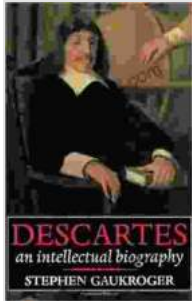


René Descartes: An Intellectual Biography by Stephen Gaukroger



Descartes: An Intellectual Biography by Stephen Gaukroger

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 7857 KB

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Screen Reader : Supported

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 520 pages

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René Descartes (1596-1650) was a French mathematician, philosopher, and scientist who is considered one of the most important figures in the history of Western thought. He is best known for his contributions to the development of analytic geometry, the scientific method, and the philosophy of mind.

In this comprehensive intellectual biography, Stephen Gaukroger provides a detailed account of Descartes' life and work. Gaukroger traces the development of Descartes' thought from his early years as a student at the Jesuit college in La Flèche through his later years as a leading figure in the scientific revolution.

Early Life and Education

René Descartes was born in La Haye en Touraine, France, on March 31, 1596. He was the third of eight children born to Joachim Descartes, a

lawyer, and Jeanne Brochard, the daughter of a wealthy merchant.

Descartes' mother died when he was only one year old, and he was raised by his maternal grandmother.

Descartes began his education at the Jesuit college in La Flèche in 1604. He excelled in his studies, and he quickly became one of the top students in his class. Descartes studied a wide range of subjects at La Flèche, including mathematics, physics, logic, and metaphysics. He also learned to speak and write Latin and Greek fluently.

Military Service and Travels

After graduating from La Flèche in 1614, Descartes spent several years traveling and serving in the military. He visited Italy, the Netherlands, and Germany, and he met many of the leading scientists and philosophers of his day. Descartes also served in the Dutch army during the Thirty Years' War.

During his travels, Descartes began to develop his own philosophical ideas. He was particularly interested in the problem of certainty. Descartes believed that the only way to achieve true certainty was to doubt everything that could be doubted. This led him to his famous method of doubt, which he used to prove the existence of God and the immortality of the soul.

The Scientific Revolution

In 1628, Descartes published his first major work, the *Discourse on Method*. This work outlined his method of doubt and his new philosophy of science. Descartes believed that the only way to understand the natural world was to use mathematics and experimentation. He also believed that

the mind and the body were separate entities, and that the mind could control the body.

Descartes' ideas had a profound impact on the development of the scientific revolution. He is considered one of the founders of modern science, and his work helped to lay the foundation for the development of calculus, physics, and other important scientific disciplines.

Later Life and Work

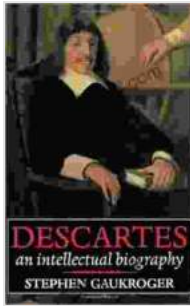
In the later years of his life, Descartes continued to develop his philosophical and scientific ideas. He published several more major works, including the *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641) and the *Principles of Philosophy* (1644). Descartes also corresponded with many of the leading intellectuals of his day, including Marin Mersenne, Pierre Gassendi, and Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia.

Descartes died in Stockholm, Sweden, on February 11, 1650. He was 53 years old. Descartes is buried in the Sainte-Geneviève-du-Mont Church in Paris.

René Descartes was one of the most important philosophers and scientists in Western history. His work had a profound impact on the development of modern thought, and his ideas continue to be debated and discussed today.

René Descartes: An Intellectual Biography by Stephen Gaukroger is a comprehensive and authoritative account of Descartes' life and work. This book is an essential read for anyone who wants to understand the history of philosophy and science.

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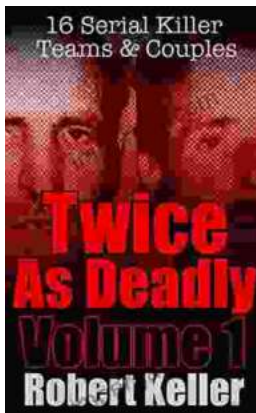
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