

Descartes' Metaphysical Physics (Science and Its Conceptual Foundations series)

By Daniel Garber

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In this first book-length treatment of Descartes' important and influential natural philosophy, Daniel Garber is principally concerned with Descartes' accounts of matter and motion—the joint between Descartes' philosophical and scientific interests. These accounts constitute the point at which the metaphysical doctrines on God, the soul, and body, developed in writings like the *Meditations*, give rise to physical conclusions regarding atoms, vacua, and the laws that matter in motion must obey.

Garber achieves a philosophically rigorous reading of Descartes that is sensitive to the historical and intellectual context in which he wrote. What emerges is a novel view of this familiar figure, at once unexpected and truer to the historical Descartes.

The book begins with a discussion of Descartes' intellectual development and the larger project that frames his natural philosophy, the complete reform of all the sciences. After this introduction Garber thoroughly examines various aspects of Descartes' physics: the notion of body and its identification with extension; Descartes' rejection of the substantial forms of the scholastics; his relation to the atomistic tradition of atoms and the void; the concept of motion and the laws of motion, including Descartes' conservation principle, his laws of the persistence of motion, and his collision law; and the grounding of his laws in God.

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Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #926843 in Books
- Published on: 1992-05-01
- Released on: 1992-05-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x 1.10" w x 6.00" l, 1.10 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 404 pages

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Much has been written about Descartes's philosophy proper--his "cogito ergo sum" ("I think, therefore I am") having brought philosophy out of the scholastic and into the modern era--but Garber's is the first book-length treatment of Descartes's natural philosophy. This work makes abundantly clear that Descartes's epistemological investigations cannot profitably be viewed in isolation from his overarching goal, which was to establish science on an unshakable foundation. Garber's exposition of Descartes's ideas about body, extension, the laws of motion and conservation, atoms and the void, and more, is a valuable addition to the philosophy/science collections of academic libraries.

-*Leon H. Brody, U.S. Office of Personnel Management Lib., Washington, D.C.*

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From the Back Cover

this is the first book ever to examine Descartes' physics and his philosophy not as separate enterprises but as what they were- a systematic attempt to deal with all knowledge.

About the Author

Daniel Garber is professor of philosophy at the University of Chicago.

Users Review

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