

*Essays on Descartes*, by Paul Hoffman. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009. Pp. viii + 282. H/b \$65.00.

A year before his death in 2010, Paul Hoffman published this collection of fourteen essays on René Descartes, two of which appear here for the first time. This book serves as a testament both to Hoffman's philosophical acumen and to his contribution to the history of early modern philosophy over the past twenty-five years: three of the essays featured in the volume — 'The Unity of Descartes's Man' (pp. 15–32), 'Cartesian Passions and Cartesian Dualism' (pp. 105–24), and 'Three Dualist Theories of the Passions' (pp. 179–95) — have captivated Anglo-American scholarship since their publication. Beyond his trademark close textual exegesis, the defining feature of Hoffman's work on Descartes is his insistence that Descartes remains committed to a number of Aristotelian doctrines. Though this was a novel claim in English twenty-five years ago, that no one would disagree with this assessment today is due, in part, to Hoffman's work. Thus, the evaluative question of greatest interest is not whether Descartes was an Aristotelian, but whether he was an Aristotelian in the three specific ways Hoffman claims, which are: (1) Descartes adopts a version of Aristotelianhylomorphism to explain the ontology of the human being, which for him is a third substance on a par with mind and body; (2) Descartes accepts an Aristotelian and distinctly un-Humean view of causation where the 'action' (*actio*) in the agent-cause and the 'passion' (*passio*) in the recipient effected are numerically identical; and (3) Descartes commits himself to an Aristotelian 'incorporation thesis', whereby the thing perceived by the mind with objective existence is the same thing existing in the world (pp. 3–4).

The book is organized into four parts. In the first part, Hoffman's focus is on (1). This is the longest part of the book and includes Hoffman's earliest and rightly famous paper — 'The Unity of Descartes's Man'. The second part deals with Descartes's view of causation, where Hoffman details (2), both as it relates to the interaction of mind and body in what Hoffman calls 'straddling modes' between two substances, and as it figures in Cartesian mechanics. The last two parts of the book cover aspects of Descartes's view of cognition and his moral psychology. Provocatively, Hoffman argues that Descartes is neither an orthodox representationalist nor a direct realist but, rather, what might be called an 'Aristotelian representationalist': what we directly perceive in the mind are the forms of bodies that exist in the world, though only as the forms exist in the mind. According to Hoffman, this is a combination of representationalism and direct realism, and it is not limited to Aristotelians, it is Descartes's view as well once it is rephrased in terms of ideas and objective, as opposed to formal, existence. It is in this part of the book that Hoffman defends (3). Incongruous with the rest of the book is Hoffman's discussion of Descartes's moral psychology, which proceeds without an eye to Aristotle. This final part contains not only an original account of Cartesian

freedom as a kind of spontaneity, but also a significant explication of difficult portions of Descartes's *Passions of the Soul*, describing how passions intervene to compromise the soul's free action.

*Essays on Descartes* can tell readers a great deal, both about the nuances of Descartes's philosophical argumentation, and about a very specific style of historical scholarship. Few, for example, can compete with Hoffman's preternatural ability to find textual support in unexpected places. And fewer still can match his ability to place Descartes in subtle conversation with his predecessors — Aristotle, Aquinas, Scotus, Ockham — or his rough contemporaries — Suarez, Arnauld, Malebranche — or even more recent figures — Rogers Albritton, Gary Watson. But what readers will not find is any mention of those sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers Descartes used as a guide to Aristotle and scholasticism — Cajetan, Rubius, Toletus, the Coimbran Commentators, or Eustachius (Suarez was likely read by Descartes only after he wrote the *Meditations* in 1640). Nor will readers find a single reference to any living Descartes scholars working in languages other than English, such as Jean-Robert Armogathe, Jean Luc Marion, Jean-Marie Beysade, or Denis Kambouchner.

Of course, there are many productive ways to engage with philosophers from the past, and Hoffman's style of historical scholarship is but one of several possibilities housed within the history of philosophy. Still, one reasonably could have hoped Hoffman would use this book of essays as an opportunity to reflect on changes in the field over the past twenty-five years or to incorporate the best results from other styles of scholarship. Perhaps, because many of the essays are already responses to criticism from Marleen Rozemond, Vere Chappel, Robert Pasnau, and a handful of others, Hoffman felt bringing his original papers together would serve the purpose of showing developments in the history of early modern philosophy. Less easy to excuse, however, is the absence of any engagement with fundamental criticisms of Hoffman's views about (2) and the intelligibility of 'straddling modes' coming from Deborah Brown. In 2006, she argued that Hoffman's need to have 'straddling modes' be at once simple — because they are a mode of a human being — and complex — because they are modes of two really distinct substances — effectively ends in a *reductio ad absurdum* of his claim that human beings are substances (Brown, *Descartes and the Passionate Mind*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 121–34). In response, Hoffman could have rejected the part of (2) that says action and passion are token-identical, thereby mitigating Brown's worry, but this is tantamount to Hoffman rejecting his Aristotelian rendering of Descartes's view of causation. In Hoffman's initial consideration of this difficulty he chose to talk of modes 'having sides', one side existing in one substance and the other side in another substance (pp. 113–16). Also, to Hoffman's credit, he briefly anticipated Brown's reason for rejecting this possibility, in noting cases in which a single substance is both the cause and the recipient of

the effect: sides do not apply when the action and passion are in a single subject. But noting a difficulty is not to dispense with it, and without an answer to Brown, Hoffman's account of mind–body causal interaction collapses, and with it some of the warrant for accepting (1) as a viable interpretation. In effect, Hoffman is left with an account of the ontology of the human being as a substance that makes causal interaction between mind and body unintelligible.

Ultimately, the \$65.00 cost of this book must be judged against the interest of the two papers that appear here for the first time and the two others previously published only in edited volumes, as opposed to easily-accessible on-line journals. The most compelling of these four is 'Passion and Motion in the New Mechanics', which addresses a topic with which Hoffman has not previously been associated. Recognizing that the pre-modern vocabulary of action and passion survives in the *Passions of the Soul*, Hoffman astutely notes in this essay that strands in Descartes's theory of motion seem to echo that terminology. This leads him to challenge major historians of early modern science — Koyré, Westfall, and Maier. He specifically condemns their thesis that reconceptualizing (uniform, rectilinear) motion as a state — rather than as a process — led to the tenet of 'Newtonian' mechanics that only *changes of state* require a force. One may attack this vague thesis frontally, by appeal to passages in Descartes and Newton implying that uniform translation too requires a force, Newton's *vis inertiae*. Hoffman takes a novel route, however. He seeks to connect inertial motion with force obliquely, by a detour through Descartes's view of action and passion. Roughly, Hoffman's argument is as follows: (i) Descartes asserts all action and passion to be 'local motions'. (ii) Hence, every passion is a motion. (iii) But — Hoffman says — Descartes also thinks that every motion is a passion. (iv) Thus, a body in inertial motion 'suffers' a passion. (v) Descartes accepts the Aristotelian-Scholastic 'identity of action and passion' — both denote a change in a 'passive' body. (vi) Ergo, every body in uniform translation is the recipient of an action. (vii) The body itself exerts this action — inertial motion is self-action. (viii) But every action requires a force. (ix) So — contra Koyré, Westfall, and Maier — Descartes thinks inertial motion needs a force to continue.

Hoffman's construal is ingenious and fruitful, though it is far from clear that all his premisses are true. For instance, his (iii) is dubious. He relies on the *Passions of the Soul*, where Descartes calls 'whatever takes place or occurs' to be a passion; Hoffman extrapolates this to mechanics, by claiming motion to be 'surely something that takes place or occurs' (p. 128). This is rather too quick, and fails to credit Descartes with the insight he clearly had: that, in dynamical contexts, 'action' and 'passion' are only meaningful in *interactions* or *changes* of inertial state, an idea that emerges from the very letter to Regius that Hoffman invokes (p. 128). His premiss (vii) too needs more support. Hoffman finds Descartes claiming that a spinning top acts on itself, and concludes: 'Descartes thinks that the agent in what we would call inertial

motion is the moving body itself' (p. 129). Unfortunately, Hoffman here infers from an educated guess on Descartes's part to what Hoffman *de facto* takes as Descartes's considered view. Before Euler in the 1760s, no one could spell out with any rigor the dynamics of rigid spin. Descartes is no exception (nor is he at fault) for he tried to analyze as best he could a case beyond the reach of his kinematics. In other words, Descartes's views on rigid rotation are anomalous, not symptomatic, and more caution is required before we infer much from them about Descartes's theory of uniform translation, a phenomenon he *did* grasp clearly.

Paul Hoffman's untimely passing in 2010 means this book is his final word on Descartes. Nevertheless, in the essay just discussed he fruitfully continues his work on the survival of Aristotelian themes. Hoffman does much to remind us that 'Newtonian' mechanics is really an Enlightenment construct, mostly due to Euler; before that, there were individual theories: Descartes's, Huygens's, Leibniz's, and Newton's. He also urges us to look more closely at how these giants engaged with the Scholastics' influential duality of *actio* and *passio*, so as to see what modern mechanics retains of it. In this we find a place where Hoffman can continue in his role as provocateur in the history of early modern philosophy.

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*The Waning of Materialism*, edited by Robert C. Koons and George Bealer. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Pp. xxxi + 490. H/b £60.00, \$99.00; P/b £22.50, \$40.00.

Materialism is widely taken as orthodoxy in the metaphysics and philosophy of mind. If the contributors to this book are right, orthodoxy is in trouble. While they differ on the details, they all reject materialism or harbour serious and specific doubts about its ultimate viability. And in these twenty-two new essays, they give many arguments. The result is a fine collection.

Many of the essays in this volume are quite ambitious; some include arguments for *substance dualism*, according to which we human persons are wholly immaterial beings. Such arguments are of particular interest since, if sound, they would tell against even the most modest versions of materialism.

David Barnett argues that conscious beings are mereologically simple. Let a person-pair be something composed of two people. Barnett's argument is: (i) person-pairs cannot be conscious, (ii) the thesis that only