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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Reconsidering the Imagery of Descartes' Universal Doubt: Insights from the Foucault-Derrida Debate

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Abstract

In Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*, the conceptual imagery of "madness" serves as a motif that has received less attention than dreams and the deceiving God in the context of universal doubt. Foucault and Derrida engage in a debate concerning its relationship with dreams; the former posits a fundamental difference between madness and dreams, while the latter holds an opposing view. From the perspective of ideas and appearances, distinguishing between madness and dreams is challenging; however, their essential difference lies in the application of will and its infinite power. This paper analyzes the underlying causes of these two phenomena from the dimensions of ideas and will. It aims to demonstrate that madness arises because the will possesses only undifferentiated freedom and cannot spontaneously follow clear and distinct ideas to make rational judgments. This indicates that the madman' s will, with its "godlike" infinite power, is exercised recklessly, making madness a threat that must be excluded in the process of doubt. Therefore, the essential distinction between madness and dreams lies at the level of will, and Foucault's interpretation is more accurate.

Keywords: Doubt, Madness, Dreams, Will.

1. Introduction

Descartes' philosophy begins with universal doubt, questioning sensory perceptions and mathematical truths, paving the way for the certainty of "I think, therefore I am." It is commonly believed that Descartes engages in two rounds of skepticism in the *First Meditation*: first, doubt about the senses through the dream argument; second, doubt about the nature of external objects through the hypothesis of a deceiving God or evil demon.(Wilson 2-3). In contrast, the "madmen" seem to have received less attention from interpreters. Why does Descartes introduce the imagery of madmen shortly after initiating his doubt? Does the appearance of the madmen constitute a reason for or a necessary step in the process of doubt? Apart from the description in paragraph four of the *First Meditation*, Descartes rarely mentions madmen. Therefore, answering these questions depends on exploring and analyzing the underlying mechanisms behind the imagery of madmen.

2. Foucault and Derrida's Debate

Fortunately, Descartes' imagery of madmen has attracted the attention of Michel Foucault, who viewed Descartes' discussion of madmen in the *First Meditation* as a pivotal point in the history of madness. In his work *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, Foucault dedicated only a few pages to Descartes' madmen but offered insightful perspectives. It is important to note that this book primarily explores the complex relationship between madness and reason, rather than focusing solely on Descartes. Jacques Derrida, however, criticized Foucault's interpretation. In his lecture "*Cogito et histoire de la folie*" Derrida presented an opposing view of Descartes' imagery of madmen. This paper will first review the differing interpretations of Foucault and Derrida. Building upon this, it will analyze the errors of madmen and their underlying causes from the perspectives of ideas and will, aiming to address the questions raised in the debate.

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In the process of doubting sensory perceptions, the skeptic initially posits that "the senses occasionally deceive us with respect to objects which are very small or in the distance". (CSM II 12)[1]. Conversely, common-sense believers maintain that our perceptions of surroundings and proximate objects cannot be doubted. This perspective suggests that we lack sufficient grounds and reasons to question beliefs such as " I am here, sitting by the fire, wearing a winter dressing-gown, holding this piece of paper in my hands, and so on." (CSM II 13). At this juncture, the imagery of madmen begins to intervene in the argumentation process. The skeptic argues that if one attempts to doubt these seemingly indubitable beliefs, "unless perhaps I was to liken myself to madmen" (CSM II 13), it becomes evident that madmen are starting to move to the opposite side of rationality. Immediately thereafter, the skeptic lists some "symptoms" of madmen who are in an abnormal or irrational state, such as "maintaining they are kings when they are paupers, or saying 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." (CSM II 13) Finally, the skeptic makes a judgment about madmen: "such people are insane, and I would be thought equally mad if I took anything from them as a model for myself."(CSM II 13) The skeptic concludes that emulating the reasoning of madmen would lead to a similar state of mental confusion. Following the imagery of madmen, the skeptic presents a scenario akin to madness—the dream argument. Experiences when I am awake can be as vividly presented in dreams or while asleep, ultimately leading to the conclusion that "I see plainly that there are never any sure signs by means of which being awake can be distinguished from being asleep." (CSM II 13). This argument casts doubt on the veracity of all sensory experiences. However, the skeptic acknowledges that, whether awake or asleep, some fundamental elements of experience remain indubitable and real, much like the colors an artist uses when depicting fantastical subjects. Thus, the first round of doubt ultimately halts in the face of those simplest and most general things, namely the nature of external objects which is exemplified by mathematical truths, such as the "corporeal nature in general, and its extension" (CSM II 14).

Foucault keenly captures this round of doubt, particularly the imagery of madmen. He argues that "Descartes does not avoid the threat of madness in the same way he avoids the possibilities of dreams and errors." (Foucault 56). The reason lies in the unequal roles and status that dreams and madness play in the process of universal doubt. As previously mentioned, dreams indeed constitute a general doubt of the senses; however, even in dreams, there are elements that remain indubitable, namely some "residue of truth"(Foucault 56). Some elements escape the threat of dreams, particularly those that are simple and universal. This suggests that while dreams are erroneous sensory experiences, they can be overcome within the realm of rationality due to their inclusion of truthful components. Even in dreams, "truth does not completely slip into the night."(Foucault 57)

The situation of madmen is entirely different; they represent an extreme state of irrationality, one that the skeptic cannot accept or even comprehend. Madness is not merely an error but also "the condition of impossibility for thinking"(Foucault 57). In simple terms, a madman lacks the capacity for rational thought, placing him directly opposite rational doubt. To continue rational thought and doubt, the skeptic must exclude and reject madness. Madness signifies an inability to engage in rational thinking, representing the impossibility of doubt (Cf. McGushin 183). In other words, while the errors found in dreams can be addressed and overcome through their inherent truths, the extreme irrationality of madness can only be dismissed and excluded by the skeptic, as rationality and madness are incompatible. To even imagine oneself in a state of madness is itself a form of madness. Thus, madmen and dreams occupy entirely different domains, the former are completely excluded because they have nothing to do with truth. This exclusion forms the philosophical foundation for the classical age's attitude toward madness, where madmen are "imprisoned" within the prison established by reason. Therefore, the imagery of madmen is neither a reason for nor a means of doubt but a defensive strategy. By excluding madmen, the skeptic avoids the possibility of losing rationality, thereby ensuring the protection of both rational identity and rational doubt.

Derrida disagrees with Foucault's interpretation because "unreason and reason mark a distinction with a vanishingly small difference,"(Mercer 9) a subtle, almost imperceptible difference. First, the dream argument is "an exaggeration of the hypothesis that the senses sometimes deceive me."(Derrida 75) Dreams not only serve as a reason for doubt but also expand the scope of doubt, as dreaming can render all sensory experiences doubtful. However, the elements

[1]Descartes' s works are cited from *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, tr.& ed. by J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch and A. Kenny, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984-1991, abbreviated 'CSM', with volume and page numbers.

of truth remaining in dreams are quickly overwhelmed by higher-order metaphysical doubt. Second, Derrida believes that the transition from madness to dreams exemplifies the broadening of skeptical boundaries. Madness "accidentally and partially affects certain domains of sensory perception." (Derrida 79) In contrast, dreams are a more general and universal phenomenon, representing a more extreme and broader form of skepticism, therefore, dreaming can universally cast doubt on the entirety of sensory experience. Overall, Derrida maintains that the differences between dreams and madness are merely quantitative, not qualitative, and that the former can encompass the latter. After all, the skeptic "regularly has all the same experiences while asleep as madmen do when awake ". (CSM II 13)

Therefore, Derrida concludes that although "dreamers are further from true perception than madmen",(Derrida, 79). Descartes does not exclude madness. Even if I am a madman, the Cogito is still valid and effective (Cf. Derrida 86-87). Madness can be seen as an exaggerated or special case of dreams, and dreams as an expanded form of madness. There is no essential difference between the two, and neither is excluded by Descartes. We can even say that madness is inherent in Descartes' text and the Cogito, considering that possibility of madness is part of the process of assuring one' s rationality. This leads to significant disagreements with Foucault regarding the relationship between dreams and madness, and consequently, Descartes' attitude toward madness. Since Descartes "does not provide a single definition in his discussion of madmen", (Cf. Kambouchner 215) we are prompted to question what errors madmen commit and whether there is a fundamental difference between madness and dreams. Furthermore, do madmen constitute a necessary step or reason for doubt?

3. Ideas in Madness and Dreaming

In fact, Descartes rarely mentions madmen in his other works. However, in his earlier work, *Optics*, he offers a physiological explanation for this phenomenon: "First, it is the soul which sees, and not the eye; and it does not see directly, but only by means of the brain. That is why madmen and those who are asleep often see, or think they see, various objects which are nevertheless not before their eyes."(CSMI172) Descartes suggests that the errors in sensory perception observed in madmen and sleepers arise because "certain vapors disturb their brain and arrange those of its parts normally engaged in vision exactly as they would be if those objects were present.... If the position of these nerves is changed by any unusual cause, this may make us see objects in places other than where they are."(CSMI 172-173) This represents Descartes' first level of explanation of madness: due to disturbances in the brain's physiological structure, madmen often perceive objects or events that do not truly exist or have not occurred. Consequently, they frequently mistake non-existent things for real ones and believe unreal events to be true, aligning with Descartes' concept of "material falsity" mentioned in the Third Meditation.

From Descartes' perspective, sensation or sensory perception contains little truth and can easily lead us to erroneous judgments. This is because there exists a special form of error in sensation, termed "material falsity." From a metaphysical perspective, this error lies in "representing non-things as things" (CSM II 30). In other words, the true nature or state of an object does not correspond with or resemble the idea we have of it, they might even be entirely opposite, such as perceiving heat as cold. From an epistemological perspective, such ideas are often obscured and confused, and therefore possess a very low degree of reality. As Descartes explains to Arnauld, "my only reason for calling the idea 'materially false' is that,owing to the fact that it is obscure and confused, I am unable to judge whether or not what it represents to me is something positive which exists outside of my sensation."(CSM II 164). The content of these ideas is extremely "obscured and confused" because of their inherent lack of reality, making it difficult to "tell, due to the idea' s confusion and obscurity, what kind of thing the idea represents"(Kaufman 397).

According to Descartes' explanation, "material falsity" describes ideas that do not belong to the category of clear and distinct perceptions, it primarily refers to sensory or adventitious ideas, including those artificially invented and constructed by humans. From Descartes' physiological analysis of the union between mind and body, sensory ideas "are always proximately occasioned by characteristic brain states, but only remotely and partially caused by such things as the sun, a dog, or heat"(Nelson 19-20). In the perceptual state of madmen, the body's disordered state leads them to represent sometimes non-existent objects as actual entities. Specifically, Descartes, in his earlier works, described in detail how images of external objects are transmitted through organs like the eyeball and nerves to the brain . By the operation of various organs, this "image" is imprinted on the pineal gland, ultimately triggering and causing the corresponding sensory perception. For madmen, due to interference

from vapors affecting the brain's structure, their representational function at the physiological level is impaired. They always represent non-existent external things or events that have not occurred as if they are real, leading them to understand the opposite of what is actually sensed. This is the error madmen commit at the level of ideas or representations. Descartes' descriptions of the causes of sensations align with his physiological explanations of madness.

So, can we distinguish between madmen and dreams at the level of ideas or representations? From a broader perspective, both situations involve representing non-existent things as if they exist, making it difficult to differentiate them based solely on representations. However, Descartes' explanations in the *Fourth Set of Replies* provide a clue. First, regarding ideas that are materially false, he reiterates that "it arises solely from the obscurity of the idea."(CSM II 164) In other words, all materially false ideas are obscured and confused. Second, this implies that not all confused ideas are materially false, the two sets are not entirely overlapping or equivalent, indicating some distinctions between materially false ideas and other confused ideas.(Cf. Field, 315). Third, the difference lies in the extent or degree to which these ideas lead to errors in judgment. "Yet ideas which give the judgment little or no scope for error do not seem as much entitled to be called materially false as those which give great scope for error."(CSM II 163) He further notes that other "confused ideas which are made up at will by the mind, such as the ideas of false gods, do not provide as much scope for error as the confused ideas arriving from the senses, such as the ideas of color and cold".(CSM II 163) In essence, both types of ideas are obscured and confused, however, sensory ideas are more aptly termed "materially false" than those arbitrarily fabricated and invented by thought. When confronting materially false or sensory ideas, we are more susceptible to errors. In contrast, when dealing with ideas "arbitrarily invented" by thought, our disposition and possibility of making a wrong judgment is relatively lower. In summary, Descartes differentiates between ideas based on their origin and their potential to lead to error. Sensory ideas, due to their inherent obscurity, are more likely to mislead our judgment than fabricated or invented ideas, thereby earning the designation of "materially false."

Based on this conclusion, we need to re-examine the representational states of madness and dreams. As previously mentioned, the representations of external objects in madmen are often formed through sensory-derived, materially false ideas. In contrast, the situation with dreams is slightly different. During dreaming, our senses are mostly in a "dormant" state and do not receive external information as they do when awake. In other words, the ideas in dreams are not entirely derived from sensory input as in the case of madness; instead, they are more arbitrarily constructed by the mind from previous ideas, akin to how an artist paints by deconstructing and reassembling elements of reality. This suggests that while the ideas in dreams are also confused, they are not entirely materially false. Most ideas in dreams are confused but non-materially false, whereas the ideas possessed by madmen are more materially false. Therefore, we can say that the ideas of madmen align more closely with the definition of materially false ideas, as they open up a larger scope for error and are more prone to leading to wrong judgments. This is a significant distinction between the two at the level of ideas. Thus, although both dreams and madness involve representing non-things as things, there are still certain differences between the ideas found in dreams and those in madness when considering the distinctions mentioned above. However, does this constitute the essential reason for the errors committed by madmen? And is this the essential difference between madness and dreams?

4. Will in Madness and Dreaming

In fact, the explanations of the two types of ideas—those derived from sensory perception and those constructed by thought—do not reveal a deeper distinction between madness and dreams. In other words, it is difficult to differentiate between the two solely at the level of ideas and representations. First, the difference between the two types of ideas lies only in their potential to induce erroneous judgments. But strictly speaking, both essentially belong to the category of obscured and confused ideas. Second, according to Descartes, "material falsity" specifically refers to those obscured and confused ideas that provide the material for erroneous judgments, rather than being formal errors in themselves. The actual error lies in the will's act of making erroneous judgments.

The root of error arises from the misuse of the will's capacity, stemming from the different scopes of the intellect and the will. First, the functions of the intellect and the will differ: "The intellect perceives ideas, the contents of potential judgments; the ideas are affirmed or denied by an act of will. "(Patterson 81) Second, their scopes differ: "The perception of the intellect extends only to the few objects presented to it, and is always extremely limited. The will, on the

other hand, can in a certain sense be called infinite, since we observe without exception that its scope extends to anything that can possibly be an object of any other will-even the immeasurable will of God." (CSM I 204) Therefore, when faced with confused and obscured representations, we habitually think that "there were things outside me which were the sources of my ideas and which resembled them in all respects."(CSM II 25) The error lies in the infinite will surpassing the limited scope of the intellect, making habitual judgments "confidently." Ultimately, the will goes beyond the realm of representation, applies itself to objects lacking clear and distinct ideas, and then makes judgments about external things arbitrarily, leading to errors. In this case, judgments are incompatible with the order of representations, thus constituting the source of error.

Since the will's false judgments constitute true errors, it is essential to analyze the operation of the will in madness and dreams. Erroneous judgments by the will are frequent; compared to a rational person, madmen are more prone to making erroneous judgments that are more bizarre and further removed from rationality. Typically, although normal individuals may err, there is generally some correlation between their ideas and the corresponding objects. In contrast, madmen often have ideas that are unrelated or even entirely opposite to reality. Confronted with their dire circumstances, they still believe themselves to be powerful kings. In such bizarre and confused representations, the will not only fails to suspend judgments cautiously but also firmly affirms these ridiculous ideas. Even if we concede that their experiences are somewhat linked to reality, compared to dreams, these experiences are undoubtedly more absurd and detached from reality, suggesting that madmen endure a more extreme form of belief incompatibility. In other words, they not only have material falsity at the representational level but also make arbitrary and capricious judgments about the ridiculous content of representations, "firmly maintaining they are kings"(CSM II 13).

This represents the fundamental error in both cases of madness and dreams: the erroneous judgments of the will. Behind formal errors lies the more significant role of the will. Facing various bizarre and confused representations, the will can make judgments freely and arbitrarily. Descartes broadly distinguishes two types of freedom, the first is the freedom of indifference. This occurs when the intellect's perception of things is unclear or confused, preventing the will from making autonomous judgments or choices, resulting in indecision or hesitation, Beyssade described it as a "wavering or balance due to ignorance". (Beyssade 194) Descartes notes that the will's freedom in this context is merely a minimal degree of freedom, and such "indifference is inessential to human freedom". (Tlumak 92) The second is the freedom of spontaneity, this is characterized by the will's spontaneous self-determination, guided by clear and distinct perception.

From another perspective, this indecision and indifference conceal a right of free choice inherent in the will, allowing it to make decisions freely and choose arbitrarily between options(Cf. CSM III 245). This indifference or infinite power of the will establishes a similarity between the humans and God (Cf. CSM II 40). God's will exercises its power freely in creation or arrangement (Cf. CSM II 294), which not only constitutes God's indifferent freedom but also reflects His incomprehensibility. Similarly, I can freely make decisions and choices using my own will's infinite power. Therefore, in a state of indifference, the will possesses an infinite power to "do or not do (that is, to affirm or deny, pursue or avoid)" (CSM II 40), akin to the infinite divine will. The higher form of freedom arises when the intellect has clear and distinct perceptions, enabling us to transcend the indecision of indifference. "If I always saw clearly what was true and good, I should never have to deliberate about the right judgment or choice" (CSM II 40), and this provides overwhelming persuasive force, rendering all other reasons unpersuasive, allowing the will to follow these perceptions easily or actively.

However, unlike rational individuals who spontaneously follow and judge clear and distinct ideas, madmen can still freely make arbitrary judgments on unclear representations, constructing their own world. This precisely highlights the infinite power similar to the divine will in a state of indifference. The divine will, with its indifferent freedom, makes itself the creator of eternal truths. Madmen cannot create truths, but they can, through this power, freely make judgments that seem ridiculous and irrational to ordinary people, even judgments that are anti-representational. The indifference of the will's power makes madmen display a state "resembling God." Confronted with various representations, madmen can affirm or deny them at will, regardless of how anomalous or bizarre these representations are. This seems to lead to an astonishing conclusion: irrational madmen do not possess rational spontaneous freedom but only arbitrary or indifferent freedom. The will of rational individuals may err when facing sensory ideas but spontaneously assents to clear and distinct ideas.

In contrast, the indifferent power of madmen allows them to deny or dissent even in the face of clear and distinct ideas. "Descartes evidently thinks that it is an essential aspect of madness to be unable to distinguish properly between reasonable and unreasonable judgments."(Frankfurt 52) Therefore, this suggests that when confronted with mathematical truths like "two parallel lines never intersect," a madman' s will may not spontaneously affirm it as a normal person's would but may deny or doubt it. Even if he affirms it, it is not out of the spontaneity of his will, or rather, he merely affirms it by chance.

In other words, whether facing obscured and confused ideas or clear and distinct ones, madmen can only make arbitrary judgments according to their own will in a state of indifference, lacking the higher form of spontaneous freedom. Therefore, "truth" becomes irrelevant to them. In brief, due to impaired representational abilities and an extremely irrational states, the will of madmen can only have indifferent freedom akin to that of God, allowing them to make a series of anomalous judgments. Such an infinite will's power is natural and appropriate for God but is difficult to accept for finite beings like us. On the one hand, the absence of spontaneous freedom leads madmen to make judgments that seem absurd to ordinary people, and they lack the capacity to attain truth. On the other hand, their will operates in a manner akin to "unruliness". This infinite will seems to transcend all limitations and influences of representations, unbound even by clear and distinct ideas, constructing a personal world according to their own will, much like God's creation and arrangement, though it remains an internally consistent world that does not correspond to the outside world for the most part. The will's indifferent power is fully applied and revealed in madmen, allowing their will to make judgments entirely unrelated to reality and even to refute clear and distinct ideas, including rejecting eternal truths. Thus, within their extreme irrationality, madmen achieve a semblance of divine "omnipotence", becoming a "miniature" God of their own world.

From the above analysis, it is not difficult to see that the madman not only holds numerous "materially false" ideas at the level of representation but also commits formal errors at the level of the will. What is more crucial is that madman's will, which consistently possesses indifferent freedom and infinite power. This even allows him to "resist" the "kidnapping" of clear and distinct ideas, and this point constitutes the key difference between the madman and the dream.

First, it is certain that we form ideas and make judgments in our dreams.(Cf. Hanna, 380.). Second, the discussion of dreams in the *First Meditations* clearly reveals that even though the images in dreams are entirely fictional and erroneous, "these general kinds of things—eyes, head, hands and the body as a whole—are things which are not imaginary but are real and exist." (CSM II 13). This is similar to what Foucault noted, that in dreams, including other types of sensory errors, there are still remnants of truth as fundamental components, such as "arithmetic, geometry, and other subjects of this kind, which deal only with the simplest and most general things". (CSM II 14). These elements are true and consistent in and out of the Cogito, and "it seems impossible that such transparent truths should incur any suspicion of being false" (CSM II 14.). When these ideas are presented, even in a dream, our will can only make affirmative judgments or express agreement, just as in the spontaneous free state when awake.

Third, and most importantly, this spontaneous freedom is something that the madman's will lacks. As mentioned earlier, the madman's irrational state prevents him from distinguishing between rational judgments based on clear and distinct concepts and other irrational judgments. Regardless of the type of ideas, the madman's will only makes arbitrary judgments in a state of indifferent freedom. Therefore, when clear and distinct ideas emerge, the madman's will may not spontaneously make an affirmative judgment. These ideas no longer possess the overwhelming persuasive power they have when presented to a rational person, and can no longer "coerce" the will into spontaneously agreeing. The madman' s will contradicts the fixed matching of clear and distinct ideas and the will's spontaneous judgments. Even if the madman makes an affirmative judgment or expresses agreement, it is entirely based on arbitrariness and chance. In other words, the madman cannot attain truth through this operation. Thus, the madman reveals the true "God-like" aspect of his will, which also constitutes the most fundamental difference between the madman and dreams—namely, the operation of the will's freedom and its infinite power.

However, this distinction seems to lead to a dangerous conclusion. If the madman can doubt or make judgments with indifferent freedom like God, then in paragraph 9 of the First Meditation, the doubt about mathematical truths introduced by the deceiving God—was it not already carried out by the madman in paragraph 4? Since things considered innate ideas and eternal truths are not truly innate and eternal

but can be doubted and denied by some, does the appearance of the deceiving God seem somewhat redundant? In fact, although the madman can already refute or doubt mathematical truths, he does so in an irrational manner, and therefore this doubt is not the one Descartes intended. Thus, in paragraph 9 of the *First Meditation*, the doubter actually doubts mathematical truths from a metaphysical perspective beyond everyday experience. The omnipotent God causes an effect that I cannot understand, like 2+3=6, making mathematical truths invalid. The deceiving God elevates doubt to a metaphysical level, whereas madness represents a failure of reason and a constant misuse of the will. His doubt or absurd judgment about truth only concerns his internal thought and does not reach the universality and systematization of the deceiving God.

In other words, even if a madman believes that "2+3=6", this does not make the proposition universally valid or true, whereas the deceiving God can cause mathematical truths to be universally and systematically doubted. Thus, the madman' s "reckless" denial or rebuttal is not a true doubt about mathematical truths; rather, it becomes something to be excluded due to the threat it poses to the rational order. From this perspective, the madman cannot form a step or reason in the process of doubt.

5. Conclusion

Starting from the debate between Foucault and Derrida, this paper analyzes madmen from two perspectives: ideas and will, and discusses their distinction from dreams. Through the analysis in this paper, it is evident that there is not much difference between madness and dreams on the level of ideas or representations, but there is an essential difference on the level of will. It is not correct to simply regard the madman as a special version of dreams, as Derrida does, or to see dreams as an expansion or generalization of madness. Therefore, Foucault's judgment is more accurate, although he may not have explicitly clarified this; that the distinction between the two is more intensely focused on free will.

At the level of ideas, the madman mostly holds "materially false" ideas through the senses; whereas in dreams, our senses are often not in their normal working state, and the ideas therein are more a reorganization and re-presentation of previously attained ideas by the mind. However, this is not the most essential difference, as the ideas in both can be seen as representations of non-existent things. The more crucial distinction lies at the level of the will. In dreams, the will still somewhat aligns with the normal functioning of rational beings, and even in dreams, our will spontaneously agrees with ideas about those simple and general things. Dreams cannot destroy or undermine the truth of these ideas. For madmen, these ideas might still hold outside of thought, but they do not necessarily hold for the madman himself. The lack of rational ability in the madman disrupts the cognitive operation described in the *Fourth Meditation*, preventing him from attaining truths and spontaneous freedom. He can only make judgments based on what he wants to believe or hopes will happen, disregarding facts. Therefore, for these simple and general ideas, the madman' s will does not spontaneously agree or consent as a normal person would, but instead exercises infinite power in a state of indifferent freedom to make arbitrary judgments, whether agreeing or not.

Therefore, madness and dreams are not merely different in terms of the scope and universality of doubt, as Derrida suggests. There is a more essential difference in the application of the will between the two forms of imagery. The madman' s irrational state and constant misuse of the will make him an "insulator" of truth, which is not permitted by Descartes or the skeptic. Thus, Foucault's judgment is more accurate: the madman cannot be simply classified within the realm of dreams. The specificity of dreams lies in that, on the one hand, they make the totality of the senses fall into doubt; on the other hand, the remaining rational elements within them form the second wave of doubt, which Descartes used to push universal doubt to its climax, namely the "deceiving God" and "evil demon". Therefore, dreams intrinsically constitute a real step and reason for doubt. The madman' s appearance is more like an "red line" that the skeptic sets for himself in the process of doubt. Doubt cannot be a form of madness, so the madman must inevitably become the object to be excluded by the skeptic.

Finally, we can further discuss the question of whether the madman constitutes a reason for doubt based on the overall *Meditations*. This image appears from the perspective of common-sense, whose position is a rebuttal to universal doubt. In other words, the madman does not appear in the sections advancing or pushing doubt, but rather as a tool for defending sensory beliefs and common-sense views. What the common-sense thinker seeks to prove is that if you are a normal or rational person, you should not doubt sensory beliefs about the body or surrounding things,

otherwise, you would be a madman. Therefore, in the process of doubt, the madman does not appear as a reason for doubt but rather as a defender of common-sense beliefs. Subsequent meditations can be seen as a response to universal doubt, aiming to rebuild what was affected by that doubt. However, in the subsequent meditations, the image of the madman seems to vanish. Especially in the *Sixth Meditation*, which regains material things, Descartes only responds to the argument for dreams at the end and does not mention the threat posed by madmen. Therefore, from Descartes' perspective, madness is not a clear step of doubt and does not require reestablishment or response.

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