是一个在思维的东西,也就是说,一个精神,一个理智,或者一个理性;这些名称的意义是我以前不知道的。那么我是一个真的东西,真正存在的东西了;可是,是一个什么东西呢?我说过:是一个在思维的东西。还是什么呢?我要再发动我的想像力来看看我是不是再多一点的什么东西,我不是由肢体拼凑起来的人们称之为人体的那种东西;我不是一种稀薄、无孔不入、渗透到所有这些肢体里的空气;我不是风,我不是呼气,不是水汽,也不是我所能虚构和想像出来的任何东西,因为我假定过这些都是不存在的,而且即使不改变这个假定,我觉得这并不妨碍我确实知道我是一个东西。

可是,能不能也是这样:由于我不认识而假定不存在的那些东西,同我所认识的我并没有什么不同,我一点也不知道。关于这一点我现在不去讨论,我只能给我认识的那些东西下判断:我已经认识到我存在,现在我追问已经认识到我存在的这个我究竟是什么。可是关于我自己的这个概念和认识,严格来说既不取决于我还不知道其存在的那些东西,也更不取决于任何一个用想像虚构出来的和捏造出来的东西^③,这一点是非常靠得住的。何况虚构和想像这两个词就说明我是错误的;因为,如果我把我想像成一个什么东西,那么实际上我就是虚构了,因为想像不是别的,而是去

① 法文第二版:“完全停止”。

② 法文第二版:“可是,我对我的存在的认识,严格说来,并不取决于我还不知道其存在的那些东西,因而也不取决于任何一个我用想像所能虚构出来的东西”。

想一个物体性东西的形状或影像。我既然已经确实知道了我存在,同时也确实知道了所有那些影像,以及一般说来,凡是人们归之于物体性质的东西都很可能不过是梦或幻想。其次,我清楚地看到,如果我说我要发动我的想像力以便更清楚地认识我是谁^①,这和我说我现在是醒着,我看到某种实在和真实的东西,但是由于我看得还不够明白,我要故意睡着,好让我的梦给我把它更真实、更明显地提供出来,是同样不合道理的。这样一来,我确切地认识到,凡是我能用想像的办法来理解的东西,都不属于我对我自己的认识;认识到,如果要让精神把它的性质认识得十分清楚,那么我就需要让它不要继续使用这种方式来领会,要改弦更张,另走别的路子。

那么我究竟是什么呢,是一个在思维的东西。什么是一个在思维的东西呢?那就是说,一个在怀疑,在领会,在肯定,在否定,在愿意,在不愿意,也在想像,在感觉的东西。当然,如果所有这些都属于我的本性,那就不算少了。可是,为什么这些东西不属于我的本性呢?难道我不就是差不多什么都怀疑,然而却了解、领会某些东西,确认和肯定只有这些东西是真实的,否认一切别的东西,愿意和希望认识得更多一些,不愿意受骗,甚至有时不由得想像很多东西,就像由于身体的一些器官的媒介而感觉到很多东西的那个东西吗?难道所有这一切就没有一件是和确实有我、我确实存在同样真实的,尽管我总是睡觉,尽管使我存在的那个人用尽他所有的力量^②来骗我?难道在这些属性里边就没有一个是能够

① 法文第二版:“我是什么”。

② 法文第二版:“机智”。

同我的思维有分别的，或者说可以说是同我自己分得开的吗？因为事情本来是如此明显，是我在怀疑，在了解，在希望，以致在这里用不着增加什么来解释它。并且我当然也有能力去想像；因为即使可能出現这种情况（就像我以前曾经假定的那样），即我所想像的那些东西不是真的，可是这种想像的能力仍然不失其为实在在我心里，并且做成我思维的一部分。总之，我就是那个在感觉的东西，也就是说，好像是通过感觉器官接受和认识^①事物的东西，因为事实上我看见了光，听到了声音，感到了热。但是有人将对我说：这些现象是假的，我是在睡觉。就算是这样吧；可是至少我似乎觉得就看见了，听见了，热了^②，这总是千真万确的吧；真正来说，这就是在我心里叫做在感觉的东西，而在正确的意义上，这就是在思维。从这里我就开始比以前稍微更清楚地明白地认识了我是什么。

可是^③，我不能不相信：对于其影像是我的思维做成的、落于感官的^④那些有物体性的东西，比不落于想像、不知道是哪一部分的我自己认识得更清楚，虽然我认为可疑的、我以外的一些东西倒被我认识得比那些真实的、确切的、属于我自己本性的东西更明白、更容易，这实际上是一件非常奇怪的事情。不过我看出了这是怎么回事：我的精神是心猿意马，还不能把自己限制在真理的正确界限之内。让我们再一次给它放松一下缰绳吧，好让我们以后再慢慢地、恰如其分地把缰绳拉住，我们就能够更容易地节制它、驾驭它。

① “接受和认识”，法文第二版是：“发觉”。

② 法文第二版：“看见了光，我听见了声音，我感觉到了热”。

③ 法文第二版：“可是我仍然觉得”。

④ 法文第二版：“落于感官的，感官本身检查的”。

御它了^①。

让我们开始考虑一下最认识的、我们相信是了解得最清楚的东西^②，也就是我们摸到、看见的物体吧。我不是指一般物体说的（因为“一般”这一概念通常是比较模糊的），而是考虑一下一个特殊物体。举一块刚从蜂房里取出来的蜡为例：它还没有失去它含有的蜜的甜味，还保存着一点它从花里采来的香气；它的颜色、形状、大小，是明显的；它是硬的、凉的、容易摸的^③，如果你敲它一下，它就发出一点声音。总之，凡是能够使人清楚地认识一个物体的东西，在这里边都有。

可是，当我说话的时候，有人把它拿到火旁边：剩下的味道发散了，香气消失了，它的颜色变了，它的形状和原来不一样了，它的体积增大了，它变成液体了，它热了，摸不得了，尽管敲它，它再也发不出声音了。在发生了这个变化之后，原来的蜡还继续存在吗？必须承认它还继续存在；而且对这一点任何人不能否认^④。那么以前在这块蜡上认识得那么清楚的是什么呢，当然不可能是在这块蜡上通过感官的媒介所感到的什么东西，因为凡是落于味觉、

① 法文第二版：“虽然如此，对于我觉得其存在性是可疑的、我不知道的、不属于我的那些东西，比起我所认识的、我相信其真实性的、属于我的本性的东西，一句话，比起我自己来，我倒认识得更清楚，这说起来实际上是很奇怪的。不过我看出来这是怎么回事了。我的心是个放浪不羁的家伙，它喜欢乱跑乱窜，还不能忍受把它拴在真理的界限以内。那么再把它拴在缰绳上放松一次，给它全部自由，允许它观察出现在它以外的东西吧，好让我们以后再慢慢地、恰如其分地拉住缰绳，让它停下来考虑它的本质和它里边的一些东西，这样，在这以后它就比较容易受我们的节制和驾驭了”。

② 法文第二版：“那么现在我们考虑一下人们通常认为是最容易认识、也相信是认识得最清楚的东西”。

③ 法文第一版里是 *on le touche*（人们摸到它），第二版里是 *maniable*（可拿的，顺手的）。这里是按照拉丁文版里 *facile tangitur* 译的。

④ 法文第二版：“任何人都不怀疑，谁都这样断定”。

嗅觉、视觉、触觉、听觉的东西都改变了，不过本来的蜡还继续存在。也许是我现在所想的这个东西，也就是说蜡，并不是这个蜜的甜味，也不是这种花的香味，也不是这种白的颜色，也不是这种形状，也不是这种声音，而仅仅是一个刚才在那些形式之下表现而现在又在另外一些形式之下表现的物体。可是，确切说来，在我象这个样子领会它时，我想象的什么呢？让我们对这件事仔细考虑一下，把凡是不属于蜡的东西都去掉，看一看还剩些什么。当然剩下的只有有广延的、有伸缩性的、可以变动的东西。那么有伸缩性的、可以变动的，这是指什么说的？是不是我想象这块圆的蜡可以变成方的，可以从方的变成三角形的？当然不是，不是这样，因为它把它领会为可能接受无数像这样的改变，而我却不能用我的想象来一个个体地认识无数的改变，因此我所具有的蜡的概念是不能用想象的功能来做到的。

那么这个广延是什么呢？它不也是不认识的吗？因为在蜡融化的时候它就增大，在蜡完全融化的时候它就变得更大，而当热度再增加时它就变得越发大了。如果我沒有想到蜡^①能够按照广延而接受更多的花样，多到出乎我的想象之外，我就不会清楚地、按照真实的情况来领会什么是蜡了。所以我必须承认我甚至连用想象都不能领会^②这块蜡是什么，只有我的理智才能够领会^③它。我是说这块个别的蜡，因为至于一般的蜡，那就更明显了。那么只有理智或精神才能领会^④的这个蜡是什么呢？当然就是我能看见的、

① 法文第二版：“甚至我们所考虑的这块蜡”。

② 法文第二版：“了解”。

我摸到的、我想象的那块蜡，就是我一开始认识^①的那块蜡。可是，要注意的是对它的知觉，或者我们用以知觉它的行动^②，不是看，也不是摸，也不是想象，从来不是，虽然它从前好像是这样，而仅仅是用精神去察看，这种察看可以是片面的、模糊的，像它以前那样，或者是清楚的、分明的，像它现在这样，根据我对在它里边的或组成它的那些东西注意得多或少而定。

可是，当我考虑我的精神是多么软弱，多么不知不觉地趋向于错误的时候，我不能太奇怪。因为即使我不言不语地在我自己心里考虑这一切，可是言语却限制了我，我几乎让普通言语的词句引入错误；因为如果人们把原来的蜡拿给我们，我们说我们看见这就是那块蜡，而不是我们判断这就是那块蜡，由于它有着同样的颜色和同样的形状。从这里，假如不是我偶然从一个窗口看街上过路的人，在我看见他们的时候，我不能不说我看见了一些人，就如同我说我看见蜡一样，那么我几乎就要断定说：人们认识蜡是用眼睛看，而不是光用精神去观察。可是我从窗口看见了什么呢？无非是一些帽子和大衣，而帽子和大衣遮盖下的可能是一些幽灵或者是一些伪装的人^③，只用弹簧才能移动。不过我判断这是一些真实的人^④，这样，单凭我心里的判断能力我就了解我认为是由我眼睛看见的东西。

一个人要想把他的认识提高到比一般人的认识水平以上，就

① 法文第二版：“相信”。

② “或者我们用知觉它的行动”，法文第二版缺。

③ “一些幽灵或者一些伪装的人”，法文第二版是“一些人造的机器”。

④ “真实的”，法文第二版缺。

应该把我碰几怀疑一般人说话的形式和词句^①当做可耻的事。我首先不管别的，专门去考虑一下：我最初看到的，用外感官，或至少像他们说的那样，用常识，也就是说用想象力的办法来领会的蜡是什么，是否比我现在这样，在更准确地^②检查它是什么以及能用什么办法去认识它之后，把它领会得更清楚、更全面些。当然，连这个都怀疑起来，那是可笑的。因为在这初步的知觉里有什么是清楚、明显的，不能同样落于最差的动物的感官里呢^③，可是，当我把蜡从它的外表分别出来，就像把它的衣服脱下来那样，我把它赤裸裸地考虑起来，当然，尽管我的判断里还可能存在某些错误，不过，如果没有人的精神，我就不能把它像这个样子来领会。

可是，关于这个精神，也就是说关于我自己（因为直到现在除了我是一个精神之外，我什么都不承认），我将要说什么呢？我说，关于好像那么清楚分明地领会了这块蜡的这个我，我将要说什么呢^④，我对我自己认识得难道不是更加真实、确切而且更加清楚、分明吗？因为，如果由于我看见蜡而断定有蜡，或者蜡存在，那么由于我看见蜡因此有我，或者我存在这件事当然也就越发明显，因为，有可能是我所看见的实际上并不是蜡；也有可能是我连看东西的眼睛都没有；可是，当我看见或者当我想是看见（这是我不再加以区别的）的时候，这个在思维着的我倒不是个什么东西，这是不可能的。同样，如果由于我摸到了蜡而断定它存在，其结果也一样，

① 法文第二版：“一般人所发明的说话形式”。

② 法文第二版：“更仔细地”。

③ 法文第二版：“在这个知觉里，有什么不同的呢？有什么好像是，不能以同样方式属于最差的动物的感官里呢？”

④ 法文第二版：“这个好像……的我，是什么呢？”。

即我存在；如果由我的想象使我相信而断定它存在，我也总是得出同样的结论。我在这里关于蜡所说的话也可以适用于外在于我、³¹在我以外的其他一切东西上。

那么，如果说蜡在不仅经过视觉或触觉，同时也经过很多别的原因而被发现了^①之后，我对它的概念和认识^②好像是更加清楚、更加分明了，那么，我不是应该越发容易、越发明显、越发分明地认识我自己了吗？^③因为一切用以认识和领会蜡的本性或别的物体^④的本性的理由都更加容易、更加明显地^⑤证明我的精神的本性。除了属于物体的那些东西以外，在精神里还有很多别的东西能够有助于阐明精神的本性，那些东西就不值得去提了。

可是，我终于不知不觉地回到了我原来想要回到地方；因为，既然事情现在我已经认识了，真正来说，我们只是通过在我们心里的理智功能，而不是通过想象，也不是通过感官来领会物体，而且我们不是由于看见了它，或者我们摸到了它才认识它，而只是由于我们用思维领会它，那么显然我认识了没有什么对我来说比我的精神更容易认识的东西了。可是，因为几乎不可能这么快就破除一个旧见解^⑥；那么，我最好在这里暂时打住，以便，经过这么长的沉思，我把这一个新的认识深深地印到我的记忆里去。

① “被发现了”，法文第二版是：“使我更清楚”。

② “概念和认识”，法文第二版是：“概念或知觉”。

③ 法文第二版：“我必须……承认我现在认识了我自己”。

④ 法文第二版：“不管什么别的物体”。

⑤ “更加容易、更加明显地”，法文第二版是：“更好地”。

⑥ 法文第二版：“因为，既然事情现在对我来说已经明白了，即物体本身并不是由于被看见或者被摸到，而不过是被理解到或者通过思想被了解到才被认识的，那么我看得很清楚，没有再比我的精神对我来说更容易认识的了。但是，由于不容易这么快就破除一个习以为常见解”。

么事情吗，在这个初步的认识里，只有我认识的一个清楚、明白的知觉^①。老实说，假如万一我认识得如此清楚、分明的东西竟是假的，那么这个知觉就不足以使我确实知道它是真的。从而我觉得我已经能够把“凡是我们领会得十分清楚、十分分明的东西都是真实的”这一条订为总则。

虽然如此，我以前当作非常可靠、非常明显而接受和承认下来的东西，后来我又都认为是可疑的、不可靠的。那些东西是什么呢？是地、天、星辰、以及凡是我通过我的感官所感到的其他东西。³⁵可是，我在这些东西里边曾领会得清楚、明白的是什么呢？当然不是别的，无非是那些东西在我心里呈现的观念或思维。并且就是现在我还否认这些观念是在我心里。可是还有另外一件事情是我曾经确实知道的，并且由于习惯的原因使我相信它，我曾经以为：看得非常清楚，虽然实际上我并没有看出它，即有些东西在我以外，这些观念就是从那里发生的，并且和那些东西一模一样。我就是在这件事情上弄错了；或者，假如说我也许是按照事实真相判断的，那也决不是对我的判断的真实性的原因有什么认识。

可是当我考虑有关算学和几何学某种十分简单、十分容易的东西，比如三加二等于五，以及诸如此类的其他事情的时候，我不是至少把它们领会得清清楚楚，确实知道它们是真的吗？当然，假如从那以后，我认为可以对这些东西怀疑的话，那一定不是由于别的理由，而只是因我心里产生这样一种想法，即也许是一个什么上帝，他给了我这样的本性，让我甚至在我觉得是最明显的一些东西

^① 法文第二版：“在这个初步的认识里，只有我所说的清楚、明白的知觉才能使我确实知道真实性”。

第三个沉思

论上帝及其存在

现在我要闭上眼睛，堵上耳朵，脱离开我的一切感官，我甚至要把一切物体性的东西的影像都从我的思维里排除出去，或者至少（因为那是不大可能的）我要把它们看做是假的；这样一来，由于我仅仅和我自己打交道，仅仅考虑我的内部，我要试着一点点地进一步认识我自己，对我自己进一步亲热起来。我是一个在思维的东西，这就是说，我是一个在怀疑，在肯定，在否定，知道的很少，不知道的很多，在爱、在恨、在愿意、在不愿意、也在想象、在感觉的东西。因为，就像我刚才说过的那样，即使我所感觉和想像的东西也许决不是在我以外、在它们自己以内的，然而我确实知道我称之为感觉和想像的这种思维方式，就其仅仅是思维方式来说，一定是存在和出现在我心里的。而且我刚才说得虽然不多，可是我认为已经把我真正知道的东西，或至少是我直到现在觉得我知道了的东西，全部都说了出来。

现在我要更准确地考虑一下是否在我心里也许就没有我还没有感觉的其他认识^①。我确实知道了我是一个在思维的东西；但是我不是因此也就知道了我需要具备什么，才能使我确实知道什

^① 法文第二版：“现在，为了进一步开展我的认识，我要小心谨慎，仔细考虑在我心里是否还能发现我至今还没有看出来的别的什么东西”。

上弄错。但是每当上述关于一个上帝的至高无上的能力这种见解出现在我的思维里时，我都不得不承认，如果他愿意，他就很容易使我甚至在我相信认识得非常清楚的东西上弄错。可是反过来，每当我转向我以为领会得十分清楚的东西上的时候，我是如此地被这些东西说服，以致我自己不由得说出这样的话：他怎么能骗我就怎么骗我吧，只要我想我是什么东西，他就决不能使我什么都不是；或者既然现在我存在这件事是真的，他就决不能使我从来或者有那么一天没有存在过；他也决不能使三加二之和多于五或少于五，或者在我看得很清楚的诸如此类的事情上不能像我所领会的那个样子。

并且，既然我没有任何理由相信有个什么上帝是骗子，既然我还对证明有一个上帝的那些理由进行过考虑，因此仅仅建筑在这个见解之上的怀疑理由当然是非常轻率的，并且是（姑且这么说）形而上学的。可是，为了排除这个理由，我应该在一旦机会到来的时候，检查一下是否有一个上帝；而一旦我找到了有一个上帝，我也应检查一下他是否是骗子。因为如果不认识这两个事实真相，我就看不出我能够把任何一件事情当作是可靠的。而为了我能够有机会去做这种检查而不致中断我自己提出来的沉思次序，即从在我心里首先找到的概念一步步地推论到后来可能在我心里找到的概念，我就必须在这里把我的全部思维分为几类，必须考虑在哪些类里真正有真理或有错误。

在我的各类思维之中，有些是事物的影象。只有在这样一些思维才真正适合观念这一名称：比如我想起一个人，或者一个怪物，或者天，或者一个天使，或者上帝本身。除此而外，另外一些思

维有另外的形式，比如我想要，我害怕，我肯定，我否定；我虽然把某种东西领会为我精神的行动的主体，但是我也用这个行动把某些东西加到我对于这个东西所具有的观念上；属于这一类思维的有些叫做意志或情感，另外一些叫做判断。

至于观念，如果只就其本身而不把它们牵涉到别的东西上去，真正说来，它们不能是假的；因为不管我想象一只山羊或一个怪物，在我想象上同样都是真实的。

也不要害怕在情感或意志里边会有假的；即使我可以希望一些坏事情，或者甚至这些事情永远不存在，但是不能因此就对我说这些事情的希望不是真的。

这样，就只剩下判断了。在判断里我应该小心谨慎以免弄错。而在判断里可能出现的重要的和最平常的错误在于我把在我心里的观念判断为和我以外的一些东西一样或相似；因为，如果我把观念仅仅看成是我的思维的某些方式或方法，不想把它们牵涉到别的什么外界东西上去，它们当然就不会使我有弄错的机会。

在这些观念里边，有些我认为我是与我俱生的，有些是外来的，来自外界的，有些是由我自己做成的和捏造的。因为，我有领会一般称之为一个东西，或一个真理，或一个思想的功能，我觉得这种功能不是外来的，而是出自我的本性的；但是，如果我现在听见了什么声音，看见了太阳，感觉到了热，那么一直到这时候我判断这些感觉都是从存在于我以外的什么东西发出的；最后，我觉得人鱼，鹭马以及诸如此类的其他一切怪物都是一些虚构和由我的精神凭空捏造出来的。可是也许我可以相信所有这些观念都是属于我称之为外来的、来自我以外的这些观念，或者它们都是与我俱生

的,或者它们都是由我做成的;因为我还没有清楚地发现它们的真正来源。我现在要做的主要事情是,在有关我觉得来自我以外的什么对象的那些观念,看看有哪些理由使我不得不相信它们是和这些对象一样的。

第一个理由是:我觉得这是自然告诉我的;第二个理由是:我自己体会到这些观念是不以我的意志为转移的,因为它们经常不由我自主而呈现给我,好像现在,不管我愿意也罢,不愿意也罢,我感受到了热,而由于这个原因就使我相信热这种感觉或这种观念是由于一种不同于我的东西,即由于我旁边的^①火炉的热产生给我的。除了判断这个外来东西不是把什么的,而是把它的形象送出来印到我心里以外,我看不出有什么我认为更合理的了。

现在我必须看一看这些理由是否过硬,是否有足够的说服力。当我说我觉得这是自然告诉我的,我用自然这一词所指的仅仅是某一种倾向,这种倾向使我相信这个事情,而不是一种自然的光明^②使我认识这个事情是真的。这二者之间^③有很大的不同:因为对于自然的光明使我看到都是真的这件事,我一点都不能怀疑,就像它刚才使我看到由于我怀疑这件事,我就能够推论出我存在一样。在辨别真和假上,我没有任何别的功能或能力能够告诉我说这个自然的光明指给我是真的东西并不是真的,让我能够对于那种功能或能力和对于自然的光明同样地加以信赖。可是,至于倾向,我觉得它们对我来说也是自然的,我时常注意到,当问题在

① 法文第二版:“我坐在旁边的”。

② 即理性。

③ 法文第二版:“这两种说法”。

于在对善与恶之间进行选择的时候,倾向使我选择恶的时候并不比使我选择善的时候少;这就是为什么在关于真和假上,我也并不依靠倾向的原故。

至于另外的理由,即这些观念既然不以我的意志为转移,那么它们必然是从别处来的,我认为这同样没有说服力。因为我刚才所说的那些倾向是在我心里,尽管它们不总是和我的意志一致,同样,也许是我心里有什么功能或能力,专门产生这些观念而并不借助于什么外在的东西,虽然我对这个功能和能力还一无所知;因为事实上到现在我觉得当我睡觉的时候,这些观念也同样在我心里形成而不借助于它们所表象的对象。最后,即使我同意它们是由这些对象引起的,可也不能因此而一定说它们应该和那些对象一样。相反,在很多事例上我经常看到对象和对象之间有很大的不同。比如对于太阳,我觉得我心里有两种截然不同的观念:一种是来源于感官的,应该放在我前面所说的来自外面的那一类里;根据这个观念,我觉得它非常小。另外一个是从天文学的道理中,也就是说,从与我俱生的某些概念里得出来的,或者是由我自己无论用什么方法制造出来的,根据这个观念,我觉得太阳比整个地球大很多倍。我对太阳所领会的这两个观念当然不能都和同一的太阳一样;理性使我相信直接来自它的外表的那个观念是和其他不一样的。

所有这些足够使我认识,直到现在,我曾经相信有些东西在我以外,和我不同,它们通过我的感官,或者用随便什么别的方法,把它们的观念或影像传送给我的,并且给我印上它们的形象,这都不是一种可靠的、经过深思熟虑的判断,而仅仅是从一种盲目的、卤莽

的冲动得出来的。

可是还有另外一种途径可以用来考虑一下在我心里有其观念的那些东西中间,是否有些是存在于我以外的,比如,如果把这些观念看作只不过是思维的某些方式,那么我就认不出在它们之间有什么不同或不等,都好像是以同样方式由我生出来的。可是,如果把它们看作是影象,其中一些表示这一个东西,另外一些表示另外一个东西,那么显然它们彼此之间是非常不同的。因为的确,给我表象实体的那些观念,无疑地比仅仅给我表象样式或偶性的那些观念更多一点什么东西,并且本身包括着(姑且这样说)更多的客观^①实在性,也就是说,通过表象而分享程度更大的存在或完满性。再说,我由之而体会到一个至高无上的、永恒的、无限的、不变的、全知的、全能的、他自己以外的一切事物的普遍创造者的上帝的那个观念,我说,无疑在他本身里比我表象有限的实体的那些观念要有更多的客观实在性。

现在,凭自然的光明显然可以看出,在动力的^②、总的原因里一定至少和在它的结果里有更多的实在性:因为结果如果不从它的原因里,那么能从哪里取得它的实在性呢?这个原因如果本身没有实在性,怎么能够把它传给它的结果呢?

由此可见,不仅无中不能生有,而且比较完满的东西,也就是

^① “客观的”(objectif),或“客观地”(objectivement),在十七世纪的涵义和今天的涵义不同。在笛卡尔的用法是:仅就其在观念上的存在而言的就叫作“客观的”,或“客观地”存在。在十七世纪,“客观的”一词的反义词不是“主观的”,而是“真实的”或“形式的”。

^② 亚里士多德哲学里四种原因之一。亚里士多德的四因是:(1)质料因,(2)形式因,(3)动力因,(4)目的因。

说,本身包含更多的实在性的东西,也不能是比较不完满的东西的结果和依据。这个真理无论是在具有哲学家们称之为现实的或形式的^①那种实在性的那些结果里,或者是在人们仅仅从中考虑哲学家们称之为客观的实在性的那些观念里,都是清楚、明显的。例如:还没有存在过的石头,如果它不是由一个东西所产生,那个东西本身形式地或卓越地^②具有进入石头的组织中的一切,也就是说,它本身包含着和石头所有的同样的东西或者更美好的一些别的的东西,那么石头现在就不能开始存在;热如果不是由于在等级上、程度上,或者种类上至少是和它一样完满的一个东西产生,就不能在一个以前没有热的物体中产生。其他的東西也是这样。此外,热的观念或者石头的观念如果不是由于一个本身包含至少象我在热或者石头里所领会的同样多的实在性的什么原因把它放在我的心里,它也就不可能在我心里。因为,虽然那个原因不能把它们现实的或形式的实在性的任何东西传授到我的观念里,但是不应该因此就想象那个原因不那么实在;不过必须知道,既然每个观念都是精神的作品,那么它的本性使它除了它从思维或精神所接受或拿过来的那种形式的实在性以外,自然不要求别的形式实在性,而观念只是思维或精神的一个样态,也就是说,只是思维的一种方式或方法。一个观念之所以包含这样一个而不包含那样一个客观实在性,这无疑地是来自什么原因,在这个原因里的形式

^① “形式的”(formel),或“形式地”(formellement),在笛卡尔的用法是:存在于我们所具有的观念所表象的东西之上,亦即真实地、实在地存在于我们的观念之本的对象上。

^② “卓越地”(éminemment)存在,指存在于高于自己而且包含了的东西。一个东西可以有三种存在方式:(1)客观地存在,(2)形式地存在,(3)卓越地存在。前两种已见于前面的注解中。

实在性至少同这个观念所包含的客观实在性一样多。因为如果我们设想在观念里有它的原因里所没有的东西,那么这个东西就一定是从无中来的。然而一种东西客观地,或者由于表象,用它的观念而存在于理智之中的这种存在方式,不管它是多么不完善,总不能说它不存在,因而也不能说这个观念来源于无。虽然我在我的观念里所考虑的实在性仅仅是客观的,我也不应该怀疑实在性必然形式地存在于我的观念的原因里,我也不应该认为这种实在性客观地存在于观念的原因里就够了;①因为,正和这样存在方式之由于观念的本性而客观地属于观念一样,存在方式也由于观念的本性而形式地属于这些观念的原因(至少是属于观念的原始的、主要的原因)。而且即使一个观念有可能产生另一个观念,可是这种现象也不可能是无穷无尽的,它最终必须达到一个第一观念,这个第一观念的原因就象一个样本或者一个原型一样,在它里边形式地、实际地包含着仅仅是客观地或由于表象而存在于这些观念之中的全部实在性或者完满性。这样,自然的光明使我明显地看出,观念在我心里就象一些绘画或者一些图像一样,它们,不错,有可能很容易减少它们之所本的那些东西的完满性,可是决不能包含什么更伟大或者更完满的东西。

45 越是长时间地、仔细地考察所有这些事物,我就越是清楚、明白地看出它们是真的。不过最后我从这里得出什么结论来呢,这就是:如果我的某一个观念的客观实在性②使我清楚地认识到

① 法文第二版:“并且,我也不应该想象,我在我的观念里所考虑的实在性既然不过是客观的,那么这个实在性就不必要非得是形式地或现实地存在于这些观念的原因里不可,而是只要它也是客观地存在于这些观念的原因里就够了”。

② 法文第二版:“客观的实在性或完满性”。

它①既不是形式地,也不是卓越地存在于我,从而我自己不可能是它的原因,那么结果必然是在世界上并不是只有我一个人,而是还有别的什么东西存在,它就是这个观念的原因;另外,如果这样的观念不存在于我,我就没有任何论据能够说服我并且使我确实知道除了我自己以外就没有任何别的东西存在;因为,我曾经仔细地寻找过,可是直到现在我没有任何别的论据。

在所有这些观念之中②,除了给我表象我自己的那个观念在这里不可能有任何问题以外,还有一个观念给我表象一个上帝,另外的一些观念给我表象物体性的、无生命的东西,另外一些观念给我表象天使,另外一些观念给我表象动物,最后,还有一些观念给我表象象我一样的人。可是,至于给我表象其他的人,或者动物,或者天使的那些观念,我容易领会它们是可以由我关于物体性的东西和上帝所具有的其他一些观念混合而成的,尽管除了我以外,世界上根本就没有其他的人,没有动物,没有天使。至于物体性的东西的观念,我并不认为在它们里边有什么大得不得了和好得不得了的东西使我觉得它们不能来自我自己;因为,如果我再仔细地考虑它们,如果我象昨天考察蜡的观念那样考察它们,我认为在那里只有很少的东西是我领会得清清楚楚的,比如大小或者长、宽、厚的广延;用这种广延的这几个词和界限③形成起来的形状④;不同形状形成起来的各个物体之间所保持的地位,以及这种地位的运动或变化;还可以加上实体,时间和数目。至于别的东西,象光、

① 法文第二版:“这种实在性或完满性”。

② 法文第二版:“在所有存在于我的这些观念之中”。

③ “词和界限”是指“长、宽、厚”说的。

④ 法文第二版:“由广延的词做成的形状”。

颜色、声音、气味、味道、热、冷、以及落于触觉的其他一些性质，它们在我的思维里边是那么模糊不清以致我简直不知道它们到底是真的还是假的，仅仅是一些假象^①，也就是说，不知道我对于性质所理会的观念到底是什么实在东西的观念呢，还是这些观念给我表象的只是一些幻想出来的、不可能存在的东西。因为，虽然我以前提出过，只有在判断里才能有真正的、形式的假，然而在观念里则可能有某种实质的假，即当观念把什么都不是的东西表象为什么东西的时候就是这样。比如，我对于冷的观念和热的观念很不清楚、不明白，以致按照它们的办法我不能分辨出^②到底冷仅仅是缺少热呢，还是热是缺少冷呢，或者二者都是实在的性质，或者都不是；并且，既然观念就象影像一样，没有任何一个观念似乎不给我们表象什么东西，如果说冷真地不过是缺少热，那么当作实在的、肯定的什么东西而把它给我表象出来的观念就不应该不恰当地被叫做假的，其他类似的观念也一样；我当然没有必要把它们的作者归之于别人而不归之于我自己。因为，如果它们是假的，就是说，如果它们表象的东西并不存在，那么自然的光明使我看出它们产生于无，也就是说它们之在我心里只是由于我的本性缺少什么东西，并不是非常完满的。如果这些观念是真的，那么即使它们给我表象的实在性少到我甚至不能清楚地分辨出来什么是所表象的东西，什么是无，我也看不出有什么理由使它们不能由我自己产生，使我不能是它们的作者^③。

① “仅仅是一些假象”，法文第二版缺。

② 法文第二版：“以致它们不能告诉我”。

③ 法文第二版：“那么即使它们给我表象的实在性少到我甚至不能分辨出所表象的东西和无来，我也看不出为什么我不能是它的作者”。

至于我具有的物体性的东西的清楚明白的观念，有些似乎是我能够从我自己的观念中得出来的，象我具有的实体的观念，时间的观念，数目的观念，以及诸如此类的其他东西的观念那样。因为，我想到石头是一个实体，或者一个本身有能力存在的东西，想到我是一个实体，^①虽然我领会得很清楚我是一个在思维而没有广延的东西，相反石头是一个有广延而不思维的东西，这样，在这两个概念之间有着明显的不同，可是，无论如何它们在表象实体这一点上似乎是^②一致的。同样，我想到我现在存在，并且除此而外我记得我从前也存在，我领会许多不同的思想，认识到这些思想的数目，在这时候我就在我心里得到时间和数目的观念，从此我就可以把这两种观念随心所欲地传给其他一切东西。

至于物体性的东西的观念由之而形成的其他一些性质，即广延、形状、地位、变动等，它们固然不是形式地存在于我心里，因为我不过是一个在思维的东西；然而由于这仅仅是实体的某些样态，好象一些衣服一样，物体性的实体就在这些衣服下面给我们表现出来^③，而且我自己也是一个实体，因此它们似乎是能够卓越地包含在我心里。

因而只剩下上帝的观念了，在这个观念里边，必须考虑一下是否有什么东西是能够来源我自己的。用上帝这个名称，我是指一个无限的、永恒的、常住不变的、不依存于别的东西的、至上明智的、无所不能的、以及我自己和其他一切东西（假如真有东西存在

① 法文第二版：“然后想到我自己也是一个实体”。

② 法文第二版：“二者都是”。

③ “好象一些衣服一样，物体性的实体，就在这里衣服下面给我们表现出来”，法文第二版里缺。

49 的话)由之而被创造和产生的实体说的。这些优点是这样巨大,这样卓越,以致我越认真考虑它们,就越不相信我对它们所具有的观念能够单独地来源于我。因此,从上面所说的一切中,必然得出上帝存在这一结论;因为,虽然实体的观念之在我心里就是由于我是一个实体,不过我是一个有限的东西,因而我不能有一个无限的实体的观念,假如不是一个什么真正无限的实体把这个观念放在我心里的话。

我不应该想象我不是通过一个真正的观念,而仅仅是通过有限的东西的否定来领会无限的,就象我通过动和光明的否定来理解静和黑暗那样;因为相反,我明显地看到在无限的实体里边比在一个有限的实体里边具有更多的实在性,因此我以某种方式在我心里首先有的是无限的概念而不是有限的概念,也就是说,首先有的是上帝的概念而不是我自己的概念。因为,假如在我心里我不是有一个比我的存在体更完满的存在体的观念,不是由于同那个存在体做了比较我才会看出我的本性的缺陷的话,我怎么可能认识到我怀疑和我希望,也就是说,我认识到我缺少什么东西,我不是完满无缺的呢,

50 不能说这个上帝的观念也许实质上是假的,是我能够从无中得出它来的,也就是说,因为我有缺陷,所以它可能存在于我心里,就象我以前关于热和冷的观念以及诸如比类的其他东西的观念时所说的那样;因为,相反,这个观念是非常清楚、非常明白的,它本身比任何别的观念都含有更多的客观实在性,所以自然没有一个观念比它更真实,能够更少被人怀疑为错的和假的了。

我说,这个无上完满的、无限的存在体的观念是完全真实的;

因为,虽然也许可以设想这样的一个存在体是不存在的,可是不能设想它的观念不给我表象任何实在的东西,就象我不久以前关于冷所说的那样。

这个观念也是非常清楚、非常明白的,因为凡是我的精神清楚地明白地领会为实在和真实的,并且本身含有什么完满性的东西,都完全包含在这个观念里边了。

51 虽然我不理解无限,或者^①虽然在上帝里边有我所不能理解的、也许用思维绝对不能达到的无数事物,这都无碍于上面所说的这个事实是真的;因为我的本性是有限的^②,不能理解无限,这是由于无限的本性的原故;只要我很好地领会^③这个道理,把凡是我会领会得清清楚楚的东西,其中我知道有什么完满性,也许还有无数的其他完满性是我不知道的,都断定为形式地或卓越地存在于上帝里边,使我对上帝所具有的观念在我心里边的一切观念中是最真实、最清楚、最明白的就够了。

可是也许我是比我所想象的更多一点什么,也许我归之于一个上帝的本性的一切完满性是以某种方式潜在我心中,虽然它们还没有产生出来,还没有由它们的行动表现出来。事实上,我已经体验到我的认识逐渐增长,逐渐完满起来,我看不出有什么能够阻止它越来越向无限方面增长。还有,既然象这样增长和完满下去,我看不出有什么阻止我按照这个办法获得上帝本性的其他一切完满性。最后,似乎是,我取得这些完满性的能力如果是存在于

① 法文第二版:“并且”。

② 法文第二版:“我是有限的”。

③ 法文第二版:“理解”。

我心里，它就能够把这些完满性的观念印到并且引到我心里去^①。虽然如此，在我更仔细一点地观察一下，我就看出这是不可能的；因为，首先，即使我的认识真是每天都取得进一步的完满，我的本性里真是有很多潜在的东西还没有成为现实地存在，可是所有这些优点绝对不属于，也不接近我所具有的上帝的观念，因为在上帝⁵²的观念里，没有仅仅是潜在的东西，全都是现实存在的，实在的东西。尤其是从我的认识逐渐增加，一步步增长这一事实上，难道不就是必然的、非常可靠的证据，说明我的认识是不完满的吗？再说，虽然我的认识越来越增长，可是我仍然认为它不能是现实无限的，因为它永远不能达到一个不能再有所增加的那样高度的完满性。可是我把上帝是现实无限的领会到在他所具有的至高无上的完满性上再也不能有所增加这样一个高度。最后，我理解得十分清楚：一个观念的客观的存在不能由一个仅仅是潜在的存在体（这样的存在体真正来说是没有的）产生，它只能由一个形式的或现实的存在体产生。

当然，在刚才我所说的一切里，对于凡是愿意在这上面仔细进行思考的人，我看不出有什么不是通过自然的光明非常容易认识的；可是，当我把我的注意力稍一放松，我的精神就被可感觉的东西的影子弄得模糊起来，好象瞎了一样，不容易记得我对于比我的存在体更完满的一个存在体所具有的观念为什么应该必然地被一个实际上更完满的存在体放在我心里的原故。

^① 法文第二版：“我看不出有什么能够阻止它像这样越来越向无限方面增长；既然像这样增长和完满下去，我也看不出为什么我不能按照这个办法获得上帝本性的其他一切完满性，最后也看不出为什么我获得这些完满性的能力（如果这个能力现在真是在我心里的话）不足以产生这些完满性的观念”。

这就是为什么我现在放下别的，只考虑一下具有上帝的这个⁵³观念的我自己，如果在没有上帝的情況下，我不能存在。我问：我是从谁那里得到我的存在呢？也许从我自己，或者从我的父母，或者从不如上帝完满的什么其他原因；因为不能想象有比上帝更完满，或者和上帝一样完满的东西。

那么，如果我不依存于其他一切东西，如果我自己是我的存在的作者，我一定^①就不怀疑任何东西，我一定^①就不再有希望，最后，我一定^①就不缺少任何完满性；因为，凡是在我心里有什么观念的东西，我自己都会给我，这样一来我就是上帝了。

我不应该想象我缺少的东西也许比我已经有的东西更难取得；因为相反，认为我，也就是说，一个在思维的东西或实体，是从无中生出来的，这无疑地要比我对于我不知道的、只不过是这个实体的一些偶性的很多东西去取得认识要难得多。而这样一来，毫无疑问，如果我自己给了我比我才说的更多，也就是说，如果我是我的产生和存在的作者，那么我至少不会缺少比较容易取得的东西，即至少不会缺少在我领会上帝的观念中所含有的任何东西，因为那些东西里边没有一件是我觉得更难取得的；如果有一种更难取得的东西，它一定会那样向我表现出来（假定我自己）是我所具有的其他一切东西的来源的话），因为我会体验到我的能力止于此，不能达到那里^②。

^① “一定”，法文第二版里缺。

^② 法文第二版：“当然，如果我给了我比我刚才说的更多，也就是说，如果我自己是我的存在体的作者，那么我至少不会否认我自己能更容易有的东西，就像我的本性缺少无数的认识那样，我甚至不会否认我自己看到包含在上帝的观念中的任何东西，因为那些东西里边没有一件是我觉得更难做的或更难取得的，假如其中有一件是更

虽然我可以假定我过去也许一直是象我现在这样存在，但是我不因此而避免这个推理的效力，也不能不认识到上帝是我的存在的作者这件事是必要的。因为我的全部生存时间可以分为无数部分，而每一部分都绝对不取决于其余部分，这样，从不久以前我存在过这件事上并不能得出我现在一定存在这一结论来，假如不是在这个时候有什么原因重新(估且这样说)产生我，创造我，也就是说保存我的话。

事实上，这对于凡是要仔细考虑时间的性质的人都是非常清楚、非常明显的，即一个实体，为了在它延续的一切时刻里被保存下来，需要同一的能力和同一的行动，这种行动是为了重新产生它和创造它所必要的，如果它还没有存在的话。因此，自然的光明使我看得很清楚，保存和创造只是从我们的思想方法来看才是不同的，而从事实上来看并没有什么不同。所以，只有现在我才必须问我自己，我是否具有什么能力使现在存在的我将来还存在，因为，既然我无非是一个在思维的东西(或者至少既然一直到现在严格说来问题还只在于我自己的这一部分)，那么如果这样的一种力量存在我心里，我一定会时刻想到它并且对它有所认识。可是，我觉得象这样的东西，在我心里一点都没有，因此我明显地认识到我依存于一个和我不同的什么存在体。

也许^①我所依存的这个存在体并不是我叫做^②上帝的东西，

难的，它当然会那样向我表现出来(假定我自己是我所具有的其他一切东西的来源的话)，因为我会在这上面看到我的能力到头了。〔原文两处“不会否认我自己”(je ne me serais pas dénié)，其中 dénié (否认)疑是 dénué (缺少)之误。〕

^① 法文第二版：“不过，也许”。

^② “我叫做”，法文第二版里缺。

而我是由我的父母，或者由不如上帝完满的什么其他原因产生的吧，不，不可能就是这样。因为，我以前已经说过，显然在原因里一定至少和在它的结果里有一样多的实在性。因此，既然我是一个在思维的、在我心里^①有上帝的观念的东西，不管最后归之于我的本性^②的原因是什么，必须承认它一定同样地是一个在思维的东西，本身具有我归之于上帝本性^③的一切完满性的观念。然后可以重心追问这个原因的来源和存在是由于它本身呢，还是由于别的^④什么东西。因为如果是由于它本身，那么根据我以前说过的道理，其结果是它自己一定是^⑤上帝，因为它有了由于本身而存在的能力，那么它无疑地也一定有能力现实地具有它所领会^⑥其观念的一切完满性，也就是说，我所领会为在上帝里边的一切完满性。如果它的来源和存在是由于它本身以外的什么原因，那么可以根据同样的道理重新再问：这第二个原因是由于它本身而存在的呢，还是由于别的什么东西而存在的，一直到一步步地，最终问到最后一个原因，这最后原因就是上帝。很明显，在这上面再无穷无尽地追问下去是没有用的，因为问题在这里不那么在于从前产生我的原因上，而在于现在保存我的原因上。

也不能假定也许我的产生是由很多原因共同做成的，我从这一个原因接受了我归之于上帝的那些完满性之一的观念，从另外一个原因接受了另外什么的观念，那样一来，所有这些完满性即使

^① “在我心里”，法文第二版是“本身”。

^② “归之于我的本性”，法文第二版是“我的存在”。

^③ “本性”，法文第二版里缺。

^④ “别的”，法文第二版里缺。

^⑤ “它自己一定是”，法文第二版是“这个东西是”。

^⑥ “所领会”，法文第二版是“本身有”。

真地都存在于宇宙的什么地方，可是不能都结合在一起存在于一个唯一的地方，即上帝之中。因为，相反，在上帝里边的一切东西的统一性，或单纯性，或不可分性，是我在上帝里所领会的主要的完满性之一；而上帝的一切完满性的各种统一和集合^①的观念一定不可能是由任何一个原因（由于这个原因，我同时也接受了其他一切完满性的观念）放在我心里的。因为，如果这个原因不让我同时知道它们是什么，不让我以某种方式全部认识它们，它就不能让我把它们理解为连结在一起的、不可分的。

至于^②我的父母，好象我是他们生的，关于他们，即使凡是我去过去所相信的都是真的，可是这并不等于他们保存了我，也不等于他们把我做成是一个在思维的东西，因为他们不过是^③把某些部置放在这个物质里，而我断定^④在这个物质里边关闭着的就是我，也就是说，我的精神（我现在只把精神当作了我自己）；所以关于他们，在这里是毫无问题的；可是必然得出这样的结论，即单从我存在和我心里有一个至上完满的存在体（也就是说上帝）的观念这个事实，就非常明显地证明了上帝的存在。

我只剩去检查一下我是用什么方法取得了这个观念的。因为我不是通过感官把它接受过来的，而且它也从来不是^⑤象可感知的东西的观念那样，在可感知的东西提供或者似乎提供给我的^⑥

- ① “集合”，法文第二版缺。
- ② “至于”，法文第二版里是“最后，至于”。
- ③ 法文第二版：“我习惯地相信他们由之而产生我的那种物质性的行动，与产生这样一种实体二者之间没有任何联系，而他们之有助于生下了我，最多是他们”。
- ④ 法文第二版：“我一向断定”。
- ⑤ 法文第二版：“不是通常”。
- ⑥ “我的”，法文第二版缺。

感觉的外部器官的时候，不管我期待不期待而硬提供给我。它也不是纯粹由我的精神产生出来或虚构出来的，因为我没有能力在上面加减任何东西。因此没有别的话好说，只能说它和我自己的观念一样，是从我被创造那时起与我俱生的。

当然不应该奇怪，上帝在创造我的时候把这个观念放在我心里，就如同工匠把标记刻印在他的作品上一样；这个标记也不必一定和这个作品有所不同。可是，只就上帝创造我这一点来说，非常可信的是，他是有些按照他的形象产生的我，对这个形象（里面包含着上帝的观念），我是用我领会我自己的那个功能去领会的，也就是说，当我对我自己进行反省的时候，我不仅认识到我是一个不完满、不完全、依存于别人的东西，这个东西不停地倾向、希望比我更好、更伟大的东西，而且我同时也认识到我所依存的那个别人，在他本身里边具有我所希望的、在我心里有其观念的一切伟大的东西，不是不确定地、仅仅潜在地，而是实际地、现实地、无限地具有这些东西，而这样一来，他就是上帝。我在这里用来证明上帝存在的论据，它的全部效果就在于我认识到，假如上帝真不存在，我的本性就不可能是这个样子，也就是说，我不可能在我心里有一个上帝的观念；我再说一遍，恰恰是这个上帝，我在我的心里有其观念，也就是说，他具有所有这些高尚的完满性，对于这些完满性我心里尽管有什么轻微的观念，却不能全部理解。他不可能有任何缺点；凡是标志着什么不完满性的东西，他都没有。

这就足以明显地说明他不是骗子，因为自然的光明告诉人们，欺骗必然是由于什么缺点而来的。

不过，在我把这件事更仔细地进行检查并对人们能够从其中

取得的其他真理进行考虑之前，我认为最好是停下来一些时候专去深思这个完满无缺的上帝，消消停停地衡量一下他的美妙的属性，至少尽我的可以说是为之神眩目夺的精神的全部能力去深思、赞美、崇爱这个灿烂的光辉之无与伦比的美。

因为，信仰告诉我们，来世的至高无上的全福就在于对上帝的这种深思之中，这样，我们从现在起就体验出，象这样的一个沉思，尽管它在完满程度上差得太远，却使我们感受到我们在此世所能感受的最大满足。

第四个沉思

60

论真理和错误

这几天我已经习惯于从感官里把我的精神摆脱出来，我又正好看出关于物体性的东西有很少是我们认识得准确的，关于人的精神有更多的东西是我们认识的，关于上帝本身我们认识的还要更多，这样，我现在把我的思维从考虑可感觉或可想像的东西上转到考虑完全脱离物质、纯粹精神的东西上去就毫无困难了。

关于人的精神，既然它是一个在思维的东西，一个没有长宽厚的广延性、没有一点物体性的东西，那么我的这个观念当然比任何物体性的东西的观念都要无比地清楚。而且当我考虑到我怀疑，也就是说我是一个不完全的、依存于别人的东西的时候，在我心里就十分清楚地明白地出现一个完全的、不依存于别人的存在体的观念，也就是上帝的观念；单就这个观念之存在于我心里，或者具有这个观念的我是存在的，我就得出上帝是存在的而我的存在在我的生命的每一时刻都完全依存于他这样的结论，这个结论是如此地明显，以致我不认为有什么能比这件事更明确、更可靠地为人精神所认识的了。因此我觉得我已经发现了一条道路，顺着这条道路我们就能从深思真实的上帝（在上帝里边包含着科学和智慧的全部宝藏）走到认识宇宙间的其他事物。

因为，首先，我看出他绝对不能骗我，因为凡是欺骗都含有某

in which are demonstrated the existence of God and the distinction between the human soul and the body

FIRST MEDITATION

What can be called into doubt

Some years ago I was struck by the large number of falsehoods that I had accepted as true in my childhood, and by the highly doubtful nature of the whole edifice that I had subsequently based on them. I realized that it was necessary, once in the course of my life, to demolish everything completely and start again right from the foundations if I wanted to establish anything at all in the sciences that was stable and likely to last. But the task looked an enormous one, and I began to wait until I should reach a mature enough age to ensure that no subsequent time of life would be more suitable for tackling such inquiries. This led me to put the project off for so long that I would now be to blame if by pondering over it any further I wasted the time still left for carrying it out. So today I have expressly rid my mind of all worries and arranged for myself a clear stretch of free time. I am here quite alone, and at last I will devote myself sincerely and without reservation to the general demolition of my opinions.

But to accomplish this, it will not be necessary for me to show that all my opinions are false, which is something I could perhaps never manage. Reason now leads me to think that I should hold back my assent from opinions which are not completely certain and indubitable just as carefully as I do from those which are patently false. So, for the purpose of rejecting all my opinions, it will be enough if I find in each of them at least some reason for doubt. And to do this I will not need to run through them all individually, which would be an endless task. Once the foundations of a building are undermined, anything built on them collapses of its own accord; so I will go straight for the basic principles on which all my former beliefs rested.

Whatever I have up till now accepted as most true I have acquired either from the senses or through the senses. But from time to time I have found that the senses deceive, and it is prudent never to trust completely those who have deceived us even once.

Yet although the senses occasionally deceive us with respect to objects which are very small or in the distance, there are many other beliefs about

which doubt is quite impossible, even though they are derived from the senses – for example, that I am here, sitting by the fire, wearing a winter dressing-gown, holding this piece of paper in my hands, and so on. Again, how could it be denied that these hands or this whole body are mine? Unless perhaps I were to liken myself to madmen, whose brains are so damaged by the persistent vapours of melancholia that they firmly maintain they are kings when they are paupers, or say they are dressed in purple when they are naked, or that their heads are made of earthenware, or that they are pumpkins, or made of glass. But such people are insane, and I would be thought equally mad if I took anything from them as a model for myself.

A brilliant piece of reasoning! As if I were not a man who sleeps at night, and regularly has all the same experiences¹ while asleep as madmen do when awake – indeed sometimes even more improbable ones. How often, asleep at night, am I convinced of just such familiar events – that I am here in my dressing-gown, sitting by the fire – when in fact I am lying undressed in bed! Yet at the moment my eyes are certainly wide awake when I look at this piece of paper; I shake my head and it is not asleep; as I stretch out and feel my hand I do so deliberately, and I know what I am doing. All this would not happen with such distinctness to someone asleep. Indeed! As if I did not remember other occasions when I have been tricked by exactly similar thoughts while asleep! As I think about this more carefully, I see plainly that there are never any sure signs by means of which being awake can be distinguished from being asleep. The result is that I begin to feel dazed, and this very feeling only reinforces the notion that I may be asleep.

Suppose then that I am dreaming, and that these particulars – that my eyes are open, that I am moving my head and stretching out my hands – are not true. Perhaps, indeed, I do not even have such hands or such a body at all. Nonetheless, it must surely be admitted that the visions which come in sleep are like paintings, which must have been fashioned in the likeness of things that are real, and hence that at least these general kinds of things – eyes, head, hands and the body as a whole – are things which are not imaginary but are real and exist. For even when painters try to create sirens and satyrs with the most extraordinary bodies, they cannot give them natures which are new in all respects; they simply jumble up the limbs of different animals. Or if perhaps they manage to think up something so new that nothing remotely similar has ever been seen before – something which is therefore completely fictitious and unreal – at least the colours used in the composition must be real. By similar reasoning, although these general kinds of things – eyes, head, 20
1 '... and in my dreams regularly represent to myself the same things' (French version).

hands and so on – could be imaginary, it must at least be admitted that certain other even simpler and more universal things are real. These are as it were the real colours from which we form all the images of things, whether true or false, that occur in our thought.

This class appears to include corporeal nature in general, and its extension; the shape of extended things; the quantity, or size and number of these things; the place in which they may exist, the time through which they may endure,¹ and so on.

So a reasonable conclusion from this might be that physics, astronomy, medicine, and all other disciplines which depend on the study of composite things, are doubtful; while arithmetic, geometry and other subjects of this kind, which deal only with the simplest and most general things, regardless of whether they really exist in nature or not, contain something certain and indubitable. For whether I am awake or asleep, two and three added together are five, and a square has no more than four sides. It seems impossible that such transparent truths should incur any suspicion of being false.

21 And yet firmly rooted in my mind is the long-standing opinion that there is an omnipotent God who made me the kind of creature that I am. How do I know that he has not brought it about that there is no earth, no sky, no extended thing, no shape, no size, no place, while at the same time ensuring that all these things appear to me to exist just as they do now? What is more, since I sometimes believe that others go astray in cases where they think they have the most perfect knowledge, may I not similarly go wrong every time I add two and three or count the sides of a square, or in some even simpler matter, if that is imaginable? But perhaps God would not have allowed me to be deceived in this way, since he is said to be supremely good. But if it were inconsistent with his goodness to have created me such that I am deceived all the time, it would seem equally foreign to his goodness to allow me to be deceived even occasionally; yet this last assertion cannot be made.²

Perhaps there may be some who would prefer to deny the existence of so powerful a God rather than believe that everything else is uncertain. Let us not argue with them, but grant them that everything said about God is a fiction. According to their supposition, then, I have arrived at my present state by fate or chance or a continuous chain of events, or by some other means; yet since deception and error seem to be imperfections, the less powerful they make my original cause, the more likely it is that I am so imperfect as to be deceived all the time. I have no answer to these arguments, but am finally compelled to admit that there is not one of my former beliefs about which a doubt may not properly be

¹ '... the place where they are, the time which measures their duration' (French version).
² '... yet I cannot doubt that he does allow this' (French version).

raised; and this is not a flippancy or ill-considered conclusion, but is based on powerful and well thought-out reasons. So in future I must withhold my assent from these former beliefs just as carefully as I would from obvious falsehoods, if I want to discover any certainty.¹

But it is not enough merely to have noticed this; I must make an effort to remember it. My habitual opinions keep coming back, and, despite my wishes, they capture my beliefs, which is as it were bound over to them as a result of long occupation and the law of custom. I shall never get out of the habit of confidently assenting to these opinions, so long as I suppose them to be what in fact they are, namely highly probable opinions – opinions which, despite the fact that they are in a sense doubtful, as has just been shown, it is still much more reasonable to believe than to deny. In view of this, I think it will be a good plan to turn my will in completely the opposite direction and deceive myself, by pretending for a time that these former opinions are utterly false and imaginary. I shall do this until the weight of preconceived opinion is counter-balanced and the distorting influence of habit no longer prevents my judgement from perceiving things correctly. In the meantime, I know that no danger or error will result from my plan, and that I cannot possibly go too far in my distrustful attitude. This is because the task now in hand does not involve action but merely the acquisition of knowledge.

I will suppose therefore that not God, who is supremely good and the source of truth, but rather some malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning has employed all his energies in order to deceive me. I shall think that the sky, the air, the earth, colours, shapes, sounds and all external things are merely the delusions of dreams which he has devised to ensnare my judgement. I shall consider myself as not having hands or eyes, or flesh, or blood or senses, but as falsely believing that I have all these things. I shall stubbornly and firmly persist in this meditation; and, even if it is not in my power to know any truth, I shall at least do what is in my power,² that is, resolutely guard against assenting to any falsehoods, so that the deceiver, however powerful and cunning he may be, will be unable to impose on me in the slightest degree. But this is an arduous undertaking, and a kind of laziness brings me back to normal life. I am like a prisoner who is enjoying an imaginary freedom while asleep; as he begins to suspect that he is asleep, he dreads being woken up, and goes along with the pleasant illusion as long as he can. In the same way, I happily slide back into my old opinions and dread being shaken out of them, for fear that my peaceful sleep may be followed by hard labour when I wake, and that I shall have to toil not in the light, but amid the inextricable darkness of the problems I have now raised.

¹ '... in the sciences' (added in French version).
² '... nevertheless it is in my power to suspend my judgement' (French version).

SECOND MEDITATION

The nature of the human mind, and how it is better known than the body

24 So serious are the doubts into which I have been thrown as a result of yesterday's meditation that I can neither put them out of my mind nor see any way of resolving them. It feels as if I have fallen unexpectedly into a deep whirlpool which tumbles me around so that I can neither stand on the bottom nor swim up to the top. Nevertheless I will make an effort and once more attempt the same path which I started on yesterday. Anything which admits of the slightest doubt I will set aside just as if I had found it to be wholly false; and I will proceed in this way until I recognize something certain, or, if nothing else, until I at least recognize for certain that there is no certainty. Archimedes used to demand just one firm and immovable point in order to shift the entire earth; so I too can hope for great things if I manage to find just one thing, however slight, that is certain and unshakable.

I will suppose then, that everything I see is spurious. I will believe that my memory tells me lies, and that none of the things that it reports ever happened. I have no senses. Body, shape, extension, movement and place are chimeras. So what remains true? Perhaps just the one fact that nothing is certain.

25 Yet apart from everything I have just listed, how do I know that there is not something else which does not allow even the slightest occasion for doubt? Is there not a God, or whatever I may call him, who puts into me the thoughts I am now having? But why do I think this, since I myself may perhaps be the author of these thoughts? In that case am not I, at least, something? But I have just said that I have no senses and no body. This is the sticking point: what follows from this? Am I not so bound up with a body and with senses that I cannot exist without them? But I have convinced myself that there is absolutely nothing in the world, no sky, no earth, no minds, no bodies. Does it now follow that I too do not exist?

1 '... puts into my mind' (French version).

No: if I convinced myself of something¹ then I certainly existed. But there is a deceiver of supreme power and cunning who is deliberately and constantly deceiving me. In that case I too undoubtedly exist, if he is deceiving me; and let him deceive me as much as he can, he will never bring it about that I am nothing so long as I think that I am something. So after considering everything very thoroughly, I must finally conclude that this proposition, *I am, I exist*, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind.

But I do not yet have a sufficient understanding of what this 'I' is, that now necessarily exists. So I must be on my guard against carelessly taking something else to be this 'I', and so making a mistake in the very item of knowledge that I maintain is the most certain and evident of all. I will therefore go back and meditate on what I originally believed myself to be, before I embarked on this present train of thought. I will then subtract anything capable of being weakened, even minimally, by the arguments now introduced, so that what is left at the end may be exactly and only what is certain and unshakable.

What then did I formerly think I was? A man. But what is a man? Shall I say 'a rational animal'? No; for then I should have to inquire what an animal is, what rationality is, and in this way one question would lead me down the slope to other harder ones, and I do not now have the time to waste on subtleties of this kind. Instead I propose to concentrate on what came into my thoughts spontaneously and quite naturally whenever I used to consider what I was. Well, the first thought to come to mind was that I had a face, hands, arms and the whole mechanical structure of limbs which can be seen in a corpse, and which I called the body. The next thought was that I was nourished, that I moved about, and that I engaged in sense-perception and thinking; and these actions I attributed to the soul. But as to the nature of this soul, either I did not think about this or else I imagined it to be something tenuous, like a wind or fire or ether, which permeated my more solid parts. As to the body, however, I had no doubts about it, but thought I knew its nature distinctly. If I had tried to describe the mental conception I had of it, I would have expressed it as follows: by a body I understand whatever has a determinable shape and a definable location and can occupy a space in such a way as to exclude any other body; it can be perceived by touch, sight, hearing, taste or smell, and can be moved in various ways, not by itself but by whatever else comes into contact with it. For, according to my judgement, the power of self-movement, like the power of sensation or of thought, was quite foreign to the nature of a body; indeed, it was a

1 '... or thought anything at all' (French version).

source of wonder to me that certain bodies were found to contain faculties of this kind.

But what shall I now say that I am, when I am supposing that there is some supremely powerful and, if it is permissible to say so, malicious deceiver, who is deliberately trying to trick me in every way he can? Can I now assert that I possess even the most insignificant of all the attributes which I have just said belong to the nature of a body? I scrutinize them, think about them, go over them again, but nothing suggests itself; it is tiresome and pointless to go through the list once more. But what about the attributes I assigned to the soul? Nutrition or movement? Since now I do not have a body, these are mere fabrications. Sense-perception? This surely does not occur without a body, and besides, when asleep I have appeared to perceive through the senses many things which I afterwards realized I did not perceive through the senses at all. Thinking? At last I have discovered it – thought; this alone is inseparable from me. I am, I exist – that is certain. But for how long? For as long as I am thinking. For it could be that were I totally to cease from thinking, I should totally cease to exist. At present, I am not admitting anything except what is necessarily true. I am, then, in the strict sense only a thing that thinks;¹ that is, I am a mind, or intelligence, or intellect, or reason – words whose meaning I have been ignorant of until now. But for all that I am a thing which is real and which truly exists. But what kind of a thing? As I have just said – a thinking thing.

What else am I? I will use my imagination.² I am not that structure of limbs which is called a human body. I am not even some thin vapour which permeates the limbs – a wind, fire, air, breath, or whatever I depict in my imagination; for these are things which I have supposed to be nothing. Let this supposition stand;³ for all that I am still something. And yet may it not perhaps be the case that these very things which I am supposing to be nothing, because they are unknown to me, are in reality identical with the 'I' of which I am aware? I do not know, and for the moment I shall not argue the point, since I can make judgements only about things which are known to me. I know that I exist; the question is, what is this 'I' that I know? If the 'I' is understood strictly as we have been taking it, then it is quite certain that knowledge of it does not

¹ The word 'only' is most naturally taken as going with 'a thing that thinks', and this interpretation is followed in the French version. When discussing this passage with Cassendi, however, Descartes suggests that he meant the 'only' to govern 'in the strict sense'; see below p. 276.

² '... to see if I am not something more' (added in French version).

³ *Lat. maneat* ('let it stand'), first edition. The second edition has the indicative *manet*: 'The proposition still stands, viz. that I am nonetheless something.' The French version reads: 'without changing this supposition, I find that I am still certain that I am something'.

depend on things of whose existence I am as yet unaware; so it cannot depend on any of the things which I invent in my imagination. And this very word 'invent' shows me my mistake. It would indeed be a case of fictitious invention if I used my imagination to establish that I was something or other; for imagining is simply contemplating the shape or image of a corporeal thing. Yet now I know for certain both that I exist and at the same time that all such images and, in general, everything relating to the nature of body, could be mere dreams (& chimeras). Once this point has been grasped, to say 'I will use my imagination to get to know more distinctly what I am' would seem to be as silly as saying 'I am now awake, and see some truth; but since my vision is not yet clear enough, I will deliberately fall asleep so that my dreams may provide a truer and clearer representation.' I thus realize that none of the things that the imagination enables me to grasp is at all relevant to this knowledge of myself which I possess, and that the mind must therefore be most carefully diverted from such things¹ if it is to perceive its own nature as distinctly as possible.

But what then am I? A thing that thinks. What is that? A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, and also imagines and has sensory perceptions.

This is a considerable list, if everything on it belongs to me. But does it? Is it not one and the same 'I' who is now doubting almost everything, who nonetheless understands some things, who affirms that this one thing is true, denies everything else, desires to know more, is unwilling to be deceived, imagines many things even involuntarily, and is aware of many things which apparently come from the senses? Are not all these things just as true as the fact that I exist, even if I am asleep all the time, and even if he who created me is doing all he can to deceive me? Which of all these activities is distinct from my thinking? Which of them can be said to be separate from myself? The fact that it is I who am doubting and understanding and willing is so evident that I see no way of making it any clearer. But it is also the case that the 'I' who imagines is the same 'I'. For even if, as I have supposed, none of the objects of imagination are real, the power of imagination is something which really exists and is part of my thinking. Lastly, it is also the same 'I' who has sensory perceptions, or is aware of bodily things as it were through the senses. For example, I am now seeing light, hearing a noise, feeling heat. But I am asleep, so all this is false. Yet I certainly *seem* to see, to hear, and to be warmed. This cannot be false; what is called 'having a sensory perception' is strictly just this, and in this restricted sense of the term it is simply thinking.

¹ '... from this manner of conceiving things' (French version).

From all this I am beginning to have a rather better understanding of what I am. But it still appears – and I cannot stop thinking this – that the corporeal things of which images are formed in my thought, and which the senses investigate, are known with much more distinctness than this puzzling 'I' which cannot be pictured in the imagination. And yet it is surely surprising that I should have a more distinct grasp of things which I realize are doubtful, unknown and foreign to me, than I have of that which is true and known – my own self. But I see what it is: my mind enjoys wandering off and will not yet submit to being restrained within the bounds of truth. Very well then; just this once let us give it a completely free rein, so that after a while, when it is time to tighten the reins, it may more readily submit to being curbed.

Let us consider the things which people commonly think they understand most distinctly of all; that is, the bodies which we touch and see. I do not mean bodies in general – for general perceptions are apt to be somewhat more confused – but one particular body. Let us take, for example, this piece of wax. It has just been taken from the honeycomb; it has not yet quite lost the taste of the honey; it retains some of the scent of the flowers from which it was gathered; its colour, shape and size are plain to see; it is hard, cold and can be handled without difficulty; if you rap it with your knuckle it makes a sound. In short, it has everything which appears necessary to enable a body to be known as distinctly as possible. But even as I speak, I put the wax by the fire, and look: the residual taste is eliminated, the smell goes away, the colour changes, the shape is lost, the size increases; it becomes liquid and hot; you can hardly touch it, and if you strike it, it no longer makes a sound. But does the same wax remain? It must be admitted that it does; no one denies it, no one thinks otherwise. So what was it in the wax that I understood with such distinctness? Evidently none of the features which I arrived at by means of the senses; for whatever came under taste, smell, sight, touch or hearing has now altered – yet the wax remains.

Perhaps the answer lies in the thought which now comes to my mind; namely, the wax was not after all the sweetness of the honey, or the fragrance of the flowers, or the whiteness, or the shape, or the sound, but was rather a body which presented itself to me in these various forms a little while ago, but which now exhibits different ones. But what exactly is it that I am now imagining? Let us concentrate, take away everything which does not belong to the wax, and see what is left: merely something extended, flexible and changeable. But what is meant here by 'flexible' and 'changeable'? Is it what I picture in my imagination: that this piece of wax is capable of changing from a round shape to a square shape, or from a square shape to a triangular shape? Not at all; for I can grasp that

the wax is capable of countless changes of this kind, yet I am unable to run through this immeasurable number of changes in my imagination, from which it follows that it is not the faculty of imagination that gives me my grasp of the wax as flexible and changeable. And what is meant by 'extended'? Is the extension of the wax also unknown? For it increases if the wax melts, increases again if it boils, and is greater still if the heat is increased. I would not be making a correct judgement about the nature of wax unless I believed it capable of being extended in many more different ways than I will ever encompass in my imagination. I must therefore admit that the nature of this piece of wax is in no way revealed by my imagination, but is perceived by the mind alone. (I am speaking of this particular piece of wax; the point is even clearer with regard to wax in general.) But what is this wax which is perceived by the mind alone?¹ It is of course the same wax which I see, which I touch, which I picture in my imagination, in short the same wax which I thought it to be from the start. And yet, and here is the point, the perception I have of it² is a case not of vision or touch or imagination – nor has it ever been, despite previous appearances – but of purely mental scrutiny; and this can be imperfect and confused, as it was before, or clear and distinct as it is now, depending on how carefully I concentrate on what the wax consists in.

But as I reach this conclusion I am amazed at how (weak and) prone to error my mind is. For although I am thinking about these matters within myself, silently and without speaking, nonetheless the actual words bring me up short, and I am almost tricked by ordinary ways of talking. We say that we see the wax itself, if it is there before us, not that we judge it to be there from its colour or shape; and this might lead me to conclude without more ado that knowledge of the wax comes from what the eye sees, and not from the scrutiny of the mind alone. But then if I look out of the window and see men crossing the square, as I just happen to have done, I normally say that I see the men themselves, just as I say that I see the wax. Yet do I see any more than hats and coats which could conceal automata? I judge that they are men. And so something which I thought I was seeing with my eyes is in fact grasped solely by the faculty of judgment: at which is in my mind.

However, one who wants to achieve knowledge above the ordinary level should feel ashamed at having taken ordinary ways of talking as a basis for doubt. So let us proceed, and consider on which occasion my perception of the nature of the wax was more perfect and evident. Was it when I first looked at it, and believed I knew it by my external senses, or

¹ ... which can be conceived only by the understanding or the mind' (French version).

² ... or rather the act whereby it is perceived' (added in French version).

at least by what they call the 'common' sense¹ – that is, the power of imagination? Or is my knowledge more perfect now, after a more careful investigation of the nature of the wax and of the means by which it is known? Any doubt on this issue would clearly be foolish; for what distinctness was there in my earlier perception? Was there anything in it which an animal could not possess? But when I distinguish the wax from its outward forms – take the clothes off, as it were, and consider it naked – then although my judgement may still contain errors, at least my perception now requires a human mind.

33 But what am I to say about this mind, or about myself? (So far, remember, I am not admitting that there is anything else in me except a mind.) What, I ask, is this 'I' which seems to perceive the wax so distinctly? Surely my awareness of my own self is not merely much truer and more certain than my awareness of the wax, but also much more distinct and evident. For if I judge that the wax exists from the fact that I see it, clearly this same fact entails much more evidently that I myself also exist. It is possible that what I see is not really the wax; it is possible that I do not even have eyes with which to see anything. But when I see, or think I see (I am not here distinguishing the two), it is simply not possible that I who am now thinking am not something. By the same token, if I judge that the wax exists from the fact that I touch it, the same result follows, namely that I exist. If I judge that it exists from the fact that I imagine it, or for any other reason, exactly the same thing follows. And the result that I have grasped in the case of the wax may be applied to everything else located outside me. Moreover, if my perception of the wax seemed more distinct² after it was established not just by sight or touch but by many other considerations, it must be admitted that I now know myself even more distinctly. This is because every consideration whatsoever which contributes to my perception of the wax, or of any other body, cannot but establish even more effectively the nature of my own mind. But besides this, there is so much else in the mind itself which can serve to make my knowledge of it more distinct, that it scarcely seems worth going through the contributions made by considering bodily things.

34 I see that without any effort I have now finally got back to where I wanted. I now know that even bodies are not strictly perceived by the senses or the faculty of imagination but by the intellect alone, and that this perception derives not from their being touched or seen but from their being understood; and in view of this I know plainly that I can

¹ See note p. 59 below.

² The French version has 'more clear and distinct' and, at the end of this sentence, 'more evidently, distinctly and clearly'.

achieve an easier and more evident perception of my own mind than of anything else. But since the habit of holding on to old opinions cannot be set aside so quickly, I should like to stop here and meditate for some time on this new knowledge I have gained, so as to fix it more deeply in my memory.

not denying that these ideas occur within me. But there was something else which I used to assert, and which through habitual belief I thought I perceived clearly, although I did not in fact do so. This was that there were things outside me which were the sources of my ideas and which resembled them in all respects. Here was my mistake; or at any rate, if my judgement was true, it was not thanks to the strength of my perception.¹

36

But what about when I was considering something very simple and straightforward in arithmetic or geometry, for example that two and three added together make five, and so on? Did I not see at least these things clearly enough to affirm their truth? Indeed, the only reason for my later judgement that they were open to doubt was that it occurred to me that perhaps some God could have given me a nature such that I was deceived even in matters which seemed most evident. And whenever my preconceived belief in the supreme power of God comes to mind, I cannot but admit that it would be easy for him, if he so desired, to bring it about that I go wrong even in those matters which I think I see utterly clearly with my mind's eye. Yet when I turn to the things themselves which I think I perceive very clearly, I am so convinced by them that I spontaneously declare: let whoever can do so deceive me, he will never bring it about that I am nothing, so long as I continue to think I am something, or make it true at some future time that I have never existed, since it is now true that I exist; or bring it about that two and three added together are more or less than five, or anything of this kind in which I see a manifest contradiction. And since I have no cause to think that there is a deceiving God, and I do not yet even know for sure whether there is a God at all, any reason for doubt which depends simply on this supposition is a very slight and, so to speak, metaphysical one. But in order to remove even this slight reason for doubt, as soon as the opportunity arises I must examine whether there is a God, and, if there is, whether he can be a deceiver. For if I do not know this, it seems that I can never be quite certain about anything else.

37

First, however, considerations of order appear to dictate that I now classify my thoughts into definite kinds,² and ask which of them can properly be said to be the bearers of truth and falsity. Some of my thoughts are as it were the images of things, and it is only in these cases that the term 'idea' is strictly appropriate – for example, when I think of a man, or a chimera, or the sky, or an angel, or God. Other thoughts have

¹ ... it was not because of any knowledge I possessed' (French version).

² The opening of this sentence is greatly expanded in the French version: 'In order that I may have the opportunity of examining this without interrupting the order of meditating which I have decided upon, which is to start only from those notions which I find first of all in my mind and pass gradually to those which I may find later on, I must here divide my thoughts ...'

THIRD MEDITATION

The existence of God

I will now shut my eyes, stop my ears, and withdraw all my senses. I will eliminate from my thoughts all images of bodily things, or rather, since this is hardly possible, I will regard all such images as vacuous, false and worthless. I will converse with myself and scrutinize myself more deeply; and in this way I will attempt to achieve, little by little, a more intimate knowledge of myself. I am a thing that thinks: that is, a thing that doubts, affirms, denies, understands a few things, is ignorant of many things,¹ is willing, is unwilling, and also which imagines and has sensory perceptions; for as I have noted before, even though the objects of my sensory experience and imagination may have no existence outside me, nonetheless the modes of thinking which I refer to as cases of sensory perception and imagination, in so far as they are simply modes of thinking, do exist within me – of that I am certain.

In this brief list I have gone through everything I truly know, or at least everything I have so far discovered that I know. Now I will cast around more carefully to see whether there may be other things within me which I have not yet noticed. I am certain that I am a thinking thing. Do I not therefore also know what is required for my being certain about anything? In this first item of knowledge there is simply a clear and distinct perception of what I am asserting; this would not be enough to make me certain of the truth of the matter if it could ever turn out that something which I perceived with such clarity and distinctness was false. So I now seem to be able to lay it down as a general rule that whatever I perceive very clearly and distinctly is true.²

Yet I previously accepted as wholly certain and evident many things which I afterwards realized were doubtful. What were these? The earth, sky, stars, and everything else that I apprehended with the senses. But what was it about them that I perceived clearly? Just that the ideas, or thoughts, of such things appeared before my mind. Yet even now I am

¹ The French version here inserts 'loves, hates'.

² ... all the things which we conceive very clearly and very distinctly are true' (French version).

various additional forms: thus when I will, or am afraid, or affirm, or deny, there is always a particular thing which I take as the object of my thought, but my thought includes something more than the likeness of that thing. Some thoughts in this category are called volitions or emotions, while others are called judgements.

Now as far as ideas are concerned, provided they are considered solely in themselves and I do not refer them to anything else, they cannot strictly speaking be false; for whether it is a goat or a chimera that I am imagining, it is just as true that I imagine the former as the latter. As for the will and the emotions, here too one need not worry about falsity; for even if the things which I may desire are wicked or even non-existent, that does not make it any less true that I desire them. Thus the only remaining thoughts where I must be on my guard against making a mistake are judgements. And the chief and most common mistake which is to be found here consists in my judging that the ideas which are in me resemble, or conform to, things located outside me. Of course, if I considered just the ideas themselves simply as modes of my thought, without referring them to anything else, they could scarcely give me any material for error.

38 Among my ideas, some appear to be innate, some to be adventitious,¹ and others to have been invented by me. My understanding of what a thing is, what truth is, and what thought is, seems to derive simply from my own nature. But my hearing a noise, as I do now, or seeing the sun, or feeling the fire, comes from things which are located outside me, or so I have hitherto judged. Lastly, sirens, hippocrits and the like are my own invention. But perhaps all my ideas may be thought of as adventitious, or they may all be innate, or all made up; for as yet I have not clearly perceived their true origin.

But the chief question at this point concerns the ideas which I take to be derived from things existing outside me: what is my reason for thinking that they resemble these things? Nature has apparently taught me to think this. But in addition I know by experience that these ideas do not depend on my will, and hence that they do not depend simply on me. Frequently I notice them even when I do not want to: now, for example, I feel the heat whether I want to or not, and this is why I think that this sensation or idea of heat comes to me from something other than myself, namely the heat of the fire by which I am sitting. And the most obvious judgement for me to make is that the thing in question transmits to me its own likeness rather than something else.

I will now see if these arguments are strong enough. When I say 'Nature taught me to think this', all I mean is that a spontaneous impulse leads

¹ '... foreign to me and coming from outside' (French version).

me to believe it, not that its truth has been revealed to me by some natural light. There is a big difference here. Whatever is revealed to me by the natural light – for example that from the fact that I am doubting it follows that I exist, and so on – cannot in any way be open to doubt. This is because there cannot be another faculty¹ both as trustworthy as the natural light and also capable of showing me that such things are not true. But as for my natural impulses, I have often judged in the past that they were pushing me in the wrong direction when it was a question of choosing the good, and I do not see why I should place any greater confidence in them in other matters.²

Then again, although these ideas do not depend on my will, it does not follow that they must come from things located outside me. Just as the impulses which I was speaking of a moment ago seem opposed to my will even though they are within me, so there may be some other faculty not yet fully known to me, which produces these ideas without any assistance from external things; this is, after all, just how I have always thought ideas are produced in me when I am dreaming.

And finally, even if these ideas did come from things other than myself, it would not follow that they must resemble those things. Indeed, I think I have often discovered a great disparity <between an object and its idea> in many cases. For example, there are two different ideas of the sun which I find within me. One of them, which is acquired as it were from the senses and which is a prime example of an idea which I reckon to come from an external source, makes the sun appear very small. The other idea is based on astronomical reasoning, that is, it is derived from certain notions which are innate in me (or else it is constructed by me in some other way), and this idea shows the sun to be several times larger than the earth. Obviously both these ideas cannot resemble the sun which exists outside me; and reason persuades me that the idea which seems to have emanated most directly from the sun itself has in fact no resemblance to it at all.

40 All these considerations are enough to establish that it is not reliable judgement but merely some blind impulse that has made me believe up till now that there exist things distinct from myself which transmit to me ideas or images of themselves through the sense organs or in some other way.

But it now occurs to me that there is another way of investigating whether some of the things of which I possess ideas exist outside me. In so far as the ideas are <considered> simply <as> modes of thought, there is no recognizable inequality among them: they all appear to come from

¹ '... or power for distinguishing truth from falsehood' (French version).

² '... concerning truth and falsehood' (French version).

within me in the same fashion. But in so far as different ideas <are considered as images which> represent different things, it is clear that they differ widely. Undoubtedly, the ideas which represent substances to me amount to something more and, so to speak, contain within themselves more objective¹ reality than the ideas which merely represent modes or accidents. Again, the idea that gives me my understanding of a supreme God, eternal, infinite, <immutable> omniscient, omnipotent and the creator of all things that exist apart from him, certainly has in it more objective reality than the ideas that represent finite substances.

Now it is manifest by the natural light that there must be at least as much <reality> in the efficient and total cause as in the effect of that cause. For where, I ask, could the effect get its reality from, if not from the cause? And how could the cause give it to the effect unless it possessed it? It follows from this both that something cannot arise from nothing, and also that what is more perfect – that is, contains in itself more reality – cannot arise from what is less perfect. And this is transparently true not only in the case of effects which possess <what the philosophers call> actual or formal reality, but also in the case of ideas, where one, is considering only <what they call> objective reality. A stone, for example, which previously did not exist, cannot begin to exist unless it is produced by something which contains, either formally or eminently everything to be found in the stone;² similarly, heat cannot be produced in an object which was not previously hot, except by something of at least the same order <degree or kind> of perfection as heat, and so on. But it is also true that the *idea* of heat, or of a stone, cannot exist in me unless it is put there by some cause which contains at least as much reality as I conceive to be in the heat or in the stone. For although this cause does not transfer any of its actual or formal reality to my idea, it should not on that account be supposed that it must be less real.³ The nature of an idea is such that of itself it requires no formal reality except what it derives from my thought, of which it is a mode.⁴ But in order for a given idea to contain such and such objective reality, it must surely derive it from some cause which contains at least as much formal reality as there is objective reality in the

1 ... i.e. participate by representation in a higher degree of being or perfection' (added in French version). According to the scholastic distinction invoked in the paragraphs that follow, the 'formal' reality of anything is its own intrinsic reality, while the 'objective' reality of an idea is a function of its representational content. Thus if an idea A represents some object X which is F, then F-ness will be contained 'formally' in X but 'objectively' in A. See below, Second Replies pp. 74f.

2 ... i.e. it will contain in itself the same things as are in the stone or other more excellent things' (added in French version). In scholastic terminology, to possess a property 'formally' is to possess it literally, in accordance with its definition; to possess it 'eminently' is to possess it in some higher form. Cf. below, p. 201.

3 ... that this cause must be less real' (French version).

4 ... i.e. a manner or way of thinking' (added in French version).

idea. For if we suppose that an idea contains something which was not in its cause, it must have got this from nothing; yet the mode of being by which a thing exists objectively <or representatively> in the intellect by way of an idea, imperfect though it may be, is certainly not nothing, and so it cannot come from nothing.

And although the reality which I am considering in my ideas is merely objective reality, I must not on that account suppose that the same reality need not exist formally in the causes of my ideas, but that it is enough for it to be present in them objectively. For just as the objective mode of being belongs to ideas by their very nature, so the formal mode of being belongs to the causes of ideas – or at least the first and most important ones – by *their* very nature. And although one idea may perhaps originate from another, there cannot be an infinite regress here; eventually one must reach a primary idea, the cause of which will be like an archetype which contains formally <and in fact> all the reality <or perfection> which is present only objectively <or representatively> in the idea. So it is clear to me, by the natural light, that the ideas in me are like <pictures, or> images which can easily fall short of the perfection of the things from which they are taken, but which cannot contain anything greater or more perfect.

The longer and more carefully I examine all these points, the more clearly and distinctly I recognize their truth. But what is my conclusion to be? If the objective reality of any of my ideas turns out to be so great that I am sure the same reality does not reside in me, either formally or eminently, and hence that I myself cannot be its cause, it will necessarily follow that I am not alone in the world, but that some other thing which is the cause of this idea also exists. But if no such idea is to be found in me, I shall have no argument to convince me of the existence of anything apart from myself. For despite a most careful and comprehensive survey, this is the only argument I have so far been able to find.

Among my ideas, apart from the idea which gives me a representation of myself, which cannot present any difficulty in this context, there are ideas which variously represent God, corporeal and inanimate things, angels, animals and finally other men like myself.

As far as concerns the ideas which represent other men, or animals, or angels, I have no difficulty in understanding that they could be put together from the ideas I have of myself, of corporeal things and of God, even if the world contained no men besides me, no animals and no angels.

As to my ideas of corporeal things, I can see nothing in them which is so great <or excellent> as to make it seem impossible that it originated in myself. For if I scrutinize them thoroughly and examine them one by one, in the way in which I examined the idea of the wax yesterday, I notice

that the things which I perceive clearly and distinctly in them are very few in number. The list comprises size, or extension in length, breadth and depth; shape, which is a function of the boundaries of this extension; position, which is a relation between various items possessing shape; and motion, or change in position; to these may be added substance, duration and number. But as for all the rest, including light and colours, sounds, smells, tastes, heat and cold and the other tactile qualities, I think of these only in a very confused and obscure way, to the extent that I do not even know whether they are true or false, that is, whether the ideas I have of them are ideas of real things or of non-things.¹ For although, as I have noted before, falsity in the strict sense, or formal falsity, can occur only in judgements, there is another kind of falsity, material falsity, which occurs in ideas, when they represent non-things as things. For example, the ideas which I have of heat and cold contain so little clarity and distinctness that they do not enable me to tell whether cold is merely the absence of heat or vice versa, or whether both of them are real qualities, or neither is. And since there can be no ideas which are not as it were of things,² if it is true that cold is nothing but the absence of heat, the idea which represents it to me as something real and positive deserves to be called false; and the same goes for other ideas of this kind.

Such ideas obviously do not require me to posit a source distinct from myself. For on the one hand, if they are false, that is, represent non-things, I know by the natural light that they arise from nothing – that is, they are in me only because of a deficiency and lack of perfection in my nature. If on the other hand they are true, then since the reality which they represent is so extremely slight that I cannot even distinguish it from a non-thing, I do not see why they cannot originate from myself.

With regard to the clear and distinct elements in my ideas of corporeal things, it appears that I could have borrowed some of these from my idea of myself, namely substance, duration, number and anything else of this kind. For example, I think that a stone is a substance, or is a thing capable of existing independently, and I also think that I am a substance. Admittedly I conceive of myself as a thing that thinks and is not extended, whereas I conceive of the stone as a thing that is extended and does not think, so that the two conceptions differ enormously; but they seem to agree with respect to the classification 'substance'.³ Again, I perceive that I now exist, and remember that I have existed for some time; moreover, I have various thoughts which I can count; it is in these

¹ '... chimerical things which cannot exist' (French version).

² 'And since ideas, being like images, must in each case appear to us to represent something' (French version).

³ '... in so far as they represent substances' (French version).

ways that I acquire the ideas of duration and number which I can then transfer to other things. As for all the other elements which make up the ideas of corporeal things, namely extension, shape, position and movement, these are not formally contained in me, since I am nothing but a thinking thing; but since they are merely modes of a substance,¹ and I am a substance, it seems possible that they are contained in me eminently.

So there remains only the idea of God; and I must consider whether there is anything in the idea which could not have originated in myself. By the word 'God' I understand a substance that is infinite, *(eternal, immutable, > independent, supremely intelligent, supremely powerful, and which created both myself and everything else (if anything else there be))* that exists. All these attributes are such that, the more carefully I concentrate on them, the less possible it seems that they² could have originated from me alone. So from what has been said it must be concluded that God necessarily exists.

It is true that I have the idea of substance in me in virtue of the fact that I am a substance; but this would not account for my having the idea of an infinite substance, when I am finite, unless this idea proceeded from some substance which really was infinite.

And I must not think that, just as my conceptions of rest and darkness are arrived at by negating movement and light, so my perception of the infinite is arrived at not by means of a true idea but merely by negating the finite. On the contrary, I clearly understand that there is more reality in an infinite substance than in a finite one, and hence that my perception of the infinite, that is God, is in some way prior to my perception of the finite, that is myself. For how could I understand that I doubted or desired – that is, lacked something – and that I was not wholly perfect, unless there were in me some idea of a more perfect being which enabled me to recognize my own defects by comparison?

Nor can it be said that this idea of God is perhaps materially false and so could have come from nothing,³ which is what I observed just a moment ago in the case of the ideas of heat and cold, and so on. On the contrary, it is utterly clear and distinct, and contains in itself more objective reality than any other idea; hence there is no idea which is in itself truer or less liable to be suspected of falsehood. This idea of a supremely perfect and infinite being is, I say, true in the highest degree; for although perhaps one may imagine that such a being does not exist, it cannot be supposed that the idea of such a being represents something

¹ '... and as it were the garments under which corporeal substance appears to us' (French version).

² '... that the idea I have of them' (French version).

³ '... i.e. could be in me in virtue of my imperfection' (added in French version).

unreal, as I said with regard to the idea of cold. The idea is, moreover, utterly clear and distinct; for whatever I clearly and distinctly perceive as being real and true, and implying any perfection, is wholly contained in it. It does not matter that I do not grasp the infinite, or that there are countless additional attributes of God which I cannot in any way grasp, and perhaps cannot even reach in my thought; for it is in the nature of the infinite not to be grasped by a finite being like myself. It is enough that I understand¹ the infinite, and that I judge that all the attributes which I clearly perceive and know to imply some perfection — and perhaps countless others of which I am ignorant — are present in God either formally or eminently. This is enough to make the idea that I have of God the truest and most clear and distinct of all my ideas.

47 But perhaps I am something greater than I myself understand, and all the perfections which I attribute to God are somehow in me potentially, though not yet emerging or actualized. For I am now experiencing a gradual increase in my knowledge, and I see nothing to prevent its increasing more and more to infinity. Further, I see no reason why I should not be able to use this increased knowledge to acquire all the other perfections of God. And finally, if the potentiality for these perfections is already within me, why should not this be enough to generate the idea of such perfections?

But all this is impossible. First, though it is true that there is a gradual increase in my knowledge, and that I have many potentialities which are not yet actual, this is all quite irrelevant to the idea of God, which contains absolutely nothing that is potential;² indeed, this gradual increase in knowledge is itself the surest sign of imperfection. What is more, even if my knowledge always increases more and more, I recognize that it will never actually be infinite, since it will never reach the point where it is not capable of a further increase; God, on the other hand, I take to be actually infinite, so that nothing can be added to his perfection. And finally, I perceive that the objective being of an idea cannot be produced merely by potential being, which strictly speaking is nothing, but only by actual or formal being.

If one concentrates carefully, all this is quite evident by the natural light. But when I relax my concentration, and my mental vision is blinded by the images of things perceived by the senses, it is not so easy for me to remember why the idea of a being more perfect than myself must

¹ According to Descartes one can know or understand something without fully grasping it, just as we can touch a mountain but not put our arms around it. To grasp something is to embrace it in one's thought; to know something, it suffices to touch it with one's thought (letter to Mersenne, 26 May 1630).

² "... but only what is actual and real" (added in French version).

necessarily proceed from some being which is in reality more perfect. I should therefore like to go further and inquire whether I myself, who have this idea, could exist if no such being existed.

From whom, in that case, would I derive my existence? From myself presumably, or from my parents, or from some other beings less perfect than God; for nothing more perfect than God, or even as perfect, can be thought of or imagined.

Yet if I derived my existence from myself,¹ then I should neither doubt nor want, nor lack anything at all; for I should have given myself all the perfections of which I have any idea, and thus I should myself be God. I must not suppose that the items I lack would be more difficult to acquire than those I now have. On the contrary, it is clear that, since I am a thinking thing or substance, it would have been far more difficult for me to emerge out of nothing than merely to acquire knowledge of the many things of which I am ignorant — such knowledge being merely an accident of that substance. And if I had derived my existence from myself, which is a greater achievement, I should certainly not have denied myself the knowledge in question, which is something much easier to acquire, or indeed any of the attributes which I perceive to be contained in the idea of God; for none of them seem any harder to achieve. And if any of them were harder to achieve, they would certainly appear so to me, if I had indeed got all my other attributes from myself, since I should experience a limitation of my power in this respect.

I do not escape the force of these arguments by supposing that I have always existed as I do now, as if it followed from this that there was no need to look for any author of my existence. For a lifespan can be divided into countless parts, each completely independent of the others, so that it does not follow from the fact that I existed a little while ago that I must exist now, unless there is some cause which as it were creates me afresh at this moment — that is, which preserves me. For it is quite clear to anyone who attentively considers the nature of time that the same power and action are needed to preserve anything at each individual moment of its duration as would be required to create that thing anew if it were not yet in existence. Hence the distinction between preservation and creation is only a conceptual one,² and this is one of the things that are evident by the natural light.

I must therefore now ask myself whether I possess some power enabling me to bring it about that I who now exist will still exist a little while from now. For since I am nothing but a thinking thing — or at least

¹ "... and were independent of every other being" (added in French version).

² Cf. *Principles*, Part I, art. 62: vol. I, p. 214.

since I am now concerned only and precisely with that part of me which is a thinking thing – if there were such a power in me, I should undoubtedly be aware of it. But I experience no such power, and this very fact makes me recognize most clearly that I depend on some being distinct from myself.

But perhaps this being is not God, and perhaps I was produced either by my parents or by other causes less perfect than God. No; for as I have said before, it is quite clear that there must be at least as much in the cause as in the effect.¹ And therefore whatever kind of cause is eventually proposed, since I am a thinking thing and have within me some idea of God, it must be admitted that what caused me is itself a thinking thing and possesses the idea of all the perfections which I attribute to God. In respect of this cause one may again inquire whether it derives its existence from itself or from another cause. If from itself, then it is clear from what has been said that it is itself God, since if it has the power of existing through its own might,² then undoubtedly it also has the power of actually possessing all the perfections of which it has an idea – that is, all the perfections which I conceive to be in God. If, on the other hand, it derives its existence from another cause, then the same question may be repeated concerning this further cause, namely whether it derives its existence from itself or from another cause, until eventually the ultimate cause is reached, and this will be God.

It is clear enough that an infinite regress is impossible here, especially since I am dealing not just with the cause that produced me in the past, but also and most importantly with the cause that preserves me at the present moment.

Nor can it be supposed that several partial causes contributed to my creation, or that I received the idea of one of the perfections which I attribute to God from one cause and the idea of another from another – the supposition here being that all the perfections are to be found somewhere in the universe but not joined together in a single being, God. On the contrary, the unity, the simplicity, or the inseparability of all the attributes of God is one of the most important of the perfections which I understand him to have. And surely the idea of the unity of all his perfections could not have been placed in me by any cause which did not also provide me with the ideas of the other perfections; for no cause could have made me understand the interconnection and inseparability of the perfections without at the same time making me recognize what they were.

¹ '... at least as much reality in the cause as in its effect' (French version).
² Lat. *per se*; literally 'through itself'.

Lastly, as regards my parents, even if everything I have ever believed about them is true, it is certainly not they who preserve me; and in so far as I am a thinking thing, they did not even make me; they merely placed certain dispositions in the matter which I have always regarded as containing me, or rather my mind, for that is all I now take myself to be. So there can be no difficulty regarding my parents in this context. Altogether then, it must be concluded that the mere fact that I exist and have within me an idea of a most perfect being, that is, God, provides a very clear proof that God indeed exists.

It only remains for me to examine how I received this idea from God. For I did not acquire it from the senses; it has never come to me unexpectedly, as usually happens with the ideas of things that are perceivable by the senses, when these things present themselves to the external sense organs – or seem to do so. And it was not invented by me either; for I am plainly unable either to take away anything from it or to add anything to it. The only remaining alternative is that it is innate in me, just as the idea of myself is innate in me.

And indeed it is no surprise that God, in creating me, should have placed this idea in me to be, as it were, the mark of the craftsman stamped on his work – not that the mark need be anything distinct from the work itself. But the mere fact that God created me is a very strong basis for believing that I am somehow made in his image and likeness, and that I perceive that likeness, which includes the idea of God, by the same faculty which enables me to perceive myself. That is, when I turn my mind's eye upon myself, I understand that I am a thing which is incomplete and dependent on another and which aspires without limit to ever greater and better things; but I also understand at the same time that he on whom I depend has within him all those greater things, not just indefinitely and potentially but actually and infinitely, and hence that he is God. The whole force of the argument lies in this: I recognize that it would be impossible for me to exist with the kind of nature I have – that is, having within me the idea of God – were it not the case that God really existed. By 'God' I mean the very being the idea of whom is within me, that is, the possessor of all the perfections which I cannot grasp, but can somehow reach in my thought, who is subject to no defects whatsoever.¹ It is clear enough from this that he cannot be a deceiver, since it is manifest by the natural light that all fraud and deception depend on some defect.

But before examining this point more carefully and investigating other

¹ '... and has not one of the things which indicate some imperfection' (added in French version).

truths which may be derived from it, I should like to pause here and spend some time in the contemplation of God; to reflect on his attributes, and to gaze with wonder and adoration on the beauty of this immense light, so far as the eye of my darkened intellect can bear it. For just as we believe through faith that the supreme happiness of the next life consists solely in the contemplation of the divine majesty, so experience tells us that this same contemplation, albeit much less perfect, enables us to know the greatest joy of which we are capable in this life.

FOURTH MEDITATION

Truth and falsity

During these past few days I have accustomed myself to leading my mind away from the senses; and I have taken careful note of the fact that there is very little about corporeal things that is truly perceived, whereas much more is known about the human mind, and still more about God. The result is that I now have no difficulty in turning my mind away from imaginable things¹ and towards things which are objects of the intellect alone and are totally separate from matter. And indeed the idea I have of the human mind, in so far as it is a thinking thing, which is not extended in length, breadth or height and has no other bodily characteristics, is much more distinct than the idea of any corporeal thing. And when I consider the fact that I have doubts, or that I am a thing that is incomplete and dependent, then there arises in me a clear and distinct idea of a being who is independent and complete, that is, an idea of God. And from the mere fact that there is such an idea within me, or that I who possess this idea exist, I clearly infer that God also exists, and that every single moment of my entire existence depends on him. So clear is this conclusion that I am confident that the human intellect cannot know anything that is more evident or more certain. And now, from this contemplation of the true God, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and the sciences lie hidden, I think I can see a way forward to the knowledge of other things.²

To begin with, I recognize that it is impossible that God should ever deceive me. For in every case of trickery or deception some imperfection is to be found; and although the ability to deceive appears to be an indication of cleverness or power, the will to deceive is undoubtedly evidence of malice or weakness, and so cannot apply to God.

Next, I know by experience that there is in me a faculty of judgement which, like everything else which is in me, I certainly received from God. And since God does not wish to deceive me, he surely did not give me the

¹ '... from things which can be perceived by the senses or imagined' (French version).
² '... of the other things in the universe' (French version).