

# Descartes

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## The Cartesian project

Descartes, as it is well known, wanted to rebuild the sciences on a secure foundation he tried to uncover in metaphysics. In his *Meditationes de Prima Philosophiae* he gives us an account of what he takes to be the “premier principe de la philosophie” (AT VI 32<sup>22–23</sup>)<sup>1</sup> and what I will henceforth call the *Cogito*. The privilege of the *Cogito* resides in its resistance to what Descartes calls ‘*scepticism*’.

Descartes’ sceptic is not only someone who doubts that we have any knowledge, i.e. any beliefs meeting a certain given standard of justification, but what one might call a *Pyrrhonian* sceptic, someone who doubts the existence of a standard of knowledge, not only of beliefs meeting such a standard.<sup>2</sup> Descartes thought it worth to prove the sceptic wrong not because he doubted that we have any knowledge. Instead he aimed to show that and how we can *defend* our knowledge claims against someone who questions their legitimacy. He wanted to prove our entitlement to them by showing that they are not only true, but justifiedly taken to be so. Not satisfied with the mere fact *that* the sceptic is wrong – because there is something we know – he wanted to show *why* the sceptic is wrong. To achieve this, he had to show more than just that we know something; he had to show that we know that we know something, i.e. that we know that the sceptic is wrong.

## The skeptical argument

To uncover the most certain of our beliefs, Descartes mounts a sceptical argument in three steps. In a first step, the Cartesian thinker of the *Meditations* notes the existence of sensory illusions:

“Nempe quidquid hactenus ut maxime verum admisi, vel a sensibus, vel per sensus accepi; hos autem interdum fallere deprehendi, ac prudentiae est nunquam illis plane confidere qui nos vel semel deceperunt.” (AT VII 18<sup>15–18</sup>)

“Tout ce que j’ay receu iusqu’ài present pour le plus vray & assuré, je l’ay appris des sens, ou par les sens: or j’ay quelquefois Áprouvé que ces sens estaient trompeurs, & il est de la prudence de ne se fier jamais entierement à ceux qui nous ont une fois trompez.” (AT IX/I 14)

The conclusion drawn in the last clause, *never* to rely on sense perception (“a sensibus”) nor on testimony (“per sensus”), may seem harsh.<sup>3</sup> It makes sense, however, if we place it in its epistemological context: if my senses are not always reliable, then they are at any instant potentially unreliable. I am not justified in assuming their reliability *unless* I have at my disposal a way of knowing that they are reliable at times when they are. I cannot, however, detect such optimal sensory conditions without relying on my senses: bracketing their evidence, I cannot establish their reliability. This is why I am forced to conclude (**Z2**) from (**Z1**):

(**Z1**) It is possible that my senses deceive me.

(**Z2**) It is always possible that my senses deceive me.

<sup>1</sup>All references to Descartes are to the standard edition by Adam & Tannery (1996).

<sup>2</sup>The distinction is Curley’s: “Pyrrhonian skepticism is a more radical position [than academic skepticism]. It holds that the academics are dogmatic even to affirm the impossibility of certain knowledge and denies that propositions differ in their probability. A judgement of probability can be made only by someone who possesses a standard of knowledge and truth. But the existence of such a standard is just what the pyrrhonians question. Since probability cannot guide our choices, they propose to follow custom.” (Curley 1978: 12)

<sup>3</sup>The transition is even hastier in the *Discours*: “Ainsi, à cause que nos sens nous trompent quelquefois, je voulus supposer qu’il n’y avait aucune chose qui fût telle qu’ils nous la font imaginer.” (AT VI 31<sup>30–32</sup>)

The Cartesian thinker has to go further than even this, however. He cannot justifiably assert of *any* instance of sense perception that his senses did not deceive him on that occasion. To do this, he would have to know that conditions were optimal – which he cannot, if he has not prior sensory assurance that they were. Because the proposition that they were is doubtable, he must treat it as if it were false (AT VII 18<sup>4–10</sup>) – he must assume the worst case scenario, that his senses always deceive him:

**(Z<sub>3</sub>)** It is possible that my senses always deceive me.

Many have doubted that the Cartesian thinker could rationally entertain something like **(Z<sub>3</sub>)** – if I need my senses to establish that they deceived me on another occasion, they argue, the hypothesis of permanent sense deception does not make sense. Though it is clear that Descartes is not *committed* to **(Z<sub>3</sub>)** and that neither **(Z<sub>3</sub>)** nor **(Z<sub>2</sub>)** can plausibly be said to follow from **(Z<sub>1</sub>)**, such worries, I think, misunderstand the nature of Descartes' project. Though Descartes requires reasons for doubting, he requires those to be neither true nor assertable by the Cartesian thinker.<sup>4</sup> They are reasons for doubting in the sense that they present the Cartesian thinker with scenarios he is in no position to exclude. The Cartesian thinker cannot exclude the possibility of universal sense deception merely on the basis of the observation that the assertability of “my senses deceive me” requires some veridical sense perceptions. Even though their reliability is epistemically unavailable to me, my senses – *when* they are reliable – justify my knowledge claims based on them. So the sceptic needs to take another step.

This second step is known as the “dream argument”:

“Quasi scilicet non recorder a similibus etiam cogitationibus me aliàs in somnis fuisse delusum; quae dum cogito attentius, tam plane video nunquam certis indiciis vigiliam a somno posse distinguere, ut obstupescam, & fere hic ipse stupor mihi opinionem somni confirmet.” (AT VII 19<sup>17–22</sup>)

“Mais, en y pensant soigneusement, je me ressouviens d'avoir esté souvent trompé, lors que je dormais, par de semblables illusions. Et m'arrestant sur cette pensée, je voy si manifestement qu'il n'y a point d'indices concluans, ny de marques, assez certaines par où j'en puisse distinguer nettement la veille d'avec le sommeil, que j'en suis tout étonné; & mon estonnement est tel, qu'il est presque capable de me persuader que je dors.” (AT IX/I 15)

Contrary to the first, this second step rules out the possibility that there might be conditions under which knowledge claims about material objects are justified. Trusting my senses to establish their reliability is a perfectly respectable procedure; but I am never entitled to trust my senses to answer the question whether I might be sleeping now. I can only know *p* by present sensory evidence if certain conditions *C* hold – but I can find out whether *C*, for the conditions *C'* which have to obtain for that may differ from *C*. Not so with dreaming: I cannot find out that I am dreaming – for *if* I am dreaming, I cannot find out anything whatsoever. As I can never find out that I am dreaming (at that time), I can never know that I am awake (at that time), not being able to rule out a possibility I would not detect if it were actual.<sup>5</sup>

Whereas the argument from sensory illusion undermined any knowledge claims based on present sensory evidence, the dream argument carries the doubt further by making any knowledge about material things unclaimable: it thereby undermines any contingent knowledge claim whatsoever, including most examples of what has been called *the contingent a priori*. There is, for any such proposition, whether a priori or not, a circumstance in which it would be false and I may dream that this circumstance obtains.<sup>6</sup>

*That I am always dreaming*, then, describes an epistemic alternative for the Cartesian thinker of the *Meditations* – not in the sense of describing a world in which he, for all he knows, might be (for he may also know, e.g.,

<sup>4</sup>He explicitly says to Bourdin that reasons for doubting may themselves be doubtable: “Eae enim sunt satis validae rationes ad cogendum nos ut dubitemus, quae ipsae dubiae sunt, nec proinde retinendae, ut jam supra notatum est. Atque validae quidem sunt, quandiu nullas alias habemus, quae dubitationem tollendo certitudinem inducant.” (AT VII 473<sup>27–474</sup><sup>3</sup>), “Verissimum enim est, nihil admittendum esse ut verum, quod non possimus probare esse verum, cum de eo statuendo vel affirmando quaestio est; sed, cum tantum de effodiendo vel abdicando, sufficit quod suspicemur.” (AT VII 553<sup>18–22</sup>)

<sup>5</sup>What then about the coherentist criterion Descartes provides us with in the *Sixth Meditation*? It only works given the assumption that there is a time *t* when I am not sleeping – and this we know only after having established the legitimacy of at least one knowledge claim: “Potest verò Atheus colligere se vigilare ex memoriâ anteaetae vitae; sed non potest scire hoc signum sufficere ut certus sit se non errare, nisi sciat se a Deo non fallente esse creatum.” (AT VII 196<sup>11–14</sup>)

<sup>6</sup>It is not required that my conception is a coherent one: most of us dream very weird things. It might seem difficult to imagine dreaming that I am not here now or that I am not Philipp Keller but in fact it is not. I may dream that I am dead or a multiply located universal, that I look into my passport and find another name written in it, that I look into the mirror and see nothing etc. That reasons to doubt are not required to be coherent overall scenarios, as long as they achieve their intended effect which is helping us to get rid of our beliefs, marks another respect in which pyrrhonian differs from academic scepticism.

learn in the Sixth *Meditation* that he is, from time to time, awake), but in the sense of expressing a belief he can never rule out on the basis of present evidence alone. The dream argument, then, leaves almost nothing untouched, sparing only necessary truths, which are true in all circumstances, and a fortiori true in all circumstances one may dream to obtain. Getting rid of these is the aim of the next step.

The third and final step in Descartes' argument is the *malin génie* hypothesis:

“Verum tamen infixae quaedam est meae menti vetus opinio, Deum esse qui potest omnia, & a quo talis, qualis existo, sum creatus. Unde autem scio illum non fecisse ut nulla plane sit terra, nullum coelum, nulla res extensa, nulla figura, nulla magnitudo, nullus locus, & tamen haec omnia non aliter quàm nunc mihi videantur existere? Imò etiam, quemadmodum iudico interdum alios errare circa ea quae se perfectissime scire arbitrantur, ita ego ut fallar quoties duo & tria simul addo, vel numero quadrati latera, vel siquid aliud facilius fingi potest?” (AT VII 21<sup>1-11</sup>)

“Toutesfois il y a longtemps que j'ay dans mon esprit une certaine opinion, qu'il y a un Dieu qui peut tout, & par qui j'ay esté créé é & produit tel que je suis. Or qui me peut avoir assuré que ce Dieu n'ait point fait qu'il n'y ait aucune terre, aucun Ciel, aucun corps estendu, aucune figure, aucune grandeur, aucun lieu, & que neantmoins j'aye les sentimens de toutes ces choses, & que tout cela ne me semble point exister autrement que je le voy? Et mesme, comme je juge quelquefois que les autres se méprennent, mesme dans les choses qu'ils pensent scavoir avec le plus de certitude, il se peut faire qu'il ait voulu que je me trompe toutes les fois que je fais l'addition de deux & de trois, ou que je nombre les costez d'un carré, ou que je juge de quelque chose encore plus facile, si l'on se peut imaginer rien de plus facile que cela.” (AT IX/I 16)

The Cartesian thinker here entertains the possibility that he might be fooled even in things he considers most certain – due to the manipulation of an omnipotent evil demon who perverts his epistemic instincts and makes him spontaneously assent to propositions which are in fact false.<sup>7</sup>

By proceeding a *facilioribus ad difficiliora*, the analytic method brings with it a distinction between two senses of “primary”: it starts from what is *prima facie primary*, i.e. most familiar to us, carrying us to what is *primary in itself*, the true ground on which a given body of (alleged) knowledge rests. The evil demon hypothesis is the suspicion that the epistemic capacity underwriting the possibility of such a transition is fatally flawed: that we may in principle be incapable of matching our epistemic instincts, what we find plausible or evident, to what really *is* plausible or evident (in itself). The sceptical scenario, then, is that what I find most plausible might be false precisely *because* I find it plausible.<sup>8</sup>

This is the most general and far-reaching doubt one may entertain (AT VII 158<sup>13</sup>): it threatens to undermine all our knowledge claims, including our presumed knowledge of simple mathematical (AT VIII/I 6<sup>8-20</sup>), logical and other necessary truths, throwing the Cartesian thinker into a state of despair.

Descartes calls beliefs that may be rationally entertained even in such an epistemic state of total doubt ‘clear and distinct’. The question then becomes whether there are any clear and distinct beliefs, whereas the *Cogito* is the claim that the belief I express by “I think; therefore I am” falls into this category and indeed is its paradigm exemplar. By showing us how to overcome the most general doubt, Descartes provides us with a foundation and justification of the analytic method – it is in this sense that he validates reason.

## The Cogito

A major exegetical problem with the *Cogito* is that there are many versions. The version in the *Meditations*, which will mostly concern us, is the following:

<sup>7</sup>That the possibility envisaged is one of a perversion of what one might call our ‘epistemic instincts’, our spontaneous and almost inevitable belief in certain very simple and (seemingly) evident propositions, is made even clearer in the *Discours* and the *Principes*: “Et parce qu’il y a des hommes qui se méprennent en raisonnant, même touchant les plus simples matières de géométrie, et y font des paralogismes, jugeant que j’étais sujet a faillir autant qu’aucun autre, je rejetai comme fausses toutes les raisons que j’avais prises auparavant pour démonstrations.” (AT VI 32<sup>3-9</sup>); “Dubitabimus etiam de reliquis, quae antea pro maximè certis habuimus; etiam de Mathematicis demonstrationibus, etiam de iis principiis, quae hactenus putavimus esse per se nota: tum quia vidimus aliquando nonnullos errasse in talibus, & quaedam pro certissimis ac per se notis admisisse, quae nobis falsa videbantur; tum maximè, quia audivimus esse Deum, qui potest omnia, & à quo sumus creati.” (AT VIII/I 6<sup>8-15</sup>)

<sup>8</sup>As with the other two sceptical hypotheses, it does not have to be coherent to achieve its intended effect: it does not have to depict a possibility which might in fact obtain. It is enough if it describes a situation which the Cartesian thinker is in no position to *rule out*. Descartes himself takes a *malin génie* to be *impossible*: both because he shows its incoherence in the Second Meditation and because it is incompatible with the true nature of God. Cf. his remarks to Burman: “Loquitur hic [AT VII 22<sup>25</sup>] auctor contradictoria, quia cum summâ potentiâ malignitas consistere non potest.” (AT V 147) It has to be noted, however, that showing that the *malin génie* hypothesis is impossible, is *not* Descartes’ main aim – even a hypothesis entertainable only *per impossibile* undermines our knowledge claims, if it keeps popping up. We have to be able to *show* that it is impossible, thereby vaccinating ourselves against it.

“Sed mihi persuasi nihil plane esse in mundo, nullum coelum, nullam terram, nullas mentes, nulla corpora; nonne igitur etiam me non esse? Imo certe ego eram, si quid mihi persuasi.

“Mais je me suis persuadé qu’il n’y a rien du tout dans le monde, qu’il n’y avait aucun ciel, aucune terre, aucuns esprits, ni aucuns corps, ne me suis-je donc pas aussi persuadé que je n’étais point? Non certes, j’étais sans doute si je me suis persuadé, ou seulement si j’ai pensé quelque chose.

Sed est deceptor nescio quis, summe potens, summe callidus, qui de industriâ me semper fallit. Haud dubie igitur ego etiam sum, si me fallit & fallat quantum potest, nunquam tamen efficiet, ut nihil sim quamdiu me aliquid esse cogitabo. Adeo ut, omnibus satis superque pensitatis denique statuendum sit hoc pronuntiatum, *Ego sum, ego existo*, quoties a me profertur, vel mente concipitur, necessario esse verum.” (AT VII 25<sup>2-12</sup>)

Mais il y a un je ne sçay quel trompeur tres-puissant & tres-rusé, qui employe toute son industrie à me tromper tousiours. Il n’y a donc point de doute que je suis, s’il me trompe; et qu’il me trompe tant qu’il voudra il ne saurait jamais faire que je ne sois rien, tant que je penserai être quelque chose. De sorte qu’après y avoir bien pensé, et avoir soigneusement examiné toutes choses, enfin il faut conclure, et tenir pour constant que cette proposition: *Je suis, j’existe*, est nécessairement vraie, toutes les fois que je la prononce, ou que je la conçois en mon esprit.’ (AT IX/I 19)

This is the Cartesian thinker speaking, recalling his universal doubt of the last *Meditation* and realising that he did not doubt his own existence and that it is indeed impossible to do so – not only that he cannot doubt without existing,<sup>9</sup> but that he cannot even try (and therefore take it to be possible) to do so, i.e. that the thought “I do not exist” is – in a particular way – necessarily false.

## Ideas as contents

The official definitions:

*Ideae* nomine intelligo cujuslibet cogitationis formam illam, per cujus immediatam perceptionem ipsius ejusdem cogitationis conscius sum; adeo ut nihil possim verbis exprimere, intelligendo id quod dico, quin ex hoc ipso certum sit, in me esse ideam ejus quod verbis illis significantur. (AT VII 160<sup>14-19</sup>)

Par le nom d’*idée*, j’entens cette forme de chacune de nos pensées, par la perception immédiate de laquelle nous avons connoissance de ces mesmes pensées. En telle sorte que je ne puis rien exprimer par des paroles, lorsque j’entens ce que je dis, que de cela mesme il ne soit certain que j’ay en moy l’*idée* de la chose qui est signifiée par mes paroles. (AT IX/I 124)

Our Idea of God:

“Nec certè quisquam talem ideam Dei nobis inesse negare potest, nisi qui nullam planè Dei notitiam in humanis mentibus esse arbitretur.” (AT VIII/I 26<sup>8-10</sup>)

“...si on prend le mot d’*idée* en la façon que j’ay dit tres-expressement que je la prenois [...], on ne sçaurait nier d’avoir quelque *idée* de Dieu, si ce n’est qu’on die qu’on n’entend pas ce que signifient ces mots: *la chose la plus parfaite que nous puissions concevoir*; car c’est ce que tous les hommes appellent *Dieu*.” (AT IX/I 209<sup>15-23</sup>)

## Degrees of reality in ideas: ideas taken *materialiter* and *objective*

Vorwort: “Idee” kann *materialiter* für eine Tätigkeit des Verstandes genommen werden, oder *objective* “für das Ding, das durch diese Tätigkeit repräsentiert wird”.

3. Meditation: Ideen haben eine(n Grad an) *formale*(r) Realität, insofern sie Modi des Denkens sind, und ebenfalls eine(n Grad an) *objektive*(r) Realität, nach Massgabe der formalen Realität dessen, was sie repräsentieren: eine Idee kann nicht mehr objektive Realität haben als das Repräsentierte formale Realität hat:

“Sofern nämlich diese Ideen nur gewisse Modi des Denkens sind, erkenne ich keine Ungleichheit unter ihnen, und alle scheinen auf dieselbe Weise aus mir hervorzugehen, aber sofern eine diese,

<sup>9</sup>As the section label in the *Principes* might suggest: “VII. Non posse a nobis dubitari, quin existamus dum dubitamus; atque hoc esse primum, quod ordine philosophando cognoscimus.” (AT VIII 6<sup>31-32</sup>) / “7. Que nous ne sçaurions douter sans estre, & que cela est la première connoissance certaine qu’on peut acquerir.” (AT IX/II 27) Descartes makes it clear in his replies to Hobbes and Gassendi that existential generalisation is not what he is interested in at this step of the argument (AT VII 175<sup>25-176</sup> and 352<sup>6-18</sup>, cf. also AT II 37<sup>26-38</sup>21).

eine andere jene Sache repräsentiert (*repraesentare*), ist es klar, dass sie sich stark voneinander unterscheiden. Denn die Ideen, die mir Substanzen (*substantia*) darbieten, sind ohne Zweifel etwas Grösseres und enthalten in sich sozusagen mehr Realität (*realitas objectiva*) als jene, die nur Modi oder Akzidenzen (*accidentia*) repräsentieren; und wiederum jene, durch die ich einen höchsten Gott verstehe, der ewig, unendlich, allwissend, allmächtig und Schöpfer aller ausser ihm seienden Dinge ist, hat sicherlich mehr objektive Realität in sich als jene, durch die endliche Substanzen dargeboten werden.”

Durch das sog. Kausalprinzip gibt Descartes so einen ersten Beweis für die Existenz Gottes:

“The intuition here is clear. Sherlock Holmes cannot cause Arthur Conan Doyle to exist, since fictional characters are “less real” than historical persons; but Arthur Conan Doyle can cause Sherlock Holmes to exist, since Arthur Conan Doyle is more real than his character. I can create the idea of an imaginary chimera, but an imaginary chimera cannot create the idea of me, or even the idea of a chimera in me. Accordingly, if I find in myself the idea of something of a higher degree of reality or perfection than myself, I can be certain that it is not the effect of a cause less real and perfect than I am or no more real and perfect than I am.” (Wilson 2003: 90-91)

“This objective reality of an idea is essentially its representative nature; in this representative nature or content of the idea the represented thing is somehow contained, and hence the objective reality of an idea is opposed to the knowing subject in that the content is of the object.” (Cronin 1966: 30)

“[Si le contenu d’une idée] est une chose, il peut être considéré comme un objet: quelque chose qui, *dans la conscience* s’oppose et se distingue du sujet lui-même. Mais les objets se trouvent dans la conscience, non comme des modes du sujet mais comme des choses distinctes du sujet lui-même. Ils ont une “espèce” d’existence, c’est-à-dire qu’ils existent dans la conscience. Ils ont, par conséquent, pour ainsi dire, une réalité objective.” (Landim Filho 1994: 194)

“La réalité objective d’une idée est son contenu représentatif intrinsèque, la caractéristique interne en vertu de laquelle elle est à propos, ou au sujet, de quelque chose.” (Glaser 1999: 47)

## **Degrees of reality *by* ideas: things that are both in and outside of ideas**

Erste Erwiderungen: Ein Apfel, der objektive Realität hat, ist nichts anderes als ein Idee des Apfels, die objektiv betrachtet wird. In Bezug auf den Apfel ist es eine “extrinsische Denomination”, dass er in objektiver Weise in meinem Verstand ist; aber in Bezug auf die Idee verhält sich die Sache anders:

“...die Idee der Sonne [ist] die im Verstand – zwar nicht formaliter, wie am Himmel, aber objektiv, d.h. in der Weise, wie die Objekte im Verstand zu sein pflegen – existierende Sonne selbst.”

“En revanche, c’est en tant qu’elle est *prise formellement* que l’idée représente” (Glaser 1999: 48)

“The distinction between formal and objective reality is applied by Descartes not only to ideas, but to entities or objects. In this case, ‘formal’ reality will be actual, extramental existence, while ‘objective reality’ will be merely existence in the mind as an object of the understanding.” (Cottingham 1993: 136)

## **Material falsity**

Dritte Meditation: Neben der formalen Falschheit von Urteilen gibt es eine materiale Falschheit von Ideen, wenn sie “ein Nicht-Ding repräsentieren als sei es ein Ding”:

“So sind zum Beispiel die Ideen, die ich von Wärme und Kälte habe, so wenig klar und deutlich, dass ich aus ihnen nicht lernen kann, ob Kälte nur eine Privation der Wärme ist oder die Wärme eine Privation der Kälte, ob beides eine reale Qualität ist oder keines von beidem; und weil es keine Ideen gibt, die nicht gleichsam Ideen von Dingen wären, wird, wenn es tatsächlich wahr ist, dass die Kälte nichts anderes ist als eine Privation der Wärme, die Idee, die sie mir als etwas Reales und Positives repräsentiert, nicht unverdient falsch genannt werden...”

In den Vierten Erwiderungen wird dies noch etwas erläutert:

Ita, si frigus fit tantum privatio, frigoris idea non est frigus ipsum, prout est objective in intellectu, sed aliud quid quod perperam pro ista privatione sumitur; nempe est sensu quidam nullum habens esse extra intellectum. Neque est par ratio de idea Dei, saltem de illa quae est clara & distincta, quia dici non potest ipsam referri ad aliquid cui non sit conformis. (AT VII 233<sup>11-19</sup>)  
Ainsi, si le froid est seulement une privation, l'idée du froid n'est pas le froid mesme en tant qu'il est objectivement dans l'entendement, mais quelque autre chose qui est prise faussement pour cette privation; savoir est, un certain sentiment qui n'a aucun estre hors de l'entendement. Il n'en est pas de mesme de l'idée de Dieu, au moins de celle qui est claire & distincte, parce qu'on ne peut pas dire qu'elle se rapport à quelque chose à quoy elle n'est pas conforme. (AT IX/I 180-181)

## A useful distinction

Glauser (1999) distinguishes between “sentir” as a “acte de percevoir non réflexif qui se réalise par le moyen du corps” (Glauser 1999: 38) [sentir-1] and a “deuxième sens de *sentir*, où l'expression *je sens* est rigoureusement équivalente à la formule *il me semble que je sens-1*” (Glauser 1999: 39), which in turn distinguishes from a third sense, “sentir-2”, “qui a pour seul objet propre et immédiat des idées sensibles” (Glauser 1999: 41):

Que les idées sensibles soient réifiées ou non, lorsque l'esprit sent-2 ces idées il pense sentir-1 des objets matériels et leurs qualités. Cela tient au fait que les idées cartésiennes *stricto sensu* possèdent ce que l'on appelle dans la philosophie contemporaine des *contenus représentatifs*. Descartes appelle le contenu représentatif de l'idée sa *réalité objective*, bien que sa conception de la réalité objective soit loin de se réduire à une théorie du contenu représentatif. (Glauser 1999: 45)

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