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Your main commentary should be focused on *Adjectives and Adjective Phrases*. Other topics may also be addressed.

Now, some may ask, why quibble with Descartes rather than with Plato, whose views on body and mind were far more exasperating, as can be discovered in the *Phaedo*? Why bother with this particular error of Descartes'? After all, some of his other errors sound more spectacularly wrong than this one. He believed that heat made the blood circulate, and that tiny, ever so fine particles of the blood distilled themselves into "animal spirits," which could then move muscles. Why not take him to task for either of those notions? The reason is simple: We have known for a long time that he was wrong on those particular points, and the questions of how and why the blood circulates have been answered to our complete satisfaction. That is not the case when we consider questions of mind, brain, and body, concerning which Descartes' error remains influential. For many, Descartes' views are regarded as self-evident and in no need of reexamination.

The Cartesian idea of a disembodied mind may well have been the source, by the middle of the twentieth century, for the metaphor of mind as software program. In fact, if mind can be separated from body, perhaps one can try to understand it without any appeal to neurobiology, without any need to be influenced by knowledge of neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, and neurochemistry. Interestingly and paradoxically, many cognitive scientists who believe they can investigate the mind without recourse to neurobiology would not consider themselves dualists.

There may be some Cartesian disembodiment also behind the thinking of neuroscientists who insist that the mind can be fully explained solely in terms of brain events, leaving by the wayside the rest of the organism and the surrounding physical and social environment-and also leaving out the fact that part of the environment is itself a product of the organism's preceding actions. I resist the restriction, not because the mind is not directly related to brain activity, since it obviously is, but rather because the restrictive formulation is unnecessarily incomplete, and humanly unsatisfactory. To say that mind comes from brain is indisputable,

but I prefer to qualify the statement and consider the reasons why the brain's neurons behave in such a thoughtful manner. For the latter is, so far as I can see, the critical issue.

The idea of a disembodied mind also seems to have shaped the peculiar way in which Western medicine approaches the study and treatment of diseases (see the postscriptum). The Cartesian split pervades both research and practice. As a result, the psychological consequences of diseases of the body proper, the so-called real diseases, are usually disregarded and only considered on second thought. Even more neglected are the reverse, the body-proper effects of psychological conflict. How intriguing to think that Descartes did contribute to modifying the course of medicine, did help it veer from the organismic, mind-in-the-body approach, which prevailed from Hippocrates to the Renaissance. How annoyed Aristotle would have been with Descartes, had he known.

Versions of Descartes' error obscure the roots of the human mind in a biologically complex but fragile, finite, and unique organism; they obscure the tragedy implicit in the knowledge of that fragility, finiteness, and uniqueness. And where humans fail to see the inherent tragedy of conscious existence, they feel far less called upon to do something about minimizing it, and may have less respect for the value of life.