The Objections of Various Learned Men
to the foregoing Meditations
with the Replies of the Author
[Selections]

From: Descartes: Meditations on
First Philosophy (with Selections
from the Objections and Replies)
edited by J. Cottingham (2nd ed.),
firm and immutable conviction concerning these conclusions, when we simply recollect that they were previously deduced from quite evident principles (our ability to call them ‘conclusions’ presupposes such a recollection). My reply is that the required certainty is indeed possessed by those whose knowledge of God enables them to understand that the intellectual faculty which he gave them cannot but tend towards the truth; but the required certainty is not possessed by others. This point was explained so clearly at the end of the Fifth Meditation\(^\text{10}\) that it does not seem necessary to add anything further here. \textit{[Second Replies: CSM II 102–5]}

I have one further worry, namely how the author avoids reasoning in a circle when he says that we are sure that what we clearly and distinctly perceive is true only because God exists.\(^\text{11}\)

But we can be sure that God exists only because we clearly and distinctly perceive this. Hence, before we can be sure that God exists, we ought to be able to be sure that whatever we perceive clearly and evidently is true. \textit{[Fourth Objections: CSM II 150]}

Lastly, as to the fact that I was not guilty of circularity when I said that the only reason we have for being sure that what we clearly and distinctly perceive is true is the fact that God exists, but that we are sure that God exists only because we perceive this clearly: I have already given an adequate explanation of this point in my reply to the Second Objections, where I made a distinction between what we in fact perceive clearly and what we remember having perceived clearly on a previous occasion.\(^\text{12}\) To begin with, we are sure that God exists because we attend to the arguments which prove this; but subsequently it is enough for us to remember that we perceived something clearly in order for us to be certain that it is true. This would not be sufficient if we did not know that God exists and is not a deceiver. \textit{[Fourth Replies: CSM II 171]}

\(^{10}\) Above, pp. 54f. \(^{11}\) Cf. Med. V, above, p. 55. \(^{12}\) See above, pp. 131 and 134.