

Descartes' Meditations: An Introduction

Clinton LeFort



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In Descartes Meditations he seeks the truths that he can rely upon that will not deceive him about himself or other things. He seeks to establish a rationale for his existence and the things that he senses and comprehends. During his meditations he comes to understand that many truths that he has thought cannot be fully relied upon to give him the truth about himself, since they are fallible, mutable and limited. There is One truth that illumines all truths and that truth is the ground of his existence as well as his fallibility. He does find that truth as a source of comfort, despite his acceptance of not comprehending it fully.

First meditation

Descartes does not want to be duped by his sense or his experience. In the past, he has experienced that he was wrong when he thought he was right. Descartes enters the first meditation by establishing that he can doubt about two things. First, he can doubt that "My senses are reliable." He conjectures to himself that his sense may be deceiving him about his own sense impressions. He doesn't trust in his own sense judgments, though he should. Next, Descartes calls into question the statement "I am awake." He is conscious that he is awake, but perhaps he really is sleeping and that he only allows himself to think that he is awake. In other words, He can still doubt his perceptions of himself.

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