The Substance-attributes Relationship in Cartesian Dualism

Françoise Monnoyeur

Centre Jean Pepin, CNRS, 94801 Villejuif Cedex, Paris, France

e-mail: monnoyf@gmail.com

Abstract: In their book on *Descartes's Changing Mind*, Peter Machamer and J.E. McGuire argue that Descartes discarded dualism to embrace a kind of monism. Descartes famously proposed that there are two separate substances, mind and body, with distinct attributes of thought and extension (*Principles of Philosophy*). According to Machamer and McGuire, because of the limitations of our intellect, we cannot have insight into the nature of either substance. After reviewing their argument in some detail, I will argue that Descartes did not relinquish his favorite doctrine but may have actually fooled himself about the nature of his dualism. It is my contention that the problem with Cartesian dualism stems from the definition of mind and body as substances and the role of their respective attributes--thought and extension--in the definition of substances.

KEYWORDS: Descartes; substance; mind and body union; dualism; monism; extension; thought; Gassendi; Henry More.

I. INTRODUCTION

The last sentence of *Descartes's Changing Mind* is the following: "Perhaps, at the end of his life, Descartes was not much a dualist after all" (Machamer and McGuire 2009: 241). This statement suggests that Descartes ultimately relinquished his dualism of mind and body in favor of monism. According to Machamer and McGuire, for the later Descartes, mind and body have certain attributes in common and can no longer be considered as independent substances. Machamer and McGuire claim that although such an idea is out of context in the works of the young Descartes, he developed it gradually in his later writings.

The question of whether Descartes changed his mind on the nature of these substances and their union is of prime importance. This problem is a sensitive one because most of Descartes's opponents, such as Gassendi, Leibniz, and Henry More, emphasized that Descartes's conception was incoherent, a failure, or at least incomplete. Nevertheless, contemporary commentators such as Lili Allanen, Ted Richardson, and Tad Schmaltz have tried to make sense of it. In *Descartes's Changing Mind*, Machamer and McGuire make a new attempt to save the coherence of the mind/body union: a union without dualism and an epistemology free of the metaphysics of substance.

Machamer and McGuire invite us to revisit the Cartesian mind-body union. Many philosophers have recognized the inconsistencies of Cartesian dualism, but Machamer and McGuire also describe an epistemological teleology capable of resolving these metaphysical discrepancies. Tracing the development of Descartes's views on mind and body, they reached the conclusion that Descartes became gradually less sure that he could fully understand the nature of substances in general. They find that Descartes had come to realize the limitations of the human mind and therefore the impossibility of justifying its absolute distinction from the body.

I will argue that Machamer and McGuire's analysis is intriguing, but ultimately off target. Descartes did not really change his mind, even if he was not married to a strict dualism based on a theory of substance. We shall investigate this last point and envision how the problem of the mind/body union is directly related to the conception of substance and its attributes. Finally, after reviewing Descartes's early correspondence with Gassendi, and late correspondence with Henry More, we will consider that, although Descartes may have been sensitive to some of their objections, he did not reconsider his dualist position.

II. HOW DESCARTES ALLEGEDLY BECAME A MONIST

To reiterate, Machamer and McGuire reached the conclusion that Descartes became gradually less sure that he could fully understand the nature of substances in general. They think that the later Descartes came to realize the limitations of the human mind, and therefore the impossibility of justifying its absolute distinction from the body.

A. Human knowledge is limited

Machamer and McGuire announce in their first chapter: "We will argue that Descartes's dualism has to be understood in terms of what we call his epistemic teleology" (Machamer and McGuire 2009: 4). According to Machamer and McGuire, Descartes would have, in the first part of the *Principles* and then in the *Passions of the Soul*, given up his dualism because of the impossibility of knowing the nature of substances. Descartes gave up his desire for absolute knowledge and instead organized his epistemology according to the limits that our minds place on us. For instance, the authors interpret principle 62 (in the first part of the *Principles)* in these terms: "Descartes now emphasizes what we may know, namely, the attributes of extension and thought, rather than substance itself" (Machamer and McGuire

2009: 227). For Machamer and McGuire, this grounds Descartes's epistemological stance according to which only attributes are knowable.

Another example can be found in Principle 64, I:

> Because when we regard them (thought and extension) as in the substances of which they are modes, we distinguish them from these substances and take them for what they actually are; while, on the contrary, if we wish to consider them apart from the substances in which they are, that will have the effect of our taking them as self-subsisting things and thus confounding the ideas of mode and substance. (Descartes 2000: 249)

Descartes insists here that we would confuse attributes and substance if we separate attributes from their respective substances. Machamer and McGuire emphasize that Descartes was turning his back on ontology and adopting a more pragmatic attitude towards knowledge that they call the "epistemic teleology shift." They write:

> The epistemic consequence of this, as we hope to show, is that the world may contain many things that we neither know nor have the possibility of knowing. More specifically it means, for example, that we cannot know, or minimally we cannot know that we know, the real nature of substances, but only some of their useful attributes or particular modes that, yet, are, still mind-independent. (Machamer and McGuire 2009: 2)

Machamer and McGuire derive further consequences from Descartes's recognition of the limits of human knowledge regarding the nature of substances. They write: "Descartes came to see more clearly that just as God's transcendent nature is beyond our comprehension, so likewise, there is much in created reality that surpasses our cognitive grasp since it lies beyond the limitations of the finite intellect" (Machamer and McGuire 2009: 197).

For Machamer and McGuire, not only God but also the created world is beyond our intellectual grasp; according to the authors it is sensation that shapes the interaction between mind and body, and they further emphasize that sensation is rooted in our bodies. But, by his own criteria, Descartes would have to provide a clear and distinct idea of how sensation relates to thought. In this way, the Cartesian epistemological shift, as described by Machamer and McGuire as holding of the later Descartes, tends to identify the nature of the mind with the nature of the body.

B. The union between mind and body is revealed through sensation

For Machamer and McGuire, and for Descartes, the idea of a person is linked to the idea of a soul and a body. The authors point out that, at the time of his later works, *The Passions of the Soul* and the *Principles*, Descartes relies on sensation to reveal the union between mind and body. They write in *Descartes's Changing Mind:*

> In his treatment of the mind-body distinction as a substantial union constitutive of the nature of person, he begins to downplay any need for maintaining a strict and direct ontological distinction between mind and body…. But notice that it is sensations that reveal immediately that the union is real and substantial. (Machamer and McGuire 2009: 233- 234)

The authors recall that the union of mind and body takes place in a person and is known immediately through sensation. To clarify how the union between mind and body should be viewed, the authors argue:

> But if the principal attributes of soul and body (thinking and extension) can be both active and passive, and if we know a substance only through its principal attributes, or are able to distinguish soul and body solely by means of their

> principle attribute, it seems on this basis alone that we will be unable to make and infer a real mind/body distinction. (Machamer and McGuire 2009: 239)

In this passage, the authors identify mind with the soul, suggesting that we may experience something of soul/body union in everyday life. This unified experience ultimately translates (somehow) into a kind of knowledge. For Machamer and McGuire, the *Passions of the Soul* gives us a clue to the indescribable union that seemingly displaces both substances.

C. Mind and body do not need to exist as substances

Machamer and McGuire argue that since Descartes identifies spiritual substance with thinking, and material substance with extension, he no longer requires two separate substances mind and body. According to the authors, the fact that Descartes admits that we cannot know the totality of the world created by God proves our human limitations and the impossibility of knowing what substances are, in themselves. In chapter six of *Descartes's Changing Mind*, the authors draw a conclusion about of Cartesian substances: "So there is no direct warrant for a real distinction, since these substances are not known by us directly but only through their principal attributes*"* (Machamer and McGuire 2009: 229). Our minds present us with the distinct attributes of mind and body, that is to say thought and extension, but do not give us access to the intrinsic substances. The authors explain that we cannot have insight into the nature of spiritual substance or material substance because of the limitations of the human intellect.

I will argue that this thesis in *Descartes's Changing Mind* is not defensible because it negates the fundamental role of thinking and corporeal substances. In their attempt to suppress the Cartesian theory of substance, Machamer and McGuire oppose the philosophers who locate the secret of the union within substance:

> In our view, the dispute between the dualists, the interactionists, and the trialists is misconceived because all parties treat the concepts of mind and body as requiring direct ontological reference. They also assume that Descartes is concerned from first to last with upholding, always in the same way, a real distinction between mind and body. (Machamer and McGuire 2009: 232)

Here, it is clear that the authors oppose the dualists and trialists (the ones who believe in the existence of three substances: the mind, the body, and the union), and think that the notion of substance has no role to play in Descartes's epistemology in the *Principles*. As a consequence, we do not need the concept of substance to understand the union between mind and body. However, Descartes devotes most of the first part of his *Principles* to defining substance, namely material substance in opposition to the spiritual substances, and these definitions are the building blocks of his arguments. According to Machamer and McGuire, Descartes is already skeptical about these definitions in the first part of his *Principles*. In the next section, I consider how the definition of substance supports the concept of mind/body union.

III. WHY SUBSTANCE CANNOT BE IGNORED

A. Substance and dualism

The concept of substance is the ontological bedrock of the Cartesian system. As in most rationalist systems, substance justifies other conceptual distinctions and must therefore be understood with the utmost clarity. For Descartes, the definition of substance is what ultimately articulates his views about the ideas of God, matter, body, mind and person. Since Cartesian dualism is so embedded in the notion of substance, it is imperative that we

understand how many substances there are and how we can know them. Marleen Rozemond states this clearly in her review of Descartes:

> It is certainly true that Descartes was concerned with the possibility of mind existing without body, but I will argue that this idea is not central to his argument. His dualism does not consist in this possibility, nor is it fundamental to the argument. Instead, the crucial argument is Descartes's conception of substance, including important claims about the relationship between the nature or essence of a substance and the properties it can have. (Rozemond 2002: 1)

Rozemond and I agree that substance and its attributes are at the center of Cartesian dualism. But while Rozemond is sure that Descartes develops his conception of the two separate substances with clarity, I notice difficulties in the relation of spiritual substance (identified with the mind) to material substance (identified with the body). A sign of this problematic articulation is the multiplicity of interpretations about the number of substances involved. For instance, the trialists would argue that the mind/body union in a person forms a third substance. In his attack on trialists, Dan Kaufman emphasizes that thought and extension are attributes of a different kind: "The fact that human beings have only the two principal attributes of thought and extension, in conjunction with the fact that all modes are modes of a principal attribute, shows that human beings must be only modes of thought and of extension" (Kaufman 2008: 71). Kaufman's standpoint respects the Cartesian hierarchical ontology between substance, attribute, and mode (the being of attributes), and corroborates the dualist nature of the Cartesian substances, mind and body.

Machamer and McGuire do not acknowledge dualism, trialism or even monism because the notion of substance has for them no function in the Cartesian mind/body union. Instead of a metaphysics of substance, the authors dwell on perceptual experience to understand the

mind/body relation: "The system is comprised of two dependent created substances, mind and body, that are related in the closest way possible, by a shared identity of representative content…" (Machamer and McGuire 2009: 220). For them, these two dependent created substances, that is to say mind and body, do not even differ any more from each other. We can see how Machamer and McGuire progressively unraveled the basis of Cartesian dualism.

If Descartes was forced to become a monist, then mind and body would become two aspects of the same substance. Machamer and McGuire have argued that substance does not play the role in Descartes' thought that it is traditionally believed to play. They contend that Descartes, aware of his cognitive limits, would have preferred to abandon his metaphysics of substances in favor of a more pragmatic claim to knowledge: "Our point is that for epistemic purposes we are able to conceive substances only under their principal attributes or under their respective modes." (Machamer and McGuire 2009: 231). It seems to me, on the contrary, that for metaphysical and epistemic reasons, Descartes needs the concept of substance and that the principal attributes cannot replace the substances mind and body.

In his article about Descartes's dualism, Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra (2008) argues that thought and extension can replace substances, not because our knowledge of substance is limited, as Machamer and McGuire claim, but because there would only be a conceptual and not a real difference between the nature of substance and its main attributes. Hence, we must investigate Descartes' account of substance and its main attributes.

B. The relationship between substances and their attributes

In the first Part of the *Principles*, Descartes mentions three distinct substances: God, mind and matter. Descartes also asserts that modes should not be confused with substances. In P I, 64:

> We then distinguish them (thought and extension) modally from substance, and they may be understood not less clearly and distinctly, provided that we do not think of them as substances or things separate from others, but simply as modes of things. (Descartes, 2000: 249)

This means that thought and extension should not be confused with mind and body as modes are just properties of substances.

On one hand, Cartesian substances depend on their attributes for their existence in experience, while on the other hand they are stated to be independent from these very attributes. The main Cartesian substance is the divine substance, infinite and the one who creates the other substances, spiritual and material. Each of these two substances has the following characteristics: they are created by God and persist by themselves in time, they have attributes that are proof of their own existence, and finally, they are subjects. In P I, 52 Descartes writes:

> Created substances, however, whether corporeal or thinking, may be understood under this common concept: for they are things that need only the concurrence of God in order to exist. But yet substance cannot be first discovered merely from the fact that it is an existing thing, for that fact alone is not observed by us.
> (Descartes, 2000: 244)

The substances known as body and mind need the concurrence of God to exist, with their respective attributes depending on the existence of the substances themselves. The inverse thesis is that substances need attributes to be known distinctly in our sensations.

Previously, in the appendix following his *Responses to the Fifth Objections* made by Gassendi, Descartes explained that substance is perceived through its attributes in the following way:

> In distinguishing a substance from its accidents, we must consider both one and the other, and this helps greatly in coming to know it; whereas if instead we only separate by abstraction this substance from its accidents, that is, if we consider it quite alone without thinking of them, that prevents us from knowing it well, because it is by its accidents that the nature of substance is manifested. (Descartes, Cottingham et al. 1984a: 277)

Also, in the first part of his *Principles* (Pl, 52), Descartes completes his definition of substance by admitting it is discovered through its attributes: "We may, however, easily discover it (substance) by means of any one of its attributes, because it is a common notion that nothing is possessed of no attributes, properties, or qualities*"* (Descartes 2000: 244).

Descartes admits here that the existence of substance is only detectable by its perceived attributes, as we do not have direct access to substance itself. The clear and distinct knowledge of its attributes is, in fact, the manifestation of the existence of substance. This point is crucial for understanding the nature of Cartesian dualism, and consequently shows us that the mind can discover the existence of spiritual and material substances by means of thought and extension respectively. But as shown before, the attributes cannot exist alone, and at no time can be dissociated from substance, as Machamer and McGuire appear to be claiming.

The question is then to understand the role of attributes in the definition of substance. The Cartesian framework should disclose the reason for inferring the existence of two separate substances based on the perception of their attributes. In order to look into this

question, we shall examine the definitions given by Descartes of mind and body as substances.

One special feature shared by the substances mind and body is being the *subject* of their attributes. In definition 7 following the *Reply to the Second Set of Objections*, Descartes emphasizes: "That substance which is the immediate subject of local extension and of the accidents that presuppose extension, such as shape, position, movement from place, and so on, is called body*"* (Descartes 2000: 162). For Rozemond (2002), the fact that substances are subjects proves they cannot be identical to their attributes. However, what Descartes means by the term "body" as an "immediate subject of extension" is not so clear. According to this definition, the role of corporeal substance is to be a subject of the main attribute extension. The subject could then be limited to a mere support of 'extension' without any independent function of its own.

It appears from these questions that mind and body are metaphysical entities that cannot be distinguished independently from one another. We may have to concede that the nature of substances is wholly dependent on attributes (Monnoyeur 2017). Nonetheless it remains difficult to abandon the dualism of substances, as Machamer and McGuire do, since substance and attribute remain both clearly linked by definition and in our experience. In no way can these attributes replace their substance and exist by themselves as Machamer and McGuire have suggested. Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra follows Machamer and McGuire by claiming that substances and their main attributes are not distinct entities, but also adds that a dualism of properties is at work. It seems to me that the identification of spiritual substance and thought, on the one hand, and corporeal substance and extension, on the other, is merely of epistemological use but is metaphysically ungrounded.

Granted, Descartes may perplex his readers when he writes in Principle I, 53 in the first part of the *Principles of Philosophy*: "Namely, extension in length, width and depth constitutes the nature of corporal substance." (Descartes, 2000: 244). And this is just after admitting in principle 9: "Corporeal substance, when distinguished from its quantity, is confusedly conceived as something incorporeal…" (Descartes 2000: 256). Does Descartes mean here that corporeal substance could be incorporeal in its nature if it is conceived only as subject, and not simply as extension? Following his reasoning, the idea of extension is known more clearly and distinctly than is the idea of a corporeal substance. At this stage, we are very far from Stephen Gaukroger's statement about the nature of substance in Descartes's system of Natural Philosophy:

> The first is that mind and body are separate substances with completely different sets of properties. One thing this means is that there is no grey area between the two, there are no blurred boundaries. (Gaukroger 2002: 92).

My proposal is that there are two major conclusions about the relation of substance and its attributes. Firstly, extension and thought make us infer the existence of substance; secondly, although Descartes distinguishes the substance of mind from thought and the substance of body from extension, his dualism is based on the attributes themselves. But, this does not mean that Cartesian dualism collapses into a monist theory of substance. My interpretation shows that Descartes wants to keep the metaphysics of substance separated from the perception of substance by its attributes.

Another recent author who has highlighted the problem of substances and attributes is Blake Dutton. According to Dutton, the conceptual weakness of Cartesian dualism comes from the absence of a justified connection between attributes and substances:

> From this independent conceivability he infers that they can exist apart from one another, and hence, are really distinct. But this way of proceeding is only viable if Descartes can justify the pairing of thinking with non-extended and extended with non-thinking. Otherwise, he has no assurance that in conceiving of mind and body he is conceiving of diverse substances rather than one and the same substance conceived through diverse attributes. (Dutton 2003: 395)

But, Descartes still defended a strict differentiation between mind and body as substances, for example in Principle 60, 1:

> Similarly, because each one of us understands that he thinks, and that in thinking he can shut off from himself every other substance, either thinking or extended, we may conclude that each of us, similarly regarded, is really distinct from every other thinking substance and from every corporeal substance. (Descartes 2000: 247).

In other words, the separation of mind and body is rooted in our power of thinking and cannot be alienated. The paradoxical outcome is that Cartesian dualism relies on the attributes but is claimed to be strictly a dualism of substances. We will see how various attempts were made to characterize and remedy this problem.

IV. CARTESIAN DUALISM IN A RENEWED CONTEXT

Our previous analysis invites us to revisit Cartesian dualism with a greater emphasis on the roles of *attributes* of the substances. We seek to understand how Cartesian dualism is resolved in everyday experience. Such a renewed context for Cartesian dualism appears in

Descartes's early correspondence with Gassendi, and late correspondence with Princess Elisabeth, and Henry More.

A. Common sense knowledge of mind and body

When battling with his correspondents on the relationship between mind and body, Descartes was called to reflect on the foundations of his substance dualism. Two of his main correspondents, Gassendi and Henry More, debate him on this question. Through a closer reading of Descartes's writings, we observe a change regarding the respective attributes of the two substances.

In his *Metaphysical Meditations*, Descartes sets out in Meditations II and VI, the irreducible distinction between the two substances: the body whose nature is extension, and the mind whose nature is thought. Gassendi in his Objections to Meditation II, disputes the Cartesian dualism between mind and body:

> You will have to prove that this solid body of yours contributes nothing whatever to your thought (for you have never been without it, and have so far never had any thoughts when separated from it). You will thus have to prove that you think independently of the body in such a way that you can never be hampered by it or disturbed by the foul and dense vapors or fumes which from time to time have such a bad effect on the brain. (Cottingham et al. 1984b: 183)

In this passage, Gassendi states that the body should influence the mind. In his answers to Gassendi's objections, Descartes refines his position and emphasizes that his knowledge of the mind and body is scientific and not rooted in mere sense experience. Descartes defends his distinction of the nature of the mind and body by drawing a separation between knowledge for

everyday life, where the senses are required to keep safe, and the search for truth, which requires a greater degree of certitude. He writes:

> However we must note the distinction which I have insisted on in several passages, between the actions of life and the investigation of the truth…But when our inquiry concerns what can be known with complete certainty by the human intellect, it is quite unreasonable to refuse to reject these things in all seriousness as doubtful and even as false. (Cottingham et al. 1984a: 243).

Here, Descartes categorizes knowledge in a twofold manner: knowledge that belongs to everyday life, and philosophical and scientific knowledge. This new definition of knowledge is contrary to the *Discourse on Method* where he had previously denied that common sense experience could be of any use in the attainment of knowledge. In his correspondence with Gassendi, Descartes stresses that the relationship of soul and body may be an issue for some philosophers, but not for the common man in his practical activities. In fact, he reproaches Gassendi for being un-methodical and for relying strictly upon everyday life experiences.

Later, in his correspondence with Elisabeth, Descartes points out that our everyday life experience is appropriate for understanding the soul/body union. At the time of his debate with Gassendi, he had acknowledged that there is a kind of knowledge which comes from everyday experience that is not philosophical or scientific knowledge. In his letter to Elisabeth of June 28th 1643, Descartes emphasizes that the understanding of the mind-body union is rooted in the experience of everyday life:

> …and finally what belongs to the union of the soul and the body is known only obscurely by the intellect alone or even by the intellect aided by the imagination, but it is known very clearly by the senses… But it is the ordinary course of life and conversation, and abstention from meditation and from the study of the things

> which exercise the imagination, that teaches us how to conceive the union of the soul and the body. (Cottingham et al. 1991: 227)

Here Descartes clearly states that knowledge of this union comes from the senses.

To corroborate this analysis, there is a letter from Descartes to Chanut, of February 1st 1647, regarding the state of soul/body relation before birth. Here, Descartes seems to reveal the existence of an existential relationship between mind and body. He reflects on the origin of the soul/body union as follows:

> But there is no doubt that the bodily conditions that were the first to accompany our thoughts when we came into the world must have become more closely connected with them than those which accompany them later…I think that the soul's first passion was joy, because it is not credible that the soul was put into the body at a time when the body was not in a good condition… The soul, uniting itself willingly to that new matter, felt love for it; and later, if the food happened to be lacking, it felt sadness. (Cottingham et al. 1991: 309).

The distinction between mind and body seems to be have been constructed after we are born and expresses an epistemological standpoint rather than our real nature; in the quotation above, Descartes refers to the time before birth when soul and body are intimately connected and the soul follows the needs of the body. According to Descartes' recollection, the independence of the soul begins after birth, when we are able to think abstractly and the soul begins to think of itself as a mind. Soul and body were originally unified, and the soul will later recall its first impressions of this past union with the body. The heterogeneity of mind and body developed throughout the Cartesian corpus appears to be, in these letters, only a scientific explanation of their respective functions. Descartes admits to Gassendi and Elisabeth that the senses play a central role in everyday experience independently from any

philosophical considerations about mind-body dualism. The purpose of Cartesian dualism is to give a scientific explanation of the nature of mind and body, while the dichotomy between everyday knowledge and scientific knowledge is accepted along with the dualism of substances. For Descartes, no epistemology is possible outside of this framework. It will therefore be interesting to explore another dualistic framework, developed by Henry More, which challenges the substance-attribute relations of Descartes' own dualism.

B. Debate with Henry More

Geneviève Rodis-Lewis (1984: 512) labeled the debate between More and Descartes *"*a dialogue between deaf people*"* in order to underline the absence of understanding between the two dualists. This opinion can perhaps be challenged by the fact that More initially praised Descartes for his dualism but eventually came to reject certain aspects that he found incoherent. According to Cartesian dualism, extension is an attribute of bodies, which also have shape, un-penetrability, divisibility and measurability. Meanwhile, More thought that God, angels, and the human mind also have extension, but that this extension is of a spiritual kind. In his letter of December 2nd, 1648, More grants Descartes his dualism but nevertheless desires to amend it in order to grant extension to spiritual substances:

> However, in order to conceal nothing, Sir, though I am madly in love with your system, and the whole body of your philosophy, I confess there is something you missed in the second part of your principles ... But these difficulties do not wear blow to the core of your philosophy .... (More 1672: Epistola Prima H. Mori ad R. Cartesium, 61).

In his letter of February 5th 1649, Descartes explains his view at length on the nature of extension, and refuses to follow More, who attributes extension to any substance. More

ultimately insists that spiritual extension is fundamental to material extension (in his reply to Descartes of March 5th 1649).

The following passage shows that Descartes was mostly receptive to More's argument. In his answer to More of April 15th, 1649 Descartes quotes his opponent on the existence of spiritual extension: *"*I say that there is another, equally genuine, extension*"* and makes the following comments:

> At last we are in substantial agreement; there only remains a question of terms, whether this second sort of extension is to be called equally genuine. For my part, in God and angels and in our mind I understand there to be no extension of substance, but only extension of power…But to attribute to a substance an extension which is only an extension of power is an effect of the preconceived opinion which regards every substance, including God himself, as imaginable. (Cottingham et al. 1991: 372).

Descartes concludes the debate by naming this spiritual extension an 'extension of power.' Here we have a concession on the attribute of extension that had been so essential for the clarity of understanding bodily substance. Descartes explains a few lines later that this spiritual extension represents the power of spiritual substance to act upon material substance and vice versa. Descartes adds:

> In fact, if there was no corporeal extension, I could not conceive any space to which an angel or God would be coextensive. (Cottingham et al. 1991: 372).

We can therefore conclude that Descartes acknowledges a power of extension to immaterial beings, and proper to spiritual substances. It seems that Descartes tries to make sense of the attribute of extension not only for spiritual substances but also for his whole system. But this kind of defense against More's objections seems to betray the earlier conception of spiritual

substance. Extension had been the unique property of bodily substance but is now applicable to spiritual substances. Despite the contradiction, Descartes did not collapse his dualism into monism after debating with Henry More. This kind of extension now given to spiritual substances merely emphasizes the important role of attributes in the Cartesian conception of substance.

Our analysis of the correspondences with Gassendi and More has shown how complex and rich Cartesian dualism is. Descartes even accepted what he had rejected earlier in his career, namely the existence of knowledge based on everyday life and the need for an extension of power for spiritual substances. He seems to have departed from a theory of knowledge based on a strict thought/extension dualism. The new type of dualism in Henry More's *Enchiridum Metaphysicum* makes extension a common attribute of mind and body but with specific characteristics in each substance (Monnoyeur 2004). For example, extension is penetrable in spirits but impenetrable in bodies. We can envision how Henry More could have convinced Descartes to reconsider the attribute of extension along these lines.

It seems to me that Descartes did not change his mind about the nature of his dualism, but occasionally modified the formal explanation of his dualism. This is why I disagree with Machamer and McGuire's claim that Descartes abandoned his dualism due to a lack of confidence in the human mind to discover the nature of substances with certainty. It seems obvious that Descartes eventually had to draw a distinction between knowledge of everyday life and scientific or metaphysical knowledge. The distinction was purely epistemic, allowing the ontological dualism of substances a greater independence. In addition, the concessions about the extension of spiritual substances were not entirely fatal to substance dualism in general, as More demonstrated. We may conclude that Descartes' dualism was overly complicated by the intricate connections between substances and their attributes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to Dante Diotallevi (Queen's University, Canada) for his critical reading and suggestions, to Thomas Steinbuch (Hangzhou University, China) for his comments, and I would also like to acknowledge the two anonymous reviewers and Heather Battaly for their precious help.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Descartes, René. 2000. *Philosophical Essays and Correspondences*. Trans. And ed. by Roger Ariew. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.

Cottingham, John, Robert Stoothof, Dugald Murdoch, and Anthony Kenny, trans. and eds. 1984a. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes: Vol 1.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____. 1984b. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes: Vol 2.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____. 1991. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes: Vol 3.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dutton, Blake. 2003. "Descartes's Dualism and the One Principal Attribute Rule." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 11(3): 395–415.

Gaukroger, Stephen. 2002. *Descartes' System of Natural Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kaufman, Dan. 2008. “Descartes on Composites, Incomplete Substances, and Kinds of Unity.” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 90: 39–73.

Machamer, Peter and J. E. McGuire. 2009. *Descartes's Changing Mind.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Monnoyeur, Françoise. 2004. “Henry More: Plaidoyer pour un Espace Infini.” In *Infini des Philosophes, Infini des Astronomes*, ed. Françoise Monnoyeur. Paris: Editions Belin, 77-92.

_____. 2017. *Matière et Espace dans le Système Cartésien*. Paris: Harmattan.

More, Henry. 1672. *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings of Dr Henry More as namely, his Antidote against Atheism, Appendix to the said Antidote, Enthusiasmus triumphatus, Letters to Des-Cartes, Immortality of the Soul, Conjectura cabbalistica*. Second Edition. London: James Flesher for William Morden.

Rodis-Lewis, Geneviève. 1984. *Descartes, textes et débats*. Paris: Livre de Poche.

Rodriguez-Pereyra, Gonzalo. 2008. “Descartes's Substance Dualism and His Independence Conception of Substance.” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 46 (1): 69-89.

Rozemond, Marleen. 2002. *Descartes’s Dualism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.