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Descartes, *Meditations* IIIb
(AT VII 42-52, cf. *Discourse* IV, AT VI 33-36)

Over the second half of *Meditations* III Descartes completed his first proof for the existence of God and offered a second. Each proof introduces a technical notion that has far-reaching significance for the rest of his philosophy. In the first proof, the notion is that of material falsity, in the second, it is that of constant creation.

QUESTIONS ON THE READING

1. What are the three main types of ideas from which all other types of ideas may be formed?
2. What would justify our considering an idea to be false?
3. How did Descartes define the term "substance?"
4. Why did Descartes think that even his ideas of the extension of corporeal things could have been invented by him on his own?
5. What is the particular feature of the idea of God that Descartes found it impossible to explain as an effect of his own nature?
6. Why should I think that my perception of God is prior to my perception of myself?
7. Why could I not have created myself?
8. Why does conservation not differ from creation?
9. Why could a chain of human ancestors stretching back to infinity not have produced me?
10. Why could a number of partially perfect things not have worked together to each contribute a small part of what I find in myself?

NOTES ON THE FIRST PROOF

Having determined over the first half of *Meditations* III that the cause of an idea must contain at least as much as is found objectively in the idea, Descartes proceeded to inquire which of his ideas could possibly be caused by himself, as a thinking thing, and which contain something he could not be supposed to have created. As a first step, he reviewed his ideas once again, this time classifying them, not on the basis of how they appear to originate, but rather on the basis of what they contain. The broad classes into which he now grouped his ideas are:

1. inanimate bodies
2. animals
3. human beings such as himself
4. angels and demons
5. God

He observed that were we in possession of the ideas at the extreme ends of this series, we could readily produce the intermediate ones by combining them with different aspects of what we find in our ideas of ourselves. Thus, were we in possession of ideas of inanimate bodies, we could create all our ideas of animal bodies by imagining various combinations of our ideas of inanimate bodies with the ideas of the different life functions we find within ourselves as living things. Similarly our ideas of ghosts and spirits could all have been created by imagining different combinations of the things we find in our ideas of ourselves and our ideas of the

grander perfections we conceive to be in God. And, of course, all of our ideas of other human beings could have been created by our own imaginations merely by repeating in different arrangements and degrees the ideas we finds to be proper to ourselves.

But what about our ideas of God and inanimate bodies? Could we have caused these ideas, or do they contain something that goes beyond anything we can find in ourselves, considered just as thinking things, so that we would have to conclude that they must have been caused by some other thing that actually possesses that added content?

This certainly seems to be the case with our ideas of inanimate bodies. Insofar as we are assured only that we are thinking beings, we cannot think that we are extended in space (we might just be immaterial spirits), or that we have any of the attributes that go along with taking up space in some determinate way or other: size, figure, position, and motion. And insofar as all we can say about ourselves is that we think, we cannot affirm that we are actually coloured, hard or soft, heavy or light, moist or dry, scented, or possessed of any other sensible qualities. Of course, all of these things, extension, figure, size, position, motion, and sensible qualities are to be found in the ideas that are contained within us, but the question at issue is how this content could be present in our ideas if it is not actually in us as a property of our being. How could we have ended up with ideas that represent extended, sensible things if we are merely thinking things that do not possess any of the simple natures characteristic of extended, sensible things?

At this point, Descartes would appear to be confronted with a choice between one or the other of two options: suppose that extended, configured, sensible things must exist in order to be able to cause his ideas of these things, or at the very least suppose that he himself must have an extended body with these sensible qualities actually inhering in it.

Surprisingly, however, Descartes claimed to be unable to clearly and distinctly perceive his way through to either of these conclusions. To explain why, he first enumerated the different simple natures he found to be characteristic of his ideas of inanimate bodies.

These are, first of all, the various sensible qualities: heat and cold, colour, solidity, and so on; then the various qualities that arise from being extended in a particular way: shape, size, position, motion; finally, certain other qualities that arise just from being an existing thing: endurance, identity over time, number.

He observed that the qualities in the third group are ones we already find in ourselves considered just as thinking things. But what about the others?

There is something that bothered Descartes about the sensible qualities: they all come in opposite pairs. Colours, for instance, are bright or dark, sounds loud or soft, tastes and smells strong or weak, tangible sensations hot or cold, moist or dry, light or heavy, hard or soft, solid or compressible, and so on. These opposite qualities are such that they cannot both exist in the same place at the same time, so that one of them appears to be just the exclusion or negation of the other. But if one member of each pair of opposite qualities is really just an idea of nothingness or privation, then we ought to be able to invent that idea ourselves, without needing any external cause to help us to do so. Indeed, there is no way any external cause could help us to do so, since *ex hypothesi* we are not getting the idea from anything. The idea must rather be due to some imperfection in our own nature, as Descartes put it, that leads us to produce an idea when there is really nothing out there.

It is in this connection that Descartes introduced the important notion of material falsity. A materially false idea is an idea that represents nothing as if it were something. Such ideas cannot possibly have an external cause, since if they are in fact of nothing, then "nothing" is, as it were,

all that exists outside of us when we experience them. And if there is nothing outside us to cause the ideas, there is no other alternative but to suppose that we ourselves must be their case.

As will be seen in subsequent chapters, the notion of material falsity is what really forges the distinction that Descartes wanted to draw between those qualities that actually inhere in objects in the outside world and merely subjective sensations in us. It plays a crucial role in ensuring that when Descartes did get to the point of demonstrating the existence of an external world, his demonstration would not be too strong, and establish that objects in the external world must have sensible as well as purely mechanical properties.

But, to return to the argument at hand, even if we can be convinced that of any two opposite qualities, one could very likely be caused by nothing, or rather, by some imperfection in our nature, what about the other? If the one that is caused by some imperfection in our nature is privative, would the other not have to be something positive and real? And would something bearing that real quality not have to actually exist in us order for us to be able to produce ideas of that quality?

Descartes still found that he could not convince himself on this score. What bothered him was that it is not always clear which of two opposed qualities is the real one and which the privation. Both can *seem* to be equally real and positive. Today we think that cold is just the absence of heat, darkness the absence of light, lightness the absence of weight, softness the absence of hardness and solidity, and so on. Yet, despite the fact that cold is just the absence of heat, it does not feel like nothing to be cold. Those of us who are cold experience this as a very real sensation. Similarly, though darkness may be just the absence of light, we do not see nothing in the dark; we see black, which is not the absence of pigments (that is white) but the mixtuyre of all of them. Qualities like being light or dry or soft are likewise so far from being obviously privative that the ancient Greeks thought that they were rather the positive ones and that to be moist, heavy and solid was to lack real, positive qualities. (This view was likely grounded in the observation that light, dry, vaporous materials rise heavenwards and so ought to be more perfect.) But, Descartes observed, if the opposite qualities are so much like one another that it is uncertain and controversial which is in fact the real one and which the mere privation, and I must be the cause of the privative one, then I ought to be able to be the cause of the positive or real one as well. After all, if I can produce the one, and the one does not look any less real than the other, then I ought to be able to produce the other as well.

Thus, none of our ideas of sensible qualities, neither the privative nor even the positive, can with any certainty be supposed to be such as to require an external cause.

This leaves just one group of simple natures to be considered, those having to do with extension and its modes of shape, size, position, and motion. Descartes claimed that he had reason to doubt that even his ideas of these simple natures must have come from actually extended things. This is far from obvious since, according to *Meditations* II, we cannot be sure that we are anything more than thinking beings. We do not know whether we have. But, if we do not ourselves have bodies, and no bodies exist outside us, where could we get the ideas of the modes of extension from?

Descartes could not answer this question by saying, as he did about sensible qualities, that these ideas are so confusedly perceived that they might, for all we know, refer to nothing at all. Our ideas of extension and its modes do not come in opposite pairs, so some of them cannot justly be imagined to be materially false ideas of nothing at all. And far from being confusedly perceived, the modes of extension are so clearly and distinctly perceived that they can be

exhaustively described by the science of geometry — a science that in all its demonstrations never uncovers any absurdity or incoherence in these ideas.

At this juncture in the argument, it would seem that Descartes ought to either admit that extended bodies must exist outside us and impress us with ideas of their simple natures, or that we must ourselves be extended, and have concocted our ideas of other bodies from the ideas of extension we discover in ourselves. However, Descartes did not do this. Instead, he claimed that since we are substances, and since the modes of extension are merely qualities of a substance, and since a substance is so much greater and more perfect than a mode, perhaps we could cause our ideas of extension eminently, even though formally we might not contain extension.

As noted in the previous chapter, an eminent cause is supposed to be a cause that is of a higher order of being than its effect, and hence more real or perfect than its effect. The cause does not literally or actually contain what is to be found in its effect, but because it is something greater, it is supposed to be able to bring about something lesser, even something lesser that it does not itself literally contain.

The notion of eminent causality was forged to explain how God, who is not supposed to be extended, should nonetheless have been able to create an extended world. But Descartes invoked it to claim that since we are substances, that is, things capable of existing on their own, we are incomparably more perfect than any mere property, which can only exist insofar as it inheres in some substance. We might, therefore, be able to eminently cause our ideas of extension.

It is worth reminding ourselves that Descartes did not need to establish that there are eminent causes, or that we actually are the eminent cause of our ideas of extension. It was enough for him to establish that these things might be possible. After all, he could not afford to accept anything that is less than absolutely certain. And where certainty is at issue any doubt, however extravagant, holds a veto.

At the same time, however, even the most extravagant doubt must have some intelligibility. Were self-contradictory or groundless doubts allowed to hold a veto as well, then there would be no sense proceeding, because whatever results were obtained, it would be possible for someone to veto them merely by uttering the words, “I doubt that,” without having to bother to demonstrate that their doubt makes any sense. And where a notion like that of eminent causality is concerned, it is not clear that the doubt does make sense — particularly not for someone like Descartes, who wanted to insist that something cannot come out of nothing. As noted in the previous chapter, it is not clear that Descartes can insist both that something cannot come out of nothing and that there are eminent causes. One principle or the other might have to be given up.

In his favour, Descartes could appeal to the case of sensible qualities. Insofar as we are thinking things, we are not red or green, hot or cold, yet we manage to produce ideas of these qualities. So, as a matter of fact, we must be able to produce ideas of things we ourselves may not literally contain.

Still, this is not a good position to be driven into. An opponent could say that allowing that we can produce ideas of things like red or hot even though we ourselves are not literally red or hot just goes to prove that Descartes was wrong that something cannot come from nothing. Or the opponent could appeal to Descartes’s own claim that there is an important difference between our ideas of modes of extension and those of sensible qualities to argue that conclusions concerning the possibility of our being able to create ideas of the sensible qualities do not imply a similar ability regarding ideas of extension. Ideas of sensible qualities could be materially false

whereas ideas of extension and its modes exhibit no opposition or mutual contradiction and so appear to be of something positive and real.

Be this as it may, Descartes rightly or wrongly thought that he could not be sure of being the cause of everything that he found in his ideas of inanimate bodies. So of the five types of ideas listed earlier, four turn out upon examination to be ones that we could cause all by ourselves. This just leaves the fifth, the idea of God. And here, Descartes claimed, there is an idea that we really could in no way have created on our own.

Our idea of God is the idea of an infinitely perfect being. That idea must have some cause that formally or eminently contains everything that is objectively contained in the idea. This means that it must have a cause that is infinitely perfect. But we very clearly and distinctly perceive that we are not infinitely perfect. Consequently, some other being must exist that could cause us to have the idea of God. Since this being must be infinitely perfect it could only be God. So God must exist. And since all evil proceeds from some imperfection in the evil doer, whereas God is infinitely perfect, we can conclude that God is no deceiver. He would not allow us to be mistaken about things we very clearly and distinctly perceive, nor would he permit another being to deceive us in this way.

And so Descartes hoped to have overcome the obstacle he encountered at the outset of *Meditations* III. He found a way to demonstrate that a being exists who would not allow him to be deceived about what he very clearly and distinctly perceives. He could trust his clear and distinct perceptions and remove the doubt arising from the fact that those perceptions might be the work of a deceiver.

The remainder of this part of *Meditations* III is devoted to considering and responding to objections.

The first objection Descartes considered is that we could create our idea of God by forming the idea of a finitely perfect being and then simply negating the thought of this finitude. We are in possession of the idea of lack or absence which we could form by, say, comparing ourselves to a 500 kilogram weight and forming the relative proposition that we do not weigh 500 pounds. And we are in possession of the idea of finitude, which we can form by contrasting, say, a line segment with a line extended forever. We need simply combine these two ideas to form the idea of a being that is not finite in any way, that is, infinitely perfect.

It is noteworthy that those taking this approach must maintain that God is really inconceivable. While we can string the words, “not finite” together, we only ever conceive finite things — one finite thing that is in some way less than another. Indeed, that is the whole point of the objection — that we can arrive at the verbal formula “infinitely perfect” without having the true idea of infinite perfection.

Descartes’s response to the objection takes off from this fact. He claimed that nothing can appear finite except by way of contrast with something greater or better than itself. I myself, therefore, would have to appear perfect to myself unless I were aware of some being more perfect than I am. (There is something to this, which is captured in the observation that many impoverished people are happy only because they do not know how badly off they are. They start to become discontent only when they become aware of others who are better off. It has been conjectured that the reason the Soviet block fell from West to East is because people in East Germany and Poland had easier access to Western European television, which made them realize how poorly off they were. Those living further East, in the Ukraine and Russia, had no such knowledge and so were more content.) But, to continue with Descartes’s argument, I *do* think

that I am imperfect. I think my knowing powers are not strong enough to save me from being deceived. And I could only regard this as an imperfection if I had the idea of some more perfect state of knowing. Similarly, I could only think that being a deceiver is an imperfection insofar as I had the idea of a more perfect moral state.

This is not a very convincing reply to the objection and many people at the time were not persuaded. Locke, for instance, observed that, rather than form the idea of finitude by contrast with what is more perfect, we form the idea of infinity by addition. Take a line segment, add it to itself, and then conceive the process of adding new segments end to end to go on forever and you form such as idea of infinity as we manage to have.

Be this as it may, Descartes turned to consider a further objection: that his idea of God could be materially false, like his ideas of sensible qualities. His response to this objection was that materially false ideas are ideas that could be ideas of nothing at all. But the idea of God is very clearly an idea of something positive and real, indeed, of infinite reality and perfection. Even though we could not possibly grasp everything that is involved in this infinite reality and perfection (our finite nature will not allow that), whatever we can grasp that is in any way positive or real is something we take to be contained in God, either formally (as with goodness) or "eminently" (as with extension).

Finally, Descartes considered an objection grounded on the fact that his knowledge and abilities seemed to him to be increasing over time. Someone might take this to imply that he had the potential to become infinitely perfect. Perhaps this potential for infinite perfection would suffice to supply him with an idea of an infinitely perfect being. His principal reason for rejecting this objection was that what exists only potentially does not exist yet and so cannot be a cause. This reply is interesting for its implicit rejection of the Aristotelian notion of potency as a kind of currently existing thing, responsible for enabling growth and development along certain lines rather than others, and so as something that already involves a kind of advance version of the end state of a thing. Descartes's rejection of that notion is stark: "… the objective being of an idea cannot be produced by a merely potential being *(which strictly speaking is nothing)*, but only by an actual or formal being" (AT VII: 47, my stress).

COMMENTARY

The most serious objections to Descartes's first proof of the existence of God are not ones he mentioned in *Meditations* III. These are that the argument is based on premises that are not clearly and distinctly perceived to be true (a point already alluded to above and in the previous chapter), and that, even if it was, the reliability of clear and distinct perception as a means of knowledge immune to all doubt has not yet been established, so that the argument ends up going in a circle. Descartes declared at the beginning of *Meditations* III that he would not be able to trust his clear and distinct perceptions until he had demonstrated that God exists and would not allow him to be deceived. To prove the existence of God by appeal to a clear and distinct perception of the principle that the cause of an idea must formally or eminently contain everything that is objectively contained in the idea, yet admit that the clear and distinct perception of such principles can only be trusted *after* God's existence has first been proven is obviously circular. This is a famous objection, first raised by Marin Mersenne and Antoine Arnauld, authors of the second and fourth set of objections to the *Meditations*. Arnauld's statement of the objection is as follows:

> I have one further worry, namely how the author avoids reasoning in a circle when he says that we are sure that what we clearly and distinctly perceive is true only because God exists.
>
> But we can be sure that God exists only because we clearly and distinctly perceive this. Hence, before we can be sure that God exists, we ought to be able to be sure that whatever we perceive clearly and evidently is true. [as translated in CSM 2: 150, AT VII: 214]

Descartes attempted to reply to this objection in a supplement to the *Meditations* not included in the course text. The reply turned on drawing a distinction between truths that are immediately perceived at a single glance, such as that the truth that I exist or the purported truth that something cannot come from nothing, and truths that only come to be known by a chain of argument, such as the conclusions of long demonstrations in arithmetic or geometry. Descartes maintained that doubt is not possible in either case except insofar as one is not currently engaged in perceiving the intuited or demonstrated fact, but merely remembers having done so. When performing long demonstrations, this would have to be the case, since the earlier parts cannot be held in mind along with the later ones, but one must merely remember that the point was proven without any longer perceiving the proof. It is only when we merely remember the proof that we can worry that we might have been deceived, not as long as we are actually perceiving it. As long as the proof for the existence of God is one that can be perceived all at once and that does not involve any steps that need to be remembered, it can be the object of an intuitive certainty and beyond doubt. Moreover, once it has been perceived, it can be appealed to in order to warrant the conclusions of longer demonstrations. We need merely perceive, once again, the intuitively obvious fact that an all good God exists who would not deceive us and who has given us memories and reasoning powers that would not deceive us as long as we use them properly, and then remember that a proper use of our reasoning powers led us to the conclusion in the past. This would put us in a position to rely on that conclusion in subsequent demonstrations without having to run through the proof all over again.

This reply has not quelled all doubts and the question of whether Descartes can escape the charge of having engaged in circular reasoning continues to be debated in philosophical journals today.

NOTES ON THE SECOND PROOF

Descartes himself seems not to have been entirely convinced by his first argument for the existence of God, since he remarked that when he was not carefully meditating on the causal principle on which the argument rests, he would find himself doubting whether the idea of an infinitely perfect being can only be caused by an infinitely perfect being. This residual doubt prompted him to offer a second, purportedly more convincing argument. This argument appeals to the causes of his existence, rather than the causes of the existence of his idea of God, and it does not rely on the same sort of claims about what a thing must contain in order to be the cause of an effect.

The argument opens by dividing the possible causes of my existence into two main groups. The causes could either be God, considered as an infinitely perfect being, or something less perfect than God. I am one sort of thing less perfect than God, because I am troubled by doubt. But I am at least certain that I exist. So Descartes opened by considering the possibilities that I might have caused myself or might have simply always existed.

He considered the first of these possibilities to be ineligible because, were I powerful enough to create myself, I ought certainly to have been powerful enough to give myself some more of the perfections that I think of when I think of an all perfect being. After all, if I could bring myself into existence out of nothing, I ought surely to be able to do something as easy by comparison as give myself some knowing powers.

But what if I simply always existed? It is here that Descartes made a profoundly important remark. "For it is obvious to anyone who pays close attention to the nature of time," he said, "that plainly the same force and action are needed to preserve anything at each individual moment that it lasts as would be required to create that same thing anew . . . conservation differs from creation solely by virtue of a distinction of reason" (AT VII 49).

When time passes, what exists now, the present, becomes past. But the past no longer exists. To say that the present becomes past is to say that it gets destroyed. But if what exists now gets destroyed in the very next instant by the passage of time, how is it that we still see it continuing from one moment to the next? Obviously, what got destroyed must have been recreated. And since the passage of time destroys everything that exists from moment to moment, everything must be constantly recreated from moment to moment. This is why conservation does not really differ from creation, and why the same force and power is required to preserve a thing in existence as to create it in the first place — preserving it just means constantly recreating it from one moment to the next.

This is called the doctrine of constant creation. According to it, the world was not just created in the beginning, but must be continually recreated from moment to moment. Were it not to recreated, it would blink out of existence.

The doctrine of constant creation will be important for a proper understanding of Cartesian physics, and in the hands of Pierre Bayle, it was exploited to buttress a more profound sceptical argument than any Descartes ever envisioned.

In this context, Descartes appealed to the doctrine to make the point that, even were I always to have existed, some cause would be required to conserve me in existence, that is, to recreate me from moment to moment. But this cause could not be myself for the reason already given — were I powerful enough to bring myself into existence, I ought to be powerful enough to give myself better powers of knowledge. Since the latter is not the case, we can reject the former as well.

The remainder of Descartes's second argument for the existence of God considers the possibility that some other being that is less perfect than God, such as my parents, or some other succession of such beings, such as a chain of ancestors back to infinity, might have been the cause of his existence. To reject this possibility, Descartes observed that the same reasons that make it implausible that I might have caused or might be sustaining myself, apply to these beings. Any being supposed to cause me to exist would itself have to have been caused to exist. But it couldn't have been caused to exist by itself, since then it should have been able to make itself all perfect. But, *ex hypothesi*, the being is one that is less perfect than God. And to suppose that the being was caused by some other imperfect being which was in its turn caused by some other imperfect being, and so on to infinity is inadequate because it does not account for what could possibly now conserve me in existence from one moment to the next. The conserving cause of my existence would have to have the power to recreate me out of nothing. If it could do that, surely it could make itself more perfect than it is.

There thus appears to be no alternative but to admit that whatever causes and conserves my existence must be a being powerful enough to create itself, and to create itself as a being with all perfections. In other words, the only possible cause is God.

COMMENTARY

Descartes's second the argument for the existence of God is not as different from the first as he seems to have thought, and is liable to the same objections. Though the argument does not explicitly appeal to the same, difficult and questionable causal principle (that the cause of an idea must formally or eminently contain everything that is present objectively in the idea), it does still appeal to a causal principle (that the cause of a greater effect ought to be able to cause a lesser effect), and that principle is no more obvious than its counterpart. Descartes tried to justify the principle by claiming that a being is a substance whereas a quality is a mere accident of a substance, and that anything with a power to bring something as grand as a substance into being ought to be able to bring a mere accident of a substance into being. But, as noted earlier, the distinction between substance and accident is an artefact of an Aristotelian view of nature that Descartes in other places claimed to have no use for. One might object that a substance is nothing more than the bundle of its qualities, so that to cause a thing or substance to come into being just is to cause the bundle of its qualities to come into being. It is not to exercise some stronger power that necessarily implies the ability to exercise that power more weakly. Perhaps the thing that caused and sustains me uses all the powers it has just to make the bundle of qualities I observe myself to have and I am nothing more than that bundle of qualities.

There is a further problem. Though Descartes claimed that the argument concerns the cause of my existence rather than the cause of my idea of God, this ends up not being the case. The problem here is not that it is only through consulting the idea of God that I find within myself that I come to think that there are perfections I lack and that I should have been able to give myself were I powerful enough to create myself. The problem is rather that it ends up being crucial to the argument that I exist as a being that has the idea of God within it, so that my cause ends up having to be something that is adequate to cause that idea in me. This is a point that only emerges when Descartes attempted to deal with a specific objection. He worried at one point that I might not have been created or be sustained by any one thing, but by a number of things working in concert, each an imperfect thing, but all together able to bring me about. This is a powerful objection. It nicely circumvents Descartes's claim that anything powerful enough to create me out of nothing would have to be powerful enough to make itself all perfect (or would it its turn need to have a cause powerful enough to make itself all perfect). This would not have to be the case if the cause is a number of different things working in concert to bring about an effect that any one of them individually would be incapable of producing.

Descartes's only reply to this objection rests on an appeal, not to what would be required to cause my existence, but rather to what would be required to cause me to exist as a being that has an idea of God (hence, in effect, to what would be required to cause the idea of God that I find within myself). Descartes claimed that the idea of God is an idea of a being that is essentially one and not a composite of many. He further claimed that the idea of oneness is more perfect than the idea of multiplicity and so could in no way be produced by a multiplicity of causes. From these claims it follows that a multiplicity of causes could not have created me as a being that possesses an idea of God.

In assessing this argument, we need not bother to object that the idea of multiplicity depends on the idea of units (you can only think of many by thinking of many ones), so that the idea of multiplicity is in fact the grander idea and one from which an idea of oneness could readily be derived. It suffices to observe that in offering this reply Descartes was returning to the argument that rests on the premise that the cause of an idea must formally or eminently contain as much as is objectively present in the idea. The second argument, concerning the causes of his existence, is not significantly different from the first, concerning the causes of the existence of his idea of God, and all the problems that arise for the first arise for the second as well.

ESSAY QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH PROJECTS

1. Descartes's notion of eminent causality is drawn from medieval philosophy. Undertake a research project to discover just how this notion was understood by medieval philosophers. (Note that rather than speak of eminent causality, the medievals might have instead discussed eminent containment of a form, which they would have contrasted with literal exhibition of a form.) Determine whether the medievals managed to articulate a clear, coherent sense in which it is possible for a thing to contain a form it does not literally exhibit. Then determine whether Descartes had any right to employ this notion (note that, despite the doubts of *Meditations* I, he only needed to make a case that it is possible that there might be eminent causes). If he dids have a right to employ the notion, did he also have a right to make the further claim that he could be the "eminent" cause of his idea of extension?
2. Outline Descartes's reasons for denying that we could have caused our ideas of God. Comment on whether these reasons are compelling. If not, say why not. Consider whether there might be other reasons for supposing that we cause our ideas of God ourselves, in addition to the ones that Descartes considered.
3. Obtain a complete copy of Descartes's *Meditations*. (Complete copies contain, in addition to the six meditations, six sets of objections together with Descartes's replies to those objections.) In the standard pagination of the Adam and Tannery edition, Mersenne's charge that Descartes argued in a circle is to be found at pp.124-25, Arnauld's at p.214 and Descartes's replies at pp.140-141, 144-46, and 245-46. Comment on whether Descartes's answer to Mersenne and Arnauld is adequate.