

THESIS OF PhD DISSERTATION

**SUBJECTIVITY AND INTERSUBJECTIVITY IN
DESCARTES' THOUGHT**

Problems of the Perception of „I” and „Personality”

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I. The specification of the topic

Descartes observed the concept of the "ego" from different perspectives – one may encounter metaphysical, physiological, psychological approaches in his works.

The common feature of these approaches is that they mirror some sort of subjectivist point of view regarding the concept of the „ego”.

In my dissertation, I am going to argue on behalf that the subjective viewpoint of these different approaches invoke intersubjective aspects. In my opinion, these two major types of approaches – interfering with each other – pervade those Cartesian analyses where the different concepts of the ego are intended to be explained.

Such a reading of Descartes' thoughts, I believe, can further shade the usual interpretative dimensions of concepts of the ego that can be unfolded from the texts.

II. Research History

Interpreters tend to approach the Cartesian train of thought from different perspectives: one could enumerate interpretations taking the viewpoint of metaphysics, philosophy of nature and psychophysics, psychology and ethics or that of phenomenology. Interpretations, which do not sideline the gestures actively controlling the process of cogitation in the sceptical ego, may provide one with invaluable aspects.

III. The hypothesis to be proved by the dissertation

My thesis is the following: the common application of different interpretative approaches can reveal such a complex concept of the ego from Descartes's works, which is not at all as evident as individual interpretations would suggest. Taking into consideration the self-expressions of the self-reflecting narrative ego, the emotions and dispositions of the abstract mind, the psychophysically determined affects of the human (taken in his complexity), or the behaviours of a human beholding someone else, such an „ego” seems to reveal itself, that approaches itself in a much more personal way, than what approaches intending to reveal the mind, the body or some psychophysical properties would suggest. Besides these different

kind of attitudes towards oneself, the ego becomes more responsive towards his own world as well – opposed to what mechanical descriptions would imply.

IV. Methodology in the dissertation

The approaches applied in my dissertation are peculiar to contemporary scholarship on Descartes, and relevant to the present topic. However, instead of making such distinctions, I will rather attempt to give an overall interpretation of the different interpretative layers during my analysis. Definitions and explanations of concepts are to be found where necessary for the better understanding of the analyses.

V. Exposition of the dissertation

Introduction

Aims

Definition of the hypothesis to be proven and methodology of the research. More schools and philosophers of the twentieth-century philosophy attest critical approach to Cartesian views. The description of the world represented directly by experience becomes conspicuous instead of the world duplicated by scientific approach (dichotomy of the misunderstood empirical world and the 'real' world explored by hypothesis but unanalogical to its experience) while the dualist principle (that divides human to mind and body) is taken over by the examination of unified, experiential humans, meeting others and embedding to the world. Where does it predominate at Descartes?

Subjectivity

Subjectivity represents such an experience (or an approach attached to this, or a form of recognition), which appertains to the unified or to the man (composed of body and soul), which represents some kind of closeness against the outside world. But the outside world, the alien consciousnesses and the affairs happening outside of his own mental substance can have an effect on his inside experiences. All of these are promotives for an ego to become a person(ality).

Alterity

The alterity means another or different state of existence, the antipod of sameness. The „Other „perceived in this way resist against the power of „Sameness”.

Conceptions of the „personality” and „personal-like”

Summary: What effects form subject’s concept before the appearance of Descartes’ philosophy.

Structure of the thesis

Description of each station in the dissertation.

1. Essentially subjective consideration of the intellectual factor: differences of the ego and the soul, the role of God in self-grasping.
2. Subjective approach within the topic: connection of body and soul : overview on arguments of proof of existence of the outer world and body, the physiological functioning of the body, the psycho-physical aspects of body-soul interaction, the perception of the body within the complex human being and the problem of unconscious self-grasping.
3. Intersubjectivity aspects: the other's role in self-gratification, ethical considerations in the perception of the other person and self-recognition, ethics and the health related to self-love and self-care.

1. Subjectivism on the level of the soul

1.1 Ego

- We look at the main stages of Descartes’ doubt first. In the skeptical study presented in his metaphysical works, the thinker begins searching for assurances to build a much more certain and coherent science system. This process draws attention to a number of features along with the logically-run reasoning. (1) The method also has a kind of spirit-like character that refers to the action of the thinking man. (2) Accordingly, the discovery of certainties depends largely on the state of the soul. (3) The removal of hypothetical thinking from the ego implies its objectual perception (res), which results in the self at the end of the doubt.....(mondat vége?...:)

1.2 Soul

What can we learn about the ego and the soul and their relationship, if we continue to shaping the forms of manifestation of different mental operations? First we point out the aspects that point to the active and passive attitudes of the spiritual substance, and then the specifics that this substance can reflect with some kind of opinion and attitude. On the basis of all these we can observe the difference between the ("extensionless") ego and the (active, independent judgment) soul. Using the term "soul" instead of "mind", I would like to refer to the surplus representing the personality of the spiritual substance.

- In this chapter, I try to detect these "surplus" infiltration points. (1) Moving from the emptiness of the metaphysical self to ??? (2) Detection of moods in an actively manifested mind. (3) Examining intellectual actions that can "sublimate" the metaphysical self into soul that will contribute to the development of the conception of the self.

1.3 God

1.3.1 The Idea of God

What sorts of stations does Descartes get to God's idea? Beyond the question that how this idea can be found in the human mind, we look for answers as to the implications of God's assumption of self-conceptual ego.

1.3.2. God's role in the idea of the self

What role does all this play in shaping the basic character of the human self? How does the 'outside' and the 'other' show up in the subjective and closed aspect of the self? I will try to illuminate this latter question by introducing certain aspects of Lévinas.

Goodness in man is already established through the gesture of creation, and manifests in his perfect (but limited) ability of thinking, abilities and intentions of his original orientations, and in the (straight line) movements of physical objects.

2. The problem of subjectivity in connection with body and soul

In the previous subchapters, we looked at the layers of intellectual substance that can be revealed. How does its experience of its own body and of the external world?

In order to speak about person and personality, this latter question, that is, the examination of the phenomena of the body and of the external world, and the analysis of the body and soul's thoughtful interaction by Descartes, becomes necessary.

2.1 The external world and the body

2.1.1. Metaphysical arguments that prove the existence of the outside world and of the own body

- First, it is necessary to cross the boundary between metaphysics and physics.
- The objects of mathematics are entities by that we can gain clear and distinct knowledge of the "whole of the physical nature" (according to metaphysical thinking).
- How does Descartes become convinced of the existence of the outside world and of his own body in the ???(Elmélkedésekben) - Examination of imagination, perception and memory.
- How can we move from the mental sphere to the outside world? - The Nature's Teaching:
 - (1) My relationship exists with a body whose experiences live intimately and related to itself
 - (2) There are other "external" bodies that have an effect on the own (perceived as own) body. Against other, older and false "teachings", the sensual perceptions can correctly indicate to the mind what is pleasing and unpleasant for the body-soul complex.
- Experience also shows that those perceptions get to the mind first which are to serve the survival of the body-soul unity.

2.1.2. Function of the body

Most of the body's function can be described in accordance with the mechanical principles. Physical equivalents of the soul's aspects can be represented physically like the blood which corresponds to the soul itself, or the ideas that are in connection with the small openings on the surface of the pineal gland. In many cases, the body can be almost completely independent of the mind. This will be the attribute that will separate the thinker from the body.

2.2. Psychophysical Self-Reflexion – Co-operation between body and soul

2.2.1. Self-interpretation before and after metaphysical self-reflection

During your everyday activities, man experience itself as a single thing. How did percieve the Thinker of Contemplation before the philosopher's reflection? Environmentally embedded, as a physical object. After philosophical reflection: the connection of the physical and spiritual component. The soul feels something about the body about the outside world. The self "on behalf of some special right" comrehends its body as its own, in which it feels the affections and the wishes (while it does not perceive the same thing in other bodies).

2.2.2. passions

In passions, the soul develops different initiations or emotions that can not be directly influenced by the will. Passions leave different traces on the inner surface of the brain. The encounter of the two different nature, in addition to the feeling of unity, also causes haze and confusion in the soul's interpretations.

2.2.3. The role of the body in self-grasping

- The problem of "mixing" the two different kinds of substance.
- To accommodate each other's condition, it is only possible to adapt to their own nature. Interpretation of body as an alteration.
- List the manifestations of the body in which it works without the consent of the soul.
- "Turbulence" and "obscurity" in sensations connecting the body and soul
- The body is disturbing from the point of view of the soul (abstract thinking processes).
- The phenomenon of sympathy. (The body can handle certain memories or external notes from the mother)
- The soul does not have direct access within the unit because of the body.
- The body conveys the effects of the outside world to the soul, and transmits to the soul's information back to the outside world. The body's filtering and distorting effect.
- The personality of the self, beyond the alteration represented by God, within the complex man is also determined by another alteration.

2.3. The unconscious's problem

- Is there anything for the mind or the "man" that is unknown to them?
- Descartes also mentions some aspects of consciousness that were later integrated into his unconscious philosophy, and he became aware of unconscious situations in psychological states.

2.3.1. The "unconscious"

Definition of terms: psychological perception; Embodied mind conceptual interpretation.

- We often notice that different thoughts enter our consciousness and then leave; Our minds are unable to keep everything in the focus of attention.
- Differences between "unconscious" and "subconscious".

2.3.2. The physiological aspects of the unconscious

The unconscious events of the machine-like within the body-soul complex: eg. Acquired habits and complex reflexes that are capable of being "discontinued" in thought, and which can be considered unconscious in the sense of unavailability due to radical differences between the body and the soul.

- (1) the root causes of each emotion, (2) the ability of physical-type brain impressions to bring different thoughts into the mind.

2.3.3. The unconscious manifestation on a spiritual level

- "Subconscious" or under the threshold of consciousness: those "mixed" (body and soul)
- Phenomena "that are not part of the actual consciousness but are not, by their nature, excluded from the ability to cognize the spirit. (Rodis-Lewis)"
- Such as eg. Dreams, memories from childhood, other forgotten memories, the experiences of crazy people, the physical sensations that the mind can outlast or misread, as well as certain past or present mistakes, self-confusions, The secret emotions of the soul.
- The basic truths of the soul that can be expanded through metaphysical investigations (the self, as a superior thought, God is the idea of my ontological position and fundamental goodness).
- The unconscious thoughts form part of the unconscious until they are "full of power". However, such content, like the body, can shape my personality without access to the mind.

3. Opportunities of the Intersubjectivity

3.1. Intersubjectivity

Intersubjectivity, like subjectivity, is also targeted at the inner experience of the self, but which focuses on the openness of it. The openness of the self is entirely different from the stranger or the "other", that is, to the alterity that can cause changes on the one hand, and on the other, fills a constitutive role in the self (both in terms of perception and inner perceptions). In connection with Husserl and Lévinas, we can see that through the Other can gain the self experience of itself and of the world.

3.2. Detecting another person I.

- For the „I“ the other person appears not just like a physical body.
- The analysis of the example of the figures wearing hats and coats in the *Meditations*.
- The problem of the communication and the behaviour – the character of the person which is basically communicates and behaves.

3.3. Detecting another person II.

- Conclusions about a subject's feelings according to the members of his or her family and the problem of the intellectual memory: the other person's effect on the subject's „I”; the person's self-comprehension as a man in a community.

4. Research results

Summary - The role of the strangeness in self-grasping

5. Publications in the topic of the dissertation

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1. Eszter Rembeczki: „The role of the other and the difference in the knowledge of self.” *Különbség*, XIV. évf. (2014) 1. szám, 29-38. o.
2. Eszter Rembeczki: „Rake over the roots of the Descartes' tree”. (Schmal Dániel: A kezdet nélküli kezdet. Descartes és a karteziánizmus problémái.)” *Különbség*, XIII. évf. (2013) 1. szám, 207-211. o.
3. Eszter Rembeczki: „The feasible explanation of the health and the sickness in Descartes” *Elpis* 2012. 1. szám, 122-149. o.
4. Eszter Rembeczki: „The role of the body in Descartes self-catch.” *Elpis* 2017. 1. szám, 23-36. o.

In progress:

-Platón

-Elpis 2018

Publications on other topics

1. Eszter Rembeczki: „The good news of the unforgettability” örömhíre. (Jean-Louis Chrétien: A felejthetetlen és a nem remélt.)” In: *Különbség*, XI. évf. (2011) 1. szám, 147-152. o.
2. Eszter Rembeczki – Surányi Csaba: „World Politics And The Crisis (Notions and Position)” (magyarul megjelent: „A világpolitika és a válság. Fogalmak és Pozíció”) In: Délkelet Európa – South-East Europe, *International Relations Quarterly*, Vol. 2. No. 4. (Winter 2011/4 Tél)