

**DISCOURSE ON THE METHOD
OF RIGHTLY CONDUCTING
THE REASON, AND SEEKING
THE TRUTH IN THE SCIENCES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649028962

Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason, and Seeking the Truth in the Sciences by René Descartes

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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RENÉ DESCARTES

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DISCOURSE

ON THE

METHOD OF RIGHTLY CONDUCTING THE REASON,
AND SEEKING TRUTH IN THE SCIENCES.

BY DESCARTES.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH:

WITH AN INTRODUCTION.

EDINBURGH: SUTHERLAND AND KNOX.

LONDON: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, AND CO.

MDCCCL.



EDINBURGH : T. CONSTABLE, PRINTER TO HER MAJESTY.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

WITH respect to the Tract, of which a translation is here presented, it may be proper to state, that what refers strictly to its matter has been reserved for the Introduction.

It may be necessary, however, here to mention, that the DISCOURSE ON METHOD is possessed of a twofold value and interest ; *firstly*, on account of the doctrines which, viewed in itself, the Tract contains ; and, *secondly*, from its being the general introduction to the works of DESCARTES, which, as is well known, were the means of eliciting the intense philosophical activity of the last two centuries, of determining the current of this activity, and of raising those problems with which philosophical schools continue at this hour to grapple.—The Translator would consider that an important end had been promoted were the present translation of the METHOD to aid in fixing the attention of those interested in philo-

sophical pursuits on the other works of its great Author.

It is hoped, moreover, that the METHOD may prove a somewhat suitable accompaniment to the LOGIC of the PORT-ROYAL. These treatises possess each, indeed, a separate utility: and, though the end sought by each is different, the realization of the ends of both is necessary to perfect knowledge. For while the practical end of Logic is the right ordering of the matter of thought, the end of the DISCOURSE ON METHOD is mainly to manifest the reality, and determine the sphere of knowledge: and the latter process does not yield in importance or necessity to the former.

With reference to the translation, it is proper to state that, though the French work has been taken as the basis, the Translator has not considered himself bound to adhere, in every instance, to its text. The *first*, or French edition has, indeed, been carefully compared throughout with the Latin; and, as this edition is declared by DESCARTES to have been revised by himself, and to contain amendments on the original from his own hand, the preference has been accorded to it in all cases in which it has appeared to the Translator that the meaning is more perfectly given.*

* Compare, e.g., Rule III., ΜΕΤΗΟΔ, Part II., in the French and Latin.

The Translator is not aware of the existence of any previous English version of the METHOD.

The Translator willingly takes this opportunity of acknowledging his great obligations to Professor MACDOUGALL. To his minute revision of the translation numerous improvements are due.

EDINBURGH, *October* 1850.

INTRODUCTION BY THE TRANSLATOR.

THE DISCOURSE ON METHOD principally contains two things:—

1. An account of the *Philosophical Method* of its author.*
2. A summary of the *Chief Results* of the Method.

* DESCARTES was born at La Haye, in Touraine, in the year 1596, and died at Stockholm in 1650. Of the particulars of his life, it is unnecessary to say anything, as a knowledge of them is easily accessible. The *Discourse on Method* contains, moreover, an account of the rise and progress of his speculations; and it is in his character of thinker and philosophical reformer that we have now to deal with him.

The principal works of DESCARTES are—

1. The four Treatises originally published in a single volume with the following title, *Discours de la Méthode pour bien conduire sa Reason, et chercher la Vérité dans les Sciences. Plus, la Dioptrique, les Météores, et la Géométrie, qui sont des Essais de cette Méthode.* Leyden, 1637.

The Method, Dioptrics, and Meteorics, were translated into Latin by Courcelles, and published at Amsterdam in 1644. There is also by DESCARTES a fragmentary treatise, the subject of which is kindred to that of the Method. It is entitled, *Regula ad Directionem Ingenii*; and to it is annexed another entitled, *Inquisitio Veritatis per Lumen Naturale*. These were published posthumously.

2. *Méditations de primâ Philosophiâ, ubi de Dei existentia, et animæ immortalitate.* Paris, 1641.

3. *Principia Philosophiæ.* Amsterdam, 1644.

4. *Traité des Passions de l'Âme.* Amsterdam, 1649.