Time and Narrative in Descartes's *Meditations*

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Abstract

Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy*, regarded by many as his masterpiece, has been the subject of significant philosophical debate since its publication in 1641. Yet the *Meditations* is remarkable not only for its philosophical ideas but also for the style in which it was written. Two of the most notable stylistic elements of the *Meditations* are the use of temporal markers—a significant departure from analogous philosophical treatises of the same period—and the fact that the text is written in such a way as to invite readers to subsume themselves into the role of the narrator, so as to experience its arguments for themselves. Many commentators have hinted at the importance of the narrator. But there has been little attempt at a sustained engagement. The function of the text as a series of days of meditation has also been insufficiently explored.

In order to further investigate the roles of time and narrative within the *Meditations*, this thesis uses various reading methods provided by narrative theory, with particular focus on Monika Fludernik's experiential model of narrative. Fludernik's model allows for a clearer articulation of the role readers play in enacting meaning, and the way in which readers will in a sense "author" a text on their own terms. Reading the *Meditations* as an experiential narrative also illuminates significant issues to do with Descartes's distinction between geometric and discursive argument, his conception of time, the specific expression of the Cogito in the *Meditations*, and the "reorientation" at the heart of the text—which I am calling a sort of conversion. The conversion at the heart of the *Meditations* will be explored in parallel with Saint Augustine's *Confessions* and Saint Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, two texts which—like the *Meditations*—can be thought of as experiential narratives designed to bring about some kind of conversion. I argue that such an experiential reading, drawing on the roles of time and narrative in the text, offers to enrich our understanding of the *Meditations*.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in the text:

AT	The standard Franco-Latin edition of the writings of Descartes edited by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, *Œuvres de Descartes*, 11 vols. (revised edition; Paris: VRIN, 1996), cited by volume and page number.
CSM	*The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vols. 1 and 2, translated by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), cited by volume and page number.
CSMK	*The Philosophical Writings of Descartes: Volume III The Correspondence*, translated by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch, and Anthony Kenny (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), cited by page number.
Conf.	Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, translated by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), cited by book, chapter and paragraph. For the Latin I have referred to James O'Donnell's three volume collection of text and commentary. See James J. O'Donnell (ed.), *Augustine: Confessions*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).
Ex.	*The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, translated by Louis J. Puhl, S.J. (New York: Random House, 2000), cited by section number.
TNN	Monika Fludernik, *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* (London: Routledge, 1996), cited by page number.

Introduction

René Descartes (1596–1650) is widely considered to be the 'father of modern philosophy.'[1] Indeed, this label is so entrenched that Tom Sorell calls it a 'cliché.'[2] Descartes's standing as the so-called father of modern philosophy stems from his desire to forge his own philosophical path, breaking free of entrenched modes of thinking so as to arrive at any given point of certainty on his own terms. According to John Cottingham: 'The transition from the "medieval" to the "modern" world outlook was a lengthy, gradual and exceedingly complex affair; but if there can be said to be one generation that represents the pivotal phase of that transition, it is the generation of Descartes and his contemporaries.'[3] Jorge Secada, after considering Descartes's philosophy in an extensive comparison to Scholastic metaphysics, claims that the 'Cartesian ego became the true atom, both social and natural, of modern metaphysics.'[4] Sorell considers that Descartes, in his distinctions between philosophy and history, and his elevation of science in comparison to the arts, has done enough to earn his title of father of modern philosophy.[5] He acknowledges that there are 'parallels' between Descartes and Aristotle, 'but they are parallels at a very high level of generality.'[6] The certainty of knowledge on the basis of first principles, and a regard for common observations are two such parallels that Sorell finds between Descartes and Aristotle. What emerges clearly here is the view of Descartes as an innovator and a revolutionary.

Yet, others have taken a more ambivalent view on the question of the radical nature of Descartes's philosophy. Marjorie Grene and Roger Ariew, in contrast, have questioned the

[1] John Cottingham, *Cartesian Reflections* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 55; Stephen Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 5; Richard Watson, *Cogito Ergo Sum: The Life of René Descartes* (Boston: David R. Godine, 2002), p. 3.
[2] Tom Sorell, 'Descartes's Modernity', in John Cottingham (ed.), *Reason, Will, and Sensation: Studies in Descartes' Metaphysics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 29.
[3] John Cottingham, *Descartes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 1. See also John Cottingham, 'René Descartes', in Ted Honderich (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (2nd edn.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 201–205. The gradual transition from the medieval to the modern world is further highlighted by Rupert Hall, who has suggested that the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century is best understood 'as the climax to a more tentative process of change and development' over decades, and centuries. See A. Rupert Hall, 'On the Historical Singularity of the Scientific Revolution of the Seventeenth Century', in J.H. Elliott and H.G. Koenigsberger (eds.), *The Diversity of History: Essays in Honour of Sir Herbert Butterfield* (London: Routledge, 1970), p. 208.
[4] Jorge Secada, *Cartesian Metaphysics: the Late Scholastic Origins of Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 268.
[5] See Sorell, 'Descartes's Modernity', pp. 29–45.
[6] Sorell, 'Descartes's Modernity', p. 36.

widespread opinion that Descartes represents a 'turning point' in the history of philosophy.[7] They argue that the idea that modern philosophy began with Descartes is 'badly mistaken.'[8] While they acknowledge that his writings contain both tradition and innovation, they suggest: '[e]ven the most radical innovator has roots; even the most outrageous new beginner belongs to an intellectual community in which opponents have to be refuted and friends won over.'[9] Grene and Ariew grant that Descartes was original and innovative, but stop short of suggesting his originality and innovation should be seen as emerging *ex nihilo*. This view of Descartes as innovative, yet indebted to his predecessors was also expressed by Desmond Clarke, who called Descartes an 'innovative Aristotelian'.[10] This label implies that while innovative, ultimately Descartes does not do enough to step out of Aristotle's shadow. Charles Schmitt made a similar claim even earlier, suggesting that Descartes's debt to Aristotle was significant.[11] Daniel Garber has pointed to two contemporaries of Descartes: Froidmont, who saw Descartes as doing nothing more than reviving atomism, an ancient system of thought; and Morin, who saw Descartes as 'an open-minded traditionalist, one who respects both intellectual tradition and the new discoveries of the new age.'[12] Morin, on Garber's reading, saw nothing revolutionary or radical in Descartes's writings.

There is, then, diversity of opinion as to Descartes's standing as the father of modern philosophy. Furthermore, there is diversity of opinion as to whether the philosophical paths he strode were new, or well-trod by his predecessors. There is some consensus that Descartes was innovative, despite scholars disagreeing on just *how* innovative he was, or in what precise areas he was innovating. In any case, it is beyond doubt that Descartes's writings have prompted intense debate from the seventeenth century up to the present. The immense commentary on Descartes's writings is indicative of his influence. As Margaret Wilson stated back in 1978, 'There are already more books on Descartes's philosophy than anyone other than a near-maniacal specialist could assimilate in a single lifetime.'[13] Descartes's significant influence on the philosophical landscape is palpable in the lively discussion of his ideas up to today.

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[7] Marjorie Grene and Roger Ariew, 'Prologue', in Roger Ariew and Marjorie Grene (eds.), *Descartes and his Contemporaries: Meditations, Objections, and Replies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 1.
[8] Grene and Ariew, 'Prologue', p. 1.
[9] Grene and Ariew, 'Prologue', p. 1.
[10] Desmond M. Clarke, *Descartes' Philosophy of Science* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), pp. 197–206.
[11] Charles B. Schmitt, *Aristotle and the Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 28.
[12] Daniel Garber, 'Descartes, the Aristotelians, and the Revolution that did not Happen in 1637', *The Monist*, 71/4 (1988), p. 482.
[13] Margaret Wilson, *Descartes* (London: Routledge, 1978), p. vii.

There is at least one aspect, however, that has been neglected up to this point. In the debate over the origins of various ideas that appear in Descartes's writings and comparison to Aristotle, medieval and Scholastic thinkers, the question of Descartes's novelty in terms of *style* has rarely been considered. Amelie Rorty, back in 1986, acknowledged that 'Descartes wrote in a remarkable variety of genres.'[14] However, very little work has been done to engage with this concept. As I will illustrate, Descartes's break from the Scholastic model, more than comprising a break from Scholastic ideas, was also a break from the mode of exposition of those ideas. This is most fully expressed in his 1641 work *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Many consider it to be a masterpiece. John Carriero calls the *Meditations* 'a truly revolutionary work,'[15] while Bernard Williams considers it to be 'one of the most original achievements in philosophical literature.'[16]

In the *Meditations* Descartes employed a pseudo-autobiographical voice that eschewed the traditional "geometric" order of arguments of analogous works of the period. The narrator of the *Meditations* is an individual (whose gender is not supplied, but I will use the masculine pronoun here) who decides he must carefully examine each of his beliefs in turn; if he can find any cause to doubt one, he will throw it out. He is hoping to cleanse himself of his former errors in order to gain a stable foundation of beliefs that are unquestionable. These will act as the framework for a belief system through which the narrator can understand himself and the world around him. The activity is presented as occurring over six days. On the first day, the narrator throws all his beliefs into question, including his very existence. On the second, he comes to the conclusion that he does in fact exist, and that he is a thinking thing. On the third day he casts around to see if he can discover anything beyond himself, which leads him to the idea of God. On the fourth day, he considers the concept of clear and distinct ideas, and how they can keep him from falling into error. The fifth day includes further consideration of God and a second proof of God's existence. Finally, the sixth day of meditation is devoted to further consideration of the distinction between the body and the mind.

Yet although useful for the sake of summary, such schematism does not appropriately capture the experience of reading the text. By contrast, consider the opening lines of the *Meditations*, which provide a striking example of Descartes's style and purpose:

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[14] Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, 'The Structure of Descartes' *Meditations*', in Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Descartes' Meditations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 1–20. This essay was a reworked version of an earlier essay, so in point of fact the concept was being acknowledged even earlier than I have suggested. See Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, 'Experiments in Philosophic Genre: Descartes' *Meditations*', *Critical Inquiry*, 9/3 (1983), pp. 545–564.

[15] John Carriero, *Between Two Worlds: A Reading of Descartes's Meditations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 1.

[16] Bernard Williams, *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p. 20.

> Some years ago I was struck [*animadverti*] by the large number of falsehoods that I had accepted [*admiserim*] as true in my childhood, and by the highly doubtful nature of the whole edifice that I had subsequently based [*postea superextruxi*] on them. I realized that it was necessary, once in the course of my life, to demolish everything completely and start again right from the foundations if I wanted to establish anything at all in the sciences that was stable and likely to last. But the task looked an enormous one, and I began to wait until I should reach a mature enough age to ensure that no subsequent time of life would be more suitable for tackling such inquiries. This led me to put the project off for so long that I would now be to blame if by pondering over it any further I wasted the time still left for carrying it out. So today I have expressly rid my mind of all worries and arranged for myself a clear stretch of free time [*securum mihi otium procuravi*]. I am here quite alone [*vacabo*], and at last I will devote myself sincerely and without reservation to the general demolition of my opinions. (CSM II 12; AT VII 17–18)

This text is expressly personal; there is strong emphasis on the first-person (‘*animadverti*’; ‘*admiserim*’; ‘*superextruxi*’). The narrator makes it immediately clear that this is going to be *his* story. It is also worth noting the way the text moves from recounting distant actions at the beginning of the paragraph, to speaking in the immediate present by the end. The events are directly and increasingly linked to an immediate voice speaking in the present moment, with the passage of time being a profound underlying feature. As these quoted lines suggest, a central purpose of the text is the sharing of an experience.

There is a palpable urgency in the opening of the *Meditations*, which adds weight to the significance of the undertaking. The Meditator has been burdened with the suspicion that the foundations of his belief system are shaky. He knows he needs to take action to put his beliefs into right order, but he has been putting the project off, and now the situation has become desperate. He is worried that if he doesn’t make a start now, his project will never happen. It is thus a project that he is compelled to undertake. The importance of experience is here pronounced by the presence of temporality in the text. The temporal threat is a presentiment of his mortality. In point of fact, Descartes, the author himself, would barely see the following decade, dying in February 1650. Time within the *Meditations* is construed as critical and precious. As indicated through my outline of the text above, the text is structured as a series of days of meditation, so that temporality provides both a framework and a sense of urgency to the whole project.

The first-person pronoun also gives the text a “confessional” sense. Part of the reason for this is that the narrator is admitting to his flaws, and chronicling publicly his process of attempting to correct them. The confessional nature creates intimacy, lending the feeling of a private conversation between the narrator and the reader. The relationship between the narrator and the reader is vital. It goes beyond the transposition of ideas from the text to the

reader. Rather, a symbiotic relationship is being formed such that the reader will become an active participant in the experience of the days of meditation. These stylistic aspects play a significant role in the text, contributing to its richness, but more significantly, aiding in its revolutionary nature in comparison to prior Scholastic writing. Although the revolutionary nature of the *Meditations* has resulted in an immense body of rich philosophical[17] and historical[18] engagement, these formal stylistic aspects, to reiterate, have received comparably limited attention. As Christia Mercer said recently of the *Meditations*, 'historians have long noted the work's brilliance and originality. The same has not been true of the richness and finesse of its method.'[19] This thesis will address this gap in scholarship.

I have just claimed that the stylistic aspects of the *Meditations* are revolutionary in comparison to prior philosophical texts. Indeed, the weight of personality in the narrative voice stands in stark contrast to the traditional Scholastic method. In order to illustrate how the *Meditations* can be seen as stylistically revolutionary in comparison to the Scholastic tradition which preceded it, I will briefly consider four Scholastic thinkers, with a particular emphasis on their style. First I will look at two highly influential thinkers, Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus. For Thomas Osborne, these two thinkers, along with William of Ockham 'are arguably the three most significant philosophers and theologians of the central period in the development of Scholastic thought.'[20] An examination of the style of these thinkers, then, will provide a good understanding of how Scholastic philosophy was generally communicated. I will then turn to Francisco Suárez, a thinker who in many ways is perched between medieval and early modern philosophy.

I turn first to a brief extract from Thomas Aquinas. My analysis and subsequent comment does not seek to engage with the content of Aquinas's text, but rather to serve as a point of reference for Descartes's own stylistic departure. I quote from the first part of the *Summa*:

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[17] E.g. Harry Frankfurt, *Demons, Dreamers and Madmen* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970); Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Descartes' Meditations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Stephen Voss (ed.), *Essays on the Philosophy and Science of René Descartes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Vere Chappell (ed.), *Descartes's Meditations: Critical Essays* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997); Karen Detlefsen (ed.), *Descartes' Meditations: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); David Cunning (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Descartes' Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[18] E.g. Geneviève Rodis-Lewis, *Descartes: His Life and Thought*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography*; Desmond Clarke, *Descartes: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Steven Nadler, *The Philosopher, The Priest, and the Painter: A Portrait of Descartes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

[19] Christia Mercer, 'The Methodology of the *Meditations*: Tradition and Innovation', in David Cunning (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Descartes' Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 43.

[20] Thomas M. Osborne Jr., *Human Action in Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2014), p. xiii.

First Article. Whether God Is Perfect?
We proceed thus to the First Article:—
Objection 1. It seems that [*uidetur quod*] perfection does not belong to God. For we say a thing is perfect if it is completely made. But it does not befit God to be made. Therefore He is not perfect.
Obj. 2. Further, God is the first beginning of things. But the beginnings of things seem to be imperfect, as seed is the beginning of animal and vegetable life. Therefore God is imperfect.
Obj. 3. Further, as shown above (*Q*. III. A. 4), God's essence is existence. But existence seems most imperfect since it is most universal and receptive of all modification. Therefore God is imperfect.
On the contrary [*sed contra*], It is written: *Be you perfect as also your heavenly Father is perfect* (Matt v. 48).
I answer that [*respondeo dicendum quod*], As the Philosopher relates (*Metaph*. xii.), some ancient philosophers, namely the Pythagoreans, and Leucippus, did not predicate *best* and *most perfect* of the first principle. The reason was that the ancient philosophers considered only a material principle; and a material principle is most imperfect. For since matter as such is merely potential, the first material principle must be simply potential, and thus most imperfect. Now God is the first principle, not material, but in the order of efficient cause, which must be most perfect. For just as matter, as such, is merely potential, an agent, as such, is in the state of actuality. Hence, the first active principle must needs be most actual, and therefore most perfect; for a thing is perfect in proportion to its state of actuality, because we call that perfect which lacks nothing of the mode of its perfection.
Reply Obj. I. As Gregory says (Moral. v, 26, 29): *Though our lips can only stammer, we yet chant the high things of God*. For that which is not made is improperly called perfect. Nevertheless because created things are then called perfect, when from potentiality they are brought into actuality, this word *perfect* signifies whatever is not wanting in actuality, whether this be by way of perfection, or not.
Reply Obj. 2. The material principle which with us is found to be imperfect, cannot be absolutely primal; but must be preceded by something perfect. For seed, though it be the principle of animal life reproduced through seed, has previous to it, the animal or plant from which it came. Because, previous to that which is potential, must be that which is actual; since a potential being can only be reduced into act by some being already actual.
Reply Obj. 3. Existence is the most perfect of all things, for it is compared to all things as that by which they are made actual; for nothing has actuality except so far as it exists. Hence, existence is that which actuates all things, even their forms. Therefore it is not compared to other things as the receiver is to the received; but rather as the received to the receiver. When therefore I speak of the existence of man, or horse, or anything else, existence is considered a formal principle, and as something received; and not as that which exists. (*Summa Theologica*, I. 4. 1)[21]

A point of contrast to the style of the *Meditations* is the rigid structure, brought about through the *quaestio*—or question and answer—form.[22] The Article begins with a problem in the form of a question. In this instance the question is whether God is perfect. The contrary position is then stated (*uidetur quod*). There is then an argument from authority (*sed contra*), and then

[21] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 3 vols. (1; London: Burns & Oates, 1947), pp. 20–21. Latin is taken from the 1663 edition of Girin and Francisci Comba.
[22] A breakdown of the *quaestio* form in medieval philosophy can be found in John Marenbon, *Later Medieval Philosophy (1150–1350): An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1987), pp. 28–32.

the author's reply (*respondeo dicendum*). Each point is enumerated, and objections are built into each argument to produce a comprehensive engagement with the central problem. Aside from the indication of a cohesive and rigid structure brought about through the *quaestio* form, I would like to draw two other points out of this extract from the *Summa*.

Firstly, since I have indicated the central role played by the first-person in Descartes, I will make a comparison to its use by Aquinas. Aquinas uses the first-person verb *respondeo* (I answer). However, the presence of an "I" in the text should not lead to the conclusion that this represents a point of similarity with the "I" of the *Meditations*. In the *Meditations*, as I have noted above, the "I" is pseudo-autobiographical and personal. The "I" has a markedly different purpose in the *Summa*. The "I" of the *Summa* carries a thetic purpose. Its position is entirely connected to the structure of the argument, rather than to expounding any sort of narrative. In other words, the "I" is bound to a particular position in the formulation of the argument. I will consider these features in greater detail in Chapter 1.

The second point I will draw out of the *Summa* is the way Aquinas appeals to authority in his argument. The appeal to authority is a central element of the *quaestio* form, usually introduced as it is here by Aquinas with the phrase *sed contra*. Much like the use of the first-person, the appeal to authority appears primarily as an essential pillar of the structure of the discussion. Its use is not only for the purpose of verification; the *sed contra* signals that the reader is at a particular point within the argument. The appeal to authority occurs before the reply to the objections; authority takes precedence over Aquinas's own argument. This indicates that Aquinas is following in the footsteps of those who have come before: the authority of the scriptures being prior to his own arguments and opinions. The authority called upon in the extract above is the Gospel of Matthew. As well as an appeal to authority within the formal structure of the argument (that is to say, in the *sed contra*), Aquinas also draws at various points in the above-quoted Article on Aristotle (referred to in the *Summa* as "the Philosopher") and also on Gregory the Great. This diverse range of authorities is indicative of a key element of Scholastic method. James Hankins, writing about the origins of Scholasticism, suggests: 'reconciling apparently incompatible authorities with each other, was at the heart of the new scholastic method.'[23]

The appeal to authority, then, had a central role in the structure of Aquinas's arguments. The role of appeals to authority gained even greater prominence by the fourteenth century, as

[23] James Hankins, 'Humanism, Scholasticism, and Renaissance Philosophy', in James Hankins (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 33.

can be seen in the work of Duns Scotus. In Scotus we can see an expansion of the *quaestio* form. While in Aquinas, each *quaestio* is fairly short (as can be seen in the extract above), the arguments mounted by Scotus tend to be far longer. Part of the reason for this is that the appeal to authority is significantly expanded. Consider the following extract of a longer argument from Duns Scotus:

> II. Man's Natural Knowledge of God
>
> Concerning the third distinction I ask [*quaero*] first whether it is possible to know God. And I ask [*quaero*] first: *whether the intellect of man in this life is able to know God naturally.*
>
> *[Pro et Contra]*
>
> I argue [*Arguo*] that it cannot:
>
> [Arg. I]. The Philosopher in *De anima*, BK. III, says: 'Sense images are related to the intellect in the same way as sense objects are related to the senses'. But the senses perceive only what is sensible. Therefore the intellect is unable to grasp anything whose sense image cannot be known by the senses. Of God there is no sense image. Neither is He such that He could be perceived by such a sense faculty. Therefore, etc.
>
> [Arg. II]. Again, according to the *Metaphysics*, BK. II: 'As the eyes of bats are to the blaze of day, so is our intellect to the things which are by nature most evident'. But if it is impossible to know such things, it is impossible to know God.
>
> [Arg. III]. Also, according to *Physics*, BK. I: 'The infinite as infinite is unknowable'. And according to the *Metaphysics*, BK. II: 'It is not possible to know an infinite [number] of things'. Therefore, neither can the Infinite Being be known, since an infinite number and an Infinite Being would seem to be equally disproportionate to our intellect; for an Infinite Being exceeds the powers of our intellect in the same measure as, or certainly to no less a degree than, does the infinite in number.
>
> [Arg. IV]. Gregory, also, in his commentary on Ezekiel says: 'No matter how far our mind may have progressed in contemplation of God, it does not attain to what He is, but to what is Beneath Him'.
>
> To the contrary [*contra*]:
>
> According to the *Metaphysics*, BK. V: 'Metaphysics is a theology of God and is primarily concerned with the divine'. And [Aristotle] places man's happiness in the actual possession of such knowledge, that is to say, in the actual speculation about the pure spirits.[24]

Scotus then proceeds with the body of the question over the next few pages, in which he engages with a number of observations he has made. After this, there is another section, '*The Opinion of Henry of Ghent*', which once more provides an extensive appeal to authority, before we finally get to Scotus's own opinion, which henceforth takes up the bulk of the discussion. The appeal to authority remained a prominent aspect of Scholastic thought. We here find Scotus referring throughout his discussion to Aristotle, Gregory, and scripture, just

[24] John Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings: A Selection*, trans. Allan Wolter, O.F.M. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), pp. 14–33.

as Aquinas does. Furthermore, much like Aquinas, the first-person is used here for the most part as a means of structuring and framing the argument: 'I argue that it cannot [*Arguo quod non*],'[25] without retaining any kind of distinct personality or autobiographical sense.

To turn, finally, to a figure more contemporaneous with Descartes, I will briefly consider Jesuit theologian and philosopher Francisco Suárez and his *Metaphysical Disputations*. In the early seventeenth century, according to Benjamin Hill, Suárez was 'one of the most important and influential philosophers in all of Europe.'[26] Suárez is worth considering here for the interesting position he occupies in the history of philosophy. Many perceive Suárez to sit uncomfortably between medieval and early modern philosophy.[27] Considering Descartes as the so-called initiator of modern philosophy, Suárez is thus a crucial bridge between Descartes and prior medieval thinkers. Suárez published his *Disputations* in 1597. As John Cottingham suggests, the *Disputations* give 'a vivid and detailed picture of the style and method of philosophical argument that Descartes would have imbibed as a schoolboy.'[28] As above, I will quote a brief extract to give a sense of the style and argument of the text:

> SECTION 1
>
> *Whether it is in the Nature of God's Essence to be a Totally Perfect Being*
>
> I answer [*Respondeo*], it is of the essence of God that he is a being that is perfect in every respect, and this can be evidently demonstrated by the natural light. To prove it, we have to suppose that 'perfect' applies to something which has no defects (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Book 5*)*. This can be understood either in a privative or a negative sense. In the former sense, something is called perfect if there is nothing missing that is owed to it by its nature to make up its integrity or fullness; in this sense many entities are perfect in their species or genera, but are not quite simply perfect – perfect in the whole breadth of their being. In the latter sense, something is called perfect when absolutely no element of perfection is missing, and in this sense a being is said to be absolutely perfect when every perfection is owed to it, and is necessarily in it, in such a way that it is wholly impossible for any perfection to be missing, either in a privative or negative sense. In both these senses, it is said to be of the essence of God that he is quite simply perfect (*Metaphysical Disputations*, XXX, I, §1).[29]

[25] Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, p. 14.
[26] Benjamin Hill, 'Introduction', in Benjamin Hill & Henrik Lagerlund (eds.), *The Philosophy of Francisco Suárez* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 1.
[27] E.g. Jorge Gracia, 'Suárez (And Later Scholasticism)', in John Marenbon (ed.), *Medieval Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 458–459; Michael Edwards, 'Suárez in the Late Scholastic Context: Anatomy, Psychology, and Authority', in Benjamin Hill & Henrik Lagerlund (eds.), *The Philosophy of Francisco Suárez* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 25–37.
[28] John Cottingham, 'Introduction: Francisco Suárez, *Metaphysical Disputations*', in Roger Ariew, John Cottingham, & Tom Sorell (eds.), *Descartes' Meditations: Background Source Materials* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 29.
[29] Francisco Suárez, 'Metaphysical Disputations', in Roger Ariew, John Cottingham, & Tom Sorell (eds.), *Descartes' Meditations: Background Source Materials* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 32, translation modified. Latin is taken from Francisco Suárez, *disputationes metaphysicae*, 2 vols. (1; Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1965), p. 60.

The first-person voice (*respondeo*) is used once more as part of the structure of the argument, providing no insights into personality or history. Furthermore, the appeal to authority, in this case to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, still plays an important role. At the beginning of §6, Suárez draws on Thomas Aquinas as a foundation of his argument. He goes on to also draw on Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine and Anselm to corroborate his position. For example: 'It was rightly said by Augustine and Anselm that God is such a being than which a greater cannot be imagined' (XXX, I, §6).[30] Suárez even devotes whole sections to the opinions of significant authorities such as Aristotle (XXX, II, §3), Duns Scotus (XXX, II, §4) and Aquinas (XXX, II, §5).

I would like to discuss these features now in relation to the *Meditations*. To review, the features I have pointed to as common of Scholastic style are the structure, the first-person voice, and the appeal to authority—though it must be made clear I stop short of suggesting that there is an entirely uniform approach amongst these thinkers. Instead, I merely wish to point to features that are shared in common between each of these texts. Firstly, in regards to structure, as I have suggested, the Scholastic authors I have considered use some sort of *quaestio* form, which gives a rigid framework to the arguments mounted. Descartes employs a radically different approach: I would claim that one of the ways in which he moves beyond the *quaestio* structure is by replacing it with a temporal framework. The days of meditation give the text the structure which Descartes's predecessors utilised the question-and-answer framework to provide.

Secondly, in regards to the narrative voice, the Scholastic thinkers use the first-person in a thetic sense, as a means of framing the argument as part of the *quaestio* structure. It is not a personal "I". The "I" of the *Meditations*, in contrast, is heavily personalised, providing a narrative autobiographical account, albeit a largely fictional one. The temporal structure plays an important role here, too, since it places the "I" within a framework that can seem in some way historical and personal: i.e. *this is the story of something that happened to me in a particular place in a particular time*. The I's personalised nature ties into my third point.

Thirdly, a personalised "I" is used so as to give the arguments a sense of authority based around personal experience. Throughout the *Meditations* Descartes appeals to no authority outside of himself, in striking distinction to the Scholastic texts quoted above. Rather than deferring to established authority, the narrator draws only on his own experience. Indeed, this is a central purpose of the *Meditations*: to eschew prior authorities and arrive at a new point of

[30] Suárez, *disputationes*, p. 62, my translation.

truth on the basis of this particular method. The arguments are proven not by appeals to authorities such as Church Fathers, scripture, or Aristotle, as can be found in Scholastic writing. They are justified through appeal to personal experience. *I have gone through this process, and this is what I have discovered.* The implication seems to be: *If you go through this process, too, you will discover these things for yourself.* The full ramifications of this personalised style with its consequent modes of readerly engagement will become crucial in later chapters of this thesis. For now I will simply underline that within the *Meditations* the narrator and the reader are drawn together into an intimate relationship, based around shared experience. This, of course, is by no means a revelation, but in Chapter 1, I will make the following argument. Descartes's appeals to authority in the form of experience are perhaps best understood as appeals to authority in the form of narrative. This will become clear once I have outlined the temporal structure of the *Meditations* in greater detail in the next chapter (Section 1.1), and provided a theoretical conception of narrative as being based around personal experience (Section 1.2).

These are the features of the *Meditations* which I will explore in this thesis: the temporal framework and the personalised narrative voice based around experience. What my preliminary presentation implies is that these two features are strongly linked within the *Meditations*. These features themselves are not revolutionary, since as I will show they exist in a variety of other genres of writing. The way in which Descartes applies these features to a work of metaphysics, though, along with the way in which he harnesses various stylistic aspects from a variety of other genres, are what make his *Meditations* stylistically revolutionary in comparison to prior Scholastic and medieval writing on metaphysics. I do not argue, therefore, that Descartes invented a new genre; however he employs a stylistic vocabulary previously encountered exclusively in other types of writing as the vehicle through which he will explore his ideas.

I have indicated one of the major arguments to follow: that Descartes's appeals to authority in the form of experience are best understood as appeals to authority in the form of narrative. This may at a glance seem a novel assertion. Yet preceding scholarship has, albeit indirectly, paved the way for such a claim. There is a long history of major commentators mentioning as an issue, and then leaving strangely undeveloped the following reference to the text's status as not simply argument, but narrative: the fact that the text has a narrator. We can see this symptomatic pattern of referring to, but then ignoring the narratorial status of the *Meditations* in the way a number of our most celebrated commentators touch upon

Descartes's own status in the text. That is to say, in their engagement with the following question: is Descartes author or narrator?

Reference to the narrator of the *Meditations* has frequently been limited to discussion of Descartes's employment of the first-person pronoun. The highly influential *Descartes: a Study of his Philosophy* by the renowned scholar Anthony Kenny, first published in 1968, contains a fleeting reference to Descartes's various usages of first-person singular, first-person plural and second-person pronouns in his writings. The reference Kenny makes to the narrator (or, more specifically, to the "I" of the text) is a grammatical observation used to argue a philosophical point. Kenny is engaging with Jaakko Hintikka's famous discussion of the Cogito, and in particular with Hintikka's claim that it is essential to the validity of the Cogito that it is specifically related to the narrator's own existence; that is, the existence of the individual that enunciates "I".[31] In Hintikka's interpretation, the Cogito is not derivable from logical inference. Rather, it is a performance, in that Descartes can only know he exists through the immediate act of performing the Cogito itself (that is, by proclaiming "I am, I exist"). For Hintikka, since it is the act of performing the Cogito that assures existence, the proof of existence can only extend as far as the person performing the Cogito (by proclaiming "I exist"), and consequently demonstrates no further proof beyond the existence of the "I" itself. Kenny counters this, though, by observing:

> [Hintikka argues that] it is essential to the performatory interpretation that the *cogito* be a proof that each man can go through for himself only. But Descartes states the proof not only in the first person singular (*Discourse, Meditations*), but also in the first person plural (*Principles*) and in the second person (*Search After Truth*).[32]

If Descartes can outline the same proof not only in the first-person singular, but also in the first-person plural, or the second-person, then surely it cannot be a proof that is restricted to the demonstration of the existence of the enunciating "I".[33] The passage by Kenny which I have just quoted alludes to potentially significant discussion on the connection between Descartes's style and his philosophy, and the relationship between the content and the mode of expression in philosophical discourse. However, once the philosophical point has been made, Kenny moves on to other matters. To take his argument further than Kenny himself

[31] See Jaako Hintikka, 'Cogito, Ergo Sum: Inference or Performance?', *The Philosophical Review*, 71/1 (1962), pp. 3–32. Margaret Wilson provides a strong rebuttal of the performative interpretation in *Descartes*, pp. 62–65.
[32] Anthony Kenny, *Descartes: A Study of His Philosophy* (1968; repr. Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1995), p. 47.
[33] Kenny's argument is indicative of the approach to Descartes's thought that has been evident in much work on Descartes which assumes universality to his individual writings, declining to take into account that Descartes's views and opinions and arguments may have changed over time. Nonetheless, I don't think such a view is detrimental in the case of this particular argument. For an in-depth recent discussion of this issue, see Peter Machamer and J.E. McGuire, *Descartes's Changing Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

does, one might say that if the Cogito cannot be restricted to the enunciating "I", then the "I" itself has no central place in the argument. This is indicative of the exclusion of style, and particularly the exclusion of the narrator, from discussion of the *Meditations*.

Margaret Wilson's seminal study *Descartes* devotes marginally greater consideration to the "I" of the *Meditations* than Kenny does. Since its publication in 1978, *Descartes* has deservedly held a prominent place in commentary. Wilson raises the tendency readers have to equate a first-person voice with the author of a text, and suggests that the style of the *Meditations* 'can lead to the assumption that Descartes is directly concerned in the *Meditations* with the facts of his own intellectual development, his private mental history.'[34] Because the content of the *Meditations* is uttered by an "I", readers will therefore assume that this "I" must be the author. However, for Wilson this is a specious assumption. Wilson takes it as a given that the author and the narrator are distinct, but she sees no great significance in it. 'While perhaps the order of arguments presented in the *Meditations* does reflect Descartes's own progress in philosophical inquiry, it is not obvious that this is so, and not in the least relevant to the philosophical purpose of the *Meditations* whether or not it is so.'[35] Wilson here takes Kenny's implicit dismissal of the "I" and makes it into an explicit argument. I take no great umbrage with Wilson on this point, and agree that were we to discover a definite link between the order of arguments in the *Meditations* and Descartes's own philosophical progress this would likely be of more historical than philosophical interest. However, she pushes a bit further, and perhaps shuts down the discussion too forcefully: 'The main point is just that the work must be read primarily as the presentation of a philosophical position having some claim to general relevance, and not as history or autobiography at all.'[36] Wilson's strong language seems to intently dismiss approaching Descartes's text with anything but a philosophical analysis; in so doing perhaps rejecting the possibility that these stylistic aspects may, in fact, have philosophical implications. She appears determined to defend the text from any readings that the text's own stylistic curiosities might (and do) attract. In any case, Wilson's use of 'primarily' rather than 'exclusively' in the above quote might be seen as allowing for a *secondary* reading of the text that seeks to interrogate what the impact of the "I" might be. The use of primarily, in a sense, permits the possibility of other approaches.

[34] Wilson, *Descartes*, p. 4.
[35] Wilson, *Descartes*, p. 4.
[36] Wilson, *Descartes*, p. 4.

Wilson proposes that the *Meditations* is written in 'the style of colloquial autobiographical narrative,'[37] but goes on to suggest that since the "I" is not Descartes, there is no philosophical interest to be found, and that there is no point reading this "I" as autobiographical. However, what this fails to take into account is that there are other forms of discourse on which Descartes may be drawing: forms of discourse in which the "I" has different functions. Wilson's argument that there is no philosophical interest in the narrator and author being distinct misses the possibility that something that is of narratological interest may reveal philosophical insights. Since Wilson acknowledges that the "I" of the text is not autobiographical, she is aware that it would be somewhat bizarre to attribute the journey of the narrator to the author himself. 'It is rather difficult to expound the arguments of the *Meditations* without sliding into such improbable assertions as "Descartes notes that he has little by little lost all faith in his senses by finding that towers which looked round from a distance looked square close-up."'[38] Although Wilson says she will try to avoid this type of language early in her study, and that she will 'try to avoid what seem to me the more serious pitfalls,'[39] she also admits that she will not seek to completely avoid attributing such language within the text to Descartes.

What Wilson warns against is exactly what occurs in the work of Harry Frankfurt, who claims to be observing the very distinction between author and narrator that Wilson insists upon. The distinction between narrator and author is highlighted by Frankfurt in his study *Demons, Dreamers, and Madmen*. Frankfurt suggests: 'In reading the First Meditation it is essential to understand that while Descartes speaks in the first person, the identity he adopts as he addresses the reader is not quite his own.'[40] Frankfurt proposes that the *Meditations* is narrated from a 'somewhat fictitious point of view.'[41] Thus, when the narrator says 'I realized it was necessary, once in the course of my life, to demolish everything completely and start again,' (CSM II 12) according to Frankfurt, this "I" should not necessarily be taken to be Descartes. What this means for the text, or how then to treat the "I" is never explored further. He makes no effort to engage with the implications of a fictional narrator. In his own reading of the *Meditations*, despite raising the concept of the fictional "I", Frankfurt readily attributes the content of the text to the author, Descartes, rather than the narrator. Soon after raising the concept of a fictitious narrator, Frankfurt says '*Descartes* ends the First Meditation doubting

[37] Wilson, *Descartes*, p. 4.
[38] Wilson, *Descartes*, p. 5.
[39] Wilson, *Descartes*, p. 5.
[40] Frankfurt, *Demons, Dreamers, and Madmen*, p. 4.
[41] Frankfurt, *Demons, Dreamers, and Madmen*, p. 4.

all propositions concerning perceptual objects and, indeed, sceptical of the very existence of the material world.'[42] Despite suggesting that there is a distinction between narrator and author, Frankfurt makes no effort to keep this distinction firmly in view while engaging with the arguments of the *Meditations*, instead assuming the "I" to be Descartes himself.

A similar approach can be found in Bernard Williams's highly influential text *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry*, published in 1978. Despite acknowledging that the narrator of the *Meditations* is not Descartes,[43] Williams still attributes quotes and discussion from within the *Meditations* to Descartes. Frequently (throughout what is, it must be acknowledged, a landmark example of analytic scholarship) statements appear such as: 'Descartes certainly arrives at the end of the Doubt with the conception that it is epistemically possible that *all* supposedly perceptual judgements are mistaken, and that the external world, the supposed object of all such judgements, may not exist at all.'[44] The "I" of the *Meditations*, despite Williams's initial comments to the contrary, is henceforth *taken to be* Descartes.

I am not here seeking to argue that there has been some kind of mistake on the part of these commentators. Instead, what I am highlighting is that there is something about the *Meditations* that some of our most celebrated commentators feel compelled to mention, and yet shy away from exploring. This becomes clear if we take a closer look at the language used to discuss the narrator of the *Meditations*. Frankfurt considers the narrator to be '*somewhat* fictitious' and that the identity which Descartes adopts in the form of the narrator is 'not *quite* his own.'[45] Williams states that the "I" of the *Meditations* is '*not so much* the historical Descartes.'[46] These cautious steps signpost the manner in which this subject has been treated in secondary literature: interesting enough to mention, but not granted significant attention. Commentators such as Frankfurt and Williams lean towards, then shrink away from meaningful discussion of the fictional narrator of the text. They indicate some vague distinction between author and narrator, but in their own discussion there is no real distinction between the "I" of the text and the author. In the case of Wilson, the "I" is emphatically maintained to be distinct from the author, and yet Wilson asserts that there is no real interest to be found in this distinction. The same exclusion occurs in the case of Kenny, who considers the "I" in a purely grammatical sense, such that the "I" plays no central role in the

[42] Frankfurt, *Demons, Dreamers, and Madmen*, p. 14, *my emphasis*.
[43] 'The "I" of the writer is not so much the historical Descartes as it is any reflective person working their way through this series of arguments.' Williams, *Project of Pure Enquiry*, pp. 19–20. This is a concept with which I will engage in detail in my final chapter.
[44] Williams, *Project of Pure Enquiry*, p. 54, *emphasis in text*.
[45] Frankfurt, *Demons, Dreamers, and Madmen*, p. 4, *my emphasis.*
[46] Williams, *Project of Pure Enquiry*, pp. 19–20, *my emphasis.*

argument itself. In each case the question of the narrator is either ignored, suggested then quickly forgotten, or shut down completely.

Consider, in contrast, a later discussion from Aryeh Kosman, who is incidentally an Aristotle scholar. In his 1986 essay 'The Naïve Narrator: Meditation in Descartes' *Meditations*' Kosman seeks at once to treat Descartes's work as a narrative, to discuss it with reference to literary theory, to place it in a genre, and to expound the *story* of the text. Within such a reading, Kosman explicitly differentiates the narrator of the text from the author. He sees the *Meditations* as:

> a descriptive or, we might say, a narrative work; for it provides us with a narrative account of a series of meditations undertaken by someone identified only as 'I.' We ought … to identify the narrator-meditator with Descartes the author only in a limited and most carefully thought-out sense. And in the same way, we ought not to assume that there are before us when we read the *Meditations* any real meditations in the primary sense; what we have is a representational account of the meditator-narrator's meditations. In this sense, the meditations within Descartes' *Meditations* are 'fictional,' where 'fictional' does not mean untrue, but merely represented.[47]

Here Kosman is building a case for the fictionality of the text. There is an emphasis on the concept of *representation*. In this passage there is also an important shift in language in comparison to prior commentary. For Kosman, we should 'identify the narrator-meditator with Descartes the author *only in a limited and most carefully thought-out sense.*'[48] The subtle shift here is in fact an enormous distinction, which reorients the reading of the text considerably. Where Frankfurt and Williams gesture towards the distinction between narrator and author, for Kosman this distinction is a central point of discussion. Although Wilson is very clear that the narrator is not Descartes, she finds no real significance in it. Conversely, for Kosman this distinction forms the basis of his reading of the *Meditations*. The narrator of the text here is first and foremost a fictional entity. In Kosman's account this does not just have superficial implications but also implications for the text as a work of philosophy. For example, the concept of a "fictional" narrator carries the potential for that narrator to be unreliable.[49] Kosman leaves this point unexplored. However, in a work such as the *Meditations*—whose central theme is sceptical inquiry, and which raises questions as to whether one can ever know they are awake, or sane—reliability is a central concern. Although

[47] L. Aryeh Kosman, 'The Naïve Narrator: Meditation in Descartes' *Meditations*', in Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Descartes' Meditations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 24–25. Kosman refers to the meditations as fictional again on the following page and then on page 31.
[48] Kosman, 'The Naïve Narrator', p. 25, *my emphasis*.
[49] Kosman, 'The Naïve Narrator', p. 30. For more on the topic of unreliability in narration see Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 158–159.

Kosman raises such interesting avenues for investigation, few, if any of these areas have been advanced in his subsequent research. Kosman's reading of the *Meditations* as 'the narrative account of a series of meditations'[50] does, however, provide a unique perspective on the text which I will seek to elaborate. In Chapter 4, below, I will consider in more depth the extent to which the *Meditations* is in fact drawing on features common to meditational texts. For the present moment though, I will stay more closely bound to the question of the narrator.

There are a small number of other commentators who have given significant weight to the distinction between author and narrator in their interpretations of the *Meditations*. These commentators try to ensure a distinction between narrator and author, even if it is only on a superficial level. Mike Marlies, for example, in his essay 'Doubt, Reason, and Cartesian Therapy' refers to the narrator of the *Meditations* as 'René' in order to ensure a clear distinction from the author, Descartes.[51] This is a point of specific relevance to the topic Marlies is discussing, which is the method of doubt, and how it relates to the concept of reason which the author, Descartes, possessed (as explored through comparisons to other texts such as the *Search After Truth*).

In *Between Two Worlds*, John Carriero utilises the feminine pronoun when referring to the person experiencing the days of meditation in order to ensure a clear separation between the "I" of the *Meditations* and the author. He says: 'It is convenient to refer to the narrator as Descartes (even though this can be misleading because the *Meditations* is not a work of autobiography).'[52] The point Carriero makes is *literally* parenthetical. It does not permit any kind of further exploration or engagement. Jorge Secada also utilises the feminine pronoun to describe the narrator in his essay 'God and Meditation in Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy.*'[53] Secada additionally suggests that when interpreting the *Meditations* as meditative, it is crucial to consider the interpretative strategy taken from literary studies of distinguishing between 'the voice of the author and the different voices within a story, be they voices of characters or of impersonal or third-person narrators.'[54] For Secada, it is crucial that the "I" of the *Meditations* is never 'to refer to its author, or to be its spokesperson.'[55] It is for

[50] Kosman, 'The Naïve Narrator', p. 21.
[51] See Mike Marlies, 'Doubt, Reason, and Cartesian Therapy', in Michael Hooker (ed.), *Descartes: Critical and Interpretive Essays* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 98–113.
[52] See Carriero, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 28.
[53] See Jorge Secada, 'God and Meditation in Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*', in Karen Detlefsen (ed.), *Descartes' Meditations: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 200–225.
[54] Secada, 'God and Meditation in Descartes', p. 201. This concept of taking traits from fiction is also raised by Dalia Judovitz, when she suggests in regards to the "I" that 'the philosophical subject is represented according to, and derives its verisimilitude from, literary conventions.' See Dalia Judovitz, *Subjectivity and Representation in Descartes: The Origins of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 3.
[55] Secada, 'God and Meditation in Descartes', pp. 201–202.

this reason that he utilises the feminine pronoun, to ensure a complete separation from the author. Here Secada demonstrates none of the reservations shown by some of the commentators cited above; namely Williams and Frankfurt. He provides a logical caveat, when he acknowledges: 'I do not intend to deny that the meditator sometimes expresses Descartes' own views, or that her views may reveal Descartes' own.'[56] But in no way does he retreat from asserting the separation between author and narrator. Secada concludes:

> recovery of the Cartesian conception of philosophy as meditation is a worthwhile enterprise. Examination of the conceptions of God, human nature, and the ultimate ends of human existence which underlie it opens up a field for inquiry that promises not only to enrich our grasp of Descartes' thought, but also to contribute to our understanding of philosophy and its place in human life.[57]

Secada sees the *Meditations* as embodying 'a conception of philosophy that is deeply anti-Scholastic and anti-analytic.'[58] Indeed, he highlights that 'when the *Meditations* is treated as something akin to an essay,'[59] the symbiosis between content and form is easily overlooked. This is a crucial point of intersection with this thesis, in which I argue that it is at the level of style where we can truly see how revolutionary Descartes's text is in comparison to his Scholastic predecessors.

Much like Secada and Carriero, Gary Hatfield also utilises the feminine pronoun to describe the narrator in his book *Descartes and the Meditations*. Moreover, Hatfield refers to the narrator as 'the meditator.'[60] He suggests that:

> We might view the six Meditations as a *story* that Descartes has constructed in the first person to *represent* in the fictional setting of six "days" of meditating the very *sequence of thoughts* by which he had discovered his metaphysics – or at least a sequence of thoughts that, in accordance with the analytic method, would show how the discovery can be made. The "I" of the six Meditations would function as *a narrator and protagonist in a metaphysical morality play*.[61]

Once more, the notion of the days of meditation being narrative fiction is reinforced, as is the concept of *representation*. The idea of the *Meditations* as a *sequence of thoughts* is something that I will also highlight further in my next chapter, when I develop my argument for the important role played by temporal succession in the text.

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[56] Secada, 'God and Meditation in Descartes', p. 202, n. 6.
[57] Secada, 'God and Meditation in Descartes', p. 225.
[58] Secada, 'God and Meditation in Descartes', p. 203.
[59] Secada, 'God and Meditation in Descartes', p. 203, n. 10.
[60] See Gary Hatfield, *Descartes and the Meditations* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 49–50.
[61] Hatfield, *Descartes and the Meditations*, p. 50, *my emphasis*.

Janet Broughton, in her book *Descartes's Method of Doubt*, and Catherine Wilson, in her book *Descartes' Meditations: An Introduction* both refer to the narrator, like Hatfield, as the meditator. For Broughton, the "I" is most certainly not autobiographical, in part because 'at the beginning of the First Meditation the meditator does not have an identity altogether his own.'[62] Catherine Wilson explicitly removes the narrator's association from the author and alternates between 'he' and 'she' from one chapter to the next when referring to the narrator. The assumption that the author and narrator are the same, Wilson suggests, is 'methodologically unsound,' given that no evidence leads to the conclusion that the six days of meditation actually occurred.[63] She further suggests that many of the insights outlined in the text, such as the Cogito, 'had occurred to the historical Descartes years earlier.'[64] Thus, 'the Meditator is better regarded as a *fictional character* (who could have existed) in a *story* taking the form of a voyage of intellectual (rather than geographical) discovery.'[65]

What my preliminary examination of scholarship suggests is that the concept of narrative (or more exactly, the *narrator*) is used in Descartes scholarship with a minimal degree of curiosity. Scholars such as Harry Frankfurt, Bernard Williams and Margaret Wilson have hinted at the significance to be found in the narrator of the *Meditations*, through highlighting that the "I" is distinct from the author, Descartes. However, beyond making the suggestion, there has been little attempt at a sustained engagement with such a concept. In the case of Kenny and Wilson, the narrator as a point of interest is either implicitly or explicitly dismissed. Recent work, rather than seeking to bring greater attention to the narrator as a point of interest, has treated the narrator's distinction from the author as a point of fact, with minimal further exploration as to the implications of the author/narrator distinction. Still there have been no attempts to make the narrator a focal point, in his own right. While recent scholars such as Aryeh Kosman, Jorge Secada, Gary Hatfield and Catherine Wilson highlight that the fictional and narrative elements of the *Meditations* are features that are worth pointing out, I suggest that they nonetheless remain underexplored. The role of the narrator in the *Meditations* yet deserves a more detailed consideration.

The minimal treatment of the narrative voice represents a significant gap in Cartesian scholarship. The temporal element, which I suggest is intimately bound with the discussion of the narrator and of narrative in the text, has likewise been overlooked. In this thesis I will closely investigate the roles that the narrative, and by extension the temporal elements play in

[62] Janet Broughton, *Descartes's Method of Doubt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 28.
[63] Catherine Wilson, *Descartes' Meditations: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). p. 6.
[64] C. Wilson, *Meditations*, p. 6.
[65] C. Wilson, *Meditations*, p. 6, *my emphasis*.

the text. I suggest that scholars have tended to discount or overlook these stylistic elements. While Descartes has been seen by many as a revolutionary, it is in his style that he is truly innovating. In this thesis I argue that despite scholars downplaying the roles of time and narrative, these are vital to the success of the *Meditations* as a work of philosophy. I will suggest that a consequence of the narrative form is that it aids in the production of a text which can act as a "conversion machine" for the reader.

Outline of Thesis

To restate my central thesis: although scholars have tended to overlook or diminish the roles of time and narrative, they are vital to the success of the *Meditations* as a work of philosophy. In the first chapter I consider in greater detail the stylistic features of the *Meditations*, including the use of temporal markers and a personalised narrator reflecting on their experience. I argue that the temporal framework helps to provide a causally linked and unified text, and furthermore, help to signify "narrativity" in the text. Thus, I henceforth simplify my thesis statement from discussion of "time and narrative" to simply "narrative", since my argument is that temporality is itself a signifier of narrativity in the text. I turn to Martial Gueroult, John Cottingham, and other scholars, who point towards the essential unity of the *Meditations*. I argue in distinction from these scholars that the unity of the *Meditations* is brought about not only through the structure of the argument, but through the temporal framework and the narration of the "I" himself. In developing this argument I turn once more to the distinction between the first-person of Scholastic discourse, which I term the thetic "I", and the personalised narrative voice we find in the *Meditations*, which I term the experiential "I". With theoretical support through Monika Fludernik's experiential model of narrative, I claim that the experiential "I" brings us closer to a recovery of Descartes's own intentions for how his text should be read.

While the first chapter focuses on the stylistic aspects of the text, the second chapter turns to explicit discussion *of* time, both within the *Meditations* and in secondary literature, by looking at the so-called non-endurance doctrine. The central argument of this chapter is that the *Meditations* is not simply a series of arguments expressed in a narrative form; rather, the narrative form is an essential aspect of the arguments themselves. The non-endurance doctrine

states that a lifespan can be divided into innumerable parts, and that the narrator has no power to sustain himself from one part of time to the next; rather, he is dependent on the preserving power of God. I develop an analogy between this idea of the causal reliance on a higher power and the way fictional characters are causally reliant on authors and readers to sustain their existence. In this chapter I chart the narrator's fragile relationship with time, which helps to indicate how from the perspective of the experiential "I", the non-endurance doctrine provides a much greater epistemological assurance than the Cogito does.

The third chapter will begin to explore some of the consequences of the *Meditations* as a temporal, narrative, text, as well as consequences of this analogy between the higher power and the author/character/reader relationship. The most significant of these consequences, which ties into my central thesis, is that the temporal and narrative aspects function to produce a text which acts as a "conversion machine" for the reader. In Chapter 3 I provide a close parallel reading of Saint Augustine's *Confessions* and the *Meditations*. I argue that by turning to the *Confessions*, in which the themes of time, conversion and narrative are not only evident, but uncontroversial, we are better able to see how these same themes are presented by Descartes, as well as how they have been overlooked by commentators. The *Confessions*, like the *Meditations*, contains a narrator with a fragile relationship with time; furthermore, this fragility is ultimately resolved through the discovery of the preserving power of God. For this reason, I argue that conversion is essentially an act of narrative, and that the *Meditations* (and the *Confessions*) are structured as a series of steps which will lead to conversion, and can thus be thought of as "conversion machines".

In the final chapter I turn to another well-known precedent of the *Meditations*: the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius. Once more, my aim is not to study influence, but rather to use the *Spiritual Exercises* as a means of revealing analogous themes within Descartes's text. I argue that we can see common features between the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Meditations*, particularly in regards to the way Ignatius's text draws the reader into undertaking the experience of meditation for themselves. Thus, the conversion that takes place for the narrator is in effect a conversion for the reader. The experiential "I", which is commonly found in texts such as the *Spiritual Exercises*, enables the reader to superimpose themselves into the experience of the text. By utilising these features, Descartes has produced a text which can be framed as a narrative of experience in which the reader becomes the Meditator at the heart of a temporal journey towards conversion, through the discovery of the preserving power and author of his or her existence.

1. Time and Narrative in Descartes's *Meditations*

So far I have sought to establish two things. Firstly, that in comparison to prior Scholastic writers, Descartes's philosophy is communicated in a novel way. I have suggested that the use of a personalised narrative voice and temporal markers in a work on metaphysics are revolutionary. I provided a comparison to a number of Scholastic writers to defend this claim. As well as providing a preliminary analysis of certain stylistic features I have considered the manner in which Descartes's style, in particular his narrative voice, has been treated by commentators. I concluded—and this is my second point—that Descartes's style has not received significant attention by commentators on Descartes and the *Meditations*. This is despite vast quantities of commentary devoted to Descartes's philosophy. To return to my central thesis I argue that despite scholars downplaying or overlooking the role of narrative, it is vital to the success of the *Meditations* as a work of philosophy. My preliminary review of previous scholarship has indicated how the narrator has been overlooked. The next step is to explore in more detail how time functions within the text, and put forward my claim that this temporality is itself a signifier of the narrativity of the *Meditations*. Some recent scholarship which I have considered already in my introduction will indicate a way forward. Gary Hatfield has pointed to the fictional setting of the days of meditation, and argued that the *Meditations* can be thought of as a '*sequence of thoughts*'. Kosman has highlighted the importance of '*representation*' in the *Meditations*. These are suggestive of the indications some scholars have made in the direction of time and narrative. Yet, missing up to this point in commentary has been an extensive analysis of the role these aspects play within the text, supported by a sound scholarly conception of narrative.

In this chapter I will therefore focus on these two revolutionary aspects of the *Meditations*: the temporal markers and the narrative voice. The primary purpose of this chapter will be to consider in greater detail the way time and narrative function within the *Meditations* with support from the field of narratology. I will turn first to the relationship between the temporal markers and the arguments being developed by the narrator (Section 1.1). I claim that the temporal markers are essential to the exposition of the discursive arguments of the text, and furthermore that the temporal markers are bound to the "I" that is experiencing the text (the narrative voice). I consider the work of Martial Gueroult, who argues that the best method for understanding and interpreting the *Meditations* is to read it as

a unified whole, since the arguments exist in a crucial causal sequence and should be considered in this way. I argue in distinction to Gueroult that the unity of the *Meditations* is brought about through the experiential "I" enunciating the arguments within a temporal span, rather than through the order of discursive arguments themselves.

In order to defend this argument I turn in Section 1.2 to the narrative voice (i.e. the experiential "I"). As I have claimed, the narrator drawing on personal experience is a unique and revolutionary aspect of the *Meditations*. In Section 1.2, I will defend this claim by drawing further distinctions between arguments articulated by a narrator within a temporal space, and the more traditional syllogistic style of argument. I argue that a focus on the narrator experiencing the days of meditation draws us closer to Descartes's own intentions for how the text should be read. I then introduce Monika Fludernik, who conceives of narrative as essentially based in personal experience. Her model of experiential narrative provides a scholarly basis for my reading of the *Meditations* as itself an experiential narrative. I juxtapose Fludernik's model with my interpretation of Descartes's directions for reading the *Meditations*. I go on to suggest in later chapters that by reading the text according to the experiential "I" we are brought into new encounters with it, encounters that I argue are more attuned to the way it was written.

1.1 Order of Days, Order of Arguments

By representing his arguments as having been considered over a series of days of meditation, Descartes provides a unique structure for the *Meditations*. Surprisingly little work has been done on this feature of the text. Gary Hatfield, as I have quoted above, suggests that the *Meditations* takes place within a 'fictional setting' of six days of meditation, and that over these days the reader witnesses the '*sequence* of thoughts by which [the Meditator] discovered his metaphysics.'[1] I would like to underline the word *sequence* here, since the way the text functions in a sequence is critical to my reading. The representation of arguments within a temporal sequence is revolutionary (true, the dialogue form had at various points in time since Plato served this purpose—and Descartes himself employed the form in the *Search*

[1] Hatfield, *Descartes and the Meditations*, p. 50, *my emphasis*.

for Truth (CSM II 400–420)—but in the *Meditations* Descartes was the first to wield the possibilities of a narrativised monologue). The narrative voice (the "I") is situated within this temporal space (the days of meditation). The philosophical arguments within the text are being enunciated by a fictional voice within a fictional span of time. This allows the *Meditations* to stand in contrast to Scholastic writing, which as I have noted, is formulated according to a *quaestio* (or question and answer) form. The *quaestio* form provides a rigid framework for the arguments within the texts of Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus and Francisco Suárez. Aquinas, to recall, uses particular phrases as part of his structure, such as 'it seems that (*uidetur quod*)', which serves to indicate a statement (or series of statements) in objection to the central question. This is followed by an argument from authority, introduced with the phrase 'on the contrary (*sed contra*)', and then a first-person '*respondeo*', in which Aquinas lays out his own response to the objections raised. The *quaestio* provides a framework within which an argument can be mounted in such a way that the reader can easily follow the order of demonstration. The key phrases are used as markers that indicate the position within the argument at crucial points, as well as indicating to the reader the distinction between Aquinas's own opinion, objections to his central questions which he will eventually refute, and crucially, the authority of scripture (which is prior to his own arguments in the framework).

I propose that in place of the *quaestio* framework, the *Meditations* is structured through a temporal framework. The common phrasing and question-and-answer structure found in Scholastic writers such as Aquinas is replaced by temporal markers, which themselves provide the structure within the text. But these temporal markers, more than simply being a matter of framing, or a stylistic curiosity, are integrated into the arguments themselves. The text being structurally divided into a series of days, on this reading, takes on a greater significance than a simple stylistic flourish. From the First Meditation to the Sixth Meditation, the days provide distinct temporal breaks. The temporal structure is essentially integrated into the arguments that are put forward by the Meditator. By means of illustration, I will briefly examine the temporal markers within the text, and explore these markers in relation to the arguments being mounted at each moment. This will prove important to my argument that time—and by extension narrative—plays a crucial role in the text.

In the First Meditation the Meditator places himself firmly in the present when he says '*Today* [*hodie*] I have expressly rid my mind of all worries' (CSM II 12, *my emphasis*; AT VII 17). The Meditator orients the rest of his meditations around the immediacy of this *today*.

As Cottingham observes, the First Meditation is '"temporally indexed" – it is essentially linked to the "here and now".'[2] Thematically, within this meditation the Meditator is beginning his project of doubt. In temporal terms, his project at this point is about forgetting what he has learned in his past in order to reemerge with a better means of understanding the world in the future. The entire meditating activity is explicitly outlined as being part of a specific and isolated 'stretch of free time' (CSM II 17). It is not a designated study period within day-to-day life, or even merely the time it takes to think and write. It is more likened to a solitary retreat. This retreat-like aspect of the text is something I will explore in greater detail in Chapter 4, when I consider the way Descartes's writing draws on different genres, such as spiritual and devotional literature. I will suspend detailed discussion of this concept for now.

In the Second Meditation the Meditator remembers being thrown into doubt 'as a result of yesterday's meditation [*hesterna meditatione*]' (CSM II 16; AT VII 23) and states that he must 'attempt the same path which I started on yesterday [*eandem viam quam heri fueram ingressus*]' (CSM II 16; AT VII 24). He draws on memory in order to consider the previous day's activity. As well as this, through stating that he wishes to continue along the same path (*eandem viam*), his language invokes a spatial metaphor, connoting the *journey* that he is undertaking—a journey which in point of fact occurs over a temporal, rather than spatial, plane. He simultaneously invokes the past and the work that lies ahead, to be performed over subsequent days. He is narrating not only the past and present, but a story implied to continue into the future. The Meditator is building his temporal framework. At the end of the Second Meditation he says 'I should like to stop here and meditate for some time on this new knowledge I have gained, so as to fix it more deeply in my memory' (CSM II 23). Memory plays a significant role throughout the text in tying the days of meditation together, as well as in ensuring a consistency of self for the "I" of the text.

The temporal markers in the Third Meditation are more subtle, though no less significant. While there are no explicit references to the temporally framed period of meditation (such as *yesterday*, or *in these past few days*), the sense of *presentness* is charted clearly at the outset. The Third Meditation begins 'I will now [*nunc*] shut my eyes, stop my ears, and withdraw all my senses' (CSM II 24; AT VII 34). The opening of the Third Meditation is once again a pivoting point. Just as in the opening of the Second Meditation, in which the Meditator draws on his memories of the previous day, and then considers a way

[2] Cottingham, *Descartes*, p. 33.

forward, here he reflects on his past, before turning towards the future: 'I will converse with myself and scrutinize myself more deeply; and in this way I will attempt to achieve, little by little, a more intimate knowledge of myself' (CSM II 24). He begins to interrogate who he is, and based on his prior knowledge and experience, considers what previously he has known about himself: i.e. 'a thing that thinks: that is, a thing that doubts, affirms, denies, understands a few things, is ignorant of many things, is willing, is unwilling, and also which imagines and has sensory perceptions' (CSM II 24). At the beginning of the second paragraph, then, he says: 'In this brief list I have gone through everything I truly know, or at least everything I have so far [*hactenus*] discovered that I know' (CSM II 24; AT VII 35). Here, with the adverb *hactenus*, the Meditator is once again drawing connections between the past and the present; he has gone over everything that up to this point in time (*hactenus*) he has discovered ('up to *now*' in Michael Moriarty's translation).[3] The Meditator draws from the past up to the present, and then he draws from the present into the future: 'Now [*nunc*] I will cast around more carefully to see whether there may be other things within me which I have not yet [*adhuc*] noticed' (CSM II 24; AT VII 35).

The Fourth Meditation proceeds via the same basic expositional structure which has been evident in the previous days of meditation. The Meditator reflects on how 'during these past few days [*his diebus*]' (CSM II 37; AT VII 52) he has accustomed himself to lead his mind away from his senses. Now that he has discovered God, and proposed his reliance on God, he proceeds with a much more positive outlook:

> I clearly infer that God also exists, and that every single moment of my entire existence depends on him. So clear is this conclusion that I am confident that the human intellect cannot know anything that is more evident or more certain. And now, from this contemplation of the true God, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and the sciences lie hidden, I seem to have discovered a path [*Jamque videre videor aliquam viam*] to the knowledge of other things. (CSM II 37, translation modified; AT VII 53)

At first, he reflects on where he has been, and then, pivoting back to the present, states that he will use this knowledge he has gained as momentum as he continues to move forward. I have modified Cottingham's translation in the above quote, in order to once more underline the spatial metaphor of following the appropriate path (*viam*), which was introduced by Descartes in the Second Meditation. To reiterate my earlier point, Descartes is here providing a metaphor which spatialises what is in fact a temporal sequence. It is a path through time,

[3] René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies*, trans. Michael Moriarty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 25, *my emphasis*.

rather than space. The path through time is once more articulated later in the Fourth Meditation when the Meditator refers to 'these past few days [*hisce diebus*]' (CSM II 41; AT VII 58) in relation to 'asking whether anything in the world exists' (CSM II 41). At the end of this meditation, the Meditator considers that he has 'profited from today's meditation [*hodierna meditatione*]' (AT VII 62, my translation) since 'today I have learned [*hodie … didici*]' (CSM II 43; AT VII 62) how to avoid falling into error as well as how to 'arrive at the truth' (CSM II 43). Though *didici* could be translated into either simple past or perfect tense, Cottingham's translation places the Meditator's discussion into the perfect tense ('I *have* learned'), indicating a past occurrence with ongoing repercussions into the present. This grammatical choice resonates strongly with the theme of the passage: a person looking back on their recent actions, and drawing on or rejecting them. Throughout the Fourth Meditation, the narrator continues to refer back to the previous days. Cottingham's translation captures the fact that the Meditator is very much looking both backwards and forwards throughout his days of meditation, yet remains always oriented around the immediate present moment.

As he comes towards the end of his epistemological journey, the Meditator continues to reflect back on the previous days in order to ensure that he can find certainty going forward. At the beginning of the Fifth Meditation, the Meditator once more pivots into the past before turning his attention towards the future. In the opening paragraph he seeks to ensure that he can 'escape from the doubts into which I have fallen in the last few days [*dubiis, in quae superioribus diebus incidi*]' (CSM II 44; AT VII 63)[4] by finding some kind of certainty in regards to material objects, and also refers to those things on which he has meditated 'in these past days [*superioribus hisce diebus*]' (CSM II 45; AT VII 65). Towards the end of the Fifth Meditation, the Meditator is in a position of greater confidence:

> Now, however, I have perceived [*percepi*] that God exists, and at the same time I have understood [*intellexi*] that everything else depends on him, and that he is no deceiver; and I have drawn the conclusion [*collegi*] that everything which I clearly and distinctly perceive is of necessity true. Accordingly, even if I am no longer attending to the arguments which led me to judge that this is true, as long as I remember [*recorder*] that I clearly and distinctly perceived it, there are no counter-arguments which can be deduced to make me doubt it, but on the contrary I have true and certain knowledge of it. (CSM II 48; AT VII 70)

As I have stated earlier, memory will prove critical to the success of the Meditator's project; for it is only through his memory of the previous days of meditation, and the discoveries and

[4] I have modified Cottingham's translation of '*incidi*' here from 'I fell' to 'I have fallen' to once more highlight the perfect tense.

conclusions contained therein, that he can be certain of knowledge in the future. Once more, the perfect tense is also used to provide the sense of how the memory of the past events continues to interact with the present. Finally, In the Sixth Meditation the Meditator once more refers to the 'doubts of the last few days [*superiorum dierum dubitationes*]' (CSM II 61; AT VII 89). Since these meditations comprise a once in a lifetime [*semel in vita*] (AT VII 17) event, the Meditator needs to ensure that during these days of meditation he has definitively guaranteed that he can avoid falling into error in the future.

The passage of time is centrally integrated into the arguments of the text. *Today, yesterday, the last few days*; the events of the text build from each other in a chain of succession. Each day the Meditator reflects on the preceding events before turning his attention back to the present, and the path that lies ahead. The use of the perfect tense indicates the continual interaction between the past and the present in the text. 'I have learned (*didici*)'; 'I have fallen (*incidi*)'; 'I have perceived (*percepi*)': the sense of ongoing effects from the past into the present ensures that the text reads as an interaction between causally linked events, rather than simply a succession of arguments. In the Second Meditation, the Meditator says:

> So serious are the doubts into which *I have been thrown* as a result of yesterday's meditation that I can neither put them out of my mind nor see any way of resolving them. It feels as if *I have fallen* unexpectedly into a deep whirlpool *which tumbles me around* so that I can neither stand on the bottom nor swim up to the top. (CSM II 16, *my emphasis*)
>
> [*In tantas dubitationes hesternâ meditatione conjectus sum, ut nequeam ampliùs earum oblivisci, nec videam tamen quâ ratione solvendae sint; sed, tanquam in profundum gurgitem ex improviso delapsus, ita turbatus sum, ut nec possim in imo pedem figere, nec enatare ad summum*]. (AT VII 23–24)

The events in the past have continuing repercussions into the present, and beyond that, into the future. While Cottingham translates *delapsus* as 'I have fallen', Anscombe and Geach render this 'as though I had suddenly fallen'[5] and Moriarty's translation reads 'as if I had suddenly slipped.'[6] I would propose that it is more accurate, both thematically and grammatically, to render this in the present perfect (I have fallen), as Cottingham does, rather than in the past perfect (I had fallen / slipped). At this point in time, at the beginning of the second day of meditation, the Meditator has not made his way out of the doubts to which he

[5] René Descartes, 'Meditations on First Philosophy', in Elizabeth Anscombe & Peter Thomas Geach (trans. & eds.), *Descartes: Philosophical Writings* (London: Nelson, 1964), p. 66.
[6] Descartes, *Meditations*, trans. Moriarty, p. 17.

subjected himself on the previous day. He is *still* being thrown into confusion (*turbatus sum*), yet to achieve the certainty he desires.

This sense of continuity is significant for the reader as well. Unless the reader has been following sequentially—and thus understands that the Meditator threw everything he believed into question, to the extent that he doubts his very existence—they cannot really understand the reason why Descartes uses this imagery, nor get a proper sense of the drama of it. At the end of the First Meditation, the Meditator does not have any assurance that he exists. The next day, then, takes on a tentative, critical importance. This sense of drama is central to the narrative thrust of the text. The drama is presented not simply with the immediacy of the present tense: the perfect tense ensures that the ongoing interaction between prior and present events is highlighted. The reader follows not only the arguments, but also the narrativised dramatic presentation of these causally-linked events.

The temporal markers, as I have suggested, can be seen as a means of structuring the text that goes beyond the traditional Scholastic *quaestio* framework. As well as providing this structural framework, the temporal markers also provide a sense of continuity to the text. The presentation allows us to read the text as a series of causally-linked events. The use of a temporal framework allows for the urgency of the undertaking to be more readily apparent. Without the urgency of *the last few days*, the text is not an epistemological journey. Rather, it remains a mere succession of arguments that can be subsequently segregated, considered and reconsidered in depth in studies that are organised into topics such as 'God', 'Error and the Will' or 'Physical Objects'.[7] This manner of delineating Descartes's thought into topics might be found in a traditional analytic commentary. As Emmet Flood suggests, 'usual accounts of the *Meditations* tend to isolate certain key arguments for analysis and evaluation … or attempt to detail the architectonic structure of the work as if it were a treatise.'[8] However, the *Meditations* is structured in such a way that the reader must follow sequentially.

Descartes himself was explicit in regards to the importance of the sequentiality of the *Meditations*. In the Second Set of Replies he says in regards to the order of the text: 'The items which are put forward first must be known entirely without the aid of what comes later; and the remaining items must be arranged in such a way that their demonstration depends solely on what has gone before. I did try to follow this order very carefully in my *Meditations*' (CSM II 110). He alludes to the importance of sequence elsewhere in his

[7] These are the titles of chapters five, six and eight respectively in Bernard Williams' *Project of Pure Enquiry.* See Williams, *Project of Pure Enquiry*, pp. 130–162; pp. 163–183; pp. 213–252.
[8] Emmet T. Flood, 'Descartes's Comedy of Error', *MLN*, 102/4 (1987), p. 850.

writing. For example, in the *Discourse on the Method*, published four years prior to the *Meditations* in 1637, Descartes writes that the perfect method of demonstration would consist of 'long chains of reasons [*longues chaînes de raisons*]' (AT VI 19). In the *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*,[9] Descartes suggests that 'self-evidence and certainty of intuition is required not only for apprehending single propositions, but also for any chain [*catenae*] of reasoning whatever' (CSM I 14; AT X 369, translation modified).[10] Sequence, I argue, is not only significant for Descartes; it is central to his entire method. While it could be claimed that Descartes here refers to the kind of order that can be found in a syllogism, in the next section (1.2) I will propose that this is not the kind of sequentiality that exists in the *Meditations*. There I will argue that the sequentiality of the text is brought about through the "I" experiencing the events of the text within a temporal sequence. Further, this is how Descartes intended his text to be interpreted. In order to highlight the significance of sequentiality, I claim, Descartes has arranged his text into a series of days, which thus *chronologise* his arguments within a causally-linked temporal framework, and provide a sense of urgency and drama. The implicit temporal structure substantiates the demonstration of the philosophical points. But this goes beyond mere drama and spectacle. The temporal framework is tied essentially into the arguments of the text themselves. This gives the *Meditations* not the sequentiality of a syllogism but the temporality of lived experience.

Moreover, the *Meditations* does not just follow a temporal framework, but the order of arguments occur in a causal sequence to produce a unified and complete work. As I have suggested, this unity is not brought about simply through the temporal sequence, but through the "I" that is experiencing time. In the next chapter I will come back to the idea of the unified sense of self over time, but for now will restate the experience of the "I" in brief. The opening paragraph of the First Meditation finds the Meditator in the immediacy of the present. From this *today*, he reflects back some years into his past, to when he first became cognisant of his over-reliance on his frequently erroneous senses, and the preconceived opinions he has long held. The Meditator proceeds through his solitary retreat into *tomorrow*, and then *the next day*, and so on. He continually refers back to the previous days of meditation, and the sense of continuity helps to integrate the temporal structure into the arguments of the text. The events of the Second Meditation enable the Meditator to come to an understanding of God in the Third Meditation. This ensures that the events can be read not just as successive, but causally

[9] Commonly known as the *Regulae*, this was one of Descartes's earliest written works, but was not published in his lifetime.
[10] I have modified Murdoch's translation here to retain the word 'chain' in continuity with what is later found in the *Discourse*. Murdoch's translation instead uses the word 'train' which still carries an equivalent meaning.

linked, to produce a text that reads as a unified whole. According to Flood, 'the intelligibility of the work as a whole, its success as a piece of philosophy, and … its significance for Western philosophy all depend on the unity of the *Meditations* as a narrated whole.'[11] I would underline the last two words there: 'narrated whole.' I take from Flood this conception of the text as a narrated whole, but would like to take the claim further to suggest that the unity of the *Meditations* is a *unity of experience* (brought about through its narrative form). The unity of the *Meditations* is brought about through this fusion of time and narrator. The Meditator is *experiencing* the days of meditation: the content of that experience is itself the philosophical arguments which the Meditator articulates. Time and experience (the experience of the narrator) join together to produce a text which is more than a treatise: it is the representation of thinking within a fictional setting. I will turn to the concept of experience in greater detail in the next section, but first I will consider how unity has traditionally been conceived in commentary on the *Meditations*. This will help to illustrate where my own reading in the next section departs from these prior conceptions.

I have just claimed that the *Meditations* can be read as a unified whole, and that the narrator experiencing the days of meditation produces this unity. The idea of reading Descartes and the *Meditations* as a unified whole has received considerable attention in recent years, yet the focus has tended to be on the unity of argument, rather than temporal, causal unity. John Cottingham has recently suggested that 'A striking feature of Cartesian thought sets it apart from a great deal of current philosophy, namely, its systematicity and unity.'[12] The systematicity and unity of Cartesian thought is a subject that has been dealt with in great detail by Martial Gueroult. I claim in this discussion—and I will defend my argument in greater detail in the next section—that the unity of the text is brought about not only through the systematic relationship between arguments, but through the relationship between the one articulating these philosophical arguments and the temporal structure (i.e. through the narrator experiencing and discovering over a span of time). I do not, then, argue against the positions of Cottingham and Gueroult, but instead seek to use their arguments as a starting point for my own. In particular I will spend the remainder of this section discussing Gueroult's study *Descartes' Philosophy Interpreted According to the Order of Reasons*, which is centrally concerned with the unity of Descartes's philosophy, particularly as espoused in the *Meditations*. Though Gueroult's method of interpretation has been questioned, what I take

[11] Flood, 'Descartes's Comedy of Error', p. 849. Flood goes on to suggest that 'an essential, and not merely accidental, formal dynamism is given the work by its narrative form' (p. 849).
[12] John Cottingham, 'The Desecularization of Descartes', in Chris L. Firestone & Nathan A. Jacobs (eds.), *The Persistence of the Sacred in Modern Thought* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), p. 16.

from his study for my purpose here is his view of the *Meditations* as a unified whole, rather than a collection of piecemeal arguments. As I have indicated, I will use this as a starting point, but take Gueroult's argument in a different direction to conclude that the unity is in fact brought about through the temporal (and by extension) narrative framework.[13]

In his monumental study *Descartes' Philosophy Interpreted According to the Order of Reasons* the highly respected French scholar Martial Gueroult sought to present a more Cartesian view of Descartes's philosophy. Rather than studying the *Meditations* by topic, as many commentators do, Gueroult proceeds according to the structure of the text itself, by the 'order of reasons.'[14] Gueroult suggests: 'Most of the other critics only consider the various topics separately or in succession: freedom in Descartes, thought in Descartes, God in Descartes, etc. This is evidently a way of doing things that is repugnant to the spirit and letter of Descartes' doctrine.'[15] Rather, for Gueroult, the only truly Cartesian way to read Descartes is to proceed as the Meditator does. In the *Meditations*, the knowledge that the Meditator receives is discovered in a particular order. It is meaningless to consider the arguments out of this context. Descartes's doctrine is 'a single block of certainty, without any cracks, in which everything is so arranged that no truth can be taken away without the whole collapsing.'[16] Since 'no single truth of the system can be correctly interpreted without reference to the place it occupies in the order,'[17] the only way to accurately read the text is according to the causal system that Descartes has advanced.

Gueroult's conception of the unity of the *Meditations* is clearly articulated near the end of the second volume of his study. He reads the six days of meditation as constituting 'a complete sphere in which the first three and the last three are opposed as two hemispheres separated by divine veracity.'[18] The first hemisphere is called by Gueroult the hemisphere of the false. The hemisphere of the false opens in the First Meditation shrouded in darkness brought about by 'the rule of the principle of universal deception.' This 'absolute realm of error and doubt' is pierced by the light of the Cogito in the Second Meditation. Then in the

[13] For a more in-depth treatment of Gueroult's study, as well as discussion of the impact it has had on 20th century philosophy, see Tad M. Schmaltz, 'PanzerCartesianer: The Descartes of Martial Gueroult's Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 42/1 (2014), pp. 1–13. See also Knox Peden, 'Descartes, Spinoza, and the Impasse of French Philosophy: Ferdinand Alquié Versus Martial Gueroult', *Modern Intellectual History*, 8/2 (2011), pp. 361–390. Though it is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide any detailed discussion, both of these articles provide invaluable insight on a longstanding conflict between the highly prominent and decorated French scholars Ferdinand Alquié and Martial Gueroult, which was broadly to do with the history of philosophy, and centred significantly on these authors' divergent interpretations of Descartes.

[14] Martial Gueroult, *Descartes' Philosophy Interpreted According to the Order of Reasons*, 2 vols. (I; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 5.

[15] Gueroult, *Order of Reasons I*, p. xx.

[16] Gueroult, *Order of Reasons I*, p. 5.

[17] Gueroult, *Order of Reasons I*, p. 6.

[18] The next two paragraphs draw closely on Gueroult, *Order of Reasons II*, pp. 215–216.

Third Meditation, the light of the Cogito 'finally encounters the infinite God, which is other than myself and which, destroying the dark fiction of universal deception, illuminates the whole sky, from one horizon to the other, through the supreme splendor of absolute veracity.' The darkness of doubt is thus threatened first by the temporary certainty of the Cogito, and finally overcome by the proof of the existence of a supreme and perfect (and thus veracious) God. Only through the certainty of a veracious God can we have any assurance of certainty in anything else.

From the first hemisphere to the second hemisphere we 'enter into a new world.' The second hemisphere, 'the hemisphere of the true,' is an inversion of the first. Where the first hemisphere sought to doubt everything, the second hemisphere seeks to 'affirm the truth of everything.' The second hemisphere also sees an inversion of the Cogito. Human error 'punctures the light of universal veracity with a dark point, as the Cogito punctured the darkness of universal deception with a point of light.' Divine veracity serves as a counterpoint throughout the second hemisphere. 'To the hypothesis of the evil genius, which plays the role of a principle of segregation, of elimination and purification, in the first three *Meditations*, responds, in the last three *Meditations*, the dogma of divine veracity.' To put this another way, the evil genius seeks to divide and conquer, divine veracity brings about unity. Gueroult's explication shows how his reading demands that the text is perceived as a unified whole, such that no part can be removed without having a detrimental effect on the rest. 'Once we perceive the true complexity of reasons, we understand the truth of the Cartesian statement that if one element were lifted from the doctrine, the doctrine would be destroyed completely.'[19] Gueroult's reading is suggestive of the inherent symmetry of the *Meditations*, such that the individual arguments are given more credence through their place in the order than if considered in isolation. By reading the *Meditations* as a complete sphere, consisting of two opposing hemispheres that invert and recalibrate each other, Gueroult's conception of the text is more analogous to a cycle than a sequence. The magisterial language in which Gueroult puts forward his interpretation of the structure of the *Meditations* also strongly calls to mind a Genesis-like story of creation. I will address this concept of the *Meditations* as a creation story at greater length in later chapters.

Before moving on it is worth considering briefly Gueroult's method, since it is relevant to my thesis in a number of ways. Firstly, in his reading of the philosophy of Descartes, Gueroult seeks to present a more "pure" and "Cartesian" interpretation by following the order

[19] Gueroult, *Order of Reasons II*, p. 216.

of reasons of the *Meditations* closely. Gueroult does not simply demonstrate that the order of reasons is crucial as a mode of exposition in the *Meditations.* He takes this further by suggesting that the order of reasons must be followed in interpreting and analysing the text. His study is thus as much about the way we read the text as about the way the arguments are structured by the author. My thesis, similarly, engages closely with the question of how we read the *Meditations,* though I draw markedly different conclusions than Gueroult does. In reading the *Meditations* as he believes Descartes intended, Gueroult is pursuing a closer adherence to the history of the text. Descartes, as I have indicated previously, sought to shake off the baggage of his predecessors, particularly the Aristotelian-based Scholasticism of medieval thinkers. Gueroult's study proposes to read Descartes within that context, focusing on the primary text itself rather than how it may have been influenced by Descartes's predecessors. Roger Ariew suggests that Gueroult's study radically departs from the majority of Anglo-American studies for this reason, since it is finely tuned into what Descartes himself demands from a reading of his text. Ariew says in his introduction to Gueroult's study: 'The tendency to do philosophy apart from its history is evident in the Anglo-American analytic tradition; and curiously, it is most evident in the case of analytic writings about Descartes.'[20] This suggests that in contradistinction to the analytic method described by Ariew, Gueroult's approach to the text is strongly historicised; the analytic tradition reads the *Meditations* apart from its history, or apart from the historical intentions of the author.

Yet, despite this claim to be a historicist text, Gueroult actually ignores the broader historical context. Descartes's intention was to produce an autonomous philosophy, and so he does not refer to predecessors or established authorities. Gueroult thus reads the *Meditations* on these terms: as an autonomous text, and paying little consideration to predecessors. Thus it is, strangely, a historicist text—since it pays adherence to the author's original intentions—which also proceeds *apart from the text's history* in Ariew's own terms, since it doesn't consider historical context in the form of Descartes's contemporaries, or potential influences. There is a distinction, of course, between authorial intention (which is one form of historical engagement) and authorial influence (i.e. influences *on* the author, which is another form of historical engagement). It could be argued that Gueroult, in seeking historical engagement in the form of authorial intention has been forced to neglect this other form of historical engagement, which has to do with the question of authorial influence.

[20] Roger Ariew, 'Introduction', in Gueroult, *Order of Reasons I,* p. xiv.

Indeed, whether Gueroult's study is historical or ahistorical has been questioned. To reiterate, Gueroult seeks to understand the *Meditations* autonomously, with little reference to contemporary philosophical trends or historical precedents. Ariew suggests that Gueroult's approach adheres more closely to the history of the *Meditations*. However, by doing so, Gueroult has neglected other forms of historical engagement. This point is made by Stephen Menn, who considers Gueroult's approach to be ahistorical. Though conceding that Descartes sought to produce a new and 'rationally autonomous'[21] philosophy, Menn questions whether it follows that a similarly autonomous approach is the best method for *interpreting* Descartes's philosophy. Menn's critique contrasts Gueroult's approach to reading Descartes with his own. Menn seeks to trace the historical origins for Descartes's philosophy—specifically in Augustine's writings—and so his study is antithetical in spirit to Gueroult's more closely text-oriented reading. Menn further suggests that Gueroult is in actual fact 'influenced by the contemporary situation' and that 'it is clear enough that Gueroult is interpreting Descartes through the perspective of the mathematical idealism of the early twentieth century.'[22] Despite Gueroult's claims about his historically-sensitive approach, Menn suggests that Gueroult is himself susceptible to contemporary philosophical trends, whilst simultaneously ignoring prior historical context.

To summarise, Ariew suggests that Gueroult's study is attuned to the spirit of Descartes, and Menn counters that it is not necessary when interpreting a text to follow the same method as that employed in the text itself. In any case, for my purpose what is particularly noteworthy in Gueroult's approach is that he highlights the importance of the structure and order of Descartes's *Meditations*, arguing at once that this feature of the text is indispensable to its understanding, but also that the majority of contemporary commentators have failed to appreciate it. Though my discussion draws on Gueroult's understanding of the structure and unity of the text, I part ways with Gueroult on two fronts. Firstly, on the matter of the unity of the text: while I follow Gueroult in considering the unity of the text to be crucial, I conclude instead that the structure (based around temporality and the experiential "I") allows for a reading of the text as a narrative. I will discuss these divergent conceptions of textual unity in the next section. Secondly, like Menn, I will be taking an interest in the legacy of thought on which Descartes may be drawing (despite Descartes's own claims towards autonomy), in order to flesh out this narrative reading. I argue that such an investigation brings us closer to the experience Descartes himself intended his readers to

[21] Stephen Menn, *Descartes and Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 10.
[22] Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, p. 10.

have. In the next section, as well as Chapter 2, I will provide further explication of a narrative reading. Then in Chapters 3 and 4 I will take up once more the question of historical context when I look to Augustine and Ignatius in order to shed light on Descartes's use of temporality and experiential engagement in the *Meditations*.

In this section I have claimed that the *Meditations* as a whole has the character of a fictional narrative, as it is a series of thoughts *represented to occur* over six days of meditation. Within the six days of the *Meditations* we witness the genesis of Descartes's philosophy. I use the term representation here in the sense in which it has been frequently used to define narrative by scholars in the field of narratology, as the method through which the events of a text are conveyed to the reader. H. Porter Abbott, a renowned contemporary narratologist, defines narrative as 'the *representation* of an event or a series of events.'[23] Representation, on this account, is linked to the role of articulation (i.e. how the story is transmitted). In the *Meditations* the one articulating the events is the Meditator—'I should like to stop here and meditate for some time on this new knowledge I have gained' (CSM II 23) as opposed to 'he will stop here and meditate for some time'. The term 'representation' in Abbott's sense helps to highlight how the "I" of the *Meditations* is not only arguing a number of philosophical points, but is also *narrating his own personal experience*. As Descartes relates to Burman, the narrator begins the first days as 'a man who is only beginning to philosophize' (CSMK 332), and ends the final day confident that he has built a solid foundation for his beliefs. The *Meditations* on this account becomes the *representation* of a man going through this process, and not the process itself, since Descartes has distanced himself from the narrator (which problematises the possibility of an autobiographical reading). Indeed, in my introduction I pointed to numerous scholars that highlight the distinction between the author and the "I" of the *Meditations*.

Furthermore, the temporal space within which the fictional "I" undergoes these meditations can also be seen as fictional. The arguments of the text, I claim, are thus embedded within a fictional temporal framework. That is, each argument is represented as occurring at a particular temporal point in the epistemological journey of the meditator, and

[23] H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 12, *my emphasis*. The term representation can also be found in the definitions of narrative that are put forward by a number of other narratologists. See Susana Onega & José Angel García Landa, 'Introduction', in Susana Onega & José Angel García Landa (eds.), *Narratology: An Introduction* (London: Longman, 1996), p. 3; Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck, *Handbook of Narrative Analysis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), p. 13; Gerald Prince, *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative* (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1982), p. 4; Gerald Prince, *A Dictionary of Narratology* (Revised edn.; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), p. 58. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan uses the word 'narrated' in place of 'represented.' See Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction* (2nd edn.; London: Routledge, 2002), p. 2. Franz Stanzel uses the term 'mediacy' to refer to the way in which the story is transmitted. See Franz K. Stanzel, *Narrative Situations in the Novel: Tom Jones, Moby-Dick, The Ambassadors, Ulysses* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971).

each argument's position in this fictional temporal sequence is crucial to understanding its role in the overall project of the *Meditations*. Unlike the *quaestio* form of his predecessors, Descartes uses a temporal framework as a means of structuring his arguments such that the sequence of thoughts is better demonstrated. Moreover, the presentation of the *Meditations* as a series of days of meditation allows for the passage of time to become not only an underlying, but an essential feature of the work. The temporality of the *Meditations*, to underline, is fictional: it is the *representation* of days of meditation, not meditations themselves; not days themselves. It is in this way that the temporal sequence signifies narrativity in the text, since it is a *series of events* that are *represented by the narrator* to have occurred. In later chapters I will come back to this concept of *representation*, when I consider aspects of genre in the *Meditations*. My argument is that while some scholars have sought to place the *Meditations* within the genre of devotional literature, and debated the extent to which the text is "meditational", frequently overlooked is the possibility that the *Meditations* is not "meditational" at all, but is rather the narrative (or the representation) of a series of days of meditation. This discussion will reinforce the importance of the role of narrative, since I claim it is *narration* that is actually occurring within the text, not *meditation*. This later discussion provides more evidence for my argument that the significance of the narrator has been overlooked or downplayed by commentators. Before turning to these implications of the term representation, though, I would like to focus on the narrative voice itself in more detail, and specifically on the relationship between the narrator, the arguments which he articulates, and the setting within which he articulates them (i.e. the temporal framework).

1.2 The Experiential "I" and the Thetic "I"

In the previous section I reflected on the temporal markers within the *Meditations*, and suggested that they provide a framework, but also the setting within which the Meditator articulates the arguments of the text. The temporal markers, to recall, were one of the features that I claim make the *Meditations* a stylistically revolutionary text. The other was the narrative voice (the "I") that experiences the days of meditation. The "I" is the feature I will consider in this section. To restate my central thesis: narrative is crucial to the success of the *Meditations* as a work of philosophy. My focus on the experiential "I" in this section will help

to articulate what "success" means in this context. Through my reading of the narrator and with support from the field of narratology I will present my conception of narrative as being based on personal experience. I will argue that Descartes intentionally produced a text to be read as (what I am calling) an experiential narrative. Descartes intended his readers to undergo an *experience* so as to be transformed: to become a new kind of subject, one who can form arguments on their own terms and not through appeals to authority and tradition, but rather through appeals to the authority of experience itself. The narrative form of the text (i.e. an experience over a number of days of meditation that is recounted by the narrator) is what enables such a transformation to occur. Thus, narrative becomes crucial to a recuperation of what I claim Descartes was trying to achieve through his *Meditations*.

In order to defend my claim that the arguments of the *Meditations* are embedded within a fictional temporal framework, and so as to be able to move forward to the consequences of such a reading, I will consider the distinctions between two types of arguments. First, I will consider a treatise in a traditional form, articulated by what I am calling the thetic "I". I will then turn to the "I" of the *Meditations*, which I am calling the experiential "I". This comparison will help to show the distinctions between these two types of arguments, as well as illustrating how the temporality and the narrative voice influence the philosophical arguments of the *Meditations*. This discussion will also draw on Descartes's stated instructions on how his text should be read, in order to develop my argument that consideration of the experiential "I" brings us closer to Descartes's own intentions.

To begin I will consider, abstractly, a treatise in this form:

I argue:
P,
Therefore Q;
Therefore R.

This treatise involves a series of claims (P; Q; R; P entails Q; Q entails R). The reader takes these claims as the 'commitments' of the author (the "I" of "I argue").[24] These commitments are treated as holding in what William James, following E.R. Clay, calls the 'specious present'[25] in that as the argument proceeds, the commitments are all added to one and the same tally, as if all held in mind at once. At a minimum, the commitments form a set {P, Q, R} which has to be logically consistent, i.e., P, Q and R must all be able to be true together.

[24] My use of the term 'commitments' here follows Charles Hamblin. See C.L. Hamblin, 'Mathematical Models of Dialogue', *Theoria*, 37/2 (1971), pp. 130–155.
[25] William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 3 vols. (1; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 573–575.

The role of the "I" then is simply to provide a locus for the set of commitments. This "I" has no relevant history outside of the treatise and no distinct personality. There is no representation of the activity of thinking here; there is the presentation of a thought as an outcome of that process (a punctive state, rather than an activity, which necessarily takes a period of time). This may in part explain Margaret Wilson's dismissal of the "I" of the *Meditations*. To recall her point, 'the work must be read primarily as the presentation of a philosophical position … and not as history or autobiography at all.'[26] Of course, if one reads the text as a philosophical treatise which uses a pseudo-autobiographical form as a stylistic novelty, it is difficult to argue against such an assertion, since the philosophical position is considered with no need to defer to what the "I" is doing. The arguments are considered as they exist in their completed form, with no emphasis on the history or experience which led to the conclusions that are reached in the text. However, as I will suggest, this thetic "I" is not the type of "I" that we encounter in the *Meditations*.

In the introduction to this thesis I considered the style of four Scholastic thinkers. I claimed that the "I" tends to function in the manner I have just described, as the locus for a set of commitments. The Scholastic authors with which I briefly engaged tend to use the "I" in a purely thetic manner; that is, the "I" is tied to the argument, rather than carrying any kind of personal or autobiographical weight. Furthermore, the "I" functions as a means of positioning the reader in relation to the discussion, indicating when the author is recapitulating a prior authority, or scripture, as opposed to providing their own argument. The "I" is fixed within a structural position, ("I argue") which a reader can frame in comparison with alternative structural positions such as "scripture says" and so on. As well as being fixed within a structural position, the thetic "I" is atemporal, since it exists outside of the scene of writing. The "I" of Aquinas or Scotus is a post-discovery "I". It is the "I" that is stamped into the text once the struggle of experimentation and thought has been worked through and resolved. Any personality or history is left behind in order to present a Gueroult-like unified and whole argument which exists in a "specious present" rather than a distinct timeframe.

However, this type of argument structure is precisely what Descartes rails against in his *Meditations*. L.J. Beck suggests that 'Descartes's attitude to the syllogistic method of reasoning, as practiced by the Scholastics of his day, is mainly a negative one when it is not frankly hostile.'[27] Descartes famously resisted the suggestion that his Cogito was, in fact, a

[26] Wilson, *Descartes*, p. 5.
[27] L.J. Beck, *The Method of Descartes: A Study of the Regulae* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 102.

syllogistic argument. Consider a form of the Cogito, rewritten by John Cottingham to follow a standard Aristotelian construction of a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion:

	(i) Whatever is thinking exists	(major)
	(ii) I am thinking	(minor)
therefore	(iii) I exist	(conclusion)[28]

Once more, while this argument is outlined in a series of steps, it is not a sequence *per se*, since the reader must hold all the claims in mind at once in order to understand the conclusion. The claims exist in the specious present, rather than in a temporal sequence. Descartes indicated why the Cogito was not a syllogism in the Second Set of Replies:

> When someone says 'I am thinking therefore I am, or I exist', he does not deduce existence from thought by means of a syllogism but recognizes it as something self-evident by a simple intuition of the mind. This is clear from the fact that if he were deducing it by means of a syllogism he would have to have had previous knowledge of the major premise 'Everything which is thinking is, or exists'; yet in fact he learns it from *experiencing in his own case* that it is impossible that he should think without existing. (CSM II 100, *my emphasis*)

Descartes is aiming to represent (or narrate) the process of discovery. A syllogistic argument in which all premises are bound together in an atemporal and unified space is antithetical to his purpose. The experience over time is central. In the *Meditations*, the proclamation '*I am, I exist*' (CSM II 17, *emphasis in text*) can only be made after the Meditator has deliberated on the deceiving demon in the First Meditation. The next day he is able to understand that if there is potential that he is *being* deceived, then he must *be* (i.e. he must exist). 'But there is a deceiver of supreme power and cunning who is deliberately and constantly deceiving me. In that case I too undoubtedly exist, if he is deceiving me' (CSM II 17). This then allows the Meditator to proclaim the Cogito as a point of certainty. What is missing in the syllogistic form is what happens *before* the "I" can state the major premise. Certain knowledge of the "I's" existence is not brought about through an awareness of a major premise (*everything which is thinking is, or exists*), but is instead a point of awareness brought about through the accumulation of experiences over a period of time.

What further emerges from Descartes's statement from the Second Set of Replies is that the experience is in fact that of the reader. Through his discussion of method in the Replies, a picture develops of the ideal reader for Descartes's text. In the Second Set of Objections, Mersenne asks Descartes why he did not demonstrate his arguments in a geometric fashion:

[28] Cottingham, *Descartes*, p. 36.

> it would be worthwhile if you set out the entire argument in geometrical fashion, starting from a number of definitions, postulates and axioms. You are highly experienced in employing this method, and it would enable you to fill the mind of each reader so that he could see everything as it were at a single glance, and be permitted with awareness of the divine power. (CSM II 92)

Of interest here is that Mersenne brings in the experience of the reader. The first point of note is that he suggests that the geometric method will enable Descartes to 'fill the mind' of the reader. This implies that all the activity is on the part of Descartes, and the reader will passively receive the argument in its completed form. As will become clear in later chapters, the *active* engagement of the reader is essential to the success of what Descartes is trying to achieve in his *Meditations*. A passive reader is antithetical to Descartes's intentions. Mersenne further suggests that a geometric presentation would be ideal for the reader to be able to hold the entire argument in mind at once, 'at a single glance.' Recall the type of argument I considered above, which is a series of claims which are held together in the specious present. There is a *unity* in this kind of argument, built around a thetic "I". However, it is not the kind of unity that Descartes is seeking in his text.

Descartes responds to Mersenne by discussing two forms of demonstration, synthesis and analysis, used in the geometrical sense.[29] Synthesis, Descartes says, 'employs a long series of definitions, postulates, axioms, theorems, and problems, so that if anyone denies one of the conclusions it can be shown at once that it is contained in what has gone before' (CSM II 110). The advantage of this method is that even the most argumentative reader must agree with the conclusion, so long as the whole is sound. Descartes does not consider this to be a very satisfying method though, as it fails to 'engage the minds of those who are eager to learn, since it does not show how the thing in question was discovered' (CSM II 110). Analysis, on the other hand, is 'the best and truest method of instruction' (CSM II 111). Descartes describes analysis as showing the truth 'by means of which the thing in question was discovered methodically and as it were a priori, so that if the reader is willing to follow it and give it sufficient attention at all points, he will make the thing his own and understand it just as perfectly as if he had discovered it for himself' (CSM II 110). Ultimately the experience of the *Meditations* is that of the reader, a point I will come back to in greater detail in my final chapter.

[29] For further discussion on Descartes's arguments for synthesis versus analysis see L. J. Beck, 'The Rules of Analysis and Synthesis', in *The Method of Descartes*, pp. 155–167; Richard McKeon, 'Philosophy and the Development of Scientific Methods', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 27/1 (1966), pp. 3–22; E.M. Curley, 'Analysis in the *Meditations*', in Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Descartes' Meditations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 153–176.

There is a distinct need for some form of remoteness to the Cartesian method, since the reader must discover the truth by *experiencing it in his own case*. While the "I" in Scholastic style was used as part of the argument structure, and to signal to the reader a distinction between the author's position, and that of an established authority such as scripture, the "I" within the days of meditation exists in isolation, referring to no outside authority. The closest the Meditator comes to acknowledging the field of scholarship outside of himself is itself expressed in vague terms, which I have already quoted: 'Some years ago I was struck by the large number of falsehoods that I had accepted as true in my childhood, and by the highly doubtful nature of the whole edifice that I had subsequently based on them' (CSM II 12). Though the narrator is ambiguous here, he alludes to the knowledge he gained in childhood, which he has accepted without really comprehending it or weighing it in meaningful terms. Descartes is more overt in a famous passage from the *Discourse*:

> as soon as I was old enough to emerge from the control of my teachers, I entirely abandoned the study of letters. Resolving to seek no knowledge other than that which could be found in myself or else in the great book of the world, I spent the rest of my youth travelling, visiting courts and armies, mixing with people of diverse temperaments and ranks, *gathering various experiences*, testing myself in the situations which fortune offered me, and at all times reflecting upon whatever came my way so as to derive some profit from it.' (CSM I 115, *my emphasis*)

This kind of appeal to experience is a central pillar of Descartes's philosophy. Particularly in the *Discourse*, and in a more developed form in the *Meditations*, Descartes rejects outside authority. This rejection goes beyond an engagement with predecessors before turning to his own opinion; indeed, the *Meditations* goes beyond even the appeal to the 'great book of the world' found in the *Discourse*. By the time of the *Meditations*, we move beyond a restless traveler seeking wisdom in outside experience; the Meditator is looking only into himself. 'I will converse with myself and scrutinize myself more deeply; and in this way I will attempt to achieve, little by little, a more intimate knowledge of myself' (CSM II 24).

What this means in terms of the formal properties of the text is that the "I" is a locus of personality, which pivots and changes throughout the discussion. The "I" of the *Meditations*, in stark contrast to the thetic "I", moves and evolves. The "I" of the *Meditations* is inherently temporal, existing within a span of time, from day one to day six, growing and learning through the experience of meditating. This makes the "I" of the *Meditations* more immediate and more transparent: we see the struggle that the narrator goes through and the '*sequence of thoughts*', to return to Gary Hatfield's phrase, is on clear display. It is in this way that the

narrative voice draws in time as well as experience: it is an experiential "I". The epistemological journey of the Meditator is all about consideration of prior experience, and reconsideration in light of the immediate and urgent process of the days of meditation. It is, thus, an experiential journey. Because it takes place within the days of meditation it is also a temporal one. Time and experience are fused within the days of meditation.

If we return to the abstract formulation which I introduced above, and rework it so that it introduces a temporal element, we begin to see how time changes the structure:

> Monday: Today I think P
> Tuesday: Yesterday I thought P; today I think not-P
> Wednesday: Yesterday, after rejecting P, I thought not-P; today I see that Q follows from not-P.

Here, there are a number of distinct features in contrast to the treatise form outlined above. The claims are not seen as commitments in a specious present; that is, they are not listed simultaneously on the tally board of the "I". Rather, change is permitted, and perhaps expected. Because of this, the "I" now has a history: past thoughts and present thoughts. Following the story of the "I" gives us a representation of the activity of thinking or understanding. Knowledge is a punctive state (i.e., a state or capacity that exists at a moment of time) and we can imagine different routes to that knowledge, including relying on authorities to get there. But knowing/understanding (the gerundive form '…ing') is an activity that takes place over a period of time; it is experiential. Change will be considered in greater detail in Chapter 3. Particularly the focus will be on how *change* impacts the "I" of the *Meditations*. I argue that the transformation and modification that is experienced by the Meditator can be considered as a form of conversion.

I have drawn a distinction between the thetic "I" which exists as a locus for a set of commitments, removed from any sense of personality or history, and the experiential "I" which draws on personal experience, and provides a narrative representation of the process of thought. Where the thetic "I" produces a unified argument which exists outside of the procedural domain of experimentation and discovery, the experiential "I" seeks to provide these very means by which an argument was formed. The experiential "I" is a representation of the process of thought: *representation* used to denote the articulation by the narrator, and *process* used to indicate the temporal sequential journey. Rather than a Gueroult-like unity of the 'order of reasons', I suggest that the unity of the *Meditations* comes about through the narrative framework, and particularly through the narrator, who uses narrative as a means of

bringing together the disparate strands of their existence. This argument will become clearer over the course of the next two chapters, first through my consideration of the narrative aspects of Descartes's philosophy of time in the next chapter, and then in my consideration of Augustine in Chapter 3. Before I can properly defend these claims, though, and in order to draw together these aspects of time, experience, and the narrative voice, I will close this chapter by turning to narrative theorist Monika Fludernik, whose work on experience in narrative has had a profound impact on the field of narratology. What I take from Fludernik is her definition of narrative, which will provide a useful theoretical basis with which to approach the *Meditations* as a narrative text—and more exactly as a *representation of experience*. I argue that Fludernik's conception of narrative as a representation of experience is synonymous with my reading of the *Meditations* and with the way in which I suggest Descartes intended his text to be read.

Fludernik first introduced the term "experientiality" in her 1996 study, *Towards a Natural Narratology*, and has continued to develop a model of narrative based on the concept in subsequent publications.[30] In *Towards a Natural Narratology*, Fludernik suggests that her work seeks to provide a 'radical reconceptualization of narratology' (TNN xi) and aims to create a new narrative paradigm (TNN xi). Her theory has been regarded for the most part as a welcome addition to the field of narratology. David Herman considers Fludernik's theory a 'significant contribution' not just to narratology, but to a number of fields.[31] It has been considered by reviewers 'innovative,'[32] pertinent and fruitful.[33] Andrew Gibson takes his praise even further, suggesting that Fludernik may arguably have 'claim to being the advance guard of narrative theory.'[34]

Fludernik defines experientiality as the 'quasi-mimetic evocation of "real-life experience"' (TNN 12). Fludernik's theory reconsiders narrative as essentially based in human experience, not plot. In *An Introduction to Narratology*, Fludernik speaks of the way we use story-telling to reconstruct our lives. 'We like to emphasize how particular

[30] Notably, see Monika Fludernik, 'Genres, Text Types, or Discourse Modes? Narrative Modalities and Generic Categorization', *Style*, 24/2 (2000), pp. 274–292; Monika Fludernik, 'Natural Narratology and Cognitive Parameters', in David Herman (ed.) *Narrative Theory and the Cognitive Sciences* (Stanford: CSLI Publications, 2003), pp. 243–267.
[31] David Herman, 'Review of *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* by Monika Fludernik', *Language*, 76/1 (2000), p. 199. David Herman also conceives of narrative as being based in experience. He suggests: 'rather than focusing on general, abstract situations or trends, stories are accounts of what happened to particular people – and of what it was like for them to experience what happened – in particular circumstances and with specific consequences.' See David Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 1–2.
[32] Masahiko Minami, 'Review of *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* by Monika Fludernik', *Narrative Inquiry*, 8/2 (1998), p. 467.
[33] John Pier, 'Review of *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* by Monika Fludernik', *Style*, 31/3 (1997), pp. 555–560.
[34] Andrew Gibson, 'Review of *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* by Monika Fludernik', *Journal of Literary Semantics*, 26/3 (1997), p. 238.

occurrences have brought about and influenced subsequent events. Life is described as a goal-directed chain of events which, despite numerous obstacles and thanks to certain opportunities, has led to the present state of affairs.'[35] We base narratives, then, on the cause and effect connections provided by a series of events. However, 'the primary concern in narratives is not actually chains of events but the fictional worlds in which the characters in the story live, act, think and feel.'[36] It is not the actions, but the actors within a fictional world with which narrative is ultimately concerned. For Fludernik, it is the experience of the actors within a story-world (which she terms experientiality) that produces "narrativity". The presence of an experiencing character is sufficient to produce narrativity: the plot is inessential (TNN 311).

Fludernik's elevation of experience over events runs counter to predominant conceptions of narrative, which tend to revolve around time and causality, and the way in which events are structured. I would requote, for example, H. Porter Abbott's definition of narrative, as 'the representation of an event or a series of events.'[37] Gerald Prince, an influential early scholar in the study of narrative, similarly defines narrative as 'the representation of at least two real or fictive events or situations in a time sequence, neither of which presupposes or entails the other.'[38] Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan defines narrative as 'the narration of a succession of fictional events.'[39] E.M. Forster, a prominent novelist from the early twentieth century, distinguishes between *story* as a 'narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence'[40] and *plot* as being 'also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality.'[41] He explains this distinction by way of an example: '"The king died and then the queen died" is a story. "The king died, and then the queen died of grief" is a plot.'[42] These definitions all contain two common features: they all highlight the importance of representation (or the storyteller narrating), as well as the order and succession of events (though there is disagreement over whether these events must be causally related or not).[43]

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[35] Monika Fludernik, *An Introduction to Narratology* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p. 1.
[36] Fludernik, *Introduction to Narratology*, p. 6.
[37] Abbott, *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, p. 12.
[38] Prince, *Narratology*, p. 4.
[39] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, p. 2. See also Onega & García Landa, 'Introduction', p. 3; Herman and Vervaeck, *Narrative Analysis*, p. 13.
[40] E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (1927; repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p. 42.
[41] Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, p. 87.
[42] Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, p. 87.
[43] Although there is disagreement regarding the extent to which causality can be seen as an indicator of narrativity, many scholars acknowledge that readers will assume causality between events regardless of the authorial intention. Gerald Prince suggests: 'Given two events A and B, and unless the text explicitly indicates otherwise, a causal connection will be taken to exist between them if B temporally follows A' (Prince, *Narratology*, p. 39). Seymour Chatman also made this point, suggesting that the reader will 'understand' or supply causality to a narrative. See Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp. 45–46. The same argument was made

For Fludernik, however, temporal order is subordinated to experience. 'Experientiality,' she argues, 'is at its lowest in the presentation of merely a succession of events and their causal independence' (TNN 328). Fludernik suggests, rather, that 'temporality is a constitutive aspect of embodiment and evaluation, but it is secondary to the experience itself, which includes temporality as one of its parameters but … cannot be subsumed under the umbrella of temporality' (TNN 322). Temporality, then, is a feature of experience, rather than experience being a feature of temporality. Fludernik considers Forster's example of a plot, '*The king died and then the queen died of grief*,' as classifiable as plot not because of the chain of events, (and then), but rather the inclusion 'of grief', which contains an indication of experientiality (TNN 328). It is the fact that this narrative contains experience, not causality, which ultimately signifies its status as narrative. Fludernik's definition of narrative runs thus:

> A narrative is a representation of a possible world in a linguistic and / or visual medium, at whose centre there are one or several protagonists of an anthropomorphic nature, and who are existentially anchored in a temporal and spatial sense and who (mostly) perform goal-directed actions (action and plot structure). It is the experience of these protagonists that narratives focus on, allowing readers to immerse themselves in a different world and in the life of the protagonists.[44]

Much like Abbott, Fludernik alludes to the storyteller through the concept of "representation". Yet, Fludernik departs from prior considerations of narrative by placing characters at the *centre* of her conception. While temporal and spatial moorings are still highlighted, it is not the causality between events that makes a text a narrative, but the way a character experiences those events. This conception will prove particularly useful for me in my next chapter, when I provide a more comprehensive reading of the way the narrator and character at the heart of the *Meditations* (the Meditator) experiences time. Experientiality will help to show that narrative is a key device in the philosophical work Descartes is performing, because it provides a link between his style and his overall purpose of conveying experience.

Fludernik's model is designed to take account of texts that fall outside of traditionally accepted narrative parameters. Her conception seeks to redraw the boundaries of narrative. She states that a major purpose of her model is to 'provide a definition of narrativity that is as

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even earlier by Roland Barthes, when he suggested that 'the mainspring of narrative is precisely the confusion of consecution and consequence, what comes *after* being read in narrative as what is *caused by*; in which case narrative would be a systematic application of the logical fallacy denounced by Scholasticism in the formula *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*.' See Roland Barthes, 'Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives', in Mieke Bal (ed.), *Narrative Theory: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, 4 vols. (I; London: Routledge, 2004), p. 69; John Pier 'After This, Therefore Because of This', in John Pier & Jose Angel García Landa (eds.), *Narratologia: Theorizing Narrativity* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), pp. 109–140.

[44] Fludernik, *Introduction to Narratology*, p. 6.

far as possible applicable to all types of narrative and does not merely serve to describe the realist novel.'[45] Fludernik believes that '[t]he proposed reconstitution of narrativity on the lines of experiential rather than actantial parameters allows for nothing less than the reintegration of some 80 to 90 percent of hitherto marginalized literature from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century' (TNN 329). It is thus a model which is designed to expand the borderlines of narrative. Furthermore, by reframing narrative along experiential lines, Fludernik is seeking to 'encompass the entire range of literary *and* non-literary texts.'[46] This, however, is the basis for some of the major points of criticism directed towards Fludernik's model. Jan Alber considers that a definition that includes almost every text results in a meaningless definition of narrative.[47] Werner Wolf, similarly, argues that a definition of narrative along purely experiential lines would be open to too many texts not traditionally considered a narrative, while also arbitrarily excluding others, such as historiography.[48]

Such discussion around the question of where to draw the borderlines of narrative does not have a great deal of impact on my thesis, and so I will avoid delving deeply into it. In any case, redrawing the borderlines of narrative to encompass a greater range of texts could only benefit a project such as mine, which seeks to consider a philosophical text *as* a narrative. Nevertheless, my reading of the *Meditations*, as I have sought to illustrate, views both the temporal markers and the experiential "I" as being revolutionary and essential features of the text. I do not go so far as Fludernik by suggesting that experience is the only necessary feature of a narrative text. As I have argued above, experience is necessarily a temporal process, since experience is gathered over a span of time. What I do take from Fludernik, particularly, is something that will have a great impact on the remainder of this thesis and is worth re-quoting from her definition: 'It is the experience of these protagonists that narratives focus on, allowing readers to immerse themselves in a different world, and in the life of the protagonists.'[49] Herein lies the crux of Fludernik's conception of narrative, and it is significant to my thesis for two reasons. Firstly, narrative is centrally concerned with recounting experiences. I have argued that the recounting of experience is a central pillar of Descartes's method, and is revolutionary, since the appeal to experience in Descartes's philosophy replaces the Scholastic appeal to authority. Fludernik's model of experiential

[45] Fludernik, 'Natural Narratology and Cognitive Parameters', p. 248.
[46] Fludernik, 'Genres, Text Types, or Discourse Modes?', p. 288.
[47] Although Alber does acknowledge that the experiential model helped him to discover an entirely new interpretation of Beckett. See Jan Alber, 'The "Moreness" or "Lessness" of "Natural" Narratology: Samuel Beckett's "Lessness" Reconsidered', *Style*, 36/1 (2002), pp. 67–69.
[48] See Werner Wolf, 'Narrative and Narrativity: A Narratological Reconceptualization and its Applicability to the Visual Arts', *Word & Image*, 19/3 (2003), p. 182.
[49] Fludernik, *Introduction to Narratology*, p. 6.

narrative enables a clearer articulation of how the appeals to authority in the form of experience in the *Meditations* can be best understood as appeals to authority in the form of narrative. In my next chapter, drawing on Fludernik's definition of narrative as based in experience, I will seek to explore in greater detail how the experiential "I" influences the way we read the *Meditations*. My argument is that by reconsidering Descartes's philosophy of time from the perspective of the experiential "I" new perspectives emerge on the central relationship of the *Meditations*, which is the relationship between the Meditator and God.

The second reason Fludernik's conception of narrative is significant to my reading is also linked to the relationships within the text. Fludernik's conception suggests that narratives are about a relationship between protagonists and readers. The *Meditations* is a text in which the relationship between the reader and the narrator is intimate. As I have claimed above, the way the text is written as the *process of thinking* creates transparency, and helps to remove the barrier which a rigid framework (such as the *quaestio* framework) places on the text. In the *Meditations* the reader and the narrator go through the days of meditation together; all the more, the narrator invites the reader to interpose themselves into the place of the enunciating "I", so as to experience the days of meditations for themselves, to 'make the thing his own and understand it just as perfectly as if he had discovered it for himself' (CSM II 110). Fludernik's model articulates the way readers become immersed in the different worlds of literary texts. I suggest this kind of immersion is what Descartes demands from his readers. In my final chapter, when I draw on Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* this relationship between reader and text will be explored in greater detail. I will thus refer back to Fludernik at various points throughout the remainder of this thesis. Her model will provide a theoretical framework with which to approach the text, as well as the tools with which to engage with the concept of narrative as experience within the *Meditations*. I claim that Fludernik's model aligns closely with Descartes's own instructions for how to approach the *Meditations*. By approaching the text from the perspective of the experiential "I", narrative becomes more significant to our reading; and I argue that this leads to a recuperation of what Descartes was trying to achieve in his *Meditations*.

2. Narrator and Author: Descartes and God

In the previous chapter I considered the role of the causally-linked temporal markers within the *Meditations*, compared the thetic "I" of scholastic philosophy with the experiential "I" of the *Meditations*, and found a useful conception in Fludernik through which to engage with the narrative voice of the text. To argue that narrative is crucial to the success of the *Meditations* as a work of philosophy, it was important to start with a good understanding of how time functioned in the text; and how time in turn helps to signify narrativity. I also claimed that by focusing on the experiential "I" we are brought closer to Descartes's own intentions for how his text should be read. I will add more evidence to support this claim in my final chapter. Meanwhile, I will continue to consider how both time and narrative can be seen to engage readers at the level of experience. In this chapter I will do so by exploring the way the narrator experiences time in the *Meditations*. This will involve an examination of the way time itself is discussed by the narrator.

The concept of time within the *Meditations* is raised briefly, in a passage from the Third Meditation termed by Jonathan Bennett the non-endurance doctrine. Consideration of the non-endurance doctrine will be valuable to my argument in a number of ways. Firstly, it draws the philosophical arguments of the *Meditations* into the narrative discussion. While up to this point I have considered the temporal markers in relation to the philosophical arguments, this chapter takes my reading further by specifically treating the philosophical discussion *of* time *as* narrative. To recall Margaret Wilson's argument which I considered in my introduction, the *Meditations* on her account is a work that must be read primarily for its philosophical arguments, and not as a historical or autobiographical text. I made the obvious point that this perspective was to the exclusion of other forms of narrative. Yet my engagement with the *Meditations* up to this point would not, I suspect, satisfy such a perspective as Wilson's. An exploration of the way time and narrative function in the text does not ultimately lead to a rebuttal of the position that we should read the *Meditations* primarily for the philosophical arguments. It merely highlights what some might call extraneous detail.

The reason I continue to refer back to Wilson is that she acknowledges that there is a distinct narrative voice in the *Meditations*, though she concludes that it is not relevant to the

function of the text overall. This makes Wilson's claim a useful counterpoint to the argument I am advancing in this thesis, which is that narrative *is*, in fact, vital to the success of the *Meditations*, not just as a literary text, but specifically as a philosophical one. Wilson provides a striking example of a celebrated scholar in the field who identifies some of the same features I do in the text, although we draw markedly different conclusions as to the value of these features. Yet, if the narrative voice influences the philosophical arguments themselves, this may counter a position such as Wilson's, since if the philosophical arguments are altered by the temporal and narrative aspects of the text, then time and narrative are no longer extraneous detail, but essential elements of the purpose of the text: that is, the communication of philosophical ideas. This is what I will illustrate in this chapter. I will advance my claims by taking a philosophical concept (in this case the non-endurance doctrine) and exploring the way narrative and time can change the shape of the doctrine in terms of the doctrine's standing in the text overall. Drawing the temporal and narrative aspects into the philosophical discussion itself helps to advance my argument that narrative plays an important role in the text. It is not an extraneous layer to be considered in isolation, but is essentially linked into the discursive arguments themselves.

My discussion of the commentary on this doctrine, meanwhile, provides further support and illustration for my claim that the stylistic aspects of the text have been overlooked by scholars. In this chapter I consider not only the non-endurance doctrine, but also the commentary on this passage. I argue that scholars have focused on a technical question of the continuity or discontinuity of time in the non-endurance doctrine, to the exclusion of the possibility (and the consequences that flow from it) that the doctrine is uttered by a fictional narrator within a fictional temporal space. Time, in my reading, is thus a feature of the way the doctrine is uttered, and not simply the content of the utterance. By once more drawing tools from the field of narratology I am able to better articulate what this means for the text as both a work of philosophy and as a work of narrative.

In Section 2.1, I introduce the non-endurance doctrine and provide a small review of previous commentary on this doctrine. I suggest that in discussion of the non-endurance doctrine, scholars have tended to focus on the question of what the doctrine reveals about Descartes's views on the continuity and discontinuity of time. Yet, despite the divergent positions taken in scholarship, both positions have tended to lead to the same conclusion, which is that the doctrine ultimately reveals the narrator's dependence on the preserving power of God. I claim that such a view tends to engage with the doctrine as if it were part of a

Scholastic text. Furthermore, the focus in scholarship has overlooked that the *Meditations* is not simply a text containing philosophical discussion of time and causality; importantly, the text itself *is* temporal.

In Section 2.2, then, I reconsider the themes of the non-endurance doctrine in light of the temporality and narrativity of the text. The non-endurance doctrine, as I will outline, is about the way the narrator experiences time: which is ultimately as a non-perfect being causally-dependent on a higher power to sustain him through the events of a life. This helps to shed insights on the relationship between the narrator, the author, and the reader, and by extension the causally-dependent relationship between Descartes and the author of his existence, God. I here draw on John Cottingham and Genevieve Lloyd in advancing an argument for the inherent fragility and instability that comes from the Cogito argument. I claim that this instability is resolved (from a narrative perspective) in the non-endurance doctrine and the Meditator's discovery of his reliance on a higher power to sustain him through time. I also draw on concepts from narratology about the construction of characters and their relationship to time, and juxtapose these conceptions with my reading of the narrator. This will pave the way for the argument I will put forward in my final two chapters, which is that the *Meditations*, through the use of time and narrative, acts as a sort of "conversion machine" for the reader. Time, causality and experience thus all play a significant role in the non-endurance doctrine. Furthermore, when considered in this light (i.e. as an element in an experiential narrative), the non-endurance doctrine becomes important as the culmination and completion of the temporary assurance that the Meditator found in the Cogito. The causal reliance on a higher power which is articulated in the non-endurance doctrine becomes the catalyst for my narrative reading of the *Meditations.* Furthermore, I claim, the non-endurance doctrine can be seen as the catalyst for the philosophical project as a whole that Descartes outlines in the *Meditations*.

2.1 The Non-Endurance Doctrine

The purpose of this section is to introduce the non-endurance doctrine and outline the way scholars have typically engaged with it in secondary literature. This discussion further advances my claim that the stylistic aspects of the text have been overlooked. I argued in the

previous chapter that Descartes's *Meditations* is a work that is steeped in temporality. The text is divided into six "meditations" that are purported to occur over six "days". These days provide a temporal undercurrent to the text, as well as the structural moorings. Yet despite this underlying temporal structure, explicit discussion *of* time as a subject within the text itself is limited to a statement of causal dependence that appears in the Third Meditation. This reads:

> A lifespan [*omne tempus vitae*] can be divided into countless parts, each completely independent of the others, so that it does not follow from the fact that I existed a little while ago that I must exist now, unless there is some cause which as it were creates me afresh at this moment – that is, which preserves me. (CSM II 33; AT VII 48)

For clarity, I will follow Jonathan Bennett in referring to this passage as expressing Descartes's non-endurance doctrine,[1] so called because the passage implies that the narrator is causally dependent on God; he has no independent power within himself to "endure" through time. This concept of causal dependence appears with slight modification at various points in Descartes's other writings. It appears in the *Replies to the Objections* (CSM II 66–397), the *Principles of Philosophy* (CSM I 177–291), and his *Conversation with Burman* (CSMK 335). Related ideas are also found in the *Discourse on the Method* (CSM I 129) and in the *Correspondence* (CSMK 320; 355). Comparison of the doctrine as it appears in the *Meditations* and in some of these other texts will help to reinforce my argument that the narrative voice in the *Meditations* is unique, and plays a significant role in the way we read the text.

One brief preliminary is in order. This chapter is concerned with the subject of time and causality within the *Meditations*: thus, when I refer to causality in this discussion unless otherwise indicated I refer to the concept that a lifespan is causally dependent on a higher power from one moment in time to the next (i.e. causality between events). This temporal and existential causality that is expressed through the non-endurance doctrine is distinct from Descartes's more recognised writings on causality, particularly his *Causal Adequacy Principle*. The *Causal Adequacy Principle* appears numerous times throughout Descartes's writings. One of the more widely discussed iterations is in the Third Meditation, where the narrator outlines that the cause of an object should contain (at least) as much reality as the object contains in itself. To put this another way, the cause must contain as much reality as its effect. John Cottingham explicates this principle in his book *Descartes*. 'If there is some item

[1] Jonathan Bennett, *Learning from Six Philosophers: Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume*, 2 vols. (1; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), p. 96.

X having the property F, then the cause which produced X, whatever it may be, must possess at least as much F-ness as is to be found in X itself.'[2] In the Third Meditation, the narrator develops this principle through an initial discussion of ordinary items such as stones, before moving onto more abstract notions, such as ideas. From Cottingham's discussion once more: 'Thus, if an idea A represents some object which is F, then the cause of the idea, whatever it may be, must itself really and actually contain as much reality (as much F-ness) as is to be found merely "objectively" or "representatively" in the idea.'[3] This concept is finally applied to a consideration on the existence of God (i.e. that I know God exists because of the idea of Him that I have intrinsically within me, which must have come from outside of myself). As stated in the Third Meditation: 'All the attributes represented in my idea of God are such that, the more carefully I concentrate on them, the less possible it seems that the idea I have of them could have originated from me alone' (CSM II 31). Since the cause must contain as much reality as the effect, the cause of my idea of God (which did not come from me) must contain as much reality as the idea of God itself. If my *idea* of God is real, then God must also be real. The *Causal Adequacy Principle* is a specific line of argument used to demonstrate the existence of God. The doctrine that will be the focus of this chapter, however, while also appearing in the Third Meditation, is not used to demonstrate the existence of God, but rather our metaphysical reliance on God, and the epistemological certainty this knowledge provides.[4]

There are other causal theories within the *Meditations* and Descartes's other writings and many of these have received scholarly attention. For example, in discussion of Descartes's physics, there has been much consideration of how the mind can have causal interaction with the body.[5] Since this is not the focus of my thesis, I will not say much more about these concepts and discussions here. But for clarity's sake, I must underline that when discussing causality in the *Meditations*, unless otherwise specified, I am referring to its use as

[2] Cottingham, *Descartes*, p. 49.
[3] Cottingham, *Descartes*, p. 50.
[4] For more detailed discussion of Descartes's causal principles and his theory of ideas, see Kenneth C. Clatterbaugh, 'Descartes's Causal Likeness Principle', *The Philosophical Review*, 89/3 (1980), pp. 379–402; Lois Frankel, 'Justifying Descartes' Causal Principle', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 24/3 (1986), pp. 323–341; Vere Chappell, 'The Theory of Ideas', in Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Descartes' Meditations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 177–198; Nicholas Jolley, *The Light of the Soul: Theories of Ideas in Leibniz, Melebranche, and Descartes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); Frederick J. O'Toole, 'Descartes' Problematic Causal Principle of Ideas', in Vere Chappell (ed.), *Descartes's Meditations: Critical Essays* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), pp. 101–127; Cecilia Wee, *Material Falsity and Error in Descartes's Meditations* (London: Routledge, 2006).
[5] E.g. Enrique Chávez-Arvizo, 'Descartes's Interactionism and his Principle of Causality', *The European Legacy*, 2/6 (2008), pp. 959–976; Louis E. Loeb, *From Descartes to Hume: Continental Metaphysics and the Development of Modern Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), pp. 111–156; Paul Hoffman, *Essays on Descartes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 77–87; pp. 101–104.

part of the non-endurance doctrine, and not to the *Causal Adequacy Principle*, or other causal theories of Descartes.

Yet even if the theories I have just mentioned are more widely discussed than the non-endurance doctrine, it still must be acknowledged that Descartes's causal theories overall have received less discussion than more celebrated doctrines and ideas such as the Cogito, the wax argument and the method of doubt. Nicholas Jolley, for instance, says that David Hume has traditionally been seen 'as the starting-point for all modern discussions of causality,' and that '[for] all his role as the so-called father of modern philosophy Descartes did no serious re-thinking about the nature of causality.'[6] Jolley suggests that Descartes did little more than expound traditional Scholastic arguments and assumptions about causality. Tad Schmaltz, in contrast, provides extensive textual evidence that there are sufficient novel aspects of Descartes's theory to represent 'a significant break with the scholastic past.'[7] Geoffrey Gorham also argues that there is value in Descartes's causal theories, suggesting that in his theories of causality Descartes is 'invoking a metaphysical thesis that has a crucial function in his program for a mechanistic science.'[8] These various views indicate that there are questions regarding elements of Descartes's work on causality that remain unresolved.

I have just proposed that Descartes's causal theories have received less discussion than many of his more celebrated doctrines and ideas. His theories on time have likewise been seen as minor contributions to his overall philosophy. In the context of the wider discussion of his work, time is frequently overlooked. Gorham states that 'as compared with his views on space, motion, and force, Descartes's views on time have received little discussion in recent commentary on his natural philosophy.'[9] Gorham suggests that a reason for this is that the explicit statements on time made by Descartes are not only very brief, but also distributed throughout a number of published works and letters.[10] Bernard Williams expresses a similar view in his *Project of Pure Enquiry*. Williams briefly gestures towards Descartes's views on time, before stating: 'There is not much point in pressing these problems, since Descartes himself gives so little to help us with them.'[11] Richard Arthur is even more critical, hinting that Descartes fails to present a 'coherent or satisfactory account of the continuity of time.'[12]

[6] Nicholas Jolley, *Causality and Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 3.
[7] Tad M. Schmaltz, *Descartes on Causation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 217.
[8] Geoffrey Gorham, 'Cartesian Causation: Continuous, Instantaneous, Overdetermined', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 42/4 (2004), p. 390.
[9] Geoffrey Gorham, 'Descartes on Time and Duration', *Early Science and Medicine*, 12/1 (2007), p. 30.
[10] Gorham, 'Descartes on Time and Duration', p. 30.
[11] Williams, *Project of Pure Enquiry*, p. 193.
[12] Richard Arthur, 'Continuous Creation, Continuous Time: A Refutation of the Alleged Discontinuity of Cartesian Time', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 26/3 (1988), p. 373.

Schmaltz suggests that in the Third Meditation, the arguments for the existence of God rely 'heavily on claims concerning causation for which [Descartes] provides relatively little explication or defense.'[13]

Despite these concerns, or perhaps because of them, the concepts of time and causality in Descartes's philosophy provide ample scope for exploration. As I will suggest below, however, discussion of the non-endurance doctrine in contemporary scholarship has tended to focus very specifically on a technical question as to whether Descartes viewed time as continuous or discontinuous. Very much connected to this area of attention has been the question of the preserving power of God. These lines of enquiry treat the non-endurance doctrine in many ways as a Scholastic argument. Yet, as I have argued in the previous chapter, the arguments of the *Meditations* are not articulated by the thetic "I" of Scholastic philosophy or formal syllogism, but by an experiential "I". Thus, the non-endurance doctrine as it appears in the *Meditations* becomes not only a doctrine about the nature of time, but also an expression of the manner in which the narrator *experiences* time. I argue that this experiential "I" has been overlooked by commentators in their consideration of the non-endurance doctrine. Yet the fact that the doctrine is uttered by a fictional narrator within a fictional span of time has significant implications for our reading of the text. I will come back to the implications of the fictional narrator within fictional days of meditation in the next section. But for the present moment I will focus on the non-endurance doctrine and a reflection on the existing scholarly debate.

During the Third Meditation, the Meditator begins to explore whether he can find any certainty beyond his own existence. The reason for this exploration is that he knows that he did not derive his existence from himself. If he had the power to bring himself into existence, then he would certainly not have created himself with flaws or imperfections. He is, however, an imperfect being, able to clearly identify that he is limited in knowledge and ability. He must therefore also lack the power to have created himself (CSM II 33). The Meditator then takes this argument further. If he has no power to bring himself into existence, then he certainly does not contain the power to preserve himself from one moment in time to the next. There must therefore be some cause other than himself by which he is preserved. John Carriero refers to this cause as a 'metaphysical sustainer,'[14] a device by which to explain how we can continue to exist from one moment in time to the next despite being 'metaphysically

[13] Schmaltz, *Descartes on Causation*, p. 3.
[14] Carriero, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 213.

dependent;'[15] that is to say, despite having no control over our continued existence from one moment to the next. This series of arguments leads to what Jonathan Bennett, as noted above, calls Descartes's non-endurance doctrine.[16] I will quote this passage again in John Cottingham's translation, but also in the original Latin, as well as in the French translation, since Descartes used the French translation as an opportunity to make minor edits and amendments to the manuscript:

A lifespan can be divided into countless parts, each completely independent of the others, so that it does not follow from the fact that I existed a little while ago that I must exist now, unless there is some cause which as it were creates me afresh at this moment – that is, which preserves me.

(CSM II 33)

Quoniam enim omne tempus vitae in partes innumeras dividi potest, quarum singulae a reliquis nullo modo dependent, ex eo quod paulo ante fuerim, non sequitur me nunc debere esse, nisi aliqua causa me quasi rursus creet ad hoc momentum, hoc est me conservet.

(AT VII 48–49)

Car tout le temps de ma vie peut être divisé en une infinité de parties, chacune desquelles ne dépend en aucune façon des autres; et ainsi, de ce qu'un peu auparavant j'ai été, il ne s'ensuit pas que je doive maintenant être, si ce n'est qu'en ce moment quelque cause me produise et me crée, pour ainsi dire, derechef, c'est-à-dire me conserve.

(AT IX 39)

The Meditator relies on a cause outside of himself, namely God, to sustain him through his lifespan. There are two separate issues here. First, there is the question of simply being sustained through time, which is a metaphysical/ontological issue. Second, there is the question of being *assured* of one's identity over time, which is an epistemological issue. God is the means through which the Meditator can be assured of his existence from the past into the present, and from the present into the future. For the most part I will be considering the epistemological perspective. That is: the assurance that the Meditator has of his passage through time, since as will become clear this assurance comes from God, and is an essential development from the partial existential guarantee that came from the Cogito in the Second Meditation. As an existential guarantee, the non-endurance doctrine provides a much more solid foundation for Descartes's philosophy than the Cogito does. In the next section I will argue, in advance of this claim, that by looking at the text as a narrative we are better able to see the significance of the non-endurance doctrine in Descartes's philosophical project.

The first important point to consider here, given my focus on the narrator, is the concept of the Cartesian 'lifespan' (*omne tempus vitae*). If the *Meditations* is articulated by a narrator,

[15] Carriero, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 213.
[16] Bennett, *Learning from Six Philosophers*, p. 96.

then the lifespan being considered is that of the narrator. This is how I will engage with the doctrine in the next section of this chapter—as a doctrine expressed by a fictional character and narrator. Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Geach's translation reads 'the whole duration of life'[17] and Michael Moriarty's translation reads 'all the time of a life.'[18] It is worth noting the indefinite article used by both Cottingham above and Moriarty in the version just cited (*a* lifespan; *a* life), which turns the text into a general statement, whereas Anscombe and Geach render the text even more broadly by translating simply as *life*. This is a product of the Latin language not using articles, which can leave the definiteness of a noun ambiguous, in comparison to languages like English or French, and of it again unlike English or French, only rarely requiring possessive determiners like "my" or "your". In the 1642 French translation of the *Meditations* by Duc de Luynes, which was read and approved by Descartes, '*omne tempus vitae*' is translated as '*tout le temps de ma vie*' (AT IX 39). The pronoun (*ma*) more suggestively ties this passage to the narrator, ensuring that the sentence discusses "my" life, rather than more broadly "a" life, or in the extreme: "life". What this does to the passage in the French edition is transform it from a general exegesis on time; instead it is explicitly the lifespan of the "I" that is being considered.

In these passages in which the narrator is discussing a 'lifespan', the French translation subtly personalises the doctrine, inscribing it within the narrator himself, rather than presenting a more general analysis. By turning to the way this doctrine appears in Descartes's other texts, we can begin to see what impact the personalised narrator of the *Meditations* has on the philosophical ideas of Descartes. For example, in Part Four of the *Discourse on the Method*, Descartes at one point considers the perfection of God, and how this compares with the states of the imperfect beings present in the world. 'But if there were any bodies in the world, or any intelligences or other natures that were not wholly perfect,' Descartes writes, 'their being must depend on God's power in such a manner that they could not subsist for a single moment without him [*leur etre devait dependre de sa puissance, en telle sorte qu'elles ne pouvaient subsister sans lui un seul moment*]' (CSM I 129; AT VI 36). This follows the notion that emerges from the non-endurance doctrine that we depend on God to sustain us from one moment to the next. There is, however, a critical difference between this passage from the *Discourse* and the doctrine as it appears in the Third Meditation, which is that in the *Discourse* the concept is inclined far more broadly. Descartes says '*if* there were any bodies in the world,' the phrasing of which is rather speculative. He does not use a possessive adjective

[17] Descartes, 'Meditations', trans. Anscombe & Geach, p. 88.
[18] Descartes, *Meditations*, trans. Moriarty, 35.

tied to the narrator's lifespan, as seen in the French edition of the *Meditations*; rather, he uses *leur* (their), giving the phrase more of a sense of a theoretical supposition. It is not an individual "I", but a vague "they".

An even greater distance can be found between narrator and doctrine in some of Descartes's other works. To restate, in the *Meditations* the non-endurance doctrine is considered as an analysis of the parts of a life (though whether *a* life generally or *the narrator's* life in particular is open for debate). Elsewhere, by contrast, the doctrine appears in modified form as a consideration of time itself. In the *Principles of Philosophy*, published after the *Meditations* in 1644, Descartes discusses the concept with an emphasis on *time* rather than a *lifespan* within time:

> For the nature of time [*temporis … naturam*] is such that its parts are not mutually dependent, and never coexist. Thus, from the fact that we [*nos*] now exist it does not follow that we [*nos*] shall exist a moment from now, unless there is some cause—the same cause that originally produced us—which continually reproduces us, as it were, that is to say, which keeps us in existence [*conservet*]. (CSM I 200; AT VIIIA 13)

There are two crucial changes made by Descartes in this iteration. The first distinction to consider is that much like in the *Discourse*, the perspective of the discussion (as seen through the pronouns and the possessives) has shifted. The *Discourse* uses 'they (*leur*)'. In the *Principles*, the pronoun is 'we (*nos*)'; and the subject under discussion a cause that 'keeps *us* in existence (*conservet*)'. Once again, it is a more generalised discussion than found in the French edition of the *Meditations*, which uses 'my (*ma*)'. The fact that 'we now exist' is being determined here, through the discussion *on the nature of time*. The second distinction in this iteration of the doctrine is the addition of the clause 'the same cause that originally produced us' which even more specifically ties the doctrine into the preserving power of God. Descartes is not here suggesting that he was created (perhaps by God) and that there exists some other power by which he is sustained. He makes it very clear that the God who created him also sustains him through time.

There is also a distinction between the way the non-endurance doctrine is presented in the Third Meditation and the way it is presented in the Replies, appended to the *Meditations* themselves. In the First Set of Replies he writes:

> For I regard the divisions of time [*temporis partes*] as being separable from each other, so that the fact that I now exist does not imply that I shall continue to exist in a little while unless there is a cause which, as it were, creates me afresh at each moment of time. (CSM II 78–79; AT VII 109)

As in the *Principles*, the doctrine as expressed here is making a point on time itself rather than a lifespan, specifically. In the Second Set of Replies, Descartes suggests that '[there] is no relation of dependence between the present time and the immediately preceding time' (CSM II 116). Descartes is here discussing a causal and logical relation (in the modern sense) between the parts of time. Causality in this sense is related to intelligibility (A gives a reason for B to happen, and so on). More importantly for my purpose, in these two passages from the Replies, Descartes is considering the 'divisions of time' rather than a 'lifespan' in particular. An implication of this shift in language is that Descartes sees no differentiation between the span of a life and the span of time itself. As Geoffrey Gorham has stated, 'it seems to be one thing for the *parts of time* itself to be mutually independent, and another for the temporal stages of *things that exist in time* to be independent.'[19] Gassendi questioned Descartes on this in the Fifth Set of Objections (CSM II 209–210). Descartes's somewhat peeved reply to Gassendi in the Fifth Set of Replies suggests that he sees no real distinction worth discussing. 'But this is not the issue: we are considering the time or duration of the thing which endures, and here you would not deny that the individual moments can be separated from those immediately preceding and succeeding them, which implies that the thing which endures may cease to be at any given moment' (CSM II 255). Descartes is emphasising that his argument concerns the rational connection between individual moments. He seems to be less interested in the implications of his position, which perhaps goes some way to explaining the minimal explication he provides for the concept in his writings. I will consider some possible implications—particularly the implications that come from reading this text in a narrative sense—in the next section.

In Descartes's *Correspondence*, finally, concepts synonymous with the non-endurance doctrine of the *Meditations* appear a number of times. In his letter to Chanut of June 1647, Descartes suggests that were the world to have an infinite duration into the future, this would not necessarily prove that the world stretches infinitely into the past. Instead, 'every moment [*tous les momens*] of [the world's] duration is independent of every other [*sont independans les uns des autres*]' (CSMK 320; AT V 53). In a letter to Arnauld the following year dated 4 June, Descartes uses a similar notion to consider the major difference between humanity and God. He writes that the human mind possesses a 'successiveness [*successio*] which cannot be found in divine thoughts' (CSMK 355; AT V 193). While God's thoughts are continuous and

[19] Gorham, 'Cartesian Causation', p. 393, *emphasis in text*.

instantaneous, humans must inevitably travel from one concept to the next, and cannot keep every thought in mind at once; such is the nature of discursivity. There is a suggestive link here between Descartes's contrast of the human frailty that prevents us from keeping every thought in mind at once and his aversion to syllogism, which as I have argued previously *requires* that every claim in a treatise be kept in mind at once. As I will argue in subsequent chapters, the form of the *Meditations* can be read as Descartes's attempt to capture something of the instantaneous and continuous process of God through narrativising the chaotic and disparate parts of his life into a coherent and gathered whole. Unlike the "unity" found in a syllogism, it would seem that Descartes is seeking the unity of a lifespan (*omne tempus vitae*). As will become clearer below, this unity can perhaps be found in the narrative form. In this same letter to Arnauld, Descartes provides an exposition which calls to mind the non-endurance doctrine. 'We clearly understand that it is possible for me to exist at this very moment, while I am thinking of one thing, and yet not exist at the very next moment, when, if I do exist, I may think of something quite different' (CSMK 355). The discursivity of human thought raises particular issues in regards to our identity over time. It is possible to read this statement as a bridge between the concepts of the Cogito and the non-endurance doctrine, in a sense. The non-endurance doctrine discusses the passage of existence: the continuity of the self across time, or the lifespan. In the Cogito, Descartes has assured himself that he exists through the act of thinking. However, he can only assure himself of this existence *while* he is thinking. There is no assurance of his thoughts from one moment in time to the next until in the Third Meditation when the Meditator stumbles upon the existence of God, the metaphysical sustainer, who preserves and continuously recreates the Meditator across his lifespan.

The lifespan is the initial point of interest in consideration of the non-endurance doctrine; however also of interest is the concept that the parts of a lifespan are completely independent from each other (*quarum singulae a reliquis nullo modo dependent*). This suggests that the parts of time within a lifespan bear no rational relation to each other at all. How, then, can there be any continuity of the "self" from one passage of time to the next? Further to this question, if one is continually created afresh from one moment to the next, can the continuity of an individual ever be assured? The question of determining personal identity over time has been considered in depth by contemporary analytic philosophers. The goal of such considerations is often, Derek Parfit suggests, that of 'telling whether some present object is identical with some past object', though he prefers the question of '*what this identity*

necessarily involves, or consists in.'[20] Marya Schechtman suggests that theorists of personal identity 'want to tell us not just how we *know* when we have one and the same person at two different times, but what *makes* someone the same person at those two times.'[21] The criterion for determining personal identity must do more than just provide a framework for determining that a particular person at a particular time is identical with this person at a different time. The criterion must also 'tell us what it *is* for him to be the same person.'[22] When Descartes speaks of the lifespan as capable of being divided into countless parts, these parts would be roughly synonymous with what Schechtman refers to as 'person-stages' or 'person time-slices.'[23] Recent studies of personal identity share many points of overlap with the ideas that flow out of the non-endurance doctrine. I will come back to these concepts in more detail in Chapter 3, when I consider the way narration has been posited to aid in the formation of a sense of self. What I will argue with support from the scholars cited in this paragraph is that we form personal identity by narrating our life story. For now, though, I will return to the non-endurance doctrine and consider one final point of interest that emerges.

It is worth noting that the non-endurance doctrine treats creation and preservation as one and the same. However, it is usually thought to be a very different thing to create something than to preserve it. Nonetheless Descartes took it to be obvious that creation and preservation are equivalent, suggesting that 'the distinction between preservation and creation is only a conceptual one' (CSM II 33). In the *Discourse*, Descartes suggests that 'it is certain, and it is an opinion commonly accepted among theologians, that the act by which God now preserves [the world] is just the same as that by which he created it' (Part Five, CSM I 133). Incidentally, here we find Descartes appealing to authority (though it is a general authority rather than a specific authority such as Aquinas); something which, as I have suggested, he outright avoids in the *Meditations*, instead preferring to appeal to personal experience. In the *Principles* Descartes posits: 'God imparted various motions to the parts of matter when he first created them, and he now preserves all this matter in the same way [*eodem plane modo*], and by the same process [*eademque ratione*] by which he originally created it' (*Principles* II. 36, CSM I 240; AT VIIIA 62). Descartes subsequently repeats the notion in Article 42 of the *Principles*. In the *Meditations*, similarly, the Meditator presents two concepts as being one

[20] Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 202–203, *emphasis in text*.
[21] Marya Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 7–8, *emphasis in text*. See also Harold Noonan, *Personal Identity* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 1–29.
[22] Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves*, p. 8, *emphasis in text*.
[23] Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves*, p. 8. For more on person time-slices see Sydney Shoemaker, 'Personal Identity: A Materialist's Account', in Sydney Shoemaker & Richard Swinburne (eds.), *Personal Identity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 67–132.

and the same: that of a "cause" continually *recreating* one throughout their lifespan from one moment in time to the next, and that of the "cause" *preserving* one throughout their lifespan. As Jonathan Bennett suggests, Descartes considers preservation and creation in this context as 'a single activity described in two ways.'[24] The distinction between continuous creation and preservation, which many commentators have discussed,[25] raises significant questions about the nature of time across what in the Third Meditation is called *omne tempus vitae*. How to come to terms with the continuity of a lifespan within the divided parts of time is a question that has been a central point of engagement in commentary on the non-endurance doctrine. Commentary has tended to focus on what the passage tells us about Descartes's views on the continuity or discontinuity of time. The stakes of this debate concern the extent to which God acts as a preserving force in Descartes's philosophy. It thus emerges as a question of God as author, and the degree to which He acts in holding the world in place. I will here consider some of the prominent perspectives in contemporary scholarship. I argue that missing in commentary on this passage is an acknowledgement that the *Meditations* itself takes place within a temporal framework: thus there is both the articulation of a philosophy of time, as well as the narrator's experience within time, which adds an implicit meta-level of commentary to the text. As will become clear in subsequent chapters, the concept of God as author and temporal sustainer—when considered from the perspective of narrative—has significant implications for my reading of the *Meditations*. An overview of some of the predominant interpretations of this passage once more reinforces my argument that narrative has been overlooked by commentators.

As just mentioned, much of the discussion surrounding the non-endurance doctrine has been centered on what views, if any, the passage reveals about the continuity or discontinuity of time in Descartes's philosophy and physics. A surface reading of the non-endurance doctrine could give the impression that there is no inherent continuity between the parts of time for Descartes; that each moment of time is discontinuous. This so-called "classic thesis" has been considered at length by a number of scholars.[26] Norman Kemp Smith argues that if individuals are recreated from one moment to the next across a lifespan, then time is necessarily *discrete*, rather than continuous. His reading sees Descartes's lifespan as 'like a

[24] Bennett, *Learning from Six Philosophers*, p. 96.
[25] E.g. Bennett, *Learning from Six Philosophers*, p. 96; Ken Levy, 'Is Descartes a Temporal Atomist?', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 13/4 (2005), pp. 641–643; Richard Arthur, 'Continuous Creation, Continuous Time', p. 357; Geoffrey Gorham, 'Cartesian Temporal Atomism: A New Defence, A New Refutation', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 16/3 (2008), p. 632.
[26] For a more comprehensive summary of defenders of the classic thesis as well as critics see Ken Levy, 'Is Descartes a Temporal Atomist?', p. 627, n. 2; n. 3; see also Arthur, 'Continuous Creation, Continuous Time', pp. 349–350.

line composed of dots, a repeated alternation between the state of being and the state of non-being.'[27] Similarly, in Martial Gueroult's estimation, there is no duration through time, only a sequence of instants.[28]

A more recent, in-depth argument for the discontinuity of time in the non-endurance doctrine was mounted by Ken Levy. For Levy, the question of whether time is composed of time-atoms results in two possible relations between the parts of time. If there are two given parts of time, (A) and (B), then '[either] A touches (is adjacent to or contiguous with) its successor B or it does not.'[29] If the latter, then there is necessarily a gap between A and B. The reason for this is that if two times (time A and time B) are touching, then there is continuity between them. For the time segments to be discontinuous, then, there must be a gap between. Levy argues that Descartes held this position. From the perspective of a discontinuous reading, Levy provides the following explication of the non-endurance doctrine. There is an atom of time (t), and the subsequent time-atom (t+1). In between these two atoms of time is a gap. This gap can have no duration, or else it is itself a time-atom. Anything that existed within this durationless gap would also necessarily exist outside of time. I cannot exist outside of time, and consequently, I cannot exist within the gap between slices of time. I cannot just jump, or be delivered across the gap in order to get from t to t+1, since this would mean existing within the gap, which is beyond time, and I am bound within time. I must therefore be recreated between t and t+1. I will cease to exist if I am not recreated between these two points.[30] 'The earlier part of my existence cannot "bring" any effect to the next moment since it is "stuck" on the other side of the temporal gap without a "bridge" or a "ferry."'[31] A discontinuous reading such as Levy's tends to hinge on the question of causal dependence. If time is discontinuous, this implies the necessity of a cause to sustain us through time, which draws back to the idea of God as a 'metaphysical sustainer'. The stakes of the non-endurance doctrine on such a reading are less about the way time functions, and more about the relationship between the one who is metaphysically dependent and the metaphysical sustainer, i.e. between the Meditator and God.

Most of the arguments against the classic/Levian thesis tend to hinge on a related point, which is that regardless of whether or not Descartes *meant* for time to be interpretable as

[27] Norman Kemp Smith, *Studies in the Cartesian Philosophy* (London: MacMillan, 1902), p. 132.
[28] See Gueroult, *Order of Reasons I*, pp. 193–202. Gueroult's arguments for the discontinuity of time in Descartes's philosophy develop out of a close reading of Descartes's physics, particularly in regards to how God "sustains" an individual moving through space. The concept of God as the cause of motion is also found in Daniel Garber, *Descartes Embodied: Reading Cartesian Philosophy through Cartesian Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 189–202.
[29] Ken Levy, 'Is Descartes a Temporal Atomist?', p. 633.
[30] Ken Levy, 'Is Descartes a Temporal Atomist?', p. 649.
[31] Ken Levy, 'Is Descartes a Temporal Atomist?', p. 649.

continuous or discontinuous, ultimately he was merely seeking to demonstrate this reliance on God. In his highly influential reading, Richard Arthur argues against the classic thesis in much this way. Arthur contends that there is 'no convincing evidence that Descartes denied the continuity of time.'[32] Arthur seeks to highlight that Descartes's arguments are not for the discontinuity of time, but merely for the 'contingency of all the innumerable parts into which time can be divided, the dependency of their connection on God's continuous action.'[33] Arthur outlines one plausible way to understand the non-endurance doctrine: 'the world is created in a discontinuous succession of discrete acts, and its duration, correspondingly, is a discontinuous sequence of discrete moments.'[34] However, Arthur suggests that there is potential to consider Descartes's phrasing of 'completely independent' to mean that Descartes sees the parts of time as, in fact, distinct. There is a logical slippage 'between the claim that the parts of time are separable, independent, and contingent, and the claim that they are actually separated, and thus discrete.'[35]

In relation to this line of argument I suggest we can consider the concept of matter as a plenum and Descartes's thoughts on matter in relation to his views on time. Descartes suggests in the *Principles* that 'there is no difference between the extension of a space, or internal place, and the extension of a body' (*Principles* II. 16, CSM I 229–230). Because a body is extended in length, breadth and depth, we are able to conclude that the body is matter; and all extended bodies are part of the same substance. Descartes goes on to suggest that 'the same conclusion must be drawn with respect to a space that is supposed to be a vacuum, namely that since there is extension to it, there must necessarily be substance in it as well' (CSM I 229–230). As Thomas Holden explains: 'Since the plenum's defining essence is extension, the existence of one part necessarily implies the existence of the whole.'[36] The same can, from this perspective, be argued in regards to time. Just as the world is made up of extended substance, such that there is no possibility of empty space, the world is made up of moments of time, any gaps between which are impossible. From this we can consider that Descartes could not hold a discontinuous reading of time, since discontinuity would imply such vacuums between the parts of time, which in Descartes's physics are impossible.

Arthur also points out that God's continuous creation in fact negates a discontinuous reading. Arthur uses a passage from Descartes's *Conversation with Burman* to support this. In

[32] Arthur, 'Continuous Creation, Continuous Time', p. 350.
[33] Arthur, 'Continuous Creation, Continuous Time', p. 373.
[34] Arthur, 'Continuous Creation, Continuous Time', p. 352.
[35] Arthur, 'Continuous Creation, Continuous Time', p. 354. See also Gueroult, *Order of Reasons I*, p. 193.
[36] Thomas Holden, *The Architecture of Matter: Galileo to Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 13.

this passage, Descartes says that in regards to God, 'we can divide his duration into an infinity of parts, even though God himself is not therefore divisible.'[37] For Arthur, there is 'no reason why the same analysis should not apply also to God's act of creation: there is only one such act, which although unextended and indivisible with respect to its own nature, is nonetheless extended and divisible with respect to its duration, which is continuous (continuous creation).'[38] Just because time is divisible into parts, this does not mean that it is therefore discontinuous; God's continuous attention and creation of the world ensure the constant momentum of time.

This position is supported by Harry Frankfurt. 'According to the Cartesian account, the existence of finite things or of the world will cease unless it is continually sustained by an external force.'[39] Frankfurt's reading of Descartes seeks to make sense of how the parts of time can be said to be independent without this resulting in a necessarily discontinuous conception of the parts of time. Frankfurt argues that what Descartes really seeks to reveal in the non-endurance doctrine is that the existence of things in time 'must be accounted for by something outside of them.'[40] Descartes provides support for such a reading in the Fifth Set of Replies, in a passage which I have already quoted. He says to Gassendi that 'we are considering the time or duration of the thing which endures, and here you would not deny that the individual moments can be separated from those immediately preceding and succeeding them, which implies that the thing which endures may cease to be at any given moment' (CSM II 255). Frankfurt makes it clear that for Descartes this is a matter of reason: there is no logical necessity that a temporal sequence continues past a certain point. According to Frankfurt, what Descartes means is 'only that there is nothing in the concept of a temporal sequence that makes it impossible for the sequence to end at any point. There is no logical necessity, for any temporal series, that it continue past any point.'[41] I have also made this observation above: that there is no *logical reason* for the parts of time to be related to each other. Just because I exist now, that does not mean that I am guaranteed to exist ten minutes, or an hour, or 50 years from now. My existence now does not guarantee my subsequent existence. This pre-Humean notion of causality as based in reason must be kept in mind in

[37] *Descartes' Conversation with Burman*, quoted in Arthur, 'Continuous Creation, Continuous Time', p. 359.
[38] Arthur, 'Continuous Creation, Continuous Time', p. 359.
[39] Harry G. Frankfurt, 'Continuous Creation, Ontological Inertia and the Discontinuity of Time', in Georges J.D. Moyal (ed.), *René Descartes: Critical Assessments*, 4 vols. (III; London: Routledge, 1991), p. 3.
[40] Frankfurt, 'Continuous Creation', pp. 14–15.
[41] Frankfurt, 'Continuous Creation', p. 12.

this discussion, since it was an obvious and almost incidental point for Descartes.[42] Aside from this point about the rational basis for Descartes's view, what is important for my purpose is Frankfurt's emphasis that the Meditator has concluded that he has no power to continually exist from one moment in time to the next. There must necessarily be an outside cause that sustains him through each time-sequence.

To summarise, I have suggested that the arguments *for* the discontinuity of time in Descartes's philosophy lean toward a demonstration of the Meditator's dependence on God. If time is discontinuous, then the Meditator is not sustained within time from one moment to the next through his own power. The discontinuity hypothesis in effect seeks to be suggestive of the authorial influence of God in the world of the Meditator. Interestingly though, the commentators cited above who argue *against* discontinuity in Descartes also suggest that ultimately the critical point within the non-endurance doctrine is the reliance on the preserving power of God. Thus both positions effectively lead to the same place. Whether a discontinuous or continuous reading, all of the above cited commentators stress the ultimate reliance on God that is suggested in the non-endurance doctrine.

At this point it may be worthwhile to reiterate that although I am spending a great deal of time in laying out these positions, I will provide my own reading of the non-endurance doctrine in the next section of this chapter. My arguments in this thesis hinge not only on the importance of narrative, but also on my claim that it has been unduly ignored or overlooked. It is thus important to provide an overview of how scholars have treated the non-endurance doctrine, since the doctrine concerns both time and (I argue) narrative. My main point is that by repositioning our reading so as to focus on the experiential "I" as opposed to the Scholastic issue of continuity (or continuous creation) we can begin to see more significant implications flowing out of the non-endurance doctrine on Descartes's philosophy as a whole.

I will now return to the view in commentary that the non-endurance doctrine ultimately articulates a reliance on God. It is a notion that has been perhaps best argued by Jorge Secada. In his wide-ranging article 'Descartes on Time and Causality', Secada disagrees with arguments for the continuity of time *and* the classic/Levian view that time is discontinuous. Secada suggests that Descartes didn't have any views on the matter of the continuity or discontinuity of time at all.[43] He questions the perception that time is composed of a series of

[42] The distinction between the Rationalist philosophy of Descartes, as contrast with an Empiricist view from philosophers such as David Hume, can be found in John Cottingham, *The Rationalists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 1–4. Cottingham raises some of the problems underlying these labels, whilst providing a useful overview of the terms.
[43] J. E. K. Secada, 'Descartes on Time and Causality', *The Philosophical Review*, 99/1 (1990), pp. 45–72.

atoms, and suggests that the language of the non-endurance doctrine does not commit Descartes to an atomic view. 'The expression "can be divided" (as opposed to "is divided") does point, if at all, in a direction contrary to atomism and to separate atoms of time.'[44] As suggested above, Descartes's writings on this matter were scattered and brief. Secada does not see enough textual commitment from Descartes to place him firmly in one camp or another. He is also happy to soften the implications of Descartes's writing. 'If a chain of causes across time has a place within Descartes's philosophy, it is a theoretical construction.'[45] This point is contiguous with one I have highlighted above, which is that Descartes was not so interested in the real-world implications of the doctrine. Secada's view, which is largely sympathetic with that of Arthur and Frankfurt, is that Descartes's position in regards to the nature of time simply points towards the preserving power of God. 'All causality within or between created substances must in the end refer to the productive activity of God as displayed through time.'[46] So in Secada's reading, Descartes committed neither to a continuous nor discontinuous view of time. Rather, he was simply trying to make a point about the relationship between himself and God.

What emerges from the above review is that commentary on the non-endurance doctrine is frequently focused on the question of the continuity or discontinuity of time. Though there are for the most part clear distinctions between these positions, ultimately both approaches tend to lead in the same direction, which is towards an emphasis on the Meditator's essential reliance on a preserving God to sustain him across his lifespan. This focus on continuity versus discontinuity tries to place Descartes in comparison with Scholastic thought, particularly in relation to the Scholastic concept of continuous creation. Thus emerge questions of whether the doctrine commits Descartes to temporal atomism or not. This type of analysis is more contiguous with treating Descartes's text as consisting of a series of claims which are taken as commitments of a thetic "I", as if he were in fact yet one more Scholastic philosopher. Or, in contrast, considering the extent to which a departure from Scholastic positions would allow him to retain his mantle of 'father of modern philosophy'.

Indeed, this line of discussion relates back to the notions raised in my introduction, surrounding the extent to which Descartes's philosophy can be thought of as "revolutionary". Consider, on this point, Jolley's position, which I quoted at the beginning of this section, that

[44] Secada, 'Descartes on Time and Causality', p. 48.
[45] Secada, 'Descartes on Time and Causality', p. 70.
[46] Secada, 'Descartes on Time and Causality', p. 70. In his reading of the causal theories of Descartes, Secada is ultimately concerned with linking the Scholastic tradition to modern philosophy. He would continue on this enterprise in subsequent work. See Secada, *Cartesian Metaphysics*.

Descartes does no serious rethinking about causality in comparison to his Scholastic predecessors. The essence of such a claim is that by placing a decontextualised summary of the positions we can attribute to Descartes in relation to his predecessors, we are able to determine whether Descartes is in fact revolutionary or not. Considering his non-endurance doctrine in relation to the question of continuity versus discontinuity places Descartes in comparison to his Scholastic predecessors and the concept of continuous creation. Yet, this overlooks what I claim to be truly revolutionary about the *Meditations*, which is its style. I suggest that a reflection on Descartes's conception of time in the *Meditations* is of particular interest when considered in the light of the manner in which the text itself *is* temporal. In the discussion of Descartes's philosophy of time within the *Meditations* there has been little (if anything) made of the way time is actually *used* in the text

As I have argued, however, the *Meditations* is steeped in temporality. Much of the temporality of the *Meditations* is a fictional temporality: the "days" of the *Meditations* do not represent the real historical days in which Descartes was writing this text. Yet, the activity is represented to occur over six days of meditation, and the causally-linked events of the text make up the experience of the Meditator. When considering the non-endurance doctrine in this light two points emerge: firstly, as we have seen, the doctrine expresses something of Descartes's philosophy of time. Secondly, the doctrine is expressed by a narrator who is actually *experiencing* the days of meditation: who is thus, *within time* (albeit a fictional time). Only the first of these points has been considered by commentators. Subsequently, this thesis will seek to consider the *Meditations* as a meditation *in time* as well as comprised of meditations on the nature of time.

2.2 The "I" of the *Meditations* as Narrator and Character

I suggested in the previous section that when discussing Descartes's views on time and causality commentators have tended to overlook that the *Meditations* is itself a temporal text. What I wish to underline in this discussion is that the *Meditations* is not simply a philosophical text which contains temporal markers and a narrative voice, but that the narrative features are embedded into the philosophical arguments themselves. I claim that a greater focus on the non-endurance doctrine from the perspective of experiential narrative

allows the significance of the doctrine itself to emerge in relation to Descartes's philosophy as a whole. My argument is that from the perspective of an experiential narrative reading, the Cogito—usually seen as the seed and foundation of the whole work—becomes of secondary importance. Rather, it is the non-endurance doctrine which becomes the locus for Descartes's entire metaphysical project. Furthermore, the very structure of the text as a series of days of meditation becomes Descartes's implicit meta-level commentary on the doctrine. In order to illuminate how time and narrative are thus employed in the text, I will return to the movement of thought that leads to the non-endurance doctrine. In this instance, I will draw further back, beginning with the expression of the Cogito, which as I suggest is itself an argument experienced within time. I will consider not only the arguments, but the experience of the Meditator articulating these arguments within a temporal space. As I have already stated, the non-endurance doctrine can be perceived as a reflection on how the narrator experiences time. Taking cues from Monika Fludernik's character-based model of experiential narrative, I will consider how the central character of the *Meditations*—who is also the narrator—experiences time in the text.

A closer consideration of the experience of the "I" of the *Meditations* reveals a character that has a fragile relationship with time and a tenuous grasp on his own existence. Genevieve Lloyd has stated that the *Meditations* is 'suffused with a sense of the tenuousness of the self's capacity either to integrate itself into the world or to maintain a secure relationship with its past.'[47] In the First Meditation, the Meditator outlines that he seeks to begin again 'from the first foundations [*a primis fundamentis*]' (AT VII 17), in order to remove the shackles of the past that are binding him to a particular way of thinking. Once the foundations have been removed through his three stages of sceptical enquiry,[48] he no longer has a firm footing within time. He is disconnected from his past, which he has now rejected, and does not yet know what the outcome of his meditations will be, which means he has no assurance of what his future holds. As well as a fragile relationship with time, he also has a fragile relationship with physical space. At this point the Meditator has found no evidence that he actually exists. The process of radical doubt leaves him considering himself 'as not having hands or eyes, or flesh, or blood or senses' (CSM II 15). Paul Ricoeur suggests, the narrator of the *Meditations* 'is radically stripped of its anchorage when its own body is carried

[47] Genevieve Lloyd, *Being in Time* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 46.
[48] The three stages of scepticism in the First Meditation are the argument from the senses (CSM II 12); the dreaming doubt (CSM II 13); and the evil demon (CSM II 14).

away in the destruction of all physical bodies.'[49] As an aside, it may be worth noting here how Ricoeur refers to the narrator as 'it', thereby underlining that the narrator is not the author, but rather a textual notion.[50] The Meditator is unbound from the temporal and physical spheres.

Thus by the start of the Second Meditation, the Meditator is untethered and anxious: his sceptical program has been so successful that it has left him in complete turmoil. He has been, to quote Ricoeur again, 'uprooted with respect to the spatiotemporal bearings of [his] body.'[51] In a passage which I considered in greater depth in the previous chapter, the Meditator says: 'I feel as if I have fallen unexpectedly into a deep whirlpool which tumbles me around so that I can neither stand on the bottom nor swim up to the top' (CSM II 16). The primary purpose of the Second Meditation, then, is to discover 'one firm and immoveable point' (CSM II 16) which will be the foundation on which the Meditator can base his new philosophy. The point that he ultimately reaches is that 'If I convinced myself of something, then I certainly existed' (CSM II 17). From here he is able to 'finally conclude that this proposition, *I am, I exist*, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind' (CSM II 17, *emphasis in text*). The Cogito provides a foundational truth. Nonetheless, it will be a long road to greater certainty.

The Meditator says that he can know that the proposition 'I am, I exist' is true 'whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind' (CSM II 17). If the Cogito provides an assurance of existence only when it is *conceived in my mind*, is it then necessary to perform the Cogito constantly to be assured of existence? Since the Cogito only assures the narrator of a temporary existence—'as long as I am thinking' (CSM II 18)—it is a tenuous certainty at best. We can see the inherent temporariness in the passage just quoted: 'If I *convinced* myself of something, then I certainly *existed*' (CSM II 17, *my emphasis*). The assurance has not carried over into the present, but remains in the past, tied to the moment the Meditator convinced himself of something. Such a momentary guarantee of existence is hardly the solid foundation of a new philosophy. It is hardly what Peter Markie has called a

[49] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 5.
[50] The misconception that the narrator is Descartes may go some way to explaining the caricature of the Cartesian philosopher, sitting alone and asking "profound" questions about his existence. For more on contemporary misconceptions of Descartes, see John Cottingham, 'Descartes, the Synoptic Philosopher', in *Cartesian Reflections*, pp. 3–10.
[51] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 5.

'bedrock certainty.'[52] The momentary guarantee does not seem capable of rescuing the Meditator from the tumult into which he has plunged himself.

This momentary and ultimately temporal nature of the Cogito has also been highlighted by Jacques Derrida, who suggests that Descartes 'must temporalize the Cogito, which itself is valid only during the instant of intuition, the instant of thought being attentive to itself, at the point, the sharpest point, of the instant. And here one should be attentive to this link between the Cogito and the movement of temporalization.'[53] The Cogito, in Derrida's estimation, rather than representing some kind of atemporal eternal guarantee, is fixed within the point of thought; bound in the space and time within which it is enunciated. There is a significant disparity between the *instant* in which the Cogito is uttered and the *lifespan* that the Meditator is trying to anchor within time and space. A lifespan, to recall the non-endurance doctrine, can be divided into an infinity of instants. Nonetheless, 'What guarantees the certainty of "I exist" is,' in Cottingham's interpretation, 'a process of thought.'[54] Cottingham goes on to suggest:

> the correct English translation of cogito/je pense, when these words occur in Descartes' discussion of the certainty of his existence, should employ the so-called continuous present – 'I am thinking' – rather than the simple present, 'I think'. For what makes me certain of my existence is not some static or timeless fact about me – that I am one who thinks; rather, it is the fact that I am at this moment engaged in thinking. And so long as I continue to be so engaged, my existence is guaranteed.[55]

This, in part, goes some way to explaining why Hintikka—as outlined in my introduction—called the Cogito a 'performance' rather than an 'inference'. Furthermore, by this view existence is not merely proven by thought, but contingent upon it. Yet, if the Meditator could be assured of his existence only when the certainty of the Cogito was foremost in mind, then it would be an exhausting and debilitating assurance indeed. As Cottingham suggests, the guarantee provided by the Cogito is 'temporary.'[56] This has also been highlighted by Lloyd: 'Time poses a challenge even to the narrator's capacity to extract from the indubitable Cogito anything more than a momentary existence.'[57]

The performance of the Cogito—reciting, 'I am, I exist'—provides the Meditator with an existential guarantee; however, it does not provide any further certainty, since it is the

[52] Peter J. Markie, 'The Cogito and its Importance', in Vere Chappell (ed.), *Descartes's Meditations: Critical Essays* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), p. 33.
[53] Jacques Derrida, 'Cogito and the History of Madness', in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 58.
[54] Cottingham, *Descartes*, p. 35.
[55] Cottingham, *Descartes*, p. 36.
[56] Cottingham, *Descartes*, p. 36
[57] Lloyd, *Being in Time*, p. 46.

performance itself that provides the assurance. This seems like an impracticable foundation for knowledge. It also goes to show how the Meditator's relationship with time is fragile. The inherently temporal and temporary Cogito cannot provide the Meditator the assurance he needs to move forward. And yet, this is allegedly the foundation on which he has based his entire philosophy. The Meditator will need a more stable certainty if he is to escape from his method of doubt. Cottingham suggests that it is in the passage which Bennett calls the non-endurance doctrine that this certainty can be found. 'Descartes soon proceeds to use this very fragility of his thinking as a decisive indicator of his complete dependence on a power greater than himself.'[58] Cottingham provides a useful summary of the relationship between the Cogito and what I am calling the non-endurance doctrine:

> For Descartes, my own existence may be the first thing I come to know, but as soon as I reflect on it I see that I could at any moment slip out of existence were there not an independent sustaining force to preserve me. I owe my being to God, the infinite creator of all things; and indeed Descartes argues that the initial act of creation is only verbally or conceptually distinct from the same eternal and perpetual divine action whereby I am 'preserved' in every single moment of my existence.[59]

It is not until the Meditator discovers a higher power on which he can depend in the Third Meditation that he can find any sustainable existential guarantee. The Cogito assures the narrator that he exists. But it is the discovery of God and the non-endurance doctrine which assure the Meditator that he will *continue to exist* from one moment in time to the next. The non-endurance doctrine provides a way for the Meditator to rest assured of his existence without having to constantly recite the Cogito moment to moment. The reliance on a higher power—or to use Carriero's term, a metaphysical sustainer—is fundamental to the identity of the narrator of the *Meditations*.[60] The inherently unstable, fragile, and fleeting assurance of existence that the Meditator experiences in the Cogito is finally resolved by the discovery of a stable, substantial and eternal God.

The fragility of the "I" in the *Meditations*, and the tenuous relationship with time, can be further illuminated through once more turning to the field of narratology. By better understanding what the "I" is, in theoretical terms, we can draw parallels back to the Meditator's experience of the non-endurance doctrine. Fludernik's model of experiential

[58] John Cottingham, 'The Role of God in Descartes's Philosophy', in Janet Broughton & John Carriero (eds.), *A Companion to Descartes* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), p. 292.
[59] Cottingham, 'The Role of God in Descartes's Philosophy', p. 292.
[60] Recent studies into personal identity have a great deal of resonance with the questions raised by Descartes's non-endurance doctrine. For example, in her book, *The Constitution of Selves*, Marya Schechtman highlights that if we 'want to build a criterion of identity over time by identifying distinct temporal stages as stages of the same person, these stages have to endure long enough for them to be person-like in their characteristics.' See Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves*, p. 9.

narrative is, as I have suggested above, a character-based model. In this section I will shore up Fludernik's conception of narrative as based on experience with Uri Margolin's conception of the textual discontinuity of literary characters to produce tools with which to engage with the meditator. Margolin is one of the foremost narrative scholars that have contributed to the understanding of fictional characters. Fludernik and Margolin will help to draw a scholarly conception of narrative into our reading of the fragility of the Meditator, who to reiterate is both the narrator and character within the days of meditation.

Margolin says that fictional characters are 'usually temporally limited … and discontinuous, in that not every minute or even year of their lives is presented in the text.'[61] The information available about a character is generally limited to the text in which they exist. While actual human beings have weight, and height, and can move around the physical world through time and space, fictional characters are indefinite entities. Margolin has for this reason also referred to characters elsewhere as being by nature 'radically incomplete'[62] and 'underdetermined objects.'[63] In the same way, in the *Meditations*, the lifespan of the Meditator is divided into discontinuous parts, or instants. Some of these parts (i.e. select moments in the six days of meditation) are available to the reader. While we can only see the meditator through the glimpses we are given, we are left with the impression of a character who exists beyond the boundaries of each meditation, despite the limited access we are given to this character's lifespan. For example, at the beginning of the Second Meditation, the narrator says: 'So serious were the doubts into which I have been thrown as a result of yesterday's meditation that I can neither put them out of my mind nor see any way of resolving them' (CSM II 16). While the reader is not privy to the events between the First and Second Meditation, the turmoil that the narrator has been suffering in between the two events is implied. The implication fleshes out the character beyond the glimpses that are provided, giving the reader the sense of a unified life that is greater than the discontinuous parts that are shown.

The lifespan of a fictitious character, as with the Meditator's lifespan, is divided into parts. These parts are indicated by textual breaks into chapter, scene, page, focalisation, and so on. Given the practical limitations of space, these breaks are necessary, as an author cannot describe every single detail of their characters' lives, nor the wider world in which the

[61] Uri Margolin, 'Character', in David Herman (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 68.
[62] Uri Margolin, 'Introducing and Sustaining Characters in Literary Narrative', *Style*, 21/1 (1987), p. 108. See also Uri Margolin, 'Character', in David Herman, Manfred Jahn & Marie-Laure Ryan (eds.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 53.
[63] Margolin, 'Introducing and Sustaining Characters', p. 108, *emphasis in text*.

characters are situated. This becomes a major plot point in Michael Chabon's novel, *The Wonder Boys*. In this novel, the protagonist is a writer who is trying desperately to finish what he hopes will be his literary masterpiece. But he can't finish it. The necessity to break the text into chapters, scenes, pages and paragraphs, and delimit the world around his characters, proves an impossible task. 'I had too much to write,' the protagonist complains. 'Too many fine and miserable buildings to construct and streets to name and clock towers to set chiming, too many characters to raise up from the dirt like flowers whose petals I peeled down to the intricate frail organs within, too many terrible genetic and fiduciary secrets to dig up and bury and dig up again.'[64] While this passage mostly describes setting, the same issue exists for the creation of characters within these scenes. I quote this passage to demonstrate the practical impossibility of wholly revealing literary characters, who are consequently by nature, as Margolin has suggested, 'incomplete' and 'underdetermined'.

The divided parts of a literary character's lifespan may be further illustrated through highlighting not the parts themselves, but the gaps between them. Evelyn Waugh's short novel, *The Loved One*, may provide illumination. The protagonist of the novel, Dennis Barlow, is an English poet of declining influence, living in America. Barlow works at a pet cemetery, much to the chagrin of his compatriots, who see this lowly employment as a bad representation of the Englishman abroad. Barlow meets an American woman named Aimee, and they begin a relationship. Barlow conceals the fact that he works in a pet cemetery, instead deceiving her into thinking he is a very famous poet, and impressing her with recitation of what he claims are his own original poems. The reader knows that this lie will eventually be exposed, thus providing comical tension in the narrative. At the end of Chapter Eight, a colleague of Aimee's named Joyboy is about to attend a funeral for his mother's parrot. Aimee is invited to attend the funeral, which is scheduled to take place at the pet cemetery where Dennis works. If Aimee attends this funeral, she will discover that Dennis has been lying to her about his occupation. Despite the book having built to this exposure, Chapter Nine begins with Dennis reading in the newspaper of the engagement of Aimee to Joyboy. The scene at the funeral is skipped over and the reader is left to fill the circumstantial gaps between events in their imagination. The scene which in *The Loved One* is omitted might traditionally form the climax of a text. Skipping instead to the outcome—Aimee and Joyboy becoming engaged and Dennis being abandoned—serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it is

[64] Michael Chabon, *The Wonder Boys* (London: Fourth Estate, 2008), p. 12.

simply a humorous and surprising literary ploy. Secondly, and paradoxically, the skipped "scene" itself is granted more weight through its omission.

Wolfgang Iser has written extensively on the gaps between characters' lifespans which I have sought to highlight through the above example from Waugh's novel. Rather than studying the events of a text, Iser finds value in considering the gaps between events. The reason for this is that it is the reader who will, as it were, fill in the gaps between the discontinuous moments of a character's lifespan, and in so doing preserve characters throughout the events of a text. 'This is why the character suddenly comes to life in the reader—he is creating instead of merely observing. And so the deliberate gaps in the narrative are means by which the reader is enabled to bring both scenes and characters to life.'[65] A character is compelling to a reader because the reader has themselves brought them to life. 'The gaps, indeed, are those very points at which the reader can enter into the text, forming his own connections and conceptions and so creating the configurative meaning of what he is reading.'[66] There are echoes here of Ken Levy's reading of the non-endurance doctrine, which concerns the question of how individuals can move from one moment in time to another. Given that it is impossible to physically move from one part of time to the next in Levy's reading of Descartes, Levy concludes that God acts as a means of preserving (or continuously recreating) us from one point in time to the next. Iser's theory implies a similar process, in that readers must necessarily step into the gaps between events, and create a bridge (or a ferry) through their interpretative power which sustains a character from one event to the next. It is in this way that characters are temporally limited and dependent. They rely on authors to preserve their existence across passages, paragraphs, and pages. Characters also rely on readers, whose interpretative activity will flesh out their otherwise discontinuous lifespans to give the impression of a full life beyond the page.

Before concluding, I will draw this discussion back to Fludernik in connection to the role of the reader. As Fludernik says, in terms that articulate clearly what I have outlined in the previous paragraph, 'It is the experience of these protagonists that narratives focus on, allowing readers to immerse themselves in a different world and in the life of the protagonists.'[67] As I will argue at greater length in my final chapter, the reader plays a crucial role in the success of the *Meditations* as a work of philosophy. The reader must step into the

[65] Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), pp. 38–39. See also Wolfgang Iser, 'Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response to Prose Fiction', in J. Hillis Miller (ed.), *Aspects of Narrative: Selected Papers from the English Institute* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), pp. 1–45.
[66] Iser, *The Implied Reader*, p. 40.
[67] Fludernik, *Introduction to Narratology*, p. 6.

text and immerse themselves in the experience of the protagonist. In the case of the *Meditations*, the reader fills the gaps between the days of meditation to transform the text from a series of arguments into a unified narrative; an *experience* rather than a philosophical treatise. The reader will bring the Meditator to life through their preserving power. In the previous chapter I claimed that Fludernik's conception of experiential narrative provides a reading model which brings us closer to how Descartes would have wanted his text to be read. I will provide further support for this notion in my final chapter. My argument is that Descartes wanted his readers to *experience* his text, not simply to comprehend it, and that he has used a narrative form because it is the best way to invoke such a readerly uptake. The experience of the text, particularly over the first two days of meditation, is being opened to the fragility of the knowledge of our existence. To reiterate an earlier point, the *Meditations* is an epistemological exercise. I would suggest Descartes never actually doubted whether he existed. The days of meditation were instead about what the Meditator can *know with absolute certainty*. The method of doubt is about destabilisation, and the Cogito ultimately does little to calm the narrator's fragile relationship to time. Indeed, it may exacerbate it. Instead, true epistemological stability is left wanting until the narrator can make that statement of total dependence on a higher power in the non-endurance doctrine. In this sense, the non-endurance doctrine provides a much greater foundation for Descartes's philosophy than the Cogito does. And the text itself may help to highlight the importance of the non-endurance doctrine.

We can read an implicit meta-level commentary in the text's structure which adds weight to this point. In the *Meditations*, Descartes articulates the non-endurance doctrine, which is a statement of causal dependence on a higher power. But the narrative of the text itself provides its own explication of the doctrine, which adds this meta-level of commentary to the text. In the *Meditations* Descartes presents the narrative of a person *at the beginning* of a philosophical journey, who *over a number of days* of meditation, emerges with a stronger understanding of themselves and their beliefs. The narrator of the *Meditations* is a character on a dramatised journey of discovery: a conduit for Descartes's ideas, but necessarily different from Descartes himself. Through Margolin's analysis we can consider the Meditator as a character to be 'undetermined' and 'incomplete' since the events of his life are discontinuous: limited only to what is depicted on the page. Margolin's analysis reveals the inherent fragility of fictional characters, and the tenuousness of their temporal and ontological states. This resonates strongly with my analysis of the narrator of the *Meditations* as having a

fragile relationship with time, which was supported through commentary from Lloyd, Cottingham, Derrida, and Ricoeur. Descartes has thus effectively dramatised the temporal fragility of the Meditator by making the narrator of the text a fictional character, rather than himself. This, I must reiterate, is far more than a mere stylistic flourish. The fictionality of the narrator means that the causal dependence expressed by the narrator is not only enunciated, but becomes a lived and embodied experience of dependence. Fictional characters are temporally fragile: bound to their authors, who preserve them through the events of the text. Iser's discussion of the importance of gaps between events in a narrative, in conjunction with Fludernik's emphasis on the reader, is indicative of the role that readers also play in preserving characters across their 'lifespans'. To reiterate, I juxtapose this discussion of literary characters with the discussion of the experience of the "I" leading up to the non-endurance doctrine in the *Meditations*. The non-endurance doctrine can be read as a philosophy of time, but the *Meditations* as a whole, through being structured as a temporal narrative, itself *enacts the non-endurance doctrine* as the representation of how the Meditator *experiences time*. Like literary characters, the "I" retains a fragile relationship with time. Like literary characters, the "I" relies on the power of the author of his existence to sustain him through his lifespan.

3. Conversion as an Act of Narrative

Consideration of the experience of the Meditator reveals a fictional character dependent on a higher power to sustain his existence over time. The non-endurance doctrine as expressed by the experiential "I" is a relationship between a causally-dependent character and the higher power that sustains them across the events within their lifespan. In this chapter the fragility and causal reliance of the Meditator will remain the focal point as I continue to explore the text as an experiential narrative. I will begin to consider some of the consequences of the *Meditations* as a temporal, narrative text, as well as consequences of the analogy between the Descartes/God and narrator/author/reader relationship. By reconceptualising the *Meditations* as a temporal, narrative text, we can identify features of it which can be found in texts from other genres, such as Augustine's *Confessions* and Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. Both the *Confessions* and the *Spiritual Exercises* contain an experiential "I". Consideration of these texts will help to shed light on the experiential "I" of the *Meditations*. I turn to the *Confessions* and the *Spiritual Exercises* because they will help to reveal that in the *Meditations* narrative enacts a process of conversion in the reader. This chapter will focus on the *Confessions* and the theme of conversion. In the next chapter as I turn to the role Descartes allots to the reader in greater detail I will consider the *Spiritual Exercises*, which in turn sheds light on the way in which the reader can be led to experience conversion in the *Meditations*.

The writings of Augustine have frequently been cited as a precedent for the *Meditations*. My use of Augustine will differ from previous commentary. While I will consider Augustine in parallel with Descartes, as many commentators have done, this thesis is not a study of influence. I use Augustine—in particular the way he utilises themes of time, conversion and narrative in his *Confessions*—as a means of better understanding these same features in Descartes, and not to suggest that Descartes was influenced by Augustine's use of these features. I will argue that Descartes and Augustine have crucial points of intersection, in their use of time and narrative, and in the way their texts serve as vehicles for a sort of conversion. I cite the *Confessions* as a precedent for Descartes not to take anything away from the originality of the latter's texts. Rather than diminishing the importance of the *Meditations*—something which perhaps Descartes himself was worried about—I argue that placing his text within such a tradition helps to illuminate features of the *Meditations* that are

not otherwise obvious. My reading of time, conversion and narrative in Augustine will enable us to better see these same themes in Descartes. These concepts, I suggest, are not as easily accessed when poring over the arguments with an analytical lens. Getting outside the text, and considering it in relation to a text from a different genre such as the *Confessions*, makes it easier to see these concepts at work within the *Meditations*.

To reiterate, my method here is not to study the influence of Augustine on Descartes, as others have done before me. Instead, the purpose is to consider the themes of time, narrative and conversion in Augustine, which may help to shed further light on these themes in the *Meditations*. Vincent Carraud, in an article concerning the Fourth Set of Objections which considers Descartes/Augustine connections, employs a method which has some overlap with my own purpose. He says that 'if St. Augustine lends credit to the *new* Cartesian philosophy, it is indeed that new philosophy that makes it possible to reread [Augustine] and to rediscover what is specifically epistemological or metaphysical in him. Descartes makes it possible to reassimilate Augustinian passages that had been philosophically neglected or underestimated.'[1] By placing the texts of these authors together, we are able to better see those features of Augustine that are frequently neglected, namely his epistemology and metaphysics. My strategy is the same, but reversed. By reading Descartes in parallel with Augustine's *Confessions*, we are better able to see the features of Descartes which are neglected or underestimated: specifically, narrative aspects.

In Section 3.1, I will return to a discussion from my first chapter, in which I considered the methods and motivations of Martial Gueroult. There I indicated the distinction between authorial influence and authorial intention as two different forms of historical engagement. I argued that Gueroult in his *Order of Reasons* focuses on authorial intention to the neglect of an engagement with authors that may have potentially served as influences on Descartes's philosophy. I then briefly considered Stephen Menn, who claimed that Gueroult's approach was ahistorical. I will continue that conversation in more detail here, since Menn's method concerns the extent to which Augustine can help to shed light on aspects of Descartes's philosophy. I highlight these positions since I draw aspects from both scholars' methods. I argue, as Gueroult does in relation to his own study, that my reading brings us closer to a recuperation of how Descartes would have intended his text to be read. However, unlike Gueroult, I consider the legacy on which Descartes draws. Additionally, while my study is not a study of influence, I place Descartes's text next to precedents from other genres in order to

[1] Vincent Carraud, 'Arnauld: From Ockhamism to Cartesianism', in Roger Ariew & Marjorie Grene (eds.), *Descartes and His Contemporaries: Meditations, Objections, and Replies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 127–128.

illuminate features of the *Meditations*. This is a project that, despite seeking a different outcome to Menn's, nonetheless employs a similar process.

In Sections 3.2 and 3.3, I consider the *Confessions* itself so that the themes which Augustine explores, and the form in which he chooses to explore them, can be more easily identified in Descartes's text. I will consider in parallel the way both texts draw on a variety of genres, thus making them difficult to classify (Section 3.2). I will then turn to three interrelated themes of time, conversion and narrative in Section 3.3. Augustine's text, much like Descartes's, contains a protagonist with a fragile relationship with time, who undertakes an epistemological journey in order to find certainty and stability. This stability is found in a higher power which rescues Augustine from time. The whole text reads as an extended metaphor for Augustine's temporal instability, and his reliance on the author of his existence. For Augustine—and I will propose, for Descartes—the concept of time is interwoven into a first-personal narrative, since this is the best way to serve the authors' strategic purpose: to generate a reading experience that will result in a type of conversion. The concept of conversion is a given in Augustine's text. While it has been alluded to in relation to the *Meditations*, I will argue that the concept has a greater resonance than has heretofore been acknowledged. A closer exploration of the *Confessions*—a text in which the themes under discussion are not disputed—will help to shed light on how Descartes's text also utilises time and narrative in ways crucial to the text's philosophical success. I argue that what is revealed in both the *Confessions* and the *Meditations* is the use of narrative to create a kind of conversion machine for the reader.

3.1 Influence and Intention

I here seek to advance the discussion of narrative by drawing links between the *Meditations* and Augustine's *Confessions*. Stephen Menn says that the question of the connection between Augustine and Descartes is an 'old one' though he does not believe it has been satisfactorily addressed, nor granted much serious scholarly attention.[2] Augustine's *Confessions* contains many stylistic parallels to Descartes's text: its autobiographical nature, its use of narrative, its

[2] Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, p. ix.

discussion of time, and its focus on the theme of a conversion. I will begin by considering some of the key scholars who have discussed the connections between Augustine and Descartes, from Antoine Arnauld, a contemporary of Descartes, through to more recent studies by Charles Taylor, Stephen Menn and Michael Hanby. This discussion considers once more the question of Descartes's status as a revolutionary and original thinker, since scholarship that highlights Augustine's influence on Descartes can be seen to reduce the impact of Descartes's claim to originality. My purpose in later sections of this chapter is to draw links between Augustine and Descartes in terms of their use of both time and narrative to produce texts which act as vehicles for conversion. My central argument is that it is this stylistic method—unexplored previously in scholarship—which contributes to his status as revolutionary. This section thus helps to set up a useful counterpoint to my own contentions, and to the overall argument of the chapter, which is that the *Meditations* can be seen as a sort of conversion-machine. As part of this discussion I return to my earlier consideration of historical context, in which I suggested that Gueroult followed Descartes's *intentions* to the neglect of his *influences*. I raised Stephen Menn as a point of contrast to Gueroult's method. In this section I will return to that discussion in presenting my own position, which in many ways mediates between the two scholars. I argue that there is better evidence for Descartes's intentions than his influences.

Saint Augustine has been cited as a precedent since the first printing of the *Meditations* in 1641. In the Fourth Set of Objections Antoine Arnauld comments 'The first thing that I find remarkable is that our distinguished author [Descartes] has laid down as the basis for his entire philosophy exactly the same principle as that laid down by St Augustine – a man of the sharpest intellect and a remarkable thinker, not only on theological topics but also on philosophical ones' (CSM II 139). Arnauld then highlights a number of specific points of overlap between Descartes and Augustine. One such parallel is in the concept of being deceived or mistaken, which as I have outlined above is a device used in the Second Meditation to help the Meditator demonstrate his own existence. Arnauld relates this to a passage from Augustine's *De Libero Arbitrio* (*On Free Will*), in which Augustine proposes that if "I" am mistaken, then "I" must certainly exist (CSM II 139). Arnauld also draws from his knowledge of Augustine in his efforts to understand the passage from the Third Meditation which includes the non-endurance doctrine (CSM II 148–149). Descartes in his reply to Arnauld says '[I] shall not waste time here by thanking my distinguished critic for bringing in the authority of St Augustine to support me' (Fourth Set of Replies, CSM II 154).

Descartes is ambiguous here, not indicating whether he agrees with the links that Arnauld has made, nor mentioning Augustine again.

As I have just suggested, one of the predominant parallels that have been drawn between Augustine and Descartes in secondary literature is in relation to the Cogito.[3] The similarities between Descartes's Cogito and Augustine's own argument are certainly compelling. As shown in the previous paragraph, Arnauld drew Descartes's attention to the similarity in both Descartes and Augustine of being deceived (or mistaken) demonstrating one's existence. Augustine's version of the Cogito—or something like it—appears in a number of his published works.[4] In *City of God*, it appears in a form very similar to that considered by Arnauld. Augustine says: 'I do not at all fear the arguments of the Academics when they say, What if you are mistaken? For if I am mistaken, I exist [*Si enim fallor, sum*]' (*City of God*, XI. 26).[5] Recall the passage from the Second Meditation, which I considered in Section 1.2: 'But there is a deceiver of supreme power and cunning who is deliberately and constantly deceiving me. In that case I too undoubtedly exist [*ego … sum*], if he is deceiving me [*si me fallit*]' (CSM II 17; AT VII 25). As Gareth Matthews suggests, 'Augustine anticipates Descartes, not only in presenting cogito-like reasoning, but also in developing reasoning about the nature of the mind that is revealed to exist by that cogito-type reasoning.'[6] It is easy to see how Arnauld, when reading the *Meditations*, found such a striking resemblance to Augustine.

Within Descartes's correspondence there are a number of references to Augustine which suggest that Augustine was in Descartes's mind around the time he was drafting the *Meditations*. When he had completed the manuscript, Descartes circulated it among his friends in order to gather feedback. Marin Mersenne also distributed the manuscript to a number of theologians and philosophers, and the feedback Mersenne received, along with Descartes's responses to this feedback, was ultimately appended to the text as the *Objections and Replies*. In one of the letters Descartes received, which was written by Colvius—a Dutch

[3] For example, see Richard Sorabji, *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights About Individuality, Life, and Death* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006), pp. 217–221; Gareth B. Matthews, *Thought's Ego in Augustine and Descartes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 29–38; Gareth B. Matthews, *Augustine* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 34–42; Brian Stock, *Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 259–273.

[4] Brian Stock finds versions of the Cogito in the following works of Augustine: '*De Beata Vita* 2.7, *Soliloquia* 2.1.1, *De Libero Arbitrio* 1.7.16 and 2.3.7, *De Vera Religione* 39.73, *De Duobus Animabus* 10.13, *Confessiones* 13.11.12, *De Civitate Dei* 11.26, and *De Trinitate* 10.10.14 and 15.12.21.' Brian Stock, *Augustine's Inner Dialogue: Philosophical Soliloquy in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 90, n. 95.

[5] Augustine, *City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. R.W. Dyson (426; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p. 484; Latin taken from the Teubner text of Bernard Dombart and Alphonse Kalb. See Augustinus, 'De Civitate Dei', in Bernard Dombart & Alphonse Kalb (eds.) *Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana* (I: Libri I–XIII; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993), p. 498.

[6] Matthews, *Thought's Ego in Augustine and Descartes*, p. 38.

Protestant minister and amateur scientist (CSMK 387)—the connections to Augustine were raised. Descartes responded on 14 November 1640, thanking Colvius for 'drawing my attention to the passage of St Augustine relevant to my *I am thinking, therefore I exist*' (CSMK 159). In this letter Descartes maintains critical differences in his own and Augustine's uses of this argument:[7]

> I went to the library of this town to read it, and I do indeed find that he does use it to prove the certainty of our existence. He goes on to show that there is a certain likeness of the Trinity in us, in that we exist, we know that we exist, and we love the existence and the knowledge we have. I, on the other hand, use the argument to show that this I which is thinking is *an immaterial substance* with no bodily element. These are two very different things. (CSMK 159, *emphasis in text*)

He does, however acknowledge: 'I am very glad to find myself in agreement with St Augustine, if only to hush the little minds who have tried to find fault with the principle' (CSMK 159). In a letter to Mersenne a month later, Descartes again raises his Cogito in relation to Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* (*City of God*) (CSMK 160–161). In a letter dated 3 December 1640, also to Mersenne, the topic of Augustine is once more raised (CSMK 160). Finally, in another letter to Mersenne on 21 January 1641 Descartes makes an allusion to a passage from Augustine to which Mersenne has drawn his attention (CSMK 168–169). To recapitulate, Descartes's letter to Colvius gives the impression that the similarities between the two authors' Cogitos are a happy coincidence; that upon reading Colvius's letter, Descartes looked up Augustine's text; that it was not something previously known to him. Nowhere does Descartes indicate that he has been inspired by Augustine's writings—neither on the Cogito nor on other points. Rather, in his letters as well as in the Fourth Set of Replies, Descartes seems happy to use Augustine as a means of legitimising his own writing, rather than acknowledging him explicitly as a source of direct influence.

This, of course, links back to my earlier discussion, in which I argued that Descartes seeks to appeal to personal experience rather than to authority. Where the predominant approach by contemporaneous thinkers was to develop an argument through appeals to established authorities such as scripture, Aquinas, Aristotle, and so on, Descartes resisted any kind of explicit acknowledgement of scholarship, instead choosing to look to what certainty he could find in himself. While much has been made of the Descartes and Augustine connection, Descartes himself was always reticent to credit others as sources of inspiration for

[7] Michael Hanby agrees with Descartes that the differences between the two Cogitos are significant. See Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 166–177.

his works. Rather, he preferred to propound the illusion of originality. Descartes 'disdains to appeal to authority,' writes Stephen Menn: 'especially in the *Meditations* he offers the fundamental principles of his philosophy as the results of a solitary reason meditating with itself, which any rational being should be able to produce.'[8] On the topic of originality, Descartes himself said:

> As we can write no words in which there are letters other than those of the alphabet, nor complete a sentence unless it consists of the words that are in the dictionary, so neither [can we compose] a book except out of the sentences [or opinions, *sententiae*] that are found in others. But if the things I say are coherent among themselves and so connected that they follow from each other, then it will not follow from this argument that I have borrowed my opinions [*sententiae*] from others any more than I have taken the words themselves from the dictionary.[9]

He also wrote in a letter to Beekman, dated 17 October 1630, that 'It is ridiculous to take the trouble as you do to distinguish, in the possession of knowledge, what is your own from what is not, as if it was the possession of a piece of land or sum of money. If you know something, it is completely yours, even if you have learnt it from someone else' (CSMK 27). It is unsurprising, given this line of reasoning, that Descartes would not acknowledge Augustine's work as an influence: he would not have even seen it in that light.[10]

As well as suggesting an apparent distaste for acknowledging any sources for his ideas, these just-cited statements by Descartes allude to his understanding of what makes an argument original in the first place. What Descartes seems to suggest is that it is the order itself that provides originality; the way in which the ideas are structured. Though Descartes may be drawing his ideas from a number of different places, such that the *Meditations* represents a collage of borrowed concepts, he has placed those ideas into a particular order. To recall my earlier discussion, in many of Descartes's writings we can identify the importance of the organisation of the work such that it consists in 'chains of reasons' (*Discourse*, AT VI 19). In the Second Set of Replies (CSM II 110) and the *Regulae* (CSM I 14) Descartes also reiterates the importance of the order of demonstration. It is, I claim, this order that represents his original contribution. As I indicated in the first chapter, scholars such as Gueroult and Cottingham have pointed to the vitality of Descartes's philosophy as a

[8] Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, p. 10.
[9] AT X 204. Quoted in Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, pp. 12–13. The glosses are Menn's.
[10] It is perhaps worth noting the context for Descartes's letter to Beekman, which was written at a time in which the two were embroiled in a dispute over ownership of some work done a decade earlier in 1618–1619, when Descartes was undergoing a sort-of apprenticeship with Beekman. Gaukroger discusses this dispute in his biography of Descartes, suggesting that Descartes's reaction was, perhaps, a little excessive. See Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography*, pp. 68–75 on the apprenticeship; see pp. 222–224 on the later dispute.

'unified whole' (or, in Flood's estimation, a 'narrated whole'). I have argued that the order of the *Meditations* is crucially a temporal order, and further to this, that it is crucially a narrative one, as opposed to the 'order' of the syllogism, which Descartes asserts that he avoided in his *Meditations*. Thus, what makes Descartes's philosophy original, in his own estimation, is the structure, which is to say, the narrative structure. My argument is thus Descartes's own. It is the style, what I call the narrative form of the *Meditations* that is truly original about Descartes, and what earns him his status as a revolutionary thinker.

As I have claimed previously, Descartes's status as a revolutionary thinker has been questioned. Scholars have looked to precedents for Descartes's philosophy as evidence that he was, perhaps, not as original as the title of "father of modern philosophy" might suggest. Yet, a study of Descartes's potential influences need not diminish his standing as revolutionary. In my first chapter I considered two opposing perspectives in scholarship from Martial Gueroult and Stephen Menn. Gueroult approached the *Meditations* on its own terms, with minimal reference to precedents or influences.[11] This approach was, for Gueroult, more in line with how Descartes wanted his text to be considered: as an autonomous philosophy able to stand without reference to what came before it. Stephen Menn's study, *Descartes and Augustine*, takes a different approach, seeking to understand the *Meditations* by means of the preceding tradition upon which Descartes—consciously and unconsciously—may have been drawing. My reading is contiguous with both of these approaches in different ways. I argue that my reading brings us closer to the way Descartes intended his text to be read, an argument Gueroult also made about his own study. Also like Gueroult, I claim that it is worthwhile to conceive of the text as a unified whole. However, while Gueroult sees unity in the argument structure, I consider that it is the temporal framework, and the experiential "I" that provide unity to the text. In regards to Menn's position, while his is not a study of influence as such, I too turn to the legacy of thought that precedes Descartes, in order to discover new meaning in the text. Menn's study presents a sustained discussion on the links between the thought of Augustine and Descartes. Although his purpose leads in a different direction to this thesis, there is a great degree of continuity between our approaches. Menn's aim is 'not simply to settle a historical question of influence, but to use Augustine as a key to understanding Descartes, and especially the rich and puzzling text of the *Meditations*.'[12] As I have stated, this method is very much synonymous with my own use of Augustine; I do not seek to argue

[11] Incidentally, this approach has also been used to great success in *Between Two Worlds*, John Carriero's recent reading of the *Meditations*. As he says, 'Because my goal is to provide a sustained reading of the *Meditations*, I focus on the text itself.' Carriero, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 5.
[12] Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, p. x.

that Augustine influenced Descartes, but instead to draw out common features between the two texts as a means of better understanding what Descartes was trying to achieve. My study, as I have said, is not so much about influence, but intention.

Menn begins his study by placing himself in opposition to Gueroult as well as to other early to mid-Twentieth Century French philosophers such as Etienne Gilson and Henry Gouhier, who each respectively held that there is a 'fundamental break between Descartes and the earlier Augustinian tradition, and that Augustinianism cannot yield the key for interpreting Descartes' philosophy.'[13] The point of departure for Gouhier and Gilson was in regards to faith and reason, which in their view were essentially linked in Augustine, and essentially divided in Descartes. Due to this, they believed that Descartes's philosophy was irrevocably removed from the 'spirit' of Augustinianism.[14] Gueroult argues against the view that Augustine is a precedent for Descartes on methodological grounds. As suggested above, Gueroult proceeds through what he believes is the most intrinsically "Cartesian" interpretation of Descartes, taking each point in succession with minimal reference to historical background. Menn takes the converse perspective that there is much to be learned about Descartes by considering the historical context, particularly Augustine. Menn's method is to first explore Augustine at length, and then turn to Descartes so as to 'study the use Descartes made of this old material for his new purposes, and the degree to which he preserves or modifies the Augustinian metaphysics in the process.'[15] Menn argues that there are fundamental similarities between Descartes and Augustine, and that Augustine is crucial to Descartes's entire project in the *Meditations*. Menn proposes:

> Descartes' aim in the *Meditations* is to exhibit the Augustinian metaphysics as the fundamental discipline from which the principles of all other knowledge must be drawn. He does not wish to discuss physics as a science, that is, as a systematic knowledge of the physical world; but he will show that whatever knowledge we have of body must proceed from knowledge of God and the soul.[16]

The extensive textual evidence Menn provides allows him to mount a strong case that Descartes's philosophy sought to replace Aristotelian scholasticism with a unified and

[13] Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, p. 6.
[14] Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, pp. 7–10.
[15] Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, p. 16.
[16] Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, p. 53.

complete philosophy drawing on Augustinian principles, in particular Augustine's search for wisdom.[17]

Before closing this section I will briefly consider two additional contemporary perspectives on Descartes and Augustine. These perspectives contribute to the discussion of Descartes's status as revolutionary. While referring back to Augustine, these scholars also consider—in relation to the question of influence—not only the influence of Augustine on Descartes but also, in turn, Descartes's subsequent influence on scholarship going forward. Charles Taylor, for instance, in tracing the development of the concept of personal identity from the ancient to the modern period in his book *Sources of the Self*, sees a significant through-line from Augustine to Descartes. 'On the way from Plato to Descartes stands Augustine.'[18] He considers Descartes to be 'in many ways profoundly Augustinian.'[19] This implies a level of influence; that Descartes has imbibed an Augustinian philosophy. A crucial point of overlap between Augustine and Descartes for Taylor is in regards to the concept of thought itself. Taylor quotes Augustine's statement that thoughts need to be 'brought together (*cogenda*) so as to be capable of being known; that means they have to be gathered (*colligenda*) from their dispersed state. Hence is derived the word cogitate' (*Conf.* X. xi. 18). For Taylor, 'This understanding of thinking as a kind of inner assembly of an order we construct will be put to revolutionary use by Descartes.'[20] I will return to this notion below, but already in previous chapters I have been developing an argument for the crucial role in Descartes's philosophy of the way in which the order of arguments (or events) is assembled in a discursive manner. What will thus become significant for my own reading, here, is the parallel between this concept of how thoughts are gathered, and the way Augustine conceives of our place within time. When I come to Genevieve Lloyd's discussion of Augustine, and put forward an argument that Descartes gathers the disparate threads of his life into order through the act of narration, this will become clearer.

Another crucial point of cohesion between Descartes and Augustine for Taylor is in regards to the centrality of the "I". Taylor suggests that Augustine 'introduced the inwardness of radical reflexivity and bequeathed it to the Western tradition of thought.'[21] The importance in modern thought of the first-person finds its roots in Augustine. Beyond this, '[t]he modern

[17] See Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, pp. 130–206. For more on Descartes and wisdom (*sapientia*) see John Cottingham, 'Descartes as Sage: Spiritual *Askesis* in Cartesian Philosophy', in Conal Condren, Stephen Gaukroger, & Ian Hunter (eds.), *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) pp. 182–201.
[18] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 127.
[19] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 142.
[20] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 141.
[21] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 131.

epistemological tradition from Descartes, and all that has flowed from it in modern culture' has made the first-person a fundamental aspect of modern thought.[22] Descartes draws the first-person mode of thinking from Augustine. Descartes's own significant influence on modern thought has ensured that this legacy, which stretches all the way back to Augustine, retains a vital hold on the way scholarship is conducted up to today.[23] There is an argument here around not only the question of whether Descartes was influenced *by* Augustine, but furthermore the way Descartes has—through tapping into this legacy—influenced modern scholarship as a whole.

The question of how Descartes has influenced those who have come after him is also what drives Michael Hanby's discussion of Descartes in his book *Augustine and Modernity*. Hanby's conclusion is that the influence has been largely negative. Hanby contends that Descartes significantly misuses and abuses Augustine, and this has had a detrimental impact on the modern world. Hanby presents an interesting counterpoint to Menn's book. *Augustine and Modernity* is in a sense antithetical to *Descartes and Augustine*: where Menn seeks to trace the influence of Augustinianism on Descartes's thought, Hanby seeks to 'trace the collapse of the Augustinian theological vision which sustained Western Christianity for just over a millennium.'[24] Much, if not all, of the blame for this extends in Hanby's view to Descartes. As the title suggests, Hanby's book is a study of Augustine's role in the modern world, which seeks to challenge the view of scholars such as Charles Taylor, who, as indicated above, see Descartes as part of the legacy of Augustine. For Hanby, considering Augustine as a predecessor to Descartes's modern sense of self is theologically damaging. He thus seeks to 'challenge Augustine's place within this narrative [and] recast this story in theological terms.'[25] A crucial point of distinction between Descartes and Augustine stems from Hanby's interpretation of Descartes's philosophy as tracing its roots to the stoics. In having roots in stoicism, Descartes's philosophy is therefore, in Hanby's view, 'un-Augustinian.'[26]

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[22] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 131.
[23] Incidentally, the roots of modern thought have also been traced back to Descartes in fields beyond philosophy and science. For example, Ian Watt traces the origins of the novel to the radical individualism that originated in Descartes. '[Descartes's] *Meditations* did much to bring about the modern assumption whereby the pursuit of truth is conceived of as a wholly individual matter, logically independent of the tradition of past thought, and indeed as more likely to be arrived at by a departure from it. The novel is the form of literature which most fully reflects this individualist and innovating reorientation.' Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (1957; repr. London: Hogarth Press, 1987), p. 13.
[24] Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity*, p. 1.
[25] Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity*, p. 135.
[26] Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity*, p. 161. Hanby's argument for Descartes's debt to the stoics can be found on pp. 137–143; pp. 161–165, and also in Michael Hanby, 'Augustine and Descartes: An Overlooked Chapter in The Story of Modern Origins', *Modern Theology*, 19/4 (2003), pp. 455–482.

Now on this question of influence, with no further specific statements of support by Descartes himself, it becomes difficult to resolve for certain. In the case of Augustine in particular, Menn acknowledges that 'while we know that Descartes read Augustine, we do not know that his reading was extensive or deep, or that it was early enough to explain the Augustinian features of his philosophy, which go back to 1628–30.'[27] On the other hand, Hanby believes that the knowledge that Descartes possessed of Augustine 'is now well established.'[28] I myself will not try to solve that puzzle here, since as I have highlighted, Descartes is reticent to provide any kind of clarity on the subject. In any case, what is more significant for this thesis than whether Descartes was influenced by Augustine will be my attempt to draw parallels that will highlight the use of narrative in Descartes's text. While influence is difficult to determine, my reading seeks to approach the *Meditations* from the perspective of the experiential "I", which I argue aligns closely with how Descartes intended his text to be read. For the remainder of this chapter, then, I turn to the *Confessions* not to prove the influence of Augustine on Descartes, but so as to better understand the role of the experiential "I" and how it influences the way we read the text.

3.2 Confusions of Genre and Conflations of Style

Time and narrative are both central themes of Augustine's *Confessions*. Patrick Riley regards the *Confessions* as 'one of the first narratives of the self through time,'[29] an apt description which helps to indicate the text's relevance to this thesis. The structure of the *Confessions* at first glance appears quite strange, and is well worth addressing at the outset. The *Confessions* consists of 13 books. The first nine are devoted to an autobiographical account of Augustine's early years with a focus on his intellectual and spiritual progress, culminating in his eventual conversion to Christianity. The final four books are exegetical in nature, exploring the themes of Memory (Book X), Time and Eternity (Book XI), Creation (Book XII) and the Book of Genesis (Book XIII). This structure is seemingly unusual; some say problematic.[30] Much like

[27] Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, p. ix.
[28] Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity*, p. 166.
[29] Patrick Riley, *Character and Conversion: Augustine, Montaigne, Descartes, Rousseau, and Sartre* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), p. 241.
[30] Annemaré Kotzé, 'The Puzzle of the Last Four Books of Augustine's *Confessions*: An Illegitimate Issue?', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 60/1 (2006), p. 65.

Descartes's conflation of philosophical treatise, confessional autobiography, narrative and meditation, the *Confessions* at various points reads as an autobiography, a personal prayer, a meditation, and a philosophical and/or theological treatise. Though this has made the text hard to classify for a number of scholars, in this chapter I draw on Genevieve Lloyd's discussion in *Being in Time*, to argue that it is at the level of narration that we are able to gather these diverse aspects into a unified text. In this section I consider the structure of the *Confessions*. The purpose of this is to highlight how the structure and conflation of genres help to illustrate the major themes of the *Confessions*. I will then further unpack the themes of the *Confessions* in the next section so as to advance my claim that narrative in the *Confessions* and in the *Meditations* enacts a process of conversion.

Augustine's interweaving of theoretical treatise into a narrative account of a highly personal intellectual and spiritual journey are further suggestive of why the *Confessions* has frequently been read by scholars as a precedent for Descartes's own genre-bending text. A number of scholars have said that Augustine in effect invented a new genre in his *Confessions*. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg say that Augustine 'first employed the form of the full-scale autobiography as confession.'[31] Along similar lines, Abbott considers that 'Saint Augustine invented the enduring form of the autobiography of a convert.'[32] However, these are potentially problematic statements, for two reasons. Firstly, the exegetical books have thrown into question the text's classification as an autobiography, and indeed as a narrative text. As Frances Young puts it: 'The climax of this thirteen-volume work consists of four books with no autobiographical content at all. On reaching the end, no reader will be surprised to hear that scholars have long since puzzled about the role of those books, or that their existence has retrospectively challenged the attribution of the description "autobiography" to the work as a whole.'[33] This leads to the temptation to perhaps ignore the last four books for the sake of a unified narrative, or to consider that the exegeses on memory, time and Genesis have no bearing on the autobiographical sections.[34] I will come back to these interrelated problems shortly.

[31] Robert Scholes, James Phelan & Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (Revised and expanded edn.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) pp. 78–79.
[32] Abbott, *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, p. 132.
[33] Frances Young, '*The Confessions* of St. Augustine: What is the Genre of this Work?', *Augustinian Studies*, 30/1 (1999), p. 2.
[34] Perhaps illustrative of this, Colin Starnes's commentary on the *Confessions* only deals with the first nine books, completely ignoring the exegetical books. See Colin Starnes, *Augustine's Conversion: A Guide to the Argument of Confessions I–IX* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1990).

Secondly, there is ample evidence that the *Confessions* was not the first of its kind at all. Augustine was not creating a new genre, but was drawing on a well-established formula.[35] In an article focusing on the last four books of the *Confessions*, Annemaré Kotzé provides a number of examples of autobiographical writing that precede Augustine, as well as a number of examples of writing that conflate autobiography with some kind of treatise. Kotzé suggests that 'general literary practice from the time of Plato (and even earlier) as well as a number of specific works … offer precedents for the inclusion of an autobiographical section, or what I would prefer to call a conversion story, in a larger work that has an apologetic, polemic, or protreptic-paraenetic overall purpose.'[36] A brief explication is in order regarding the terms protrepsis and paraenesis. These terms refer to a type of moral exhortation, either of a particular style of conversion literature in which outsiders are encouraged to follow a particular path, or alternately written for those that already follow a particular path, but with the intention to provide advice about how to best follow it. The absolute distinctions between the two forms of exhortation are complex, but for our purposes here what is relevant in Kotzé's analysis is the way in which Augustine uses the theme of conversion as a means of encouraging his readers to follow the same path.[37] Furthermore, Kotzé alludes to a rich literary tradition preceding the *Confessions*. The works that Kotzé discusses as precedents for the *Confessions* are the *De Trinitate* by Hilary of Poitiers, the *Ad Donatum* by Cyprian of Carthage, and Justin Martyr's *Dialogus cum Tryphone*. Kotzé argues that combining philosophical discussion with an autobiographical section was a 'common occurrence' in ancient philosophical literature.[38] Kotzé clarifies that she would rather call this type of work a 'conversion story' than 'autobiography'. This is an important distinction for my purpose. Kotzé's discussion overall draws an interesting parallel between Augustine and Descartes, both of whom have been seen as revolutionary, and as 'fathers' (Augustine as a Father of the Catholic Church, and Descartes as the so-called 'father of modern philosophy'). And yet there is a tension between these titles and a history of scholarship that finds precedents for their works, which perhaps dilutes the impression of their originality.

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[35] For a more in-depth discussion of the genre of the *Confessions*, see Young, '*Confessions*: Genre', pp. 1–16. See also Annemaré Kotzé, *Augustine's Confessions: Communicative Purpose and Audience* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

[36] Kotzé, 'The Last Four Books of Augustine's *Confessions*', p. 66.

[37] For more on protrepsis and paraenesis see Abraham J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986); Diana M. Swancutt, 'Paraenesis in Light of Protrepsis: Troubling the Typical Dichotomy', in James Starr & Troels Engberg-Pedersen (eds.), *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), pp. 113–153.

[38] Kotzé, 'The Last Four Books of Augustine's *Confessions*', p. 68. Kotzé continues: 'Prominent examples are Plotinus' *Enneads* prefaced by the *Vita Porphyrii* and Iamblichus' *De vita Pythagorica* that starts with the vita of Pythagoras (followed by the protreptic and then by the philosophical discussion proper.) In general, the life of the philosopher was seen as an appropriate introduction to a more theoretical discussion of his work' (pp. 68–69).

In any case, the relationship between the autobiographical and exegetical books of the *Confessions*—whether innovative or drawing on a well-known formula—has continued to provide fertile ground for scholarly research. Frances Young considers that the *Confessions*' last four books can be explained if we consider the 'life' that Augustine presents 'as a kind of paradigm of all human life.'[39] The themes discussed in the final four books are illustrated through the discussion of his life in the preceding books.

> The episodes of [Augustine's] life which he earlier chooses to narrate are illustrative of the themes he discusses at length, themes which can appear digressive and tedious if we imagine the principal interest is in giving an autobiographical account. Of course there is an apologetic element … But there is also a didactic thrust, and the overall perspective is reflection on human existence and God's providence … Augustine makes himself an instance of the universal human story, and the work is fundamentally typological.[40]

Augustine presents his life as a *type* so as to provide an *exemplar* with which his readers will identify. His greater aim in this instance is not the narrative account, but using his account as a means of *teaching* his readers. I agree with this sentiment inasmuch as it is a general statement on the purpose of the *Confessions*. But it fails to adequately address the autobiographical and exegetical distinction. To anticipate my conclusion, what is essentially missing is closer consideration of Augustine's use of narrative.

In Gaukroger's intellectual biography of Descartes he puts forward an argument that is similar to Young's, regarding the instructive aspect of the *Confessions*. He first draws links to the use of an autobiographical first-person in both Augustine's *Confessions* and Descartes's *Discourse on the Method*.[41] Gaukroger then considers the *Discourse's* function as a 'moral tale', drawing links to Augustine in the *Confessions*, but also to Montaigne in his *Essays* and Cardano in his *De vita propria liber*.[42] On similar lines to Young, Gaukroger suggests that these texts operate 'as a didactic genre in which lessons are implicitly contained in the story that is set out.'[43] Additionally, the texts function as 'a public exercise in self-knowledge.'[44]

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[39] Young, '*Confessions*: Genre', p. 8.
[40] Young, '*Confessions*: Genre', p. 13.
[41] Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 306.
[42] Though, due to reasons of scope, not under discussion here, a number of scholars have sought to highlight some of the ways in which Montaigne serves as a precedent to Descartes. For both authors' use of scepticism, see Edwin M. Curley, *Descartes Against the Skeptics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), pp. 1–20; Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle* (Revised and expanded edn.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 150; on Montaigne and Descartes's uses of doubt as a strategy for defending faith see Charles W. Swain, 'Doubt in Defense of Faith', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 36/2 (1968), pp. 114–115; for a discussion of the legacy of thought extending through Augustine, Montaigne, Pascal and Descartes see Pierre Force, 'Innovation as Spiritual Exercise: Montaigne and Pascal', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 66/1 (2005), pp. 17–35; on both authors' concepts of self, see Dalia Judovitz, *Subjectivity and Representation in Descartes*, pp. 1–17; on the concept of conversion in both Montaigne and Descartes see Riley, *Character and Conversion in Autobiography*, pp. 60–87.
[43] Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 306.
[44] Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 306.

The stylistic aspects of Descartes are here briefly highlighted by Gaukroger, as well as Descartes's penchant for distancing himself from his narrators: 'Descartes himself characterizes his autobiographical material in the *Discours* as a story (*histoire*) or fable (*fable*) which contains some examples worthy of imitation.'[45] Gaukroger here is referring to Part One of the *Discourse*, in which Descartes says 'I am presenting this work only as a history or, if you prefer, a fable' (CSM I 112). Descartes goes on to hope his fable contains 'examples worthy of imitation' (CSM I 112). We can draw this discussion back to Young's reading of the *Confessions* as part of a genre of protreptic-paraenetic literature. Gaukroger, on similar lines, suggests the use by Descartes of a rhetorical device whereby *change* is brought about in the reader through the text. Descartes, like Augustine before him, used what could be called a conversion narrative, for the purpose of imitation by his reader. As I will argue, this conversion mechanism becomes even more pronounced in his *Meditations*.[46]

The distinction between the autobiographical and exegetical books of the *Confessions* raises an interesting parallel with the *Meditations* which is pertinent to my discussion. Above I have suggested that some scholars have considered the structure of the *Confessions* to be problematic, since the last four books are difficult to reconcile under the umbrella of autobiography. In a sense, this comes down to a question of narrative voice. Since the last four books of the *Confessions* are not "autobiographical" the genre of the text as a whole has been questioned. A reason for this is because the "I" of the *Confessions* is not questioned to be that of Augustine, and so the conflation of autobiographical elements with theological and philosophical discussion creates issues of classification. I will consider how to define autobiography, so as to clarify what is at issue here. Philippe Lejeune, a highly influential theorist in the study of autobiography, defines autobiography as 'Retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality.'[47] He further stipulates that for a text to be classified as an autobiography, the identity of the narrator, the author, and the protagonist must be the same. The first nine books of the *Confessions* fit within this framework. The final four books fit to a point: 'the focus is his individual life.' The exegetical

[45] Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 306.
[46] Regarding the connections between the *Discourse* and the *Meditations*, Jean-Luc Marion has argued that both texts, as well as the *Objections and Replies*, serve as an 'organic whole' in which the *Meditations* serve as a response to the objections made to the *Discourse*, and so on. Marion argues that 'the strict corpus of the six meditations ought to be read, indissolubly, as an ensemble of replies to the scattered objections made to the *Discourse on Method* and as a text itself destined from the first—even before its (regular) publication—to be submitted to objections, to which Descartes would reply.' See Jean-Luc Marion, 'The Responsorial Status of the *Meditations*', in *On the Ego and On God: Further Cartesian Questions*, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), p. 41.
[47] Philippe Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, trans. Katherine Leary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 4.

books, while still in the first-person, are focused not on Augustine's life, but on questions of philosophical and theological import. But because there is an undeniably autobiographical "I" in the first nine books (we could go so far as to call it an experiential "I"), it can be assumed that the final four books must therefore sit outside the narrative structure of the *Confessions*. The philosophical components cannot be reconciled with the narrative components. Yet despite books 10–13 not being "autobiography" as such, we can still perceive them as having a critical role in the "narrative" of the *Confessions*. My discussion of Lloyd, below, will help to make clear how the "narrative" and "philosophical" aspects can be reconciled in the *Confessions*.

When it comes to the *Meditations*, interestingly, the problem is the same, but inverted. Since the personality of the "I" of the *Meditations* has been taken to be extraneous, the book's status as narrative has been neglected. Though I have frequently referred back to Wilson's argument throughout the early stages of this thesis, I will quote again, for clarity, this time in full:

> While perhaps the order of arguments presented in the *Meditations* does reflect Descartes's own progress in philosophical inquiry, it is not obvious that this is so, and not in the least relevant to the philosophical purpose of the *Meditations* whether or not it is so. In this connection, one should bear in mind that in works other than the *Meditations* Descartes uses different pronouns to set forth essentially the same ideas. In *The Search After Truth* he makes heavy use of the second person. In the general philosophical parts of the *Principles*, 'we' and 'it' (i.e., 'the mind') predominate. To note these points is not, of course, to deny that Descartes's system in some sense presupposes the availability of the concept of subject or self—or the form of the first person singular. (It does, in fact, make this presupposition, and for this very reason—a philosophical, not an historical reason—the first person form probably does provide the most effective mode of exposition.) The main point is just that the work must be read primarily as the presentation of a philosophical position having some claim to general relevance, and not as history or autobiography at all.[48]

Wilson's position hinges on the assumption that a reader's focus should be restricted to the ideas themselves. She acknowledges that, largely, the first-person is important as a means of elucidating the arguments of the text, but even then emphasises that the "I" is important on philosophical, and not historical grounds. My method differs through a focus on the pronoun itself. The purpose is to then see what may be discovered about the text through this focus on the "I", rather than excluding it in the first instance. To refer back to Lejeune's definition, if the "I" of the narrator is distinct from the author, the text is not an autobiography. Wilson (rightly) takes a comparable position regarding the *Meditations*. Yet as I have argued, this

[48] Wilson, *Descartes*, p. 4.

excludes other forms of narrative beyond autobiography. Just because the "I" is not historical, this does not mean it must be treated as strictly philosophical. My discussion in the first chapter on the distinction between the thetic "I" and the experiential "I" sought to argue for the validity of this point. Furthermore, just because the "I" is not philosophical, this does not mean that a full examination of the "I" will not reveal points of philosophical interest. This was my argument in Chapter 2. In the case of the *Meditations*, as with the *Confessions*, the narrative voice is used to define our modes of reading. The autobiographical "I" throws into question the status of the last four books of the *Confessions*, and scholars have tended to ignore these, or discount their role in the narrative. Since the "I" of the *Meditations* is not autobiographical, the text's status as a narrative has been overlooked. This section has sought to illustrate, rather than resolve these issues of classification. In the next section I will argue that the *Confessions* can be thought of as—to draw on Flood's terminology once more—a 'narrated whole', and not an autobiography containing extraneous exegetical discussion. And the *Meditations*, by this same token, can be thought of as a 'narrated whole', in which the act of narrative brings about unity in the text—and furthermore brings about unity in the lifespan of the Meditator.

3.3 Time, Conversion & Narrative in Descartes and Augustine

I will now turn to three interrelated components of the discussion of the *Confessions*: time, conversion and narrative. Explication of these is integral in my argument that narrative is crucial to the success of the *Meditations* as a work of philosophy. As I will argue, the concept of change over time (or more specifically, conversion) is crucial both to the identity of the experiential "I" as well as to the narrative structure of both texts. I argue that time and narrative are both used in the *Confessions* and the *Meditations* to enact a process of conversion in the reader.

Richard Sorabji calls Book XI of the *Confessions* the 'most eloquent and arresting exposition' of 'the paradox of the parts of time.'[49] Augustine asks 'What then is time?' (*Conf.* XI. xiv. 17). Augustine grapples with time, and a part of his difficulty in coming to terms with it is in finding an adequate way to measure it. The past cannot be measured because it is gone, the future cannot be measured because it hasn't happened yet, and the present is difficult to measure because it is constantly slipping into the past. 'But who can measure the past which does not now exist or the future which does not yet exist, unless someone dares to assert that he can measure what has no existence? At the moment when time is passing, it can be perceived and measured. But when it has passed and is not present, it cannot be' (*Conf.* XI. xvi. 22). As well as highlighting the difficulties in measuring time, Augustine here indicates that time is constantly just out of reach. I remember the past; I am aware of the present; I anticipate the future. But the past is beyond my grasp, and the future constantly disappearing. Robert J. O'Connell has indicated that Augustine's consideration of time is crucially tied to his concept of existence. 'Temporal existence inexorably implies an uninterrupted sequence of not-being what one will become, and becoming what one formerly was-not; it is a type of existence undivorceably wedded to non-existence. We temporal beings both "are" and "are-not"; we do not fully "exist."'[50] If our lives are situated within the chaos of time, then our lives are inevitably caught in this chaos of fragmentary existence. The only period in which we can be truly said to "exist" is in the present, since the past no longer exists, and the future has not yet come into being.

Genevieve Lloyd has read Augustine in a similar way: 'On either side of the present, [Augustine] reasons, lies an abyss of non-existence. And even the present, in abstraction from the mind's attention, collapses internally into a non-existent future and an equally non-existent past, on either side of a durationless instant in which nothing can happen.'[51] Augustine's relationship to time, on this account, is fragile indeed. In the previous chapter I highlighted the Meditator's own fragility in time, and it is worth highlighting this contiguity of experience between the narrators of the *Confessions* and the *Meditations*. In regards to the *Confessions*, Gareth Matthews has also highlighted the difficulty in adequately perceiving of the existence of the present. What, exactly, is the present? Is the present the twenty-first century? Or 2017? Or this week, or day, or hour, or second? Matthews suggests that, if we try to boil time down to its most singular *present*, then 'no matter how short it may be, part of it

[49] Richard Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (London: Duckworth, 1983), p. 29.
[50] Robert J. O'Connell, *Soundings in St. Augustine's Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1994), pp. 24–25.
[51] Lloyd, *Being in Time*, p. 22.

will be already past and part will still be future.'[52] In Matthews' reading of Augustine, it is impossible to distill time down to a single *now*. 'Only if we consider *now* to be a "knife-edge," an instant without any duration at all, can we find something that is truly present. But such a "knife-edge" instant cannot be long or short; it has no duration.'[53] The result of this, for Matthews, is that 'there is no such thing as time.'[54] If time does not exist, what, then, is it? An invention of humanity.

In James O'Donnell's analysis of Augustine's relationship to time, he suggests that it is at the level of temporality that we can identify an inherent separation between the *creature* and the *creator*. Time, O'Donnell suggests, is 'a category for describing the apparent transience and impermanence of reality.'[55] It is this 'framework of their own invention'[56] which separates the creature's experience from that of their creator. The creator, situated outside of created things is also, therefore, situated outside time. 'God as creator sees all things simultaneously in a single vision, perceiving process and change but, freed of experiencing those things in temporal succession, he does not experience time.'[57] We can here recall Descartes's analysis of the human mind having a 'successiveness' (CSMK 355) which is distinctly removed from the atemporal continuous and instantaneous mind of God. Augustine, on similar lines, uses this concept to conclude that time is a construction of created being. Thus, outside created being, time does not exist.

For Augustine the past and the future do not actually "exist" as such. Therefore, he proposes a new terminology with which to conceive the parts of time:

> What is by now evident and clear is that neither future nor past exists, and it is inexact language to speak of three times—past, present, and future. Perhaps it would be exact to say: there are three times, a present of things past, a present of things present, a present of things to come … The present considering the past is the memory [*memoria*], the present considering the present is immediate awareness [*contuitus*], the present considering the future is expectation [*expectatio*]. (*Conf.* XI. xx. 26)

The language used by Augustine to classify time: *memory*, *awareness* and *expectation*, is language that indicates activity of the mind. And it is in memory of the past, awareness of the present, and expectation of the future, that time can be measured. 'So it is in you, my mind, that I measure periods of time' (*Conf.* XI. xxvii. 36). Incidentally but significantly in this

[52] Matthews, *Augustine*, p. 81.
[53] Matthews, *Augustine*, p. 81.
[54] Matthews, *Augustine*, p. 81.
[55] James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985), p. 116.
[56] O'Donnell, *Augustine*, p. 116.
[57] O'Donnell, *Augustine*, pp. 115–116.

passage: for this brief moment rather than speaking to God Augustine is here addressing his own mind.

Augustine resides in a present that is constantly slipping into the past, always anticipating a future that will not exist until it becomes the present (for a brief moment). There is an indication here of a mind in chaos, constantly looking forwards and backwards, swelling and receding. Augustine considers through this that 'time is simply a distension [*distentionem*]' of the mind (*Conf.* XI. xxvi. 33). This distension is illustrated in a significant passage towards the end of Book XI. Augustine also establishes the relationship between the individual parts of time and the broader concept of time across lifespans:

> Suppose I am about to recite a psalm which I know. Before I begin, my expectation is directed towards the whole. But when I have begun, the verses from it which I take into the past become the object of my memory. The life of this act of mine is stretched two ways, into my memory because of the words I have already said and into my expectation because of those which I am about to say. But my attention is on what is present: by that the future is transferred to become the past. As the action advances further and further, the shorter the expectation and the longer the memory, until all expectation is consumed, the entire action is finished, and it has passed into the memory. What occurs in the psalm as a whole occurs in its particular pieces and its individual syllables. The same is true of a longer action in which perhaps that psalm is a part. It is also valid of the entire life of an individual person, where all actions are parts of a whole, and of the total history of 'the sons of men' (Ps. 30:20) where all human lives are but parts [*cuius partes sunt omnes vitae hominum*]. (*Conf.* XI. xviii. 37)

The human mind is distended, constantly shifting between anticipation, memory, and attention. However, in the process of recitation, these divided parts are brought together and unified into a single enunciating activity.

Two points of discussion can be drawn from Augustine's example of reciting a psalm. The first point to take away is the manner in which Augustine universalises his discussion from a psalm and its individual syllables, to the lifespan of an individual, to the parts of time in the life of mankind. His example does not only seek to articulate the way time is measured in the mind, but more broadly, seeks to express the way our lives through time are constantly shifting between past, present and future. His universalisation of this concept seeks to demonstrate the chaos of man throughout history, distended in time. O'Connell suggests that 'Augustine's situation is that of all men. And that situation is "fallen."'[58] Man is fallen and subject to the chaos of time, and thus needs to be rescued. I will come back to this concept, since the "rescue" comes in the form of conversion. The second crucial point to take away

[58] Robert J. O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Confessions: The Odyssey of Soul* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 143.

from Augustine's discussion of reciting a psalm is the way Augustine demonstrates how memory is used to gather the disassembled parts of a psalm into an ordered recitation. Above I cited Charles Taylor's consideration of Augustine's concept of *cogitatio* (thought) as a process of gathering; of bringing together disparate parts into a whole. I would like to suggest that there is a similar process at work in Augustine's illustration here: that memory is playing a crucial role in "assembling" the parts of time, in the same way as the individual dispersed actions of men are gathered into a whole lifespan and assembled in some way. This way, as will be illustrated below, is through the transformation of a life through conversion; or more specifically, through the story of conversion.

Paul Ricoeur, in an extensive analysis of Book XI of the *Confessions*, has suggested that the *distentio* indicates 'the way in which the soul, deprived of the stillness of the eternal present, is torn asunder.'[59] The *distentio* merges with Augustine's sinful life: 'I see now that my life has been wasted in distractions [*ecce distentio est vita mea*]' (*Conf.* XI. xxix. 39).[60] Here the *distentio* of time collides with the *distentio* of Augustine's distracted wanderings. Distension of life is a symptom of the distension of time. Augustine needs to be rescued from the chaos of time and distraction. This rescue will come in the form of conversion. Returning to O'Connell's reading, temporality leaves us in a state of continuous "non-being". 'Only in the Eternal God are all "befores" and "afters" so perfectly "in-gathered," present in His "now" … Only of a God so perfectly "One" can it be said He truly "IS."'[61] Conversion will be crucial to Augustine's escape from the chaos of the distension of time. It will also be crucial for Descartes. At the close of the previous chapter I explored the Meditator's fragile relationship with time. Below I will suggest the crucial role that the conversion narrative plays in rescuing the Meditator from his own *distentio*. But first, I will explore in more detail the way conversion is used in Augustine, and put forward my argument that conversion itself is an act of narrative.

Conversion, which theologian V. Bailey Gillespie defines as 'an alternation, a turning around,'[62] is the central theme of the *Confessions*. Throughout the autobiographical account Augustine is searching for meaning, and the climax of the text is a mystical moment in a garden in Milan, where he experiences his conversion. Edwin Starbuck, a scholar of the psychology of religion from the early 20th century, has an understanding of conversion which,

[59] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, 3 vols. (1; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984–1988), p. 27. Hereafter cited as 'TN' by volume and page number.
[60] Here I quote Ricoeur's translation. See TN I 27.
[61] O'Connell, *Soundings in St. Augustine's Imagination*, pp. 24–25.
[62] V. Bailey Gillespie, *The Dynamics of Religious Conversion: Identity and Transformation* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1991), p. 19.

as I will show, aligns closely with what is experienced by Augustine in the *Confessions*. For Starbuck, conversion is 'a process of struggling away from sin rather than of striving toward righteousness.'[63] The first point to consider: conversion is a *process*. In Augustine's case, it is not an instantaneous experience. Rather, it is a slow and gradual process over time. Gillian Clark has said that Augustine's conversion 'was not a sudden event. Intellectually and spiritually he moves through several stages of conversion.'[64] To return to the remainder of Starbuck's conception: for Augustine, the process of conversion is certainly a process of *struggling away from sin*. Long after he has come to terms with the major tenets and doctrines of the Christian faith, the final obstacle to overcome is concupiscence. In Book VI Augustine says: 'From this time on, however, I now gave my preference to the Catholic faith' (*Conf.* VI. v. 7). While intellectually aligning himself with the Catholic faith, spiritually and morally he struggles to change his habits, and it is a gradual process over a number of books before he reaches his *moment of conversion*. 'Fettered by the flesh's morbid impulse and lethal sweetness, I dragged my chain, but was afraid to be free of it' (*Conf.* VI. xii. 21). In Book VII he says 'I was astonished to find that already I loved you, not a phantom surrogate for you. But I was not stable in the enjoyment of my God. I was caught up to you by your own beauty and quickly torn away from you by my weight. With a groan I crashed into inferior things' (*Conf.* VII. xvii. 23). In Book VIII: 'Vain trifles and the triviality of the empty-headed, my old loves, held me back. They tugged at the garment of my flesh and whispered: "Are you getting rid of us?"' (*Conf.* VIII. x. 26). A significant amount of space in the narrative is devoted by Augustine to this internal conflict with sin, and to the gradual purging that is necessary before he can fully consider himself reborn in the moment of his decisive conversion in a garden in Milan.

As well as being a gradual process through time, conversion in Augustine's *Confessions* acts as a pivot: a decisive point of distinction between the chaotic fragility within time, and the contrasting stability of the atemporal eternal God. At one point in the text, Augustine says, (speaking to God) 'I am scattered in times whose order I do not understand. The storms of incoherent events tear to pieces my thoughts, the inmost entrails of my soul, until that day when, purified and molten by the fire of your love, I flow together and merge into you' (*Conf.* XI. xxiv. 39). For Augustine, resting in God enables him to go beyond time, to escape from the disarray and incoherence of the distension of time by melting into the eternal a-temporality of the divine. Conversion produces a change in the temporal construct. The

[63] Edwin Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion* (2nd edn.; London: Walter Scott, 1901), p. 64.
[64] Gillian Clark, *Augustine: The Confessions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 69.

divided parts that make up "Augustine" pre-conversion are scattered and disparate. Upon conversion, these disparate parts are able to transcend time to be with the creator who is beyond time. Salvation is, in this sense, being rescued from time (*Conf.* XI. xxx. 40).

Augustine's relationship with time is fragile, requiring that he be rescued. To recall my discussion in Chapter 2, the Meditator likewise has a fragile relationship to time in the early days of meditation. In Lloyd's reading, already quoted above, the *Meditations* is 'suffused with a sense of the tenuousness of the self's capacity either to integrate itself into the world or to maintain a secure relationship with its past.'[65] This instability echoes Augustine's *distentio*. The Cogito of the *Meditations* is a *turning away* from the instability that results from the fault [*culpa*] of unfounded beliefs. This turning around from uncertainty towards certainty is, in a sense, a form of intellectual conversion.[66] But much like Augustine the intellectual conversion is only the first step on the way to spiritual conversion. As Paul Ricoeur has observed, the discovery of God has a profound effect on the Meditator's concept of self, which had up to that point been based entirely in the Cogito. Upon discovering God, Ricoeur says of the narrator of the text, 'the idea of myself appears profoundly transformed.'[67] This susceptibility to change, to recall the argument from my first chapter, is one of the fundamental aspects of the experiential "I". The thetic "I" of a syllogism exists purely as a locus for a set of commitments. The experiential "I", by contrast, is a locus of personality and change. We can read Ricoeur's word *transformation* here as contiguous with another type of change, which is conversion. As Stephen Gaukroger says, 'The *Meditationes* read like an account of a spiritual journey in which the truth is only to be discovered by a purging, followed by a kind of rebirth.'[68] This concept can plausibly be used to describe conversion, which to reiterate, Starbuck conceives as 'a process of struggling away from sin rather than of striving toward righteousness.'[69] I will now trace how the Meditator struggles with his previous beliefs throughout his days of meditation, leading to the eventual transformation that comes first fleetingly through the Cogito, and finally the non-endurance doctrine.

In the First Meditation, the catalyst for the entire exercise is the Meditator acknowledging that he is at fault '*essem in culpa*' (AT VII 17). By the end of that first day of meditation he is apprehensive, because, as he says: 'My habitual opinions keep coming back,

[65] Lloyd, *Being in Time*, p. 46.
[66] Susan Bordo has highlighted how Descartes's project is about attaining a sort of 'purity' of thought, which can in turn lead to transcendence. See Susan Bordo, *The Flight to Objectivity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), pp. 75–95.
[67] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 9.
[68] Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 336.
[69] Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion*, p. 64.

and despite my wishes, they capture my belief, which is as it were bound over to them as a result of long occupation' (CSM II 15). Ultimately, he gives in, and 'a kind of laziness brings me back to my normal life … I happily slide back into my old opinions and dread being shaken out of them' (CSM II 15). Though he has set himself upon this epistemological journey, he cannot resist his former beliefs. He continues to grapple with his errors and his doubts until finally in the Cogito, he reaches a moment of certainty that will form the basis of his life from that point onwards. Nonetheless, even at the end of the Second Meditation, when he has had his moment of conversion, he is still concerned with the specter of 'the habit of holding on to old opinions,' which he knows 'cannot be set aside so quickly' (CSM II 23). Although the Cogito provides a foundational, Archimedian point that brings about the Meditator's intellectual conversion, his conversion proper is not complete until he can find the assurance that comes from his discovery of the 'metaphysical sustainer' and author of his existence in the Third Meditation, through the non-endurance doctrine. In the Third Meditation, Descartes's encounter with God enables him to realise that there is a cause which preserves him through time. Consequently, by the start of the Fourth Meditation he is able to confidently proclaim that he now has 'no difficulty' (CSM II 37) in turning his mind away from things outside of himself. There are echoes of Augustine even here. Lloyd suggests that 'Augustine presents the process by which he gradually learns to turn away from the physical world to the world of consciousness as the story of his religious conversion. His turning away from the physical world to contemplate himself begins the process of turning towards God.'[70] Similarly, Descartes's process of conversion begins when he learns to turn away from the physical, material world, to the world of consciousness. Then it is from a 'contemplation of the true God' that Descartes is willing to forge ahead towards 'knowledge of other things' (CSM II 37). The Fourth Meditation opens: 'During these past few days I have accustomed myself to leading my mind away from the senses; and I have taken careful note of the fact that there is very little about corporeal things that is truly perceived, whereas much more is known about the human mind, and still more about God' (CSM II 37). In the Fourth Meditation, it is the subject of error that is under consideration. The conversion is gradual, and the Meditator continually struggles away from *error* towards *righteousness* over the six days of meditation.

In *Demons, Dreamers, & Madmen*, Harry Frankfurt fleetingly considered the *Meditations* as a conversion text. Frankfurt has said: 'The skeptical excursion of the First Meditation … is intended to render the philosophical novice to whom Descartes addresses

[70] Lloyd, *Being in Time*, p. 37.

himself, and in whose behalf he speaks, susceptible to an intellectual conversion—a conversion from reliance on the senses to appreciation of the essential role of reason in the acquisition of knowledge.'[71] He elsewhere in this same text gives a similar reading, suggesting that: 'Descartes's aim is to guide the reader to intellectual salvation by recounting his own discovery of reason and his escape thereby from the benighted reliance on his senses, which had formerly entrapped him in uncertainty and error.'[72] I will take two crucial points from Frankfurt here. Firstly: the concept of 'intellectual salvation'. I have spoken of conversion as it appears in Augustine and Descartes, but it must be noted that Descartes attempts to separate his text from the type of conversion found in Augustine. In the Synopsis to the *Meditations* Descartes writes: 'here it should be noted in passing that I do not deal at all with sin [*peccato*], i.e. the error [*errore*] which is committed in pursuing good and evil, but only with the error that occurs in distinguishing truth from falsehood' (CSM II 11; AT VII 15). This caveat was an addition made after reading Arnauld's objections (The Fourth Set of Objections), which as indicated above, were in part devoted to uncovering passages in which Descartes's text was in any ways "Augustinian".[73] Descartes's caveat from his Synopsis perhaps alludes towards the intentional stylistic function of the text: that Descartes uses the themes of sin and salvation as a kind of metaphor for his discussion of error. This is an indication of not only a stylistic choice, but also of how Descartes treads cautiously in his philosophical project. Descartes adopts the *concept* of conversion, turning from the darkness of error towards the light of truth. In any case Paul Valery suggests, 'these intellectual upheavals must not be confused with conversions in the realm of faith, so closely resembling them in their preliminary torments and in the sudden assertion of the "new man."'[74] It is a story of conversion, even if the errors that Descartes considers are significantly different to the sins considered by Augustine.

And yet, it is worth highlighting that elsewhere Descartes seems to conflate sin and error—or at least to consider the source of both concepts to be synonymous. On this point, consider the discussion in the Fourth Meditation in which the Meditator considers his faculty of judgement. He concludes that the source of his capacity for error stems from the fact that:

> 'the scope of the will is wider than that of the intellect; but instead of restricting it within the same limits, I extend its use to matters which I do not understand. Since the will is

[71] Frankfurt, *Demons, Dreamers, and Madmen*, p. 14.
[72] Frankfurt, *Demons, Dreamers, and Madmen*, p. 4.
[73] See Descartes's letter to Mersenne, dated 18 March 1641, in which he asks Mersenne to add this caveat to the *Meditations* (CSMK 175).
[74] Paul Valery, *The Living Thoughts of Descartes* (London: Cassell, 1948), p. 6.

> indifferent in such cases. It easily turns aside from what is true and good, and this is the source of my error [*fallor*] and sin [*pecco*]' (CSM II 40–41; AT VII 58).

I will not try to solve the puzzle of whether Descartes was dealing with sin, or merely using the concept of sin as a metaphor for his discussion of error. But in any case, I suggest that this highlights once more Descartes's intentions to present his philosophy in a stylistically novel way. He has drawn on features and concepts that are generally found in texts from other genres; texts written for different purposes than the purposes of traditional philosophical treatises on epistemology and metaphysics.

I will turn now to Frankfurt's concept of Descartes aiming to *guide the reader*, and once more consider it alongside Augustine's *Confessions*. Augustine's text is a *narrative of experience* that seeks to provide a pathway for those reading his text. As Frances Young has suggested in relation to the *Confessions*, Augustine becomes an exemplar with which his readers can identify. *His* experience of searching, of sin, of conversion and salvation will become *theirs*. It is crucial to acknowledge that Descartes's text is also not simply a narrative account of conversion for the interest of the reader. Descartes fully intends the reader to be transformed by their encounter with his text. Descartes, like Augustine before him, provides the Meditator's journey as an exemplar with which the reader can identify, as a path that the reader must inevitably follow in order to attain their own moment of conversion. In the next chapter, the importance of the *Meditations* as a mechanism for the conversion of the reader (who as I have suggested, is led to occupy the place of the "I" in the text) will be brought to the fore.

As I have outlined, Descartes purges himself of fault through his *Meditations*, and emerges as a reborn, converted philosopher, able to find wisdom *through* God. It is the Meditator's attempts to purge himself of his faults that leads him towards conversion, and a true discovery—and concretisation—of self. This is much like the experience of his predecessor Augustine, for whom the search for wisdom is a gradual and continual process of overcoming sin and error. Conversion in neither case is instantaneous, but is a gradual process through time. Conversion is also, Linda Anderson suggests, a process of narrative. 'The *Confessions* conflate Christian and narrative imperatives: Augustine's conversion also has to be read as a conversion, in narrative terms, to a point of view from which the future, now become the past, can be seen as part of the overall design.'[75] This concept will be further unpacked when I turn to the theme of narrative in the *Confessions*. But before turning to

[75] Linda Anderson, *Autobiography* (2nd edn.; Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 20.

narrative in the *Confessions*, I will consider how conversion can be seen as an act of narrative itself.

I have discussed the importance of a *conversio*, or 'turning around', for the narrators of both the *Confessions* and the *Meditations*. In Erich Auerbach's seminal work *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, the idea of a 'turning around' is central in the development of the literary identity of Christianity. In a discussion of Peter's denial of Christ, Auerbach speaks of the 'pendulation' going on within Peter. Having left his trade as a fisherman to follow Christ, he later, at the time of Christ's arrest, denies any knowledge of him for fear of also being arrested. Ultimately, Peter will beg forgiveness for this denial. Auerbach describes Peter's inner life as being composed like a pendulum frequently swinging from one direction to the other.[76] Later in his discussion, Auerbach turns to a scene in Book VI of Augustine's *Confessions*, in which a close friend of Augustine's, Alpius (who was the sole witness to Augustine's eventual conversion experience in the Milan garden), is taken into an amphitheater to witness a gladiator match. Initially, he tries to resist, but is gradually overcome by the screaming crowd and his own curiosity. 'As soon as he saw the blood, he at once drank in savagery and did not turn away. His eyes were riveted. He imbibed madness. Without any awareness of what was happening to him, he found delight in the murderous contest and was inebriated by bloodthirsty pleasure' (*Conf.* VI. viii. 13). From this point on, Alpius is addicted to the thrill of the bloody spectacle, returning to the amphitheater and bringing others along as well. As Auerbach remarks, 'not only has he been seduced, he turns seducer. What he has despised, he now loves.'[77] Auerbach relates this back to the discussion of Peter. 'The about-face is complete. And such an about-face from one extreme to the very opposite is also characteristically Christian. Like Peter in the denial scene (and inversely Paul on his way to Damascus), he falls the more deeply the higher he stood before. And, like Peter, he will rise again.'[78] Auerbach later refers to this concept as 'the dramatization of an inner event, an inner about-face.'[79] He sees 'pendulation', the dramatic reversal or turning around, as a crucial feature of the Christian literary tradition. It can be further exemplified through an extract from the *Confessions*, which I have quoted above, but will quote again here for emphasis: 'I was not stable in the enjoyment of my God. I was caught up to you by your own beauty and quickly torn away from you by my weight. With a groan I crashed into inferior

[76] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 42.
[77] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 69.
[78] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 69.
[79] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 71.

things' (*Conf.* VII. xvii. 23). 'Pendulation' is an essential part of the narrative process; it drives the development of character and ensures we can read characters as flesh and blood and bone, rather than static and lifeless. The gradual struggle away from sin for Augustine, and error for the Meditator, are suggestive of this same process of pendulation, or in other words, of conversion.

I will relate this idea of pendulation to the conceptions of two influential narrative theorists. I will first turn to Tzvetan Todorov, who coined the term 'narratology' in 1969.[80] In his essay 'Structural Analysis in Narrative', Todorov says: 'the minimal complete plot can be seen as the shift from one equilibrium to another.'[81] This shift in equilibrium is the basis of narrative for Todorov, involving a 'period of imbalance' in which the situation in a narrative at first deteriorates and finally improves. Claude Bremond has proposed a similar conception. Bremond suggests that 'all narrative consists of a discourse which integrates a sequence of events of human interest into the unity of a single plot.'[82] These sequences of events will fall into one of two categories: amelioration and degradation. The unity of a narrative will be brought about through the continual alternation between amelioration and degradation, which constitutes the narrative cycle.

This continual turning around, shifting from a period of lowness to improvement, has strong links to Auerbach's conception. Auerbach's *pendulation*, Todorov's *shifts in equilibrium* and Bremond's narrative cycle of *amelioration and degradation* are all suggestive of the crucial role of change and transformation, or an *act of conversion* in narrative. In the case of Augustine and Descartes, this 'inner about-face' can also be identified through their respective processes of conversion. They go through shifts in equilibrium, from high to low, to high again, through amelioration and degradation, moving in one direction and then another. The events in the lifespan of the Meditator and of Augustine, after Auerbach, Todorov, and Bremond, form a narrative cycle through processes of conversion. The *Confessions* of Augustine and the *Meditations* of Descartes act in this sense as vehicles for conversion, through narrative.

I have considered the nature of time and conversion, and the crucial role that narrative plays in both; and now turn to my final concept for discussion, which is narrative itself. I have claimed that conversion is a process over time, and furthermore that conversion itself is an act

[80] Tzvetan Todorov, *Grammaire du Décaméron* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969), p. 10.
[81] Tzvetan Todorov, 'Structural Analysis of Narrative', trans. Arnold Weinstein, *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 3/1 (1969), p. 74.
[82] Claude Bremond, 'The Logic of Narrative Possibilities', trans. Elaine D. Cancalon, *New Literary History*, 11/3 (1980), p. 390.

of narrative. I will now consider how narration is an act of creation which brings about unity and cohesion in the narrator. I argue that through the act of narration, Descartes can imitate the activity of the author of his existence. As highlighted above, there has been much scholarly debate over how to reconcile the autobiographical and exegetical books of the *Confessions*. For Paul Ricoeur, the discussion of time in Book XI cannot be reconciled with the life that is narrated in the first nine books of the *Confessions*, and thus Augustine's conception of time cannot be used to form the basis of his conception of narrative. This is because Augustine's account of time as *distentio* produces a discordance. Augustine's discordant time cannot be related to narrative because it fails to take account of the inherent unity that emplotment produces within a narrative text.

Ricoeur turns to Aristotle to offset the *distentio* of Augustine, which has failed to offer him an adequate means of understanding narrative. 'Augustine groaned under the existential burden of discordance. Aristotle discerns in the poetic act par excellence—the composing of the tragic poem—the triumph of concordance over discordance.'[83] Aristotle's *Poetics* produces concordance because it offers a model for organising events into a logical sequence, namely: emplotment. Ricoeur's understanding of emplotment is thus: 'The kind of universality that a plot calls for derives from its ordering, which brings about its completeness and its wholeness.'[84] Emplotment seeks to reorient a series of disordered events into an ordered *plot*. 'In this respect, we can say of the operation of emplotment both that it reflects the Augustinian paradox of time and that it resolves it, not in a speculative but rather in a poetic mode.'[85] Ricoeur thus utilises Aristotelian emplotment to shore up his concept of narrative, because (as Pranger phrases it), Augustine's speculations on time 'fail in producing the temporality of narrative.'[86] The *distentio* of time cannot be reconciled with a concordant, causal narrative. It is worth noting that Ricoeur is searching for a theory of narrative, and Augustine's conception of time does not itself enable Ricoeur to produce one. This is a point which is important for Ricoeur's project, though of minor concern here. What is useful in Ricoeur's analysis for my purpose is that narrative (in the form of Aristotle's *emplotment*) is what rescues Augustine from the distension of time.

[83] TN I 31.
[84] TN I 41.
[85] TN I 66.
[86] M.B. Pranger, 'Time and Narrative in Augustine's *Confessions*', *The Journal of Religion*, 81/3 (2001), p. 389. I quote Pranger but it must be made clear that the quote is in danger of misrepresenting his position. Pranger is merely relaying Ricoeur's conclusion. For what it is worth, Pranger finds it entirely possible to reconcile time and narrative within Augustine's text itself. 'We do not need an external poetics at all that would bridge the gap between Augustinian time and narrative. Augustine's own ideas of time suffice to lend the narrative the width it needs to survive as narrative' (p. 389).

Genevieve Lloyd's reading of Book XI of the *Confessions* further suggests that time and narrative play central roles in bringing about the unity of the *Confessions* as a philosophical work and as autobiography. For Lloyd, 'The philosophical content of the work is interwoven with its narrative form.'[87] The discursive considerations on God, time and eternity 'allow a clearer articulation of the experiential and emotional dimensions of being in time.'[88] I have highlighted, in my discussion of Fludernik, the importance of the *experience of time* in my reading; this significant connection is indicated here by Lloyd. As protagonist in his own life-story, Lloyd suggests, Augustine is not able to come to terms with the events of his life, since events in the past are continually reshaped and reconsidered in the light of new experiences.[89] But it is through *narration* that Augustine can come to grips with the chaos of the parts of his life. 'In the position of the narrator … he presents himself as seeing each event in a fixed relation to a past which has achieved its final form. From this god-like perspective, the self has a completeness and stability which the protagonist cannot attain … His narrated life takes on a unity, a wholeness.'[90] We can see Augustine's distinction between the limitations of a temporally bound individual trapped within the sequences of life, and the unity and wholeness that the creator possesses, in Book Four of the *Confessions*:

> All that you experience through [the flesh] is only partial; you are ignorant of the whole to which the parts belong. Yet they delight you. But if your physical perception were capable of comprehending the whole and had not, for your punishment, been justly restrained to a part of the universe, you would wish everything at present in being to pass away, so that the totality of things could provide you with greater pleasure … There would be more delight in all the elements than in individual pieces if only one had the capacity to perceive all of them. But far superior to these things is he who made all things, and he is our God. (*Conf*. IV. xi. 17)

Like the characters in the novel *The Loved One*, considered in the previous chapter, who are sustained across pages of text by the preserving power of the author and the reader, Augustine is able to make sense of his life in the form of narrative, by himself taking on that divine capacity for ordering and unity. Once again, we can recall Descartes's distinction between the successiveness of humanity, and the unity and atemporality of God. Augustine (and as I will propose, Descartes), is able to draw on something of the *authority of the creator* by repositioning and repurposing his disordered life into a unified narrative. It is through the autobiographical form that past, present, and future can be unified and 'held together.'[91] The

[87] Lloyd, *Being in Time*, p. 15.
[88] Lloyd, *Being in Time*, pp. 41–42.
[89] Lloyd, *Being in Time*, p. 15.
[90] Lloyd, *Being in Time*, p. 15.
[91] Lloyd, *Being in Time*, p. 41.

literary and narrative form of the work allow for a fuller exposition on the subject of time. Lloyd suggests:

> The idea of eternity plays not only a religious role in Augustine's thought on time but also a literary one. By projecting a construct of an alternate mode of presence, Augustine is able to sharpen his articulation of the temporal presence which characterizes human consciousness. Reflection on the idea of eternity serves to focus and intensify the experience of incompleteness and fragmentation that goes with being in time.[92]

Lloyd's reading demonstrates how, through the act of narration, Augustine is able to look back on the disparate and disordered parts of time that make up his early life and order them with *authority*, to bring about a text that contains unity and wholeness. I argue that it is this kind of unity which the *Meditations* possess. It is not only a Gueroult-like unity of the order of reasons: or the unity of the atemporal thetic "I" making claims in a specious present. It is the unity of a narrated life. Perhaps most importantly, narrative is one of the most salient ways in which the text manages to be both a unity of the order of reasons, and of a narrated life.

Ricoeur and Lloyd in the above discussion each highlight the crucial role played by narrative in constructing a sense of self. By applying Aristotle's emplotment to Augustine's conception of time, Ricoeur is able to see the 'inestimable value of narrative for putting our temporal experience into order.'[93] Bernard Williams has also explored this concept, when he suggested that 'narrative provides not merely an account of the process of living: it also provides the basis of *the unity of human life*.'[94] This is a concept that Williams perhaps overlooked in his reading of the *Meditations* by failing to take full account of the text's narrative aspects. Augustine and the Meditator are able to unify the disparate events of their life through narrative. Although they each have fragile relationships with time, they are rescued from the distention of time by the authors of their existence, who sustain them from one event to the next. They can then take part in this unifying process by themselves becoming the authors that unify the events of their life through narrative.

In my discussion of the non-endurance doctrine in the previous chapter I considered the way the distinct parts of a lifespan can be seen to relate to each other. That discussion is relevant to my present discussion of narrative as the means of providing unity to human life, as well as to modern considerations of the construction of personal identity. A vital scholar in

[92] Lloyd, *Being in Time*, p. 39.
[93] Paul Ricoeur, 'Life in Quest of Narrative', in David Wood (ed.), *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 31
[94] Bernard Williams, 'Life as Narrative', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 17/2 (2007), p. 305, *emphasis in text*.

this space is Marya Schechtman.[95] Schechtman has proposed what she terms a 'narrative self-constitution view.'[96] As she explains, individuals, in coming to an understanding of themselves as persons, consider themselves as 'persisting subjects.'[97] That is, as individuals who endure through time across the span of their own lives. 'An individual constitutes herself as a person by coming to organize her experience in a narrative self-conception.'[98] This popular understanding of the narrated life has a considerable history of scholarship behind it. For instance, Catriona Mackenzie suggests that 'to be a person is to constitute oneself as a temporally extended persisting subject by organizing one's remembered past, experiences, emotions, character traits, and so on, into a narrative self-conception.'[99] Charles Taylor, similarly, in his *Sources of the Self* proposes that it is a 'basic condition of making sense of ourselves, that we grasp our lives in a *narrative*.'[100] But this is not simply a matter of assembling oneself in hindsight. Taylor goes on to suggest that 'I project my life forward … I project a future story.'[101] Taylor here draws on Alasdair MacIntyre's conception of 'human life as a whole' being a 'narrated or to-be-narrated quest.'[102] We do not only look back on our lives and organise it in the manner of a narrative, but we organise our futures in narrative form as well.[103] Although as we have seen in this chapter, narrative provides a useful mechanism for Augustine and Descartes, it is worth highlighting that these lives are also captured at a particular moment within their lifespans. The moments of conversion in the *Confessions* and in the *Meditations* are turning points, and both Augustine and Descartes are—to draw on Taylor's terminology—projecting a future story which runs beyond the boundaries of the texts themselves. They have each moved through points of crisis (or in Bremond's conception, from states of degradation to states of amelioration), and can narrativise their own futures as reborn and righteous individuals with a true sense of self. To

[95] For a more extensive engagement with Schechtman's conception of personal identity see Kim Atkins, *Narrative Identity and Moral Identity: A Practical Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 57–64.
[96] See Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves*, pp. 94–135. For a recent critique of Schechtman's position see Andrew Lane, 'The Narrative Self-Constitution View: Why Marya Schechtman Cannot Require it for Personhood', *Macalester Journal of Philosophy*, 20/1 (2011), pp. 100–115.
[97] Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves*, p. 94.
[98] Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves*, p. 134.
[99] Catriona Mackenzie, 'Personal Identity, Narrative Integration, and Embodiment', in Sue Campbell, Letitia Meynell, & Susan Sherwin (eds.), *Embodiment and Agency* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), p. 119.
[100] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 47, *emphasis in text*.
[101] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 48.
[102] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (2nd edn.; London: Duckworth, 1985), p. 219.
[103] Galen Strawson has argued fervently against the views of MacIntyre, Taylor and Schechtman. Strawson sees this perspective of life as essentially narrativised as being erroneous. He considers that it is damaging to hold these perspectives as being correct, since these views can 'hinder human self-understanding, close down important avenues of thought, impoverish our grasp of ethical possibilities, needlessly and wrongly distress those who do not fit their model, and are potentially destructive in psychotherapeutic contexts.' See Galen Strawson, 'Against Narrativity', *Ratio*, 17/4 (2004), pp. 428–452.

underline a crucial point, it is the narrative act of conversion which enables this process to occur.

The futures of both Augustine and Descartes involve engagement with a community of believers. In MacIntyre's conception, the idea of the narrated life is not exclusively a matter of self-understanding, since 'we are never more (and sometimes less) than the co-authors of our own lives.'[104] Our lives are necessarily intertwined in the lives of others. 'We enter upon a stage which we did not design and we find ourselves part of an action that was not of our making. Each of us being a main character in his own drama plays subordinate parts in the dramas of others.'[105] This is evident in both Augustine and Descartes. Henry Chadwick, in his introduction to his translation of the *Confessions*, suggests that 'Book IX is a turning point in the *Confessions*. With Book X Augustine is no longer speaking about the past but explicitly about his state of mind in the present as a bishop ministering the word and sacraments to his people.'[106] These books are Augustine's means of engaging with his community in defence of the faith against the heresy of the Manichees. We see a similar community engagement at work in the *Meditations*. Through narrativising the *Meditations*, Descartes (the author) can present the Meditator as the narrator of his own life story; but the "I" which is often seen as solitary and alone does not remain so. As he advances towards a stable sense of himself, the narrative gives way to a dialogue in the form of the *Objections and Replies* (which, it must be stressed, are not narrated by the Meditator). As Rorty points out, 'examining the Objections and Replies … It is not an isolated meditator's reflective analytic and foundational architechtonic but the published correspondence of a group of debaters animated by mutual respect.'[107] The *Meditations* presents 'a world defined as a community of philosophers and scholars.'[108] In MacIntyre's terms, the Meditator becomes a supporting character in the lives of his interlocutors, just as they play the role of supporting characters within the *Meditations*.

I will draw one final point from MacIntyre in relation to my thesis. MacIntyre considers that there is 'no way of *founding* my identity – or lack of it – on the psychological continuity or discontinuity of the self. The self inhabits a character whose unity is given as the unity of a character.'[109] In my second chapter I cited discussion around the question of whether the Cartesian lifespan subsists in the continuity or discontinuity of self; concluding that the unity

[104] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 213. For an engaging commentary on MacIntyre's concept of us being co-authors of our own lives see David Carr, *Time, Narrative, and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 83–86.
[105] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 213.
[106] Henry Chadwick, 'Introduction', in Henry Chadwick (trans. & ed.), *Saint Augustine: Confessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. xxv.
[107] Rorty, 'The Structure of Descartes' *Meditations'*, p. 19.
[108] Rorty, 'The Structure of Descartes' *Meditations'*, p. 19.
[109] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 217, *emphasis in text*.

of a lifespan (that is to say, of the fictional lifespan of the Meditator) is instead brought about through the act of creation imparted on characters by their authors, and the acts of preservation imparted by readers. The dramatic underpinnings of the *Meditations*— aspects of character, style, and temporality—are integrated into the arguments of the text. We thus find in the Meditator a subject whose unity as a person does not hinge on a temporal continuity or discontinuity. My finding, through the lens of MacIntyre's work, stands apart from most scholarship on the non-endurance doctrine which to recall discusses the non-endurance doctrine precisely in these terms: for what it reveals about the continuity or discontinuity of time. Rather, the unity of the Meditator's identity hinges upon his unity as a character, narrating his own life story. This, in turn, is what gives the *Meditations* a unity as a whole.

To close this chapter I will turn once again to Paul Ricoeur, who will help to draw this discussion into a characterisation of the *Meditations* as a text calibrated to engage a reader at the level of experience. Ricoeur will serve as a useful bridge between my present discussion of the narrated life and the next chapter's focus on the reader. In 'Life in Quest of Narrative' Ricoeur considers the distinctions between life and narrative. He initially suggests that the field of narratology has failed to bridge this divide adequately. For Ricoeur, narratology 'appears to distance narrative *from lived experience* and to confine it to the region of fiction.'[110] In attempting to highlight the demarcation he is seeking to bridge, Ricoeur points out that 'stories are recounted and not lived; life is lived and not recounted.'[111] On the other hand, for Ricoeur, Aristotle's conception of emplotment 'constitutes the creative centre of the narrative;'[112] the organising of events which produces an 'intelligible whole' is not just an activity of the author, but also an operation of the reader.[113] When we read, we are becoming active participants in this process of concordance, in part through the 'complex operation' of following a story and continually readjusting our expectations 'until [these expectations coincide] with the conclusion.'[114] The act of reading for Ricoeur allows for the bridging between life and narrative, or in his terms the 'world of the reader' and the 'world of the text.'[115] I will quote in full his explication of how these two worlds interact:

[110] Ricoeur, 'Life in Quest of Narrative', p. 20, *my emphasis*. Incidentally, Ricoeur does not use the term narratology, but instead is considering 'knowledge acquired in the past five decades concerning narrative' (p. 20). He does then go on to specify that he is considering the work of the Russian formalists and French Structuralists, early precursors to the discipline that would become known as narratology.
[111] Ricoeur, 'Life in Quest of Narrative', p. 20. Cf. MacIntyre: 'Stories are lives before they are told – except in the case of fiction.' MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 212.
[112] Ricoeur, 'Life in Quest of Narrative', p. 24.
[113] Ricoeur, 'Life in Quest of Narrative', p. 21.
[114] Ricoeur, 'Life in Quest of Narrative', p. 22.
[115] Ricoeur, 'Life in Quest of Narrative', p. 26.

> To speak of a world of the text is to stress the feature belonging to every literary work of opening before it a horizon of possible experience, a world in which it would be possible to live. A text is not something closed in upon itself, it is the projection of a new universe distinct from that in which we live. To appropriate a work through reading is to unfold the world horizon implicit in it which includes the actions, the characters and the events of the story told. As a result, the reader belongs at once to the work's horizon of experience in imagination and to that of his or her own real action. The horizon of expectation and the horizon of experience continually confront one another and fuse together.[116]

Life interacts with narrative in the merging of these two worlds through the act of reading. In reading we engage with texts on an experiential level (as has already been indicated through my discussion of Fludernik above). As will be seen in my final chapter, readers do not just observe the events in a text but *appropriate* them, particularly when a text is constructed in the dramatic style of Descartes's *Meditations*.

[116] Ricoeur, 'Life in Quest of Narrative', p. 26.

4. Meditations on Meditation and Reading

In continuing to consider the form of the *Meditations* more closely, I will turn to how the meditative form itself sheds light on the temporal and narrative aspects of the text. Jorge Secada has suggested that while the meditative nature of the *Meditations* has been highlighted in commentary, it has not yet been sufficiently explored.[1] In the previous chapter I claimed that a consequence of my reading is that narrative can be seen to enact a process of conversion on the reader. By pointing to these themes in Augustine's *Confessions*, I argued, we are more able to see how time and narrative in the *Meditations* enact this process of conversion. What was of interest in the previous chapter was the way in which these two authors' texts, through being structured as a series of events to form a narrative, act both to demonstrate our causal reliance on the preserving power of the author of their existence, as well as to bring about conversion. In this chapter I will articulate in more detail how the reader is brought into this process. The reader's role, the significance of which has been highlighted by Descartes himself, is crucial to the success of the *Meditations* as a work of narrative, and as a work of philosophy. In this chapter I will advance my claim that narrative is crucial to the success of the *Meditations* by considering the text alongside the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, a text which also uses a narrative form to bring about conversion. While in the previous chapter I was considering conversion as experienced by Augustine in the *Confessions* and by the narrator in the *Meditations*, in this chapter the conversion in question is that of the reader.

In Section 4.1, I provide some scholarly context by way of an overview of how commentators have sought to understand the *Meditations* as a meditational text. I have claimed that the narrative aspects of the *Meditations* have been overlooked or underexplored. In support of this argument, my discussion of scholars such as Amélie Rorty, Bradley Rubidge, Dennis Sepper, and Christia Mercer in this section seeks to highlight how the common approach in scholarship is to test the degree to which Descartes's text is meditational: i.e., whether the *Meditations* can be situated within the genre of devotional meditations. In distinction from these scholars I instead follow Aryeh Kosman in conceiving of Descartes's text as *the story of a person meditating*. It is the *narrative account* of a person undertaking a series of days of meditation. This narrative distinction is what drives my

[1] Secada, 'God and Meditation in Descartes', p. 201.

reading in this chapter. In Section 4.2, then, I turn to the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius, not to demonstrate how the *Meditations* draws on this text, but rather to show ways in which the narrative features of the *Exercises* allow us to better appreciate these same features in the *Meditations*. Though scholars have claimed that the *Spiritual Exercises* was a clear influence on Descartes, my own use of Ignatius's text is not so much to demonstrate influence, but rather to argue, as I did in relation to Augustine, that the *Exercises* helps us to see features in the *Meditations* which may have otherwise been overlooked. In the remainder of the chapter I focus on two themes that emerge from a parallel reading of Ignatius and Descartes: the way the reader is actively drawn into the experience of the text (Section 4.3) and the way the narrative structure seeks to bring about conversion (Section 4.4). I claim that the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Meditations* are both narrative texts that demand the involvement of the reader. And more intensely, demand the superimposition of the reader over the "I" of the text, such that the conversion experienced by the narrator becomes that of the reader.

4.1 Are the Meditations Meditational?

In this section I will consider what commentators have made of the question of the *Meditations* as a meditational text. In order to discuss the extent to which the *Meditations* is, in fact, drawing on the tradition of devotional meditative literature, commentators have sought both to isolate key texts and analyse them with the aim of discovering evidence of influence in method and/or form. I argue that what scholars have overlooked is that the *Meditations* may not be meditational at all; perhaps it is not so much a meditational text, but instead a *narrative* of a person going through a series of days of meditation. This narrative perspective, I have argued throughout this thesis, has been heretofore overlooked. What this discussion does for my argument, then, is point to some useful features which I will consider in greater detail throughout the remainder of the chapter, whilst also reinforcing my argument that the narrative aspects of the text have not been granted significant attention.

I turn first to Amélie Rorty. In her 1983 article 'Experiments in Philosophic Genre', Rorty suggests that the *Meditations* can be situated within the genre of religious meditation.[2]

[2] Rorty, 'Experiments in Philosophic Genre', pp. 545–564.

A key concern of Rorty's analysis is the importance of form and style to the philosopher's ability to intrigue and convince. 'Conviction is often carried by a charismatic, authoritative style: its clarity and condensation, the rhythms of its sentences, and its explosive imagery … often the form of the work assures its legitimation.'[3] Style will inevitably influence how the text should be read. But more significantly in this conception, the personality and power of the author are crucial to the overall success of a philosophical project. This is certainly the case with the *Meditations*, a text written in such a way that it has engaged scholars for centuries. Bradley Rubidge, in an article tracing the influence of the genre of devotional meditations on Descartes, agrees with Rorty that the charismatic style of a work is crucial to the success of a project. However, he stops short of suggesting as Rorty does that the style of the *Meditations* is in any way essential to our understanding of the work as philosophy. Rubidge suggests that Rorty needed to more clearly define her understanding of *genre*, since he thinks Rorty tends to 'speak of genre in an ahistorical way, as if a genre were constituted by a group of texts that resemble each other.'[4] For Rubidge, while Rorty's approach can help to 'reveal certain characteristics' shared in common between texts, it will ultimately reveal nothing about an author's intentions: something that Rubidge believes Rorty has set out to do.[5] In attempting to mitigate these issues Rubidge presents a more detailed analysis of the kind of 'devotional manual' that Descartes is perhaps drawing on. He is seeking through this more detailed reading to more precisely test comparisons between Descartes's text and the wider genre.

Rubidge argues that by calling his text "Meditations" Descartes was harnessing a genre that his readers would have immediately recognised and been very familiar with.[6] Rubidge points out that seventeenth century works of philosophy, 'and especially … works on epistemology and ontology,' were not commonly associated with the term "meditations" and so 'the title of Descartes's book would predictably have made readers associate it with the tradition of devotional exercises.'[7] Rubidge claims that due to the popularity of works such as Saint Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* and Saint Francis of Sales's *Introduction to the Devout Life,* the genre of devotional meditations flourished during this period, and further suggests

[3] Rorty, 'Experiments in Philosophic Genre', p. 546.
[4] Bradley Rubidge, 'Descartes's *Meditations* and Devotional Meditations', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 51/1 (1990), p. 38.
[5] Rubidge, Devotional Meditations', p. 38
[6] On this argument, see also L.J. Beck, *The Metaphysics of Descartes: A Study of the Meditations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), pp. 28–38.
[7] Rubidge, 'Devotional Meditations', p. 44. See also Harry Frankfurt: 'Moral and religious meditations were published before the seventeenth century, but Descartes was the first to use the form in an exclusively metaphysical work.' *Demons, Dreamers, and Madmen*, p. 3.

that Descartes is in some ways tapping into the zeitgeist through appropriating this genre.[8] Rubidge provides a summary and analysis of the key features of the genre of devotional meditations. According to Rubidge, *reflection* was the basic component of the genre. The subject of reflection was usually very specific, frequently drawn from passages of the Bible. The primary purpose of the meditations was to 'encourage pious beliefs and sentiments that conform to Church Doctrine.'[9] Reflection was intended to be 'active' and because of this, these meditations were often called 'exercises'. A meditator will seek to train their soul in order to move more closely towards the divine: an inherently active process. In Section 4.3, below, I will consider the way Ignatius and Descartes make use of a method, or a series of steps, such as is described by Rubidge here, in order to experience a *conversion*: a turning around.

Rubidge highlights a number of points in the *Meditations* that link it to the tradition of devotional meditations. These include Descartes's reference to the need for solitude to undertake the meditations (i.e. First Meditation, CSM II 12), the contemplation of God (i.e. Third Meditation, CSM II 36), and the purging of past 'sins' (i.e. First Meditation, CSM II 12). Rubidge concludes that these features, among others, are not enough to allow us to call the text a work of meditation itself. The *Meditations* utilises features of the genre without itself becoming a work within that genre. He also believes that these links to the meditational genre 'should not alter our reading of the text, for the *Meditations* allude to the tradition without adopting its conventions in a way that makes the text distinctly meditational.'[10] Rubidge argues that Descartes himself provides no indication that he is drawing specifically on this genre of devotional exercises, but that his title intends to subtly alert readers to consider it in that light. While many commentators have attempted to draw connections to particular devotional texts, such as the *Spiritual Exercises*, Rubidge contends that Descartes is instead drawing more generally on the genre of devotional meditation. He also sees a strategic motivation in Descartes's use of the genre. 'By linking his text to such a tradition, Descartes signals his adherence to orthodox positions and advertises his desire to conform to, even to support, some of the Church's fundamental doctrines.'[11]

I take no issue with Rubidge's conclusion that the *Meditations* does not belong within the corpus of meditational texts; and in any case the degree to which the *Meditations* could conceivably be called "meditational" is not the subject of my study. In distinction from

[8] Rubidge, 'Devotional Meditations', pp. 28–33.
[9] Rubidge, 'Devotional Meditations', p. 29.
[10] Rubidge, 'Devotional Meditations', p. 48.
[11] Rubidge, 'Devotional Meditations', p. 48.

Rubidge, though, I contend that the stylistic 'choice' on the part of Descartes will inevitably alter our reading of the text. Indeed, my entire thesis concerns the extent to which Descartes's stylistic intentions transform our reading of the text. I also think that Rubidge is overly reductive in diminishing Descartes's method to a mere political maneuver. The non-endurance doctrine places a great deal of emphasis on the way the *Meditations* concerns the narrator's ultimate reliance on a higher power. On this point, Dennis Sepper, in his essay 'The Texture of Thought', argues that it is critical to understand that Descartes's aim in the *Meditations* is to bring one's will into conformity with God. It is an understanding of this that guides Sepper's reading, as it allows him to 'establish not an accidental but an essential relationship to the practice of devotion.'[12] Consequently, his essay seeks to view the meditations within the *Meditations* not simply as aspects of a genre, but 'first and foremost as spiritual praxis.'[13] If the text is indeed the spiritual praxis of a devout believer, then a political ploy becomes unnecessary. Sepper concedes to Rubidge that Descartes's debt to devotional exercises is general, rather than being tied to particular texts. However he believes that Rubidge provides an inadequate historical account of devotional meditation.[14] I will say more on Sepper's own historical account in Section 4.3, below. I do not here seek to arbitrate between Rubidge's and Sepper's positions. I argue that the most generous reading of Descartes would grant him both positions. Against Rubidge, I suggest that Descartes is doing *far more* than just being political, and dressing up his work as a "devotional" text. I believe the evidence in favour of Descartes's fealty to his faith outweigh the evidence in the opposite direction. But, nor do I think that the political aspect is beyond Descartes. It is well known that he withheld publication of *Le Monde* upon Galileo's condemnation, so he was certainly aware of the politics that surrounded any "new" or "revolutionary" ideas and discoveries in his day.[15] Though I fall somewhere between Rubidge and Sepper, this is not an evasion. Rather, I think Descartes deserves credit for both positions, as a devout man, who was not ignorant of the political climate of his age.

Rubidge has argued that Descartes's use of the meditational genre was a means of smoothing over the reception of his ideas. By contrast, Christia Mercer has recently suggested that Descartes's use of the meditative form would have in fact been provocative. She considers Descartes's employment of devotional meditations ultimately as a methodological

[12] Dennis L. Sepper, 'The Texture of Thought: Why Descartes' *Meditationes* is Meditational, and Why it Matters', in Stephen Gaukroger, John Schuster & John Sutton (eds.), *Descartes' Natural Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 748, n. 11.
[13] Sepper, 'The Texture of Thought', p. 748, n. 11.
[14] Sepper, 'The Texture of Thought', p. 737.
[15] On Galileo and *Le Monde*, see Clarke, *Descartes: A Biography*, pp. 111–114; Rodis-Lewis, *Descartes*, pp. 106–107.

strategy, one which is 'more subtle and more philosophically significant than has generally been appreciated.'[16] Mercer argues that 'a clearer sense of the *Meditations*' methodological strategy provides a better understanding of exactly how Descartes intended to revolutionize seventeenth-century thought.'[17] Mercer finds the roots of the meditational genre in neoplatonism and St. Augustine.[18] From the twelfth century, systematic meditative treatises flourished. 'Authors came to explicate meditative steps in terms of the faculties of memory, imagination, intellect, and will.'[19] Mercer considers key features in the *Meditations* that have parallels in earlier important works in the form, particularly by Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Teresa of Ávila. These features are: prominence of the authorial voice; the reader's desire to change; the reader's exposure to doubts and demons; the reader being themselves the central meditating subject; focus on the time and effort required for the reader to reorient the self; and the eventual illumination the reader experiences as a result of the meditative process.[20] By utilising these features, Descartes was signaling to his own readers the radical change that his project entailed: the new philosophy would require them to completely reorient themselves.[21] In the previous chapter I put forward a similar argument in my discussion of Descartes and Augustine. The revolutionary reorientation of the *Meditations* requires going through a series of steps in order to bring about a conversion-like experience. I will add further support to this argument through my parallel reading of the *Meditations* and the *Spiritual Exercises*, which will show that the meditational narrative form is vital to the success of the revolution at the heart of the *Meditations*.

I have just suggested that the meditational *narrative* form is vital. Indeed, I would like to underline a very important distinction: I do not here read the *Meditations* as a work of devotional meditation: rather, I approach the text as a narrative representation of a person going through a series of days of meditation. I will here requote Aryeh Kosman, who suggests that the *Meditations* provides '*a narrative account* of a series of meditations undertaken by someone identified only as "I".[22] The small handful of articles that seek to explore the

[16] Mercer, 'The Methodology of the *Meditations*', p. 23.
[17] Mercer, 'The Methodology of the *Meditations*', p. 23.
[18] For a detailed reading of the influence of Plotinus on Augustine see John Peter Kenney, *The Mysticism of Saint Augustine: Rereading the Confessions* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
[19] Mercer, 'The Methodology of the *Meditations*', pp. 28–29.
[20] Mercer, 'The Methodology of the *Meditations*', pp. 34–39.
[21] Despite highlighting the revolutionary nature of the *Meditations*, Mercer would not, I suspect, grant that Descartes deserves sole credit for this. In more recent work Mercer has sought to highlight the debt Descartes owes to the tradition of devotional literature. In a very recent article, for example, Mercer claims that Descartes owes a significant debt to Teresa of Ávila, as part of a wider argument that the history of philosophy should be a broader and more inclusive one, which highlights such frequently overlooked figures. See Christia Mercer, 'Descartes' Debt to Teresa of Avila, or Why We Should Work on Women in the History of Philosophy', *Philosophical Studies* (2016), pp. 1–17.
[22] Kosman, 'The Naïve Narrator', pp. 24–25, *my emphasis*.

similarities between the *Meditations* and the tradition of devotional meditations tend to ignore this major and crucial distinction, and Kosman himself did not subsequently explore the question of narrative in the *Meditations*. As I have suggested, Rubidge goes to great lengths arguing that the *Meditations* cannot be placed within the "genre" of devotional literature; he too has missed the point that the *Meditations* may not be devotional literature at all, it is *the story of a person meditating*. I wish not to diminish the importance of scholarship on this subject. Rather, I wish to underline that while scholars tend to consider the *Meditations* and the genre of devotional meditations around questions of—to refer back to my discussion of Augustine—influence or intention, these are of secondary importance for my purpose of revealing the role played by the temporal and narrative features of the *Meditations*. I am turning to this topic from the perspective of narrative, and that is the significant counterpoint between myself and previous scholars in this space. In this thesis it is less important that the *Meditations* can be situated within a particular genre. Indeed, I will claim that the way Descartes appropriates and amalgamates aspects from a *variety* of different forms of writing is one of the ways in which he is a revolutionary stylist. Thus, in the next section, I draw on Saint Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, not to provide a historical precedent—in any case that terrain has been well worn. Instead, I turn to the *Spiritual Exercises* because it is a text which demands readerly engagement, and which through utilising features of narrative and temporality, seeks to bring about conversion in the reader. As I will argue, we can identify these same features in the *Meditations*.

4.2 Spiritual Exercises

The purpose of this section is to provide an introductory overview of the *Spiritual Exercises*. My reading of the *Spiritual Exercises*, like my reading of the *Meditations*, is concerned with the narrative aspects of the text. An initial overview will highlight those aspects which are of particular relevance to my thesis. I will here point out that many of the connections between the *Meditations* and the *Spiritual Exercises* have been considered by scholars before me. As indicated above, a small number of commentators have considered the *Meditations* to be drawing stylistic and thematic elements from devotional literature. Later I will consider some of these thematic and stylistic elements. Once more I must underline that my purpose is

narrative, and so where previous scholars have sought to draw points of historical or philosophical significance, as a means of demonstrating influence, my purpose is to highlight how the narrative form of the *Meditations* enacts a process of conversion in the reader. I turn first to the *Spiritual Exercises* so as to better highlight these same features in the *Meditations*. Descartes employs themes such as solitude, purging of past sins and transformation, and contemplation of God to produce a text which is an amalgam of philosophical argument, meditation and narrative. These themes as well as further narrative elements, including the way the "I" in Ignatius's text functions to draw the reader into a more immersive experience, will be explored in the final sections of this chapter.

Saint Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556), founder of the Society of Jesus (also known as the Jesuits), published the *Spiritual Exercises* in 1548. A significant portion of the *Exercises* stems from Ignatius's own experiences of prayer over ten months in the town of Manressa in Eastern Spain in 1523.[23] The *Exercises* is essentially a handbook designed to be used by spiritual directors to guide people undertaking a retreat. The most common goal of undergoing the *Exercises* is to find a central purpose or direction in life.[24] According to Karl Rahner, this is the most important part of an Ignatian retreat: 'real spiritual exercises are the serious attempt, following a certain plan, to make a definite decision or choice at a decisive point in one's life.'[25] The *Exercises*, then, provide a means of discerning a course of action and direction: the best path to follow.

What Ignatius means by spiritual exercises is 'every method of examination of conscience, of meditation, of contemplation, of vocal and mental prayer, and of other spiritual activities' (*Ex.* §1). The *Exercises* provides opportunity for the exercitant to meditate on the life of Christ. Through these meditations, the exercitant will be drawn closer to God, and thus to God's purpose for their life. The *Exercises* sets out a week-to-week program of activities, reflections and meditations for the exercitant to go through. In the First Week the reader is asked to meditate on the topic of sin via imagining the crucifixion and hell. The Second Week is 'taken up with the life of Christ our Lord up to Palm Sunday inclusive.' The Third Week 'treats of the passion of Christ' and the Fourth Week 'deals with the Resurrection and Ascension' (*Ex.* §4).

[23] George A. Aschenbrenner, *Stretched for Greater Glory: What to Expect from the Spiritual Exercises* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004), p. 1.
[24] See Zeno Vendler, 'Descartes' Exercises', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 19/2 (1989), p. 196; Avery Dulles, S.J., 'Preface', in *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (New York: Random House, 2000).
[25] Karl Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises*, trans. Kenneth Baker (London: Sheed & Ward, 1967), pp. 8–15.

The text of the *Exercises* begins with twenty Introductory Observations (*Ex.* §§1–20). These give a general statement of the purpose of the exercises, as well as serving as broad instructions for the spiritual director. The Observations give a sense of the essence of the *Exercises* and act as a general guiding preface. The Observations are followed by a Presupposition (*Ex.* §22) containing advice for how to proceed if there occur disagreements on matters of orthodoxy between the director and the exercitant. This is followed by the First Principle and Foundation (*Ex.* §23), which acts as a central statement of belief. This short but significant section provides a framework that should be kept in mind as the *Exercises* are performed. The First Principle, in brief, is that we are 'created to praise, reverence, and serve God' and that we must make ourselves 'indifferent to all created things' so as to have no obstacle stopping us from doing that for which we were created (*Ex.* §23). Since the *Exercises* is centrally concerned with making a choice for a way of life, the placement here of the First Principle conveys the message that whatever vocational choice one makes, ultimately, 'our one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to the end for which we are created' (*Ex.* §23). That end is to praise and serve God.

There are significant thematic parallels and distinctions that can be identified already between the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Meditations*. Much like the *Exercises*, which are about finding a pathway for one's future, the narrator of the *Meditations* is looking for a pathway to more certain knowledge. 'And now, from this contemplation of the true God, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and the sciences lie hidden, I seem to have discovered a path to the knowledge of other things' (AT VII 53). The Meditator is at a turning point in his life, and the activity of the days of meditation will help him achieve a certainty which will provide him a way forward. Descartes's project is about finding a firm foundation for his beliefs. Scepticism plays a key role: before he can find any basis for a belief system, he must be open to the possibility of rejecting each of his beliefs in turn. However, to run through his beliefs individually 'would be an endless task. Once the foundations of a building are undermined, anything built on them collapses of its own accord' (CSM II 12). This highlights a key point of difference between the project of the Meditator and the project outlined in the *Exercises*. At the outset of the *Exercises*, Ignatius provides a statement of belief that will inform the entire project. Ignatius assumes anyone seeking to undertake the *Exercises* will be on the same page, so to speak, in regards to this foundation. No matter the outcome of the *Exercises*, this foundation and first principle will still be true for the exercitant. However,

Descartes is *seeking* a first principle. His entire project, in a way, is aspiring to get to a place where he can make a statement of belief equivalent to that with which Ignatius begins his text.

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, the standard formula for each exercise is an opening prayer, followed by two preludes and a colloquy. The First Prelude is a 'mental representation' of a place (*Ex.* §47). This is frequently a scene from the Bible; for example, 'the temple, or the mountain where Jesus or His mother is' (*Ex.* §47). The Second Prelude is a petition. 'I will ask God our Lord for what I want and desire' (*Ex.* §48). These preludes 'must always be made before all the contemplations and meditations' (*Ex.* §49). As Zeno Vendler outlines, 'The Preludes are followed by a number of 'Points,' into which the subject matter of the meditation is divided. To each Point the exercitant is called upon to apply his memory … his understanding … and his will … These points (usually three) form the main part of the meditation.'[26] In the First Exercise, the First Point consists of:

> using the memory to recall the first sin, which was that of the angels, and then in applying the understanding by reasoning upon this sin, then the will by seeking to remember and understand all the more filled with shame and confusion when I compare the one sin of the angels with the many sins I have committed (*Ex.* §50).

I need to point to the narrative voice here. Though in this context the text consists of instruction, it remains in the first-person singular, conflating the voice of the guide with the voice of the one going through the exercises. I will make more of this in Section 4.3.

The final step of an Ignatian exercise is the Colloquy. Ignatius notes that the Colloquy 'is made by speaking exactly as one friend speaks to another' (*Ex.* §54). Vendler calls the Colloquy 'a highly emotional and intimate conversation.'[27] The Colloquy, as well as being a dialogue, essentially draws on the imagination. The Colloquy for the First Exercise, for example, asks the exercitant to:

> Imagine Christ our Lord present before you upon the cross, and begin to speak with him, asking how it is that though He is the Creator, He has stooped to become man, and to pass from eternal life to death here in time, that thus He might die for our sins.
> I shall also reflect upon myself and ask:
> 'What have I done for Christ?'
> 'What am I doing for Christ?'
> 'What ought I to do for Christ?'
> As I behold Christ in this plight, nailed to the cross, I shall ponder upon what presents itself to my mind. (*Ex.* §53)

[26] Vendler, 'Descartes' Exercises', p. 197.
[27] Vendler, 'Descartes' Exercises', p. 199.

Though the *Exercises* is a necessarily private and solitary undertaking, within the Colloquy the exercitant is drawn into inner dialogue. We can also here get a sense of how significant the imagination is in the process. The *Exercises* seek a vivid and active engagement on the part of the reader.

The active engagement of the reader which the form of the *Spiritual Exercises* demands has been explored by Louis L. Martz in a study that is worth mentioning briefly here, since he highlights features of the *Exercises* which intersect with my thesis. *The Poetry of Meditation* is a study of the influence of meditational practices on seventeenth century English poets. It presents excellent analyses of many key works of devotional meditation. Though not dealing with Descartes directly, *The Poetry of Meditation* has been cited by a number of commentators who explore the meditational aspects of Descartes's thought. There are obvious reasons for this: Martz's summary and analysis of the genre of devotional meditative literature has made his text an invaluable reference point for work on devotional writing. Consequently, it is natural that commentators discussing Descartes's links to the tradition of devotional meditation would turn to Martz's book. Martz has generally been used in Cartesian commentary to provide a background and synthesis of meditational literature. His central argument is that meditational texts played a key role in influencing Seventeenth century poets. By providing close comparative analysis between meditational texts such as the *Spiritual Exercises* and an extensive collection of individual poems, Martz provides a strong argument for the influence of these meditational texts on the composition of literature in this same period. Though Martz is focusing on poetry, his method provides a close counterpart to those authors seeking to find parallels between these same meditative texts and Descartes. This is perhaps suggestive of the widespread influence of devotional literature in this time period: its impact was felt both in the philosophical and literary realms.

Martz sees the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius as having had a 'widespread influence' in seventeenth century Europe.[28] Martz considers that Ignatius's text is drawing on a long legacy of meditative practices, and that the *Exercises* 'represent a summary and synthesis of efforts since the twelfth century to reach a precise and widely accepted method of meditation.'[29] Martz highlights that the *Exercises* draw on the 'image-forming faculty to provide a concrete and vivid setting for a meditation.'[30] The use of an 'image-forming faculty' is crucial for Ignatius, and crucial as well in poetry. In the previous paragraph I quoted an Ignatian

[28] Louis L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), p. 25.
[29] Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, p. 25.
[30] Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, p. 28.

Colloquy, in which the exercitant is directed to imagine themselves present at the crucifixion of Christ. Martz draws comparisons between Ignatius and the Latin exercises of the poet Robert Southwell, highlighting Southwell's 'habit of feeling theological issues as a part of a concrete, dramatic scene.'[31] I will quote from one such example of Southwell's poetry:

> Behold a silly tender Babe,
> In freesing Winter night;
> In homely manger trembling lies,
> Alas a pittious sight:
> The Innes are full, no man will yeeld
> This little Pilgrime bed;
> But forc't he is with sillie beasts,
> In Crib to shrowd his head.[32]

The scene being depicted in this extract is the birth of Christ. Martz provides an analysis of this poem in relation to the structure of an Ignatian exercise. To recall the above quoted Ignatian Colloquy, the reader is instructed to 'Imagine Christ our Lord present before you upon the cross, and begin to speak with him' (Ex. §53). The reader is asked to place themselves into that biblical scene. In the same way, in Southwell's poem, the reader is instructed to 'Behold a silly tender Babe'. The reader becomes witness to the biblical scene by drawing on their imagination to place themselves actively into that scene. Martz then further highlights a number of examples of metaphysical poets' practice of writing 'vividly dramatized, firmly established, graphically imaged' work.[33] Below I will explore the way something like the faculty identified by Martz in Ignatius's writing is also used by Descartes to draw the reader into the experience of the days of meditation.

Martz highlights a feature of the *Exercises* that will be important to my own reading, which is the use of an 'image-forming faculty' which brings a reader actively into the experience of a text. In his study Martz draws many links between the form of the *Exercises* (among other works of devotional meditation) and poetry of the seventeenth century. A number of scholars have drawn similar links specifically between Ignatius and Descartes. As I have mentioned, Ignatius wrote the *Spiritual Exercises* as a manual of devotional meditations which spiritual directors could use to guide exercitants over the course of a retreat. Descartes attended a Jesuit school named La Flèche in his youth, where he would most certainly have been exposed to Ignatian spirituality.[34] At La Flèche, Walter John Stohrer has noted, the

[31] Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, pp. 29–30.
[32] Robert Southwell, 'New Prince, New Pompe', cited in Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, p. 39.
[33] Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, p. 31.
[34] Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography*, pp. 38–61; Clarke, *Descartes: A Biography*, pp. 15–29.

Jesuit Fathers held annual retreats during Holy Week in which the *Spiritual Exercises* was used to guide students in spiritual direction and devotional practice. 'The student Holy Week retreats at La Flèche provided the young Descartes and his confreres with the fundamental experiences of Ignatian asceticism.'[35] Stohrer has also noted connections between Descartes and Ignatius on a textual level, pointing to similarities of themes in the two authors' works, including 'the strategy of solitude, active indifference, the role of self-activity, the discipline of concentration, and continuity of thought and repetition.'[36] Stohrer suggests that for both Descartes and Ignatius, each of these issues were seen 'as an integral contribution to the development of their respective methodological goals.'[37] After a close parallel reading Stohrer concludes that the textual evidence for linkage is 'compelling. The Cartesian-Ignatian relations seems to be a flexible bond suggesting analogy and adaptation.'[38]

Zeno Vendler also considered the Jesuit influence of Descartes's schooldays. 'Indeed, it would be greatly surprising if [Descartes] had escaped Loyola's influence. He spent eight years, his most impressionable formative years, at La Flèche under the guidance of the Jesuit fathers, who were not only imbued with the spirit of their founder, but steeped in the very phrases and images in which it is expressed, chiefly in the *Exercises*.'[39] Even if Descartes did not encounter the *Spiritual Exercises* directly, he was surrounded, in his impressionable early schooldays, by Ignatian spirituality. Vendler pushes his argument further than Stohrer does, arguing that the influences of Ignatius on Descartes go beyond mere historical interest: the influence of Ignatius is 'not just a matter of some similarities, but of basic conception, aim, strategy, and literary form.'[40] After giving a brief introduction to the *Spiritual Exercises*,[41] Vendler turns his attention to Descartes, and a close reading of the first four meditations. Vendler provides ample evidence for the textual similarities, concluding that 'the "Ignatian" elements in the *Meditations* form a consistent and powerful pattern explaining many features of the work that were simply ignored by the "mere philosophy" approach.'[42] Vendler and Stohrer both provide support for the similarities and probable influence of Ignatius on Descartes. While highlighting Descartes's exposure to Ignatius at an early and impressionable

[35] Walter John Stohrer, 'Descartes and Ignatius Loyola: La Flèche and Manresa Revisited', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 17/1 (1979), p. 13.
[36] Stohrer, 'Descartes and Ignatius', p. 16. For Stohrer's full explication of these themes see pp. 17–26. I will provide a close textual comparison between Descartes and Ignatius below.
[37] Stohrer, 'Descartes and Ignatius', p. 17.
[38] Stohrer, 'Descartes and Ignatius', p. 26.
[39] Vendler, 'Descartes' Exercises', p. 194. L.J. Beck has also made the point that Descartes would have had a great deal of exposure to the *Spiritual Exercises* and Ignatian spirituality at La Flèche. See Beck, *The Metaphysics of Descartes*, p. 31.
[40] Vendler, 'Descartes' Exercises', p. 195.
[41] Vendler, 'Descartes' Exercises', pp. 196–198.
[42] Vendler, 'Descartes' Exercises', pp. 198–220.

stage of life, Vendler also raises significant questions regarding the literary style of Ignatius and Descartes, as well as the question of how these stylistic aspects influence a philosophical reading of the text. A point which is peripheral to this thesis, but nonetheless worth highlighting, is the manner in which scholars have considered the connections between Ignatius and Descartes. Unlike Vendler and Stohrer, my project is about better understanding the role that narrative plays in the *Meditations*, and how it is integrated into the text's arguments. My thesis departs from prior scholars in this space by considering not so much the influence of Ignatius, but rather the similarities in form between both at the level of narrative.

4.3 Reading and Meditation

The brief overview in the previous section sought to highlight how the *Spiritual Exercises* is an immersive experience. The exercises of the text are active, demanding a full involvement on the part of the reader. It can be viewed as a series of steps arranged in a certain sequence, so as to bring about a transformative experience. Since the text acts as a guide, which a reader is meant to follow, the transformative experience belongs not to the narrative voice (the "I" of the text), but to the reader. As I have suggested through my discussion of Rubidge's and Martz's studies, the influence of this kind of writing was profound in the seventeenth century, impacting not just the way a writer like Descartes would approach a metaphysical treatise, but also the way poetry was constructed. What is at issue here is a matter of modes of writing, and the modes of reading demanded by them. The narrative of the *Spiritual Exercises* is the story of a *reader's* conversion. As I continue to explore some of the major points of intersection between Ignatius and Descartes, I will further highlight how Descartes's text can be perceived as an outlined series of steps over a temporal span which the reader can follow to bring about conversion (which, as I have highlighted above, is a process of narrative).

The way the reader is drawn into that story of conversion can be highlighted through a closer examination of the narrative voice. As I have stated, Loyola's text is a handbook to be used by spiritual directors guiding people through the *Exercises*. The text contains explicit instruction at various points. In the Introductory Observations, for example, we read: 'The one who explains to another the method and order of meditating or contemplating should narrate accurately the facts of the contemplation or meditation' (Ex. §2). This is clearly a

direction which the spiritual director will use in the process of guiding the exercitant. In other places, however, the first-person is prominent: 'In the preparatory prayer *I* will beg God our Lord for grace that all *my* intentions, actions, and operations may be directed purely to the praise and service of His Divine Majesty' (*Ex.* §46, *my emphasis*). Though in a few places, such as at §2, the narrative voice is that of the guide, for the most part throughout the text the guide is conflated with the exercitant into a single "I" (as at §46). In this example, the first-person acts as author, spiritual director, and exercitant. Its variable nature provides a space which any reader can occupy. The historian Hilmar Pabel has suggested that: 'Although the Jesuit director gives the *Exercises*, many of the practices are formulated in the first person with the exercitant in mind.'[43] Pabel goes on to quote William Longridge's commentary on the *Exercises*, in which Longridge highlights that Ignatius frequently 'uses the first person singular, in order that the exercitant may apply everything to himself.'[44] The "I" in the *Exercises* is removed from the author, so that the reader can inhabit the place of enunciation. The text acts in a sense as a script for the reader to follow. The "I" is frequently the reader performing these exercises, rather than the spiritual director, or the author. This superimposition of the reader into the space of the "I" is literalised in the *Exercises*.

This conflation of the first-person pronoun is exactly how the "I" functions in the *Meditations*. Elizabeth Anscombe has suggested that 'the first-person character of Descartes' argument means that each person must administer it to himself in the first person.'[45] Similarly, Bernard Williams, as quoted in my introduction to this thesis, claims the "I" is 'not so much the historical Descartes as it is any reflective person working their way through this series of arguments.'[46] Although Williams makes this claim, the superimposition of the reader into the text has yet to be considered in detail. Take, for instance, the following: '[s]uppose then that I am dreaming, and that these particulars – that my eyes are open, that I am moving my head and stretching out my hands – are not true. Perhaps, indeed, I do not even have such hands or such a body at all' (CSM II 13). For scholars such as Wilson, Williams, Frankfurt, Kosman, Carriero, Secada, Hatfield and Broughton, the "I" of the text is not the author, Descartes. I claim that it is here that we can see why this openness of attribution matters to the

[43] Hilmar M. Pabel, 'Meditation in the Service of Catholic Orthodoxy: Peter Canisius' *Notae Evangelicae*', in Karl Enenkel & Walter Melon (eds.), *Meditatio – Refashioning the Self: Theory and Practice in Late Medieval and Early Modern Intellectual Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), p. 270.
[44] W.H. Longridge, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola translated from the Spanish With a Commentary and a Translation of the Directorium in Exercitia* (London, 1919), p. 47, quoted in Pabel, 'Meditation in the Service of Catholic Orthodoxy', p. 270.
[45] Elizabeth Anscombe, 'The First Person', in *The Collected Papers of G.E.M. Anscombe, Volume Two: Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), p. 21.
[46] Williams, *Project of Pure Enquiry*, pp. 19–20.

purpose of the text. The "I" is a locus of change, and the most significant of these changes is that the "I" does not remain the Meditator, but will be replaced by the reader. The reader does not just passively observe these steps as they occur on the page; they first follow what the Meditator is doing, with the Meditator acting therefore as a guide. Then the reader must also become the "I" of the text; however, this remains complicated and conflated. Gueroult has suggested that the *Meditations* is 'not, in effect, mere dry geometry, but the initiation of one soul by another soul acting as its guide.'[47] The conflated "I" is acting as both exercitant and guide. The *Spiritual Exercises* is characteristic of this conflation, literalising the central role played by the narrative voice in converting the first-person, "I", to an implicit second-person, "you", which is then possessed by the second-person such that it becomes first-person once more.

As I have argued already, this is precisely how Descartes wanted his text to be read. In the first chapter I outlined the distinction between two methods of argument, synthesis and analysis (Section 1.2). Descartes specified in the Replies that he was trying to avoid geometric, structured arguments of the synthetic type, such as can be found in the form of a syllogism. It is not the thetic "I" of Scholastic philosophy which interests Descartes in the *Meditations*. Rather, Descartes has written his text in the experiential "I". In Descartes's description of analysis we are given a sense of how he understood this to work. I will quote Descartes on this point again for emphasis. For Descartes, analysis uncovers truth 'by means of which the thing in question was discovered methodically and as it were a priori, so that if the reader is willing to follow it and give it sufficient attention at all points, he will *make the thing his own* and understand it just as perfectly *as if he had discovered it for himself*' (CSM II 110, *my emphasis*). Descartes qualifies that an argumentative or inattentive reader will find no cause to follow such an argument. In his Preface to the Reader he is equally instructive: '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' (CSM II 8). Descartes wants readers who will *meditate seriously with him*, who will *withdraw their minds from all preconceived opinions*, and thus discover the truths that the Meditator has discovered without—to draw on Ignatius's words—the 'influence of any inordinate attachment' (Ex. §21). Descartes provides a narrative of conversion: a series of steps that the reader can follow in order to make the arguments of the text their own. This is not a series of steps in an argument, in the manner of a syllogism. Rather it is a chaotic,

[47] Gueroult, *Order of Reasons I*, p. 9. Though I cite Gueroult to my advantage here, I must also note that he emphatically rejected the proposed correlation between the *Meditations* and the *Spiritual Exercises*.

discursive, transformative experience within time; a series of events over a number of *days of meditation*, in which each individual will become the narrator of their own life story, and in so doing come to a place of conversion.

In Descartes's discussion of synthesis and analysis, he outlines that his philosophy is wholly about the conveying of a personal experience—in Fludernik's terms, a narrative of experience—with which the reader can identify, to such an extent that they will subsume themselves into the text. To reiterate my central argument in this chapter, what this means is that the conversion at the heart of the text is in effect experienced by the reader. We can see how in practice the reader is drawn into the experience of the text in the *Exercises* and the *Meditations*. A central purpose of the *Exercises* is to meditate on things both tangible (scenes from the Bible) and intangible (sin) by calling to mind the senses. Consider the following passage from Ignatius, in which direction is given as to a particular meditation that the exercitant must perform:

> FIRST POINT. This will be to *see in imagination* the vast fires, and the souls enclosed, as it were, in bodies of fire.
> SECOND POINT. To *hear* the wailing, the howling cries, and blasphemies against Christ our Lord and against His saints.
> THIRD POINT. With the *sense of smell* to perceive the smoke, the sulphur, the filth, and corruption.
> FOURTH POINT. To *taste the bitterness of tears*, sadness, and remorse of conscience.
> FIFTH POINT. With the sense of touch to *feel the flames* which envelop and burn the souls. (§§66–70, *my emphasis*)

The use of the senses is a crucial part of these reflections. The contemplation seeks to be an immersive experience, bringing one into closer encounter with the subject of meditation. The reader, through the use of the imagination, is drawn actively and sensorially into the experience of the text.

That Descartes, all superficial differences aside, was in fact appealing in a similar fashion, can be seen from the emphasis on sensory perception throughout the early meditations. In the First Meditation, for example, the Meditator says: 'Yet at the moment my eyes are certainly wide awake when *I look at this* piece of paper; *I shake my head* and it is not asleep; as *I stretch out and feel my hand* I do so deliberately, and I know what I am doing' (CSM II 13, *my emphasis*). The language is tactile and sensorial: opening eyes, moving head, stretching out hands. It draws on the imagination as a central component of the argument—a feature which I will unpack with the aid of narrative theory shortly, once I have further outlined the process of reading in the *Meditations* and devotional literature. Another good

example of how the text draws the reader into the experience of its arguments is the famous wax demonstration from the Second Meditation. This passage demonstrates a use of the technique of meditation in forming an argument:

> Let us take, for example, this piece of wax. It has just been taken from the honeycomb; it has not yet quite lost the taste of the honey [*omnem saporem sui mellis*]; it retains some of the scent of the flowers [*nonnihil retinet odoris florum*] from which it was gathered; its colour, shape, size are plain to see [*ejus color, figura, magnitudo, manifesta sunt*]; it is hard [*dura est*], cold [*frigida est*] and can be handled without difficulty [*facile tangitur*]; if you rap it with your knuckle [*si articulo ferias*] it makes a sound. In short, it has everything which appears necessary to enable a body [*corpus*] to be known as distinctly as possible. But even as I speak, I put the wax by the fire, and look: the residual taste [*saporis reliquiae*] is eliminated, the smell goes away [*odor expirat*], the colour changes [*color mutatur*], the shape is lost [*figura tollitur*], the size increases [*crescit magnitudo*]; it becomes liquid and hot [*fit liquida, fit calida*]; you can hardly touch it, and if you strike it, it no longer makes a sound. But does the same wax remain? It must be admitted that it does; no one denies it, no one thinks otherwise. So what was it in the wax that I understood with such distinctness? Evidently none of the features which I arrived at by means of the senses; for whatever came under taste [*gustum*], smell [*odoratum*], sight [*visum*], touch [*tactum*] or hearing [*auditum*] has now altered – yet the wax remains. (CSM II 20; AT VII 30)

I gloss this passage in order to underline that Descartes is using these short, direct words to produce a visceral response. This is not an effect of translation, but a sensuality present in the Latin original. The accessible and tangible nature of these sensorial concepts (paper, fire, wax, heat, and so on) make it easier for a reader to be drawn into the arguments. In this passage, the Meditator is seeking to demonstrate how physical objects are better known through our intellect than they are through our senses. Bernard Williams suggests that the wax argument has 'a metaphysical beginning leading to an epistemological conclusion.'[48] The way the discussion is framed within the *Meditations* is strongly suggestive of the process of meditation. Though it is perhaps an anachronistic example today, since most contemporary readers of the *Meditations* do not have a ball of wax close to hand, seventeenth century readers would have been familiar with it: the feel of it in the hand, the sound it makes when tapped, the taste and smell. The Meditator is using here a most banal everyday object, one which his readers would immediately be able to draw to mind and contemplate. The Meditator invokes the imagination to serve his rejection of the senses and the imagination. The rhetorical strategy of using techniques common to meditative texts in a sense clashes with the very purpose of the argument. There is thus something strangely paradoxical about the use of meditation here. The Meditator—and thus reader—invoke their senses when

[48] Willims, *Project of Pure Enquiry*, p. 220.

considering the wax. The reader recalls all of these sensual elements in their mind in order to understand how the Meditator then discounts them in favour of the mind.

I have just claimed that the literary techniques employed by Descartes at many points elevate the role of the imagination in his arguments, so as to indicate how the reader is drawn into the experience of the text. Dennis Sepper has written extensively on Descartes's theory of imagination, as well as how the imagination features in Descartes's writings.[49] In 'The Texture of Thought', which I have already discussed in Section 4.1, Sepper focuses on the imagination as it relates to Descartes's use of the meditative form. Of primary concern for Sepper is the role of the spirituality of St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure and the Victorines in influencing seventeenth century meditations. Sepper focuses on the influence of the Victorines on Jesuit spirituality, particularly Hugh and Richard from the Abbey of St. Victor in France, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. 'The teaching of the Victorines,' Sepper states, 'was repeated throughout the following centuries; perhaps most significant for our purposes is that it was foundational for the Jesuits' interpretations of Ignatius' spiritual exercises in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.'[50] Sepper is particularly interested in the psychology of meditation. In this regard Sepper looks to Hugh of St. Victor's account of cogitation [*cogitatio*] and its relationship to meditation. Cogitation involves consideration of 'sensory and memorative images' which, when reconsidered 'with the aim of discovery constitutes meditation.'[51] Sepper gives a number of examples, the last of which indicates the manner in which Descartes has utilised these concepts of cogitation and meditation:

> I notice that a tower I had always thought was round is really octagonal. Being in a reflective mood, I begin wondering about other things I have perceived otherwise than they really are and about what this says about the trustworthiness of sense perception. This leads me to think that some perceptions must be trustworthy, since after all I know that the tower is octagonal rather than round. But then I begin wondering again, for I notice that I have two sets of perceptions (round tower and octagonal tower) that contradict one another, and ask myself what criterion I use to discriminate the reliable from the untrustworthy. Of course, I have begun to enter through this train of thought the realm of Descartes' first meditation. I have begun with cogitations, that is, a series of incipient notions set off by images of sense or memory, and have turned my mind to

[49] E.g. Dennis L. Sepper, 'Descartes and the Eclipse of Imagination, 1618–1630', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 27/3 (1989), pp. 379–403; Dennis L. Sepper, 'Ingenium, Memory Art, and the Unity of Imaginative Knowing in the Early Descartes', in Stephen Voss (ed.), *Essays on the Philosophy and Science of Rene Descartes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 142–161; Dennis L. Sepper, *Descartes's Imagination: Proportion, Images, and the Activity of Thinking* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
[50] Sepper, 'The Texture of Thought', p. 739.
[51] Sepper, 'The Texture of Thought', p. 738.

> assiduously and sagaciously treating and re-treating them in order to bring out something hidden or obscure – what Hugh calls meditation.[52]

Here Sepper is drawing on a discussion from the Sixth Meditation, in which the Meditator refers to seeing towers at a distance, and being mistaken about their actual shape. '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' (CSM II 53). Sepper uses this concept, in conjunction with his reading of Hugh of St. Victor's account of cogitation, to build a convincing argument for the centrality of imagination in Descartes's philosophy. He claims that a reconsideration of Descartes's method through cogitation and meditation provides essential ways of understanding philosophy. For Sepper, Descartes's aims (particularly in his earlier writings) were to found a new integrated system that utilised geometrical figuration and imagery. 'This kind of figuration of relationships and proportions is preeminently the task of imagination, and what is usually interpreted as Descartes' mathematisation of thought is more fundamentally the imaginalisation of thought.'[53] Sepper's example of *cogitatio* can also be applied to Descartes's piece of wax argument, which involves using the senses and the memory to call to mind what a piece of wax looks, feels, smells, and tastes like. According to Sepper, when the reader trains their mind towards a particular discovery out of this cogitation—for example, discovering whether objects can be best understood through the senses or through the intellect—this cogitation becomes a meditation.

The central argument of this thesis, to recall, is that narrative is crucial to the success of the *Meditations* as a work of philosophy. I have pointed to the experiential "I" as an essential feature of the text. It draws in both time (since experience is by necessity temporal) and narrative (in that the sharing of experience is the basic underlying feature of narrative). Fludernik's conception of narrative helps to highlight the role of experience in narrative, as well as highlight the role of the reader. With the support of Fludernik's conception of experiential narrative I have claimed that the appeals to authority in the form of personal experience in the *Meditations* are perhaps best understood as appeals to authority in the form of narrative. I will here return to these claims, since they are of great relevance to the current

[52] Sepper, 'The Texture of Thought', p. 739.
[53] Sepper, 'The Texture of Thought', p. 742. More on this can be found in Sepper's earlier writings, particularly Sepper, 'Descartes and the Eclipse of Imagination', pp. 379–403; Sepper, 'Ingenium, Memory Art', pp. 142–161. Sepper slightly reworked and expanded on these concepts for his book *Descartes's Imagination*. Matthew L. Jones also argues that one can view Descartes's geometry itself as a kind of spiritual exercise. See Matthew L. Jones, 'Descartes's Geometry as Spiritual Exercise', *Critical Inquiry*, 28/1 (2001), pp. 40–71.

discussion of the activity of the reader in the *Meditations*. As I will argue, the experience of reading can be seen as synonymous with the experience of meditation. Marco Caracciolo, a narrative theorist who has recently sought to expand Fludernik's concept of experiential narrative, articulates how, exactly, the reader's interaction with a text becomes an experiential engagement. I will also make use of Wolfgang Iser's theory of reading which, to recall my discussion in Chapter 2, has already provided a clearer articulation of the experience of the non-endurance doctrine. The theory of reading which I will articulate in the remainder of this section provides valuable links to the concepts of meditation I have just been discussing. In turn, a clearer articulation of the experience of reading (which draws in both narrative and temporality, since experience necessarily occurs across a temporal frame) adds further support to my argument that narrative is vital to the success of the *Meditations* as a work of philosophy.

Caracciolo claims that a reader will bring their own history and experiences into any engagement with a text. 'Our experience is drawn into a dense web of presuppositions and memories of past interactions with the world.'[54] These interactions will play a critically formative role in the way we approach a text. In his article 'Fictional Consciousness: A User's Manual', Caracciolo seeks to demonstrate the central role that *consciousness* holds in narrative texts. In particular, he considers the idea of 'consciousness attribution.'[55] In a very Cartesian discussion, Caracciolo argues that we cannot with reason attribute consciousness to others: 'we do not attribute consciousness to real people on reasoned grounds.'[56] It is impossible, he suggests, for me to demonstrate that the person sitting next to me has conscious experience.[57] In practice, that we can or cannot prove another's consciousness has no bearing on whether we do or do not attribute consciousness to others. The way we interact as human beings would be entirely different if our overriding suspicion was that the person we were trying to communicate with had no consciousness. Caracciolo's argument here contains echoes of the Second Meditation, in which the Meditator realises that he has no way of being certain of anything outside of himself: 'But then if I look out of the window and see men crossing the square, as I just happen to have done, I normally say that I see the men themselves … Yet do I see any more than hats and coats which could conceal automatons?' (CSM II 19). He has no way to prove that there are actually people walking around and not automatons in hats and coats, and so he must make a *judgement* that it is in fact real people

[54] Marco Caracciolo, 'Notes for a(nother) Theory of Experientiality', *Journal of Literary Theory*, 6/1 (2012), p. 184.
[55] Caracciolo, 'Fictional Consciousness: A Reader's Manual', *Style*, 46/1 (2012), pp. 42–65.
[56] Caracciolo, 'Fictional Consciousness', p. 47.
[57] Caracciolo, 'Fictional Consciousness', p. 47

that he can see crossing the square. Descartes's discussion here is not about consciousness. Yet I suggest the point of convergence between this discussion and that of Caracciolo's is the gap between what can be known and what is assumed. The Meditator has no way of *knowing for certain*.

Caracciolo suggests that in the same way that we attribute consciousness to other people, though we may have no way to verify or chart it, we will also attribute consciousness to fictional characters. Readers of fiction attribute consciousness to fictional characters, even though fictional characters contain no inherent consciousness of their own. 'While it is reasonable to assume that fictional characters are *not* conscious, it is reasonable to assume that real people are.'[58] He further suggests that there are 'good reasons to believe that real people are conscious, whereas there are none for having the same belief about characters. But we tend to attribute consciousness to both nevertheless.'[59] For Caracciolo, the attribution of consciousness to others is 'based on our first-person understanding of what having a consciousness or subjective experience involves.'[60] This is what the experientiality of narrative is for Caracciolo: the conscious experience that a reader brings into an encounter.

Through an engaging reading of the opening passage of William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, Caracciolo is able to hypothesise how this works in practice. The passage in question, in which Benji watches a game of golf through a fence, reads:

> Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting. They were coming toward where the flag was and I went along the fence. Luster was hunting in the grass by the flower tree. They took the flag out, and they were hitting. Then they put the flag back and they went to the table, and he hit and the other hit. Then they went on, and I went along the fence. Luster came away from the flower tree and we went along the fence and they stopped and we stopped and I looked through the fence while Luster was hunting in the grass.[61]

The language is unusual here, and the reader must work hard to make proper sense of it. Caracciolo's reading seeks to uncover how a reader will consider the passage, and what this means for the 'consciousness' of the characters; particularly Benji, the narrator of this section. 'Because of the first-person pronoun, readers easily interpret these [quoted] words as indicative of a consciousness. Thus, we attribute to the character who says "I" the visual experience of a fence, and of some unnamed characters beyond the fence, surrounded by

[58] Caracciolo, 'Fictional Consciousness', p. 48, *emphasis in text*.
[59] Caracciolo, 'Fictional Consciousness', p. 47.
[60] Caracciolo, 'Fictional Consciousness', p. 47.
[61] William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929; repr. New York: Norton, 1994), p. 3.

flowerbeds, hitting something.'[62] Benji, according to Caracciolo, has no consciousness, and no embodied self. Thus, Benji has never stood next to a fence, looked through a fence, or watched people playing golf. But a reader will form an image in their mind of a fence; of a golf course; of people playing golf; of a boy watching through a fence. Caracciolo's analysis becomes more plausible when looking back at Faulkner's description. Nowhere in the quoted passage does Faulkner write explicitly that the people being observed are playing golf. There are clues provided: the people are 'hitting'; someone is 'hunting in the grass'; they take the flag out and hit again, and then put the flag back. Someone that has never witnessed or experienced golf would have no capacity to piece together what is being described in the text. It is in this way that a reader's own history and experience will enable them to construct a clear picture of what is happening based on the minimal clues that Faulkner provides. Caracciolo argues: 'We imagine, on the basis of past experience, what it must be like to watch some people through a fence, and this enables us to enact the character's consciousness.'[63] It is, then, the reader 'enacting' the consciousness of a character that creates meaning in a text. A reader will draw particularly on their memory to form the images in their mind that are outlined on the page: in Sepper's terms, 'sensory and memorative images'.

We can also here once more consider Wolfgang Iser, whose reader-response theory I outlined in Chapter 2. For Iser, to recall, it is the gaps in a narrative that are most significant, since the gaps enable a reader to step into a text. 'This is why the character suddenly comes to life in the reader—he is creating instead of merely observing. And so the deliberate gaps in the narrative are means by which the reader is enabled to bring both scenes and characters to life.'[64] One of these gaps in Faulkner's text is the gap between Benji's first-person and naïve description of what he observes, and the reader's intimation of what is actually happening in the scene itself. It is the reader who must step into the text with their interpretive power in order to make sense of what has not been articulated in the text. The gap between Benji's description and a coherent picture of the scene is bridged by the reader's experience, which enables them to take these clues: hitting, hunting in the grass, removing and returning the flag. Through their own understanding of what playing golf looks like, a reader can then bring clarity to "Benji's" observations.

This idea of the reader *enacting* consciousness and meaning can be seen explicitly in the case of the *Spiritual Exercises*. In the Colloquy from the First Exercise, quoted above, the

[62] Caracciolo, 'Fictional Consciousness', p. 51.
[63] Caracciolo, 'Fictional Consciousness', p. 54.
[64] Iser, *The Implied Reader*, pp. 38–39.

reader is told to 'Imagine Christ our Lord present before you upon the cross, and begin to speak with him' (*Ex.* §53). The activity of meditation consists in the reader inserting themselves into scenes from the Bible. In this way, the reader is *enacting* meaning. An experiential "I", to restate, allows the opportunity for a reader to step into the discussion and determine meaning on their own terms. It is an active and involved process. It is unlike the experience of a thetic "I", the purpose of which is largely to allow the reader to tally up the commitments of the author. When the Meditator performs the Cogito, since the "I" is not a thetic "I" but an experiential "I" it is explicitly the *reader* who says '*I am. I exist.*' To refer back to Anscombe's discussion, the Cogito only works in the first-person. The reader *enacts* the Cogito. Recall, furthermore, Dennis Sepper's discussion of the role of *cogitatio* in forming 'sensory and memorative images'[65] in order for that reader to consider something very particular, with the aim of discovering some truth. Sepper suggests that this is what constitutes meditation. I claimed above that Descartes employs these same techniques as a means of bringing his reader into a full experience of his arguments. I now seek to juxtapose that discussion with Iser's and Caracciolo's theories of the activity of reading. By drawing on *sensory and memorative images*, we project consciousness onto characters within narrative, and enact life into the scenes that we are considering. For Caracciolo the experience of the reader, on which they will draw as they approach a text, constitutes reading. I suggest that reading and meditation are, in these terms, equivalent processes. While all reading is to a greater or lesser degree performative, some genres (poetry, devotional exercises, Cartesian meditation, to name a few) make this particularly apparent. Reading and meditation both involve creating images in the mind, and drawing on the senses and the memory. Thus, the narrative of meditation that Descartes creates is also a meditation *through* reading. In this way, Descartes's text is an act of meditation, as narration, as reading.

4.4 Withdrawal from the World

Another prominent point of intersection between the *Meditations* and the *Exercises* is in the need to withdraw from the world into solitude in order to be best placed to experience the days of meditation and contemplation. As indicated above, a number of commentators have

[65] Sepper, 'The Texture of Thought', p. 738.

pointed to the idea of solitude as being a prominent way in which Descartes's text contains echoes of meditational literature. For Descartes, it was whilst in complete solitude in a stove heated room in the small town of Neuberg that the first inklings of his philosophical project began.[66] As he describes it in the *Discourse*:

> At the time I was in Germany, where I had been called by the wars that are not yet ended there. While I was returning to the army from the coronation of the Emperor, the onset of winter detained me in quarters where, finding no conversation to divert me and fortunately having no cares or passions to trouble me, I stayed all day shut up alone in a stove-heated room, where I was completely free to converse with myself about my own thoughts. (CSM I 116)

Descartes's desire for privacy in his life is well established, even if the reasons for this privacy remain up for debate.[67] Cottingham refers to Descartes as 'one of the most wary and private of the great philosophers.'[68] Descartes famously abandoned the stimulating intellectual society of Paris to move to the Netherlands in 1628. Indeed, Gaukroger, in considering Descartes's enigmatic move to the Netherlands, states 'it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Descartes' move to the Netherlands is a kind of retreat.'[69] In my fist chapter I pointed to the temporal span of the *Meditations* as being indicative of a kind of retreat (Section 1.1). Descartes completed the writing of the *Meditations* whilst living remotely in northern Holland, for the most part, in the town of Santpoort. As Cottingham has highlighted: 'This "corner of north Holland", [Descartes] wrote to Mersenne on 17 May 1638, was much more suitable for his work than "the air of Paris" with its "vast number of inevitable distractions"' (Translator's Preface, CSM II 1). This solitude is not just a matter of personality. The ability to withdraw, I will argue, is crucial for a reader to be best placed to experience the *Meditations*—and by consequence, undergo a conversion. Descartes advises that those wishing to undertake the meditations should 'withdraw their minds from the senses and from all preconceived opinions' (Preface to the Reader, CSM II 8). In the *Meditations* the Meditator suggests that he himself has 'expressly rid [his] mind of all worries and arranged for [himself] a clear stretch of free time' (CSM II 12). Since he is 'quite alone' he is in the perfect state to undertake his project to 'demolish [*evertenda*] everything completely' (CSM II 12). As Cottingham has pointed out, 'Descartes has a conception of ultimate truth that

[66] See Clarke, *Descartes: A Biography*, pp. 58–66.
[67] For one of the more entertaining, if largely speculative theories, see A.C. Grayling, *Descartes: The Life of René Descartes and its Place in his Times* (London: Pocket Books, 2006). Grayling's way to resolve the enigma of Descartes's solitude is to suggest that Descartes was a spy, or at least, 'in some way engaged in intelligence activities or secret work during the period of his military service and travels' (p. 9).
[68] Cottingham, 'Descartes as Sage', p. 201.
[69] Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 188.

requires an *aversio* – a turning of the mind away from the world of the senses – in order to prepare it for glimpsing the reality that lies beyond the phenomenal world.'[70] Descartes is, so to speak, turning the Peripatetic axiom—*there is nothing in the intellect that was not first in the senses*—on its head.[71] Throughout the first few days of meditation, the Meditator is continually seeking to withdraw from the material world, so that he can move towards things which, he believes, can be better known. As Susan Bordo states, 'much of the *Meditations* may be read as prescribing rules for the liberation of mind from the various seductions of the body, in order to cleanse and prepare it for the reception of clear and distinct ideas.'[72] The Meditator is not only alone in his undertaking, but he continually seeks to withdraw from the things he thinks he knows: that is to say, certainty about the material world.

It is similarly essential that the person going through the *Exercises* free themselves from worldly attachments. Ignatius makes this clear at the outset:

> SPIRITUAL EXERCISES
> *Which have as their purpose the conquest of self and the regulation of one's life in such a way that no decision is made under the influence of any inordinate attachment* (*Ex.* §21, *emphasis in text*).

Early in the *Exercises,* it is crucial to rid the soul 'of all inordinate attachments,' and once these have been removed, to seek and find 'the will of God in the disposition of our life for the salvation of our soul' (*Ex.* §1). Freedom from worldly attachments is an essential component in preparing to undertake the exercises. Ignatius advises that 'progress made in the exercises will be greater the more the exercitant withdraws from all friends and acquaintances, and from all worldly cares' (*Ex.* §20). Seclusion ensures that 'the mind is not engaged in many things,' and leaves the soul 'more fit to render itself to approach and be united with its Creator' (*Ex.* §20). Ignatius believed one should withdraw into solitude in order to experience the *Exercises*. To undertake an intense period of private reflection, one would need to withdraw from the concerns of daily life. As mentioned above, Ignatius's own experience, which would later grow into the text of the *Spiritual Exercises*, occurred over 10 months of retreat in Manressa. He advises that 'the progress made in the *Exercises* will be greater the more the exercitant withdraws from all friends and acquaintances, and from all worldly cares' (*Ex.* §20). The *Exercises* provide an opportunity for one to 'rid [oneself] of all

[70] Cottingham, 'Descartes as Sage', p. 191. It is worth noting that here Cottingham is relating Descartes not to Ignatius, but to another prominent figure in Catholic spirituality, St. Bonaventure.
[71] This axiom came from Aristotle and was adopted by Thomas Aquinas.
[72] Bordo, *The Flight to Objectivity*, p. 91.

inordinate attachments, and, after their removal, of seeking and finding the will of God' (*Ex.* §1).

In both the *Exercises* and the *Meditations*, the practice of withdrawal is related to the fact that the reflection occurs within a fixed temporal frame. As discussed in greater detail in my first chapter, the Meditator cannot come to a point of feeling firm in his beliefs until he has thrown everything into question; the Cogito could not have occurred after the events of the Third Meditation; the Meditator could not begin to search for something outside of himself until he could feel assured in his own existence. The 'chain of reasons' is important to the way the argument develops, but it is also an experience over time. The order of the *Spiritual Exercises* is similarly crucial. The Foundation provides underlying doctrinal moorings for the entire retreat: to recall, 'Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul' (*Ex.* §23). This is a necessary first principle. The reflection on sin has as an essential aspect the purging of previous attachments; without having accomplished this, the exercitant will not gain the most benefit out of the subsequent experience. It is through being stripped of these attachments that one can then be in a position to undertake the Election, in which a central purpose can be decided for one's life.[73] While not part of my premise, it is interesting to note incidentally that given Descartes's educational background, as well as the extensive textual parallels, it seems plausible to suggest that Descartes is drawing on Ignatian concepts learnt in his youth. Even if not explicitly "aping" the *Exercises*, we might conclude that it was a given for Descartes that such a process should occur within a fixed temporal framework as part of a kind of retreat. He himself, as I have indicated above, experienced the Ignatian exercises within the fixed temporal framework of the school's Easter retreats. One cannot *experience* the days of meditation in the specious present: it will necessarily be a process over a span of time.

In Ignatius's text, while there is some flexibility in the amount of time the process may take, it is still ultimately essential that the exercises be completed within approximately thirty days. Jesuit theologian Joseph De Guibert explains: at the discretion of spiritual directors, "weeks" could be shortened or lengthened, or exercises omitted or repeated 'according to the results obtained and the dispositions or needs which become manifest' throughout the course of the exercises.[74] As Ignatius says, 'it may happen that in the First Week some are slower in attaining what is sought, namely contrition, sorrow, and tears for sin. Some, too, may be more

[73] For more on the election, see Jules J. Toner, *Discerning God's Will: Ignatius of Loyola's Teaching on Christian Decision Making* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1991).
[74] Joseph De Guibert, S.J., *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, trans. William J. Young S.J. (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1964), p. 131.

diligent than others, and some more disturbed and tried by different spirits. It may be necessary, therefore, at times to shorten the Week, and at others to lengthen it' (*Ex.* §4). What is ultimately important in this thesis, however, is that the *Exercises* are designed to occur within a proscribed temporal frame, through being undertaken as part of a retreat. The person undergoing the exercises has withdrawn from the world, and will now set aside cares and worries for the period of time necessary to achieve transformation. Due to their intensive and immersive nature, the *Exercises* are thus necessarily undertaken as part of a retreat in some form.

In any case, the structure of the *Exercises* is so demanding that some form of withdrawal from worldly attachments would be necessary in order to undertake them as prescribed. The *Exercises* are designed to occur at numerous points throughout the day. According to Ignatius, 'The First Exercise will be at midnight; the Second, immediately on rising in the morning; the Third, before or after Mass … the Fourth, about the time of Vespers; the Fifth, an hour before supper' (*Ex.* §72). This timeline demonstrates how immersive are the *Exercises*. Bradley Rubidge provides a summary of the five exercises:

> The first two are considerations of new subjects and the second pair are repetitions, each of which reiterates the first two exercises. Last comes the application of the senses, in which the exercitant uses his imagination to consider the subject matter of the previous exercises in an especially vivid and striking way.'[75]

This brief outline suggests how intense and rigorous is the structure of the *Exercises*, and is demonstrative of why withdrawal is so essential to undertake them properly.

Aside from the practicality of solitude, this withdrawal from worldly attachments is also tied to withdrawal from "sin". As indicated in the previous chapter in my discussion of conversion, Descartes employs language and themes from religious writing, while making it clear that he is not talking about sin in the religious sense. Rather, he is talking about fault and error. For the Meditator the way he perceives the material world, and the conclusions he has drawn about it, have been factors in his erroneous belief system up until this point. In the previous chapter I discussed how in the *Meditations* the Meditator continually struggles away from his former self and his former errors until he can finally attain salvation. In that discussion I quoted from the First Meditation, in which the Meditator complains that 'despite [his] wishes' his 'habitual opinions keep coming back' (CSM II 15). Error is a central concern for the Meditator from the outset. In the very first paragraph of the First Meditation, he says

[75] Rubidge, 'Devotional Meditations', pp. 31–32.

that he has been 'struck by the large number of falsehoods that [he] had accepted as true' (CSM II 12). It is an obvious point that turning away from error in order to find a firm basis for his beliefs is the central project of the *Meditations*. The Meditator says that he has put this project off for so long that 'I should hereafter consider that I would be at fault [*ut deinceps essem in culpa*]' if by pondering over it any further I wasted the time still left for carrying it out' (CSM II 12; AT VII 18, translation modified). This language calls to mind sin and fault, and indicate how seriously the Meditator views this project. As I highlighted in the previous chapter, Descartes stated that he is only considering error, and not sin. Yet Keith Sidwell points out that in Medieval Latin *culpa*, as well as *peccatum*, *delictum* and so on were all used for the concept of sin.[76] I would venture to suggest that when Descartes used the word *culpa* he was fully anticipating these connotations. By overcoming his errors, and finding ways to think clearly and properly, using the natural light of reason, the Meditator can insulate himself from fault in the future. He can, by devoting himself 'sincerely and without reservation to the general demolition [*eversioni*] of my opinions' (CSM II 12; AT VII 18) put himself in a frame of mind to discover the proper foundations for knowledge. By demolishing everything he previously took to be certain, and starting again, the Meditator's project is essentially a process of transformation: or to phrase this another way, a narrative of conversion.

Error is the first topic considered by the Meditator in the First Meditation. So too in the *Exercises*, the first week (*Ex.* §§24–100) is devoted to the subject of sin. Conquering sin, and regulating one's life in such a way as to be free from sin, is the ultimate goal of this week. As part of this process of regulation, the exercitant is expected to make an Examination of Conscience three times each day. For the Examination, the exercitant will have identified a particular sin or defect from which they wish to free themselves. Immediately upon rising in the morning, 'one should resolve to guard carefully against the particular sin or defect' (*Ex.* §24). After dinner, one 'should ask God our Lord for the grace … to recall how often he has fallen into the particular sin or defect, and to avoid it in the future' (*Ex.* §25). After this comes the first examination, which involves going over each hour of the day, and taking note of when one has fallen into sin. The exercitant is then to 'renew his resolution, and strive to amend during the time till the second examination is to be made' (*Ex.* §25). The second examination occurs after supper, in the same manner as the first. Each day should be compared with the last, and then each week with the preceding, so that the exercitant can chart their progress. The examination of conscience is a central part of the *Exercises*, and the

[76] Keith Sidwell, *Reading Medieval Latin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 44.

daily self-scrutiny is aimed at minimising the presence of sin over the course of the program.[77]

In Chapter 3 I indicated a reading of the *Meditations* and the *Confessions* as a process (in Starbuck's terms) of 'struggling away from sin'. I suggested that this process, which was how Starbuck defined conversion, was an essentially narrativised activity. I drew on narrative theory to highlight how for many theorists, narrative structure is perceived as a continual interaction between high points and low, of turning in one direction and then another: in other words, of change. We see the literalised form of this in the *Spiritual Exercises*. The narrative voice and structure of the *Exercises* enable a process of change to take place in the reader. Through following a particular series of steps in which the reader will struggle away from sin, they will be gradually brought to a place of conversion. This is *necessarily* a gradual experience over time. The narrative voice (the experiential "I") draws the reader into the experience of the text. And then through the process of striving away from sin—which to recall Bremond's conception of the narrative cycle is a process of amelioration and degradation, or going through periods of high to periods of low—the reader is brought to a place of conversion. We can see these same features at work in all three texts: the *Meditations*, the *Confessions* and the *Spiritual Exercises*. All three texts utilise the experiential "I", by which, through the use of narrative, the reader is put in a position to experience a conversion.

[77] The concept of examination of conscience is considered in greater detail in Timothy M. Gallagher, *The Examen Prayer: Ignatian Wisdom for our Lives Today* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006).

Conclusion

In this thesis I have argued that narrative is crucial to the success of the *Meditations* as a work of philosophy. I have further claimed that part of the reason for this success is that narrative functions so as to produce a kind of conversion-machine for the reader. My reading is concerned with the experiential "I". In my introduction I explored the manner in which the "I" has been considered in scholarship on Descartes and the *Meditations*, and concluded that the "I" has generally been discussed with a minimal degree of curiosity. Scholars such as Bernard Williams, Margaret Wilson, Harry Frankfurt and Anthony Kenny have each indicated the "I" as a point of interest through raising questions about the status of the "I" in relation to the author of the *Meditations*, Descartes. When we turn to more recent scholars such as John Carriero, Jorge Secada, Janet Broughton, Catherine Wilson, and Gary Hatfield, the question of the identity of the narrator seems to be more decisively resolved (in that they each take the distinction between narrator and author to be evident). However, missing between earlier and more recent scholarship has been any kind of engagement with the implications of a fictional narrator. That is to say, the question seems to have been "resolved" before it was adequately addressed. What this means is that although recent scholars seem to unambiguously conclude that the "I" is not Descartes, this apparent consensus has not spawned any decisive or detailed *engagement* with the "I" *as* a fictional entity. I have argued in my thesis that engaging with the narrator not so much as fictional, but *experiential*, allows for greater possibilities of exploration.

The first step in my engagement with the narrator has been to consider in greater detail how time and narrative function in the *Meditations*. In my first chapter I explored the temporal markers and claimed that these markers helped to indicate the narrativity of the *Meditations*. I then drew a distinction between the kind of narrative voice found in Scholastic writers, and the kind of narrative voice found in the *Meditations*. I claimed that what I call the thetic "I" (which is generally found in Scholastic writing and in the syllogistic form) functions as the locus for a set of commitments, having no relevant personality or history. The thetic "I" also functions to differentiate an author's claims from those of a prior authority. The experiential "I" of the *Meditations*, in contrast, functions as a locus of personality and change. An essential feature of the experiential "I" is temporality, which is a subset of experience. Thus, unlike the thetic "I", which in this regard stands only to defer to and differentiate itself

from established authorities, the experiential "I" seeks to appeal to personal experience itself as the highest form of authority. I argued that Fludernik's model of experiential narrative helps to recover Descartes's own intentions for how his text should be read: or more exactly, how his text should be experienced. My claim up to this point was that Descartes's appeals to authority in the form of personal experience are perhaps best understood as appeals to authority in the form of narrative.

Thus in order to further explore the experience of the narrator, I turned in Chapter 2 to the non-endurance doctrine. The non-endurance doctrine, I claimed, was centrally concerned with the way the Meditator experiences time. This consideration further highlighted how commentators on Descartes overlook both time and narrative in the *Meditations*. Scholars such as Ken Levy, Geoffrey Gorham, and Richard Arthur have discussed Descartes's philosophy of time without reference to the temporality of the *Meditations* itself; that is, the inherent temporality that the narrator's days of meditation effect upon the text. My discussion of the non-endurance doctrine, through a focus on the experiential "I", pointed to the Meditator's fragility within time and his consequent desire to experience conversion. Though the Cogito has been seen as a "moment" of conversion, I claimed that this was only partial, since the Cogito is a flawed foundation for a philosophical system. Rather than resolving the Meditator's existential crisis, it instead reinforces his fragile state within time. The assurance of the Cogito is temporary. Reconsidered in this light, the non-endurance doctrine instead becomes a much more stable foundation for Descartes's philosophy than the Cogito. The non-endurance doctrine becomes the true conversion event of the *Meditations*, since it is the point at which the Meditator proclaims his reliance on God, rather than on his own power. The experiential "I" thus reveals that the non-endurance doctrine is not only a doctrine on the nature of time, but an expression of the way in which the Meditator experiences time; i.e. as a fragile being reliant on the preserving power of God. I suggested that the Meditator, as a literary character, has no power to preserve his existence through time. It is the higher power, the same power that created him, which preserves him.

The relationship between the Meditator and God is thus analogous to the relationship between character and author. Over the six days of meditation, the author Descartes creates anew the Meditator, which echoes perhaps the six days of creation in Genesis. But the relationship between the Meditator and God is also analogous to the relationship between narrator and reader. More precisely, the narrative form of the experiential "I" provides a medium in which readers will enter more deeply into the text, recreating themselves as

integrated in time from the effect of conversion in the same way that Descartes recreates his own "other self" the Meditator. It is in this way that readers participate in the authorial activity of creation.

My reading of the *Meditations* reveals a series of complicated relationships: between Descartes and God; between narrator and author; between character and reader. I do not here wish to resolve these complications, but will instead indicate what I see as a point of convergence, which is the act of conversion. The non-endurance doctrine is a *moment of conversion* for the Meditator: a moment of *recreation*. It is the turning point from which he can proceed with some kind of epistemological assurance. My discussion of Augustine in Chapter 3 and Ignatius in Chapter 4 sought to highlight two important points: first, that narrative turns the *Meditations* into a sort of conversion machine; second, that it is the reader who might ultimately experience this conversion. I claimed in the previous paragraph that readers participate in the authorial activity of creation. I have argued that the *Meditations* can enact a process of conversion on the reader. My conclusion, which I will outline in more detail below, is that the reader participates in the authorial activity of creation, and is thus converted from a reader to an author in their own right.

There have been two interrelated threads throughout this thesis. The first is that the style of Descartes's text, specifically in regards to the use of temporal markers and a personalised narrative voice, can be seen as revolutionary. The second is that this revolutionary style has been frequently overlooked or ignored by commentators in their interpretations. In conclusion I wish to show firstly how my narrative-based reading can clarify enigmatic moments in the broader "narrative" of how Descartes discovered his system, with emphasis on his mythical night of dreams. This discussion of the narrative *of* Descartes's philosophy will help to further reveal ways in which Descartes's philosophy itself *is* narrative. Secondly, I wish to show how my reading can clarify certain events in the interpretation of Descartes's philosophy, specifically the famous dispute between Foucault and Derrida. The latter discussion will make even clearer what I mean by the term conversion-machine. Indeed, both discussions are ultimately driven by this concept of conversion.

The first point I wish to consider is what I have just called the "narrative" of how Descartes discovered his philosophical system, or to be economical, simply the *narrative of Descartes's philosophy*. The popular conception propagated by Descartes himself suggests that it was whilst alone in a stove-heated room in Neuberg, Bavaria in 1619, that he first

conceived his unified system of knowledge.[1] The night of his intellectual discovery, Descartes had three dreams which would mark the turning point of his life. Although the veracity of these dreams is debatable, they nonetheless help to provide context for Descartes's philosophical project. More importantly for this thesis, this discussion indicates an early interest on the part of Descartes in narrativising his philosophy. Descartes was not interested in presenting his philosophical project in the manner of Scholastic philosophy, which as I have stated contained a post-discovery "I". The Scholastic method presented a clarified and unified series of arguments, free of the muddle of the work of thought and experiment. Instead, Descartes wanted to provide the story of *how* he came up with his ideas, as well as how he came to his conclusions. The narrative of the three dreams and his Archimedean moment helps to point towards Descartes's inclinations to create a *narrative of discovery*, as well as an interest in mythologising his own work. According to John R. Cole, in Descartes's account in the *Discourse* of the discovery in the stove-heated room, he 'swings the "history" of his life on the pivot of one event, just one, his day of thought in a heated chamber at the beginning of winter, 1619.'[2] I will suggest that this single but significant day, the turning point of his life, is in effect what Descartes presents as his narrative of conversion.

Descartes recorded his night of dreams in a little notebook, 'grandly entitling his dream record the *Olympica*.'[3] While the little notebook itself is now lost, there are records preserved in the form of substantial notes copied by Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz in 1676, as well as a close paraphrase of the notebook which appeared in Adrien Baillet's biography of Descartes in 1691.[4] Cole suggests that Baillet's paraphrase is the closest remaining historical record which gives us Descartes's own account and interpretations of these dreams. Cole furthermore believes that 'it is Descartes's account of his youthful dreams that can help explain what he himself took to be the decisive stage in his formation as a thinker.'[5]

In the first dream, Descartes found himself walking along a road, confronted by terrifying phantoms, or shadows.[6] Something forced him to go left instead of right, and a great gust of wind disturbed him. He saw a college, and made for the chapel, to pray or confess his sins. He noticed someone in the yard of the college whom he recognised. The

[1] Baillet puts this day of solitary reflection at 10 November 1619. See Adrien Baillet, *La Vie de Monsieur Des Cartes* (Paris, 1691; repr. Geneve: Slatkine, 1970), p. 81.
[2] John R. Cole, *The Olympian Dreams and Youthful Rebellion of René Descartes* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), p. 1.
[3] Cole, *Olympian Dreams*, p. 1.
[4] Cole, *Olympian Dreams*, p. 1.
[5] Cole, *Olympian Dreams*, p. 2.
[6] My account of Descartes's dreams is drawn from Baillet, as well as Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography*, pp. 106–108; Clarke, *Descartes: A Biography*, pp. 58–62; and Rodis-Lewis, *Descartes: His Life and Thought*, pp. 37–42. Rodis-Lewis and Gaukroger draw their own accounts closely from Baillet.

acquaintance had something for him to give to someone else; perhaps it was a melon from a foreign land. The wind continued to throw him about, yet he noticed a number of other people who were around him, able to stand upright, unaffected by the wind. At this point he awoke, 'and he thought the whole experience might be the work of some evil genius who was trying to deceive him.'[7] After lying awake for quite some time, Descartes finally fell back to sleep, and had a second dream in which he heard what sounded like a crack of thunder. He opened his eyes to see sparks from the fire filling the room. 'He remembered having had this experience before, while awake, and he was therefore able to make sense of it and to return calmly to sleep.'[8]

He shortly began to dream again. In the third dream he found a book open upon a table. Seeing that it was some kind of dictionary or encyclopaedia, he was pleased, because he thought it might help him in his studies. 'When Descartes [extended] his hand toward the encyclopedia, he [seized] another book that had suddenly appeared, the famous *Corpus poetarum*, familiar to him from college.'[9] He opened this book at random and saw the words '*Quod vitae sectabor iter?*' (What path shall I follow in life?). A stranger entered the room while he was reading and recommended a verse which began with the words '*est et non*' (It is, and is not). Descartes told the stranger that he knew the lines well, and that they were the opening of a poem by Ausonius. Leafing through the anthology, Descartes failed to find the poem. He told the stranger that he knew another poem by Ausonius that began with the words '*Quod vitae sectabor iter?*' At this point, both the stranger and the book disappeared.

I will not attempt to delve into the psychological state that these dreams might indicate; indeed, even Freud refused to do so.[10] Instead I will draw two points of interest out of these dreams which are relevant to this thesis. Firstly, in the previous chapter (Section 4.4) I suggested that the *Meditations* required some kind of withdrawal from the world, so as to enable the reader to be best placed to experience transformation. The stylised autobiography Descartes presents us through these dreams indicates how seriously he believed in this transformative activity. The dreams occur at a turning point, and (as per the *Discourse*) it is while he is isolated and not otherwise engaged that he has his epistemological breakthrough (which occurs on the same day as the dreams, thus conflating the two events—first, the discovery of his system, and second the dreams which in a sense confirm the divine provenance of it). Moreover, Descartes seeks to intensify the significance of his project

[7] Clarke, *Descartes: A Biography*, p. 59.
[8] Clarke, *Descartes: A Biography*, p. 60.
[9] Rodis-Lewis, *Descartes: His Life and Thought*, p. 41.
[10] Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 109.

through these dreams. As Baillet records, Descartes imagined that the dreams could only have come from above,[11] alluding to a divine purpose. After interpreting the dreams, Descartes was satisfied, and able to convince himself that 'it was the spirit of truth [*que c'etoit l'Esprit de Vérité*]' which wanted to reveal to him 'the treasures of all the sciences [*les trésors de toutes les sciences*]' in these dreams.[12]

Gaukroger distinguishes between the first two dreams, 'which have the appearance of genuine dreams,' and the final dream, 'which is somewhat stylized, and is more likely to involve elements that reflect a conscious attempt to draw attention to the importance of his intellectual discovery.'[13] The intellectual discovery itself, which on Baillet's account occurred earlier on the same day as the three dreams, is worth outlining in greater detail, since it is intimately related to the subsequent night of dreams that Descartes supposedly experienced. After outlining the discovery, which Descartes articulates in the *Discourse*, I will then return to my discussion of the dreams in order to piece together how the discovery itself, in conjunction with how Descartes interpreted his dreams, have implications for my reading of the *Meditations*. I will then turn to the dispute between Foucault and Derrida, as a means of putting forward my argument that their diverse readings help to indicate how the text acts as a conversion-machine.

Shut up alone after the onset of winter, nobody to converse with but himself, Descartes had a number of profound thoughts which would take almost 20 more years to work through before he would publish them, in a preliminary form in the *Discourse*, and finally in his masterpiece, the *Meditations*. This is how Descartes describes the event, as well as the discovery itself, in the *Discourse*:

> I stayed all day shut up alone in a stove-heated room, where I was completely free to converse with myself about my own thoughts. Among the first that occurred to me was the thought that there is not usually so much perfection in works composed of several parts and produced by various different craftsmen as in the works of one man. Thus we see that buildings undertaken and completed by a single architect are usually more attractive and better planned than those which several have tried to patch up by adapting old walls built for different purposes. Again, ancient cities which have gradually grown from mere villages into large towns are usually ill-proportioned, compared with those orderly towns which planners lay out as they fancy on level ground … And so I thought that since the sciences contained in books – at least those based upon merely probable, not demonstrative reasoning – is compounded and amassed little by little from the opinions of many different persons, it never comes so close to the truth as the simple reasoning which a man of good sense naturally makes concerning whatever he comes

[11] Baillet, *La Vie de Des Cartes*, p. 81.
[12] Baillet, *La Vie de Des Cartes*, p. 84, my translation.
[13] Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 108.

> across. So, too, I reflected that we were all children before being men and had to be governed for some time by our appetites and our teachers, which were often opposed to each other and neither of which, perhaps, always gave us the best advice; hence I thought it virtually impossible that our judgements should be as unclouded and firm as they would have been if we had had the full use of our reason from the moment of our birth, and if we had always been guided by it alone. (CSM I 116–117)

Once more Descartes indicates how he prioritises knowledge discovered on one's own to knowledge gained from others. This preference for his own discoveries, once more, reinforces the experiential "I". Furthermore, he refers to wishing he had full access to his reason from the moment of his birth. We can recall in connection to this, Gaukroger's suggestion that 'The *Meditationes* read like an account of a spiritual journey in which the truth is only to be discovered by a purging, followed by *a kind of rebirth*.'[14] We might consider the *Meditations* to be Descartes's attempt to further enact these concepts first raised in the *Discourse*, by placing himself into a position in which he has stripped himself of all ties to his past knowledge. As suggested in the previous chapter, the Meditator seeks to withdraw from the world and all preconceived notions, which we can consider as a necessary step on the path to conversion. Through a narrative process of conversion, the Meditator can be *reborn*, and make use of his reason free of prejudice or outside influence.

It is worthwhile to further highlight one aspect of the extract from the *Discourse*, just quoted. Descartes writes 'Among the first [thoughts] that occurred to me', the phrasing of which stands in stark contrast to the way Scholastic authors present their arguments. To recall the discussion in Chapter 2, the Meditator's investigations concern '*ma vie*' (my life) specifically. The Meditator thus presents the process of thinking, rather than simply the finished argument supported by authorities. It is the authority of *ma vie*, particularly, on which the *Meditations* draws. The way Scholastic writers, by contrast, appeal to a diverse range of authorities in formulating their arguments is what Descartes alludes to in the *Discourse*. If we turn to Suárez, for example, we find a system of knowledge which comes not only from Suárez himself, but is supported through appeals to the authority of his predecessors, from the works of Aristotle and the Church Fathers, through to medieval thinkers such as Aquinas. Descartes in the above-quoted passage indicates that this kind of assembly of different authorities—a method with which he would have been very familiar from his time at La Flèche—does not appeal to him. I do not here seek to detract from the richness of Suárez's philosophy, of course, nor any of the Scholastic writers with which I have briefly engaged in this thesis. I merely wish to point to those aspects of method to which

[14] Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography*, p. 336, *my emphasis*.

Descartes might have objected. Descartes replaced the appeal to prior authority with an experiential "I" which preferred the authority of personal experience, as conveyed by narrative. He has withdrawn from the world, stripped himself of his ties to preconceived notions (i.e. the notions imparted to him by his teachers, and gained in his study of the Scholastics, Aristotle, and so on). In connection with this point I must once more assert that the appeals to authority in the form of personal experience which we find in the *Meditations* can be best understood as appeals to authority in the form of narrative.

This leads into the second point I wish to draw from my discussion of Descartes's dreams. The experiential "I" brings in stylistic—specifically temporal and narrative—elements which are absent from the thetic "I" of Scholastic philosophy. Yet, Descartes has rarely been considered a stylist, nor has the style of his philosophy been granted serious attention. Descartes's third dream includes two books, the first of which is a dictionary (or encyclopedia). According to Baillet's account, Descartes interpreted this book to represent all of the sciences gathered together.[15] The second book is a compendium of Latin poets, which Descartes took to distinctly represent 'the union of Philosophy and Wisdom [*la Philosophie et la Sagesse jointes ensemble*]'[16] Rarely considered is that these two books in Descartes's dream could also represent the union of reason with style.

In the dream, when Descartes reaches out to grasp the encyclopaedia, it vanishes, and is replaced by the *Corpus poetarum*. This book leads him to a question, '*Quod vitae sectabor iter?*' (What path shall I follow in life?).[17] I have suggested that the *Meditations* is the culmination of an epistemological journey which—Descartes claims—began on the day of these dreams. It is the *presentation* of a unified system of knowledge. Yet, throughout this thesis I have continually stated that it is at the same time the *representation* of how one arrives at a unified system of knowledge. The form that this representation takes is that of an experiential narrative of a man on a search for wisdom and certainty: a man seeking the right path to follow. Descartes's *Meditations* is not only a philosophical treatise, but also an epistemological journey, a pseudo-autobiographical account, the representation of meditations over a number of days. Perhaps the wisdom Descartes found in his intellectual discovery was a unity of disparate forms held together by a solitary authority ("I"), which can stand in direct opposition to Scholasticism: a unity of thought and method under the authority of disparate

[15] Baillet, *La Vie de Des Cartes*, p. 83.
[16] Baillet, *La Vie de Des Cartes*, p. 84, my translation.
[17] John Cole has suggested that 'the "way" or "road," in French *voie* or *chemin* and in Latin *via* or *iter*, was to be one of Descartes's most characteristic and insistent images in his later writing.' Cole, *Olympian Dreams*, p. 134. In my first chapter I have highlighted the way Descartes uses the spatial metaphor of following a path throughout the *Meditations*.

thinkers. In his third dream, Descartes explores both knowledge and poetry. In the *Olympica*, Descartes wrote: 'poets were driven to write by enthusiasm and the force of imagination. We have within us the seeds of knowledge [*semina scientiæ*], as in a flint: philosophers extract them through reason, but poets force them out through the sharp blows of the imagination, so that they shine more brightly' (CSM I 4, translation modified; AT X 217). In Chapter 4, I outlined how imagination plays an essential role in Descartes's representation of the form of meditation. Descartes's philosophy is diverse, revolutionary, and highly engaging; particularly in the *Meditations* we see the narrative account of the seeds of knowledge springing forth from a unified method that draws not only on the philosopher's reason but also on the imagination of a poet.

To restate, Descartes draws on disparate genres and styles of writing to craft his *Meditations*. Part of what I suggest is unique in his text is the way he can weave these forms together to construct a new kind of work of metaphysics out of a variety of styles. The variety of styles which make up the text can be further illustrated through a brief comparison of two passages. Consider for example a passage taken from the Third Meditation, in which after intense consideration of the existence of God, the Meditator exclaims:

> I should like to pause here and spend some time in the contemplation of God [*Dei contemplatione*]; to reflect on his attributes, and to gaze at, wonder at and adore the beauty of this immense light, so far as the eye of my darkened intellect can bear it. (CSM II 36; AT VII 52)

The "meditative" sense is clear in this passage. What also emerges clearly is that the "I" is narrating the process of meditation. There is no formal argument being mounted; rather, the reader is privy to the Meditator's private prayer. Compare the above to a passage from the Fifth Meditation:

> Since I have been accustomed to distinguish between existence and essence in everything else, I find it easy to persuade myself that existence can also be separated from the essence of God, and hence that God can be thought of as not existing. But when I concentrate more carefully [*diligentius attendenti*], it is quite evident that existence can no more be separated from the essence of God than the fact that its three angles equal two right angles can be separated from the existence of a triangle, or the idea of a mountain can be separated from the idea of a valley. Hence it is just as much a contradiction to think of God (that is, a supremely perfect being) lacking existence (that is, lacking a perfection), as it is to think of a mountain without a valley. (CSM II 46; AT VII 66)

It is a mundane observation that significant portions of Descartes's text are argumentative in nature. The bulk of Cartesian scholarship engages with the philosophical arguments of the

text. The just-quoted passage is an extract from Descartes's ontological proof of the existence of God in the Fifth Meditation. It is not the argument itself that I wish to discuss here;[18] instead I wish to indicate just that it *is* an argument, and in this sense it contrasts noticeably with the previous-quoted passage from the Third Meditation. There is a distance created by Descartes's use of a formal argument, based around Scholastic terminology. It is in marked contrast to the meditative passage, above, which is intimate (almost voyeuristic) and private. When considering this passage in parallel with the above-quoted passage from the Third Meditation, it is apparent that there is a very different thought process at work on the part of the narrator. In the passage from the Third Meditation, the Meditator is contemplating (*contemplatione*). In the Fifth Meditation, he is concentrating carefully (*diligentius attendenti*). Part of what makes the *Meditations* so unique is that the text offers these various avenues through which we can engage with the text. To underline my point, Descartes's *Meditations* can be seen as disparate forms of writing under the unity of a single authority (the experiential "I"). What this does is enacts a proliferation of divergent readings of his text. One reader could point to Descartes "contemplating" and argue that his text is a meditation. On the contrary, another could point to his use of a Scholastic formulation as a rebuttal of the view of the text as meditation (or indeed, as innovative). Instead, I would argue that the unified method that is brought about through these disparate styles is an essential factor in Descartes's status as the 'father of modern philosophy'.

To close this thesis, I would like to claim that the different pathways upon which we can approach the *Meditations* are symptomatic of the way the text uses narrative to enact a process of conversion in the reader. The conversion is the activation of the seeds of knowledge, brought about through experiencing the days of meditation; by the possibility of becoming the "I" of the text. I turn to the well-known dispute between Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, one of the most famous events in the interpretation of Descartes. As Max Deutscher explains, the dispute 'about what appears on the page as a fine line of difference … opened up a fracture wide and deep enough to separate Foucault and Derrida for more than a decade.'[19] I will consider Foucault's influential article 'My Body, This Paper, This Fire,' originally published as an appendix to the 1972 edition of the *Histoire de la Folie*. Foucault

[18] The ontological argument has in any case received extensive analysis. E.g. Gassendi's objections (CSM II 179–240); William P. Alston, 'The Ontological Argument Revisited', in Willis Doney (ed.), *Descartes: A Collection of Critical Essays*, (London: MacMillan, 1967), pp. 278–302; Anthony Kenny, 'Descartes' Ontological Argument', in Vere Chappell (ed.), *Descartes's Meditations: Critical Essays* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), pp. 177–194; Lawrence Nolan & Alan Nelson, 'Proofs for the Existence of God', in Stephen Gaukroger (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Descartes' Meditations* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 112–121.

[19] Max Deutscher, 'Foucault's Madmen', *Parrhesia*, 21 (2014), p. 69.

wrote this paper as a response to Derrida's 'Cogito and the History of Madness', which itself was a critical response to the first edition of Foucault's *Histoire*, first published in 1961.[20] What I take from this discussion for my purpose here is the clear indication it gives of the different modes of reading to which Descartes's text is susceptible. I must clarify that by modes of reading I do not mean modes of interpretation, since philosophical discourse would not exist if it were not a point of fact that every text is open to multiple interpretations. Rather, what I will be considering here is the way Foucault and Derrida *read the narrator of the text* in divergent ways. I will use this discussion to once more reinforce my earlier point that the *Meditations* requires some level of experiential engagement on the part of the reader, and that such an engagement is primed to lead to a kind of conversion. What I will argue here is that when we experience the *Meditations* we are converted from readers into authors. Derrida and Foucault *read* the narrator articulating his arguments; *experience* the arguments for themselves; and in the process they are themselves converted into the "I" that can 'make the thing his own' (CSM II 110).

On the surface, the crux of the disagreement between Foucault and Derrida was in their varying interpretations of the passage from the First Meditation in which the Meditator considers whether he is insane, or dreaming. Ultimately though, the stakes are far higher than this, and their dispute ends up being 'the issue of whether anything can be anterior to the text, whether there can be anything beyond philosophical discourse.'[21] In Roy Boyne's analysis of their dispute: 'If philosophy can and does cover everything, as Derrida seems to hold, then the reign of philosophy is secure. Foucault will not accept such a position as a truth, seeing such an argument as a legitimation of philosophical supremacy.'[22] It will below become clearer how Foucault, in contradistinction to Derrida, seems to suggest the integration of alternate discourses into the philosophical discourse in order to properly come to terms with the narrative voice within the *Meditations*.

In *Histoire de la Folie*, Foucault suggests that Descartes is complicit in the practice of sequestering those who are insane from the concept of reason; symptomatic of a broader segregation of the insane within society. As Shoshana Felman summarises, the 'entire history of Western culture is revealed to be the story of Reason's progressive conquest and consequent repression of that which it calls madness.'[23] Foucault's argument suggests that the

[20] Michel Foucault, 'My Body, This Paper, This Fire', in Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (trans. & ed.), *History of Madness* (London: Routledge, 2006) pp. 550–574; Derrida, 'Cogito and the History of Madness', pp. 31–63.
[21] Roy Boyne, *Foucault and Derrida: The Other Side of Reason* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p. 75.
[22] Boyne, *Foucault and Derrida*, pp. 75–76.
[23] Shoshana Felman, 'Madness and Philosophy or Literature's Reason', *Yale French Studies*, 52 (1975), p. 209.

turning point for this was in the First Meditation, and in the Cogito. I will quote the relevant passage from the First Meditation in full so as to make it clear what is under discussion:

> Yet perhaps [*Sed forte*], although the senses occasionally deceive us with respect to objects which are very small or in the distance, there are many other beliefs about which doubt is quite impossible, even though they are derived from the senses – for example, that I am here, sitting by the fire, wearing a winter dressing-gown, holding this piece of paper in my hands, and so on. Again, how could it be denied that these hands or this whole body are mine? Unless perhaps I were to liken myself to madmen, whose brains are so damaged by the persistent vapours of melancholia that they firmly maintain they are kings when they are paupers, or say they are dressed in purple when they are naked, or that their heads are made of earthenware, or that they are pumpkins, or made of glass. But such people are insane [*sed amentes sunt isti*], and I would be thought equally mad if I took anything from them as a model for myself.
>
> A brilliant piece of reasoning [*Praeclare sane*]! As if I were not a man who sleeps at night, and regularly has all the same experiences while asleep as madmen do when awake – indeed sometimes even more improbable ones. How often, asleep at night, am I convinced of just such familiar events – that I am here in my dressing-gown, sitting by the fire – when in fact I am lying undressed in bed! Yet at the moment my eyes are certainly wide awake when I look at this piece of paper; I shake my head and it is not asleep; as I stretch out and feel my hand I do so deliberately, and I know what I am doing. All this would not happen with such distinctness to someone asleep. Indeed! As if I did not remember other occasions when I have been tricked by exactly similar thoughts while asleep! As I think about this more carefully, I see plainly that there are never any sure signs by means of which being awake can be distinguished from being asleep. The result is that I begin to feel dazed, and this very feeling only reinforces the notion that I may be asleep. (CSM II 12–13; AT VII 18–19)

The crucial element here for Foucault comes at the end of the first paragraph, where the narrator at first raises the possibility of insanity before rejecting it outright: 'But such people are insane, and I would be thought equally mad if I took anything from them as a model for myself.' Descartes here seems to intently dismiss the consideration of insanity as a possible foundation for argument, and Foucault claims that by doing so Descartes is in effect dismissing the very subject of insanity from the realm of reason. Foucault posits this to be a crucial turning point in the way society deals with madness and the insane. To quote Felman's analysis once more, 'Descartes expels madness outside of the confines of culture and robs it of its language, condemning it to silence.'[24]

Derrida sees Foucault's project of writing a history of insanity as fundamentally flawed. Derrida first presented his critique of Foucault at a conference on 4 March 1963 (at which Foucault was in attendance). 'Cogito and the History of Madness' was subsequently published in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* later that year, and then after slight revision appeared in 1967 in the collection *L'écriture et la difference (Writing and*

[24] Felman, 'Madness and Philosophy or Literature's Reason', p. 209.

Difference). For Derrida, in order to avoid subjugating madness to reason, the historian has an essential problem of *finding a language with which to speak for the insane*, even though one cannot speak in the voice of the insane:

> Foucault wanted to write a history of madness *itself*, that is madness speaking on the basis of its own experience and under its own authority, and not a history of madness described from within the language of reason …
>
> It is a question, therefore, of escaping the trap or objectivist naiveté that would consist in writing a history of untamed madness, of madness as it carries itself and breathes before being caught and paralyzed in the nets of classical reason, from within the very language of classical reason itself, utilizing the concepts that were the historical instruments of the capture of madness—the restrained and restraining language of reason. Foucault's determination to avoid this trap … is the most audacious and seductive aspect of his venture, producing its admirable tension. But it is also, with all seriousness, the *maddest* aspect of the project.[25]

Derrida considers Foucault's attempt to pursue an academic project without the language of reason to be unsound. Regarding Foucault's use of Descartes, which is my major point of focus here, Derrida retorts that in the First Meditation Descartes does not exclude madness from reason any more or less than he excludes the senses, or dreams. That is to say, there is no particular exclusion of madness from reason in this passage. Derrida objects to Foucault's proposition that the aside from the Meditator (But such people are insane) is a way of ostracising the insane. In the First Meditation, Derrida argues, '[all] significations or "ideas" of sensory origin are excluded from the realm of truth, for the same reason as madness is excluded from it. And there is nothing astonishing about this: madness is only a particular case, and moreover, not the most serious one, of the sensory illusion which interests Descartes at this point.'[26] According to Derrida:

> the entire paragraph which follows *does not express Descartes's final, definitive conclusions, but rather the astonishment and objections of the nonphilosopher*, of the novice in philosophy who is frightened by this doubt and protests, saying: I am willing to let you doubt certain sensory perceptions concerning 'things which are hardly perceptible, or very far away,' but the others! that you are in this place, sitting by the fire, speaking thus, this paper in your hands and other seeming certainties! Descartes then assumes the astonishment of this reader or naïve interlocutor, pretends to take him into account when he writes: 'And how could I deny that these hands and this body are mine, were it not perhaps that I compare myself to certain persons, devoid of sense … and I should not be any the less sane were I to follow examples so extravagant.'[27]

[25] Derrida, 'Cogito and the History of Madness', p. 35, *emphasis in text*.
[26] Derrida, 'Cogito and the History of Madness', p. 50.
[27] Derrida, 'Cogito and the History of Madness', p. 50, *my emphasis*.

Derrida here touches on a point which I have argued has been generally overlooked in Descartes scholarship, which is that the narrator begins the days of meditation as a naïve and inexperienced fictional character, who over time gains the experience and understanding necessary to emerge from the retreat with a greater confidence in his knowledge. Derrida also notes that the narrator uses phrases such as *sed forte* (but perhaps; yet although) as 'feigned objections'[28] which turn the text into a running dialogue between the "I" and an unnamed interlocutor. Thus, the *sed forte* is not a means of excluding the insane at all; it is instead a rhetorical device that signals the interplay of voices within the text. Above I argued that the "I" of the *Meditations* can be seen to contain such an interplay of voices, i.e. a guide and novice going through a spiritual exercise, both of whom are absorbed into a single enunciating "I". There is an echo of this concept in Derrida's reading. As John Frow puts it, Derrida is 'construct[ing] a play of voices in the text of Descartes—that is, a stratification of levels which breaks an expository monologue into a dialogue between the voice of the philosopher and the voice of the projected interlocutor.'[29] While the lone speaker is still "Descartes," 'the position of utterance varies'[30] to produce a text that contains more than a single voice. For Derrida, the project of hyperbolic doubt is a process of 'the narration narrating itself.'[31] Derrida suggests that Foucault's reading, by failing to pay attention to such nuances within the text, is 'reinscribing an interpretation … within the total framework of the *History of Madness*.'[32] Foucault is, in other words, misrepresenting Descartes for the sake of his broader argument.

Foucault was slow to respond to Derrida. When he did respond, in 'My Body, This Paper, This Fire' in 1972, he largely ignored Derrida's arguments on the subject of reason. Instead, Foucault focused his objections on Derrida's reading of the First Meditation. He sees Derrida's reading as compensating for its inadequacies through the 'invention of a difference of voices.'[33] For Foucault, Derrida's reading itself neglects the thematic and textual differences within the text. In Foucault's reading of this passage from the First Meditation, 'what is at stake is no longer demonstrating, but carrying out an exercise and calling up a memory, a thought, a state, in the very moment of meditation.'[34] That the text is a meditation

[28] Derrida, 'Cogito and the History of Madness', p. 50.
[29] John Frow, *Marxism and Literary History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 210.
[30] Frow, *Marxism and Literary History*, p. 210.
[31] Derrida, 'Cogito and the History of Madness', p. 57–58.
[32] Derrida, 'Cogito and the History of Madness', p. 33.
[33] Foucault, 'My Body, This Paper, This Fire', p. 570.
[34] Foucault, 'My Body, This Paper, This Fire', p. 553.

is crucial for Foucault, and in Foucault's estimation, crucially overlooked by Derrida. I will quote Foucault's objection at length:

> We must keep in mind the title of 'Meditation'. Any discourse, whatever its nature, is made up of a group of enunciations which are produced in their space and in their time, as so many discursive events. If they form a pure demonstration, these enunciations can be read as a series of events, linked to each other according to a certain number of formal rules; the subject of discourse is in no sense implied in the demonstration; it remains, in relation to it, fixed, invariant, and as though neutralised. A 'meditation', by contrast, produces, as so many discursive events, new enunciations that bring in their wake a series of modifications in the enunciating subject: through what is said in the meditation, the subject passes from darkness to light, from impurity to purity, from the constraint of passions to detachment, from uncertainty and disordered movements to the serenity of wisdom, etc. In the meditation, the subject is ceaselessly altered by his own movement; his discourse elicits movements inside which he is caught up; it exposes him to risks, subjects him to tests [*épreuves*] or temptations, produces in him states, and confers a status or a qualification upon him which he in no sense possessed at the initial moment. A meditation implies, in short, a subject who is mobile and capable of being modified by the very effect of the discursive events that take place.[35]

Foucault here distinguishes between two different types of discourse. He makes it clear that a demonstration is a group of enunciations, but that the vocalising subject, i.e. the one doing the enunciating, is buried (or in Foucault's term: neutralised). This concept relates closely with what I have called the thetic "I" of philosophical discourse. The thetic "I", as I have argued, is there only so that the reader can locate the 'commitments' of the author, and carries no personality or history. The thetic "I" is fixed within its position in the argument. Thus, the enunciating voice is neutralised, having no relevant history or personality. A meditation, Foucault suggests by way of contrast, is about things *happening to* the enunciating subject. I have argued throughout this thesis that the experiential "I" is a locus of change. The experiential "I", which we find in conversion literature such as Augustine's *Confessions*, as well as in works such as Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* and indeed in the *Meditations*, is in a state of constant change, and thereby susceptible to further change. The subject that Foucault speaks of—i.e. the subject within a meditation—is continually modified and altered, undergoing what I am calling a process of conversion. Foucault also highlights this concept, reading the *Meditations* as consisting of 'a series of modifications in the enunciating subject', a concept analogous to my reading of the *Meditations* as a narrative of conversion, in which the Meditator goes from the darkness of error to the light of philosophical truth. From the First Meditation to the Sixth, he undergoes a continual process of modification, cleansing himself of error in order to emerge with a new understanding of himself and the world.

[35] Foucault, 'My Body, This Paper, This Fire', pp. 562–563. Gloss provided by the translator.

Both these types of discourse are evident for Foucault in the *Meditations*, which causes him to conclude that the text requires a 'double reading: a group of propositions, forming a *system*, which each reader must run through if he wishes to experience their truth; and a group of modifications forming an exercise, which each reader must carry out, and by which each reader must be affected, if he wishes in his turn to be the subject enunciating this truth on his own account.'[36] I would contend that the *Meditations* is open to an even more diverse range of readings than Foucault's binary allows. Foucault's just-quoted passage also points to the important role of the reader, which I have sought to explore in detail in my previous chapter. For Foucault, the reader will in turn become 'the subject enunciating this truth on his own account', becoming the "I" that goes through the days of meditation as they read the text. Foucault's concept of a 'double reading' raises a number of questions. I will briefly consider two lines of enquiry which, while beyond the scope of my discussion in this thesis, are indicative of where this topic can be further developed in subsequent research.

The first line of enquiry can be drawn from Foucault's terminology, which deserves closer scrutiny. 'Any discourse, whatever its nature, is made up of a group of enunciations which are produced in their space and in their time, as so many discursive events.' I would suggest that Foucault is imprecise here in regards to what kind of time, exactly, he is describing. He suggests that a discourse is made up of a group of enunciations produced in *their* space and time, which seems to imply the fictional time of the discourse. However, there is no consideration of the relationship here between what we might for the sake of argument call "clock time" and "fictional time". Furthermore, there is no consideration of how these temporal worlds interact. These are questions which I have also avoided exploring in detail, since it is beyond the scope of this thesis. But there is room for a more extensive exploration of the interaction between the different "times" we find in the *Meditations*, such as the "fictional" time of the six days of meditation, the time it takes to read the text, or the time it took the author to write it. These considerations may shed light on the relationship between the historical Descartes and his fictional narrator, and furthermore the reader's interaction with both.[37]

A second line of enquiry which might be further explored in subsequent research is concerned specifically with the reader's interaction with the text. In my previous chapter I

[36] Foucault, 'My Body, This Paper, This Fire', p. 563, *emphasis in text*.

[37] Once again, narratology may provide invaluable tools for such enquiry. Mieke Bal, for example, has written about the distinctions between the time within a fictional text and reading time. See Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (3rd edn.; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. 75–112. Bal's narrative framework expands on the foundational work of Gérard Genette, who also discussed these temporal distinctions in detail. See Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980).

claimed that in the *Meditations* the narrative voice elicits a particular response from the reader—a concept which emerges once again in the present discussion of Foucault. My argument is that the text is primed to elicit a sort of conversion. In this thesis I have focused on simply indicating these features of the *Meditations*, since a central pillar of my argument is that the experiential "I" has been largely overlooked or neglected in prior scholarly readings of the text. But there is scope in future research to explore in greater detail *why* some texts are more likely to draw out the kind of readerly identification we find in the *Meditations*. This is a question that is very relevant to the topic of my fourth chapter, and might be continued in further research. Yet, once more, literary theory can be of great benefit in seeking to answer some of these questions about the role of the reader, and how that role impacts the text itself. For example, Louise Rosenblatt has explored these questions in her study *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*. Rosenblatt first explores the way readers of poetry[38] 'are highly active in evoking [a poem] from the page.'[39] Yet, she addresses the obvious question, 'is not *any* reader of *any* text active? Does not any reader, whether of a newspaper, scientific text, or cookbook, have to evoke the work from the page?'[40] We could certainly add philosophical treatise to this list. Rosenblatt distinguishes between two types of text, which require two different modes of reading. First, there is 'efferent reading' which concerns what a reader will 'carry away from the reading.'[41] A reader's attention is more focused on 'the concepts, the solutions, to be "carried away" from their reading.'[42] Rosenblatt contrasts this with 'aesthetic reading' in which 'the reader's primary concert is what happens *during* the actual reading event.[43] We can identify both kinds of reading in the *Meditations*. First: the reading which seeks a system of knowledge, which a reader might consider, understand, and consequently carry away. Second: the reading which seeks *engagement*, which will lead to some kind of transformative experience. There is scope to consider in greater detail how theories of reading can help to shed light on these diverse aspects of the *Meditations*.

Rosenblatt indicates two types of readings: efferent reading and aesthetic reading. Foucault has suggested that the *Meditations* requires just such a 'double reading'. Foucault claims that Derrida, despite being 'a remarkably assiduous' reader, has 'missed so many literary, thematic or textural differences' in the *Meditations* by failing to take into account the

[38] Though her focus is poetry, Rosenblatt makes it clear that her study is relevant to all 'literary [works] of art'. Louise M. Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: the Transactional Theory of the Literary Work* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), pp. 22–23.
[39] Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*, p. 22.
[40] Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*, p. 22.
[41] Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*, p. 24.
[42] Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*, p. 24.
[43] Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*, p. 24.

double reading of the text which sees the *Meditations* as being composed of a series of demonstrative and meditational events. For Foucault, the text does not contain a multitude of voices; it is a single voice, which undergoes continual modification through the process of meditation. However, after John Frow I would also suggest that Foucault's reading does not disagree as strongly with Derrida's as he would think. Frow suggests that 'Foucault's reading, and above all his location of a "chiasma, where the two forms of discourse intersect", should surely support Derrida's analysis.'[44] Frow goes on to propose that 'there *is* a play of "voices" here—dialogism if not dialogue. And it is precisely the "meditation" genre, which involves a *splitting* of the enunciating subject … which provides the formal basis for this play.'[45] Frow does not elaborate on this, but we can here recall my analysis in the previous chapter, which suggested that the "I" of the *Meditations* might stand simultaneously for the spiritual director and the exercitant. This is the feature, taken from the genre of devotional meditation, to which Frow alludes.

Derrida and Foucault each draw on stylistic aspects of the *Meditations*. For Derrida, the narrator can be read as an "I" that contains a diversity of voices. For Foucault, the "I" is singular, but the text itself contains a diversity of different styles of writing. Foucault and Derrida both touch on aspects that I have discussed in earlier chapters. For example I highlighted that the narrative and temporal aspects of the *Meditations* contribute to the text's revolutionary nature in comparison to preceding Scholastic thinkers. I drew a distinction between what I have called the thetic "I" of these prior thinkers (and of syllogistic arguments more generally) and what I have called the experiential "I" of the *Meditations*. The experiential "I" is a locus of personality and change; *personality* signifying that there must be a unique voice telling a particular story, and *change* signifying that the story takes place over a temporal period. There is congruence between this reading and the way Derrida and Foucault have considered the narrator of the *Meditations*.

The dispute between Derrida and Foucault is perhaps the most famous modern event in the interpretation of Descartes. I argue that their dispute is symptomatic of the way the text was written. Descartes wanted readers who would meditate seriously with him, and withdraw their minds from all preconceived opinions. His philosophy does not stand on the shoulders of

[44] Frow, *Marxism and Literary History*, p. 210. These 'chiasms' where different forms of dialogue intersect has also been explored by Juan Carlos Donado. Donado concludes that these chiasms are reconciled in the *Meditations* through the use of fiction. See Juan Carlos Donado, 'Chiasms in Meditation: or Towards the Notion of Cartesian Fiction', *Telos*, 162 (2013), pp. 113–130.

[45] Frow, *Marxism and Literary History*, p. 210. Frow here alludes to Bakhtin. For a more explicitly dialogical reading of the *Meditations*, see Alex Gillespie, 'Descartes' Demon: A Dialogical Analysis of *Meditations on First Philosophy*', *Theory Psychology*, 16/6 (2006), pp. 761–781.

Aristotle and the great Scholastic writers. The success of his arguments does not depend on appeal to these prior authorities. Instead, the success of his philosophy is dependent on the experiential engagement of individual readers. Descartes appeals to the authority of personal experience. And these appeals to authority in the form of personal experience are perhaps best understood as appeals to authority in the form of narrative. The use of the experiential "I"—that is, the "I" which employs both time and narrative—is such that each reader, in *experiencing* the *Meditations*, is also brought to a place of transformation; modification; conversion. I have highlighted the dispute between Foucault and Derrida here precisely because it helps to indicate how readers of the *Meditations* will become *authors* in their own right; the text demands divergent interpretations precisely because it creates diverse interpreters. Every reader will arrive at the text with a unique history of experiences. They will read the text, and become the "I" that enacts meaning. Thus, when readers step into the text with their interpretative power, they will engage in the *activity of creation*, and so occupy that god-like position of the author. Each reader will, as Descartes himself suggests, 'make the thing his own' (CSM II 110). The inability of Derrida and Foucault to reconcile their divergent interpretations might be because they were no longer reading the *Meditations*: they were writing them.

Descartes has been called the 'father of modern philosophy'. I read this as opaquely alluding to the following. Through the use of narrative, he has created a conversion machine, through which each reader will become authors in their own right. The text itself promulgates diverse readings: from the authors of the *Objections* who first grappled with these concepts; from Wilson, Frankfurt, Williams and Kenny who were unable to reconcile the role of the narrator in their analytic readings; from scholars such as Levy, Gorham, Arthur, and Secada, who looked at the non-endurance doctrine through the lens of Scholastic thought, rather than through the lens of temporality and narrative; from Gueroult, Menn and Hanby, who were each seeking a historiographic reading, yet found no common ground among themselves; from scholars debating whether the *Meditations* is a work of meditation or a philosophical treatise. And from Derrida and Foucault, whose disparate interpretations of the narrator led to a bitter falling out which lasted over a decade. The history of Cartesian scholarship is a history of authorship. Narrative is essential to the process of conversion within the *Meditations* which turns readers into authors. The experience at the heart of the *Meditations* is the continuous creation of new narrative voices for philosophy.

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