

DESC(ART) OR THE 21ST CENTURY CARTESIAN MEDITATOR

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ABSTRACT: *In this paper I argue that the continued relevance of Descartes' philosophy for present-day concerns can be demonstrated by bringing to bear on his Meditations state-of-the-art developments in Informal logic and Argumentation theory, specifically Leo Groarke's approach to multimodal arguments. I show that the meditative exercises that Descartes viewed as preconditions of establishing the metaphysical tenets of his system can be recast in present-day form using technological tools and media that we are familiar with. We will see that, due to the different historical and cultural contexts, the 21st century Cartesian meditating process can be: 1) technology-enhanced (a customizable, multimodal process using images and nonverbal sounds alongside verbal claims) and 2) interdisciplinary (sensitive to and informed by the history of philosophy, of ideas and of art). Reformulated and practised in this way, Descartes' meditative exercises can serve as tools for honing much-needed critical thinking skills and dispositions, as well as for promoting autonomous decision-making. After providing examples of this contemporary Cartesian meditation, I suggest that Groarke's multimodal approach can be extended to reconstructing the arguments of other philosophers thus supplying a way of doing history of philosophy that is both novel and has personal benefits for its practitioners.*

Keywords: *ART, Cartesian Descartes, interdisciplinary meditation, meditation, technology-enhanced multimodal visual and auditory arguments*

In recent years many historians of philosophy have called for a thorough revision and diversification of the philosophical canon by including non-European Philosophers,¹ women philosophers,² as well as by changing the interpretive categories and labels

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¹ Goto-Jones 2005; D'Ambrosio, Amarantidou and Connolly 2021.

² Shapiro (2016); O'Neill and Lascano (2019).

traditionally applied.³ Alternatively, Samuel Rickless has proposed the use of an “inclusive anti-canon”.⁴

Rickless brings up two main questions: “First, what texts should historians of philosophy assign in their courses?⁵ And, second, how should historians of philosophy approach the analysis of those texts?” (Rickless 2018, 168). Rickless argues that the answer to the first question is: “it doesn’t really matter” as long as certain conditions, such as philosophical virtues,⁶ narrative structure⁷ and diversity/inclusivity,⁸ are met. In answer to the second question, Rickless emphasizes the importance of accurately reconstructing the views of past philosophers and engaging in the evaluation of these views if and when we consider appropriate.⁹ The process of accurately reconstructing philosophical positions can be assisted by an awareness and use of research in the history of ideas, by remaining open-minded, avoiding anachronisms and steering clear of forcing prior conceptual frameworks to fit our current presuppositions. The stress, Rickless continues, should be on actively engaging with these works, on making these texts resonate with contemporary interests and concerns.¹⁰ According to Rickless, practicing the history of philosophy in this way will prove valuable both in itself¹¹ and instrumentally (due to its beneficial effects on its practitioners).¹² Finally, according to Rickless, “a veritable explosion of philosophical diversity” is one of the likely positive consequences of working with such an inclusive anti-canon (Rickless 2018, 178).

³ Antonia LoLordo urges avoiding the use of the term “naturalism” when discussing Early Modern philosophical views and replacing this anachronistic term with that of “Epicureanism” (LoLordo 2011).

Peter Anstey and Alberto Vanzo (2016) have suggested the replacement of the commonly used categories of “rationalism” and “empiricism” with “speculative” and “experimental” philosophy, respectively. See also Walsh and Currie 2015.

⁴ “...*there should be no canon at all*. Instead, there should be constraints: exemplars, structure, diversity” (Rickless 2018, 177).

⁵ While Rickless focuses on teaching the history of philosophy, he also mentions that using the inclusive anti-canon he is advocating will also have positive effects on research and will ultimately invigorate the discipline (Rickless 2018, 178).

⁶ Philosophical virtues include: “breadth and importance of the questions that are asked and answered; elegance of the theories or arguments that justify the answers; imperviousness to objections (at least, to objections that were permitted by the conceptual schemes of the day); internal coherence; explanatory fruitfulness; and sophistication. Any candidate text that exemplifies more of these virtues, and to a greater degree, than the alternatives has a stronger claim to be added to the syllabus” (Rickless 2018, 176).

⁷ Rickless 2018, 176.

⁸ Rickless 2018, 176-177.

⁹ Rickless 2018, 173.

¹⁰ Rickless 2018, 177.

¹¹ “I understand the *primary* value of the history of philosophy to be intrinsic: past philosophical theories and arguments are worth studying *for their own sake* as intellectual achievements, moments of intellectual excellence in the service of the greatest intellectual value: Truth” (Rickless 2018, 174).

¹² “Just as artists study the history of as a way of honing their artistic skills, so undergraduate and graduate students should study the history of philosophy as a way of honing their philosophical skills” (Rickless 2018, 175-176).

Building on Rickless' suggestions, this paper focuses on Descartes¹³ and aims to show that when Descartes is properly read, his place on our study lists is justified because: Descartes' *Meditations* meet Rickless' conditions (viz. "philosophical virtues"¹⁴ and narrative structure)¹⁵; afford their careful readers not only the benefits identified by Rickless (viz. teaching readers to appreciate the amazing beauty and complexity of the work¹⁶ while also fostering these readers' philosophical skills)¹⁷ but also additional ones¹⁸ (such as improving critical thinking skills and dispositions¹⁹ as well as promoting autonomous²⁰ decision-making).²¹ These additional benefits and insights, I argue, are available to present-day readers who approach Descartes' works

¹³ While Rickless acknowledges that his focus is on "how to build a survey course, rather than [on] how to build a course that focuses on the work of a single author" (Rickless 2018, 176), he does provide some suggestions about how to devise a course dealing only with Locke. Both types of course would have to meet the requirements of what Rickless called "philosophical virtues" (see Footnote 7) as well as "narrative structure" (Rickless 2018, 176). Descartes' *Meditations* also meet Rickless' conditions, as we will see below and as Rickless himself acknowledges (Rickless 2018, 175).

¹⁴ Rickless himself acknowledges this (Rickless 2018, 175)

¹⁵ The *Meditations* have their own, in-built narrative structure. See Campbell (2015); Kosman (1986).

¹⁶ Rickless 2018, 175.

¹⁷ See Footnote 12.

¹⁸ These benefits, I argue, are additions to rather than replacements of the one's Rickless identified (See Footnotes 10 and 11 above). Rickless stressed the fostering of philosophical skills such as increasing, deepening and solidifying the comprehension of contemporary philosophical positions as a result of working through the intricacies of older philosophical views. What Descartes valued and promised the correct reading and application of his (Descartes') recommendations would supply are transferable skills, skills applicable to "each of life's contingencies", as he put it in the *Rules* (AT X, 361; CSM I, 10).

Parentetical references to Descartes's works use the following abbreviations: AT: Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (eds.) (1974-86), *Oeuvres de Descartes*, 2nd ed., 11 vols. (Paris, Vrin/C.N.R.S.). CSM: John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (trans.) (1985), *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. I and II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). CSMK: John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, and Anthony Kenny (trans.) (1991), *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

¹⁹ "The second benefit is that the study of these principles will accustom people little by little to form better judgements about all the things they come across, and hence will make them wiser. The effect so produced will be the opposite of that produced by ordinary philosophy. For it is easy to observe in those we call 'pedants' that philosophy makes them less capable of reasoning than they would be if they had never learnt it" (AT IXB, 18; CSM I, 188). The comments from the *French Edition to the Principles of Philosophy* are applicable to the *Meditations* as well since the first part of the *Principles* covers the same ground as the *Meditations* (AT IXB, 16; CSM I, 187).

For treatments of "critical thinking" see Hamby (2013); Hitchcock (2021 and 2022).

²⁰ "This is why I say that, in the sense in which the phrase should be understood here, *the thought of each person – i.e. the perception or knowledge which he has of something – should be for him the 'standard which determines the truth of the thing'; in other words, all the judgements he makes about this thing must conform to his perception if they are to be correct.... Thus the most absurd and grotesque mistake that a philosopher can make is to want to make judgements which do not correspond to his perception of things*" (AT VII, 208; CSM II, 272-273 – emphasis added).

For a recent survey of the literature on "autonomy", see Sahebi and Formosa (2022).

²¹ "If, therefore someone wishes to investigate the truth of things ... he should, rather, consider simply how to increase the natural light of his reason, not with a view to solving this or that scholastic problem, but in order that his intellect should show his will what decision it ought to make in each of life's contingencies" (AT X, 361; CSM I, 10 – emphasis added).

in a manner that, in addition to conforming to the conditions Rickless enumerated above (e.g. avoiding anachronisms, remaining open-minded, etc.) is also in keeping with Descartes' own recommendations and adapted to our present environment.²²

Assistance for properly reading Descartes is available from Descartes himself. In the *Preface to the Reader* accompanying the *Meditations* Descartes states:

But now that I have, after a fashion, taken an initial sample of people's opinions, I am again tackling the same questions concerning God and the human mind; and this time I am also going to deal with the foundations of First Philosophy in its entirety. But I do not expect any popular approval, or indeed any wide audience. On the contrary I would not urge anyone to read this book except those who are able and willing to meditate seriously with me, and to withdraw their minds from the senses and from all preconceived opinions. Such readers, as I well know, are few and far between (AT VII, 11; CSM II, 8).

In this paper I use an 'ART' approach to inquire into what "meditating seriously" with Descartes entails and how a 21st century reader of Descartes could go about accomplishing this. "Art" will be used in two senses: first, 'ART' is an acronym proposed by Leo Groarke²³ for dealing with arguments.²⁴ According to Groarke, 'A' stands for "acknowledge", i.e. recognize a piece of discourse as an argument; 'R' is for represent, i.e. make perspicuous the premise(s)-conclusion structure of the argument under scrutiny; 'T' refers to "test", viz. evaluate the strength of the argument (by checking the acceptability of the premises; whether the conclusion follows from the premises, etc.). The second sense of "art" covers painting, music, literature, etc.²⁵

Adapting Groarke's scheme, in *Part A* of this paper I will make a case for acknowledging the *Meditations* together with the *Replies* as an extended argument intended to convince Descartes' audience that meditating is a necessary condition for reading/benefiting from the text. *Part R* will unpack Descartes' compressed argument in support of this conditional. I will present the main elements of this argument as requirements that a committed meditator is expected to meet. *Part T* will examine how these requirements could be fulfilled in our own time. I argue that fulfilling Descartes' requirements involves repeatedly reconstructing, reflecting on and assessing the individual arguments of the *Meditations*. Due to the different historical and cultural contexts, I show, the 21st century Cartesian meditating process can be: 1) technology-enhanced and 2) interdisciplinary.

Further analysis will reveal the technology-enhanced feature of the contemporary Cartesian meditation as a customizable,²⁶ multimodal process of reformulating

²² The manner of reading Descartes this paper proposes and defends is based on Leo Groarke's "ART" approach (Groarke 2019) and multimodal reasoning (reasoning involving visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, etc. components – Groarke 2015 and 2019).

²³ Groarke 2019, 345.

²⁴ Verbal, visual or auditory can be analyzed using Groarke's ART method.

²⁵ Context coupled with my explicit remarks will make clear which of these two senses of 'art' is used throughout the paper.

²⁶ Here 'customizable' means "different from reader to reader and dependent on each reader's attention to and engagement with Descartes' text".

Descartes' arguments using images and sounds alongside verbal claims.²⁷ To preserve the original intent of Descartes' project and thus remain Cartesian in spirit, present-day meditators, I will show, will also be sensitive to and informed by the history of philosophy, the history of ideas and the history of art. This is because bringing to light the connections between Descartes' theses and these theses' predecessors and successors not only in philosophy but also in music, painting and literature will keep our contemporary attempt at reading Descartes anchored and contextualized. Reformulated and practised in this way, Descartes' meditative exercises can serve as tools for honing much-needed critical thinking skills and dispositions as well as for promoting autonomous decision-making.

This way of reconstructing Descartes' arguments from the *Meditations* uncovers an additional source of "explosive [philosophical] diversity"²⁸ (mentioned by Rickless), since many multimodal versions are possible depending on the background, inclinations, preferences and skills of the readers of the text. In closing, I suggest that Groarke's multimodal approach can be extended to reconstructing the arguments of other (early modern) philosophers thus supplying a way of doing history of philosophy that is both novel and has personal benefits for its practitioners.

Let us get started by taking a closer look at the passage from the *Preface to the Reader*.

A): ACKNOWLEDGE

There, Descartes indicates that being his committed companion is a necessary condition for *reading* the *Meditations*. In other words, "If you read the *Meditations* you are my devoted associate". Taken literally, this seems to be much too strong a claim. It is unlikely that Descartes was optimistic enough to draw the conclusion "you are my devoted associate" since 'here you are, reading the book at this very instant'. After all, Descartes' remarks occur at the very start of the book and the reader currently perusing it could simply be curious or have accidentally stumbled across the book without having decided anything about whether to proceed or abandon it. And it also seems implausible to interpret Descartes' meaning as: 'Put down the book *now*, if you are not going to do things my way.' This would have reduced his readership even more than he already expects and the book was, after all, published. So he *was* looking for readers. Not to mention that Descartes tells the Doctors of the Sorbonne that having his views

²⁷ A "multimodal argument" is a piece of discourse intended to convince an audience of a certain position or point of view by supporting said position with reasons in the form of images, sounds, tastes, verbal claims, etc. Consult Groarke (2015); Birdsell and Groarke (2007). Following Groarke, I take arguments to involve not only attempts to resolve disagreement by supplying evidence but also using evidence to "securely establish some belief" (Groarke 2015, 134-135). The latter sense of "argument" will be particularly important for Descartes, as we will see below.

²⁸ Rickless identified the many combinations of philosophical figures brought together to form narratively coherent arcs as the source of the explosive diversity and invigoration of the discipline. In other words, it was the "who and what gets read" that supplied the diversity; in this paper I show that "how the reading and interpreting are done" can also contribute to the diversity Rickless seeks and praises.

defended by atheists (of course, after they have been properly impressed by the Sorbonne's endorsement of the work) would have practical benefits for the community at large.²⁹ But, one assumes, to defend Cartesian views (even if only for show), atheists would have to be acquainted with these views, presumably by reading the book. So Descartes must mean something else.

And indeed, just a few lines later in the *Preface* (and subsequently throughout the *Meditations* and in his *Replies*) Descartes clarifies his intention and qualifies the above statement: it is not the actual *reading* of the text that is at stake but *the audience's benefiting* from this perusal.³⁰ So, the statement from the *Preface* gets supplemented as follows: 'You should read the *Meditations* meditatively because only in this way will you benefit from them'.³¹ This short passage prompts many questions: what does "benefiting" from the *Meditations* consist in? (To complicate things further, later Descartes makes "benefiting" a matter of degree.) And what does "meditating" entail, after all? Additionally, how is "meditating seriously" different from simply "meditating"? Getting clarification on the latter notions will help shed light on the former, as we will see below.

As Gary Hatfield has noted, Descartes was acquainted with meditative practices and likely engaged in them during his time at La Flèche. He could also count on his 17th century readers' familiarity with such practices since several of the objectors to the *Meditations* were Catholic priests or theologians (Caterus, Mersenne, Arnauld, Bourdin) and different varieties of meditation (Ignatian, Augustinian, etc.) were part of the overall cultural environment of the time.³² Maybe this familiarity lies behind Descartes' mentioning meditation without spelling out either what it involves or how one ought to go about putting it into practice. All we find in the *Meditations* are references to: concentrating, paying attention, focusing, remembering, gazing, etc. We, 21st century readers of Descartes, are much less familiar with meditative styles and techniques so we could have really used more guidance, maybe in the form an eleventh item in Descartes' list of definitions opening his *Geometrical exposition* in the *Second Set of Replies*. An operational definition enumerating necessary and sufficient conditions for something to count as "meditation" would have been *really* useful. But since Descartes did not provide it, we must try to glean its meaning from Descartes' scattered remarks. To that end, we get some additional information from the *Preface* itself.

The passage we have been examining continues by mentioning "*free[ing oneself] from preconceived opinions ...*" alongside meditating seriously.³³ On the basis of other textual references to freeing the mind³⁴, it is safe to conclude that Descartes takes this detachment phase to be *a part of*, rather than an independent addition *to* the process of mediating. The immediately ensuing lines refer to grasping the order of Descartes'

²⁹ AT VII, 6; CSM II, 6.

³⁰ AT VII, 11; CSM II, 8.

³¹ AT VII, 9; CSM II, 8; AT VII, 379; CSM II, 260.

³² Hatfield 1986; Rorty 1986; Jones 2001; Eksen 2019.

³³ Due to space constraints, here I gloss over the fact that Descartes used ability and dispositional terms: *able* and *willing*, respectively.

³⁴ AT VII, 444-7; CSM II, 299-301; AT VII, 135; CSM II, 97; AT VII, 348-349; CSM II, 241-2, etc.

arguments and the interconnections between them. Meditating, we have learned so far, involves decluttering the mind and grasping the order *within* Descartes' arguments and *between* them. This, as we will discover, is only an outline of the aspects included in meditating. This list gets greatly expanded throughout the work, as we will see below.

To underscore the logical connection between reading meditatively, on the one hand, and benefiting from this reading, on the other, Descartes sometimes uses strong claims: "I *must* remember",³⁵ "I shall take *good* care",³⁶ etc. These strong claims could, without distorting Descartes' meaning, also be phrased as commands rather than declarative statements. For these reasons, in the remainder of the paper I will cast the premises of Descartes' argument in support of reading meditatively as directions, instructions, imperatives, commands. The fact that in the *Second Set of Replies*, in the *Postulates*, Descartes is "asking" his audience to undertake certain actions should not mislead us into thinking that these are just optional suggestions, as Descartes underlines in no uncertain terms elsewhere.³⁷ With that in mind, we are now ready to (*R*)*epresent* Descartes' argument by sketching the portrait of his serious meditator.

R): REPRESENT

The portrait of Descartes' meditator emerges only gradually, reconstructed from Descartes' original remarks in the *Meditations*, his answers to the objectors' requests for clarification as well as from Descartes' reactions to the objectors' frustrations at not being able to replicate Descartes' results, despite repeated and concerted attempts. This portrait is composed of: character traits (e.g. open-mindedness), traits that are needed in order to undertake and complete certain specific activities (e.g. comprehensive reading of the *Meditations*) which, in turn, will facilitate the suppression of certain ingrained behaviours (e.g., rashness to make judgements by taking things at face value). Once these objectionable behaviours have been cleared away, Descartes' methods will foster the acquisition of new policies (assent only to clear and distinct perceptions) and character traits (resolve to favour intellect-based cognition); the latter will ultimately lead to the conclusions Descartes is looking to draw (immortality of the soul, God's existence, extension as the essence of bodies, etc.).³⁸

Descartes is looking for someone willing to attentively read *all* the *Objections* published with the *Meditations* and, even more importantly, Descartes' *Replies* to these *Objections*.³⁹ Descartes' comprehensiveness directive can further be unpacked into: a briefing stage and an applied one. Comments Descartes makes in the *Principles* (that

³⁵ AT VII, 22; CSM II, 15.

³⁶ AT VII, 62; CSM II, 43.

³⁷ AT VII, 348-352; CSM II, 241-243. Descartes' phrasing his instructions to the reader as *Postulates* or "requests" was probably just Descartes' way of being witty by making a veiled reference to Euclid's geometrical postulates.

³⁸ For the role of ethical considerations in the *Meditations* see: Shapiro 2005 and 2008; Naaman-Zauderer 2010; Mihali 2014; Parvizian 2016.

³⁹ AT VII, 11; CSM II, 8.

his readers go over that work four times)⁴⁰ support the need for the former, while Descartes' explicit remarks (e.g. in the *Second Replies*, among other places)⁴¹ back up the detailed scrutiny requirement. The briefing phase consists, I argue, of a first reading of Descartes' works for the purpose of taking in the whole and drawing the contour of Descartes' "edifice".

This kind of bird's eye view of Descartes' writings will also involve sampling the offerings in terms of substantive theses, procedures as well as possible objections. Descartes, we are told, has provided multiple distinct arguments leading to the same conclusion⁴² and he had the *Meditations* examined by diverse critics before publication.⁴³ Once we complete this survey, detailed, assiduous, iterated and applied scrutiny must follow.

A reader fully convinced that the *Meditations* contain *no* worthwhile insights whatsoever, is unlikely to even get to the end of the volume much less return for a thorough inspection, so a minimum of receptivity appears presupposed in the above comprehensiveness condition. A more detailed examination of the open-mindedness Descartes forcefully recommends brings to light three main components starting with a provisional acceptance of Descartes' overall proposals (which we learned about by reading the full text).⁴⁴ Second comes testing this initial decision by applying *some* of Descartes' recommendations.

Having resolved not to quibble, the reader is asked to practise *analysis*, "the best and truest method of instruction", and the only method "[Descartes] employed in [his] *Meditations*".⁴⁵ Analysis comprises sustained attention and putting into practice, in strict order, key components of Descartes' writings. Taken together, attention and systematic implementation, are both necessary and sufficient, (Descartes assures us), for perfectly understanding something as well as if one were its original discoverer.⁴⁶ Jointly, attention and systematic implementation will also bring to light other related topics, not mentioned in the text but crucial for arriving at the conclusions explicitly stated.⁴⁷ This slow but steady and self-directed progress toward Descartes' intended goals will provide confirmation of what the agent has accepted provisionally and thus encourage the meditator to continue her quest alongside Descartes.

The third element of Cartesian open-mindedness consists of avoiding superficiality and cultivating intent focus on the *right* objects (i.e., the ones resulting from the exacting doubt Descartes prescribes). (We will return to the issue of doubt below).⁴⁸ A lack of sufficient attention will result in a superficial understanding of Descartes' views and nitpicking at minutiae, maybe further reinforcing the deficit of open-mindedness

⁴⁰ AT IX B, 12; CSM I, 185.

⁴¹ "Yet I reckon that both the overall and the detailed scrutiny is necessary if the reader is to derive the full benefit of my work" (AT VII, 158-160; CSM II, 112-113 – emphasis added).

⁴² AT VII, 119; CSM II, 85.

⁴³ AT VII, 11; CSM II, 8.

⁴⁴ AT VII, 157; CSM II, 112.

⁴⁵ AT VII, 156; CSM II, 111.

⁴⁶ AT VII, 156; CSM II, 110-111.

⁴⁷ AT VII, 156; CSM II, 110-111.

⁴⁸ AT VII, 158-160; CSM II, 112-113.

one had to begin with.⁴⁹ By contrast, Descartes seeks companions who are systematic,⁵⁰ obedient and unafraid of hard work.

Comprehensively and charitably going over the *Meditations* will also uncover Descartes' order of reasons and make it abundantly clear to the reader that the only Descartes-approved way to Descartes' proposed goals (viz. proving the existence of God and the mind-body real distinction) is to not deviate from that order when applying it. The meditator must at all cost follow Descartes' hierarchical structure of reasons and this starts by: i) remembering the order at both a global level (i.e. the *Meditations* taken as a whole)⁵¹ and a localized one (with regard to individual arguments).⁵² Violations of order inevitably lead to either diminished understanding or to misunderstanding.⁵³ Such violations (be they lapses of memory, lapses of attention or wilful disregard of parts of proofs) ought to be avoided. ii) The same goes for skipping ahead (no *Meditation II* before *Meditation I*)⁵⁴ and taking things out of context⁵⁵ (no faulting *Meditation II* for lacking a proof for the real distinction between mind and body, which proof only comes in *Meditation VI*). Instead, we must be comprehensive and orderly not only in our reading but also in our practice of Descartes' recommendations.⁵⁶

iii) And finally, to be able to grasp Descartes' conclusions we must be willing to expend effort and to persevere.⁵⁷ Sustained, attentive reflection functions as an effective antidote to bad habits⁵⁸ and is key for acquiring new, good epistemic habits.⁵⁹ The path of acquiring these new habits starts with a demolition phase,⁶⁰ namely detaching one's mind from preconceived opinions.⁶¹

To accomplish this, Descartes informs us, we must withhold our assent (which he views as an act of the will) from certain contents ("ideas") whenever the grounds for

⁴⁹ "As for the beneficial results derived from these *Meditations*, I did clearly point out, in the short Preface which I think you have read, that those who do not bother to grasp the proper order of my arguments and the connection between them, but merely try to quarrel with individual passages, will not get much benefit from the book" (AT VII, 379; CSM II, 260).

⁵⁰ AT VII, 11; CSM II, 8.

⁵¹ Descartes makes this clear in the *Second Replies*.

⁵² AT VII, 155; CSM II, 109-110.

⁵³ AT VII, 156; CSM II, 110-111.

"All of this is manifest if we give the latter our careful attention; ... *But as I readily admit it is the kind of argument which may easily be regarded as a sophism by those who do not keep in mind all the elements which make up the proof* (AT VII, 119; CSM II, 85 – emphasis added).

⁵⁴ AT VII, 379; CSM II, 260.

⁵⁵ AT VII, 12-13; CSM II, 9.

⁵⁶ AT VII, 144; CSM II, 103; AT VII, 492 HH- 493; CSM II, 332-333.

⁵⁷ AT VII, 162; 165; CSM II, 114-116. See especially "Fifthly, I ask my readers to send a great deal of time and effort in contemplating the nature of the supremely perfect being".

⁵⁸ AT VII, 9; CSM II, 8. "Things which we have become convinced of since our earliest years, even though they have subsequently been shown by rational arguments to be false, cannot easily be eradicated from our beliefs unless we give the relevant arguments our long and frequent attention" (AT VII, 231; CSM II, 162).

⁵⁹ AT VII, 53; CSM II, 37; AT VII, 162; CSM II, 115-116.

⁶⁰ Here I am taking the architectural metaphor from *Meditation I* a step further than *Descartes* himself does.

⁶¹ AT VII, 4-5; CSM II, 5; AT VII, 11; CSM II, 8.

assenting are either nonexistent or unsatisfactory upon reflection.⁶² Reasons for doubt, which Descartes helpfully provides, show how shaky our previous grounds for assent have been. We are also enjoined to think very carefully about our resolution not to assert or to deny and in this way strongly impress this resolution on our memory.⁶³

Doubt is described as absolutely necessary for gaining metaphysical knowledge;⁶⁴ carefully circumscribed (restricted to theoretical matters);⁶⁵ genuinely executed (as opposed to perfunctory);⁶⁶ instrumental (directed at knowledge acquisition, rather than being a goal onto itself);⁶⁷ temporary (discontinued once knowledge has been found) and potentially dangerous if misapplied.⁶⁸ Failure to fulfill all of the above prescriptions will result in unphilosophical claims⁶⁹ or in making basic philosophical mistakes.⁷⁰

We must, Descartes has shown, doubt “all things, especially material things”.⁷¹ The testimony of our senses constitutes unsatisfactory grounds for belief since we habitually and mistakenly take the reports of the senses to be exact copies of external objects. To remedy this flaw, we have to clean up sensory ideas: moving away from the way things appear (to her eyes, ears, taste buds, etc.), the agent must gain access to schematized contents (i.e., contents involving three-dimensional figures). And the agent has to grasp, truly encompass the contents in question thus making them her own. By actively working at the cleaning up and schematizing of these contents, and only then accepting them as true, the agent moves from having an idea that was *pre-conceived* (i.e., ready-made, unreflectively and absentmindedly picked up) to one conceived by herself.⁷²

Together with our sense organs, custom, tradition and authority are numbered by Descartes among the sources of preconceived opinions. Habit covers an individual’s repetition of certain courses of action: e.g., automatically accepting that corporeal objects really are as our sight reveals them to us. The remedy here is pretending for a time that these former sense-based beliefs are utterly false and imaginary.⁷³ Custom,

⁶² AT VII, 205; CSM II, 271.

⁶³ AT VII, 201; CSM II, 270.

⁶⁴ AT VII, 350-351; CSM II, 243 – emphasis added).

⁶⁵ AT VII, 350-351; CSM II, 243.

⁶⁶ AT VII, 348-349; CSM II, 241-242.

⁶⁷ “A philosopher would be no more surprised at such suppositions of falsity than he would be if, in order to straighten out a curved stick, we bent it round in the opposite direction. The philosopher knows that it is often useful to assume falsehoods instead of truths in this way in order to shed light on the truth...” (AT VII, 350; CSM II, 242).

⁶⁸ “I completely concede, then, that the contents of the first *Meditation*, and indeed the others, are not suitable to be grasped by every mind. I have stated this whenever the opportunity arose, and I shall continue to do so. This was the sole reason why I did not deal with these matters in the *Discourse on the Method*, which was written in French, but reserved them instead for the *Meditations*, which I warned should be studied only by very intelligent and well-educated readers” (AT VII, 247; CSM II, 172).

⁶⁹ AT VII, 350; CSM II, 242.

⁷⁰ AT VII, 350-351; CSM II, 243; AT VII, 353; CSM II, 244-245.

⁷¹ AT VII, 12; CSM II, 9.

⁷² This makes Descartes an internalist about justification and sheds light on why he states that an already discovered view can be appropriated by others who genuinely understand it.

⁷³ AT VII, 22; CSM II, 22.

refers to the unreflective repetition of socially accepted and socially perpetuated practices. Tradition reflects a view's longevity (the length of time a view has been accepted) and we must set it completely aside, Descartes commands.

As for appeals to authority: doubt puts putative experts and their views out of reach; however, someone else's position may be discussed provided *no* assent or only independently supported assent is given.⁷⁴ Finally, not all appeals to authority are illicit (Descartes and the Sorbonne figure among the legitimate ones).⁷⁵ To distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate ones, an agent has to carefully examine a position and base one's decision to accept the say-so of someone else on *reasons*, reasons proving that the other party is competent while the agent herself is ignorant.⁷⁶

We are strongly advised to take as much time as needed to dislodge our former convictions. How much doubt and time to doubt are enough, is left up to each of us. Nonetheless, as we've already learned, Descartes' project has both a demolition and a construction phase. And the thorough execution of the projects' ordered components demands that we eventually move on to rehabilitating knowledge.

The directive to proceed in an orderly, (Descartes-imposed), fashion remains in effect at this rebuilding stage as well. In an effort to ease uptake and facilitate the rediscovery of his metaphysical views by committed meditators, both Descartes' order of presentation and his order of discovery were modelled on (analytical) geometry.⁷⁷ There is a strict linking to the whole structure: properly conducted doubt leads to simples (i.e., simple notions)⁷⁸ which are subsequently connected in ways "utterly evident and certain to the mind". "Arguments ... possessing complete truth and certainty" are the result, Descartes assures us.⁷⁹

It is now time to *Test* Descartes' recommendations.

(T): *TEST*

Why would we, now in the 21st century, even want to try to meet the conditions Descartes set up for his serious readers? Perhaps the *Meditations*' standing and reputation in the Western philosophical tradition might prompt us to start perusing the text, although with some hesitation and caution in light of the remarks regarding extending, diversifying or even doing away with the philosophical canon, remarks mentioned at the start of this paper. Having decided to accompany Descartes, we will slowly come to discover the order of requirements outlined in the previous part of the paper (*Part R: Represent*).

⁷⁴ An example is Descartes' discussion of Aquinas' argument for the existence of God.

⁷⁵ AT VII, 5; CSM II, 5-6.

⁷⁶ AT VII, 208; CSM II, 272-273.

⁷⁷ "In the same way, although the proofs I employ here are in my view as certain and evident as the proofs of geometry, if not more so..." (AT VII, 4-5; CSM II, 5).

⁷⁸ See Marion (1992).

⁷⁹ AT VII, 444-447; CSM II, 299-301.

Descartes assumed his readers to be very intelligent and well-educated. While, it is unclear how he would have, in fact, gauged intelligence,⁸⁰ it is likely (given his comments in the *Preface*) that knowledge of Latin would have been counted as a sign of a good education. Would he, then, have approved of CSM (or some other English translation) being used? Although he might have some reservations, he would probably *not* be completely opposed, given the fact that he agreed to having the *Meditations* translated into French in 1647.⁸¹

I argued in *Part R: Represent* of this paper, that Descartes is likely to have approved of a first, comprehensive but not necessarily in-depth reading of his *Meditations*, complete with *Objections* and *Replies*. So, to the extent to which we are willing to cover all of these, we are probably on our way to meeting the Descartes' comprehensiveness condition. And we are exercising open-mindedness, as Descartes enjoined, by not allowing criticisms that might occur to us early on to prevent us from getting to the end of these works. Further ways in which we prove to be open-minded will surface when, in our coverage of the *Meditations*, we get to the applied stage.

As we make our way through Descartes' writings, we become well-acquainted with how important the order of reasoning steps, the goals Descartes set for himself as well as the tight connection between the two are. And this, I think, brings up the question: why we would want to go further than a detached, uninvolved reading of the letter of Descartes' text? After all, the glory of God, the immortality of the human soul and belief in such immortality as a precondition of a morally upright earthly life may not hold as much appeal for present-day readers as they did for 17th century ones.⁸² It is also unlikely that placing science on solid foundations⁸³ will motivate many of us to try to meditate, Descartes-style. Then why?

In my view, giving Descartes-style meditation a try would be a worthwhile endeavour as an "experiment of living",⁸⁴ to use Mill's formulation from *On Liberty*.⁸⁵ Descartes invited his readers to become like the narrator of his *Meditations*: to share and embody in their own person values that Descartes found worthwhile, defended in

⁸⁰ After counting Gassendi among the "critics of outstanding learning and intelligence" to whom the *Meditations* were sent (AT VII, 347-348; CSM II, 241), Descartes seems to retract his initial positive assessment of Gassendi (AT VII, 353; CSM II, 244-245). See also AT VII, 215; CSM II, 151.

⁸¹ For Descartes' reasons for moving back and forth between Latin and French when it came to the publication of his works see Limbrick 1993 and Fransen 2017. Descartes' *Discourse* was first published anonymously in 1637; a Latin translation appeared in 1644. The *Principles* appeared first in Latin in 1644, followed by a French edition in 1647. The *Passions of the Soul* saw the light of print in 1649, in French.

⁸² AT VII, 2; CSM II, 3.

⁸³ AT VII, 12; CSM II, 9; AT VII, 17; CSM II, 12.

⁸⁴ At the end of *Part I* of the *Discourse* Descartes reports having himself engaged in experiments in living: travelling the world, mixing with people of different types, testing himself in different situations and amassing experiences from which he intended to profit via recollection and reflection (AT VI, 9-11; CSM I, 115-116).

⁸⁵ Mill 2002; Anderson 1991.

his works,⁸⁶ practiced and lived by.⁸⁷ As we have seen, Descartes repeatedly stated that, properly conducted, his search for knowledge would be formative and transformative. His intention was not merely to apprise his readers of new positions but rather to **re-**form them (i.e. to clear their minds of prejudice) and **trans-**form them (i.e. to instill in his readers new cognitive habits) so that they become able to **in-**form themselves⁸⁸ (i.e. to fashion themselves⁸⁹ and to furnish themselves with knowledge instead of being fed views by others, from without). Descartes was adamant that reaching the conclusions expressed in the *Meditations* was dependent on adopting and embracing *new habits*; in other words, Descartes' primary goals depend on the accomplishment of some prior secondary ones. And, I contend, the latter *can* be adapted to our present context. In what follows I would like to suggest how.

Some authors⁹⁰ have argued that we are now living in the age of digital consciousness; the individual self is continuously dissolved, eroded as a result of immersion in an ever changing flow of images, sounds, interactions; assailed from all sides by shifting perspectives and information (often predigested and distorted). Selves are now being incessantly undone and redone, pieced together only to be taken apart and built back up from different components. Heraclitus' flux had nothing on our current digital media! To say with Augustine that we are now scatted abroad into multiplicity would be a gross understatement. Given all of this, heeding the advice of someone like Descartes who calls for focused attention, thorough scrutiny, systematic approach, evidence-based reasoning⁹¹ is unlikely to yield negative results. At the very least, it might, at least for the duration needed to carefully go over the *Meditations*,

⁸⁶ According to Paul Trainor, in the *Discourse*, "even though a narrator presents himself as a unique concrete value, he also presents himself as a shareable value to his potential readers and thereby presents himself as a potentially universal value" (Trainor 1988, 395). Trainor's remarks can be extended to the *Meditations* which, as the *Preface to the Reader* indicates, Descartes viewed as a continuation and development of the metaphysical parts of the *Discourse*.

⁸⁷ Developing suggestions from Kambouchner 1995, Mihali (2022) argues that Descartes' correspondence shows that Descartes himself was engaged in the process of acquiring generosity, the highest virtue according to the *Passions of the Soul*.

⁸⁸ In the *Preface to the French edition of the Principles of Philosophy*, Descartes tells his readers they should study "true philosophy" (i.e., his) because doing so will prove fruitful (new and practical discoveries), pleasant (steady satisfaction) and cultivating (better morals) (AT IXB, 3-4; CSM I, 180).

⁸⁹ Descartes' insistence on the transformative effects of his works, when properly approached, lends support to interpretations placing Descartes among the exponents of "philosophy as a way of life". See Sellars (2017); Chase, Clark, and McGhee (eds 2013) and Ambury, Irani, and Wallace (eds 2020). Joseph I. Breidenstein's contribution to the latter collection deals with "Cartesian Philosophy as Spiritual Practice" and stresses the spiritual character of Descartes' ethics. For other treatments of Descartes' ethical views, see Williston 2003; Svensson 2020; Mihali 2022.

⁹⁰ Rotman (2000) notes the parallel manner of accessing and processing information as well as the distributed character of consciousness which ceases being that of "one" individual.

Ott (2023) analyses how digital computers and microprocessors rewire our brains. Ott identifies intransigence, impertinence and impulsivity as negative character traits that are the result of this rewiring.

Sahebi and Formosa (2022, 69) "show how the autonomy of users of social media can be disrespected and harmed through the control that social media can have over its users' data, attention, and behaviour".

⁹¹ "Evidence" is used in both our everyday sense and in Descartes' own technical sense of vividness. For an enlightening treatment of Descartes' notion of evidence see Jones (2006).

serve as a counterweight to prevailing trends.⁹² So, I suggest, it is worth attempting. And this brings us to the applied phase of our study of the *Meditations*.

By now, we will have encountered again and again Descartes' repeated remarks regarding the necessity of detaching our minds from preconceived opinions (and there is no shortage of them today). We will have also become familiar with his emphasis on being suspicious of appeals to tradition and authority as well as the crucial role of practice, and relentless rehearsal.⁹³ It is my contention that the way in which we, contemporary companions of Descartes, go about fulfilling these prescriptions will differ from that of our 17th century counterparts.

You will recall Descartes' claim that in publishing the *Meditations* he sought to find out whether the arguments that convinced him will also successfully convince others.⁹⁴ To increase the chances of the published work to achieve this goal, he had the work examined in advance by a number of distinguished scholars, quite different in terms of backgrounds and convictions.⁹⁵ As a result of this thorough vetting process, Descartes "venture[d] to hope" that no other objections worth replying to can be devised.⁹⁶ The *Meditations* themselves, Descartes claimed, as we noted in *Part R: Represent*, were written for a variety of minds by including different arguments leading to the same conclusions.⁹⁷ Since we are reading the *Meditations*, we are also a part of Descartes' intended audience.

On the other hand, our backgrounds and the overall context in which we are reading Descartes, are *so* very different than that in which Descartes was writing. I wonder, then, whether our type of minds is not (and could not, realistically have been) included among those to whom Descartes directly addressed his theses. If that is the case, then we might have to make some additions and modifications in order to make the text resonate with us today. It would then not be implausible to expand and even reformulate his arguments in ways unenvisaged by Descartes himself. As a result, it would, and as I will argue, it *does* fall on us, contemporary readers of Descartes, to expand on Descartes' texts and suggestions and thus fashion the 21st century Cartesian meditator.

This type of move would be in keeping with Descartes' own remarks regarding works by his predecessors. Descartes states in a letter to Elizabeth that we ought to not only know and understand the views of the Ancients but we should also modify them somewhat, customizing and appropriating them, which, in turn, will make it more likely that we will follow and put those views into practice.⁹⁸ I propose four complementary

⁹² In *Meditation I* Descartes compares straightening a stick by bending it in the opposite direction and turning my will in the completely opposite direction for the purpose of countering the wight of bad epistemic habits. Elsewhere he mentions a philosopher's assuming falsehoods in order to shed light on the truth (AT VII, 350; CSM II, 242).

⁹³ AT VII, 130-131; CSM II, 94.

⁹⁴ AT VII, 10; CSM II, 8.

⁹⁵ AT VII, 347-348; CSM II, 241.

⁹⁶ AT VII, 10; CSM II, 8.

⁹⁷ AT VII, 119; CSM II, 85.

⁹⁸ AT IV, 252; CSMK 256).

In the 2nd Mesland letter Descartes indicates that we are more likely to be indifferent in the sense of balance when we are commanded by someone else to do something we would not do spontaneously.

ways to customize and appropriate Descartes' views, starting with: I) using Groarke's "ART" procedure to reconstruct the individual arguments contained in the *Meditations*. Then, II) building on the results of the "ART" analysis completed in I), I suggest recasting the above-mentioned individual arguments in multimodal form. III) This multimodal reformulation will be carried out by employing mostly period-specific (mostly 17th century) artistic sources and IV) by availing ourselves of technological means unheard of in Descartes' time but part of our everyday lives nowadays. Together, these four elements will compose what I will call in the remainder of the paper "enhanced"⁹⁹ ART".

"Enhanced ART"

I) An informal application of Groarke's "ART" helped us sketch the portrait of Descartes' meditator in *Part R: Represent* of this paper.¹⁰⁰ We are now in the process of "Testing" Descartes' recommendations by applying them for ourselves. And here (within the "T: Test" of our first application of Groarke's "ART" procedure to the *Meditations* as a whole) a new application of "ART" as a method for dressing, diagramming and evaluating arguments is in order and will prove illuminating.¹⁰¹ This is because, as noted above, Descartes recommended that his committed readers keep in mind both the overall structure of the *Meditations* (which is what *Part R: Represent* dealt with) and the individual components and arguments (which is what we will do below). Such reconstructions have already been done in the literature. For instance, John Carriero's *Between Two Worlds* (to cite just one example) can be interpreted as a reconstruction of all six of Descartes' *Meditations*.

As part of his "ART" analysis, Groarke proposes the use of Key Components (KC) Tables to "represent" arguments in premise-conclusion form. A KC table indicates which components are premises, which is a conclusion; spells out any hidden components; and specifies the mode of each component (e.g.: verbal claim; image; sound; taste, smell, etc.).¹⁰²

This type of situation involves two opposing reasons (it is good to follow commands *and* it is difficult to act as commanded) and the closer in intensity and persuasiveness these reasons are, the less likely we are to act. Descartes seems to imply that such a stalemate does not (or is less likely to) happen when we direct ourselves to action. Maybe that is one of the reasons spontaneity counts as a higher degree of freedom (AT IV, 174; CSMK 245).

⁹⁹ Here 'Enhanced' means "multimodally", "interdisciplinarily" and "technologically" enhanced.

¹⁰⁰ Groarke notes that "the kind of analysis ART proposes can be carried out informally, without the formal construction of KC tables and argument diagrams" (Groarke 2019, 357). A discussion of KC (Key components) tables follows below.

¹⁰¹ "Dressing an argument" refers to identifying the premises and conclusion of that argument (Groarke 2015, 135).

¹⁰² Groarke 2019, 338-340. Groarke's way of representing KC tables in his 2015 "Going Multimodal" paper is slightly different than the most recent one from "Depicting Visual Argument: an ART approach" (2019). In the earlier paper the three columns of the table are labelled: "Act of arguing; Argument; Mode of arguing" (Groarke 2015, 135-136). It is the more recent (2019) version of KC Tables that I use in the remainder of this paper.

Reconstructing the individual arguments of the *Meditations* by means of KC Tables will involve more precision and rigour than prior treatments of the arguments of the *Meditations* thus contributing to improving our critical thinking skills. Here is an example:

Whatever I have up till now accepted as most true I have acquired either from the senses or through the senses. But from time to time I have found that the senses deceive, and it is prudent never to trust completely those who deceived us even once.

Yet although the senses occasionally deceive us with respect to objects which are very small or in the distance ... (AT VII, 18; CSM II, 12).

KC Table 1

Key Components	Role	Explanation
Objects which are very small or in the distance appear different than they actually are.	Premise (s)	Verbal claim
The senses occasionally deceive us.	Subconclusion (o)	Verbal claim
It is prudent never to trust completely those who deceived us even once.	Premise (n)	Verbal claim
I must withhold assent from sense-based opinions.	Main Conclusion (mc) (hidden) ¹⁰³	Verbal claim

s
|
o + n
|
mc

So far, even with the use of KC tables and argument diagrams, we have not gone beyond Rickless' view of the history of philosophy, namely aiming for accurate reconstructions of philosophical views.¹⁰⁴ The novelty of my proposal in this paper comes from the next three features of such reconstructions I advocate for: II) using the KC tables and argument diagrams we will have completed in I) to recast the arguments in question in combinations of images, nonverbal sounds alongside words, i.e. in multimodal form. III) Recasting the arguments under scrutiny in this multimodal form by using mostly period-specific (mostly 17th century) artistic sources and IV) resorting to technological means unheard of in Descartes' time but part of our everyday lives nowadays. My suggestion to use KC tables featuring verbal claims as starting points for formulating multimodal arguments (and their corresponding multimodal KC tables)

¹⁰³ This conclusion is implicit in the passage just quoted but it is explicitly stated later in *Meditation I*: "So in the future I must withhold my assent from these former beliefs ..." (AT VII, 22; CSM II, 15).

¹⁰⁴ See Footnote 9.

expands and further develops Groarke's ideas thus moving from "ART" to "enhanced ART". While Groarke recommended starting from full blown arguments and devising KC tables which preserve the same modes as the original arguments,¹⁰⁵ my "enhanced ART" proposal features KC tables twice. The "enhanced ART" approach comprises the following sequence of steps: Descartes' argument (expressed verbally and often by exact quotation); KC table containing verbal claims; multimodal KC table; verbal discussion of multimodal KC table as well as regular KC table, discussion followed by the evaluation of the overall argument.¹⁰⁶

II) I argue that in order to make Descartes' text resonate with us today and as a means of satisfying Descartes' condition of protracted study of the *Meditations*, Descartes' present-day diligent companions have the option of using multimodal reasoning. Following Groarke, Birdsell and others, I take a "multimodal argument" to be a piece of discourse intended to convince an audience of a certain point of view by supporting that point of view with reasons in the form of images, sounds, tastes, verbal claims, etc.¹⁰⁷ Images, other visuals (diagrams, videos, etc.) as well as sounds can play several roles in arguments: first, they may be used as nonverbal flags (attempting to grab the audience's attention; e.g. a drum roll). Second, visuals, sounds, etc. can function as nonverbal demonstrations: before and after shots brought before the audience as a point of comparison in order to draw some conclusion (e.g. that a building was nicely restored). Third, images can be employed as symbols: skulls mean death; a diagonally crossed-out circle means "no", "forbidden; etc. Fourth, there are visual and auditory metaphors (Pinocchio's nose means "liar"; an upbeat musical tempo can stand for "fun", Chopin's *Funeral March* stands for "disturbing" or for expressing disapproval).¹⁰⁸

Thus far I have made a case for 21st century meditators' taking certain liberties in their implementation of Descartes' conditions. In support of my proposal, I have cited the historical and cultural gap between Descartes' 17th century readers and us. We should not however lose sight of the original context of the *Meditations* either. In an effort to bridge this gap, I suggest III) employing mostly period-specific artistic sources in our multimodal approach. In doing so, we will in fact be taking our cue from Descartes' own period. The Baroque was underway in Europe at the time Descartes was writing and mixing media (text and images in emblems; music, text, dance and stage sets in opera; etc.)¹⁰⁹ not only for entertainment but also for edifying and instructive purposes was common.

To remain Cartesian in spirit, I contend, present-day meditators will also be sensitive to and informed by the history of philosophy, of ideas and of art. This is because bringing to light the connections between Descartes' theses and their

¹⁰⁵ Groarke 2015, 138-139.

¹⁰⁶ My proposed multimodal reconstructions of verbal arguments do not involve problematic uses of "translation" (from words to images, sounds, etc.). For details, see "Objections and Replies" below.

¹⁰⁷ Groarke 2015, 140.

¹⁰⁸ Non-verbal demonstrations, metaphors and symbols are characterized as "sub modes of visual (or auditory, etc.) modes of arguing" (Groarke 2015, 147). See also Groarke 2018a and 2018b.

¹⁰⁹ See Rueger 2011; Hanning 2008.

predecessors and successors not only in philosophy but also in music, painting and literature will keep our attempt at properly reading Descartes anchored and contextualized. This foray into the history of philosophy, of ideas and of art will in fact uncover and recover some of the sources that may have inspired and influenced Descartes himself when he devised his philosophical system. In this way, our present-day multimodal approach (comprising visual and auditory elements) will unveil and then illustrate with contemporary means the ways in which Descartes distilled philosophically and expressed verbally contents and attitudes occurring in the painting, music and literature of his time.

IV) The images and sounds introduced in III) are easily accessible to us today due to the technology we have available. Images and sounds are captivating; they grab our attention and are also linked with and evoke emotions in us. Additionally, by resorting to technological means, the present-day committed reader of Descartes is contemporizing Descartes' meditating process. The reader is using tools she is already familiar with to make her own a text that otherwise might sound remote and even foreign. Using familiar technological tools for the purpose of combining images of period-specific paintings and music with the text of the *Meditations* may increase the likelihood that we will stick with our persistent and careful consideration of the *Meditations*.

For these reasons, the contemporary Cartesian meditator could, and in my view *will*, decide to use technology in an effort to make Descartes' views her own. In doing so, the 21st meditator would find some support in the technological future Descartes mentioned approvingly in the *Discourse* where Descartes remarks on the distant possibility of technological advances that would make us masters of nature, would improve our health and prolong our lives.¹¹⁰ However, it is unlikely that he could have ever foreseen the details of technological innovations we now take for granted.

Additionally, using technology in this way and for this purpose could attune the contemporary reader to some of the pitfalls and shortcoming of technology itself: the danger of been carried away by a never-ending flow of information, images and sounds which surround us from all sides, dull our critical abilities and by-pass our discernment. So, by using technology to illuminate the Cartesian text, with proper care and sufficient time spent on this endeavour, the reader can find the Cartesian text shedding new light on and supplying the means for remedying some of the flaws of technology itself. By analogy with Descartes' use of doubt to undermine doubt (i.e., to combat skepticism from within and thus, by Descartes' own lights, reach certainty), present-day committed readers of Descartes who take the multimodal route outlined here will use technology to undermine some of technology's flaws and start remedying them). This, in turn, will contribute to our visual, auditory and digital literacy thus making us better critical thinkers.

One of my main theses of this paper is that, in an attempt to apply Descartes' procedural prerequisites, some contemporary Cartesian mediators will build multimodally on Groarke's "ART" approach as well as use technology to formulate

¹¹⁰ AT VI, 61-63; CSM I, 142-143.

visual and auditory arguments using period-specific artistic sources. Then, these contemporary diligent companions of Descartes will proceed to examine the resulting multimodal arguments again and again.

Descartes himself may have opened the door to such an approach as we learn from the *Synopsis*:

In the *Third Meditation* I have explained quite fully enough, I think, my principal argument for proving the existence of God. But in order to draw my readers' minds away from the senses as far as possible, *I was not willing to use any comparison taken from bodily things. So it may be that many obscurities remain; but I hope they will be completely removed later, in my Replies to the Objections. ... In the Replies [the causal principle as applicable to the idea of God] is illustrated by the comparison of a very perfect machine, the idea of which is in the mind of some engineer. Just as the objective intricacy belonging to the idea must have some cause, namely the scientific knowledge of the engineer*(AT VII, 14-15; CSM II, 10-11 – emphasis added).

This passage appears to indicate that in the *Replies* Descartes is relaxing the stringent requirements used in the *Meditations* and is willing to employ more corporeal references for the sake of assisting his readers to better understand his views. I will interpret this as permission for us, 21st century readers of Descartes, to avail ourselves of aids unavailable in Descartes' time but easily accessible to us, for the purpose of making Descartes' text resonate with us today.

Furthermore, certain formulations used in the very text of the *Meditations* seem to invite bringing in extra material and customizing one's reading. Here is Descartes:

Now the best way of achieving a firm knowledge of reality is first to accustom ourselves to doubting all things, especially corporeal things. Although I had seen many writings by the Academics and the Sceptics on this subject, and was reluctant to reheat and serve this precooked material, I could not avoid devoting one whole Meditation to it. *And I should like my readers not just to take the short time needed to go through it, but to devote several months, or at least weeks, to considering the topics dealt with, before going on to the rest of the book. If they do this they will undoubtedly be able to derive much greater benefit from what follows* (AT VII, 130; CSM II, 94- emphasis added).

I will assume, in light of the reasons from *Part R: Represent*, that this excerpt refers to the applied stage of reading the *Meditations*. Once they have familiarized themselves with the whole text, this passage directs committed readers of the *Meditations* to pace themselves and ration their reading of Descartes' book. In the applied stage, the *Meditations* are not be read at one sitting but months or at least weeks ought to be devoted to the doubt of *Meditation I*.¹¹¹ Interestingly, Descartes does *not* seem to be saying that the text of *Meditation I* is *the only thing* one ought to occupy oneself with during this time. What he *is* saying, it seems to me, is that doubt-related topics ought be considered. This appears to indicate that other texts, by other authors, maybe even

¹¹¹ In light of the reasons provided in *Part A* I will assume that we, diligent 21st century readers of Descartes, have already covered the book in its entirety once, without going into details.

other media are permitted as long as they deal with scepticism-related issues. And this opens up a whole array of possibilities and scenarios, from optical and auditory illusions, trompe-l'oeil paintings, virtual reality environments, etc. And we have been given given permission to consider and reflect on them for months or at least weeks.

As an example, let us reformulate multimodally the argument from *Meditation I* we have already diagrammed above. To customize Descartes' arguments and make his points register better with us as readers, the following multimodal reconstruction of the argument from *Meditation I* will have a first premise that is different in content but analogous in import: while Descartes mentioned "objects which are very small or in the distance" (AT VII, 18; CSM II, 12), the reconstruction below resorts to looking through a 17th century perspective box. This new example of sense deception is in keeping with Descartes' own variations on the same theme. In *Meditation VI*, for instance, we find the narrator stating:

Later on, however, I had many experiences which gradually undermined all the faith I had had in the senses. *Sometimes towers which had looked round from a distance appeared square from close up; and enormous statues standing on their pediments did not seem large when observed from the ground.* In these and countless other such cases, I found that the judgements of the external senses were mistaken (AT VII, 76; CSM II, 53; my emphasis).

Following Groarke, this multimodal reconstruction will employ visual quotation: the first premise of Descartes' argument will be rendered "as [a] thumbnail in [the] KC table". "[T]his process" is called "visual quotation" because it aims to reproduce an original (or some detail of an original) it refers to".¹¹²

Multimodal recasting of KC1: by visual quotation

Key Components	Role	Explanation
Objects and spaces viewed through the peepholes of a perspective box appear different than they actually are. 	Premise (pb)	Visual quotation ¹¹³
The senses occasionally deceive us.	Subconclusion (o)	Verbal claim
It is prudent never to trust completely those who deceived us even once.	Premise (n)	Verbal claim
I must withhold assent from sense-based opinions.	Main Conclusion (mc) (hidden)	Verbal claim

¹¹² Groarke 2019, 354-355.

¹¹³ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hoogstraten_Perspective_Box.jpg

pb
|
o + n
|
mc

In the spirit of Descartes' recommendations regarding the repeated, thorough and sustained scrutiny of the text of the *Meditations*, here is a second multimodal reconstruction of the same argument. This second multimodal reconstruction resorts to ostension, which "does not aim to replace seeing with a verbal description but instead attempts to direct our seeing in some way – physically, by pointing, or by words that direct us to something that can be identified and seen" (Groarke 2019, 354-355).¹¹⁴

Multimodal recasting of KC1: by ostension

Key Components	Role	Explanation
Objects and spaces viewed through the peepholes of a perspective box appear different than they actually are.	Premise (H)	Visual - link to images of Hoogstraten's perspective box: https://jhna.org/articles/seeing-outside-the-box-reexamining-the-top-of-samuel-van-hoogstratens-london-perspective-box/ ¹¹⁵
The senses occasionally deceive us.	Subconclusion (o)	Verbal claim
It is prudent never to trust completely those who deceived us even once.	Premise (n)	Verbal claim
I must withhold assent from sense-based opinions.	Main Conclusion (mc) (hidden)	Verbal claim

H
|
o + n
|

¹¹⁴ Groarke 2019, 354-355.

¹¹⁵ For views from different angles of Hoogstraten's Perspective box see the images included in (Nakamura 2020): <https://jhna.org/articles/seeing-outside-the-box-reexamining-the-top-of-samuel-van-hoogstratens-london-perspective-box/>

mc

Expressed verbally, the argument represented by the two multimodal KC Tables and diagrams above would be: ‘When I look through the peephole of this 17th century perspective box by Hoogstraten, I cannot help but see a long room with a floor stretching before me; the room has tall ceilings and there are openings to other rooms, a staircase, etc. But the box itself is only a few dozen centimetres long so what I see is in fact an illusion. Hence my eyes are in fact deceiving me. On the basis on such experiences, I conclude that senses are deceptive “and it is prudent never to trust completely those who deceived us even once”. Therefore I must withhold assent from sense-based opinions’.

Upon reflection, the perspective box example can also be interpreted as a combination of sense-based illusion and evil demon scenario¹¹⁶ since the painter skilfully manipulates the laws of perspective in order to make us (the viewers) see things that aren’t really there (i.e., to implant in our minds ideas lacking actual mind-independent referents). This perspective box example also brings our attention to Descartes’ painter analogy¹¹⁷ and invites us to reconstruct that argument by means of another KC Table. Then, we may already be wondering what a multimodal reformulation of the painter analogy could look like. And, so, we find ourselves well on our way in the process of meditating Descartes-style!

Upon immersing ourselves in skeptical issues in a variety of media, months later, time has come to tackle *Meditation II*. To that end, we get some guidance from Descartes’ remarks in the *Second Replies*:

The correct, and my view unique, method of [drawing away from the senses] is contained in my Second Meditation. *But the nature of the method is such that scrutinizing it just once is not enough. Protracted and repeated study is required to eradicate the lifelong habit of confusing things related to the intellect with corporeal things, and to replace it with the opposite habit of distinguishing the two; this will take at least a few days to acquire. I think that was the best justification for my devoting the whole of the second Meditation to this topic alone* (AT VII, 131; CSM II, 94 – emphasis added).

Again, Descartes does not seem to say “don’t do anything but read and re-read the text of *Meditation II*, for days on end”. “Scrutinizing” could plausibly cover the “casting around” mentioned at the beginning of *Meditation III*.¹¹⁸ The door seems open to pictorial, musical versions of the cogito; to performing the actual wax experiment, etc. Once again, possibilities abound. Provided we are careful to square the image-based and auditory components of our reconstructions with the standards of reason (as Descartes himself demanded)¹¹⁹ our multimodal strategy can still comply with Descartes’ recommendations.

¹¹⁶ AT VII, 22-23; CSM II, 15.

¹¹⁷ AT VII, 20; CSM II, 13-14.

¹¹⁸ AT VII, 35; CSM II, 24.

¹¹⁹ AT VI, 14; CSM I, 117.

As we recall, recovering from doubt and gaining genuine knowledge require meticulous keeping to Descartes' order by focusing on the basic components of Descartes' proofs as well as on how they are linked.¹²⁰ And, as Descartes says at the end of *Meditation IV*, "this is just what [we will] take good care to do from now on", only multimodally.

Now I would like to share with you *one* (among the many possibilities), one more extended attempt at making Descartes' views our own. This will be part of a technology-enhanced, multimodal first-pass attempt at meditating Cartesian-style. The emphasis will be on reformulating multimodally the key arguments from all six *Meditations* rather than on justifying my artistic choices, discussing these choices and their limitations.¹²¹ The following recorded presentation as given < <https://youtu.be/pM86ej7Lwhk> > will inevitably be incomplete and provisional since, like Arnauld,¹²² other commitments prevented me from repeatedly completing the focused scrutiny Descartes enjoined.

Above I have tried to show that the process of carefully choosing images, sounds and words to capture Descartes' intended message can assist us in becoming intimately familiar with Descartes' writings. Justifying such choices will facilitate full engagement and help make the text our own, like Descartes wanted. It might even make us more centred, less jostled around by predigested information and ready-made views. Before inviting you, readers of this paper, to embark on Cartesian-style meditation and create your own multimodal reconstruction of Descartes' *Meditations*, responding to some objections is in order.

OBJECTIONS AND REPLIES

First, it could be objected that the multimodal reconstruction of Descartes' *Meditations* that this paper proposed and defended is not worth undertaking since we have independent grounds to reject Descartes' conclusions (the existence of God, the immateriality of the soul, etc.). Maybe, the critic might continue, some of us are convinced by some version of the argument from evil and on that basis reject the existence of God. Or maybe some reject the immateriality of the soul because they endorse physicalism for what they take to be strong, considered reasons, etc.. Since Descartes assured us that practicing his requirements in the proper order and for a sufficiently long time is both necessary and sufficient for reaching these conclusions (the existence of God, the immateriality of the soul, etc.),¹²³ to the extent to which the conclusions are impeachable, the procedures leading to these conclusions are also invalidated.

¹²⁰ AT VII, 13; CSM II, 9; AT VII, 4-5; CSM II, 5.

¹²¹ A detailed multimodal reconstruction of the *Meditations* accompanied by in-depth discussion would require a book-length treatment or a series of articles. Due to space constraints I can only offer a small sample here.

¹²² AT VII, 197; CSM II, 138.

¹²³ AT VII, 156; CSM II, 110-111.

In response, we can stress that our critical thinking skills and dispositions can still benefit from studying and putting into practice Descartes' recommendations even if the results he envisaged as stemming from his methods are not forthcoming. This is because we are training our natural reasoning abilities,¹²⁴ (maybe by spotting errors that escaped Descartes but are apparent to -some of- us).¹²⁵ There is also value in attempting to understand not only how Descartes reasoned but also why he might have taken his proposed arguments to be persuasive (some even to the point of certainty, as he claimed – AT VII, 4; CSM II, 4-5).

Second, a critic might remark that the multimodal reconstruction of Descartes' *Meditations* proposed and defended in this paper is un-Cartesian in spirit because it invites too much reliance on the senses and the imagination. Groarke shows how "visual, verbal and musical modes of arguing" can be and often are combined in a very powerful genre of argument which Groarke calls "argument by experience" (Groarke 2015, 151).¹²⁶ Since Descartes explicitly sought to assist the meditator detach from the senses,¹²⁷ employing a type of reasoning that relies heavily on sense experience runs counter to the aim of the Cartesian project in the *Meditations*.

A reply to this objection could start from Descartes' remarks to Mersenne in the *Second Set of Replies*:

the objections you raise [about the natives of Canada, the inhabitants of Nineveh, the Turks and so on] cannot occur to those who follow the road which I have indicated and who lay aside *for a time* whatever they have acquired from the senses, so as to attend to dictates of pure an uncorrupted reason (AT VII, 154; CSM II, 109 – emphasis added).

This passage indicates that according to Descartes contents accessed through the senses need not always be unacceptable, hence the qualification "for a time". This qualification reminds us that the order of meditative steps is crucial: whether the reader is working through *Meditation I* or *Meditation VI*, to take just one example, will determine the role and credence given to sensory ideas.

In *Meditation I* and *Meditation II* before the *cogito*, arguments that rely on sensory information are used to demonstrate the unreliability of sense perception. During this demolition phase multimodal arguments are not only appropriate but can in fact be more effective than their verbal counterparts at convincing the reader that sense organs ought not to be trusted. Looking through the peephole of an actual perspective box demonstrates, i.e., actually shows, to the meditator that her eyes are deceiving her. So, using multimodal reasoning in this context (in *Meditation I* and *Meditation II* before the *cogito*) is in keeping with Descartes' goals.

¹²⁴ AT IXB, 18; CSM I, 188.

¹²⁵ Descartes advised his readers that "they should not accept any opinion as true – whether in [his] writings or elsewhere- unless they see it to be very clearly deduced from true principles" (AT IXB 20; CSM I, 189).

¹²⁶ Groarke 2015, 151-152.

¹²⁷ AT VII, 11; CSM II, 8.

Subsequently, the committed reader engaged in reconstructing the rest of the arguments of the *Meditations* (ranging from the discovery of the *cogito* in *Meditation II* to the proof for the existence of bodies in *Mediation VI*) is permitted to use arguments comprising visual, auditory, musical elements alongside verbal claims because in so doing the reader is following the approach Descartes himself took in the *Replies* to the *Meditations*. As we have seen, Descartes mentioned in the *Synopsis*¹²⁸ that the comparison between the idea of God and the idea of an intricate machine, which idea originates in the mind of an engineer, can provide additional clarification and help the reader grasp Descartes' proofs for the existence of God. Since such a comparison drawn from the corporeal sphere is appropriate in the case of the most metaphysical of notions, the idea of God, we can plausibly extend the use of similar devices to our reconstructions of other topics covered in the *Meditations*. It is also interesting to note that comparisons in the form of nonverbal demonstrations, metaphors and symbols were characterized by Groarke as "sub modes" of visual, auditory, etc. argument. As a result, Descartes' 'intricate machine analogy' licenses the use of multimodal arguments in our reconstructions of *Meditations I* through *VI*.

Furthermore, toward the end of *Mediation VI*, Descartes supplies procedures for ensuring the accuracy of sense-based evidence. Descartes indicates several means for assuring oneself of being awake: checking in more than one way where information is coming from, ensuring coherence with other ideas and pieces of information as well as being able to account in an uninterrupted sequence of steps for where things come from (AT VII, 89-90; CSM II, 61-62).¹²⁹ I suggest that Descartes' aforementioned steps can be adapted for the purpose of remedying and/or forestalling the use of technological tools for deceptive and manipulative purposes (e.g. to "doctor" and "fake" evidence instead of providing easy access to it). Verification and independent corroboration coupled with a "chain-of-custody" procedure can be viewed as present-day analogues of Descartes' steps and can assist us when using visuals, sounds, etc.

Even if the above-mentioned charge of un-Cartesianism can be defeated, our resolved critic might continue, asking contemporary readers of Descartes to not only dress and diagram the arguments of the *Meditations* but also to reformulate these arguments multimodally is overly complicated and only invites more errors. This is because the reader's attention is more likely to falter when working with images and sounds. Reformulating these arguments multimodally also amounts to asking readers to "translate" from one argumentative mode (in this case words) to another (images, sounds). Groarke argued against translation since it often involves loss of meaning, it opens the door to multiple interpretations, etc.¹³⁰ Why present translation from a verbal to a visual (and sometimes auditory and musical) mode as a vehicle for improving critical thinking? After all, the critic could say, if translation is useful when

¹²⁸ AT VII, 14-15; CSM II, 10-11.

¹²⁹ The fact that a 21st century serious Cartesian meditator may not be willing to resort to a veracious God to further buttress this argument, does not diminish, in my view, the usefulness of the steps Descartes recommends for checking the accuracy of sensory reports.

¹³⁰ Groarke 2015, 152.

reconstructing Descartes' arguments from the *Meditations*, why isn't it useful in the scenarios Groarke considers?

We could indicate to this critic that there are relevant differences between these two cases. Groarke warned against the flaws of attempting to move from images to words; moving in the opposite direction can in fact be an advantage; for instance, "when we use non-verbal modes to explicate a verbal text, as when we draw a diagram to help us better understand a written argument" (Groarke 2015, 139). That Descartes would not be opposed, in principle, to this type of aids and clarificatory tools (e.g. diagrams, etc.) we see from his emphasis in the *Rules* on the importance of proper notation for solving mathematical problems and his proposal to employ line segments as easily graspable stand-ins for more intricate components.¹³¹

Another objection, related to the one above, stems from realizing that it might not always be possible to come up with exact multimodal reformulations of arguments which Descartes expressed verbally. So we are just inviting errors by insisting on such reformulations.

To reply to this new objection it is useful to remember that multimodal argument does not mean "no verbal elements whatsoever"; so preserving some of Descartes' claims in verbal form is compatible with multimodality. Furthermore, rather than aiming for a full multimodal reconstruction of a given argument, sometimes it will be enough to provide additional support to Descartes' verbal claims, support presented visually, etc. Other times, maybe using analogies (presented via images, sounds, etc.) to Descartes' claims could also serve the goals of further clarification and of spending time with the text to increase the chances of Descartes' message to sink in.

It could also be pointed out that there are potentially serious problems with my proposed combination of disciplines (history of philosophy, history of art, history of ideas, art criticism, and informal logic). Bringing in artistic sources is particularly problematic since the reader might be tempted to stick with gazing at beautiful art instead of combining these artistic pieces in full-blown arguments. The same issues relate to using technological tools and digital media.

To alleviate these worries, let us note that each of the disciplines invoked and used in this paper has its own standards and we should abide by them. For instance, when attempting to trace what Descartes may have been aware of in terms of literary and artistic sources contemporary with him, it is important that our information be accurate. This is what the history of ideas and the history of art do. When bringing in paintings and 17th century music (e.g., Monteverdi), we should be aware of the art-historical as well as formal features of these pieces. However, above and beyond these standards of historical accuracy and aesthetic appreciation, the main criteria we must be sensitive to and mindful of are those of informal logic and argumentation theory (premise acceptability, premise relevance, sufficiency of support, etc.). Provided we keep in mind and abide by this hierarchy of disciplinary criteria, our multimodal reconstructions of Descartes' arguments from the *Meditations* can reach a similar level

¹³¹ Schmitter (2000) convincingly argues that in his early works (*Rules* and in the *Geometry*) Descartes employed a "notion of partial computability".

of argumentative strength as the verbal originals from Descartes' text. It is this hierarchical application of disciplinary standards that guided the examples of multimodal Cartesian meditation contained in this paper. This hierarchical application of disciplinary standards could be referred to as "integration by leader" (Hoffmann, Schmidt and Nersessian 2013, 1860),¹³² the leader in this case being informal logic and argumentation theory. Since argumentation theory is already considered by many authors an interdisciplinary field,¹³³ "enhanced ART" will also qualify as interdisciplinary. Work on how to accomplish the integration of different standards and spell out the details of the evaluation step of "ART" is still ongoing, as Groarke indicates.¹³⁴

As for the temptation to give up on the "ART" step (i.e. to put aside the arduous task of Acknowledging-Representing and reconstructing multimodally- Testing arguments from the *Meditations*) and instead turn exclusively (or mainly) to 'art' and artistic masterpieces (i.e. to gaze at the beautiful paintings or listen to the beautiful music that should have been a part of the process of multimodal Representation and reconstruction), this temptation exists, there is no denying it! How well we succeed in fighting this temptation will be a measure and reflection of our commitment to improve our critical thinking skills and dispositions as well as our autonomous decision-making. Descartes points in this direction when addressing the problem of doubt in a Letter to Buitendijck from 1643. Descartes characterizes doubting for the sake of doubting as volitional and impermissible, the implication being that whoever engages in it does so deliberately and is blameworthy, maybe even epistemically vicious.¹³⁵ For Descartes, doubt is a tool and a stepping stone to achieving certainty; similarly, artistic sources are tools and intermediary steps in the multimodal reconstructions of the *Meditations* proposed and defended in this paper, reconstructions ultimately geared to making us better critical thinkers. In their respective contexts, treating doubt and artistic sources as goals rather than means represents a failing on the part of each of the agents involved.

CONCLUSIONS

In answer to calls to expand the philosophical canon, diversify it or even do away completely with it, this paper built on Samuel Rickless' suggestions and made a case for maintaining Descartes on our study lists. Descartes' *Meditations* fulfill Rickless' conditions of philosophical virtues, and narrative structure. Properly read, the *Meditations* teach their readers to appreciate the text's beauty and complexity and hone the readers' philosophical skills. To these benefits singled out by Rickless, this paper added benefits that Descartes himself promised to his diligent companions: improved critical thinking skills and dispositions as well as better autonomous decision-making. To reap these benefits, Descartes assured us, the text must be read in accordance with

¹³² See also Holbrook 2013.

¹³³ Ribeiro 2013; Tindale 2013.

¹³⁴ Groarke 2019, 373.

¹³⁵ AT IV, 63; CSMK 229.

Descartes' explicit reading instructions, viz. by "meditating seriously" with the narrator of the *Meditations*.

This paper proposed and defended a way to operationalize what "meditating seriously" Descartes-style can mean nowadays. Drawing on Leo Groarke's "ART" (Acknowledge – Represent - Test) approach to arguments, it supplied a three-step procedure for reconstructing the arguments composing the *Meditations*: first, dress and diagram individual arguments using KC Tables. Second, reformulate these arguments in multimodal form (using images and nonverbal sounds alongside verbal claims). Third, analyze these reconstructions, justify the choice of nonverbal sources, assess the strength of the arguments; and repeat, again and again.

Reconstructing the arguments of the *Meditations* by dressing and diagramming them is not new. Where my paper goes off the beaten path is in its proposal to use "ART" to engage in a second, multimodal reconstruction of the *Meditations* (I refer to this procedure as "enhanced ART"). This second, multimodal reconstruction will be customized and personalized: one's own since devised by the individual reader in accordance with their background knowledge, preferences and skills, the only constraints being remaining faithful to the reader's initial (accurate) representation/reconstruction of the arguments of the *Meditations*.

This second pass at recasting the arguments in imagistic, auditory, musical etc. form requires added attention, reflection and critical assessment in the selection of visual, auditory and musical elements, properly linking them together, justifying one's choices, discussing the similarities as well as the differences from the original, verbally-expressed Cartesian elements. Focus, perseverance, open-mindedness, and creativity are required. These reasons coupled with the amount of time and scrupulous reflection and scrutiny dedicated to this whole multimodal process make this second multimodal reconstruction of the *Meditations* a "Cartesian meditation". To the extent to which no errors are allowed to creep in, it counts as "serious Cartesian meditation", of the kind Descartes enjoined in the *Preface to the reader* (AT VII, 11; CSM II, 8).

After supplying examples of arguments from the *Meditations* reconstructed by means of "enhanced ART", objections were answered. I argued that the value of the proposed "enhanced ART" approach to the *Meditations* can be decoupled from whether one rejects on independent grounds some of Descartes' main theses (e.g. the existence of God; the immateriality of the soul, etc.). "Enhanced ART" was shown to be not un-Cartesian in spirit and not overly complicated. We also saw that attention, diligence and a chain-of-custody process can help forestall and/or remedy the danger of "doctored" or "fake" visual, auditory, etc. evidence especially when this evidence comes in digital format. Furthermore, I contended, the errors this procedure might open one to can, to paraphrase Descartes' words from the *Passions*, be avoided and even become a source of benefit.¹³⁶ Additionally, I showed that our reformulations of Descartes' verbal arguments increase our comprehension of the text and improve our reasoning abilities even when these reformulations do not precisely mirror the original verbal arguments. A hierarchical, "integration-by-the-leader" method was suggested

¹³⁶ AT XI, 488; CSM I, 404.

for handling the problems stemming from integrating multiple disciplinary standards and perspectives. Finally, the success at overcoming the temptation to be carried by the captivating force of music, images and fast moving technology turned out to be dependent on and a reflection of our commitment to critical thinking and autonomous decision-making.

I want to suggest now that the “enhanced ART” approach can be fruitfully applied to the works of other philosophers as well. Reconstructing the arguments of other philosophers by means of KC Tables, recasting these dressed and diagrammed arguments in multimodal garb, reflecting on and justifying one’s visual, auditory, and artistic choices before assessing the arguments under scrutiny will undoubtedly contribute to our understanding of the works in question. Such efforts of (double) reconstruction and of assessment will also improve our critical thinking skills and dispositions. Depending on how prolonged and sustained our reconstructions combined with examination are, such endeavours can even count as “meditations”. They will not, however, be “Cartesian” meditations since the works and topics being scrutinized belong to other authors. For instance, when sufficient “enhanced ART” repetition and time are spent on Hume and his works, one can be said to engage in Humean meditation.

And this brings us to what sets “Cartesian meditation” apart from other “enhanced ART”- powered philosophical meditations: it is not only the authorship of the works occupying the reader’s attention but also whether the author left explicit reading instructions; if so, how well these explicit reading instructions lend themselves to being operationalized via “enhanced ART”; whether the author spelled out (or at least gave discernible indications of) the values he/she considered worth pursuing and linked these values with his/her works and the reading instructions he/she provided. An important aspect of my argument in this paper has been that in Descartes’ case there is a tight connection between what Descartes valued and pursued, his works and the ways of dealing with these works he recommended: Descartes valued individual, independent, clear and critical thinking and supplied advice about how to achieve such thinking through the intermediary of his (Descartes’) works.¹³⁷ What the situation is like for other philosophers is an open question and remains to be investigated. It is likely, though, that not all philosophers will furnish such a good fit between the aspects mentioned above (professed or at least implied values and goals, the author’s works and explicit reading instructions and the potential of the instructions and works to be reconstructed via “enhanced ART”, etc.). Hume, to continue with the example introduced above, opposed “monkish virtues” and praised conviviality, sociability,

¹³⁷ This connection supports transposing to Descartes John Sellars’ characterization of Lucretius as an exponent of “philosophy as a way of life”: “perhaps it does not matter so much whether we start out in the pursuit of truth or with a desire for a transformed life, for if we do our philosophy well we shall always end up with both” (Sellars 2017, 53). Because a large part of this paper has been dedicated to the “technical” aspects of applying Groarke’s informal logic “ART” method to Descartes’ *Meditations* (KC tables, multimodal KC tables, etc.), I framed the paper as a history of philosophy endeavour. Someone who applies “enhanced ART” to Descartes repeatedly and diligently will be engaging in practicing philosophy as a way of life.

affability, joyfulness.¹³⁸ To what extent Hume’s works assist a careful reader to achieve these virtues is not immediately clear, remains to be investigated and “enhanced ART” can be a helpful tool.

In other cases, “enhanced ART” can be useful in yet another way: there are authors, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz for example, who wrote not only treatises but also plays, poetry and music. Such works can be viewed as already multimodal and, when reconstructed via “enhanced ART” in the manner outlined in *Part T: Test* above, would involve multimodality twice. This shows, I submit, that Rickless’ sought-after “explosive [philosophical] diversity” can plausibly be expected to result from research and teaching using “enhanced ART”. I invite you to try it!

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¹³⁸ Hume 1975.

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