Augustine's Way into the Will
Simon Harrison

Augustine is a pivotal figure in the history of the concept of will, but what is his ‘theory of will’? This book investigates Augustine’s use of ‘will’ in one particular context, his dialogue On Free Choice of the Will, taking seriously its historical and philosophical form. First, it finds that the dialogical nature of On Free Choice of the Will has been missed, as exemplified by the unhistorical and misleading modern attributions of names to the speakers. Secondly, the commonplace that Augustine changed his mind in the course of its composition is shown to be unfounded, and a case is made for its argumentative coherence. Thirdly, it is shown that it is the form and structure of On Free Choice of the Will that give philosophical content to Augustine’s theory of will. The dialogue constitutes a ‘way in to the will’ that itself instantiates a concept of will. At the heart of this structure is a particular argument that depends on an appeal to a first-person perspective, which ties the vocabulary of will to a concept of freedom and responsibility. This appeal is significantly similar to other arguments deployed by Augustine which are significantly similar to Descartes’ ‘cogito ergo sum’, ‘I think therefore I am’. The book goes on to investigate how Augustine’s ‘way in’ relates to these cogito-like arguments as they occur in Augustine’s major and most read works, the Confessions, the City of God, and On the Trinity. The relationship of Augustine’s to Descartes’ ‘cogito’ is also discussed. Augustine elucidates, within a particular Platonic theory of knowledge, a ‘theory of will’ that is grounded in a ‘way in’, which takes the conditions and limits of knowledge seriously.

Biblical Natural Law
Matthew Levering

Biblical Natural Law
This book serves as an introduction to natural law theory. The Introduction proposes that natural law theory makes most sense in light of an understanding of a loving Creator. The first chapter then argues the Bible sketches both such an understanding of a loving Creator and an account of natural law that offers an expansive portrait of the moral life. The second chapter surveys the development of natural law doctrine from Descartes to Nietzsche, and shows how these thinkers reverse the biblical portrait by placing human beings at the center of the moral universe. Whereas the biblical portrait of natural law is other-directed, ordered to self-giving love, the modern accounts turn inward upon the self, with reductive consequences. The final two chapters employ theological and philosophical investigation to achieve a contemporary doctrine of natural law that accords with the biblical witness to a loving Creator. These two chapters interact creatively with the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. The book revives discussion of natural law among biblical scholars while also challenging philosophers and theologians to re-think their accounts of natural law.

Rationalism, Platonism and God
Michael Ayers (ed.)

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This book comprises three main chapters on Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, with extensive responses. It explores the common ground of the great early-modern rationalist theories, and provides an examination of the ways in which the mainstream Platonic tradition permeates these theories. One chapter identifies characteristically Platonic themes in Descartes’s cosmology and metaphysics, finding them associated with two distinct, even opposed attitudes to nature and the human condition, one ancient and ‘contemplative’, the other modern and ‘controlling’. It finds the same tension in Descartes’s moral theory, and believes that it remains unresolved in present-day ethics. Was Spinoza a Neoplatonist theist, critical Cartesian, or naturalistic materialist? The second chapter argues that he was all of these. Analysis of his system reveals how Spinoza employed Neoplatonist monism against Descartes’s Platonist pluralism. Yet the terminology — like the physics — is Cartesian. And within this Platonic-Cartesian shell Spinoza developed a rigorously naturalistic metaphysics and even, Ayers claims, an effectually empiricist epistemology. The final chapter focuses on the Rationalists’ arguments for the Platonist, anti-Empiricist principle of ‘the priority of
the perfect’, i.e. the principle that finite attributes are to be understood through corresponding perfections of God, rather than the reverse. It finds the given arguments unsatisfactory but stimulating, and offers a development of one of Leibniz’s for consideration. These chapters receive informed and constructive criticism and development at the hands of, respectively, Douglas Hedley, Sarah Hutton and Maria Rosa Antognazza.

Cogito?
Joseph Almog

Decartes' maxim Cogito, Ergo Sum (from his Meditations) is perhaps the most famous philosophical expression ever coined. The author of this book, Joseph Almog, is a Descartes scholar whose last book What Am I? focused on the second half of this expression asking who is the “I”, who is thinking, and how does this entity somehow incorporate both body and mind? This book looks at the first half of the proposition — cogito. The book calls this the “thinking man's paradox”: how can there be, in and part of the natural world, a creature that thinks? Descartes' proposition declares that such a fact maintains and is self-evident; but as this book points out, from the point of view of Descartes' own skepticism it is far from obvious. How can it be that a thinking human can be both part of the natural world and yet somehow distinct and separate from it? How did “thinking” arise in an otherwise “thoughtless” universe and what does it mean for beings like us to be thinkers? The book goes back to the Meditations, and using Descartes' own methodology — and his naturalistic, scientific worldview — tries to answer the question.

Descartes on Causation
Tad M. Schmaltz

This book is a systematic study of Descartes's theory of causation and its relation to the medieval and early modern scholastic philosophy that provides its proper historical context. The argument here is that even though Descartes offered a dualistic ontology that differs radically from what we find in scholasticism, his views on causation were profoundly influenced by scholastic thought on this issue. This influence is evident
not only in his affirmation in the Meditations of the abstract scholastic axiom that a cause must contain the reality of its effects, but also in the details of the accounts of body-body interactions in his physics, of mind-body interaction in his psychology, and of the causation that he took to be involved in free human action. In contrast to those who have read Descartes as endorsing the “occasionalist” conclusion that God is the only real cause, a central thesis of this study is that he accepted what in the context of scholastic debates regarding causation is the antipode of occasionalism, namely, the view that creatures rather than God are the causal source of natural change. What emerges from the defense of this interpretation of Descartes is a new understanding of his contribution to modern thought on causation.

Matter Matters
Kurt Smith

Why is there a material world? Why is it fundamentally mathematical? This book explores a seventeenth-century answer to these questions as it emerged from the works of Descartes and Leibniz. What we learn is the sense in which these philosophers held that an analysis of the material world must inevitably lead to mathematics, and that mathematics must inevitably take matter as its object. Here the connection between matter and mathematics was cast in terms of the conditions of intelligibility—matter is what underwrote the very intelligibility of mathematics. Thus, in every world in which mathematics in intelligible, matter exists, and vice versa. On this view, then, matter is not seen as a cosmic anomaly or divine afterthought, but as an essential constituent of the universe. As the title of the book asserts: matter matters.

Occasionalism
Steven Nadler

This book is a collection of essays on the problem of causation in seventeenth-century philosophy. Occasionalism is the doctrine, held by a number of early modern Cartesian thinkers, that created substances are devoid of any true causal powers, and that God is the only real causal agent in the universe. All natural phenomena have God as their direct
and immediate cause, with natural things and their states serving only as “occasions” for God to act. Rather than being merely an ad hoc, deus ex machina response to the mind-body problem bequeathed by Descartes to his followers (especially Malebranche, Cordemoy, and La Forge), as it has often been portrayed in the past, occasionalism is in fact a full-blooded, complex, and philosophically interesting account of causal relations. These essays examine the philosophical, scientific, theological, and religious themes and arguments of occasionalism, as well as its roots in medieval views on God and causality.

Descartes and the Puzzle of Sensory Representation

Raffaella De Rosa

Published in print: 2010 Published Online: February 2010
Publisher: Oxford University Press
Item type: book

While much has been written on Descartes' theory of mind and ideas, no systematic study of his theory of sensory representation and misrepresentation is currently available in the literature. This book is an ambitious attempt to fill this gap. It argues against the established view that Cartesian sensations are mere qualia by defending the view that they are representational; it offers a descriptivist-causal account of their representationality that is critical of, and differs from, all other extant accounts (such as, for example, causal, teleofunctional and purely internalist accounts); and it has the advantage of providing an adequate solution to the problem of sensory misrepresentation within Descartes' internalist theory of ideas. In sum, the book offers a novel account of the representationality of Cartesian sensations; provides a panoramic overview, and critical assessment, of the scholarly literature on this issue; and places Descartes' theory of sensation in the central position it deserves among the philosophical and scientific investigations of the workings of the human mind.

The grid

Louis A. Girifalco

in The Universal Force: Gravity - Creator of Worlds

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Item type: chapter

Descartes believed he was meant to create the ultimate natural philosophy. He relied primarily on reason and philosophic principles,
so most of the physics he developed was wrong. But he was a great mathematician and created analytic geometry, which was a major step in developing modern mathematics. Mathematics had always primarily meant geometry, which was regarded as being the only absolute truth. Galileo, and even Newton, presented their results in geometric form. Descartes showed that there was a close connection between geometry and algebra. This ultimately led to modern powerful analytic tools. His contributions to philosophy were important because they stressed the need for rigorous logic and for making as few assumptions as possible.

Introduction
Walter Ott

in Causation and Laws of Nature in Early Modern Philosophy

This chapter sets up the division the book will explore: the split between “top-down” and “bottom-up” views of the laws of nature. The scholastic view is a bottom-up picture: although God must concur with the powers of bodies, those bodies determine the precise course of events. Descartes's invention of the laws of nature results in a top-down picture: what happens in the world depends directly on the will of God.

What Mechanism Isn't
Walter Ott

in Causation and Laws of Nature in Early Modern Philosophy

There are two ways to understand early modern mechanism: first, as the view that what happens in the natural world is a result of the mechanical properties of bodies (call this “course-of-nature mechanism”), and second, as the view that the only properties bodies have are mechanical properties (“ontological mechanism”). In the work of Descartes and Malebranche, the two kinds of mechanism are starkly opposed: it is because they accept ontological mechanism (and so must reject scholastic powers) that these figures cannot endorse course-of-nature mechanism.
Descartes's picture of the laws of nature thus implies a very strong version of the top-down model of laws. And yet Descartes often speaks as if bodies had vis, “force” or “power.” This chapter argues that such language is merely a convenience, and that Descartes cannot, strictly speaking, hold that bodies have vis.

Cartesian method, construed as a way of organizing domains of knowledge according to the ‘order of reason’, was a powerful reductive tool. Descartes produced important results in mathematics, physics, and metaphysics by relating certain complex items and problems back to simpler elements that serve as starting points for his inquiries. However, his reductive method also impoverished these domains in important ways, for it tended to restrict geometry to the study of straight line segments, physics to the study of ambiguously constituted bits of matter in motion, and metaphysics to the study of the isolated, incorporeal knower. This book examines in detail the impact, negative and positive, of Descartes's method on his scientific and philosophical enterprises, exemplified by the Geometry, the Principles of Philosophy, the Treatise of Man, and the Meditations on First Philosophy.

This book argues for a reflective virtue epistemology based on a kind of virtuous circularity that may be found explicitly or just below the surface.
in the epistemological writings of Descartes, Moore, and now Davidson, who also relies crucially on an assumption of virtuous circularity. Along the way various lines of objection are explored. Part I of this book considers historical alternatives to the view developed in Part II. It begins with G. E. Moore's legendary proof, and the epistemology that lies behind it. That leads to classical foundationalism, a more general position encompassing the indirect realism advocated by Moore. Next the book turns to the quietist naturalism found in David Hume, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and P. F. Strawson. After that comes Thomas Reid's common sense alternative. A quite different option is the subtle and complex epistemology developed by Wilfrid Sellars over the course of a long career. Finally, Part I concludes with a study of Donald Davidson's distinctive form of epistemology naturalized (as the book argues). The second part of the book presents an alternative beyond the historical positions of Part I, one that defends a virtue epistemology combined with epistemic circularity. This alternative retains elements of the earlier approaches, while discarding what was found wanting in them.

Learning from Six Philosophers Volume 2
Jonathan Bennett

This book presents and analyses the most important parts of the philosophical works of Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. Volume 1: the shift from Aristotelian to Cartesian physics; Descartes on matter and space, on causation, and on certainty; Descartes and Spinoza on matter and mind, and on desire; Leibniz's metaphysics (monads) and physics, his theory of animals. Volume 2: Locke on ideas, on necessity, on essences, on substance, on secondary qualities, on personal identity; Descartes on modality; Berkeley's epistemology and metaphysics; Hume on ideas, on belief, on causation, on bodies, on reason; Hume and Leibniz on personal identity.

Introduction
Simon Harrison

in Augustine's Way into the Will: The Theological and Philosophical Significance of De libero arbitrio
This chapter sets out the structure and method of this book. Will, evil, and predestination are all problems which have a history, and whose history is relevant to Augustine’s On Free Choice of the Will. This book adopts a rather parsimonious approach to these contexts by focusing upon On Free Choice itself. Rather than attempting to map Augustine’s text onto a contemporary account of these concepts or locating it in an overarching narrative of their development, this book is an enquiry into the way Augustine uses such terms and ideas in the context of this particular text. A related methodological minimalism consists in the leaving out of detailed references to Augustine’s relationship to other historical figures and movements (Manichaeanism, Stoicism, Neoplatonism).

A Cogito-Like Argument?
Simon Harrison

in Augustine's Way into the Will: The Theological and Philosophical Significance of De libero arbitrio

When Descartes published his Meditations, the similarity of his arguments to some found in Augustine was immediately pointed out to him. The most frequently cited and most similar is Augustine’s claim that ‘If I doubt, I am’ (City of God 11.26). This chapter discusses this text in detail, and suggests that the relationship with Descartes is illuminating. It identifies three cogito-like arguments in On Free Choice, all of which act as starting points, involve revealing the self-evidence of certain undeniable truths, include an analysis of what is to know something, and incorporate an idea of value.

New Essays on the Rationalists
Rocco J. Gennaro and Charles Huenemann (eds)

This anthology presents recent writings on Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz. All of the essays were written especially for this volume, and many of them grew out of a 1995 NEH summer seminar on the Rationalists hosted by Jonathan Bennett at Syracuse University. The collection is divided into three parts: “Matter and Substance,” “Freedom
and Necessity,” and “Mind and Consciousness.” Essays include those written by Jonathan Bennett, J. A. Cover, Edwin Curley, Michael Della Rocca, Don Garrett, Stephen Voss, Catherine Wilson, and Margaret D. Wilson. Some specific topics include Descartes's conception of empty space (i.e., vacuum), Leibniz on the infinite divisibility of matter, Spinoza's “necessitarianism,” and Spinoza and Leibniz on animal mentality and consciousness.

**Descartes's Theory of Mind**

Desmond Clarke

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Descartes argues that no explanation of any phenomenon may assume or merely re-describe what needs to be explained. He cannot, therefore, propose substance dualism as a theory of mind. To explain mental activities such as sensation, memory, or imagination, one must hypothesize how they result from interaction between the environment, the senses, and the processing of the brain. Descartes initiated such a naturalized account. However, given the state of neurology in the seventeenth century, his efforts were doomed. The failure to construct a scientific theory that bridges the theoretical gap between mental events and matter (as understood by Descartes) results, by default, in a property dualism that marks the limits of his scientific efforts.

**Learning from Six Philosophers Volume 1**

Jonathan Bennett

Published in print: 2001 Published Online: November 2003
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This book presents and analyses the most important parts of the philosophical works of Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. Volume 1: the shift from Aristotelian to Cartesian physics; Descartes on matter and space, on causation, and on certainty; Descartes and Spinoza on matter and mind, and on desire; Leibniz's metaphysics (monads) and physics, his theory of animals. Volume 2: Locke on ideas, on necessity, on essences, on substance, on secondary qualities, on personal identity; Descartes on modality; Berkeley's epistemology and metaphysics; Hume on ideas, on belief, on causation, on bodies, on reason; Hume and Leibniz on personal identity.