

Mind and Body

Readings (see copies for full bibliographic details)

- [1] Descartes, from the *Second Meditation*, ¶¶1–9.
- [2] Descartes, from the *Sixth Meditation*, ¶¶1–9, 12–4.
- [3] Leibniz, from the *New System*, ¶¶12–8.
- [4] ★ Leibniz, from the ‘*Third Explanation of the New System*’, ¶¶2–5.

1. [1] What is the ‘thinking thing’?
- 2.★ [1] Describe the process by which the meditator arrives at the conclusion that he/she is a ‘thinking thing’ (see the last point on Handout 3).
3. [2] What is the point about the chiliagon in ¶2?
4. [2] Descartes argues for mind–body dualism in ¶9. How does this argument work? *Does it work?*
- 5.★ [2] Explain the sailor analogy (cf. AT VII 81).
6. [3] How does Leibniz solve the problem of causal interaction between substances?
- 7.★ [4] How does the clock–analogy support Leibniz’s ‘new system’ or the ‘theory of agreements’?

Background Information. (a) In the *Sixth Meditation* (¶¶5ff.), the meditator revisits his/her journey of intellectual discovery. Hence, ‘first’ (¶5) means at the start of engaging in these meditative cognitive exercises; ‘later on’ (¶7) means during the early stages of meditating; and ‘but now’ (¶8) means at the beginning of the *Sixth Meditation*. (b) Descartes’s comments on imagination and corporeal nature (¶¶3–4) are preliminary for the proof of the external world, which is omitted in Reading [2]. (c) In Reading [3], Leibniz says that Descartes gave up on the causal interaction between substances (¶12). The problem is this: how could a *non*-extended (thinking) substance cause changes in an extended substance, given that causation involves contact, the transfer of momentum, or anything else that presupposes extension? This is a point noted by Gassendi (*Fifth Objections* AT VII 341 CSM II 237) and Princess Elizabeth (*Letters* of 16 May and 20 June 1643). Leibniz mentions this problem in Reading [4], ¶5. This problem led followers of Descartes, such as Malebranche (e.g., *The Search After Truth* 1674–5) to embrace *occasionalism*, according to which no finite entity causes anything, such that apart from God, everything is causally inert. What we regard as ‘causes’ are occasions for divine causation (agency) in line with natural laws. Since for Leibniz this means that God constantly meddles with things, he uses the phrase *deus ex machina* (¶13): causation seems to be a perpetual miracle. Yet, Leibniz agrees that there is no real causal interaction between substances, since they are ‘windowless’ self-contained units. But Leibniz exploits his theory of complete notions to explain this (cf. Reading [3] ¶14; and also Reading for 10 May [3] §8).

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