

**THE MEDITATIONS, AND SELECTIONS FROM
THE PRINCIPLES OF RENÉ DESCARTES. WITH A
PREFACE, COPIES OF ORIGINAL TITLE
PAGES, A BIBLIOGRAPHY, AND AN ESSAY ON
DESCARTES' PHILOSOPHY BY L. LÉVY-BRUHL,
MAÎTRE DE CONFÉRENCES IN THE SORBONNE**

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The Meditations, and Selections from the Principles of René Descartes. With a Preface, Copies of Original Title Pages, a Bibliography, and an Essay on Descartes' Philosophy by L. Lévy-Bruhl, Maître de Conférences in the Sorbonne by René Descartes & Lucien Lévy-Bruhl & John Veitch

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RENÉ DESCARTES & LUCIEN LÉVY-BRUHL & JOHN VEITCH

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RENÉ DESCARTES

(1596-1650)

I'd deny I had a body too if it looked like his!!

THE MEDITATIONS
AND
SELECTIONS FROM THE PRINCIPLES
OF
RENÉ DESCARTES
(1596-1650)

TRANSLATED BY

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WITH A PREFACE,
COPIES OF ORIGINAL TITLE PAGES,
A BIBLIOGRAPHY, AND AN ESSAY ON DESCARTES' PHILOSOPHY
BY L. LÉVY-BRUHL, MAÎTRE DE CONFÉRENCES
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CHICAGO
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PUBLISHERS' PREFACE.

An authorized reprint of Veitch's translation of Descartes' *Discourse on Method* has already been published as No. 38 of the Religion of Science Library. The present volume is a reprint of the remainder of Veitch's translations of Descartes' representative speculative treatises. The *Meditations on the First Philosophy* are translated entire, and the preface and the first part of the *Principles of Philosophy*, together with selections from the second, third and fourth parts of that work, corresponding to the extracts in the French edition of Garnier, are also given, as well as an appendix containing part of Descartes' reply to the *Second Objections* (*viz.*, his formal demonstrations of the existence of Deity), and Veitch's notes. The translations are based on the original Latin editions of the *Meditations* and *Principles*, published respectively in 1641 and 1644. Both works having been translated into French during Descartes' lifetime, and personally revised and corrected by him, the French text is evidently deserving of the same consideration as the Latin originals, and consequently, the additions and variations of the French version have also been given—the additions being put in square brackets in the text and the variations in the footnotes.

Dr. C. Güttler, of the University of Munich, has just published (Munich: C. H. Beck. 1901) a new critical and annotated edition of both the Latin and French texts of the *Meditations*, and students desirous of consulting the sources may be referred to this easily accessible book. Dr. Güttler made use of the copy of the original Latin edition (1641), preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris, and of the copy of the original French translation by the Duc de Luynes (1647) found in the University Library at Göttingen. Literal copies of the title-pages of these original editions, as given in Dr. Güttler's work, are also reproduced in the present volume. The most recent French edition of the *Meditations* is that of Émile Thouverez (Paris: Belin Frères. 1898).

With a view to rendering the volume as complete and serviceable as possible, the publishers have added by way

of a general introduction, Professor L. Lévy-Bruhl's essay on the philosophy of Descartes, which appeared in his *History of Modern Philosophy in France* (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co. 1899). A brief bibliography of Cartesian literature has also been appended.

It merely remains for us to add a few remarks as to the technical history of the *Meditations*, and to refer to the prevalent misconception that Descartes regarded his famous dictum, *Cogito, ergo sum*, as having the force of a syllogism.

The first draft of the *Meditations* was written in 1629 while Descartes was sojourning at a chateau of a noble family named Sjärdama, in Francker, a small university town in Friesland. In a letter to Gibieuf, dated July 18, 1629, Descartes speaks of a small metaphysical tract on which he was engaged, and on April 15, 1630, he writes to Mersenne from Amsterdam that he had devoted the first nine months of his stay in Holland to meditation on the problem as to how the proofs of the truths of metaphysics might be rendered more evident than the demonstrations of geometry. The treatise did not see the light however, until 1641. In the meantime, the great work on *The World* was written (1633) and suppressed, and the *Discourse on Method* and the treatises on *Dioptrics*, *Meteors*, and *Geometry* (1637) appeared. It was to offset the criticisms which were aimed at these latter works by Fermat, Petit, De Roberval, Voëtius, Bourdin and others, that in 1639 Descartes took up the draft of the old tract prepared ten years before, to remodel it into an independent and systematic treatise on metaphysics. To forestall all possible animadversions, and to render his exposition explicit on all points, he submitted his manuscript before printing, to a number of learned men for examination and critical analysis. With the so-called *Objections*, which these critics supplied, and Descartes' answers, the book finally appeared on August 28, 1641. The authors of the *Objections* were: Caterus, a theologian of Louvain (First *Objections*); Mersenne, Desargues, and anonymous critics (Second and Sixth *Objections*); Hobbes, Arnauld and Gassendi (Third, Fourth and Fifth *Objections*). In later editions, other *Objections* were incorporated. The title *Meditationes* was chosen in contradistinction to the *Quaestiones* and *Disputationes* of scholastic literature.

The frequent misconception that Descartes regarded his famous *cogito, ergo sum*, as having the force of a syllogism also deserves brief mention. Descartes himself, although not always careful as to his mode of expression on this point, has explicitly anticipated the objection so often made to his reasoning. In *Meditation II*. (see pages 30-33) he omits the "therefore." In his reply to Gassendi's objection that *cogito ergo sum* implies *qui cogitat est*, a pre-judgment, Descartes says:

"The term *pre-judgment* is here abused. Prejudgment there is none, when the *cogito ergo sum* is duly considered, because it then appears so evident to the mind that it cannot keep itself from believing it, the moment even it begins to think of it. But the principal mistake here is this, that the objector supposes that the cognition of particular propositions is always deduced from universals, according to the order of the syllogisms of logic. He thus shows that he is ignorant of the way in which truth is to be sought. For it is settled among philosophers, that in order to find it a beginning must always be made from particular notions, that afterwards the universal may be reached; although also reciprocally, universals being found, other particulars may thence be deduced." Again he says: "When we apprehend that we are thinking things, this is a first notion which is not drawn from any syllogism; and when some one says, *I think, hence I am, or I exist*, he does not conclude his existence from his thought as by force of some syllogism, but as a thing known of itself; he sees from this, that if he deduced it from a syllogism, he must beforehand have known this major, *All that which thinks is or exists*. Whereas, on the contrary, this is rather taught him, from the fact that he experiences in himself that it cannot be that he thinks if he does not exist. For it is the property of our mind to form general propositions from the knowledge of particulars."

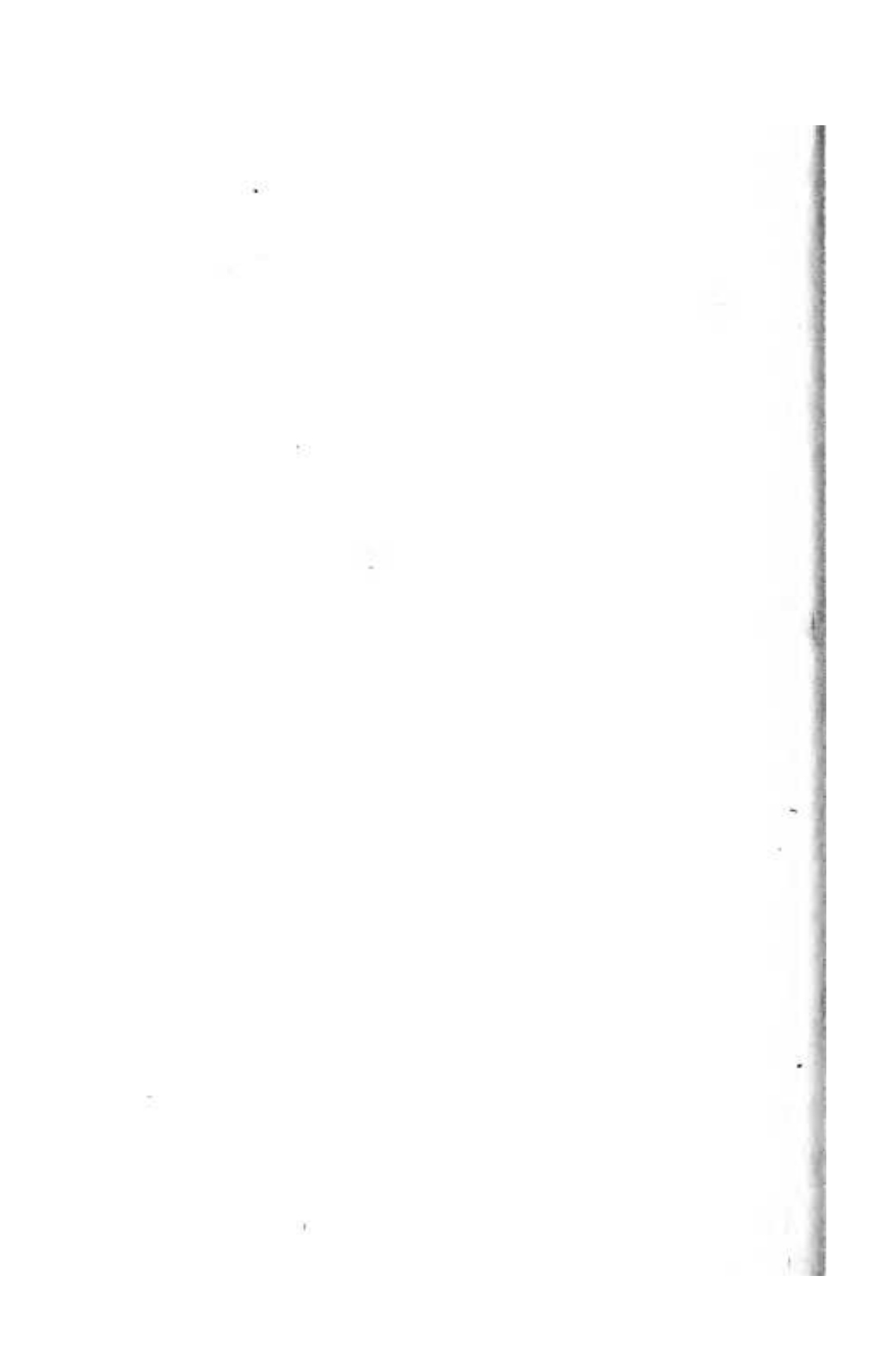
In other places, also, Descartes has made the same distinct assertion.* Finally, Mr. C. S. Peirce, in THE OPEN COURT of June 15, 1893, cites a passage in a letter to Clerelier:

"Je pense, donc je suis, ne suppose pas la majeure, *Tout ce qui pense existe.*"

T. J. McCORMACK.

La Salle, Ill., September, 1901.

(*See M. Cousin's edition, T. I., 247, 403; T. II., 74, 333.)



ESSAY ON DESCARTES.

BY PROF. L. LÉVY-BRUHL.

With Descartes a new period of modern philosophy begins. It is not, indeed, a beginning in a literal sense: there is no such thing in the history of ideas, nor elsewhere. Descartes, who came after the great scientific and philosophical illumination of the sixteenth century, had profited largely by it. He owed much to the Italian Renaissance, and not less to the Renaissance in France and in England. He was acquainted with the discoveries of contemporary men of science, such as Galileo, Torricelli, and Harvey. Even scholastic philosophy, which he was to combat, left a lasting impression upon his mind.

However, after we have considered all the influences, both of the past and of the present, which were exercised upon him, the originality of Descartes shines out all the more conspicuously, and we see the more clearly that he initiated a new philosophic method. Hegel called him a hero, and this hyperbole may in a certain sense be justified. Descartes had, indeed, no vocation for martyrdom. But nature had endowed him with that higher sort of courage which is love of truth and devotion to science; and if the name of hero is due the men whose exertions have laid open new paths for human thought, Descartes is undoubtedly entitled to the name.

The attitude of Descartes toward the philosophers who preceded him is remarkable,—he deliberately ignores them. Although well acquainted with their works, he builds his own system as if he knew nothing of them. He wishes to depend solely on his own method and reason. Not that he personally holds in contempt either the ancient or the modern philosophers. He is not so presumptuous as to believe that his mind is superior to theirs. He even acknowledges that many truths had been discovered before he created his method, but these truths he does not wish to accept on tradition. He is determined to discover them for himself. By means of his