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DESCARTES AND THE PASSIONATE MIND

Descartes is often accused of having fragmented the human being into two independent substances, mind and body, with no clear strategy for explaining the apparent unity of human experience. Deborah Brown argues that, contrary to this view, Descartes did in fact have a conception of a single, integrated human being, and that in his view this conception is crucial to the success of human beings as rational and moral agents and as practitioners of science. The passions are pivotal in this, and in a rich and wide-ranging discussion she examines Descartes' place in the tradition of thought about the passions, the metaphysics of actions and passions and sensory representation, and Descartes' account of self-mastery and virtue. Her study is an important and original reading not only of Descartes' account of mind-body unity but also of his theory of mind.

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*This book is dedicated to my parents,
Margaret and George, and
to my sister, Catherine,
for their love, laughter and generosity.*

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Acknowledgements

The surprisingly lush vegetation around where I live grows out of the notorious ‘Brisbane shale’, a flaky mixture of mud, silt and brittle sedimentary rock. Clinging precariously to a cliff of this rubbish is a loquat tree, whose roots are few and frantically gripping whatever stable soil it can find, and whose trunk is spindly and clawed by possums, but whose fruit, for those willing to work around the many obnoxious stones, is delicious. Descartes locates his account of the passions among the fruits of his ‘tree of knowledge’, but most, finding the roots insecure and the trunk inevitably thin, do not venture that they will find anything at the end of the branches. Sometimes though you just have to follow the possums.

My own possums are Lilli Alanen and Calvin Normore. Lilli provided the initial impetus to write on the passions for a conference in Helsinki in 1996, and has kept the pressure steadily up since then. She has been an inspiration, a mentor and a friend, and I am so very grateful to her for her comments on earlier drafts and discussing these topics with me over the intervening years.

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I have utilised the standard edition of the works of Descartes by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, *Oeuvres de Descartes*, 12 volumes (1897–1913), hereafter cited as AT. References to *Les Passions de l'âme* from the AT edition are hereafter cited as PS. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own. I have benefitted from consulting the following English translations: John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch and Anthony Kenny, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vols. I–III, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985–91); John J. Blom's translation of the Elisabeth correspondence, *Descartes: His Moral Philosophy and Psychology* (New York: New York University Press, 1978) and *René Descartes: The Passions of the Soul*, trans. Stephen Voss (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1989). Quotations from Descartes' correspondence with Princess Elisabeth, other than those with an AT citation, are taken from the 'Past Masters' CDROM: *Oeuvres Complètes de René Descartes*, ed. André Gombay, Connaught Descartes Project; all translations are my own.