DESCARTES' CONCEPTION OF MIND

CHAPTER II
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As we know that 'Mind-Body' relation is one of the most controversial problems in the philosophy of Mind. This problem arises because of the difficulties in understanding the relationship between the 'Mind' and the 'Brain'. This 'Mind-Body' dualism or relation continues to be the most central issue in the history of Philosophy, there are presently two major approaches to the understanding of the nature of 'Mind':-


The dualistic approach retains the traditional assumption that mind is non-physical, inner, private, and so on. The monistic or physicalistic approach states that all mental processes are nothing but the physical activities which originate or take place in the brain (body). However, we are not inclined to stick to either, or. If we regard 'mind' to be 'thought' as an immaterial entity, then the three following things need to be explained:

(i) The Mind, (ii) The Brain (body), and (iii) The interaction between the two.
Scholastic philosophy maintains that everything in this world can be divided into two basic categories of things mainly 'substances' and 'accidents', which in modern terminology can be understood as 'individual things' and 'accidental properties'. Accordingly, substances are independent existents whereas accidental properties can exist only as dependents upon substances. The tradition opines that a material substance is composite of matter and essence with a distinction that essence is part and parcel of the substance whereas accidental properties are added to it from the outside to the whole compromised of matter and essence in such a way that substance would still be what it is. In other words, an essence determines the inner structure of a substance and the accidental properties do not. Further, the traditional view states that 'a human being consists of a body and a soul'. The soul is conceived as the essence of the body. In other words, the relationship between a human being and his soul is the relationship between substance and its essence, i.e. the soul or mind.

Rene Descartes, the father of Modern Philosophy, offers the mental substance theory which states that every human being even idiots and infants in arms possess both 'mind'
and 'body'. According to him, both 'mind' and 'body' are two independent, individual substances. Every human being is a combination of 'mind' and 'body'. He says, the 'mind' is lodged in the 'body' but the relation between the two is contingent, i.e. not necessary. Because even after the death of the body, mind continues to exist. Thus, both 'mind' and 'body' are independent of each other. He opines that 'mind' is an active and conscious substance as having 'extention' as its essential attribute. Both 'mind' and 'body' possess two different exclusive properties in the form of 'consciousness' and 'extention', respectively. Thus what was considered as 'essence' in traditional view gets termed by Descartes into a substance having its own specific essence. Descartes says:

"By body I understand all that can be terminated by certain figure, that can be comprised in a certain place; and so fill a certain space as therefore, to exclude every other body that can be perceived either by touch, sight, hearing, taste, or smell; or that can be moved in different ways, not indeed of itself but by something foreign to it by which it is touched ....... I am therefore, precisely speaking, only a thinking thing, that is, a mind, understanding, or reason, - terms whose significance was before unknown to me. I am however, a real thing
and really existent, but what thing? The answer was a thinking thing. It is a thing that doubts, understands, denies, wills, refuges, that imagines also and perceives—.

All human bodies are in space and subject to the machanical laws and being in space can be inspected by external observers. So a man’s bodily life is as much a public affair as are the lives of animals and plants. Mind, on the other hand, is not in space and is subject of non-machanical laws. Its workings cannot be witnessed by other observers. The human body is public because it is in space, external, physical, outer and therefore, a subject of machanical laws, such as the law of gravitation, uniformity of Nature, law of causation, etc. of nature while the ‘mind’ is private, it is inner, mental, non-spatial, etc. This distinction between mind and body also makes obvious that there are only two kinds of existences, namely physical existence and the mental existence. Events that take place in the body are events in the physical world and the events which take place in the mind are in the mental world.

According to the official doctrine of the mental substance

theory of Descartes, there are three functions of the mind -- thinking, willing and feeling. Being conscious (or consciousness) is the main function of the mind and being extended is the main characteristic of the body. In other words, the inner life is the stream of consciousness, and to this stream, there are hidden tributaries which run hidden from their owner. We do not know what happens to these tributaries because they remain hidden from us. Those who advocate official doctrine say that 'I have direct access or knowledge of my mind'. I know it for granted and its certainty can never be questioned.

The ulterior aim of Descartes' Metaphysics or Natural Philosophy is to demonstrate two thesis: -

(1) Material bodies do exist, and

(2) Material bodies in nature are really and completely different from minds.

According to Descartes a direct causal interaction between mind and body is necessarily impossible. Because both the mind and the body possess mutually exclusive properties. Body is in space and public. It is extended and can be mechanically explained. Mind, on the other hand, is not in
space but only in time. It is private and has consciousness as its attribute. It is not extended and therefore, can't be inspected. However, Descartes accepts that there is some sort of connection between the two, i.e. between the mind and the body. Thus he is laid to answer the following questions:

(i) How do we know that there is a connection?
(ii) How is the connection known to be described?

His answer to the former epistemological question is that "the union of the soul to the body is intuitively known". In his reply to the second question he says that whenever something happens in the mind is a case mental occasion and with the body is a case physical occasion.

According to Descartes, the animated 'body' or 'machine' or the inanimate matter are of the same kind but they differ in degrees. The animated body is complex and exhibits greater homogeneity among its constituent corpuscles. Descartes says that the body of a man is nothing but a statue or machine made of earth, which was later endorsed by Leibnitz when he said: All that take place in body of a
man or any animal is as mechanical as that which takes
place in a watch. It implies that the body which has motion
can be animated and hence is destroyable. Human bodies are
animated because we move from one part of space to another
part of space, and that inanimate body cannot move, e.g.
stone, etc.

Further, Descartes defines substance in two different
ways namely, (1) Whatever that has complete existential
independence from any other substance is a primary substance,
and (ii) Whatever that has existential independence from
any other substance, except from Absolute substance is a
secondary substance. For example, 'Mind' and 'Body' are
secondary substances having two different mutually exclusive
properties or attributes, for instance, 'consciousness'
and 'extension' respectively. Again, he recognises three
kinds of distinction between mind and body, which are: (1)
Real, (ii) Modal, and (iii) Rational.

(1) Real: There is a real distinction between mind and
body because 'mind' (a substance) can be conceived without
the logical necessity of conceiving from any other substance,
e.g. body. Hence it is based on the principle of logical
conceivability.

(11) Modal: There are two kinds of modal distinctions, namely (a) The distinction between the earth's revolutionary motion (mode) and its matter (substance). (b) The distinction between the two modes of the same attribute of the same substance. For example, the distinction between the revolutionary motion and the spheroidal shape of the earth.

(i) Rational: There are two types of rational distinction namely (a) the distinction between substance and its attributes (b) the distinction between two essential characters of the same substance. For example, the distinction between matters' duration and its extension. It may be noted that according to Descartes what is distinguishable in thought, though not separated in existence, is to draw a distinction of reason.

Descartes believes that matter or body acts on mind and the mind acts on matter or body, the question now is: How are we to explain the apparent action of matter on mind, or of mind on matter? Let us consider the question how matter acts on mind. First in order to answer the question we can
take Descartes' account of sense perception in consideration which is mainly divided into consecutive stages namely:

(i) Series of causally connected events comprising both those occurring in the existing 'body' and those stimulating the nerve-endings and sense organs of the perceiver's own body.

(ii) A conclusion of the series of movements propagated from the affected sense organs along the nerves and terminating in the pineal gland, located in the centre of the brain.

(iii) On the gland an impression is produced on the occasion of which physical impression a conscious act occurs.

Let us now consider the latter question, i.e. how are we to explain the apparent action of the mind and the matter. Descartes tries to answer this question by:

(a) Selecting the pineal gland as the single, ultimate and central receptacle to which all the apparent movements in the human body converge and from which all effectual
ones depart.

(b) Identifying that gland with 'the sit of the soul', Descartes says that the pineal gland being simple in structure and hence not duplicate was appropriate to the unity of the mind's operations, synthesizing of all data into one centre of consciousness.

(c) Distinguishing purely mechanical movements which explain physical change from the flow of animal spirits which explain physiological change.

Descartes remarks in the Sixth Meditation:

"I am not only lodged in my body as a pilot in a vessel, but that I am besides so intimately conjoined, and as it were intermixed with it, that my mind and body compose a certain unity. For this were not the case, I should not feel pain when my body is hurt, seeing I am merely a thinking thing, but should perceive the wound by the understanding alone, just as a pilot perceives by sight when any part of his vessel is damaged".

This proves that though a human being is primarily a thinking thing, it stands in substantial unity with body.

2. Ibid, p.135.
Hence Descartes did not quite deny interaction between the two, i.e. the mind and the body, but tried to ascertain interactionism.

Descartes, we know gives a mechanistic explanation of the body which is different from scholastic mechanism, where soul or the mind is conceived as the essence of the body, and at the same time where activity is totally or partly denied to body. Hence body cannot be acted upon. They hold body does not have intrinsic activity but only extrinsic activity and can be defined only in terms of locomotion. Descartes, on the contrary, conceived mind not as the essence of the body but a substance in its own right. A human being is thus a combination of two individual things namely of a body and a mind. Moreover, the relationship between the two is not the relationship of the substance and the essence, rather relationship of the two independent individual substances having their own essences namely in the form of 'extension' and 'consciousness', respectively.

In other words, Cartesian Dualism is the dualism of substances, where substance is the basic notion. And because of the due consideration of this basic notion we find that
this dualism of substances, i.e. of the mind and the body is not acceptable. Not because we have improved and refined our objections clearly but because we want to understand mind at least as well as we understand the world around ourselves.

Now, to understand the Cartesian notion of the mind, however, we have to examine the concepts which emerge as central to his distinction between ‘mind and body’. These concepts can be treated as the criteria establishing the distinctness of the mind.

When we consider the arguments by which Descartes establishes the distinction, we find two key claims about mind.

One is about the ‘privacy’ of mind and the other is ‘Intentionality’ of mind and its direct and indubitable knowledge. Let us now examine the two key claims about mind in detail.

It is evident that the two main candidates of the criteria of the mental, which have received considerable attention
today, are 'privacy' and 'intentionality'. We find that both these criteria reflect the aspects of consciousness.

It may be clear that here we are discussing 'Privacy' as the criterion of the mental and not as such anything 'mentally private' to avoid any logical fallacy of pre-supposing prior notion of the mental. On the other hand, we are concerned here with the ownership of the mental state which comes as a kind of access to it, which is not available to others. Intuitively it seems there is a sense in which mental states and events are private.

Descartes has suggested this criterion of the mental 'Privacy' which claims that one has 'direct access' to the modification of one's own consciousness. The access to one's own mind or consciousness can also be seen as privileged to another's mind, except when it is known analogically from one's own case. No one else can know my conscious states, I am privileged to know what conscious states I have or I am in. It is such consideration about the way one has access to one's consciousness that leads to the belief that consciousness is the private domain of mental states, processes and events which are fundamentally different from
any feature of material things, conceived in terms of 'extension'. As J Wisdom puts it, "The peculiarity of the soul is not that it is visible to none, but that it is visible to one". Descartes believes that mind is private, inner, immaterial, have no window, etc. It also implies that none of the modifications of one's own consciousness will deceive him. It is that mental state which necessarily owned by and ascribed to only one owner, namely the one whose states they are. This unique relationship between the owner and the owned is that what gives an owner direct access to what he owns, and which in turn give sense to their 'privacy'.

Hamlyn observes that the notion of privacy is difficult to spell out. The following quotation from him brings out the crucial points very successfully:

"The notion of the private is of course wider than that of being the object of the direct, indubitable access that Descartes had in mind; for to say that a sensation or thought is private is not necessarily

to say that we have indubitable or incorrigible awareness of it. It is to say that we have access to our own mental states in a way that others do not, but it need not imply anything about the epistemological status of that access. To make that point is to begin the task of sorting out the appropriate sense in which mental items can be said to be private. For, as has been pointed out by others, the sense in which pains, for example, are private not in the sense in which my property, my voice or even information that I may possess may be private.

Don Locke even specifies a sense of 'private' which he calls 'mentally private', defined by saying that something is mentally private 'if only one person can perceive it'. But he has to go on to say that, while by that criterion pains are mentally private, conscious processes (i.e. such things as perceiving and thinking) are not, since they 'cannot be felt or perceived at all, by anyone'. Moreover, by that criterion certain things may be mentally private for merely contingent reasons, such as that nobody else can get in quite the same position as I can to perceive the thing in question. One suspects that the definition of 'mentally private' could rule out such contingent impossibilities only by begging the question --- only by presupposing a prior notion of the mental.

This is the crux. Intuitively it seems obvious that there is a sense in which mental states and events
are private, in that there is a way in which we have access to them which others cannot have. It may indeed be the case that for a large class of such items we are the ultimate authority about them; certainly, if we feel pain it is not up to others to maintain that we do not, although the situation is less clear in the case of more complex mental states. The reason why we have this kind of access to our mental states, etc is that they are ours. A mental state cannot be mental as far as concerns whose it is. With the ownership of a mental state comes a kind of access to it that is not available to others. It is impossible, however, to define in such terms, the sense of 'privacy' in which mental states are private without circularity. For we should in effect be saying that mental states are private in the sense that mental states are, i.e. in the sense that their owners have access to them by reason of that ownership in a way that is not open to others. Hence, while privacy may be a necessary condition of being mental it is not an independent sufficient condition, which enables us to decide simply by its means what is mental and what is not - or not without circularity' ".

Hamlyn points out that it is not possible to define the notion of privacy in terms of ownership, etc. without

circularity. He maintains that though privacy may be a necessary condition. It is not a sufficient condition, according to him, there is no special sense of privacy available which could be used to separate the mental from the non-mental. He comes to the conclusion on the basis of some powerful arguments that privacy cannot be considered as a valid criterion.

Wittgenstein in his book, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, rejects the Cartesian view of the the self/mind and redefines it by saying that the Cartesian self/mind or Cogito is reducible to the psychological self. And thus the psychological self is part of the world and therefore it becomes subject of the empirical experience. It implies that there is a thinking self for every act of thinking. For Wittgenstein both mind and body belong to the world and are not domain of facts but are parts of the domain of facts. Wittgenstein maintains that mind is nothing but a set of activities & not a mental entity though it is real. What, Wittgenstein does not admit is that there is no possibility of there being any private language. Each language

is to be publicly intelligible and if it is so then 'Privacy' will no longer be an independent criterion of the mental as there is no mental representation which can be said to be the sole repository of our access to the world.

Further, though consciousness is necessarily private we can say very little about this relationship of the owner and the owned, and consequently we are led with the view that 'privacy' cannot be used as an independent criterion of the mental.

The other criterion of the mental is intentionality which in modern times stems from Franz Brentano. Intentionality, the criterion of the mental, states that consciousness is always directed to an object as such and such. According to Brentano, all the mental acts are related to a particular object which has intentional existence. It means that an act is internally related to an object ignoring whether or not there is anything corresponding to it (rerum natura). This explanation of Brentano of intentionality as criterion of the mental seems to be some special and arguable too. It is so because of the fact that there is no correspondence

between what is stated through a proposition (or an act) and the actual world (the thing as it is). More precisely, by the term 'intentionality' Brentano mainly understands two things that consciousness is always directed towards an object as such and such and that consciousness always makes reference to a content. It implies that consciousness is always and of something. The idea of intentionality states that 'consciousness' being a subject must have an object to be directed upon. A seeing is always a seeing of something. For example, when we perceive an animal in a farm, we notice that the animal out there is the object towards which our seeing consciousness is directed. Although, sometimes it also seems that there are a number of mental states where our consciousness is not directed as there is no any object. For example, 'pain' as it is not about anything. Here Brentano maintains that this fact is expressed by saying that the object in question is intentionally 'inexistent'. And in the case of some psychological phenomena, such as melancholy, depression, etc. where one does not find an object, Brentano holds that a 'secondary' referent exists which he identifies as the psychical phenomena, ignoring the fact that the object in question has to exist, independently of the act which involves consciousness. For
example, depression cannot be conceived to exist independently of the act of feeling it.

It is clear that there are some processes and events which need not have objects at all. We can also point out that intentionality not necessarily always involves consciousness. In other words, direction upon an object can exist in an activity without necessarily involving consciousness. But one may be inclined to agree with the fact that ‘direction upon an object’ is possibly non-existent is a very reliable mark of the mental. However, from the above discussion, it appears that ‘direction upon an object’ is not a necessary condition of a conscious event or state.

The another important feature of consciousness, according to Brentano is the idea of ‘reference to a content’. Brentano here claims that all mental acts, states and events do necessarily have some kind of content. Consciousness does not exist as mere consciousness without something given to it or represented into it. It is believed that the content can be described independently of any reference to the object of consciousness. For example, ‘pain’ is both a qualitative content and a proportional content which are understood as
or felt as phenomenalological quality of the painful sensation and that one believes that such and such is true or false, respectively. It is also believed that on a given occasion, the content of an act of consciousness may not correspond to the object intended to the act.

One can also understand intentionality by saying that it is that property of the mental events by which they are directed at objects and states of affairs in the world. According to M J Harney,

"Brentano's intentionality thesis states that, for any mental activity, there is always some object to which that activity is directed. I cannot think without thinking something, I cannot hope without hoping for something. But the peculiarity of the objects of mental activities is that they need not exist. No physical phenomena exhibit this characteristic. If I kick a stone or eat an apple, there must exist some stone that I kick or some apple that I eat. But if I think of a stone or wish for an apple, it does not follow from this that such objects exist."

Brentano makes a distinction between 'Mental phenomena'

and 'physical phenomena' in terms of dichotomy of act and object. The fact behind this thesis of intentionality is that the objects of mental phenomena to which they are directed need not exist, and as a result, what distinguishes mental from physical phenomena is that object of a mental act which is possibly non-existent. For instance, there are objects of wanting, fearing and other mental phenomena or psychological phenomena which need not exist. And this is what has been called by Brentano 'intentional inexistence'.

But we see that this way of characterising mental phenomena falls short in order to give us a mark which distinguishes mental from the physical phenomena. Since, as we have been, certain mental states such an depression, donot take any object about.

When we go by Brentano's understanding of 'reference to content' we see that a belief must have a content and so to say it is mental because knowing, believing and perceiving are mental phenomena. No physical phenomena has a content the way a belief has. But again there are some mental states, processes or events, which, for instance, states of

depression, euphoria, suffering, irritability, etc. need not have any specific content and hence it is very difficult to say whether these states fall into the category of physical or psychological/mental.

In other words, in the cases of perceiving their contents are not themselves propositional. Though they can be described in propositions. Now if we apply the same 'reference to a content' formula to those conscious states, processes and events which as stated earlier, donot have objects at all, and we again find that this feature of consciousness too can be levelled with the same problems, which as a result, mars it to be a necessary condition of a conscious state or event. For example, what contents do a state of depression or euphoria have? The answer to this question seems to be in negative ..... a depression is not of something, nor can the cause of depression provides the content. Thus, it seems that 'reference to a content' cannot be held as a necessary condition of the presence of consciousness. But if we follow the belief having the proportional content, it seems to be sufficient condition, because the notion of 'reference to a content', where the content is a proposition, is simply out of explaining physical events, processes or
states. To put in brief, the 'reference to a content'; does not propose an important feature of consciousness and also being limited in scope, it cannot be said to be an overall criterion of consciousness.

Roderick Chisholm, while providing general criteria of the mentality makes a distinction between the 'intentional' and 'non-intentional' terms of the form of belief statements. According to him, there has been an assimilation of intentional to the intentional and non-intentional to the non-intentional.

It may be mentioned that the truth and falsity of an extentional proposition is solely dependent on the truth and falsity of its constituent parts or possible constituents. This is not the case with intentional sentences or propositions (acts).

It describes a state of affairs that can be characterised as mental. But this formulation of intentionality as the criterion of the mental is satisfactory to the linguistic

level only. So again, intentionality cannot be said to be the sufficient condition of the criteria of the mental.

Now the question arises: Should we infer from the failure of these two criteria of the mental (Privacy & Intentionality) that there is no such thing as mental? Can Cartesian dualism of mind and body as two independent substances be defended?

We have seen that the dualist propounds a version of the two component theory that our bodily component, our Cartesian Mind, is the true seat of mental phenomena as beliefs and desires, pains and visual experiences. But this initial characterisation of the dualist position looks extremely vague and thoroughly problematic when we start thinking seriously about it. The question now being asked: What is meant by 'non-bodily component? Where are they to be formed? What are they made of?' How are such things supposed to interact with our bodies? Are we considered among the animals in having them? When and how did they emerge onto the evolutionary scene? These questions are not easily answerable. Yet, we find that dualism retains a very powerful appeal. And despite the sort of difficulties which we have just raised, some versions of dualism must be correct because
there are compelling arguments in its favour. So here we will try to unravel some of the considerations that seem to give dualism its undoubted appeal.

While motivating the dualist position, it has been considered that mental properties (like being conscious, for example) are so different from physical properties that they clearly cannot be had by the same thing. So the physical properties are had by the body and the mental ones by something else. The reason behind this consideration is that merely material things cannot think or feel. We can think and feel. It implies we are not merely material things/objects, but something else besides. The variation on the argument which appeals that there are some particularly deep or impressive thoughts and feelings which merely material things cannot have. For a merely material being could not appreciate, fall in love, believe in god. But we can appreciate, fall in love, believe in god and therefore, we are not mere chunks of physical stuff, but something else besides.

Here if we grant for the sake of argument that there is some good sense in which mental properties are radically
different from physical properties then why on earth should we accept, it follows that the two sorts of properties cannot be had by the same thing? But normally it is thought that one and the samething can have a wide variety of properties. A material thing, for example, a house may be built of a lime stone, be several months or years old, be of great beauty and so on. Yet the house has a temporal characteristics. So what hinder us to accept that the mental properties and physical properties are likewise very different in type. Now .... Why should not things have properties of the two diverse kinds? For instance, the properties of being in pain and of understanding quantum field theory where one can easily be mistaken whether one understands a scientific theory, and understanding quantum field theory would seem to be a state only open to a rational language - using creature, while even a mouse can feel pain. It implies that mental properties can in turn be divided into distinct classes notably that a person consists of a body plus an intellect plus a centre of sensation . But these remarks donot show that there is anything actually wrong with dualism, but they do show that the argument

mental and physical properties are different as they are possessed by mind and body, respectively, is not enough by itself to establish the dualist case.

With the dualist we can all accept that 'merely material things cannot think or feel' while we human beings can think or feel, and consequently we are not merely material things/beings. The above stated argument that 'material things cannot think or feel' tries to reach to the much stronger conclusion that we are not merely material things but something else besides. But this argument of dualistic approach does not justify its claim rather it supports to its naturalistic rival. It entails the desired dualist conclusion but is unacceptable because though it can freely be granted that material things are made up of physical stuff but does not imply dualism and moreover this argument seems to be more persuasive.

We may accept Spinoza as he opined 'experience has not yet taught any one what the body can do from the laws of nature alone in so far as nature is only considered as corporeal 11. It remains true to say that experience has not

yet taught us that a purely corporeal being could not exhibit the behavioural complexities of a human being. On the other hand, as the research is going on in the biological sciences and in the field of artificial intelligence, we increasingly get to understand how purely physical systems are capable of more and more complex behaviour. Therefore, the anti-dualist can rightly protest that the argument 'thinking and feeling that underlie our behaviour must be one to some non-physical component' is not obviously true as it stands. The reason is there is some possibility in saying that mental and physical properties are very different from each other. The dualist must not assume that one and the same thing cannot have both kinds of property.

Again, we are not merely material things in the sense of being brute unthinking lumps of stuff, but that does not mean that we are a combination of some brute physical things with a special kind of additional entity which does the thinking, namely the Cartesian Mind. The anti-dualist will not obviously agree that we are unthinking physical objects, his view is that we are thinking - physical beings and nothing shows that this view is untenable. Again we can agree that there is some mystery about the nature of our
aesthetic experiences (and likewise for many other aspects of our mental lives). But we cannot simply assume with that the argument 'immaterial things can appreciate, fall in love, believe in god' establishes the dualist case. For we need to investigate what is involved in our aesthetic responses (or whatever) and we have no business to prejudge the results of such an investigation by supposing that it must turn out that only immaterial minds could have such responses. Finally, the dualist cannot just assume what needs to be argued, namely that complexity of human behaviour is to be explained by ascribing it to non-physical causes.

The more interesting argument which seems to have a considerable attraction is that 'dualism must be true because people sometimes have experiences in which they perceive themselves from a point outside their bodies'. But in that case we can hardly be the same thing as our bodies --- for a thing cannot leave itself. This argument however, might merely be a kind of illusion to which people are rather prone because of the fact that the person in question, perceiving his body from a point located outside it, is

12. Ibid. p. 21.
somewhere other than where his body is. In short, it plainly
doesn't follow from this that he really is out of his body.

Therefore, seeming to perceive the world from a place
outside the body proves nothing at all. We have no good
reason to suppose that anyone ever does better than seem to
have out of body perceptions. Even if we did apparently
encounter a case of thoroughly reliable perception of events
from a point of view remote from the body, this still would
not conclusively demonstrate that a person had left his
body. So this argument also collapses to support dualism.

A much more substantial argument, whose treatment requires
more care, where in an ordinary discourse we say both
things about a person. For example 'John is thinking about
Mary' and 'John weighs sixty kilograms. Here we ascribe
both mental and physical characteristics to the samething,
as a two component picture of a person. In former case, it
refers the Cartesian Mind or soul that constitutes the
inner man, and latter his body. But here again for the
anti-dualist the terms 'John' and 'John's body' do pick-out
samething, but the latter expression is conventionally
reserved for one when one is focussing on the more obviously
bodily aspects of ‘John’. In other words, the phrase ‘John’s body’ functions rather like a longer phrase ‘John, so far as his more obviously corporeal aspects are concerned’. Thus when one asserts ‘I admire John’s body’ he is thereby conveying the carnal nature of his appreciation of John. He is not saying he admires something distinct from John himself, but he is revealing on what aspects of John his admiration is based on (it might be said he admires John body-wise). Here it can be said that the expression ‘John’s body’ does not merely denote John but instead has a double function. It both picks out the living organism which is John and also focuses our attention on John’s more evidently corporeal aspects. It can well be understood by the assertions that ‘I met John’s body and John’s body solved an equation’ are distinctively odd and the phrase ‘John’s body’ looks ill-formed. The expression ‘John’s body’ does not picks out something quite distinct from John himself like the phrase ‘John’s house’, as it picks out and simply denotes an object quite distinct from John himself, the latter phrase is indeed a pure designator.

All the above arguments do not support dualism in any way. But the basic thought underlying is that ‘I can imagine
myself surviving the destruction of my present body'. But of course I cannot imagine my body continuing to exist even when it has been destroyed -- that supposition is simply non-sensical. So there is a difference between myself and my body. The first has the property of being imaginable-by-me--existing-after-the-destruction of my body, and the second lacks this property. This means that we have found a feature, albeit a complex one, which distinguishes myself from my body. Hence as the dualist maintains, they must be distinct things' is that we can easily separate ourselves from our body in thought 14, and thereby inferring the possibility to clearly prove that they are (myself and my body) distinct items in reality. The importance and basic interest of this idea is that it is one that Descartes himself is standardly interpreted as having used to support his dualism. It will be worth mentioning how Descartes develops the same underlying idea.

The opening pages of Descartes' 'Meditations' set before us in marvellously compelling way, questioning like: How do you know that you are not dreaming now? How do you know that the whole course of your experience is not just one long

hallucination? Descartes reaction to this crucial point is fascinating and deeply attractive once it is understood. Here we find Cartesian strategy has two stages, a temporary suspension of belief in those things in which we donot initially have a cast-iron proof, and then a constructive phase in which we seek to re-establish at least the bulk of our old beliefs. And it is the second, positive, phase which causes the most trouble for Descartes because it is one thing to set certain beliefs aside for the sake of the argument, and is quite another thing to try to re-establish them on a firm footing. Now here if we follow Descartes in setting aside any belief that is initially open to sceptical challenge, then it seems that one belief that will temporarily have to go is our belief in our own bodies. But even if that belief has to be set aside, there is one quite crucial belief each of us shares that does seem to be resistant even to the most inventive.

Sceptics challenge, namely our belief in our own individual existence. One may be able to spin a tale according to which he is possibly deceived about the existence of his body, along with the rest of the world. But none of us can

15. Ibid, P. 31.
coherently suppose ourselves to be in error in holding that we ourselves exist. The very fact that I can so much as raise the question whether I exist proves conclusively that I do exist, because I must exist in order to think at all.

Descartes develops exactly this line of thought by pointing out:

"I have just said that I have no senses and no body. This is the sticking point: what follows from this? Am I not so bound up with a body and senses that I cannot exist without them? But I have convinced myself that there is nothing absolutely nothing in the world, no sky, no earth, ... no bodies. Does it now not follow that I too do not exist? No: If I convinced myself of something then I certainly existed. But there is a deceiver of Supreme power and cunning and who is deliberately and constantly deceiving me, and let me deceive me as much as he can, he will never bring me about that I am nothing so long as I think that I am something. So after considering everything very thoroughly, I must finally conclude that this proposition, I am, I exist, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind"!"

In part Four of his Discourse on the Method, Descartes sums up the same point. :

"I noticed that while I was trying thus to think everything false, it was necessary that I, who was thinking this, was something. And observing that this truth 'I am thinking, therefore I exist' was so firm and sure that all the most extravagant suppositions if the sceptics were incapable of shaking it, I decided that I could accept it without scruple as the first principle of the philosophy I was seeking".  

In short, Descartes' belief in his own existence is absolutely secure and what goes for Descartes here goes for each of us.  

Here it appears that if we follow Descartes in attempting to set aside any belief for which we do not currently have an absolutely rock-solid proof, then we are going to have to suspend judgement about the judgements of our own body, on the other hand, we can retain our belief in our own existence. But in doing so one must be distinct from one's body. It shows existence of one's own body could be doubled but not the existence of one's ownself. Here at least we seem to have the makings of a sophisticated argument for dualism, and one which looks as if it can indeed be attributed to Descartes.  

17. Discourse on the Method, Descartes writings 1:127.
Descartes writes:

"I saw that while I could feign that I had no body and that there was no world and no place for me to be in, I could not for all that feign that I did not exist. I saw on the contrary that from the mere fact that I thought of doubting the truth of other things, it followed quite evidently and certainly that I existed, whereas if I had merely ceased thinking, even if everything else that I had ever imagined had been true, I should have had no reason to believe that I existed. From this I knew I was a being whose whole essence or nature is simply to think, and which does not require any place, or depend on any material thing, in order to exist. Accordingly this 'I' -- that is, the soul by which I am what I am -- is entirely distinct from the body, and indeed is easier to know than the body, and would not fail to be whatever it is, even if the body did not exist." 18.

Descartes' argument in favour of dualism is intrinsically fascinating and worth discussing for defences of dualism. His arguments as follows:

"(a) I can feign that my body does not exist.

(b) I cannot feign that I myself do not exist.

18. Ibid.
Hence, (c) I myself am entirely distinct from my body."

Now whether or not this argument of Descartes is a valid one we could be able to summarise his argument in an analogous way as follows:

“(a) I can imagine myself surviving the destruction of my body,

(b) I cannot imagine my body surviving the destruction of my body.

Hence, (c) I myself am an entirely distinct from my body.”

Though here it appears that this argument is not exactly of the same form as Descartes’, but there is a close relation between the two. In each case we are invited to infer the distinction between the body and the self from the observation that there is something we can imagine or feign with respect to the one which we cannot imagine or feign with respect to the other. As far as the validity is concerned, it is reasonable to suggest that the move from the premises to the conclusion in the last argument is legitimate if and only if the parallel move in Descartes’ argument is

acceptable. The arguments differ not in their point of validity or lack of it, but in respect of the plausibility of their premises. For instance, premise '(a)' involves dispute. But if Descartes' premise '(a)' properly understood, is not about what is imaginatively possible, but about what is required in a certain intellectual project. More precisely '(a)' makes hold of positive claim about what we can imagine, it encapsulates a much more modest negative claim about the difficulty of defending one's belief in the physical world against sceptical challenge. Here Descartes '(a)' looks a lot more attractive than the analogous '(a)'; and the arguments seem to be on a par as far as validity is concerned.

Leibniz, with his typical logical acumen saw that this argument of Descartes is not logically valid and therefore will not work. He writes:

"It is not valid to reason", 'I can assume or imagine that no corporeal body exists, but I cannot imagine that I donot exist or donot think. Therefore, I am not corporeal, nor is thought a modification of the body'. I am amazed that so able a man (as Descartes) could have based so much on so flimcy a sophism ... Some one who thinks that the soul is
corporeal .... will admit that you can doubt (as long as you are ignorant of the nature of the soul) whether anything corporeal exists or does not exist. And as you nevertheless see clearly that your soul exists, he will admit that this one thing follows: that you can still doubt whether the soul is corporeal. But no amount of torture can extort anything more from this argument". To put more precisely, Descartes' premises about what we can feign that we are distinct from our bodies is not sufficient to show that we really are separate from our bodies. There seems to be no avoiding Leibnitz's conclusion that Descartes argument is simply invalid. Descartes idea is that since he can feign that his body does not exist but he cannot feign that he himself does not exist, it follows that he is something distinct from his body. Descartes thinks that since the expressions 'I myself' and 'my body' cannot be freely interchanged in the context 'I can feign that ..... does not exist' it follows that they pick out different things. But 'I can feign.....' is, of course a psychological context, and designators which occur in this setting function as part of the specification of a mental state. As we see here, we cannot infer from the fact that two designators cannot be

21. Ibid, P. 44.
interchanged in this sort of setting that they do not pick out one and the same thing in their standard use.

And consequently, in short, Descartes' argument is obviously a bogus argument, and therefore, invalid. "

22. Ibid, P. 44.