

Descartes and elisabeth

Philosophy



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Descartes and Elisabeth The correspondence between Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and Rene Descartes yielded a total of fifty eight letters. The letters provide a chance for any individual interested in understanding Descartes's philosophy. The letters offer Descartes's philosophy on human being as a union of mind and body or dualism (Clarke 310). The correspondence offers the reader with an insight into the development of ideas through intellectual collaboration and the characters of the authors. In her letters, Elisabeth seeks to clarify Descartes idea of dualism by asking him how the soul of a human being can determine the bodily spirits and in so doing bring about voluntary action?

In her letters, Elisabeth displays her interest in natural philosophy by asking Descartes how something immaterial- Descartes definition of the mind- could influence something immaterial in the form of the body (Clarke 328). She seeks for clarification in regard to the interaction as she notes that for motion to occur there must be impulse which requires contact or extension. Descartes reply to Elisabeth's question intimated that the interaction was not to be thought of as between two bodies. To Descartes, this interaction could be likened to that interaction which exists between gravity and bodies. Descartes response to Elisabeth was inadequate. His correspondence on the union of the body and mind does not seem to answer the objections raised by Elisabeth. He seems not to have an exact definition and understanding of how the soul and body could interact. Descartes works on the mere assumption that the soul had the capability to do so. He does not substantiate how it does so. He appears to contradict himself by stating that the mind and body are distinct yet the union of the mind and body provides human beings with their sensations!

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Works Cited

Clarke, Desmond M. Descartes: A Biography. Oxford: Cambridge University Press , 2006.