

On the *Meditations*

"I will suppose that the sky, the air, the earth, colors, figures, sounds, and all external things, are nothing better than the illusions of dreams..." (First Meditation)

1. A philosopher's first premise is his act of faith.
2. Descartes' first premise: doubt. Its corollary, solitude.
3. *"I have opportunely freed my mind from all cares and am happily disturbed by no passions" (First Meditation)*
4. His "niece" died of scarlet fever just as the first critics received the *Meditations*—"niece," not daughter, only because he couldn't publicize his relations with the servant girl.
5. Francine he loved. He loved his sister too; she also died that year,
6. as did his father. Rene had written to postpone a visit when Francine died; by the time the letter arrived, no visit was possible.
7. The funeral was held in another country.
8. *"...in amazement I almost persuade myself that I am now dreaming." (First Meditation)*
9. Though the *Meditations* were already being read by then, they feel like an act of mourning.
10. A call to strip down, to tear away garments already half torn.
11. *I will consider myself as without hands, eyes, flesh, blood, or any of the senses" (First Meditation)*
12. Imagine this self lifting his daughter's coffin, taking the weight of it on his fleshless, bloodless shoulders.
13. Happily disturbed by no passions.
14. *"...it follows that the body may, indeed, without difficulty perish, but that the mind is in its own nature immortal." (Synopsis of the Meditations)*
15. He claimed afterward that he did not fear death.
16. It was *"easier and more sure"* than believing in the preservation of life.
(letter to Chanut, 15 June 1646)