

Descartes's Res: An Interactionist Difficulty

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As is well enough known, Descartes refers to both the mind and body as each a *res*.¹ This is a less than luminous term for those who have cast the problem of the relationship of mind and body in interactionist terminology. For this paper I take that to mean addressing the mind/body problem in terms of how one “thing” (*res*) can influence or affect another “thing.” The question already, it can be reasoned, precludes the possibility of influence or affect because of how mind is termed, because of what it is called—a *thing*. The question already has its answer, and as posed almost appears as a parody of inquiries that look to the nature of mind for evidence that man is individually immortal in his personhood. If mind and body are separable, the interactionist wording raises the question how can they be conjoinable if each is a *thing*. Is it not, after all, their conjunction that makes the body cognitive? How, though, can some *thing* which is immaterial be joined to some thing which is not? Conjunction implies propinquity, but how can a thing which takes up no space be joined to that whose existence can only be spatial? How can there be a *point* of interaction without location, which is the specification of magnitudes one to the other? If the individual is to be called immortal which, for some immortalists, separability of mind and body is a precondition, how does mind exist as a *thing*?

I do not propose here to answer these interactionist-phrased difficulties. I want, instead, through some remarks on Descartes, to suggest how the immortality inquiry has been hampered by his tradition, and what manner of

¹ See the “Second Meditation,” especially *Œuvres de Descartes*, ed. by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery [hereafter, Adam-Tannery], revised edition (Paris: Vrin and Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1964-75), Volume VII, p. 27 (“*res cogitans, chose qui pense*”). See *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. Elisabeth S. Haldane & G.R.T. Ross [hereafter, Haldane-Ross], (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1973), Volume 1, p. 153; and “Sixth Meditation,” Adam-Tannery, VII, p. 78 (“Meditation VI” in Haldane-Ross, 1, p. 190: “I possess a distinct idea of body as an extended and unthinking thing.”).

thinking about mind may provide us egress from it. In that way the interactionist problem about the relationship of mind and body might not be so much of a problem for the immortality thesis as some think it is.

I

Descartes nowhere in the corpus defines *res*. It is not convertible with substance; that has independence² but not every thing does. *Cogito*, then, may be a thinking substance,³ but calling it a *res* is not meant to indicate that. Perhaps *res* had for Descartes a clarity and distinctness to it that obviated the need for definition. Clarity, as a metaphysical term and not figure of speech, is that quality of an idea that makes its denial self-contradictory.⁴ And distinctness seems to arise in our notion when the idea is recognized as being complete. One further note added to or subtracted from the idea—the mental representation—would make the idea cease to be that idea. That recognition in general constitutes its distinctness. Is the idea of God complete, if it is distinct, might be another question. What a complete idea of God might be, if it does not involve complete comprehension, might only be an issue for one who has not studied Descartes long enough.⁵

² Descartes first allows only God independence, but later allows independence to created substance. That apparently would be a created independence. See "Principles," I, pp. i-ii (Haldane-Ross, I, pp. 239-40), and "Reply to Objection IV" (II, p. 101).

³ "I am a thinking thing [or a substance whose whole essence or nature is to think]," "Meditation VI," Haldane-Ross, I, p. 190; see Adam-Tannery, VII, p. 78.

⁴ Indubitability is Descartes' alternate for clarity ("Reply to Second Objection," Haldane-Ross, II, p. 42). Inability to doubt that he exists is what led Descartes to pronounce knowledge that he exists, to assert the *Cogito's* existence. I must exist if I am doubting my existence; to deny my existence would be self-contradictory, in any actual or possible world, since only if I exist could I doubt my existence ("Objections III with Replies," Haldane-Ross, II, p. 61; "Reply To Objections II," II, p. 38). It is here where the indubitability that he exists, the clarity of his conception that he does, resides. It is impossible for me to doubt if I do not exist. See *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. Cottingham, Stotthoff, and Murdoch [hereafter, CSM], (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), "The Search For Truth," II, p. 415. The test of epistemic impossibility is the contradictoriness an assertion's denial may entail. In this way, subjective clarity of my existence assures objective truth.

Clarity is indubitability about what is conceived. How does an idea compel assent? How can I *know* that it can have a place in *knowledge*? Only if I cannot doubt what is present to my thinking. "Self contradictoriness in our concepts arises merely from their obscurity and confusion; there can be none in the case of clear and distinct ideas" ("Author's Replies to the Second Set of objections," CSM, II, p. 108 {152}). A clear perception is defined by Descartes in "Principles of Philosophy," CSM, I, p. 207.

⁵ The difficulty is not unknown to Descartes. His solution, it appears, is to hold we have an understanding of the idea when the idea is complete. Why that is not an understanding that is complete seems left for another to explain. See Haldane-Ross, I, p. 227 ("Principles" I, p. xix).

So guided, can we come to clarity and distinctness for this term *res*? Perhaps any term that Descartes did not himself explicate he thought his instructions on clarity and distinctness could. If I may be allowed that supposition, what quality about this term *res* would make for clarity about its conception, would make it a clear idea to us, would make the denial of that quality a contradiction? What do I need to doubt to ensure that I at least have proceeded methodically? If *res* or any remnant of it is sensibly derived, doubt as a purgative (whose epistemic value Descartes, perhaps, could not subject to doubt)⁶ must be pursued if we are to expect any attainment of truth.

Textually, we cannot proceed by the rule of doubt in this matter because Descartes never tells us if *res* was first prehended through a sensibly achieved state of awareness. Surely, Descartes opines, sense transmission seems to leave room for error and any apparatus that could be so tainted has no place in the thinker's study. Whether sense transmission is a conduit for possible error I do not wish to address. That is not necessary in approaching how we come to a *conceptus* of "thing" for Descartes. Is it just that he provides no guidance on how doubt can be used in achieving such a *conceptus*.

Descartes also does not tell us if *res* is a terminus of thought. Is it what we come to after a full inventory of our awareness—something with which we are left after every complex idea has been reduced to its simpler predecessor? One would surely hope that an idea is not a *res* for Descartes, because then how does one have an idea of *res*, a *res* of *res*? It seems *res* must have a different status if we are to have an idea of *res*. And to reach the truth of *res* we must have a clear and distinct conception of it.

We do not have from Descartes an account of such a conception. What is it about our idea of *res* that makes our denial of it self contradictory? And what is it about *res* that makes an addition to or subtraction from our conception of it cease to be that of a *res*? These are knotty quandaries, and perhaps simply saying it is self-evident what a *res* is unties the knots. If evidence is a *datum* that removes inquiry, self-evident is the term to suggest inquiry is not possible with respect to what it is that we are terming self-evident. A question is not possible with respect to it. Such peace of mind does not appear to be ours in the case of Descartes' *res*. "We know a *res* when we see it" seems an acceptable enough declaration when referring to items of sense perception. We cannot say that in the way Descartes uses the term because he calls both the mind and body a *res*.

⁶ It is not clear what evidence Descartes adduces for his belief in doubt's epistemic probity, nor certain if any is forthcoming. That doubt can make us miss the truth (a proposition that we doubt can nevertheless be true) for whatever period of time seems not to have affected Descartes' belief in doubt as a way to reach truth.

Two totally dissimilar entities (they could not be more dissimilar creatures for the Frenchman from La Haye) cannot have the same referent for their definition—this referent being the term *res*. Black and white have as their referent “color,” it is true; but we are not defining color when we speak of black and white. It is *res* we are seeking to define, and calling mind and body each a *res* does not appear to get us to that definition.

Am I using the term “definition” in too restrictive a sense, i.e., conceiving it in the possibly less sophisticated speech of genus and species? Admit these—genus and species—are chimera, as was Descartes’ wont, we are left with units of intellection, contents of mind whose simplicity of nature provide simplicity of apprehension. We reach certainty in thought when we can proceed no further with what is conceived. *Res*, then, cannot be defined, if by that is meant reducing the notion of it to a simpler notion. That again leaves me with inquiring as to what it is I am knowing when I conceive *res*. Clarity and distinctness, as the Cartesian measure of one’s knowledge, as I have already noted, do not appear to provide for refinement of our mental representation called *res*. How is what we conceive and of which we have a conception, a *res*? For purposes of clarity, what is it about our conception of *res* that makes denying it is a *res* self-contradictory? And in what would lie its distinctness if it is accretion or subtraction with regard to the idea that enables us to argue for the distinctness of an idea?

Descartes, of course, was not the only student of philosophy to encounter difficulty with this term *res* or “thing.” Hegel somewhere seems to have wrestled with it⁷ as the emptiest of universals (I am not giving the term “universal” any Aristotelian import here). And for the Schoolmen *res*, of course, was a transcendental. Are we visited here with three different meanings of *res*? It appears we are, but I have chosen Descartes’ difficulty with this term not so much as an opportunity to critique him, but as a starting-point for a discussion on how this terminology has created the interactionist debate which, if mind not be called a “thing,” might ease or moderate the debate. Descartes’ own doctrine has shown the difficulties his teachings present for his students if they are to conceive of mind and body as things. It may be that perhaps one of them should not be so conceived.

II

Now what do I mean when I say one of these disjuncts may not be clearly conceived when conceived as a *res*? And why is it an issue at all if mind is

⁷ Georg Hegel, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 68-70.

conceived clearly as a *res* only if body is not a *res*? I have already commented that Descartes cannot be using this term univocally of both mind and body. How does one, with coherence, maintain that an entity without magnitude, and that is non-localizable, non-spatial and incapable of division, is a *res* if another entity that is always divisible, capable of any extension, and by its very nature is localizable is also a *res*? And how does one persist in holding this belief if the way one comes to the awareness of mind is totally other than the way one comes to that of *res extensa*? I come to be aware of myself as mind, *res cogitans*, for Descartes through the non-deniability of the Cogito's existence; even to doubt it I must exist. I can, however, doubt an existence characterized by parts outside of parts⁸ without entering into the same immediate embarrassment of self-contradiction.

So, there appear to be two difficulties in understanding Descartes' use of the term *res* for both mind and body. Why, however, is any of this important? We seem to have proceeded without this difficulty in reading Aristotle, for example, in whose Greek there appears no equivalent for the English word "thing."⁹ Why single out Descartes?

For the modern debate on personal immortality one would naturally enough begin with him. He affirmed personal immortality¹⁰, and not a century after his affirmation the empiricist denial of substance—or at least skepticism towards it—made it arguably easier to question how an inextended *res* could have power over, influence, that which is in place and of itself totally inert. Descartes himself speaks of some pineal conjunction¹¹ that brings the *res cogitans* into commerce with the unthinking bulk that he calls *res extensa*. How the conjunction is effected, what the means for it are, perhaps might need more than a natural light for its illumination.

The question of how one thing can act through another thing in the way Descartes conceived of mind and body appears, on the surface, trenchant and well-founded. At first glance, and without reflection, the question seems to situate two images and give them equal content. Two billiard balls may undergo an interaction, through the other, on impact. Let us, *pace* Hume, allow more than sequence and constant conjunction here, and say that the one moves by way of a force that the contact of one against the other somehow transmits. We can at least picture to ourselves two extended objects and allow the inference of transmission.

⁸ At least initially, prior to establishing God's guarantee against deceit on those ideas that compel assent. See "Sixth Meditation," *passim* (Haldane-Ross, I, p. 185).

⁹ Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1963 revised second ed.), p. 114, n.#30.

¹⁰ Adam-Tannery, I, p. 82 (To Mersenne, 25 November 1630).

¹¹ "The Passions of the Soul," CSM, I, p. 340.

How can this causality occur in mind through body? Contact requires situatedness in place, with one object next to the other. Even claims of action at a distance¹², if it occurs, presupposes spatiality in its claim. Surely, further, what is causality without force, which itself assumes some inference about distance in its mathematical formulation?

These are not new questions. Aristotle was not satisfied with his teacher's metaphors on the soul's use of the body, and he does not seem to have anticipated Descartes' approach to the subject. The issue, I suggest, poses a difficulty because the interactionist unreflectively accepts the equivalence of mind with thing. And once that occurs, reason uses the only image it can—spatial configuration—and some will conclude thereby that interaction is impossible with the body. Mind, which has no location or extension, cannot be “next” to that, body, over which it need exercise causality, and therefore the causality, the interaction, is impossible. What is unextended is not in place, and only what is in place can be “next to.”

The assumption, of course, is that causality can only be between spatial configurations. We have this “picture” of what interaction is, I suggest, much as a key fitting into a lock—turning it “opens” the door; or of the pool ball hitting the six in the side pocket. We do not think of interaction when a car collides into a wall. We have the word “destruction” for that, but that too is a form of causality. Spatiality in all these instances is present, however. This is how we unreflectively look at causality. And so long as we do, the “interaction” question of mind and body is already settled. There can be none under this aegis of causality.

III

This interactionist question has gained heightened visibility in our day given the broad reporting today of the so-called near-death, out-of-body experience. The literature is extensive, and it now seems that every two or three months a book about this phenomenon appears on the *New York Times*' bestseller list. Beginning with Raymond Moody in the 1970's, up to the paperback of Jean Ritchie's *Death's Door*¹³, claims of non-bodily awareness abound. Their veridicality aside, assume the mind in such instance is in fact separable from the body. Is it a *thing* that has separated? Might not the subject of mind be more realistically approached in a manner similar to that in which existence is? Existence is not a thing. I, at least, cannot point to any object and say “There is

¹² For Descartes this required a medium. The universe is a plenum of subtle (or first) matter, allowing for no void. See “Principles of Philosophy,” CSM, I, p. 229.

¹³ Jean Ritchie, *Death's Door: True Stories of Near-Death Experiences* (New York: Dell, 1996).

existence,” and I don’t believe anyone else can. Yet we know that there is existence. What it is we perhaps cannot define. “The final perfection of a thing”? What might that mean if that is an explanation (indication?) of existence? Clearly that description is meant to apply to more than possibility (which exists), and to more than the image of a winged horse that I cannot find “in the world,” but only in my imagination or dreams. The description is meant to indicate, perhaps, the fullness of a possibility, that possibility is not the completion of whatever it is about which we are talking. Existence in this sense might refer to that state where an entity stands outside its cause, or outside our simply thinking about it. Does one say, in today’s solipsistic, verificationist, climate, “as the entity is independent of its being thought about”?

This still does not inform us what existence is. We seem to know only what it does, not what it is. Existence brings to awareness what was not before awareness just a moment ago. Existence makes possibility cease to be just possibility. The mother of a child yet to be born perhaps is closer to that awareness than others. Yet we have not really defined existence here. What a reality does and what it is are linked, for sure. Existence does so much, however. Does it not provide not only for an entity’s emergence from simple possibility, but also for its perdurance of sorts, and for the full integration of all its manifestations, operations, and attributes? And do not all of these exist too?

An idea of being does not convey to us existence. What this idea may be—Descartes seems to have limited it to degrees of perfection (more or less reality) that we conceive¹⁴—it cannot get to the existential order. Essences, natures, never do; and Descartes’ ideas in fact are, in their purity, called by him simple

¹⁴ In the “Second Set of Replies” Descartes axiom VI tells us “there are various degrees of reality or being . . . there is more objective reality in the idea of a substance than in the idea of an accident.” Axiom X tells us that “existence is contained in the idea or concept of every single thing, since we cannot conceive of anything except as existing” (CSM, II, p. 117). In the “Third Set of Objections with Replies” (Reply to Ninth Objection) Descartes reiterates “reality admits of more or less” (CSM, II, p. 130). Apparently my idea of substance contains more of the notion of existence than that of modes, perhaps because the former characterizes independence relative to the latter.

An idea of perfection (God) may entail the notion of being, the impossibility that that of which the idea is cannot but be. I may have an idea of a being (God) whose non-existence is self-contradictory (“ . . . from the fact that I cannot conceive God without existence, it follows that existence is inseparable from Him” [“Meditation V,” Haldane-Ross, I, p. 181, and “Meditation V” *passim*, Halden-Ross, I, pp. 179-185]): Simply to have an idea that this is so can bring me to the realization (certainty) that it is so only if an idea (sc., that of God) is guarantor of the truth claim “God exists.” The impossibility of His nonexistence at the same time entails that He, for that reason, must exist. The idea of a being’s impossibility of non-existence (i.e., the clear idea of God) becomes the guarantor of its existence, of its being more than an idea. This idea of being (sc. God’s), for Descartes, is different than that

natures.¹⁵ An idea of being for him, then, would have to be the conception of a nature. Existence, however, is not grasped in an idea. The idea of a hundred dollars does not buy me goods in the marketplace because it must be more than the idea that the grocer accepts as payment. What he accepts must exist, which is to say, must be more than an idea. Failure to secure provisions with his idea of a hundred dollars should be enough to rouse anyone from dreams to the contrary.¹⁶

Prior to an entity's emergence into existence, however, we do not ask, so far as I know, how existence interacted with nonexistence, or with possibility, for such an emergence. In an Aristotelian setting we may say the efficient cause makes the matter to be through the introduction of the appropriate form. But form makes a thing what it is; and what a thing is is not that it is. That a thing is derives from existence.¹⁷ Existence, however, is never discoursed upon as having

of any other that we have (though he seems to conceive of existence in every case as an attribute ["Principles," I, lvi (Haldane-Ross, I, p. 242)]). To some there seems here an illicit transition from idea to existence. Descartes might reply that the transition is only in a thought that is not clear, and not in the idea which itself includes the notion of existence, and does so to the one that sees it clearly. This would accord with the notion that an *intuitus* is not a process (of which transition is a species). The goal of Cartesian *intuitus*, e.g., is the vision of the inseparability (the right ordering, then) of concatenated truths all at once.

¹⁵ "Rules For the Direction of the Mind," rule 12, CSM, I, p. 45. Method (clarification), of course, is how we come to them. These natures are neither simple nor the essences of the Schools. A simple nature seems to be the object as prehended from our viewpoint, and not according to itself (see "Rule for the Direction of the Mind," Rule 12, CSM, I, p. 44). Simple also does not mean intrinsic indivisibility; rather, it is the status where no further division of the idea is required for distinctness. A simple nature may be an axiom, extension, position, or eternal truth (see "Principles of Philosophy," CSM, I, p. 208).

¹⁶ Descartes, his *malin génie* notwithstanding, does not need in this situation of the marketplace God's solicitude against our being deceived to assure us that our dream of one hundred dollars is, in fact, discernible from the actual possession of those dollars.

¹⁷ In its Aristotelian habitat form in matter does not give me knowledge *that* a thing exists. While it actuates matter to be an individual this-such, the judgment that a thing exists is not furnished by the form. That is an act of mind needing more than the form in the composite. Existence as the synthesis of form and matter provides grounds for the judgment that this thing, informed to be matter of this kind rather than that, exists. (Aristotle appears to work towards, without actually reaching, the judgment of existence in *Analytica Posteriora* II, 2, 90a 26-b 6, where he distinguished whether a thing exists and what it is that exists, and rules that clearly the cognitive content [lógos] is known only under the aspect of being. Lógos carries with it here the modality of universality, however, which is not reached in the judgment "this exists" [see also *Metaphysics* Δ, 7]). That judgment "this thing exists" accordingly, is a knowledge other than that provided by the Aristotelian lógos. At *De Anima*, III, 6, 430a 27-28 Aristotle speaks of synthesizing predicate with subject, and then adding the tense. That is not the judgment "this exists," however, and it will take a later tradition in

been “next to,” or “in,” or “near” that which does come to be. And existence is not a thing. The reasons it is not are too clear for further discussion.

Why, then, is mind a “thing”? Descartes thought it was—believed it to be, if I may, a substantial thing. He does not call it such—but it is a thing which is a substance. He allows for that teaching.¹⁸ So it is a substantial thing, in contrast to modes, which he never calls *res*. And accidents, that old Aristotelian way of talking, he never permitted in reasoning *more geometrico*.¹⁹ His epistemology was a search for other “things,” although these “accidents” are still with us in everyday living and *praxis*.

IV

Let me go back to this point about mind and thing. If I call any reality a thing, do I not immediately form of it an image, and must that not be one that is three-dimensional? If I do that, is that clear thinking? Here I have slipped into that sense-world against which Descartes himself has warned. In calling mind a thing I now have to explain how it can be in another thing, the body. I have

the Schools to introduce it. While form for them specifies the matter individually, that it tells us *what* a thing is seems to the Schoolmen to require a principle that tells us *that* a thing is. Otherwise, as their reasoning can be construed, in each instance where form told us *what* a thing is it would likewise have to actuate matter such that *what* a thing is in each instance would be *that* it is).

¹⁸ See note 3 above.

¹⁹ Though Descartes uses the term “accidents,” he had no use for them (“Sixth Set of Replies,” CSM, II, p. 293), or for other doctrines of the Schools, like the syllogism. Science was by way of clarification (method) from the more complex to the less to that which was totally simple (“Rules for the Direction of the Mind,” Rule 11, CSM, I, p. 37). And the Cartesian matter, to which modes (accidents) are referred has an essence; Aristotelian matter does not. Having discarded Aristotelian form (see “The World, or Treatise on Light,” CSM, I, pp. 89-91; “Principles of Philosophy,” CSM, I, p. 287), Descartes had to discard the syllogism since the middle term in the syllogism is itself a form (See “Rules For the Directions of the Mind,” Rule 2, CSM, I, p. 11; Rule 10, CSM, I, p. 36; Rule 13, CSM, I, p. 51; “Principles of Philosophy,” Author’s Letter, CSM, I, pp. 185-6; “Discourse on the Method,” CSM, I, p. 142). Simple natures, after all, are intuited for Descartes, and their ordering, in which science consists, is not a product of bringing the subject under the domain of the predicate. It is, rather, proceeding the way of the mathematicians (see “Meditations,” Synopsis, CSM, I, p. 9; “Discourse on the Method,” CSM, I, p. 120). In this reconstruction of *scientia*, the matter of the Schools as the ultimate subject of predication of accidents by way of the substance they inform was equally, then, of no service to Descartes.

On foundational certainty, science (*scientia*), in Descartes see “Second Set of Replies,” CSM, II, p. 103 (“no act of awareness that can be rendered doubtful seems fit to be called knowledge”); “The Search For Truth,” CSM, II, p. 408 (“a body of knowledge . . . firm and certain enough to deserve the name science”); “Rules for the Direction of the Mind,” Rules 1-5, CSM, I, pp. 10-20.

preordained the outcome by thinking this way. It can't be in the body as a thing. How is existence in a thing? For the question about mind, if, as I suggested, we are to think of it as we do existence, to have any meaning, must I not be able to say, equally and simultaneously, "Where is existence in the thing?" Existence is not in a thing, but the thing about which I am asking the question exists nevertheless.

If in our reflection upon what makes for man we come to a facet about him that no other facet about him that we have unearthed seems to share, does not the facet, in increasing our awareness, our knowledge, of itself make for a way of thinking that the other facets do not? And if it is an awareness of what cannot be material might not this new object of our awareness give us a way of thinking about it that differs from the way we think about material things? Surely it must, otherwise we could not think about it. Our difficulty is that we seem never to think without an image, although various applications in mathematics might belie that. What, after all, is our image of π ?

Does an awareness of mind's reality give us a way to think that differs from the way we think of the world as given to sense? Our ability to conceptualize a property that is the same in objects that differ in other ways indicates an ability to transcend a singular object, to be indifferent towards certain of its properties, and prehend one that it shares in common with other objects. This is, of course, to think universally—to think indifferently with respect to certain properties of things and see different things as a group of some one feature. That indicates a power that is trans-particular. And, to paraphrase Descartes, if there cannot be in the effect what is not in the cause,²⁰ it indicates a causality that is trans-particular. It indicates for man a trans-particular, i.e., non-material, character. Our ability to classify by way of an entitative content in things otherwise different tells us that the presence in us of mind may mean that mind can be thought of differently than in terms of an image, a three-dimensional something.

Is this not the same as to say we should not attempt to visualize what interaction might be between mind and body? That we must think of mind abstractly—not as a *thing* "next to" or "in" the body—but as an activity that man performs when he is thinking, as he can, beyond the sense-particular? Is not mind a power man has that moves him out of sense restriction (the awareness only of the singular object), frees him from the sense-image, separates him from matter, the very stuff of singular, particular, existence? If matter is simply existence as a localized sense-particular, man's ability to transcend that in conceptualization clearly means that we must find a way to discourse about mind other than the way we talk about sense-objects, which we always picture

²⁰ See the "Third Meditation" (Haldane-Ross, I, p. 163).

as in a place, as next to another sense-object.

The inability to localize long-term memory in the brain gives additional license, or plausibility, to speak of mind in a non-material, i.e., non three-dimensional, way. The findings on long-term memory are well-enough known, and I would only point the reader to my chapter on this subject in my work *Personal Existence After Death: Reductionist Circularities and the Evidence*.²¹ Long-term memory appears to be non-spatial, and that is anathema to the reductionist. If, further, as I believe is shown, that man in fact can proceed non-algorithmically in mentation,²² artificial intelligence theorists may be on the most inauspicious of grounds in seeking to advance how man and computer are alike. Mind is not the effect of matter suitably organized: digitally originated electronic pulses—quanta of information flow—are not explanatory of human cognition.

Accordingly, let us not think of mind three-dimensionally, which calling it a *thing* inclines us to do. If I have been right in my comments on the universal and the non-spatiality of memory, then keeping to the facts—“saving the phenomena”—does not permit me to think of mind three-dimensionally. So we need not ask ourselves how does mind work “on” or “in” a body or any part of it. It is the person as a body in this world who is the thinker that transcends sense-particulars, and sees (however shadowy) into their essence by powers of inference and abstraction. The mind does not work on the brain; it is not situated some *where* to effect a result. Rather the brain is how each person is situated as a cognitive agent in this world as the thinker he is in this world. As a body in this world his experience shall be his by that body and place in this world, in which body his brain resides. The brain he has and the body he has are how the experiences are his and not yours or mine. To have those experiences, however, to prehend this world and each object in it as a coherent and unitary whole, he needs more than the neurological apparatus of the cortex. The chaotic and disaggregated neuroelectric events of the brain, studied with all deliberation by modern refinements in neurophysiology *cannot* be the experience, the percept. The percept is uniform, stable, and steady. The neurological mechanism shows none of these characteristics.²³ The unity of the percept allows us to suggest a trans-neural function in man. And this is mind.

I suggest the question of interaction, of dualism, arises because we have allowed the mind to be called a *thing*, and we then three-dimensionalize it. But

²¹ Robert Geis, *Personal Existence After Death: Reductionist Circularities and the Evidence*. (Peru, Illinois: Sherwood Sugden, 1995).

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 89-92.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-87.

thinking clearly about it reveals that it is a principal by how we act in this world. That is what we mean when we say it is indivisible. It is not reducible to any other state is what we further mean. It is the source of how we commerce with the world.

As we perpend these notions, it is clear that the language of interaction, wherein we speak of things acting on one another, is not the correct medium of translation. How mind is operant in this world I am not prepared to explain. There are insights in terms of form in sensible particulars being illumined by way of an active power in mind²⁴ that perhaps point us to a way of understanding, however inchoately, how mind is operant. It is so non-dimensionally.

Man, through mind, exists in the world in a non-dimensional way. Calling mind a *res* has been an impediment to asserting what the evidence about intellection says about non-dimensional man. As existence makes a thing to be, and is neither big nor small, might it not be that mind need not be dimensional either to make an agent cognitive? And just as we do not speak of existence interacting with an existent to make it exist, on what grounds need we speak of mind interacting with body to make the agent cognitive?

Mind is human existence (and we have already agreed existence is not a thing) as capable of becoming all things. Its inextensibility, its partlessness—the precondition for its indestructibility—is a causality. As existence is throughout the body, and divisible nowhere, mind for the living body is its potency to become, and actuality of becoming, more than just body; and is likewise divisible nowhere. An amputated leg will have no feeling because its nerves no longer receive the nourishment that allows mind to be present there. The nerves in the leg cannot be equivalent to mind for if they were mind would no longer exist for the person whose leg has been amputated. And, to rephrase a thought already advanced, as existence is not said to interact with any reality that it has brought out of possibility, so the mind is not interacting as *thing* with other *thing*. As existence makes the reality it has brought out of possibility more than possibility, so mind makes the body more than body. We do not know how existence effects reality from possibility, but we know interaction is an inapt term for its causality. Might not that language be inapt, then, for the mind and body?

Along this line of thought, the abstractions of mathematics might not be so inapposite here. We know it is from a point that a line is generated, yet the point's inextensibility does not lead us to deny a line exists. And we do not say a point interacts with a line to generate line. It is, in fact, where magnitudes

²⁴ See Aristotle, *De Anima*, III, 5, 430a 10-17.

interact that a point—location without extension—emerges. And sensation itself begins with the contact of magnitudes—sense data and the corporeal sense organ.

Obviously the precisions that would calm us have not been fully arrived at in this discussion on the relation of mind and body. The doctrine that the mind is a *res* has been an exercise in imprecision, however. Distancing ourselves from that doctrine with perhaps a look at how existence and mind may be spoken of similarly may be a beginning to understanding mind's efficacious role in the being of knowing man.