

The unity of Descartes's thought
Katalin Farkas
Central European University, Budapest
farkask@ceu.hu

History of Philosophy Quarterly 22/1 (January 2005) 17-30

1. The problem

Article 48 of Descartes's *Principles of Philosophy* presents a confusing claim. Descartes first states that everything in the world belongs to one of two ultimate classes of things. The first is the class of intellectual or thinking things and their properties – perception and volition, for instance. The other class contains extended substance or body and its properties – the examples being size, shape, motion, position and so on. So far nothing is surprising; Descartes apparently only repeats familiar tenets of his dualist theory of substances. And then he says something puzzling.

But we also experience within ourselves certain other things which must not be referred either to the mind alone or to the body alone. These arise, as will be made clear later on, in the appropriate place, from the close and intimate union of our mind with the body. This list includes, first, appetites like hunger and thirst; secondly, the emotions or passions of the mind which do not consist of thought alone, such as the emotions of anger, joy, sadness and love; and finally, all the sensations, such as those of pain, pleasure, light, colours, sounds, smells, tastes, heat, hardness and the other tactile qualities. (CSM I 208-9, AT VIIIA 23.)¹

This is puzzling, because Descartes seems to contradict what he said just a few sentences back. If everything belongs to one of the two ultimate classes, thought or extension, then how should we understand the establishment of a third category – how should we understand the claim that certain features are to be assigned specifically to the union of mind and body?

Descartes defines substance as something that has independent existence. Since everything depends for its existence on God, created substances are substances in the qualified sense that they do not depend for their existence on other created substances. There are two kinds of created substances: thinking substances and extended substance. Everything else that we have an idea of – every property, quality or attribute – depends for its existence on a substance in which it inheres. Though Descartes may not state this explicitly, the suggestion is clearly that a certain quality or attribute needs precisely *one* substance for its existence. ‘... (I)f we perceive the presence of some attribute, we can infer that there must also be present an existing thing or substance to which it may be attributed’ says Descartes in article 52 of the *Principles* (CSM I 210, AT VIIIA 25). The next article of the *Principles* explains that each substance has a principal attribute which constitutes its essence, and that all the other properties of the substance are referred to this; for example, ‘imagination, sensation and will are intelligible only in a thinking thing’ (CSM I 211, AT VIIIA 25). Given this, everything in the created world does indeed fall into two ultimate classes: thinking substances and their properties on the one hand, and extended substance and its properties on the other. What is unclear is how the third class fits into this theory. Why should certain modes be referred to *two* substances, instead of only one? There is a clearly intelligible relation between a certain mode and a certain substance: that of ontological dependence. But the general theoretical framework does not readily offer a dependence-relation which links a certain mode to *two* substances, rather than to one.

But even if we could make sense of such a relation in general, there is still a problem. As we have just seen, the principal attribute of thinking substance is thought, and ‘whatever we find in the mind is simply one of the various modes of thinking.’ (CSM I 210, AT VIII A 25.) Earlier in the *Principles*, Descartes defines thought as follows:

By the term ‘thought’, I understand everything which we are aware of as happening within us, in so far as we have awareness of it. Hence, *thinking* is to be identified here not merely with understanding, willing and imagining, but also with sensory awareness ... (*Principles* I.9. CSM I 195, AT VIII A 7.)

The definition ‘everything we are aware of as happening within us’ encompasses, it seems, all the phenomena Descartes lists in article 48 as belonging to the third class. We are aware of hunger, as well as of joy or sadness and of sensations of pain, colour and so on. And indeed, Descartes explicitly mentions that sensory awareness is a mode of thinking.² Thus apart from the difficulties in the theoretical background, sensory awareness is once classified explicitly as belonging to the mind alone, and once as belonging to the union of mind and body. And this looks like a contradiction.

The difficulty becomes vivid if we recall the evil demon hypothesis. I could be deceived by the demon and be a disembodied mind, and still everything would seem the same. But this surely requires that, even in my disembodied state, I would have feelings and sensations – otherwise it would be very easy to establish whether I was being deceived by the demon or not. This means, however, that sensations and feelings do not require the existence of the body – how should we then understand that they ‘arise’ from its union to the mind? To this it may be replied that at the end of the Descartes’s investigations, the Evil Demon hypothesis turns out to be metaphysically impossible. A support for this might be found in the letter to More in August 1649, occasionally quoted in this context, where Descartes says that ‘the human mind separated from the body does not have sense-perception strictly so-called’ (CSMK 380, AT V 402.). But this statement hardly dispels our worries; for now we would like to know why, given that sensory awareness is a mode of thought, and given that thinking substance can exist independently of extended substance, a mind separated from the body would lack sense-perception? This question leads us back to the original problem.

Before turning to the discussion of possible answers to this question, it will be useful to separate it from other issues in the vicinity. The problem here is not the familiar one about the union of mind and body and their *interaction*. The interaction problem arises precisely because, according to Descartes’s official doctrine, mental events are modes of an immaterial substance, and bodily events are modes of a distinct material substance. Consequently, a bodily event causing a mental event or the other way around would involve the interaction between two different substances, and many claim this to be incomprehensible. The present puzzle, however, does not on the face of it concern causation between two substances; it is simply the problem of why any mode of a thinking substance would be referred also to a separate extended substance.

Another related issue which has been discussed extensively by Descartes’s commentators is the issue of the *union of mind and body*. There is a well-known tension in Descartes’s theory about human beings: while he insists that mind and body are distinct substances, he also claims that in the case of human beings, they form a ‘unity’ or ‘union’. This is expressed for example in the famous claim that ‘I am not merely present in my body as a sailor is present in a ship’ (CSM

II 56, AT VII 81). Various interpreters of Descartes have considered the question of whether he has succeeded in offering us a picture of a truly unified human being, and the role that sensory awareness plays in our lives is often indicated as a crucial element in this aspect of Descartes's theory. It has to be noted, however, that the 'union' question is somewhat vague: for how can we settle exactly whether mind and body are unified *enough* on a particular interpretation? Just how intimate should the connection between mind and body be so that we can safely assert that the two are not related as the sailor to his ship? It can be hardly expected that these sorts of questions will have a precise answer. In contrast, our present question is concrete and well-defined. It is the question of whether article 48 of the *Principles* and similar pronouncements contradict Descartes's dualist theory of substances and his definition of thought, for the reasons explained above.

2. Cottingham's interpretation

Article 48 is not an isolated occurrence of the idea that certain mental events are related to the union of mind and body. As John Cottingham points out³, the list of the varieties of thought given in the *Meditations* (similar to article 9 of the *Principles*, quoted above), already shows some hesitation in classifying imagination and sensory awareness together with other forms of thought.

But what then am I? A thing that thinks. What is that? A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, and also imagines and has sensory perceptions. (CSM II 19, AT VII 28)

The term 'also' separates imagination and sensory perception from the rest of the faculties. Cottingham thinks, plausibly, that Descartes here is anticipating the considerations he puts forward in the *Sixth Meditation*, where he classifies imagination and sensory perceptions as 'certain special modes of thinking' which do not belong to the pure intellect (CSM II 54ff, AT VII 78ff.)⁴ Supported by these and other examples, Cottingham draws the conclusion that 'even on Descartes's own account of these faculties, they do not fit happily within the confines of his official dualistic schema'.

One crucial passage quoted by Cottingham is from the *Sixth Set of Replies*, where Descartes distinguishes among what he calls 'three grades of sensory perception'.

The first is the immediate stimulation of the bodily organs by external objects; this can consist in nothing but the motion of the particles of the organs, and any change of shape and position resulting from this motion. The second grade comprises all the immediate effects produced in the mind as a result of its being united with a bodily organ which is affected in this way. Such effects include the perception of pain, pleasure, thirst, hunger, colours, sound, taste, smell, heat, cold and the like, which arise from the union and as it were the intermingling of mind and body as I explained it in the *Sixth Meditation*. The third grade includes all the judgements about things outside us which we have been accustomed to make from our earlier years - judgements which are occasioned by the movements of these bodily organs. (CSM II 294-5, AT VII 436-7.)

Cottingham offers a highly instructive demonstration of how the three grades are to be distinguished, for example, in the case of hunger. The first grade is the purely physiological aspect, the contraction of the stomach, the fall of blood sugar and so on. The second is the feeling or sensation of hunger – what Descartes describes in the *Sixth Meditation* as 'that curious tugging in the stomach'. And the third grade is a 'purely intellectual' judgement that 'this body needs food' or the decision that 'I need to take food'. Cottingham's main point is that the second

of these, the *sensation*, is clearly distinguished from the other two, because (1) the physiological event is neither necessary, nor sufficient for the occurrence of the sensation. The first case is illustrated by a comatose patient, who may have the physiological process without feeling anything, and the second is by a patient with a certain disease, who may feel hunger or thirst while the normal physiological processes are lacking. Similarly, (2) the intellectual event is neither necessary nor sufficient for the occurrence of the sensation, for on the one hand I could judge that my body needs food without feeling hunger, and on the other hand, even though I have the sensation, I could refrain from deciding to take food.

‘The three notions involved in the analysis of hunger are thus quite genuinely distinct’ Cottingham concludes (Cottingham, *op.cit.* note 3, 244). This points to ‘the emergence in Descartes’s writing, alongside his official dualism, of a more flexible trialistic pattern’ – hence the title of the paper ‘Cartesian Trialism’. Cottingham would probably not wish to argue for the existence of a *third substance*, a substance of mind-and-body, as the term ‘trialism’ might suggest. This would be implausible, since created substances should be capable of existing independently of other created substances, and the putative substance ‘mind-and-body’ could hardly exist without either the mind or the body. Cottingham’s point is rather that on this reading of Descartes, in the ultimate classification of things – like the one we saw attempted in article 48 of the *Principles* – we should employ three, rather than two basic categories, and this will give us a more satisfactory catalogue of various entities in the world. But while we should agree with Cottingham that the *three types of events* – physiological event, sensation and pure intellectual act – are distinct, this observation will not quite answer our original puzzle.

To support the claim that sensations can occur without the physiological event that *usually* accompanies them, he cites the case of Descartes’s dropsical patient from the *Sixth Meditation*.⁵ Descartes’s discussion is in the context of examining the question of how we learn from our sensations what is good for our body. The dropsical patient suffers from a dryness of the throat, hence has the sensation of thirst, and this might induce him to have a drink, with the unfortunate consequence of his disease being aggravated. If the physiological counterpart of the sensation of thirst were the *body’s need to drink*, then Cottingham would be right: the case illustrates how the sensation can occur in the absence of its usual accompanying physiological process. However, the text arguably suggests something different. Descartes’s point seems to be that while the *direct* cause of the sensation is always the same – the dryness of the throat, or even better, the motion this causes in the brain – the *remote* causes may vary. If this is right, it would be more natural to name the direct cause as the physiological counterpart of sensations. And the direct cause is present in the case of the dropsical patient.

What Descartes then says about pain corroborates this point. There is a characteristic sensation of, say, having pain in one’s left foot; in the ordinary course of things, this is brought about by the nerves in the left foot being affected, the impulse being forwarded into the brain, and the pineal gland making a specific impression on the mind. But Descartes points out that if we could somehow cause this specific motion in the brain or in the pineal gland directly, and not through the nerves of the foot, the sensation would be the same. This is why it is possible to feel pain in one’s left foot even when the foot is not hurt. But the interesting fact is that the direct cause of the sensation is the same: ‘a given motion in the brain must always produce the same sensation in the mind’ (*Sixth Meditation*, CSM II 61, AT VII 89.). Of course, from the fact that a

certain motion in the brain always creates the same sensation it does not, strictly speaking, follow that the brain's movement is *necessary* for the sensation. The point is only that the cases Descartes mentions here are not ones when a sensation occurs without its usual physiological counterpart.

Nonetheless, we have good reason to think that sensations can exist without the body – simply because sensation is supposed to be a mode of a thinking substance. Distinguishing sensations both from pure bodily and from pure intellectual events in the way Cottingham does may suggest that these special modes of thought are, as it were, in an *equal distance* from pure intellect and pure body. But this isn't quite right. The fact that the physiological event is distinct from the sensation supports Descartes's official dualism: that the sensation, being a mode of a thinking substance, does not presuppose the existence of bodily substance. Arguing from the other direction brings a different result. While it may be true that, in a particular mind, an event of sensation and an event of pure judgement are separate, there is no reason to assume that the sensation does not presuppose the existence of a *thinking substance* in which it inheres. Cottingham's evidence for the distinctness of the three grades therefore does not undermine the essential asymmetry of metaphysical dependence for the special modes of thinking, which follows from Cartesian dualism: modes of thought should presuppose the existence of thinking substance, but not the existence of bodily substance. In fact, if Cottingham is right, the original puzzle remains unsolved. The initial idea was that the special modes are assigned to the union of mind and body because their occurrence seems to require some physiological activity. (Cottingham, op .cit. note 3, 238.) But if closer inspection reveals that the physiological activity and the mental event of sensation are after all independent, we still lack an explanation of why sensations need both mind and body.

3. Separable from me

There is another idea emerging in Descartes's writings about the special modes which might tempt us with a solution. In the famous passages of the *Sixth Meditation* about imagination and sensory perception, Descartes states that

I can clearly and distinctly understand myself as a whole without these faculties; but cannot, conversely, understand these faculties without me, that is, without an intellectual substance to inhere in. This is because an intellectual act is included in their essential definition; and hence I perceive that the distinction between them and myself corresponds to the distinction between the modes of a thing and the thing in itself. (CSM II 54, AT VII 78.)

This is indeed an important difference between the special modes and the faculties belonging to the pure intellect: the latter are, the former are not, essential to the existence of a thinking thing. We might then contemplate the following line of thought: if we consider a thinking thing on its own, stripped of all its accidental properties, what we have is a pure intellect. Anything that belongs to the mind in this state truly does belong to the mind alone. When the mind is united to the body, some further events arise from the union: these are the events of the special modes. Since their emergence is dependent on the union, we can see that they are accidental to the mind; at the same time, since they emerged from the union, the mind is essential to *their* existence – just as the above quotation states. Descartes himself – at least at one point – seems to suggest

that the essential/accidental difference is sufficient to explain why certain modes of thought need the union of mind and body. In a letter he writes:

I do not see any difficulty in understanding on the one hand that the faculties of imagination and sensation belong to the soul, because they are species of thoughts, and on the other hand that they belong to the soul only in so far as it is joined to the body, because they are kinds of thoughts without which one can conceive the soul in all its purity. (Letter to Gibieuf on 19 January 1642. CSMK 203, AT III 479.)

Unfortunately, we can hardly consider this line of thought as a complete explanation of our problem. True, once we accept that the special modes emerge from the union of mind and body, and also that the mind can exist on its own, it follows that the special modes are not essential to the mind. But the explanation of our phenomenon would require drawing a conclusion the other way: we should be able understand how the union-relatedness of the special modes *follows* from the fact that they are not essential to the mind. Things, however, do not run smoothly in this direction. Suppose that we establish, as Descartes claims he has done in the *Sixth Meditation*, that I can clearly and distinctly understand myself without the special modes, and hence that they are not essential to a thinking thing as such. Perhaps it will be natural to assume that since special modes don't necessarily make an appearance in a pure intellect, something *other* than an intellect is needed for their occurrence, and this other thing is, most plausibly, the body. But we still need an explanation of *how this is so much as possible*, given that, according to Descartes's official doctrine, the mind, with all its modes, essential and accidental alike, is distinct from the body. The above line of thought already presupposes that we can make sense of how special modes require the union, and does not explain it.

4. Immediate effects

Let us go back to the passage about the three grades. The first grade is the physiological process, followed by the second grade which 'comprises all the immediate effects produced in the mind' ('continet id omne quod immediate resultat in mente'; AT VII 437.) The key here is the word 'immediate'. If we turn to other descriptions of the sensation process, the expression reoccurs: for example, later in the *Principles*⁶ Descartes provides a somewhat more detailed explanation of how the movement in the nerves contributes to the physiological aspect of perception:

The result of these movements being set up in the brain by the nerves is that the soul or mind that is closely joined to the brain is affected in various ways, corresponding to various different sorts of movements. And *the various different states of mind, or thoughts, which are the immediate result of these movements are called sensory perceptions*, or in ordinary speech, sensations. (CSM I 280, AT VIIIA 316, my emphasis)⁷

As a first approximation, we can say this: the special modes of thought are none other but the *immediate effects of the body on the mind*. It seems that whenever Descartes describes the immediate effects of the body on the mind, it is always a 'special mode' of thinking. We do not encounter 'purely intellectual' events directly caused by a bodily event.

Moreover, there seems to be evidence that the *only way* for the special modes to occur is through the direct involvement of the body. The workings of imagination is a case in point. In a well-known passage of the *Sixth Meditation*, Descartes claims that there is a difference between merely understanding a pentagon (as a figure with five sides), and imagining it, as it were, with 'my mind's eye' (CSM II 50, AT VII 72.). The latter act, according to Descartes, requires 'a

peculiar effort' not required by the former. What might this peculiar effort be? In a letter to Princess Elizabeth, Descartes discusses another example of imagination. In a town it is announced that the enemy is coming to besiege it. Hearing this, people first form a conception of the danger. This is an intellectual act, an action of the soul, and as such to be distinguished from the occurrence of emotions or passions:

The souls can receive the emotion that constitutes the passion only after they have made the judgement, or at least conceived the danger without making a judgement, and then imprinted an image of it in the brain, by another action, namely imagining. When a soul does this it acts upon the spirits which travel from the brain through the nerves into the muscles ... the fresh spirits returning from the heart to the brain are agitated in such a way that they are useless for forming any images except those which excite in the soul the passion of fear. All these things happen so quickly one after the other that the whole thing seems like a single operation. (Letter to Princess Elizabeth, 6 October 1645. CSMK 271, AT IV 312-3.)

Here, as before, Descartes distinguishes between the 'pure intellectual' event of forming a judgement or a conception of the danger, and the event of the emotion caused by it. The judgement and the emotion may follow each other so quickly, that we might think we witness one single operation, or that the judgement causes the emotion directly. In fact, the emotion will not rise unless the imagination first affects the brain, the brain affects the nerves, and the resulting nervous agitation, in turn, will send back some spirits to the brain which will have the effect of imprinting images on the soul. In other words, the working of imagination is such that the resulting mental state - a fearful imagination of the approaching enemy - can come about *only through the influence of the body*.⁸

The 'peculiar effort' required for visualising a pentagon is, we can assume, this: the mind has to affect the body in such a way that the body would send back an appropriate impulse whose immediate effect on the mind would be the visual image of a pentagon. Memory is described as a similar process in the *Passions of the Soul*.

... when the soul wants to remember something, this volition makes the gland lean first to one side and then to another, thus driving the spirits towards different regions of the brain until they come upon the one containing traces left by the object we want to remember. (art. 42, CSM I 344, AT XI 360.)

The resulting movement of the spirit makes a similar impression upon the soul as the perception of the original object, and hence memory arises. The pattern is the same: an act of the will first effects the body, and the resulting effect of the body on the mind is the emergence of memory. A mental event belonging to the 'special modes' is an immediate effect of the body on the mind; such an event can be caused by another mental event (such as the judgement or decision) *only indirectly*, by first affecting the body, which in turn, will have a direct effect on the mind.

5. Nothing comes from nothing

The suggestion is that special modes include all and only mental events which cannot be caused directly by another mental event. In other words, *events belonging to the special modes need an extra-mental proximate cause* (where 'extra-mental' is understood as outside a particular mind, rather than a non-mental entity). Moreover, Descartes holds the proposition that nothing can come from nothing to be an eternal truth, something which is very evident by the natural light. (*Principles* I.49, I.18 CSM I 209, AT VIIIA 24 and CSM I 199, AT VIIIA 11.)⁹ No event

without a cause: this means that for an event belonging to the special mode to occur, its proximate cause, outside the mind, has to exist too. So far we have been considering only bodies as possible extra-mental causes, but we have to take into account other possibilities as well. It is clear that God could cause mental events directly, and before the Evil Demon hypothesis is excluded, the Demon is presented in the same role. Bodies, God, the Demon - they are all possible extra-mental causes whose immediate effect on the mind is an event belonging to the special modes. Of course, Descartes's final, considered position in the *Sixth Meditation* is that we can exclude the second two options. Notice that the treatment in the *Sixth Meditation* fits nicely the present suggestion if we reconstruct Descartes's reasoning along the familiar lines: special modes need extra-mental causes; the options are bodies, God, and the Demon; but if God caused our sensations directly, he would be deceiving us, which cannot be right; and if sensations came from the Demon, this would still amount to a deception which is incompatible with God's benevolence; hence they must come from bodies; hence bodies exist.

This way of looking at things will help to explain the earlier discrepancy we noticed between assigning the special modes to the union of mind and body on the one hand, and the possibility of a disembodied mind having sensations and sensory perceptions on the other. Special modes need extra-mental causes, and the default assumption is that these are provided by the body. However, at least at some stage of the inquiry, we need to consider the possibility that instead of our bodies, it is the Demon – or God – who causes these events. After Descartes excludes these alternatives, we can work with the assumption that events belonging to the special modes are caused by the body. The metaphysical principle which underlies the claim that sensations belong to the union of mind and body is the principle that there is no event without a cause. But this is not incompatible with the real distinction between mind and body. The principle which justifies the distinctness of mind and body is the principle that created substances are capable of existing independently from *other created substances* – but not, of course, without the concurrence of God. Accordingly, the mind, and all the modes of thought – including the special ones – are capable of existing without the body; what would be required in that case is that God assumed the usual causal role of the body. The characteristic feature of the special modes – that for their ordinary occurrence, the existence of their proximate cause, the body must exist – is not, therefore, incoherent with Descartes's substance dualism.¹⁰

6. Union of mind and body

What has been said so far explains how the treatment of the special modes fits into Descartes's theory about substance dualism. Admittedly, it does not explain *everything* about the union of mind and body. Our problem was *not*, to begin with, *how interaction is possible* between mind and body, so the solution of our problem does not fully make clear this – possibly problematic – aspect of Descartes's philosophy.

The suggestion presented here may shed some further light on the question of the union of mind and body. Some readers of Descartes think that the 'union' problem is simply the same as the interaction problem: union is created by the causal interaction between mind and body. Others hold that the curious expressions 'intermingling' or 'substantial union' indicate an assumption of a stronger and less accidental tie between mind and body, something which could make their union more intelligible.¹¹ If the present interpretation is right, this is some evidence

for the first view. For what is required for an event belonging to the union to occur is only that the body should have an immediate causal effect on the mind.

Twenty-first century readers may also note a curious fact about Descartes's theory of the special modes. Here is a typical example of what, in contemporary philosophy of mind, is often seen as a motivation for holding a dualist theory of the mind and body.

We are tempted to take conscious experience as paradigmatically mental. Moreover, a headache, an itch, a sudden thought, a feeling of joy, a pang of longing, or the awareness of a beautiful blue may seem very different from any physical process such as the excitation of nerve ends in the brain. We have a direct acquaintance with experiences and mental processes in general that, it seems, we can never have with physical processes. Some such line of thought may persuade us to accept some form of dualism ...¹²

According to this line of thought, the best examples of mental events which seem strikingly different from physical events are conscious experiences with a phenomenal character. If we take this striking difference at face value, we are likely to end up with some kind of dualism. And everyone knows that the philosopher who most influentially represented the dualist view in the modern philosophical tradition was Descartes.

What we saw in this paper shows that the facts are rather different from this textbook view.¹³ Descartes's special modes encompass precisely the very events which, according to the contemporary classification, are the most conspicuous examples of events with a phenomenal character: sensations, sensory perceptions, emotions and so on. Far from thinking that these are paradigmatically mental, Descartes claims that they are accidental to the mind. And instead of regarding their existence as the main reason to hold dualism about mind and body, he thinks that these mental events are the ones most closely connected to the body.¹⁴

¹ ‘CSM’ = J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff and D. Murdoch (editors and translators), *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vols. I. and II.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1984). ‘AT’ = Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (eds.), *Ouvres de Descartes* (Paris: Vrin/CNRS 1966-76). References to Descartes’s works throughout the paper are to these editions. References to Descartes’s letters below are from the following edition: J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch and A. Kenny (editors and translators): *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes Vol. III.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991), abbreviated as ‘CSMK’.

² A similar definition and the inclusion of the operation of the senses among thoughts is in the *Second Set of Replies*, CSM II 113, AT VII 160.

³ John Cottingham, ‘Cartesian Trialism’, *Mind*, XCIV No. 374 (April 1985), 218-30. Reprinted in *René Descartes, Critical Assessments*, ed. G. Moyal (London: Routledge, 1991). Vol. III, 236-248. References are to the latter edition. Though some of Cottingham’s conclusions will be criticised here, his paper provided an invaluable help in understanding this aspect of Descartes’s thinking.

⁴ Another well-known occurrence of the idea that certain faculties belong to the union of mind and body rather than to the mind alone, is in Descartes’ letter to Princess Elizabeth on 21 May, 1643. See CSMK 218ff, AT III 665ff.

⁵ Cottingham, op.cit. note 3, 243 and footnote 21, the reference is to CSM II 58, AT VII 84.

⁶ This is article 189 of Part 4, the place which is referred to in article 48, as the ‘appropriate place’ where it will be made clear how certain phenomena arise from the union of mind and body.

⁷ “Atque hae diversae mentis affectiones, sive cogitationes, ex istis motibus immediate consequentes, sensuum perceptiones ... appellantur.” See also the description of forming a visual perception in art. 35 of the *Passions*: ‘the two images in the brain form only one image on the gland, which acts directly (*immédiatement*) upon the soul and makes it see the shape of an animal.’ (CSM I 342, AT XI 356.) Or viewing it from the body’s point of view, see *Passions* article 51. ‘the ultimate and most proximate (*la dernière et plus prochaine*) cause of the passions of the soul is simply the agitation by which the spirits move the little gland in the middle of the brain’ (CSM I 349, AT XI 371.)

⁸ See also the description of the workings of the imagination in the *Passions*: article 43, CSM I 344, AT XI 361.

⁹ See also the axioms in the *Second Set of Replies*, CSM II 116, AT VII, 164f.

¹⁰ The following objection might be raised: if a sensation causes a mental event which belongs to the pure intellect, then the body will figure in the causal history of the pure intellectual event. Does this not imply that the body is needed for these kind of events, too? The answer is no. It is arguable that the ‘No event without a cause’ is meant for *proximate*, rather than for remote causes – see the discussion of these two kinds of causes in Descartes’ *Comments on a Certain Broadsheet*, CSM I 304ff, AT VIII B 358ff.

¹¹ As an example of this latter view, see for example Paul Hoffman, ‘The Unity of Descartes’s Man’ *Philosophical Review* XCV No.3 (July 1986) 339-370. Hoffman argues that the key to the understanding of the mind-body union is that the mind inheres in the body as form inheres in the matter. He criticises representatives of the former view, like Margaret Wilson, for claiming that ‘the union of mind and body is nothing other than their interaction’. See her *Descartes* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1978, 219), quoted by Hoffman on p. 340.

¹² Gilbert Harman, *Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1973), 35.

¹³ Wilson op.cit. note 11 also points out important differences between contemporary and Cartesian dualism.

¹⁴ Versions of this paper were presented at the *IUC Conference on Mental Phenomena V*, Dubrovnik, Croatia, 2002 and the Open Session of the *Joint Session of the Aristotelian Society and the Mind Association*, Belfast, 2003. I would like to thank audiences present at these lectures, and Michael V. Griffin for helpful written comments. I gratefully acknowledge the support of the Hungarian OTKA, grant no. F 032218.