

Candidate 2 evidence

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1	<p>Section 1</p> <p>Descartes was a French philosopher in the 17th-century. In his book <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i>, he attempted to prove that the our knowledge of the world is based on reason, and that Skepticism is false. To do this he would have to find certainty, some belief or knowledge that was completely indubitable. In doing this, he would prove the truth of Rationalism, the belief that our knowledge of the world is based on reason. In this essay I will analyse and evaluate Descartes' first step in this process, Meditation 1, and I will do so by individually tackling his Senses Argument, Dreaming Argument, and Deceiving God Argument. But first, Descartes' Method of Doubt must first be discussed.</p> <p>At the beginning of Meditation 1, Descartes is struck by the large amount of falsehoods that he took to be true in his childhood. He decides, upon realising this, that he must examine the foundations of his knowledge to check for doubt in his beliefs if he wants to be certain of anything in the sciences. The method that Descartes proposes to achieve this aim is called the Method of Doubt. The purpose of the Method of Doubt is to examine the foundations of Descartes' knowledge, withhold his assent from any beliefs which he has reason to doubt, and ultimately prove that Skepticism is false. Examining the foundations of his knowledge is important because Descartes believes that if the foundations are found to be doubtful, any and all beliefs which are built on top of them will be toppled. This drastically speeds up the process of examining</p>

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	<p>all of Descartes beliefs, Descartes explains the process of his Method of Doubt using the Basket of Apples analogy. If Descartes has a basket of apples, the apples being his beliefs, he is going to throw throw all of them out of the basket and replace only those that show no signs of rot, the rot being representative of doubt. This shows how Descartes is going to completely withhold his assent from any beliefs in which he has the slightest reason to doubt, and only leave those which he is completely certain of.</p>
	<p>The first foundation that Descartes must examine is the knowledge he receives from his senses. Descartes recalls that his senses sometimes deceive him in the case of objects that are very small or very far away, and this gives him reason to doubt what his senses tell him. It's important to note that Descartes does admit that, on the whole, his senses are reliable, but even the slightest doubt is enough for him to withhold his assent from the knowledge of the senses. The argument that he is presenting here is 'the senses have deceived me on some occasions. It's best never to entirely trust something that has deceived you even once. I should not trust my senses entirely.'</p>
	<p>A criticism of this Senses Argument is that what Descartes mentions are not actually deceptions. If he is able to know that he was wrong about something his senses told him, then he can't have been truly deceived. If his senses were to truly deceive him of something, then he would not even know that this is the case, and so Descartes can give us no examples of when his senses have</p>

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	<p>truly deceived him, and so we establish that they are unreliable. Descartes might respond by saying that, in cases when he has been deceived by the senses, it's his reason that has kept him correct. The senses are completely deceiving him, but he is being corrected by some other facet of himself. Therefore, he can say that he should not trust them. But someone might respond to this and say that often times your reason corrects you based upon knowledge gathered by the senses. An example of this might be the optical illusion that occurs when you place a pencil in a glass of water and it appears to bend. Your sense of sight is telling you that the pencil has bent, and your reason is telling you that the pencil could not have bent just by being placed in water. But your reason can correct you on this because it has knowledge of how the world works and how different materials interact with each other. If this knowledge, that must be gathered by the senses, is false, then Descartes would have no way of knowing that he had been deceived, and no way of knowing that the senses are untrustworthy. Personally I think Descartes' argument stands up to this criticism. Even if he he doesn't know that the senses are untrustworthy, he can't prove that they are entirely indubitable either, and this is enough doubt for the Method of Doubt to decree that he withhold his assert assert from them.</p>
	<p>But is it right that Descartes considers the senses to be mostly reliable? For he has been deceived before into thinking that he he was wide awake, by the fire in his dressing gown, when in fact he was in his bed, undressed and dreaming. For Descartes senses can be deceived entirely by his dreams,</p>

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	<p>argument holds up to criticism, because only the tiniest amount of doubt is needed for Descartes to withhold his assent from that belief. So Descartes concludes that he cannot trust his senses when they tell him that there is a sky, or earth, and that he has a body, because he could just be dreaming these things. But Descartes also suggests that these elements in his dreams must be built from something that is real, like how a painting of a fictional creature is comprised of real animal limbs, real shapes and real colours. Descartes suggests that these "real colours" of reality must be mathematical principles, as as he cannot possibly imagine that he could be deceived of these things. Surely there is no way that $2+3$ doesn't equal 5?</p>
	<p>But there is one more foundation of belief that Descartes has yet to examine: his belief in God. Descartes admits that this all powerful being could deceive him of even the simplest of mathematical principles, like the fact that $2+3=5$. If Descartes can't be sure of even these most certain principles, then he cannot be sure of anything. Even suggesting that God doesn't exist doesn't solve the problem, Descartes says, as if he has originated through chance, or through a random chain of events instead of an all-powerful God, then it is even more likely that he is an imperfect being, and so more likely to be deceived of every thing. At this point in his process Descartes has reason to doubt all of his former beliefs of himself and the world, so has reached a stage of hyperbolic doubt. A criticism of this conclusion might be that God is an all-</p>

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	<p> loving being and so would not think to deceive Descartes in this way. But Descartes covers this in his 'Receiving God' argument, pointing out that if God would deceive him in this massive way, then it would be inconsistent with his character to deceive him even some of the time, yet Descartes knows that sometimes he he is deceived. His 'Receiving God' argument is a strong step in his Method of Doubt process, as it casts a very large sphere across every single one of Descartes' beliefs, bring them all into doubt in one fell swoop. I think that, at this stage at this stage, Descartes cannot prove that he is not being completely deceived and so, if he is adhering to the Method of Doubt, he must withhold his assent from everything. </p>
	<p> Now that Descartes has reached a stage of hyperbolic doubt, he must consider how to proceed. He admits, however, that he finds it hard to convince ^{himself} that everything he thought he knows for certain is is false, because it seems more reasonable to believe these these things than to reject them. To help himself commit to his hyperbolic doubt, he introduces the idea of the evil demon. Descartes pretends that he is not by God, who is all-good, but a malicious demon. This demon is doing its very best to deceive Descartes into thinking that he has a body, and that there is an earth. This gives Descartes something to push back against, and the drive he needs to commit to hyperbolic doubt. If he is being maliciously deceived then he has incentive to push back against this deception and convince himself that all of his former </p>

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beliefs are not just doubtful, but entirely false.	
In conclusion,	
I think Descartes does a precise and thorough job of	
the examining the foundations of knowledge. I think this is mostly	
achieved through the Method of Doubt which allows Descartes to	
quickly and thoroughly commit to the process. As the end of Meditation	
1, Descartes has created a solid basis for the rest of his process, where	
he will try to prove the sovereignty of reason, and that Skepticism	
is false. The Senses, Dreaming, and Receiving bad argument are,	
for the most part, convincingly argued.	

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	means it is less time consuming than	
	Act Utilitarianism which requires you to	
	assess each possible consequence. Act	
	Utilitarianism also uses the hedonic calculus	
	which is too impractical to use especially	
	when all the possible consequences are	
	unknown. Act Utilitarianism can also allow	
	for an potentially wrong acts to be	
	justified. For example, if committing a crime	
	results the murder of an innocent man would	
	lead to more pleasure as overall, it would	
	be considered moral under Act Utilitarianism.	
	However, rule Utilitarianism comes the general rule	
	of 'never kill' and so it would prevent	
	more acts such as murder from occurring.	
	However, rule Utilitarianism can lead to	
	too many exceptions of rules. This can	
	make the rules become meaningless and	
	would ultimately lead to act Utilitarianism	
	if there were too many singular rules. Overall,	
	Rule Utilitarianism is an improvement on	
	Act Utilitarianism as it is more practical	
	and prevents possibility of morally wrong	
	acts such as 'tyranny of the majority.'	