

PHIL 354  
Fall 2002  
L. Shapiro

### Third Paper Topics

Write a 5-6pp paper (about 1500 words) on one of the following topics. Papers should be typed, double-spaced, with standard font and margins.

Papers are **due** in class on **November 7, 2002**.

1. In the Sixth Meditation Descartes accounts for the nature of a human being as follows: “I am not merely present in my body as a sailor is present in a ship, but ... I am very closely joined and, as it were, intermingled with it so that I and the body form a unit” (7:81, S:116). Discuss the nature of this close joining or intermingling so as to form a unit. Issues you might consider include: whether the human being constitutes a third substance and whether the close joining is simply a causal connection, or, if not, what more than a causal connection the union might involve. In your discussion you should feel free to draw appropriate analogies.
2. According to Descartes our sensations allow us to infer first, that “the bodies which are the source of these various sensory perceptions possess differences corresponding to them, though perhaps not resembling them” (7:81, S:117) and second, that the bodies we are sensing benefit or harm us in some way. After briefly presenting this account of sensation, evaluate it as an account of the representationality of our sensations. There are several ways you might approach this question. One dimension you might consider is whether this account can manage to avoid the dreaming skepticism of the First Meditation. Alternatively, you might consider whether this affords a robust enough account of sensory knowledge, or equally whether it can account for our common sensical understanding of what we sense.
3. In her letter of 16 May 1643, Elisabeth asks Descartes “how the soul of a human being ... can determine bodily spirits in order to bring about voluntary actions”. Explicate just what the problem of mind-body causal interaction seems to be, and what sort of notion of causation underlies it. Then consider Descartes’ response in his subsequent letters, and consider whether this response adequately answers her concerns. Is there some other aspect of his account of mind-body causation which might have served him better? Does he have an adequate answer?