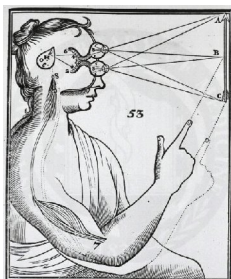
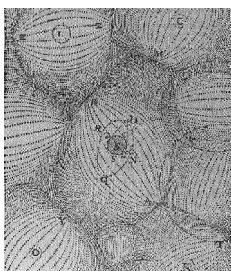


Society for the Advancement of Philosophy, Zagreb
University of Zagreb – Centre for Croatian Studies



INTERNATIONAL PHILOSOPHICAL CONFERENCE

Descartes and Contemporary Philosophy



PROGRAM / ABSTRACTS

21-23 May 2007
Hotel 'Lavica' · Conference Hall
Samobor · Croatia

PROGRAM

Sunday, 20 May

Arrival of participants

Monday, 21 May

9.30 Opening

9.45 ALAN GABBAY, The Cartesian Forces of Body and Mind

10.30 BORIS HENNIG, The Immaterial Substance

Break

11.45 CHIKARA SASAKI, Descartes, Husserl, and the Historical Philosophy of Mathematics

12.30 OLIVIA CHEVALIER, The Cartesian Notion(s) of Infinity as Anticipations of Its Contemporary Understanding: Philosophy and Mathematics

Lunch break

16.00 PETR GLOMBICEK, Descartes' Concept of Common Sense

16.45 JUSTIN E. H. SMITH, 'The Thought Hidden in the Body': Descartes on Language and Animals

Tuesday, 22 May

9.30 JOSIP TALANGA, Imagination in Early Modern Philosophy

10.15 DANIEL MUÑOZ-HUTCHINSON, Descartes and the Cartesian Model of Introspection

Break

11.30 TOM VINCI, Descartes and Contemporary Epistemology

12.15 MLADEN DOMAZET, Descartes in Entanglement

Lunch break

15.00 Excursion to Zagreb

Wednesday, 23 May

9.30 MICHAEL V. GRIFFIN, Knowledge and the Cartesian Circle

10.15 CAROLE TALON-HUGON, 'Treating passions as a physician': Novelty, Ambiguity, Topicality of Descartes' *Traite des passions*

Break

11.30 GABOR RONAI, Anti-Cartesian First Person Authority. Is it Possible from the Third Person Point of View?

12.15 KSENJA PUŠKARIĆ, The Argument from Religious Experience

Lunch break

15.00 RAFFAELLA DE ROSA, Descartes on Qualia

15.45 JUDIT SZALAI, Are there Psychophysical Laws in Descartes

Thursday, 24 May

Departure of participants

ABSTRACTS

The Cartesian Forces of Body and Mind

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The essence of finite things does not imply their existence. Given Descartes's account of *attribute* (PP I, 56; AT VIII (2), 348-350), it follows that extension and thought are not the only attributes of *res extensa* and *res cogitans* existing *in re*. Through re-creation at each instant God maintains in existence, by virtue of a universal *causa secundum esse*, the whole universe of *res extensae* and *res cogitantes* (Fifth Replies). The individual *causae secundum esse* of bodies are forces maintaining them in their present modal states of motion or rest. Because these forces are *attributes* of body, I call them *attributive forces*. Extension is the essence or *principal* attribute (PP I, 53) of a body, whether or not it exists *in re*. If it does exist *in re*, it does so through a *causa secundum esse* and the consequent attributive force becomes the *secondary* attribute maintaining the body's existence in this or that modal state. Though an ontological necessity, the attributive force is not *empirically* accessible at all times, as is extension. It becomes an empirical datum under a rule of quantification when there is modal incompatibility between body and body (AT IV, 185).

Analogous considerations apply, though not with ease, to *res cogitans*. I argue that the two basic modes of thinking, volition and intellectual perception (PP I, 32), are isomorphic with corporeal motion and rest. Here a key witness is the "Annotations" it seemed to Leibniz that Descartes had written on *Principia Philosophiae* (AT XI, pp. 654-655), though I question the authenticity of that text. There are a couple of difficulties. Thought is the principal attribute of mind, whether or not any mind exists *in re*. But given the modal isomorphisms between body and mind existing *in re*, how do volition and perception become *attributive forces*? The most serious difficulty is the contrariety between the *necessity* of corporeal *causae secundum fieri* (Fifth Replies), the forces that determine the modal states of colliding bodies, and the *libertas* of Cartesian volitions, the active mental *causae secundum fieri*.

The Immaterial Substance

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When Descartes calls the mind an immaterial substance, he seems to depart from the tradition Aristotelian picture of the mind in at least two ways. First, Aristotle calls the soul the form of the human body, and this seems to conflict with its being a substance. Second, when Descartes characterizes that which thinks as *immaterial*, he seems to distinguish it as a separate substance from the human being, whereas an Aristotelian could simply say that the thinking substance is the human being her- or himself. I will

show in this contribution that in both respects, Descartes does not differ as radically from the tradition as one might suppose. For according to Aristotle, the substantial form of a living being is not one of its properties, but rather *what* it is, and hence the living being itself in a certain respect. Since the living being is a substance, its substantial form or soul is accordingly also a substance. Second, there is clear, if metaphorical sense in which the talk of an inner and immaterial realm that figures in Augustine and Descartes refers to the “space” that extends between an ideal prototype and a real instance of the respective type. This inner “space” between standard and instance is an immaterial “space”. Since the substantial form of a living being is that what it is when it fully actualizes its potential, it may also be called immaterial in this sense. Hence, the Cartesian philosophy of mind does not break as radically with the tradition as is often assumed.

Descartes, Husserl, and the Historical Philosophy of Mathematics

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Descartes, one of the principal founders of modern philosophy, made a great effort to overcome an attack of mathematical knowledge by ancient skeptical philosophy represented, for example, in Sextus Empiricus's *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. In my *Descartes's Mathematical Thought* (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), I have argued that it was by means of his later philosophy of “Cogito, ergo sum” that Descartes boasted, “I became the first philosopher ever to overturn the doubt of the skeptics” in “Seventh Set of Objections with the Author's Replies” concerning *Meditations on First Philosophy*. But, was his attempt finally successful?

It was Husserl who challenged in the first half of the 20th century to reform Descartes's attempt at overturning the criticism of the skeptics. According to his *Erste Philosophie*, the Greek skeptics, Plato, and Descartes were the three “great beginners of the entire history of European philosophy”. And Descartes like Columbus discovered the new continent, but failed to know anything of it, merely believing to have discovered a new sea-route to India. As Husserl has observed, Descartes certainly cultivated a new continent of philosophy in order mainly to justify pure mathematics and mathematical physics, but his attempt cannot be evaluated to have been totally successful. Then, what about Husserl's phenomenological philosophy?

Husserl's own Cartesian procedure to revise Descartes's attempt to justify mathematical knowledge may be seen in his statement in *Cartesian Meditations*: “How can evidence (*clara et distincta perceptio*) claim to be more than a characteristic of consciousness within me? Aside from the (perhaps not so unimportant) exclusion of acceptance of the world as being, it is the Cartesian problem, which was supposed to be solved by divine *veracitas*.” The Cartesian theological theory of evidence to justify mathematical knowledge by relying on the divine *veracitas* seems to have been a failure because of the circularity of the reasoning.

As a comparative study of Descartes and Husserl, Paul S. MacDonald's *Descartes and Husserl: The Philosophical Project of Radical Beginnings* (State University of New York, 2000) may be said to be suggestive. I believe, however, that another kind of radical ‘conversion’ is necessary. We have to commit ourselves to a kind of “the

historicist turn”, as it were. This is what Husserl tried after having drafted *Erste Philosophie* and also Thomas S. Kuhn attempted at by his program of “historical philosophy of science” in the second half of the 20th century. Husserl’s writings which help us shed light on today’s philosophy of mathematics are, among others, *Formal and Transcendental Logic* of 1929, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* of 1936, and “The Origin of Geometry”, a swan song written in 1936.

To clarify the meaning of mathematical knowledge, a transcendental consideration of it is insufficient. As a sentence in “The Origin of Geometry” has taught us, “Making geometry self-evident, then, whether one is clear about this or not, is the disclosure of its historical tradition.” I dare to say that simply to make mathematics self-evident is also insufficient. In our contemporary world, the mathematical sciences including information technology must not be mobilized for social and political injustice. Thus, it is necessary for us to consider mathematics not simply internally, but also externally. Namely, we shed light on the social and political dimension of the mathematical sciences as well as their internal dimension. An intellectual desideratum at the beginning of the 21st century is the radical Kuhnian program of “historical philosophy of mathematics” for protesting against the emptying of the meaning of pure mathematics and also against the abuse of the mathematical sciences. This is a task which should be tackled by those thinkers who follow the radical philosophical tradition of Descartes and Husserl.

The Cartesian Notion(s) of Infinity as Anticipations of its Contemporary Understanding: Philosophy and Mathematics

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The aim of such an ambitious program is, of course, not to describe, in all their details, both Cartesian and contemporary aspects of such a complex notion. I would rather try to exhibit what features characterizing Cartesian infinity can be considered new and relevant in the constitution of a contemporary understanding of this notion.

So, we’ll be led to take into account both the metaphysical Infinity, namely the foundation of knowledge, the figure of a theorized God, and the infinity refused in Descartes’ official mathematics, but received as necessary in his practice, as his Correspondence shows.

It is to say that our aim is to center our discussion in Descartes’ anti-aristotelian anti-scholastic affirmation of an actual infinity (his essential claiming “*infinitum in actu datur*”, underlined as the “Cartesian Revolution” by A. Koyré, for example), making possible a new conception of it; and, on the other side, in mathematics, the way Descartes uses with great mastery infinity as a very fruitful but illegitimate instrument (as underlined by many commentators, such as Jules Vuillemin, or, more recently, by the studies of Vincent Jullien).

The theoretical constitution of Infinity, the conception of an actual Infinity, the use of infinity to solve mathematical problem as an anticipating method, are thus the principal points my intervention would discuss.

Descartes's Concept of Common Sense

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Today we are naturally tempted to interpret Descartes's writings concerning first philosophy as rather weird psychological treatises. However, there are signs that this can be simple anachronism. It seems that Descartes's concept of *mens* is better captured with help of (Descartes's favorite author) Seneca's concept of *bona mens*. In the whole corpus of Seneca's epistles the term "bona mens" appears repeatedly as the aim of philosophical exercise, understood as a care for the self, yielding an inner calm, wisdom and a command of the artistry of living. "Sapientia habitus perfectae mentis est, sapere usus perfectae mentis" (CXVII.16) To have what Seneca calls "bona mens" means to participate on what is divine in us, namely the universal reason. Descartes indeed uses the term "mens" to denote individual mind too. But his concept of mind implies that it is purely intellectual thing. Its essence is thinking, what means assuming attitudes like asserting, negating, doubting, desiring, being afraid etc. And apparently it was natural for him to understand this activity as participation on one universal structure of rationality. It is the inquiry into the nature of our faculty of judgment ("le bon sens ou la raison") what serves as a principal means for development of this very capacity of judgment. As this faculty represents the best part of our self, the inquiry has a character of a care for the self – for one's own mind or soul.

'The Thought Hidden in the Body': Descartes on Language and Animals

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In a letter to Henry More of 1649, Descartes writes that it is only speech that can reveal the "thought hidden in the body". For him, there can be no evidence of thinking in animals, while other than in the context of the *Meditations*' methodological skepticism any speaking human can be known to possess a mind. In implementing this criterion, Descartes is going against a widespread early modern view of intentionality as something that can be read off of a wide array of non-vocal actions, many of which animals were just as capable of executing as were humans. Thus Francis Bacon describes gestures as "transient hieroglyphics", and by the mid-17th century authors such as John Bulwer were busy developing sociolinguistic theories of body language, while artists such as Nicolas Poussin were taking Descartes's *Passions de l'âme* as inspiration (ironically, given Descartes's insistence that only speech may be intentional) for the pictorial study of the meaning-bearing character of facial expressions.

Finally, in the latter half of the century we also see a renewed interest in Rorarius's 16th-century skeptical argument that animals are more rational than humans on the grounds that their every action is a direct execution of will without any need for the

sort of clumsy deliberation we see in humans. In short, Descartes's contemporaries saw sublinguistic intentionality all over the place, and well beyond the bounds of the human species.

In this short paper, I shall offer an account of the reasons behind Descartes's austere conception of linguistic behavior, arguing that it issues directly from his well-known concern to limit intentionality to human agents. I shall show that speech has been far more important than commentators have assumed in Descartes's broad effort to close the gap between the traditionally ontologically quite distinct domains of natural beings on the one hand, and machines on the other. For Descartes, a machine cannot speak; an animal must be a machine; and therefore any apparent linguistic behavior other than speech must be redescribed in terms of the dispositional unity of a complex mechanism. I shall conclude with some speculative and counterfactual considerations of how certain recent candidates for intentional agency – notably sign-language-using gorillas and Turing machines – might have been accommodated by Descartes had he been confronted with them.

Descartes & the Cartesian Model of Introspection

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A distinctive trend in recent philosophical accounts of introspection has been the repudiation of the alleged “*Cartesian Model*,” where the *Cartesian* model represents the paradigmatic case of introspection as a kind of perception, and carries along with it strong epistemic claims of transparency and infallibility. According to this view, allegedly held by Descartes, our epistemic access to our own mental states is similar to, if not identical with, our access to items in the environment, i.e., that the perception of our internal mental states is just like the perception of external objects. Furthermore, it is of the very essence of our mental states (or minds) to reveal their existence and nature to their possessor in an immediate way, and our self-ascriptions to such mental states are necessarily infallible. This view, leaving aside for the moment whether it was actually held by Descartes, has rightly come into disrepute in recent years due to developments in moral and cognitive psychology. My concern therefore is not to defend this view, nor to defend any similar strands of it, for I think it is rightly dubious. My intention, rather, is to show that the *Cartesian* model attributed to Descartes is in fact not his own, or at least, not entirely.

To accomplish this I shall have to confront two major proponents of this view, Sydney Shoemaker and Richard Moran. Both Shoemaker and Moran are in agreement as to what the *Cartesian* model is and why it fails to offer a coherent theory of introspective self-knowledge, but differ in their attempt to provide an alternative. I am concerned specifically with an assumption they both share about what the fundamental feature of thought or mentality is for Descartes: both claim that it is consciousness, and in Moran's case, thought for Descartes is simply identical with consciousness. In my estimation, the unattractiveness of the *Cartesian* model largely depends on this assumption. I shall therefore argue against this position in hopes of disentangling Descartes from the *Cartesian Model*.

Descartes and Contemporary Epistemology

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From the perspective of contemporary analytic epistemology the verdict on Cartesian epistemology is that it does not cast a useful light on current issues. My objective is to demonstrate that this is false for Descartes's positive epistemology and to do so using two important movements in contemporary analytic epistemology as foils – naturalism and deontic epistemic internalism. (The later is the view that epistemic justification is a matter of epistemic agents acting in ways that conform to epistemic obligations.)

I develop my argument in three parts: the connecting theme in all three is the role of consciousness in epistemology. In the first (Part I) I say something about Descartes's account of intuition as "inner consciousness" and compare Cartesian intuition with the corresponding notion employed by analytic philosophers. I distinguish two notions of intuition, one akin to the Cartesian notion, one not, arguing that only the Cartesian notion has the connection to truth necessary for it be of epistemic value. In the second (Part II) I show how Descartes develops his positive epistemology in the *Meditations* and the role played by intuitions therein. I also compare his account with some of the main approaches to the analysis of knowledge in contemporary analytic philosophy since Gettier, arguing that a dilemma arises for this analysis for which the Cartesian approach to epistemology provides the solution. Finally, (Part III) I investigate the confrontation between Cartesian epistemology and Quine's "epistemology naturalized," arguing that Quine shares with Descartes a non-normative conception of knowledge (but a normative conception of method), against one of the prevailing standards in post-Gettier analytic epistemology. Where they differ is on the role of consciousness in epistemology, but even here it is doctrine rather than method that separates them.

Descartes in Entanglement

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"... the perception I have of [the piece of wax] is a case not of vision or touch or imagination, [...], but of purely mental scrutiny" (Descartes, *Med.* II:14)

In Descartes' *Meditations* the sense data were deceiving and a realist had to find a scientific explanation that relies on other senses and reason to expose the sensory (usually visual) illusion, explain how it comes about and describe what the world really is like (of course, foundationally stemming the rational certainty of the *Cogito* and the intuitive appeal of the geometric primary qualities). Primarily, think of the stick bending in water example here. The contemporary quantum mechanics seems to claim that the whole mechanistic conception of the world is deceiving: the spatial separation does not allow for regulation of physical causality, the basic constituents are not in

mechanistic interaction, the supposed knowledge of the macroscopic world is an illusion. What is the new realist solution? Is it to simply try to posit the limits of human knowledge of the world; to acknowledge the rules governing the new 'sensory perception' (information gathering) and try to live with that (this is an anti-Cartesian move of deferring partially to skepticism about the physical world); or is it to find a reasonable explanation of the origin of deception and a depiction of what the world really is like? Obviously the latter follows the spirit of realism, but is it possible and what are the criteria by which we would accept it? What are the new primary qualities imposed by 'clearly and distinctly' perceived in the physical world?

Knowledge and the Cartesian Circle

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In this paper I discuss Descartes's response to the objection that he reasons in a circle when he argues for the existence of a non-deceiving God in order to establish the truth of what he clearly and distinctly perceives. I will also discuss Descartes's conception of knowledge, which he clarifies in texts relevant to the circularity objection. Briefly: I argue that Descartes's reasoning is not circular because it does not rely on the truth of clear and distinct perceptions, but on their ability to produce conviction. Our nature, according to Descartes, is such that whenever we clearly and distinctly perceive something, we are spontaneously convinced of its truth (AT VII, 69, 145-6). But unless we are convinced that whatever we clearly and distinctly perceive is true, we can raise doubts about these perceptions, when we are not attending to them (AT VII, 69). The proof of a non-deceiving God is aimed at producing this conviction. Only when this conviction is achieved, Descartes holds, do our other convictions become knowledge. Knowledge is distinguished from mere conviction by its permanence and stability (AT III, 65). The Cartesian mathematician, for instance, retains his conviction in the conclusions of his proofs even when he is no longer attending to them, while the atheist mathematician moves from a state of conviction to a state of (potential) doubt (AT VII, 141, 428). I will develop this conception of knowledge and use it to critically evaluate the standard picture of Descartes's epistemology and reassess his contribution to the theory of knowledge.

'Treating passions as a physician': Novelty, Ambiguity, Topicality of Descartes' *Traité des passions*

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This presentation concerns one of Descartes' later works: the *Traité des passions*, which presented to the philosophical world, a new concept of passion. At the beginning of the 17th century, there existed an accepted theory, which combined four different schools of thought: there were elements taken from St Thomas Aquinas, St Augustine,

the Stoics, and antique humoralism. According to this traditional concept, passions are the result of movements within sensitive soul, which lead toward the good, or away from evil, and the manifestations of this movements cause physical disorders. Descartes began a revolution on declaring that the passions originated in the body (and not in the soul) and produce their effects in the soul, and furthermore, are divinely introduced in the human species to be beneficial to the body. So, Descartes' theory is not only of interest for its novelty within the evolution of the philosophical discipline, but also for the fact that it created the basic building blocks still in use today in contemporary thought concerning passions, emotions and feelings. So, the continuing debate between, on one hand, the cognitivist conception of passions and, on the other, the emotivist one, find its roots in this text written in 1649.

Anti-Cartesian First Person Authority: Is it Possible from the Third Person Point of View?

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Davidson's third person account of mental states – radical interpretation – presupposes that knowledge of oneself, knowledge of others and knowledge of the world come at the same time. According to him, for two speakers to understand each other it is not required that they speak the same language. It is only needed that they triangulate with regards to a (third) common object. The attitude of holding true relativized to times and speakers, which fixes the truth conditions, helps to break into the circle between meaning and belief. This indirect 'foundation', however, is needless for determining my thought that *p*, and my thought that I think that *p*, because these contents are (mostly) the same. Hence Davidsonian first person authority (FPA). I argue that there is a tension between FPA and radical interpretation, because all knowledge (objective and intersubjective also) can be non-inferential if language presents reality. Without representation there is no FPA with introspection, and FPA without introspection ceases to be FPA.

The Argument from Religious Experience

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Many people had experienced a presence of a supreme, holy, good, and loving being, which gave them so great certainty in the existence of God that overwhelms any argument which could question the belief that God exists. Is there a rational for such a strong feeling of conviction? Can religious experience provide a rational ground for belief in the existence of God? I argue that it can. In this paper I've tried to pin down the rational side of evidential force of the religious experience in a form of an argument. The starting point of my argument is that non-sensory religious experience (NSRE) is in a relevant respect like perceptual experience, as Alston argues in

Perceiving God. I argue along with Alston, that NSRE share some relevant phenomenological features with perception, namely the object of NSRE, typically reported as a holy, loving, good being (X being F), appears to be immediately present before consciousness, it appears to be mind-independent, and the object is presented in a vivid way, unlike an object of thought. Since NSREs satisfy these general phenomenological features, then, I argue, H. Robinson's phenomenal principle of perception can be applied on NSREs as well. Thus, for every NSRE it is true that, *whenever something appears to be F, there is something being F that I am directly aware of.* The phenomenal principle accounts for what is intuitively compelling about NSRE (and perception), namely, that there *is* something that I am aware of. It is hard to plausibly deny that. What I can doubt, is whether what I am aware of is really God. I eliminate the possibilities that the object of the experience is a product of our mind or brain, i.e. the hypothesis that NSRE is hallucination, because it would violate Descartes' causal principle of reality- *what is more perfect – that is, contains more reality – cannot arise from what is less perfect.* Therefore, NSRE must be veridical. Therefore, God exists.

Descartes on Qualia

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According to most Descartes scholars, Cartesian sensations lack intrinsic intentionality because they present themselves as purely qualitative features of experience (or qualia). Accordingly, Descartes' view would be that in perceiving the color red, for example, we are merely experiencing the subjective feel of redness rather than seeming to perceive a property of bodies. Moreover, the interpretation of Cartesian sensations as qualia is seen by contemporary philosophers of mind as part and parcel of Descartes' internalist account of mental content (i.e., the view that mental states are individuated non-relationally) and its (allegedly) related skepticism of the veil of ideas. It is Descartes, after all, who opened up the problem of our knowledge of an external world and created an epistemological gap between the mind and the world. And Cartesian qualia are perfect candidates for those third entities between the mind and the world.

Finally, this reading of Cartesian sensations fits the more general view that the Rationalist Descartes denied that the senses play any cognitive role in the search for truth. This role is allotted to the intellect alone. Sensations are mere impressionistic modes of the mind and do not serve any cognitive purpose. So, in many ways, the view that Cartesian sensations aren't intrinsically intentional is the standard view of Cartesian sensations. In this paper, I argue that qualia aren't Descartes' legacy. First, I establish that the arguments and the textual evidence offered in support of this reading of Cartesian sensations fail to prove that Descartes held this view. Second, I argue that there are textual and theoretical reasons for believing exactly the opposite, that is, that Descartes held that sensations are intrinsically intentional. Not only is it false that Descartes introduced qualia in the philosophy of mind but some of Descartes' reasons for rejecting qualia are still sound.

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