

Reading Assignment 10: Descartes' Early Philosophy of Mathematics

Required Readings: Rules 2-4, 10 and 12-15 of Descartes [1985].

Questions:

- Why, according to Descartes, are arithmetic and geometry free from any taint of falsity or uncertainty? Explain.
- In Rule 3, Descartes discusses the distinction between deduction and intuition. Would Descartes agree that to intuit a triangle is imagine it or picture it in one's mind's eye? Explain.
- In Rule 10, Descartes claims that Aristotle's syllogistic reasoning can never teach us anything that we did not previously know. Explain Descartes' argument to the best of your ability.

References

Rene Descartes. Rules for direction of the mind. In John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, editors, *The philosophical writings of Descartes*, volume 2. Cambridge University Press Cambridge, 1985.