

First paper

Answer the following question in a paper that is 900 words (about 3 pages) long. Turn the paper in to Michael Green's box in 208 Pearsons by 11 am on Monday, September 17.

In the First Meditation, Descartes resolves to reject opinions if he finds "some reason" for doubting them (second paragraph, p. 13/AT 18). In the last paragraph, he says that he will "suppose" that there is an evil genius who has systematically deceived him (p. 16/AT 22). Your task is to explain how that is relevant to Descartes's project. After all, I can suppose that I am seven feet tall. "If I were seven feet tall," I might say, "my pants would not fit and my head would hit the door frame." But that would not give me any reason to doubt that I am, in fact, merely five feet, eight inches tall (in shoes). Why did Descartes think that supposing there is an evil genius who has deceived him casts any doubt on what he believes?¹

¹The page numbers refer to pages in the third Hackett edition, translated by Cress. The AT numbers refer to page numbers in the standard edition of Descartes's collected works, edited by Adam and Tannery, hence AT. They are the numbers in the margins.