

1.2 Introduction: The Modern Times

Times of many revolutions :

- Religion
 - Politics
 - Economics
 - Sciences
- Also in philosophy

Medieval Philosophy :

- Aristotle + Catholic Church – Scholastics
- Organistic worldview
- Natural purpose and place of human beings within God's Creation

Renaissance :

- Universal Reason
- Humanism
- Reformation

The challenge of Skepticism :

- Aristotle: source of knowledge = senses
- The problem: senses are unreliable

What alternative do we have?

Answer: Reason :

- Logic and Mathematics – Euclid's geometry – rational method – warranty of truth
- *Rationalism*

1.3 Descartes' Dedicatory Letter

AIM of the *Meditation* :

- To prove the existence of God and the Soul
- What is special about it? Rational Method.

METHOD of the *Meditations* :

- Faith vs. Rational Arguments
- Faith and Holy Scriptures for believers
- Natural Reason for atheists – more convincing
- Contrast: Faith and authority vs Reason and own mind
- New Method: Sciences
- Reformulate old argument in a systematic manner → definitive, certain and evident demonstrations, similar to the demo. of geometry

CONDITIONS for understanding the *Meditations* :

The reader must be:

- attentive
- free from prejudices – *including knowledge from books*
- detached from the senses – *source of knowledge for Aristotle!*

HORIZON of the Meditation – a new foundation of knowledge

- Preface to the reader: “and this time I am also going to deal with the foundations of the First Philosophy in its entirety”
- Cf. Letter to Mersenne (1/18/1641)

I may tell you, between ourselves, that these six Meditations contain all the foundations of my physics. But please do not tell people, for that might make it harder for supporters of Aristotle to approve them. I hope that readers will gradually get used to my principles, and recognize their truth, before they notice that they destroy the principles of Aristotle.

1.4 Ariew, 'The *Meditations* and the *Objections* and *Replies*

Ariew's main point :

- Block vs sedimentary view of Descartes' philosophy
- Ariew: sedimentary view

Discussion: ways to do history of philosophy :

- The "Old French" way: philosophies as unbreakable systems
- The "New French" way: historical point of view
- The analytic way: arguments and truth vs internal interpretation

What should we do?