

Method as Mythic Speech: A Challenge in the Historiography of Science—Descartes and Beyond

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Abstract: The *Regulae* and *Discourse on Method* teach a method that cannot work but which has persuaded many that it can—arguably including Descartes himself, at least up until the collapse of the *Regulae* in 1628. The problem, however, is more general, pertaining not just to Descartes' method but to any of the grand methods that have been proclaimed to be universal, efficacious and transferable: methods of Newton, Popper, Lakatos and others. All suffer from the same problem: Such methods consists of a type of discursive structure which [a] prevents the method from actually being efficacious; yet, [b] creates powerful literary effects (illusions) that the method is efficacious, progressive and transferable.

- 1.0 The Cult of Method in the History of Science and Cartesian Studies
- 2.0. Toward Methodological Atheism: Koyré, Bachelard and Kuhn on the History of Science
- 3.0 The Way Forward: Between Naïve Belief and Pure Debunking
- 4.0 Descartes' Method as Mythic Speech: Where 'Myth' is not a Colloquial Term of Abuse
- 5.0 The Failure of Adequate Redescription: An Example of Descartes Attempting to 'Methodologize' a Field of Inquiry
- 6.0 The Structural Levels and Underlying Metaphors in Descartes' [or Anybody's] Method Discourse
7. The First Two Structural 'Effects': Adequate Redescription' and 'Application'
8. The Third and Fourth 'Effects': the 'Unity' and 'Progress' of a Method Discourse
- 9.0 The Rhetorical/Political Use of Method-Talk Inside Actual Scientific Practice

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