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第一哲学沉思集

MEDITATIONS ON FIRST PHILOSOPHY

[法]勒内·笛卡儿 著

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Meditations On First Philosophy

By *René Descartes*

English Translation By

*John Cottingham*

本书根据 Cambridge University Press 1993 年版本译出

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徐陶 译

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## Dedicatory Letter To The Sorbonne

To those most learned and distinguished men, the Dean and Doctors of the sacred Faculty of Theology at Paris, from René Descartes.

I have a very good reason for offering this book to you, and I am confident that you will have an equally good reason for giving it your protection *once you understand the principle behind my undertaking; so much so, that my best way of commending it to you will be to tell you briefly of the goal which I shall be aiming at in the book.*

I have always thought that two topics—namely God and the soul—are prime examples of subjects where demonstrative proofs ought to be given with the aid of philosophy rather than theology. For us who are believers, it is enough to accept on faith that the human soul does not die with the body, and that God exists; but in the case of unbelievers, it seems that there is no religion, and practically no moral virtue, that they can be persuaded to adopt until these two truths are proved to them by natural reason. And since in this life the rewards offered to vice are often greater than the rewards of virtue, few people would prefer what is right to what is expedient if they did not fear God or have the expectation of an after-life. It is of course quite true that we must believe in the existence of God because it is a doctrine of Holy Scripture, and conversely, that we must believe Holy Scripture because it comes from God; for since faith is the gift of God, he who gives us grace to believe other things can also

## 献给索邦神学院的信

勒内·笛卡儿致那些最有影响的和卓越的人们,神圣的巴黎神学院院长和博士们。

我有很好的理由把这本书献给你们,并且我深信,一旦你们理解了我写这本书所采用的原则,你们会有同样好的理由来庇护这本书;因此,我向你们推荐它的最好办法就是简短地告诉你们我在这本书中所要实现的目标。

我一直认为,这两个主题——即上帝和灵魂——是应该借助于哲学而不是神学来进行论证的主题中的两个首要范例。对于我们信仰者来说,只凭信仰就足以让我们相信人类灵魂不会随同肉体而死亡,相信上帝存在;但是对于那些不信仰者来说,似乎不存在宗教,在实践中也没有道德之善,除非自然理性能向他们证实这两个真理,否则他们不会被说服去采纳它们。而且,既然在此生中,罪恶所获得的回报经常大于善德所获得的回报,那么,如果人们不是因为畏惧上帝或者期望来世的话,没什么人会喜欢正义甚于私利。当然,我们必须相信上帝的存在,这点是非常正确的,因为这是《圣经》所言,反之,我们必须相信《圣经》,因为这来自于上帝;因为信仰是上帝的恩赐,他给我们以恩惠使我们相信其他东西,同样也

give us grace to believe that he exists. But this argument cannot be put to unbelievers because they would judge it to be circular. Moreover, I have noticed both that you and all other theologians assert that the existence of God is capable of proof by natural reason, and also that the inference from Holy Scripture is that the knowledge of God is easier to acquire than the knowledge we have of many created things—so easy, indeed, that those who do not acquire it are at fault. This is clear from a passage in the Book of Wisdom, Chapter 13: ‘Howbeit they are not to be excused; for if their knowledge was so great that they could value this world, why did they not rather find out the Lord thereof?’ And in Romans, Chapter I it is said that they are ‘without excuse’. And in the same place, in the passage ‘that which is known of God is manifest in them’, we seem to be told that everything that may be known of God can be demonstrated by reasoning which has no other source but our own mind. Hence I thought it was quite proper for me to inquire how this may be, and how God may be more easily and more certainly known than the things of this world.

As regards the soul, many people have considered that it is not easy to discover its nature, and some have even had the audacity to assert that, as far as human reasoning goes, there are persuasive grounds for holding that the soul dies along with the body and that the opposite view is based on faith alone. But in its eighth session the Lateran Council held under Leo X condemned those who take this position, and expressly enjoined Christian philosophers to refute their arguments and use all their powers to establish the truth; so I have not hesitated to attempt this task as well.

In addition, I know that the only reason why many irreligious people are unwilling to believe that God exists and that the human mind is distinct from the body is the alleged fact that no one has hitherto been able to demonstrate these points. Now I completely disagree with this: I think that when

能给我们以恩惠使我们相信他存在。但是这个论证不能加给不信仰者,因为他们会认为这是循环论证。此外,我注意到你们和其他所有神学家不仅断定上帝的存在能够通过自然理性来加以证明,同时也注意到来自《圣经》的推论是,关于上帝的知识,要比我们已有的关于许多被造之物的知识更容易获得——实际上这是如此的容易,以至于那些不能获得关于上帝的知识的人就是有罪的。从《智慧书》第十三章的一段话中可以清楚地看到这一点,“即使如此,他们仍难辞其咎,因为既然他们的知识是如此巨大,以至他们能评价这世界,为何他们反而没有从中发现上帝?”《罗马书》第一章中,说他们“不能被饶恕”。在同一章里“关于上帝的知识明白地显示在他们心中”,这好像是告诉我们,关于上帝的任何知识,都能够通过推理来论证,而这种推理来源于我们自己的心灵而非其他。因此,我认为我要探究这是如何可能,并且探究上帝比这世界上的事物更容易和更确定地被我们认识到,这是非常正当的。

关于灵魂,很多人认为并不容易发现它的本质,而且一些人甚至胆敢声称,在人类理性所能达到的范围内,有令人信服的证据来支持以下观点:灵魂随同肉体而死亡,而相反的观点仅仅是基于信仰。但是在利奥十世主持的拉特兰宗教会议的第八次会议审判了持这种立场的人,基督教哲学家们也特意加入进来,以驳斥那些人的论证,并且运用他们的能力来确立真理;因此我也毫不犹豫地执行这项任务。

并且,我知道许多不信教的人不愿相信上帝存在,也不愿相信人类心灵不同于肉体,其唯一理由是他们声称:迄今为止没有人能够证明这两点。我现在完全反对这种说法:我认为只要加以

properly understood almost all the arguments that have been put forward on these issues by the great men have the force of demonstrations, and I am convinced that it is scarcely possible to provide any arguments which have not already been produced by someone else. Nevertheless, I think there can be no more useful service to be rendered in philosophy than to conduct a careful search, once and for all, for the best of these arguments, and to set them out so precisely and clearly as to produce for the future a general agreement that they amount to demonstrative proofs. And finally, I was strongly pressed to undertake this task by several people Who knew that I had developed a method for resolving certain difficulties in the sciences—not a new method (for nothing is older than the truth), but one which they had seen me use with some success in other areas; and I therefore thought it my duty to make some attempt to apply it to the matter in hand.

The present treatise contains everything that I have been able to accomplish in this area. Not that I have attempted to collect here all the different arguments that could be put forward to establish the same results, for this does not seem worthwhile except in cases where no single argument is regarded as sufficiently reliable. What I have done is to take merely the principal and most important arguments and develop them in such a way that I would now venture to put them forward as very certain and evident demonstrations. I will add that these proofs are of such a kind that I reckon they leave no room for the possibility that the human mind will ever discover better ones. The vital importance of the cause and the glory of God, to which the entire undertaking is directed, here compel me to speak somewhat more freely about my own achievements than is my custom. But although I regard the proofs as quite certain and evident, I cannot therefore persuade myself that they are suitable to be grasped by everyone. In geometry there are many writings left by Archimedes, Apollonius, Pappus and others which are accepted by everyone as evident and certain because they contain absolutely nothing that is not very easy to understand when considered on its own, and each step fits in precisely with what has gone before; yet because they are somewhat long, and demand a very attentive reader, it is only comparatively



恰当的理解,那些伟大人物在这个问题上已经提出的几乎所有论证都具有证明的力量,我相信不太可能提出任何先前没有被别人提出过的论证。不过,我认为在哲学中没有什么贡献能比得上以下行为,即细致地并且是一劳永逸地寻找到这些论证中的最好论证,然后明确和清晰地将其展示出来,以使今后大家普遍同意这样的论证就是最终的证明。最后,还有几个人强烈地督促我承担起这项任务,他们知道我已经发展出一种方法来解决科学中的某些难题——不是新方法(因为没什么比真理更古老),他们已经看到我在别的领域使用这个方法已获得成功;因此,我认为做些努力使其运用于我目前所承担的任务,这是我的职责。

这本论文集里包含了在这个领域我能完成的所有事情。但是在这里我并未收集完所有用来确立相同结论的不同论证,因为这似乎并不值得做,除非单独的论证被认为不是充分可靠的。我所做的仅仅是采用首要的和最重要的一些论证,并把它们按照某种方式来加以完善,以使我现在能够冒险把它们作为非常确定和显然的证明来提出。我还要作一些补充,这些证明是这样的一种证明,我认为人类理智不会有可能发现什么更好的证明了。我的整个事业所指向的目标的极端重要性和上帝的荣耀,使我在这里多少比平常更放肆地谈及我自己的成就。但是尽管我把这些证明看作是确定的和显然的,我仍然不能说服自己,使我相信它们适于被每个人领会。在几何学中,有许多阿基米德、阿波罗纽斯、帕普斯以及其他人所留下来的著述,这些著述被大家当作是显然的和明确的来加以接受,因为著述本身绝对不包含什么不是很容易被理解的东西,并且每一步与前一步都精确地符合;然而因为它们多少有点长,也需要有非常专心的读者,因此相对而言只有