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0521452910 - Cartesian Metaphysics: The Late Scholastic Origins of Modern
Philosophy - Jorge Secada

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Cartesian Metaphysics

This is the first book-length study of Descartes's metaphysics to place it in its immediate historical context, the Late Scholastic philosophy of thinkers such as Suárez against which Descartes reacted. Jorge Secada views Cartesian philosophy as an 'essentialist' reply to the 'existentialism' of the School, and his discussion includes careful analyses and original interpretations of such central Cartesian themes as the role of scepticism, intentionality and the doctrine of the material falsity of ideas, universals and the relation between sense and understanding, causation and the proofs of the existence of God, the theory of substance, and the dualism of mind and matter. His study offers a picture of Descartes's metaphysics that is both novel and philosophically illuminating.

Jorge Secada is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Virginia. He has published a number of articles on the history of early modern philosophy.

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University of Virginia



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In memory of
Carmen Koechlin Meyans,
Narda Koechlin Meyans
and
Carlos Secada Mas

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There is no life in thee, no, except that rocking life imparted by a gently rolling ship; by her, borrowed from the sea; by the sea, from the inscrutable tides of God. But while this sleep, this dream is on ye, move your foot or hand an inch; slip your hold at all; and your identity comes back in horror. Over Cartesian vortices you hover.

H. Melville

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Preface

I began writing this book about twelve years ago, after finally abandoning the revision of my doctoral dissertation and deciding to instead start anew and write a fresh account of the Cartesian metaphysics. I had basically finished what you now have in your hands by 1994. At that point I still thought that it would contain a fourth part exploring the origins and development of idealism. However, I have recently come to realize that the present essay is complete as it stands and that that final part is in fact an independent project which will see the light in its own time.

In writing this essay I have incurred many debts, too many to recall and properly acknowledge here. I beg the forgiveness of those institutions or persons to whom I am obliged but whom I have failed to mention.

Some of the research which I did in the early eighties has found its way into this essay particularly in chapters 7 and 8. I thank the generosity and kindness of the Master and Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge for the opportunity to carry it out in a most congenial and intellectually stimulating environment. Some sections of chapter 5 were written in one of the most beautiful urban settings in the world while on a visiting appointment at the University of British Columbia in the autumn of 1991; I thank the Philosophy Department there, and especially Paul Russell, for that opportunity. Some other parts, particularly in chapters 1 and 3, were composed in Quito in 1993; I thank FLACSO-Ecuador and my good friends Alonso Zarzar and Heraclio Bonilla for making that wonderful time up in the Andes possible. Preparation of the final production copy took place while on a most enjoyable NEH appointment at Potsdam College of SUNY; I thank all who had a hand in bringing about that visit, particularly Joseph DiGiovanna and Philip Tartaglia. I also wish to thank my numerous friends at the Departamento de Humanidades of the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú for selflessly providing me over the years with the facilities with which to carry out my work while in Lima. Finally, I thank the O'Reilly Memorial Library of Christendom College at Fort Royal in Virginia for allowing me to consult their rare books collection.

The Corcoran Department of Philosophy and the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Virginia have given me invaluable encour-

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agement and support during the last fifteen years, for which I am deeply grateful.

Among the many persons with whom I have had profitable conversations on Descartes and on other philosophical topics, or who have provided me with specific comments or criticisms on some parts of the ensuing text, or from whom this book has benefited in some other way, are Elizabeth Anscombe, Renford Bambrough, James Cargile, Roque Carrión Wam, Edwin Curley, David Curry, Dan Devereux, Cora Diamond, Willis Doney, James Doyle, Juan Bautista Ferro, Javier Herrero, Amy Karofski, Salomón Lerner, Cocó Mancini, John Marshall, Karen Paz Bachrach, Peter Remnant, Richard Rorty, Joshua Tonkel, Isa Wiener, Bernard Williams and the anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press. I am also grateful to my countless students who over the years have allowed me to test out my views on early modern philosophy in many tutorials, seminars and courses.

Much of this book was written during yearly trips to Perú. The cool, grey sky of 'tearless Lima' provided an ideal backdrop for my work. I will never be able to thank sufficiently the extraordinary hospitality of Narda Koechlin, who made it possible and pleasant for me to work there. I am grateful also to Ivy Arbulú, who has known this book from its inception, nurtured its development, and lived with the pains of its delivery.

I should finally mention that parts of chapters 1 and 4 have appeared in print as, respectively, 'Descartes y la escolástica' in *Areté* 7 (1995), pp. 301–30, and 'Las ideas de Descartes' in *Archivos de la Sociedad Peruana de Filosofía* 7 (1996), pp. 180–91.

Note about citations and translations

I refer to repeatedly cited works using the listed abbreviations. References for quotations from such works are given in parentheses within the text. No references are given when they would repeat those of the last citation. In the case of the writings of Descartes in the Adam and Tannery edition, or in the English translations by Cottingham, Stoothoff and Murdoch, or by Cottingham, Stoothoff, Murdoch and Kenny, references are to volume and page numbers. In the case of other repeatedly cited works, references are usually only to standard internal divisions. In the case of Suárez's *De Anima*, I indicate whether the reference is to sections and questions from Disputations or to sections and chapters from Book IV, as this determines the edition used. When it is necessary to provide more exact references to facilitate finding the cited passage, as may be the case with Pedro de Fonseca's *Principles of Logic* or *Commentaries on Aristotle's Metaphysics* and Francisco Toledo's *Commentaries on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*, I add volume and page numbers in the cited edition after the reference

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to the internal divisions. The editions cited are indicated in the list of abbreviations.

Other references in the endnotes and elsewhere use an abbreviated nomenclature which is given in complete form in the References.

Though I have typically quoted from the indicated translations, I have also changed and altered them as I saw fit. Where divergence in the translation is of some hermeneutical consequence, this has been usually indicated in the endnotes.

Abbreviations

AT	<i>Oeuvres de Descartes</i> , ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: J. Vrin, 1996), 11 vols.
CM	Pedro de Fonseca SJ, <i>Commentaries on Aristotle's Metaphysics</i> , cited from Fonseca (1615–1619).
CSM	<i>The Philosophical Writings of Descartes</i> , ed. and trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984–1985), 2 vols.
CSMK	<i>The Philosophical Writings of Descartes: The Correspondence</i> , ed. and trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch and Anthony Kenny (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
DA	Francisco Suárez SJ, <i>Commentaries on Aristotle's De Anima</i> , cited from Suárez (1978–1981), for texts up to Disputation Seven, and Suárez (1856), for texts from Book IV.
DV	St Thomas Aquinas OP, <i>Disputed Questions On Truth</i> , cited from Aquinas (1925), vol. I.
ID	Pedro de Fonseca SJ, <i>Principles of Logic</i> , cited from Fonseca (1964).
MD	Francisco Suárez SJ, <i>Metaphysical Disputations</i> , cited from Suárez (1614), Suárez (1960–1966), Suárez (1982), and Suárez (1983).
PA	St Thomas Aquinas OP, <i>Commentaries on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics</i> , cited from Aquinas (1882).
SG	St Thomas Aquinas OP, <i>Summa contra gentiles</i> , cited from Aquinas (1918–1930) and from Aquinas (1975).
ST	St Thomas Aquinas OP, <i>Summa of Theology</i> , cited from Aquinas (1964–1980).
TPA	Francisco Toledo SJ, <i>Commentaries on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics</i> , cited from Toledo (1616).