

2103 Lecture Notes
Descartes
SBM, pp.87-108

Brief Biography

- Life (1596-1650)
- Physiology, Mathematics, Analytic Geometry, optics, etc.
- “Father of Modern Philosophy”: *Cogito ergo sum*
- Major Works: World (~1633*), *Discourse on Method* (1657), *Meditations* (1641), *Principles of Philosophy* (1644)

Project and Influence

- Complete, systematic knowledge of the world – single method
- Applies to all bodies of knowledge
- Descartes + Newton = Enlightenment

Method and Knowledge

- Geometric model of knowledge – Tree example (p. 95)
- Four Rules: *Discourse on Method* (1637) (p. 93)
 - Accept nothing as true which is not clearly recognized as true
 - Divide problems into parts and their order
 - Methodically construct knowledge (geometry)
 - Be systematic/complete/comprehensive
- *Principles of Philosophy* (1644) – recall Tree metaphor
 - Part 1: Principles of Knowledge (Metaphysics)
 - Part 2: Principles of Material Things
 - Part 3: heavens
 - Part 4: light, heat, etc.

Mechanical Philosophy

- No teleology – laws or mechanism describing motion
 - 1st Law: conservation of motion
 - 2nd Law: linear motion only
 - 3rd Law: inertia
- Corpuscularism (atomism) – matter in motion, nothing but...
- Mind + Body Dualism: thought vs extension

Last Thoughts

- Extremely influential project – Mechanical Philosophy
- Rationalism vs. Empiricism: compare with Bacon, later Locke and Hume
- Mind + Body?