



Meditations on First Philosophy

René Descartes (1596 - 1650) Translated by John Veitch (1829 - 1894)

Read by:	D. E. Wittkower	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
Length:	3 hours 27 minutes	Catalog:	DB-1187
Language:	English	UPC:	0683422135071
Style:	Solo	MSLP:	\$9.99
Genre:	Philosophy, Religion		

The Meditations on First Philosophy, which carries the subtitle “In which the existence of God and the immortality of the soul are demonstrated”, is a detailed presentation of the metaphysical and philosophical systems of Descartes that became a fundamental document in the development of western thought and one of the most influential ever written. The book consists of six meditations in a narrative voice that suggests they had taken place in six days; each refers to the previous as “yesterday”. In the course of the narrative he attempts to discard belief in things which are not for certain and establish what can, in fact, be known for sure.

Meditations was one of the first manuscripts to undergo peer review: Descartes submitted his manuscript to numerous philosophers and theologians prior to publication, and included the objections and his replies in the first edition. The product of two years of effort, it first appeared in Latin in 1641 and was translated into French as *Médiatations Métaphysiques* in 1647. The first two meditations, which used the skeptical method of doubt to conclude that only the ego and its thoughts are unquestionably true, exerted a huge impact in the history of philosophy and are considered an indispensable first lesson in modern philosophical thinking. *The Meditations* continues to be a standard text in most university philosophy departments.

Rene Descartes (March 31, 1596 – February 11, 1650) was a French mathematician, scientist and philosopher who made significant contributions to the development of each of these disciplines. He was born in Touraine; his father was a member of Parlement of Brittany and his mother died when he was one year old. He studied at a Jesuit school and earned a law degree at the University of Poitiers. At age 24 Descartes had a series of visions in which a divine spirit revealed a new philosophy in which all truths were linked and a fundamental truth applied with rigorous logic would lead to a science of all things. These insights led him to the formulation of analytical geometry and to the notion of applying mathematics to philosophy, which revolutionized both mathematics and philosophy.

In mathematics, he developed analytic geometry, bridging algebra and geometry and elemental to the discovery of calculus, and created the system of Cartesian coordinates. Often called the father of modern western philosophy, he refused to accept the authority of the past and instead resolved to start at the beginning - “as if no one had written on these matters before” - and establish those things we could know for sure and discard those that could not. In doing so he laid the foundation for rationalism. His most famous statement - “cogito ergo sum” - “I think, therefore I am” - lies at the core of his philosophy, which asserted that the only thing we can know for certain is our own consciousness and thoughts.