Abstract

Descartes’s First Meditation imposes a pressing, currently neglected problem of reconciling its sound central argument that concludes that all the meditator’s current and currently prospective results are doubtful with subsequent Meditations’ results that are not at all doubtful. The problem cannot be addressed by received interpretations that fail to credit the First Meditation with a sound extended central argument; it cannot be solved by interpretations reliant on standard translations that obscure the Second Meditation’s opening argument. This study credits the First Meditation’s three-premise argument for its announced conclusion; the Second Meditation’s opening argument for its meditator’s announced “Archimedean” conclusion; and a contribution from the Meditations’ genre of dramatic monologue. The solution specifies the Meditations portrayal of its meditator’s epistemic conceptual transition.

Key Terms

Dream Argument, God and mathematics, Archimedean argument, Cartesian skepticism, knowledge
How can the central argument of Descartes's First Meditation conclude that all current and currently prospective results of the meditator's inquiries are doubtful without depriving subsequent Meditations of their not at all doubtful results? The problem this question poses acknowledges the First Meditation's sound extended central argument from three main premises. One main premise specifies the epistemic concepts the meditator is able to apply in the First Meditation. The central argument's additional main premises follow from the First Meditation's Dream Argument and from its two-part subordinate argument that applies the meditator’s avowed religious creed to deprive her of knowledge in mathematics. Solution to problem includes departing from standard translations that obscure the Second Meditation’s seminal opening argument for the meditator's announced “Archimedean” goal of an initial result that is “one thing... certain and unshakeable.” (24) ¹ The solution must also acknowledge the contribution from the Meditations' genre of dramatic monologue that portrays the meditator's conceptual innovation that enables the Second Meditation's opening argument to introduce an epistemic concept previously unavailable to the meditator.

The dramatic action of the First Meditation unfolds in three parts. The beginning opens by introducing a dedicated and accomplished inquisitive meditator who recounts her practical rationale for initiating the Meditations' inquiry in first philosophy. The meditator undertakes her ambitious inquiry in first philosophy by adopting the First Meditation’s tactical, non-permissive inquisitive method. The middle conducts a sound extended argument that applies the meditator's specified epistemic concepts as well as the concept of a maximally powerful, benevolently purposive God in the meditator's avowed religious creed. At the extended argument’s conclusion all the meditator's current and currently prospective results are doubtful. The denouement displays a debilitating effect of her inquisitive effort in first philosophy. Dramatic action of the First Meditation’s three-part monologue portrays this precipitous fall of the meditator to the condition portrayed by the utterly

¹ Parenthetical page references to Descartes 1964 vol. vii are also marginal page references in Cottingham 1984 vol. ii.
disempowered prisoner at the First Meditation's close. Nevertheless, the sequel reveals a further outcome, which the meditator could not anticipate, when she is subsequently able to resume her inquiry. The argument that follows the start of the Second Meditation pursues the meditator's announced “Archimedean” goal of “just one thing, however slight, that is certain and unshakeable \([\textit{certum} \ldots \textit{& inconcussum}]\).” The argument in pursuit of her Archimedean goal introduces an epistemic concept newly accessible for the meditator and available to her throughout her subsequent Meditations. (24)

**BEGINNING**

**Predicament**

The opening of the First Meditation reports a discovery by her scientific inquiries that much earlier locked its meditator in a predicament that continues to deprive her of any “firm and enduring \([\textit{firmum} \& \textit{mansurum}]\) results in the sciences”:

> It has already been some years since I discovered \([\textit{Animadverti}]\) how many falsehoods I accepted as true since my youth and how doubtful is whatever I erected \([\textit{superextruxi}]\) afterwards on them. (17) ²

Discovery of any result elevates it to the epistemic level of results the discoverer knows. That is, restated using the Meditations’ non-factive, undefined epistemic expression: elevates to the epistemic level of results that for her are “not at all doubtful \([\textit{non liceat dubitare}]\).” (21) In the Meditations’ non-colloquial epistemic vocabulary, abbreviations for “not at all doubtful” include “most true \([\textit{maxime verum}]\)” (18) and “certain \([\textit{certa}]\)”(18, 20). It follows that the Meditations’ non-colloquial epistemic use of its term “certain” is non-factive; that is, that a result is certain does not imply that it is true, so the certainty of a result that is certain can have implications that do not follow from that result alone.

² The standard English translation is figurative: “Some years ago I was struck by ["Animadverti"] the large number of falsehoods that I had accepted as true in my childhood…” (tr.) Cottingham.
Immediately, the meditator reveals how her discovery, far from routine, blights all accumulated and prospective results of her current inquiries in the sciences. The certain results of her current inquiries depend for their epistemic status as certain on their having been, as she says, “erected [superextruxi]” on the truth of results that include some that her discovery revealed are false. In the same architectural figure, the meditator adds that these certainly false implications belong to her current sciences’ “first foundations [primis fundamentis].” 3 So there are certainly false implications that follow from the non-factive certainty of her current and currently prospective sciences’ certainly true results; the “first foundations” of her current and currently prospective sciences are certainly false. An intellectually repugnant consequence of the discovery the meditator reports at the First Meditation’s start consequently reveals all current and prospective certainly true results of her current sciences to be also certainly not certain. The project in first philosophy the meditator announces that sets a goal of “firm and enduring [firma & mansura] results in the sciences” aims to remedy this condition. The meditator’s quest for firm and enduring results duly seeks certainly true results in sciences that rest on “first foundations” that are not certainly false. Her goal of firm and enduring results of inquiry aims for results in the sciences that satisfy the minimal epistemic requirement: they are certainly true and not also certainly not certain. 4

Why not suppose instead that those foundational implications her discovery revealed to be certainly false are consequences that follow from the truth of her inquiries’ results, or suppose that

3 The Meditations does not report which opinions the discovery by its protagonist’s earlier scientific inquiries revealed to be false. This study’s use of pronouns aims to help discourage mistaking the Meditations’ protagonist for the autobiographer in Descartes’s Discourse on the Method.

4 Margaret Wilson translates “Animadverti” literally, “I noticed,” and she credits the First Meditation’s start with initiating a philosophical inquiry discontinuous with the meditator’s previous inquiries. Nevertheless Wilson comments: “The beginning of the Meditation does not need to be read so literally...” (Wilson 1978: 1). Janet Broughton denies that the First Meditation starts with “beliefs and goals we can see as fully rational” (Broughton 2002: 3). John Carriero acknowledges “the first paragraph as Descartes’s attempt to provide a motivation for the project,” but adds: “I do not believe he [Descartes] expects this motivation to be fully available to the meditator” (Carriero 2009: 28).
her prior scientific inquiries have foundations that are simply false? Either would imply that her accumulated results of prior inquiries are all uncertain. Then, the First Meditation would start when the meditator had already been deprived all certainly true results. The First Meditation’s extended central argument would be superfluous, since it does conclude by depriving the meditator of any results that are certainly true. (21-22) Also, if results of her prior scientific inquiries were merely uncertain, the meditator would have no good reason to quit pursuing certain results in those scientific inquiries, and she could not be entitled to the practical reason that she presently declares for initiating her Meditations’ specialized inquiry in first philosophy. It follows that the firm and enduring results in the sciences she announces as her goal cannot be understood to be results that simply have first-order certainty. Neither can her announced goal of firm and enduring results be understood as aimed to relieve lack of results with second-order certainty or, that is, as aimed to add foundations for her inquiries that are themselves certain. The reason is just that the announced discovery that opens the First Meditation did not reveal that her prior inquiries in the sciences rest on foundations that merely are not certainly true. Rather, as cited above, she reported “how many falsehoods” she discovered that are among the foundations of her prior inquiries in the sciences. Duly, the goal she announces of “firm and enduring” results in the sciences aims for certainly true results on foundations that are not certainly false, consequently, for results in the sciences that satisfy a minimal epistemic requirement of being certainly true and not also certainly doubtful.

**Method**

For the meditator, discovery that opening of her First Meditation reports locked her in a predicament. The certainly false foundation of her current inquiries in the sciences barred any escape that would add to her current accumulation of certainly true results in the sciences, as no certainly true addition to her current results could avoid being also certainly doubtful. So the practical solution for the meditator’s problem of escaping her opening predicament requires that she quit her prior acquisitive inquiries that exclude her from achieving any results that are firm and enduring. Also, her evident dedication to inquiry prohibits any plan that is not inquisitive. Her
practical solution that concludes the First Meditation’s beginning deliberation adopts the First Meditation’s method that is both inquisitive and purgative.5

To pursue her strategic goal of firm and enduring results by inquisitive means, the meditator resolves to implement a tactical method of winnowing her prior inquiries’ accumulated results. She disregards any means that would proceed by hiking the epistemic level a result must attain to qualify as certainly true, presumably for the reason that her prior scientific inquiries already set a maximal epistemic level. Also, she leaves aside likely interminable reassessments that would reapply all her prior sciences’ means of epistemic assessment and could promise no more than to reveal errors her individual prior assessments committed. She implements her purgative tactical plan rather by adopting a non-permissive general acceptance rule that would have her retain only “completely certain” results. She thus resolves to banish hypotheses, probable conjectures, as well as any results the least doubtful that served her prior acquisitive scientific inquiries. The meditator concludes her First Meditation’s beginning practical reasoning:

Reason now persuades me that I should hold back my assent from opinions that are not completely [\textit{plane}] certain and indubitable just as carefully as I do from those which are patently [\textit{aperte}] false. (18)

Here, the meditator’s practical conclusion declares her tactical project of both reassessing her accumulated results of prior scientific inquiry that aims to winnow her results and of a task that awaits the First Meditation’s denouement, of withdrawing belief from results that fail to withstand her reassessment.

Presently, the meditator makes clear that her method is not applicable to opinions for which she claims no level of certainty, such as her avowed theist mere opinion. (21)

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5 The First Meditation’s strategic goal of “firm and enduring results” for its purgative inquiry aims to improve the epistemic quality of the meditator’s inquiries. About the contrasting goals of ancient and renaissance Pyrrhonian skeptical purgative inquiry, see Michael Frede 1987.
By declaring that “reason now persuades” her to adopt the purgative tactic of her inquisitive plan for escape from her opening predicament, the meditator concludes the practical argument that initiates her as inquirer in first philosophy. Here, she also declares the end to the temporizing that had postponed the start of her purgative inquisitive plan:

...but this task appeared enormous [ingens opus], and I waited to attain an age of maturity when no subsequent time would be more suitable for tackling such inquiries. This led me to put off the project 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. (17)

The end of her temporizing lends urgency to the Meditations’ postponed inquiry, as it launches the meditator’s purgative tactic, governed by the method of doubt, in an inquisitive effort that she has now ensured will be her “once in a lifetime” foray into first philosophy.

For the committed inquirer who is locked in a predicament that bars the way to her stated goal of adding any firm and enduring results, or, that is, certainly true results that are not also certainly uncertain, the meditator’s tactic of purgative inquisitive reassessment offers a hope of escape, but no promise. Optimally, an outcome of the meditator’s inquisitive winnowing in the First Meditation’s middle portion will reveal some positively reassessed certainly true residue with which her inquiries in the sciences can “[begin] again from the first foundations” that are newly revealed and not certainly false. In estimating the risk in undertaking her project of first philosophy the meditator may presume that the outcome can be no worse than her predicament at the start for the reason that the project she pursues will remain reversible throughout her inquiry in first philosophy.

6 Contrast the non-tactical, strategic employment in Discourse on the Method of a method of doubt: “to see if I was left believing anything that was entirely indubitable” (AT vi, 31/CSM I, 127). The outcome reports: “I noticed that while I was trying thus to think everything false, it was necessary that I, who was thinking this, was something” (32/127). The First Meditation’s strategic goal of firm and enduring results, inter alia, is absent from Descartes’s Discourse on the Method.
However, the meditator cannot be credited with accurately anticipating the effects of her First Meditation’s prudently adopted purgative inquisitive pursuit.

**MIDDLE: Acquired Certainty**

The First Meditation’s extended central argument implements the meditator’s tactical inquisitive project of reassessment governed by her adopted method of inquiring. Her tactic advances as an argument with three main premises. The meditator introduces the first premise after she declines as likely interminable any piecemeal reassessment of the original evidential bases of each of her accumulated certainly true results. Her architectural figure already supplies her means for reassessment that is general, as she explicitly rehearses: “Once the foundations of a building are undermined, anything built on them collapses of its own accord.” Again, her use of “foundations” applies to implications that follow from the non-factive certainty of her accumulated certain results. So her proposal to address “the basic principles on which all my former beliefs rested” articulates a foundational principle implicated in the non-factive certainty of her previously accumulated and currently prospective certainly true beliefs. This principle plainly was not among those unspecified results that her earlier, previously cited discovery revealed to be certainly false. Here, the meditator uses “most true” as another non-factive epistemic term for “not at all doubtful” to confide that:

> Of course [Nempe], whatever I had admitted until now as most true [maxime verum] I accepted either from the senses or through the senses [vel a sensibus, vel per sensus]. (18)

These necessarily sensory epistemic concepts “from the senses or though the senses” that the meditator retains from her prior inquiries in the sciences are the epistemic concepts her First Meditation’s extended central argument applies. Here, the meditator’s nominally disjunctive label for her epistemic concepts introduces no distinction. Following its Dream Argument however the First Meditation’s extended central argument does distinguish acquired certainty from the senses or though the senses from non-acquired certainty from the senses or through the senses.
The meditator’s avowal that specifies her current epistemic concepts serves the First Meditation’s extended central argument as its initial main premise:

(1) Any result that can be certain for the meditator has certainty from the senses or through the senses.

The First Meditation helps confirm that (1) has the status of the meditator’s opinions, in part, by offering no argument to support (1) and by exempting (1) from the meditator’s accumulated certain results that are subject to her First Meditation’s reassessment. It may be that prior to her First Meditation, the meditator never before acknowledged her exclusive reliance on her necessarily sensory epistemic concepts “from the senses or through the senses.”

The First Meditation casts (1) as the initial premise in its sound central argument for the First Meditation’s announced fully general conclusion (4), that concedes the meditator lacks any current or currently prospective certain results. Premise (1) also contributes to the subordinate Dream Argument that supplies the First Meditation’s central argument’s premise (2), that denies the meditator has any acquired certainty from the senses or through the senses. The subordinate two-part argument for the central argument’s remaining main premise (3), that denies the meditator has any non-acquired certain results, rests on the concept of God in the meditator’s avowed religious creed, as I discuss below.

A current interpretation that supposes the First Meditation’s argument recurs to Scholastic Aristotelian epistemology overlooks premise (1) and expressly denies that the First Meditation is entitled to its announced conclusion (4). Standard commentaries that overlook (1) and impute a proto-Humean restriction to an evidential basis of exclusively sensory data also deprive the First Meditation of its sound central argument. These interpretations imply that (4) is false, by supposing the meditator can retain knowledge of her current experiences and knowledge that she exists.

7 “...when Descartes claims in the First Meditation the doubtfulness of all his former beliefs ... he is issuing something of a promissory note...” (Carriero 2009: 34-5, 45).
Interpretations of the First Meditation’s central argument that import from its denouement the First Meditation’s false evil demon supposition, together with commentaries that attribute so-called “Cartesian skepticism,” would also deprive the First Meditation of the sound argument it provides for its stated general conclusion, (4), as I note below.

Maxim

Following her introduction of premise (1), the meditator supplements her newly adopted inquisitive method with a modest, general prudential precept that enjoins withholding complete trust from any sometime deceiver:

... it is prudent never to trust completely those who have deceived [deceperunt] us even once.

(18)

The meditator adopts an epistemic version of this unconditional practical precept that applies to basic sources of certain results, as a maxim:

(Maxim) Treat any result from a source that sometimes deceives as somewhat doubtful.

The Maxim serves the First Meditation’s argument by imposing minimal epistemic demotion on all results from any original source that sometimes deceives. Since her adopted Method of Doubt applies to results even minimally below the epistemic level of certainty, addition of the Maxim serves to implement the meditator’s adopted method by both demoting all results from any sometime deceiving original source to the epistemic level of certainly false results and treating them as results that are certainly false.

Presently, the argument for premise (3) specifies original sources of certainty for her results that satisfy her concept of non-acquired certainty from the senses or through the senses. The sole original sources of the acquired certainty from the senses or through the senses that premise (2) addresses are her senses.
Is the meditator ever deceived by her senses? The First Meditation introduces the Dream Argument by first clarifying this question.

**Deceive or mislead**

The First Meditation, but not current English translations of the First Meditation, explicitly distinguishes deceiving from misleading. The meditator uses the term "fallere" to report that her senses have been sources of some errors about acquired certain results: “I have sometimes found these senses mislead [fallere] me”(18). She again uses the term “mislead [fallere]” and, notably, abstains from using the Maxim’s term “deceive” [deceperunt] when she reports some examples in which her visual senses lead her to err. In such cases:

... the senses occasionally mislead [fallere] us with respect to objects that are very small or in the distance ...

The meditator presently specifies sensory “distinctness” as one of the “certain signs [certis indiciis]” her senses themselves provide that can enable her to correct errors, or to avoid erring about gaining certainty of targets that are “very small or in the distance.” Such sensory distinctness could mark the last line a subject can read on an ophthalmologist’s eye chart, and the meditator could add that a line she finds too blurry to read lacks “sensory distinctness.” Duly, about occasions when she errs by presuming to gain certainty of targets “very small or in the distance,” the meditator does not say she is deceived [deceperunt]. As the Dream Argument presently confirms, her reason is just that her senses themselves enable her to correct such errors and to avoid erring about gaining certainty of such targets, so she is not deceived but merely misled.

Subsequently, the meditator again contrasts misleading with deceiving, and confirms her prior application of this distinction. Errors that their source enables her to correct are misleading, as they do not imply the source is a deceiver. Her Sixth Meditation says:

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8 The Second Meditation coins “clear and distinct” to label a mark that is not sensory. (31)
... the very fact that God is not a deceiver [fallax], and the consequent impossibility of there being any falsity in my opinions which cannot be corrected by some faculty supplied by God, offers me a sure hope that I can attain the truth even in these matters. (80).

Here, following the theist conclusion that the Third Meditation's argument introduces, her divine source cannot deceive “on pain of contradiction." Her source can allow errors that the meditator is divinely equipped to correct retrospectively, and evidently to anticipate, so that they merely mislead and do not deceive. (47)

Unfortunately, standard translations use the one term “deceive” to translate both the First Meditation’s term for deceive “deceperunt” and for its two initial occurrences of “fallere." ⁹ If routine errors about gaining results with acquired certainty from the senses or through the senses were cases of deception, her Maxim and inquisitive method would require the meditator to conclude immediately that all her results with acquired certainty from the senses or through the senses must be demoted. Consequently, not only would her First Meditation’s Dream Argument then be superfluous. Also, contrary to the Sixth Meditation’s close, the fact that her fallible senses yield any erroneous results would bar the meditator’s senses from contributing to her gaining results with acquired certainty, permanently. (79f.)

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⁹ “But from time to time I have found that the senses deceive [fallere], and it is prudent never to trust completely those who have deceived [deceperunt] us even once. Yet although the senses occasionally deceive [fallant] 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....” (tr. Cottingham). “j'ai quelquefois eprouve que ces sens estoient trompeurs, & i est de la prudence de ne se fier jamais entierement a ceux qui nous ont une fois trompez.” AT ix-1: 14; “I have noticed that the senses are sometimes deceptive, and it is a mark of prudence never to place our complete trust in those who have deceived us even once” (tr.) Cress; “Yet I have found that these senses sometimes deceive me, and it is a matter of prudence never to confide completely in those who have deceived us even once” (tr.) Heffernan; “Now I have sometimes caught the senses deceiving me; and a wise man never entirely trusts those who have once cheated him” (tr.) Anscombe and Geach. For (tr.) Haldane and Ross, see below.
The First Meditation provides that the meditator's errors about gaining acquired certainty about too small and too distant targets merely mislead. Are there, in addition, examples in which the meditator's senses do deceive her?

**Dream Argument**

Initially, the meditator offers the example in which she is seated holding papers in her own hands to illustrate cases in which, far from deceiving, her senses do not even mislead:

But although the senses sometimes mislead *[fallant]* us about objects which are very small or in the distance, there are many other things that plainly cannot be doubted, 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... *(18)*

To introduce the Dream Argument, the meditator asks, as if rhetorically, how she could err about whether the hands that hold the paper before her are her hands:

... for what reason could it be denied that these hands and this entire body are mine? *(18)*

The meditator's answer may initially appear to be no less obviously false than a denial that "these hands and this entire body are mine." She could commit such extravagant errors about her own body, she answers, in case she was afflicted by the condition of victims of a type of psychosis:

... whose brains are impaired by such an unrelenting vapor of black bile that they steadfastly insist that ... they have heads made of clay, or that they are pumpkins or made entirely of glass. *(19)*

A pathological victim who is convinced his own body is a pumpkin or whose senses fail to correct his conviction that a clay pot is his own head presents a condition in which a subject is barred from adding acquired certainty of results, including results such as that the hands holding papers before
him are his own hands. Sufferers from this psychotic condition are similarly disabled from acquiring certainty about any bodies in their surroundings. The meditator protests that she suffers from no such pathological condition:

But these people are insane [amentes] ... (19)

To be sure, the meditator is not afflicted as are those whose “brains... [are] impaired by... an unrelenting vapor of black bile.” Immediately, however, the meditator qualifies her protest with the unexceptionable observation that she is a human sometime dreamer:

[I am]... a human who is accustomed to sleep at night and to experiencing in my dreams the very same things, or now and then even less plausible ones, as these insane people do when they are awake. [For example]... that I am here, clothed in my dressing gown, seated next to the fireplace -- when in fact I am lying undressed in bed. (19)

While she dreams, the meditator acknowledges, she is in the psychotic condition of those she cited as insane. Her errors while dreaming about gaining certainty of the posture, location, and surroundings of her own body exhibit her temporary epistemic disability that prevents her senses from serving as a source of any acquired certain results about her own body or its surroundings. Generally:

(D-prin) When she acquires certain results about her body or its surroundings she cannot be dreaming.

The question she initially posed rhetorically she now answers by specifying how she can err about whether “these hands and this entire body are mine.” The answer is that just because she is a human sometime dreamer her senses are indeed sometimes disabled from serving as sources of her acquired certain results. When she is dreaming her senses do allow her to err about gaining certainty that she is seated holding papers in her own hands, and they do not contribute to her gaining any
certain results about her own body or surroundings. Of course, the pathological psychotic condition that afflicts madmen is also dissimilar to the condition of the meditator when she dreams, since the meditator's dreaming is a psychotic state that is temporary.

Is the meditator deceived when she dreams she gains acquired certainty from the senses or through the senses that she is seated holding papers in her own hands? Of course, she does not ask whether, while dreaming, her senses can mark the occasion as one when they are not competent to supply any results with acquired certainty. The meditator asks, rather: on occasions when she is not dreaming, can she have some way of telling that she is indeed not dreaming? In her First Meditation, and so long as she is confined to her epistemic concept of acquired certainty from the senses or through the senses, the sole source of any such way of telling must be her senses. If there is some solely sensory feature that can mark occasions when she is not dreaming, then, when she lies in bed dreaming she acquires certainty that she is seated holding papers in her own hands, her error would be another example in which her Maxim does not apply; she would once again be merely misled, not deceived.

The meditator's initial, too hasty answer to the question whether the basic source of her results' acquired certainty can again be absolved of deceiving nominates the same sensory mark that would absolve her senses of deceiving when she is merely misled about targets too distant and too small for her senses to yield certainty:

... Right now my eyes are certainly wide-awake when I gaze upon this sheet of paper. This head which I am shaking is not heavy with sleep. I extend this hand consciously and deliberately, and I feel it. Such things would not be so distinct [distincta] for someone who is asleep. (19)

However, this initial answer, that sensory distinctness marks her condition of wakefulness, earns the meditator's derisive immediate retraction:
... as if I did not recall having been deluded \([delusum]\) on other occasions even by similar thoughts in my dreams. As I consider these matters more carefully, I see so plainly that being awake can never be distinguished from sleep by certain indications \([certis indiciis]\)… (19)

Sensory distinctness cannot suffice to mark occasions when she is not dreaming, and her pause to “consider more carefully” may allow her silently to deny that there can be any sensory feature that marks such occasions. Later, she cites the general basis for this denial:

...every sensory experience I have ever thought I was having while awake I can also think of myself as sometimes having while asleep. (77)

In the First Meditation, consequently, on occasions when she dreams she acquires certain results from the senses or through the senses about her body or its surroundings, the meditator’s senses cannot be acquitted of deceiving.

Her Maxim can then apply to demote all her current and currently prospective results with acquired certainty from the senses or through the senses. The First Meditation’s Dream Argument concludes:

(2) None of the meditator's current or currently prospective results have acquired certainty.

Together with premise (1), it follows that the meditator’s newly derived premise (2) deprives the meditator of all her current and currently prospective results with acquired certainty from the senses or through the senses.

**Reversible**

Near the Sixth Meditation’s close, when the meditator returns to the topic of dreaming, she will have retained her Maxim and the non-permissive acceptance rule of the Method of Doubt that the start of her Second Meditation's inquiry adapts to serve in an acquisitive role. (24) Also, she will have demonstrated in the Second Meditation’s opening argument for its Archimedean conclusion her
then newly won command of epistemic concepts that include a concept of acquired certainty that is not sensory. Thereafter, her senses can contribute as one of multiple sources, or as a component of a single complex source of the meditator's prospective results with acquired certainty. She will then no longer be restricted to solely sensory marks of when she is not dreaming, so the Sixth Meditation can at last claim a fallible and utterly routine way of telling when she is not dreaming:

But when I distinctly see where things come from and where and when they come to me, and when I can connect my perceptions of them with the whole of the rest of my life without a break, then I am fully certain that when I encounter these things I am not asleep but awake.

(90)

Provided she has not somehow adopted some restriction that again confines her every way of telling when she is not dreaming to solely sensory marks, her necessarily erroneous dreams of acquiring certain results about her body and its surroundings can at last be merely misleading, not deceiving.

Descartes's popular works contrast with the First Meditation's inference from the irreversible fact that the meditator is a characteristically human sometime dreamer, together with her reversible current epistemic concepts that premise (1) records, to infer that the meditator's senses sometimes deceive and to apply her Maxim to conclude (2), that the meditator lacks any results with acquired certain from the senses or through the senses. In *Discourse on the Method* the autobiographer assumes without argument that “our senses sometimes deceive us” and he concludes irreversibly “that nothing was such as they [our senses] led us to imagine” (AT vi, 32; CSM i 167). Descartes's *Principles of Philosophy* adopts the same conclusion given just the irreversible fact that “in sleep we regularly seem to have sensory perception of, or to imagine, countless things which do not exist anywhere” (AT viiia 6; CSM i 193-4).

Replies

Descartes's *Third Replies* rebut Hobbes's *Objections* to the First Meditation that take Descartes to subscribe to an irreversible doctrine that “there is no criterion enabling us to distinguish our dreams from the waking state and veridical sensations” and that disparage the First Meditation's
Dream Argument for rehearsing trite Platonic doctrine of “uncertainty in sensible things.” (171) Descartes’s Reply declines to restate the First Meditation’s argument for (2). Instead, he rebuts by noting that Hobbes overlooks the diagnostic feature of the Dream Argument:

Partly I [Descartes] introduced the arguments so that I could reply to them in the subsequent Meditations.... I could not have left them out, any more than a medical writer can leave out the description of a disease when he wants to explain how it can be cured. (172)

The analogue of a disease Descartes diagnoses is not the temporary psychotic state common to humans who sometimes sleep. It is rather the meditator’s current commitment to her avowed specifically sensory current concept of acquired certainty “from the senses or through the senses.” The symptom that the Dream Argument describes and diagnoses, but Descartes’s Replies do not restate, is the First Meditation’s insatiable requirement that the meditator have a mark of when she is not dreaming that is solely sensory. The treatment for Descartes’s medical writer to prescribe would include excision of the meditator’s current epistemic concept of acquired certainty from the senses or through the senses. To Hobbes’s further complaint that Descartes’s target employs the senses “without exercising our reason in any way,” (171) Descartes’s Replies could add that although there is something the meditator fails to exercise in the First Meditation, it is not her reason. Rather, it is the conceptual capacity she first exercises in the Second Meditation when she earns her initial acquired certain results that do not instance her prior concept of acquired certainty from the senses or through the senses.

Barry Stroud’s standard interpretation of the Dream Argument employs a translation that collapses the First Meditation’s distinction between deceiving and misleading.10 Nevertheless, Stroud expressly declines to attribute reasoning that would lead readers from the observation standardly mistranslated as if the meditator says about too small and too distant targets that her fallible senses

10 “…but it is sometimes proved to me that these senses are deceptive” (tr.) Haldane and Ross (1955, vol. i 145).
deceive. Stroud says, “Descartes’s negative assessment of all his sensory knowledge does not depend on such reasoning.” (Stroud 1984: 9) Stroud’s alternative locates the start of the Dream Argument at the meditator’s report that she is seated holding papers in her hands. This interpretation bypasses the *Meditations*’ distinction between deceiving and misleading, the First Meditation’s account of dreaming as temporary psychosis, as well as both the meditator’s Maxim and her statement of premise (1) that the meditator understands to restrict her to solely sensory marks of when she is not dreaming. Stroud nevertheless does derive a skeptical conclusion, by crediting the example in the meditator’s report that she is seated as setting “the most favorable conditions for reliable operation of the senses as a source of knowledge.”

Stroud declares the conclusion he derives from the Dream Argument conditionally, but with an antecedent that he leaves unchallenged: “Descartes would be perfectly correct in saying ... [that] we could never tell we are not dreaming, if he were also right that knowing that one is not dreaming is a condition of knowing something about the world around us.” If this necessary condition for knowledge of such things applies in Descartes’s First Meditation, it also applies in the Sixth Meditation. Stroud acknowledges that the conclusion that follows on his interpretation of the Dream Argument is irreversible: “[It] can never be given a satisfactory solution.”

Rather, to “find a way to reject the problem -- I [Stroud] think that is our only hope” (Stroud 1984: 33). However, the *Meditations* can subsequently solve the problem Stroud attributes to the First Meditation of “knowing anything about the world around us on the basis of the senses....” because the First Meditation’s argument’s indispensible premise (1) that its Dream Argument derives is not irreversible. Subsequently, as noted above, the meditator can gain knowledge of results such as that she is seated, when her results with acquired certainty are no longer confined to having acquired certainty from the senses or through the senses.

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11 For attribution of a so-called “lunacy argument” and discussion of a dispute with Foucault by Derrida 1978, see Broughton 2005: 44-63.

12 Cf. “…I see no real escape from the conclusion of the dream argument” (Curley 1978: 68).
Middle: Non-acquired Certainty

Suppose I'm dreaming

To continue her inquiry in first philosophy, the meditator must comply with the Dream Argument’s conclusion. Duly, she adopts the assumption that will govern the balance of the First Meditation’s central argument: “that I am dreaming.” (19) This false supposition serves solely to codify the Dream Argument’s soundly derived conclusion (2) that has already deprived the meditator of any results with certainty she can acquire only when she is not dreaming. Do there remain any results that both satisfy premise (1) and are consistent with her supposition? Her answer nominates some “perspicuous truths” as having certainty untouched by the Dream Argument:¹³

... Whether I am awake or asleep, two and three added together are five, and a square has no more than four sides. (20)

The meditator cannot even dream a sum of 2+3 other than 5 or a square without 4 sides. Generally, “perspicuous truths” with certainty that consistent with her supposition that she is dreaming have negations even her dreams cannot represent. The meditator’s hypothetical explanation of how her senses enable her to earn results with certainty that is consistent with supposing she is dreaming offers a comparison. As pictures depend on elementary “real colors from which we form all the images of things, whether true or false,” so her capacity for sensory representation depends on “simple and universal” elementary ingredients. Her hypothetical explanation’s list of elements starts with “corporeal nature in general, and its extension; also, the figure of extended things...” Her capacity for sensory representation, to which she attributes these elementary ingredients, prevents her from even dreaming erroneous results in arithmetic and geometry, she says:

¹³ In the Fifth Meditation the meditator recalls: “…before, when I was completely preoccupied with the objects of the senses, I always held that the most certain truths of all were the kind that I recognized clearly in connection with shapes, or numbers, or other items related to arithmetic or geometry, or in general to pure and abstract mathematics” (65).
... 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, independently of whether or not these things exist in nature, contain something certain and indubitable. (20)

This explanation, whether at all accurate, credits her certain results that are consistent with the supposition that she is dreaming just to the meditator's endowed capacity for sensory representation. It follows that the source of her certain results that are immune to the Dream Argument is none other than the source of her sensory capacities. That is, the source of her certain results that she cannot even dream are false is the original source of the meditator herself.

The certainty of these results may be said to be non-acquired certainty from the senses or through the senses. Notably, “perspicuous truths” such as 2+3=5, that have such non-acquired certainty just because they have negations the meditator is unable to dream, share a matching vulnerability. Unlike the Dream Argument that demotes results with acquired certainty only because the meditator is actually deceived on some occasions when she dreams that she gains acquired certainty from the senses or through the senses, the meditator grants that her non-acquired certainty of results in arithmetic or geometry is vulnerable to the mere possibility that she is deceived by the original source of her cognitive capacities. Further, an error about her having a result with such non-acquired certainty is one that the meditator could not anticipate, avoid, or correct, so it would deceive, not merely mislead. She adds, rhetorically:

It seems impossible that such perspicuous truths should incur any suspicion of being false.

(20)

Nevertheless, it is just such a suspicious that her two-part argument for premise (3) raises and sustains.
Religious theism

The argument applies the concept of an all-powerful purposefully benevolent creator that the meditator says she keeps “fixed in my mind,” as her religious creed avows:

…[a] long standing opinion that there is an all-powerful God [*qui potest omnia*] who created me as I am. (21)

Preliminary to her two-part argument, the meditator acknowledges that the God of her religious creed has a level of power that can make it that there is “no Earth, no heavens, no extended thing, no figure, no magnitude, no place, while at the same time ensuring that all these things appear to me to exist just as they do now…” (21) However, since she adds that these components serve her explanation “regardless of whether they exist in nature or not,” she can have results with non-acquired certainty despite this possibility. Her argument’s first part concerns application of this God’s power:

What is more, just as I consider that others sometimes go astray in cases when they think they know perfectly, how do I know that God has not brought it about that I too go wrong [*fallar*] every time I add two and three…? (21)

Because the meditator herself cannot even dream a sum of 2+3 other than 5, she poses this suspicion by comparing herself to others whom she contends do err in “cases when they think they have the most perfect knowledge.” Whether she has a result with non-acquired certainty depends on the divine source of the meditator and her senses. To the question of whether it is possible that this divine source of her sensory capacity ever deceives her, the meditator’s answer initially notes that her religious creed includes in her concept of God purposive divine benevolence:

But perhaps God would not have allowed me to be deceived [*decipli*] in this way, since he is said to be supremely good. (21)
This crediting of supreme goodness to an all-powerful God prompts the meditator to a variant of a standard theodicy by questioning how such a God can “allow me to be deceived even occasionally”:

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. (21)

The false assertion that “cannot be made” is that an all-powerful benevolent God so created the meditator that she has never been deceived. Of course, the occasion the Dream Argument previously reported belies “this last assertion.” The God of her religious creed did in fact allow her to be deceived on that previously reported occasion. According to a tradition that endorses the meditator’s religious creed, this divine deception can be reconciled with God’s benevolence in case deception of the meditator served as means to some benevolent divine end. Thus, the meditator infers it is possible that her purposefully benevolent God can also allowed her to be deceived when he provides capacities that equip her for non-acquired certainty of results in arithmetic and geometry. Notably, the same possibility of deception, as means to a divine benevolent end, would remain in case divine ends were indifferent or malevolent. Consequently, the possibility that she is deceived about having non-acquired certainty of results in arithmetic and geometry follows from her avowed religious opinion that her original source is purposive. Rhetorically, the meditator concludes it is possible that the purposive creator of her religious creed sometimes deceives her about having non-acquired certainty in mathematics: “how do I know that God has not brought it about that I too go wrong [fallar] every time I add two and three...?” (21). This possibility, together with her Maxim, bars her having any results that depend for their non-acquired certainty just on the meditator’s God-given faculties.

In the First Meditation, as in the Meditations generally, the meditator cautiously abstains from acknowledging explicitly that her non-acquired certainty of results such as 2+3=5 is inconsistent with her having a creator that is purposive. The exception is in the Third Meditation’s
introductory passage where she recalls how the First Meditation’s argument deprived her results in mathematics of non-acquired certainty: 14

The only reason for my later judgment that they [2+3=5 or “similar things”] were open to doubt was that it occurred to me that perhaps some God could [potuisse] have given me a nature such that I was deceived [deciperer] even in matters which seemed most evident.(36)

The same religious conception remains the meditator’s idea of a purposive God throughout the Second Meditation and in the Third Meditation’s opening passage. There, the meditator acknowledges explicitly that her having a purposive source can bar from having non-acquired certainty of results in mathematics, “if he so desired”:

... 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 [siquidem velit], to bring it about that I am deceived [deciperer] even in those matters which I think I see utterly clearly with my mind’s eye. (36)

Even although she cannot even dream any sum of 2+3 other than 5, and she can be said to see that 2+3=5 “utterly clearly with my mind’s eye,” the purposively benevolent God of the meditator’s religious creed could deceive [decipere] her about having non-acquired certainty that 2+3=5, “if he so desired.” 15

Elsewhere, the Meditations’ “Synopsis” omits acknowledging the “grounds for doubt” about mathematics and, thereby, the role of meditator’s religious theism, where Descartes anticipates that

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14 For discussion of this key passage, see [reference omitted].

15 The nature of a creator that can both allow her to restore non-acquired certainty of results in mathematics and accommodate the sorts of error the meditator can commit raises questions for the main arguments of Meditations Three and Four.
the First Meditation’s arguments present “reasons ... which give us possible grounds for doubt about all things, especially material things, so long as we have no foundations for the sciences other than those which we have had up till now.” (2) His earlier Discourse on the Method includes no hint of the First Meditation’s argument that obliges the meditator to deny she has non-acquired certain results in mathematics. There, the autobiographer argues for demoting his certain results in mathematics, as if in earnest, just from his own asserted lack of accomplishment in geometrical reasoning.

(ATvi32/CSMi127) The argument Descartes gives in Principles of Philosophy I, 5 for denying certainty to "even mathematical demonstrations" adopts as its mere assumption that there are examples in which we have been deceived. There, Descartes does not note that “this omnipotent God who created us” is also purposive. 16

Nevertheless, received interpretations presume that the version of theism subsequent Meditations defend can be consistent with the teleological religious theism that the meditator avows in the First Meditation. Among them are interpretations that presume a task for subsequent Meditations is to conclude that God is benevolent. However, as the First Meditation implies and the Third Meditation expressly acknowledges, it is the benevolent purposive God of the meditator’s avowed religious opinion that deprives the meditator of her current and currently prospective non-acquired certain results in mathematics. Particularly, a standard interpretation presumes that the meditator is deprived of certain results, not as a consequence of her avowed religious creed, but rather by the Evil Genius supposition in the First Meditation’s denouement. 17 This standard interpretation that tasks subsequent Meditations with concluding that there is a purposively benevolent God not only overlooks the First Meditation’s argument for denying that the meditator’s

16 Neither the “creation of eternal truths” doctrine that Descartes introduces elsewhere, nor the status of 2+3=5 as a necessary truth take part in the First Meditation’s argument that deprives the meditator of certain results in mathematics, pace Wilson 1978: 136; Wagner 2014.

17 Cf. Newman 2016: sec. 3.2. Cp. “By the end of the First Meditation Descartes is holding that all his beliefs are rendered ‘uncertain’... He will ultimately attempt to remove the Deceiver Hypothesis by proving that he is in the hands of an omnipotent, benevolent being...” (Wilson 1978: 35).
non-acquired certainty of results in mathematics is inconsistent with her avowed religious opinion that she has a purposive creator that is benevolent. Also, this standard interpretation mistakes the place of the meditator’s Evil Genius supposition. As I discuss below, this supposition serves in the First Meditation’s denouement, after the central argument has already concluded that the meditator’s current or currently prospective results are all uncertain.

The meditator’s religious creed also implies that the purposive God that demotes all her results with non-acquired certainty is “all-powerful.” Evidently, she understands an “all-powerful” being to have power that is maximal, since in the First Meditation the only alternatives the meditator can entertain to the deity “…firmly rooted in my mind… [that is] an all-powerful [qui potest omnia] God who made me the kind of creature that I am” assign her non-purposive original sources that have less than maximal power. (20)

**Atheist alternatives**

The less than maximally powerful alternatives the meditator can consider in the First Meditation are versions of atheism. Here, the meditator avoids associating herself with even a supposition of explicit atheism, by imputing these alternatives to others:

> These people might suppose that I came to be what I am either by fate, or by chance, or by a connected chain of events, or by some other way. (21)

From the only alternatives the meditator can consider to her avowed version of theism, it also follows that her sensory capacities fail to provide results with non-acquired certainty, as she argues. The less powerful her supposed source, the more likely are the meditator’s cognitive capacities to condemn her to be sometimes deceived about having non-acquired certain results. She says:

> Because to be misled and to err [falli & errare] are specific [quaedam] imperfections, the less power they [sc., the atheists’ suppositions] assign to my original author [originis meae authorem], the more probable it is that I am so imperfect as to be always misled [semper fallar]. (21)
Supposing she has an original source with less than maximal power, her commission of some error about having a result with non-acquired certainty is then probable and hence possible. Any error about her having a result with non-acquired certainty is one the meditator could not anticipate or correct. So her error would not merely mislead; she would be deceived. The meditator must conclude, given that her conception of a purposively benevolent creator includes having maximal power, that the only alternatives to her having a purposive divine creator also ensure she is sometimes deceived about results with non-acquired certainty. ¹⁸ Then, the meditator's Maxim applies to deprive her of non-acquired certainty of all results that depend for their certainty on her having a non-divine original source.

The central argument's third main premise follows, either in case the meditator is a creature of a maximally powerful purposive original cause, such as the purposive God of her avowed religious creed, or in case she has a less powerful origin:

(3) The meditator lacks any results that have non-acquired certainty from the senses or through the senses.

In the First Meditation, and through the Second Meditation, it remains the meditator's long-standing religious concept of a purposive and maximally powerful deity that prevents her from considering any additional alternative to either teleological theism or atheism and, consequently, that bars any remedy for her current lack of results with non-acquired certainty particularly in mathematics. Whether the meditator can earn results in mathematical sciences that fulfill her epistemic goal of

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¹⁸ Plantinga's widely discussed argument against versions of Naturalism in epistemology would conclude, from current evolutionary accounts of her origin that are not supplemented by teleological theism, that the meditator’s cognitive faculties are generally misleading or unreliable (1993: 216-37; 2002, 1-12). Cp. Van Cleve (2002: 116ff); Sosa (2002: 91-102, and 2007: 93-106). The meditator’s argument infers from her having a non-theist source of her cognitive capacities just that her sensory cognitive capacity is possibly deceptive in some cases.
having firm and enduring certainty depends in part on how subsequent Meditations settle questions about the *Meditations'* version of theism.

Notably, the argument that deprives the meditator of non-acquired certainty from the senses or though the senses applies more generally to any results with non-acquired certainty, or any results that depend just on some cognitive capacity of the meditator. The First Meditation’s argument for (3) would also exclude non-acquired certainty that a thinking capacity or some supposed intuitive capacity would suffice to provide.

**Conclusion**

The First Meditation’s central argument concludes with the meditator’s concession that tactical purgative reassessment by her inquiry in first philosophy has spared none of her intellectually repugnant previously accumulated certainly true results:

I am finally compelled to admit that there is not one of my former beliefs about which a doubt may not properly be raised [*de quo non liceat dubitare*]... (21)

This outcome not only disappoints the meditator’s plan to winnow from the accumulated certain results of her prior inquiries in the sciences some certainly true results that she may be entitled to endorse as firm and enduring. Her conclusion deprives all her current and currently prospective results of inquiry of certainty:

(4) For the meditator no current or currently prospective result of inquiry is certain.

The central argument’s conclusion (4) applies to results with acquired certainty from the senses or though the senses and to all results with non-acquired certainty. It follows that the inferences the meditator draws in the First Meditation’s argument cannot be understood to exercise reasoning abilities that require the meditator to be certain of principles of logic that govern her inferences. Also,
because (4) allows no exceptions, the Second Meditation’s initial certain results cannot be understood as certain results that survived the First Meditation’s argument.¹⁹

The First Meditation’s central argument contrasts with influential interpretations that attribute to the First Meditation a sequence of skeptical doubts of increasing severity, with overlapping outcomes, that ends in a final so-called “Evil Genius Doubt.”²⁰ Rather, the argument that derives (4) in the First Meditation assigns to premises (2) and (3) separate jurisdictions that are, given premise (1), also exhaustive. The First Meditation’s argument also contrasts with so-called “Cartesian Skepticism” that imputes a pattern of argument that supposes some false skeptical hypothesis deprives a subject’s results of having certainty, just because he lacks certainty that the skeptical hypothesis is false.²¹ On the contrary, however, the First Meditation’s central argument derives (4) from premises that are true. Premise (1) accurately reports the meditator’s epistemic conceptual resources in the First Meditation. Premise (2) follows, given (1) and that the meditator is a human sometime dreamer. It follows that premise (3) is true, given that the meditator’s original source is either less than maximally powerful or instances her expressed current concept of a purposive God that is maximally powerful. As noted above, the false supposition that the meditator is currently dreaming serves only to codify the result of the Dream Argument, that the meditator’s senses currently can provide no results with acquired certainty. Further, the false Evil Genius supposition, as anticipated above, can take no part in advancing the First Meditation’s central argument’s conclusion, because the meditator introduces this false supposition in the denouement, after her argument for (4) has already concluded.


²⁰ Pace Klein: “Though dreaming doubts do significant demolition work, …the most powerful of doubts….take[s] the form of the Evil Genius Doubt” (2015 sec. 3). “The most famous rendering of Descartes’ hyperbolic doubt takes the form of the Evil Genius Doubt” (Newman 2016: sec. 3.2).

²¹ Cf. Luper 2011.
Dénouement

Malign Genie

The First Meditation’s two-paragraph dénouement exhibits some immediate effects on the meditator of her conduct of the inquiry that landed her with the First Meditation’s central argument’s conclusion (4). To comply with her prudently adopted resolution to abstain from believing her newly demoted results “as I would from obvious falsehoods,” the meditator needs a plan for withholding belief from her previously certain results. She specifies the formidable obstacle she must overcome: “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 very probable opinions much more reasonable to believe than to deny” (22). How can she meet her conscientiously pursued inquisitive method’s requirement that she treat as “obvious falsehoods” results such as that the hands holding papers before her are her hands and that 2+3=5?

The plan she adopts for withdrawing her belief from all such currently “very probable” results attempts no pointless additional epistemic demotion of her previously certain results. She plans, rather, a variant of the ancient Pyrrhonist balancing exercise that requires her to believe that her previously certain and currently very probable beliefs have negations that are true:

...by pretending [fingam] for a time that these former opinions are entirely 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 judgment from perceiving things correctly. (22)

The single extravagant pretense she adopts avoids undertaking a likely interminable separate pretense for each of her demoted beliefs. She first pauses to muster some wishful momentary reassurance that would minimize her estimate of her stake in the outcome of her plan for disabusing her of opinions that formerly were certain:

This is because the task now does not involve action, but only things to be known. (22)
She can wish that pursuit of her purgative inquisitive project in first philosophy did lack practical consequences. Presumably, she would be equipped to protect herself from adverse consequences, in case she could be confident that it remained still up to her whether to quit her inquiry in first philosophy. It was up to her whether to initiate her current inquiry in first philosophy, and no doubt it remained up to her whether or not to interrupt her inquiry's early stages. Current thoughts the meditator does not yet voice could question however whether her continued inquiry in first philosophy had already imposed constraints on what she can do and what she can attempt.

Just in order to disabuse herself of beliefs that are long standing and newly demoted from their prior epistemic level of certainty, the meditator adopts this one extravagant supposition:

Some malicious demon [genium aliquem malignum] of the utmost power and cunning has employed all his energies in order to mislead [falleret] me. (23)

This supposed malicious demon has a level of power similar to the purposively benevolent God of the meditator's religious creed. As already noted, its power could not be deployed to deprive the meditator of certain results, since all are already uncertain. Also, since the meditator's method of doubt prescribes treating results that are the least uncertain as if they are certainly false, it would be pointless to employ the power of the malicious demon to further demote the meditator's previously certain results that are currently somewhat doubtful. Rather, the denouement's malicious demon supposition aims just to disabuse the meditator of her uncertain beliefs, such as her beliefs that she has hands, eyes, flesh and blood, or senses. So that, as she says: "I consider myself as not having hands or eyes, or flesh, or blood or sense, but as falsely believing that I have all these things." (23)

The meditator's effort to apply this malicious demon supposition to disabuse her of her newly demoted beliefs, such as her beliefs that she is seated and 2+3=5, evidently proves no more than
partly successful and laborious to maintain. About her balancing exercise, she concedes that “this is an arduous undertaking, and a kind of indolence [desidia] brings me back to customary life.”

**Prisoner**

With the First Meditation’s closing image, the meditator acknowledges an immediate outcome of her purgative tactical project in first philosophy that has demoted all her current and currently prospective certain results. She is now disabled for any attempt to continue inquiring, either to attempt to advance her adopted inquiry in first philosophy or to attempt to resume her earlier pursuits in her prior scientific inquiries that yielded intellectually repugnant results that lack firm and enduring certainty. She portrays her enervated state as the condition of a prisoner who exerts his currently accessible resources ineffectually to resist waking from his dream of freedom. No sooner does this prisoner realize that the scene he dreamt of an avenue out of his confinement was delusory but his dawning deprives him entirely of any power to attempt to follow its path to freedom. Then, he no longer can try to follow his now vanished avenue of escape:

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 connives [connivet] with the pleasant illusion as long as he can. (23)

Once deprived of his delusory avenue to freedom, the already disillusioned prisoner may continue briefly to devote some anxious wishful effort to persuade himself that his dream continues. Perhaps he “connives with the pleasant illusion” in a futile attempt to disregard some bell that already thwarts his effort to accommodate its tolling as a summons that fits within his dream. This prisoner personifies the meditator’s condition of disillusion at the First Meditation’s close. The prisoner’s unwelcome dawning deprives him of the only avenue by which he can try to escape now that waking dispels his delusory freedom. So too, an outcome of the meditator’s conduct of her inquisitive project

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22 Notably, it does not follow that she succeeds in believing that the supposed Evil Genius makes it the case that 2+3 has a sum other than 5.
in first philosophy has deprived her of some resource indispensable for her to try to continue her inquisitive efforts. The meditator's current disability also excludes her from anticipating any future Meditation when she will once again be able to try to pursue her inquisitive goal. Subsequently, however, after the perilous interval that follows the First Meditation's close, she will emerge once again able to try to pursue her inquisitive goal of firm and enduring results of inquiry. In the Second Meditation she will resolve explicitly: “...I will make an effort and once more attempt [Enitar] the same path which I started on yesterday.” (24) At the First Meditation's close however the meditator pictures herself as far from a resumption of her inquisitive pursuit of results that are firm and enduring as the prisoner is distant from the delusory path of freedom in his vanished dream. The meditator has no way to attempt to continue inquiring at the First Meditation's aporetic close.

The First Meditation’s dramatic close raises for the reader the question of just which resource did the meditator’s inquisitive efforts in first philosophy deprive her? For the meditator, questions the First Meditation’s close leaves unanswered ask whether her current disability has interrupted her inquisitive pursuits permanently. The meditator’s suspense during the interval that follows the First Meditation’s close portrays the meditator’s wait for an answer as breathless.

**Archimedean Goal**

**Interval**

At the Second Meditation’s start the meditator emerges from the suspension of her inquiry that followed the First Meditation’s close. She reports her peril during the interval using a watery figure: “...as if I have fallen into a deep whirlpool ...[where] I can neither stand on the bottom nor swim to the top.” (24) With her resolution to “attempt [Enitar] the same path I started on yesterday,” she exhibits her revived inquisitive power, which recalls her energized condition in the First Meditation’s earlier stages and contrasts with her disability at the First Meditation’s close. Her resolution recommits her to the inquisitive method that she adopted when she began her inquiry in first philosophy and, consequently, to aim again for results of inquiry that are firm and enduring. Once again her renewed inquiry in first philosophy will follow “the same path” that submits to the non-permissive acceptance rule she adopted to implement the First Meditation’s purgative tactical
aim. Now, however, her Second Meditation’s start must acknowledge her current lack of any certain results; so her pursuit of firm and enduring results of inquiry must follow a plan of inquiry that is acquisitive. The meditator duly announces an “Archimedean” goal:

> 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 unshakeable [certum …& inconcussum]. (24) 

The meditator emulates Archimedes by introducing a single candidate on which her Second Meditation’s opening argument imposes a series of three Tests that assess whether it fulfills her stated “Archimedean” goal of “just one thing, however slight that is certain and unshakeable.” Presently, the argument’s Third Test supplies the interpretation of its epistemic term “unshakeable certainty” that specifies a special case of firm and enduring certainty. As in the First Meditation (18), the Second Meditation’s use of “certain” abbreviates the Meditations’ non-factive, undefined epistemic term “not at all doubtful [non liceat dubitare].” (21) The Second Meditation’s opening argument twice confirms that its use of “certain [certa]” is non-factive.

The meditator launches her opening argument without pause to anticipate an objection that would invoke the unexceptionable epistemic principle that requires any argument that supplies a conclusion that is known or certain to have premises that are known or certain. Her reason is that her argument to achieve her Archimedean goal of a single initial unshakably certain result can have premises sufficient to imply a conclusion that is not itself an additional certain result and that attributes first-order certainty. It follows that the Second Meditation’s opening argument can avoid violating the unexceptionable epistemic principle requires any argument with a conclusion that is known or certain to have have premises that are known or certain.

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23 This study treats the Second Meditation’s opening argument just as it bears on the First Meditation. See [reference omitted].
Contrast so-called “Cogito reasoning,” and its abbreviation “the Cogito,” which standard interpretations interpolate in place of the Archimedean argument. On these interpretations of the Second Meditation’s opening passage, the meditator arrives at knowledge or certainty that she exists on the indelible Cartesian slogan, “Cogito ergo Sum,” imported from Descartes’s popular works. For such “Cogito reasoning” to provide knowledge or certainty that the meditator exists without violating indisputable epistemic principle, “I think” must also be known or certain. However, not only does the Second Meditation omit the slogan as well as any claim that the slogan is certain. Also, interpretations that attribute “cogito reasoning” must acknowledge that the Second Meditation’s opening argument is barred from claiming that the meditator is certain of the Cartesian slogan’s antecedent. Margaret Wilson’s interpretation duly proposes “epistemic transparency” as an indispensable supplement to any attribution of cogito reasoning: “No matter how one interprets the cogito, one is going to have to recognize eventually that Descartes does ascribe indubitability to cognitatio judgments, epistemological... transparency to his thought-states.” Such a doctrine of

24 In Descartes’s earlier Discourse on the Method the autobiographer recalls that “this truth, ‘I am thinking, therefore I exist’ was so firm and sure that all the most extravagant suppositions of the skeptics were incapable of shaking it, I decided that I could accept it without scruple as the first principle of the philosophy I was seeking” (AT vi, 32/CSM I: 127). Descartes’s additional exoteric presentation in his Principles of Philosophy explicitly claims certainty of the same formula, just because “[it]... is a contradiction to suppose that what thinks does not at the very time when it is thinking, exist. Accordingly it [Cogito ergo Sum] is the first and most certain of all...” (AT viia, 7/CSM i: 195).

25 “One big surprise is that nowhere does Descartes have the meditator say, ‘I think, therefore I am’” (Broughton 2008: 182).

26 Other current commentators follow the standard translations and suppose the Second Meditation is exempt from offering any argument at all for its meditator’s initial certain results: “What is important to Descartes is to get the meditator to the point where she has indisputably seen some truth (namely the truth that she exists). How exactly she gets there is not important” (Carriero 2009: 77).

27 Margaret Wilson 1978: 53, 58. Bernard Williams assigns so-called “incorrigibility” to each of “cogito” and “sum”: “if anyone believes that he is thinking, or again, that he exists, then necessarily he has a true belief” (1978, 73).
epistemic transparency may salvage cogito reasoning's compliance with the unexceptionable epistemic principle, but it forfeits not only the meditator’s announced Archimedean goal of a single initial certain result. In addition, if the meditator can be credited in the Second Meditation with “transparency” that provides “indubitability [of her] ... cognitatio judgments,” she can be similarly credited anytime and, notably, in the First Meditation where the meditator’s certainty of the antecedent “I think” would contradict her First Meditation's announced conclusion, (4).28

Unfortunately, standard translations of the Second Meditation prompt current commentaries to interpolate such “cogito reasoning” by obscuring the Archimedean argument. These translations reproduce as transliterations the Second Meditation’s opening passage's interchanges of its Latin cognates of “certain” and “necessary.” As I note below, the Archimedean argument’s premises use an occurrence of a cognate of “certain” as an alethic modal; the conclusion of the Archimedean argument uses a cognate of “necessary” as an epistemic term.

**Archimedean candidate**

Any candidate to achieve the meditator’s announced Archimedean goal must be, she says, “something else”; that is, a result that could not have been included among those made doubtful by her First Meditation’s argument when she surveyed all her then current and currently prospective certain results. The meditator lists some of the casualties: “I will suppose then, that everything I see is spurious. I will believe that nothing my mendacious memory represents ever existed...I have no senses. Body, shape, extension, movement and place are chimeras.” (24) She denies rhetorically nevertheless that these exhaust her options:

Ernest Sosa attributes “Cogito reasoning” to the Second Meditation’s start and observes that the Cartesian formula it requires as premise “seems also subject to skeptical doubt” (2014: 20).

28 Descartes’s defense of the familiar Cartesian formula in Replies to Gassendi does not address the Second Meditation. This may tend to confirm that Gassendi’s Objection does not apply to the Archimedean argument. (140f.) Contrast Wilson: “What Descartes’s reply to Gassendi seems to tell us is just that ...[the Meditations] is not meant to supplant in any substantial way the more straightforward deployment of ‘I think therefore I am’ in other works” (Wilson 1978: 54).
How do I know there is not something else which does not allow even the slightest doubt?

(24)

God is a notable absentee from her list of casualties. The reason is that only results that previously were certain, such as that she is seated, that 2+3=5, that there are bodies, and that she has senses, does the First Meditation demote and her lately renewed non-permissive method of inquiry require that she treat as certainly false. Results exempt from the First Meditation's reassessment include the religious creed that the meditator explicitly specified as her “old opinion [vetus opinio].” (21) In the Second Meditation the meditator retains as her current opinion the version of theism she avowed as her religious creed in the First Meditation that assigns her “a God who can do all things and by whom I have been created.” The First Meditation's survey thus permits the Archimedean argument to nominate God as “something else that does not allow even the slightest doubt.”

Further, the meditator introduces her divine nominee as source of the thoughts that constitute her current inquisitive meditation, who “puts into me the thoughts I am now having”:

Is there not a God, or whatever I may call him, who puts into me the thoughts I am now having [qui mihi has ipsas cogitations immittit]? But why should I think this, since I myself could perhaps be the author of these thoughts? Therefore, am not I at least something? (24)

Immediately, the meditator voices a retreat by nominating as source of her current thoughts “I myself.” This introduction of “I myself” however is unaccompanied by any reason the Second Meditation can offer for denying that God is indeed the source of the current thoughts that compose the start of the meditator's Second Meditation. Similarly, the Second Meditation also postpones to subsequent Meditations arguments from which the meditator can conclude that the referent of “I myself” is diverse from God and the source of the meditator’s thoughts is not divine. The balance of the Second Meditation neither addresses these delicate issues nor do causal features of the meditator.
make any further contribution to the Second Meditation, following the meditator’s nomination of “I myself”:

(J) I myself exist.

To assess whether (J) can stand as a single initial result that is unshakably certain the Second Meditation’s opening argument imposes a series of tests on its Archimedean candidate:

C(J) I am certain that (J).

**First Test**

The First Test restricts the non-factive certainty that C(J) attributes to certainty that is independent of the meditator’s having a body or senses. The meditator’s current assumption that she lacks body and senses conforms to her lately reaffirmed method of doubt that requires her to treat as certainly false all her previously certain results that the First Meditation’s argument demoted. She announces the outcome, rhetorically and not fully explicitly:

But I have just said that I have no senses and no body. Wait, what follows from this? Am I so bound up with a body and with senses that I cannot exist without them? (25)

This verdict specifies that it is possible for the meditator both to have the non-factive certainty the Archimedean candidate C(J) attributes to (J) and to lack senses or a body. The argument’s First Test consequently distinguishes the certainty C(J) attributes to (J) from the necessarily sensory certainty “from the senses or through the senses” which the meditator acknowledged in the First Meditation’s argument as specifying the certainty of “whatever I have up till now accepted” (18). The First Test’s outcome thus certifies that the meditator’s conceptual capacity extends to an epistemic concept of certainty that is newly accessible for her in the Second Meditation. Consequently, this study’s problem of resolving the First Meditation’s argument for its conclusion that deprives the meditator of
all non-acquired certain results and of acquired certain results with certainty from the senses or through the senses rests on whether the meditator’s Archimedean candidate C(J) fulfills it’s the remaining tests that Meditation’s opening argument imposes.

The Second Meditation emphasizes presently that she cannot be understood to claim, in place of the elliptically formulated verdict of the First Test of C(J), that it is the truth of (J) that is consistent with her lacking senses or a body. The meditator confirms it is indeed the non-factive certainty that C(J) attributes that is consistent with her lacking senses or a body, following both the Second Meditation’s opening argument and a subsequent argument. There, the meditator explicitly raises and postpones a separate question, which the Second Meditation expressly leaves open, that asks whether or not it is possible for the meditator to lack senses or a body:

But perhaps these very things that I suppose to be nothing because they are unknown to me do not differ from that me that I know? I do not know. I am not now disputing about this matter. (27)

The Sixth Meditation’s argument for “the real distinction between mind and body” first returns to the questions of whether (J) can be true in case no currently unknown body exists. As the certainty C(J) attributes does not imply that the meditator has senses or a body and leaves open whether or not (J) has similar implications, the Second Meditation confirms that its use of “certain” is non-factive.

The First Test’s verdict that credits the meditator with an epistemic concept of certainty newly available to her in the Second Meditation invites attention to the question of what accounts for the meditator’s ability at the Second Meditation’s start to resume the inquiry that she was unable even to attempt to continue when her First Meditation closed. The dramatic action of the First Meditation’s monologue suggests an answer. The meditator’s First Meditation’s purgative inquisitive efforts in first philosophy deprived her of her current and prospective certain results and closed by picturing the meditator as a prisoner disillusioned with the delusory freedom of his dream. As the newly disillusioned prisoner’s awakening deprived him of the freedom he dreamt, the meditator’s inquisitive efforts in first philosophy may have deprived her of her previously avowed epistemic
concepts “from the senses or through the senses.” The interval when her inquiry was suspended following the First Meditation’s dramatic close may then represent her conceptual transition to the Second Meditation’s start. Then, she emerges to exhibit her ability to resume her interrupted inquiry in first philosophy, when she is newly relieved of impediments that previously prevented her from employing an epistemic concept the opening argument’s first requirement introduces that is not necessarily sensory. The meditator may be understood to owe this dramatic reversal of her inquisitive fortunes to this renovation of her epistemic conceptual resources.

The problem of how to reconcile the First Meditation’s argument that deprives the meditator of all certain results with subsequent Meditations’ having results that are certain can be solved, because the certainty her Archimedean candidate C(J) attributes is newly available certainty that contrasts with certainty “from the senses or through the senses.”

A Second Test both ensures the Archimedean candidate is unique and further contrasts the certainty her Archimedean candidate C(J) applies with non-acquired certainty that remains still unavailable to the meditator following the conclusion (4) of the First Meditation’s argument.

**Persuasion Test**

The meditator could be persuaded that she has no mind, in case she somehow became persuaded that there are no minds at all, duly concluded that she lacks a mind, and became persuaded of her conclusion. If she somehow became persuaded that no bodies exist, the meditator could infer that she lacks a body then become persuaded that she has no body. Similarly, she could become persuaded of a result that implies she does not think, entertain the thought that she does not think, and become persuaded that she does not think. If somehow she became persuaded that nothing at all exists she could infer that she does not exist, and she could entertain the thought that she does not exist. This Second Test questions whether, by being thus persuaded of something that implies she does not exist, she could be persuaded that she does not exist:
But I have persuaded \[persuasi\] myself that there is absolutely nothing in the world, no sky, no earth, no minds, no bodies; then have I done the same for I exist, too \[none igitur etiam me non esse\]? (25) ²⁹

No, she cannot be persuaded that she does not exist, no matter of what else she is persuaded. As already noted, the reason is not that she is unequipped to have the thought that she does not exist. It is rather that she is equipped to ask, rhetorically: “Who is persuaded that she does not exist?” That is, from her thought <that she herself is persuaded that she does not exist> she is able to infer necessarily <that she does exist>.

If I convinced myself of something then necessarily \[certe\] I existed. (25)

So C(J) passes the Second Test.

A caution that standard translations unfortunately disregard requires attention to the Second Meditation’s use of cognates of “certain” and of “necessary.” The Second Test articulates the inference that yields its verdict using a cognate of “certain” as an alethic modal. Where the Second Test reports that the meditator cannot be persuaded that she does not exist, the meditator reasons that even from her being persuaded of something that implies that she does not exist, she can infer necessarily \[certe\] that she does exist.

Interpretations that follow standard cognate epistemic translations of “certe” in this passage would have the meditator contend erroneously that merely from her being persuaded of anything at all, it would follow as an immediate consequence that C(J) is true. ³⁰This unsupportable contention

²⁹ Cp. “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?” (tr.) Cottingham.

³⁰ Cp.: “…If I convinced myself of something then I certainly existed” (tr.) Cottingham; “But doubtless I did exist, if I persuaded myself of something” (tr.) Cress. “…there is no doubt that I existed, if I convinced myself of anything” (tr.) Williams 1978: 72.
would by-pass the Third Test of C(J) where the Archimedean argument questions whether the
certainty that C(J) applies to (J) fulfills the meditator’s Archimedean goal of a result with certainty
that is unshakeable. Also, as noted below, since unshakeable certainty is also firm and enduring the
standard translation of the Second Test would consequently bar the Archimedean argument from
achieving the goal the meditator’s First Meditation announced of results of inquiry that are firm and
enduring.

The Second Test uses "certe" rather to endorse the meditator’s inference that yields a
consequence that follows necessarily. From her being persuaded of anything at all, including her
being persuaded that nothing exists, or even her momentarily tending to be persuaded that she does
not exist, the meditator can infer: “... If I have persuaded myself of something, then necessarily [certe]
I was.” (25) No matter by what means she has been persuaded, if only it is she who exercises her
capacity for thinking by having a thought such as <that I am persuaded>, then even if the result of
which she is persuaded implies not-(J), she can infer necessarily [certe] <that I am>.

A further result of the second requirement is epistemic. The certainty her nominee attributes
to (J) contrasts with the certainty her First Meditation illustrated with the non-acquired certainty the
meditator’s sensory capacities provide her of 2+3=5, just because her sensory capacities prevent the
meditator from even dreaming a sum of 2+3 other than 5. (20) As the outcome of the Second Test
makes clear, the meditator’s thinking capacity does not similarly prevent her from thinking that she
does not exist; it is not unthinkable or inconceivable for her that not-(J). Not only does the certainty
C(J) attributes contrast with non-acquired certainty that would be vulnerable to the same argument
from the meditator’s still current version of theism that demoted her non-acquired certainty that
2+3=5 in the First Meditation. Also, the meditator’s having her thinking capacity that the Second
Meditation’s central argument subsequently credits as her necessary property cannot suffice for her
being certain of (J). (See [reference omitted])

Third Test

The next requirement asks whether an Archimedean candidate that has satisfied the
previous requirements attributes certainty to (J) that could survive in a maximally hostile
environment:
[There] is a deceiver \emph{deceptor} -- otherwise unknown -- of supreme power \emph{summe potens} and supreme cunning who sedulously always deceives me \emph{qui de industria me semper fallit}.

\[25\]

To deceive the meditator about C(J), the hypothesized deceiver can exert its supreme power to bring it about that any non-trivial implication of the non-factive certainty that C(J) attributes is false. Consequently, the non-factive certainty that C(J) attributes cannot imply that any other certain result contributes as supporting evidence for C(J). Neither can the certainty C(J) attributes imply that the \textit{Meditations}' subsequently introduced general Clarity Principle is true that credits clear and distinct perception with generating the certainty of results that include (J). Also, the certainty C(J) attributes cannot imply that there does exist a benevolently purposive deity or that there does not exist a malicious demon. Most generally, the certainty C(J) attributes does not imply that the Deceiver hypothesis is false. Even in case the Deceiver hypothesis were true, therefore, (J) is undoubtedly or certainly true:

\[\text{In that case I undoubtedly exist, if he is deceiving \emph{fallit} me.} \quad (25)\]

Through the balance of the Second Meditation, and until the meditator can be certain that the Deceiver Hypothesis is false, all her certain results must also have non-factive certainty that is independent of the Deceiver Hypothesis. The Archimedean argument's conclusion presently dubs certainty that is thus independent of the Deceiver Hypothesis “unshakeable.” Since the hypothesized Deceiver could make it the case that there is no meditator and no candidate certain result, the unshakeable certainty that enables C(J) to clear its Third Test may be understood to be non-factive certainty that lacks any non-trivial implications.

\[\text{I should be acknowledged that a candidate with certainty that implies the meditator has senses or a body would not withstand the Deceiver Hypothesis. However, the first requirement retains a role in the Archimedean argument as introduction of an epistemic concept of certainty}\]
newly available to the meditator in the Second Meditation, that specifically ensures that the acquired
certain results the meditator earns in the Second Meditation’s opening argument cannot be
inconsistent with the First Meditation’s conclusion (4) that deprives the meditator of all results with
certainty from the senses or though the senses.

The Archimedean candidate C(J) that clears its Third Test attributes to (J) unshakeable
certainty cannot fail also to achieve the goal the meditator’s announced at the First Meditation’s start
of results that are firm and enduring. The non-factive certainty of a result that clears the Third Trial
lacks any non-trivial implications at all, and firm and enduring results have non-factive certainty that
lacks any implications that are certainly false.

The Archimedean candidate must have an additional immunity from the hypothesized
Deceiver:

And let him [the hypothesized deceiver] 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. (25)

The deceiver has power ample to bring it about that (J) is false, “that I am nothing.” Could this power
of the hypothesized deceiver also bring it about that the meditator has a thought (J) that both clears
the argument’s prior Tests and is false? Or, as she asks, is it possible that “I think that I am
something... [but] ...I am nothing”? The answer, that, necessarily, if she thinks that (J) then (J) is true,
applies just to a candidate that qualifies to submit to the third requirement. Consequently, the
Archimedean argument cannot also endorse “I think,” “I doubt,” “I sense,” “I feel headache,” or any
other result excluded by its First or Second Trials.

Archimedean conclusion

The meditator uses a cognate of “necessary” as an epistemic term to announce her

Archimedean conclusion:
So after considering everything very thoroughly, I must finally conclude that this proposition, I am I exist, is certainly \textit{[necessario]} true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind. (25)

The standard translation of “\textit{necessario}” here as its cognate alethic modal term would issue a superfluous repetition of one result the Third Test already explicitly established, that necessarily if she thinks that (J) then (J) is true. \(^{31}\) Or, it would saddle the Archimedean argument with the inconsequent conclusion that the meditator exists necessarily. The meditator adds confirmation that her conclusion’s use of “\textit{necessario}” is epistemic where she introduces the Second Meditation’s next task: “I do not yet have a sufficient understanding of what this ‘I’ is that now certainly \textit{[necessario]} exists” (25). The conclusion of the Archimedean argument thus announces the meditator’s achievement of her Archimedean goal: the Second Meditation’s opening argument certifies as having acquired unshakeable certainty a single result (J). Provided she has a thought (J), (J) is true and the

\(^{31}\) Cp. “I must finally conclude that this proposition, \textit{I am, I exist}, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind, (tr.) Cottingham; “...this pronouncement “I am, I exist” is necessarily true every time I utter it or conceive it in my mind,” (tr.) Cress. “So after very thoughtful and the most careful consideration, I must hold firm to this conclusion: that the proposition \textit{I am, I exist}, must be true whenever I utter it or conceive it in my mind” (Williams 1978: 72).
meditator’s certainty of (J) has achieved her Archimedean goal of “a single result that has unshakeable certainty.”

The meditator’s Archimedean conclusion completes the solution to the problem of Descartes’s First Meditation. The sound central argument of the First Meditation that deprives the meditator of certainty from the senses or through the senses of any current or currently prospective results cannot contradict the conclusion of the Second Meditation’s seminal opening argument that credits its single initial Archimedean candidate with unshakeable certainty that is not certainty from the senses or through the senses.