*“Inter inextricabiles. . .
difficultatum tenebras”:*
Ficino’s *Pimander* and the
Gendering of Cartesian
Subjectivity

MICHAEL
KEEFER

Summary: *After reviewing the evidence that Descartes’ philosophical itinerary was to a significant degree shaped by a reading of the Hermetic writings translated by Ficino, this article proposes that, in the Cartesian and Hermetic texts alike, the body from which an emergent autonomous subjectivity seeks to separate itself is gendered female. Some of the implications of this argument are explored through a reading of Marvell’s poem “The Garden,” which is seen here as a parallel response to the Hermetic texts.*

The Latin words of my title are from the concluding sentence of Descartes’ first Meditation. In this quite labyrinthine passage Descartes is telling us how difficult he finds it to resist the hypothetical evil genius, to take his belief in his own body to be the result of daimonic deceptions, and to suspend all judgments. This task, he says,

is a laborious one, and insensibly a certain lassitude leads me back into the course of my ordinary life. And just as a captive who in sleep enjoys an imaginary liberty, when he begins to suspect that his liberty is but a dream, fears to be awakened, and conspires with these agreeable illusions to prolong his deception, so insensibly of my own accord I fall back into my former opinions, and I am anxious about being roused from this slumber, lest the laborious wakefulness which should follow the tranquillity of this repose should have to be spent not in daylight, but — *inter inextricabiles. . . difficultatum tenebras* — in the pathless shadows of the difficulties which have just been discussed.¹

The Cartesian persuasions of which this is a striking sample are a matter, very largely, of divestment — a divestment by Descartes not just of his former opinions, beliefs and prejudices, but also of his material body.

As I have argued at length in an essay published in the Spring 1996 issue of *Renaissance Quarterly*,² this philosopher's itinerary needs to be set within the context of philosophical texts which, if scarcely respectable in the eyes of most contemporary philosophers and historians of philosophy, were nonetheless read throughout Western Europe — often with a respect bordering on reverence — between the latter part of the fifteenth century and the mid-seventeenth century. I refer to writings which make up a part of what we now call the *Hermetica*, or *Corpus Hermeticum*, and which were translated from Greek to Latin by Marsilio Ficino in 1463 under the title of *The Pimander of Mercurius Trismegistus, On the Power and Wisdom of God: Mercurii Trismegisti Pymander, de potestate et sapientia dei*.³

In the first of these dialogues, which is a significant intertext for the passage I have just quoted from Descartes' first Meditation, what is at issue is also a matter of enslavement, confinement and subjection: we, who are enveloped in the shadows of ignorance (*ignorantiae tenebris involuti*), are exhorted by the Hermetic writer to return to the wakeful state in which we were created and recover our true selves by escaping from "the enticements of irrational sleep."⁴ The project of the Hermetic texts which I believe Descartes to have read and reflected on in the course of working out his own philosophical itinerary is also one of divestment, and of an autonomous and incorporeal self's escape from "the irrational afflictions of matter,"⁵ from a darkness, a shadow or *umbra* which is identified with a material nature that is explicitly gendered feminine, and identified as well with corporeality, the senses of the body, and with death.⁶

My argument for the relationship between Descartes' central philosophical writings and certain of the writings attributed to the entirely legendary Egyptian sage Hermes Trismegistus is not merely a matter of the ways in which some of the Hermetic dialogues anticipate the movement of Descartes' thought from a rejection both of previously accepted opinions ("the deceptions of the world")⁷ and of corporeality, to a perception of the self as autonomous and irreducibly incorporeal, an abstract knowledge of God, and a distinction between the domain of mind and that of what one Hermetic writer calls "three-dimensional corporeality"⁸ — or, in Cartesian terms, *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. I have re-examined, possibly in greater contextual detail than previous scholars, the evidence that Descartes' early reading included such sixteenth-century Hermetists as Cornelius Agrippa and Baptista Porta — and also the anonymous work *Arbatel de magia*, which was printed with Agrippa's *Opera omnia*, and which contains a series of

aphorisms about the benefits to be derived from commerce with what Arbanel (whoever he or she may have been) calls Olympic spirits, or spirits of Olympus. This is arguably the source both of the title of that lost early work, *Olympica*, in which Descartes recorded his dreams of November 10, 1619, and of the remarks about “the things of Olympus” and the metaphorical equivalence of spirit and wind that survive among the passages transcribed by Leibniz from Descartes’ early manuscripts.⁹ As I have also argued, there is compelling evidence to suggest that Descartes was familiar (in one of the many sixteenth-century editions of Ficino’s *Pimander*) with the Hermetic texts to which these writers so incessantly refer; and furthermore, that the revelatory dream-experience of November 10, 1619, which constitutes what I have called the primal scene of Cartesian philosophy, follows a Hermetic paradigm established in the first, fourth, seventh, and thirteenth tractates of the *Pimander*. This paradigm is one in which a dualist ascesis, deliberately undertaken, leads to a state of extreme distress accompanied by fears of madness, and thence to religious enthusiasm, divine revelation, an assurance of mental autonomy, and the arrival, with gnostic certitude, of an unshakable and divinely authenticated knowledge. All of these elements are present in the *Olympica* manuscript in which Descartes recorded his dream-revelation — a text which, though lost (or, more probably, deliberately destroyed) in the early eighteenth century, we have some access to through the paraphrase of it by Baillet, Descartes’ first biographer, and the excerpts copied from the manuscript by Leibniz in the 1670s.

One of the advantages of this kind of approach to the Cartesian textual corpus is that it makes possible a recognition in these texts of recurrent metaphorical exchanges, involving figures which signify corporeality, mental autonomy, and a daimonic force that threatens any possible autonomy. In these metaphorical exchanges one can trace the self-representation of Cartesian subjectivity at the moment of its emergence. As I would now like to emphasize, this emergence is bound up with a rejection of the Cartesian body. Explicitly in the Hermetic writings and implicitly in Descartes, this body is feminine: in its absence and exile it guarantees the masculinity of the wholly intellectual subject whose dark other it has become.

Let us consider briefly the structure of the three dreams of November 10, 1619 — dreams which constitute the primal scene of Cartesian philosophy and the moment Descartes would identify in his *Discourse on Method* as the starting-point of his philosophical itinerary. The second and third dreams — an annunciatory warning and a revelation from “l’Esprit de

Vérité”¹⁰ (the third person of the Christian trinity: Descartes was not a very modest young man) — are less interesting than the first, which images both a mind-body split and the purported attainment of mental autonomy.

In this dream, Descartes, walking at night in the street, encounters “quelques fantômes,” by whom the entire right side of his body is struck with weakness; when he attempts to straighten himself, he is attacked by a wind which he identifies as an evil genius, and spun around like a top. Seeking refuge from this wind, he directs himself towards a *collège*, intending to shelter in its chapel — only to find that the evil spirit, the wind, is pushing him in precisely that direction, toward the church. In Descartes’ own words, quoted by Baillet in the margin of his paraphrase, *A malo Spiritu ad Templum propellebar*.¹¹ This is a perfect image of psychic overdetermination. However, the dream throws up obstacles to Descartes’ entering the church: an unnamed gentleman, who tells him another gentleman wishes to give him a melon; and a group of people among whom he is able finally to arrest his movement toward the church.

In at least two subsequent texts Descartes returns to this primal scene of a night-time encounter with phantoms in the street. In Part Two of the *Discourse on Method*, speaking of his thought-processes of November 1619 and of what he claims was his initial formulation of the program of systematic doubt, Descartes appears to be remembering his crippled state in that primal scene: “But like a man who walks alone and in darkness, I resolved to go so slowly, and to use so much circumspection in all things, that even if I advanced only very little, I would at least take care not to fall.”¹² This allusion to the 1619 dream is well known: as Georges Poulet remarked a half-century ago, “Toute cette seconde partie du *Discours* est, sans que Descartes y fit formellement mention du songe, remplie de l’expérience même que le songe lui communiqua.”¹³ But another more important allusion to what I have called the primal scene of Cartesian philosophy seems largely to have escaped the notice of commentators. In the unfinished dialogue *La recherche de la vérité par la lumière naturelle* (c. 1635), Descartes responds to objections against the systematic doubt that he is proposing with the assurance that “these doubts, which alarmed you to begin with, are like phantoms and vain images which appear at night in the uncertain glimmer of a feeble light. If you flee from them, your fear will follow you, but if you approach as though to touch them, you will discover them to be no more than air and shadow, and will in the future feel more confident in any such encounter.”¹⁴

This passage is important because it links the evil genius which is allied to the phantoms of the 1619 dream with the evil genius which appears in the *Meditations* of 1641 as the hyperbolic form of systematic doubt. In 1619 the phantoms, seconded by the evil genius which is also a wind, block Descartes from pursuing his itinerary, which is fleetingly figured in the first dream (where was he going when the phantoms appeared before him?), and which becomes an explicit object of concern in the third dream when Descartes seeks out in an anthology of poetry the line of Ausonius, *Quod vitae sectabor iter*: "What path in life shall I follow?"¹⁵ The 1619 phantoms and evil genius are intimately connected with corporeality: the latter strikes the dreamer with such lameness that he is scarcely able to stand. The evil genius of 1619 is also very clearly a force of daimonic overdetermination. The fact that the dreamer is pushed by this explicitly evil power towards the church he is struggling to reach as a refuge from that same power confronts him with an insoluble riddle: is his decision to seek out the church autonomous or overdetermined? In the *Meditations* of 1641 the daimonic power of the evil genius is confined to the epistemic level (in that sense this power is a less urgent menace than its predecessor, who infects the dreamer's very acts of choice with uncertainty). But the link between the early evil genius and the later one is confirmed by the fact that *La recherche de la vérité* identifies the phantoms of the primal scene with the argument of systematic doubt. Whether in dream or in philosophical argument, Descartes' itinerary involves a confrontation with the phantoms and the evil genius.

One of the most intriguing aspects of Descartes' early fragmentary texts is that they appear to have contained instructions as to their own interpretation. In a passage transcribed by Leibniz that probably formed part of the *Olympica*, Descartes wrote: *Sensibilia apta concipiendis Olympicis: ventus spiritum significat*. ("Sensible things enable us to conceive the things of Olympus: wind signifies spirit.") What then of the phantoms? Are they not also a metaphorical vehicle? In another sentence from what must be the same passage, Descartes tells us that metaphorical exchanges can work in more than one direction:

Just as the imagination uses figures to conceive bodies [*Ut imaginatio utitur figuris ad corpora concipiendis*], so the intellect uses certain sensible bodies to figure spiritual things [*ita intellectus utitur quibusdam corporibus sensibilibus ad spiritualia figuranda*].

The chiastic form of this sentence makes explicit a paradoxical doubleness: the figures bodied forth by the imagination are an immaterial representation

of the corporeal, while the sensible bodies summoned up by the intellect are a corporeal figuration of the spiritual.

If wind, in the first dream of 1619, signifies the evil genius, then (I would suggest) the phantoms signify the body from which it had apparently been the dreamer's waking project to divorce himself. And if the phantoms are nothing but air and shadow ("rien, que de l'air et de l'ombre"), that connects them once again to the body. For, as I proposed in my *Renaissance Quarterly* article, the words *ombre* and *umbra* had resonances in Descartes' time that they have lost for modern ears. In his *Theologia Platonica* Ficino explains the *umbra* or shadow as the term applied by the "ancient theologians" to the "elemental murk" (*caligo elementalis*) with which the soul is surrounded, most especially during this life. The same associations appear in Iamblichus' *De mysteriis Aegyptiis*, which Ficino translated, and in one of Iamblichus' and Ficino's common sources, the first dialogue of the Hermetic *Pimander* — where, in Ficino's translation, the key word is again *umbra*, and the insistent lesson is of a separation of mind from body which will free the self from the deceptions of the senses.¹⁶

What these Hermetic intertexts also suggest is that the Cartesian body is gendered — and that its gender is feminine. For the first revelation dialogue of the Hermetic *Pimander* is, among other things, a revisionary account of the Fall of Man (and here one must use "man," rather than any less strongly gendered word). Unlike the Biblical Adam, the Hermetic Primal Man is divine and incorporeal: it is only because he wishes, like his Father, to create something that he descends through the encircling planetary spheres to the world. Nature, by this account, is watery and feminine, the product of a cloudy darkness (*umbra*) that unfolded itself from the primordial light. She sees the approach of this divine figure, loves him, and reflects back at him his own beautiful image, by which he is in turn infatuated.

Loving, like Narcissus (or like Milton's Eve), his own image, the Primal Man descends into nature and becomes entrapped, through this misrecognition, in corporeality and sexual reproduction. The Hermetic gnosis is thus a narrative of the entrapment of masculine mind in an order of passive-receptive, shadowed, and deceptive materiality that is also explicitly feminine, and the Hermetic texts contain a corresponding prescription of an asceticism of self-recognition and dematerialization that is also, very explicitly, a rejection and devaluation of the feminine.¹⁷

Am I being too wildly speculative in suggesting that something very close to this structure of thought is implicit in the primal scene out of which

emerged the autonomous Cartesian subjectivity — a subjectivity to which most commentators would not dream of attributing the characteristic of gender?

Let us return to one particular moment in Descartes' first dream of November 10, 1619 — the moment at which, fleeing from his phantoms or shadows toward the refuge of a church, and recognizing suddenly that the wind which has allied itself to these terrors is pushing him willy-nilly in the direction he has already chosen for himself, Descartes meets someone who tells him that a certain gentleman wishes to give him a melon. He is not yet able to stop; the wind pushes him on.¹⁸

What is this melon? Late-seventeenth and eighteenth-century readers, recognizing sexual overtones in the image, responded to this detail of the *Olympica* narrative in Baillet's *Vie de Monsieur Des-Cartes* (1693) with belly-laughs. But what, more precisely, does it mean?

Perhaps Descartes' English contemporary Andrew Marvell can help us here — for in his poem "The Garden," written in the early 1650s, Marvell records a more directly erotic encounter with melons. There is some reason to think that this poem can be appropriately discussed in conjunction with the Cartesian meditations. Writings of the recently-deceased Descartes were known by this time in certain English circles (the Cambridge philosopher Henry More had corresponded with Descartes in the late 1640s);¹⁹ the Hermetic writings and related mystical and theosophical texts had recently become available in English translations by John Everard;²⁰ and by the mid-1650s at least one English thinker had convinced himself that Descartes' philosophy belonged to the category of "Mysticall Theology" or "Enthusiasme" which, thanks to the work of religious radicals like Everard, had become an important part of the political ferment of the Civil War and Commonwealth years.²¹

The central conceit of Marvell's "The Garden" is that it substitutes for male-female heterosexual desire an eroticism of solipsism and tautology. The poet attaches himself not to the colours of a woman's body, but to those of nature: "No white nor red was ever seen / So am'rous as this lovely green."²² And unlike "Fond lovers, cruel as their Flame," who "Cut in these Trees their Mistress name," he, like a demented Adam naming the things of Paradise, cries out that he will inscribe them only with their own names: "Fair Trees! where s'eer you[r] barks I wound, / No name shall but your own be found." In Marvell's Latin version of the poem, this passage is expanded in a manner that literalizes the conceit:

*Ast Ego, si vestras unquam temeravero stirpes,
 Nulla Neaera, Chloe, Faustina, Corynna, legetur:
 In proprio sed quaeque libro signabitur Arbos.
 O charae Platanus, Cyparissus, Populus, Ulnus!*
 [But I, if ever I shall have profaned your stocks,
 No *Neaera, Chloe, Faustina, Corynna* shall be read:
 But the name of each tree shall be written on its own bark.
 O dear plane tree, cypress, poplar, elm!]²³

Marvell's garden responds to him with an eroticism no less powerful than his own:

The Luscious Clusters of the Vine
 Upon my Mouth do crush their Wine;
 The Nectaren, and curious Peach,
 Into my hands themselves do reach;
 Stumbling on Melons, as I pass,
 Insnar'd with Flow'rs, I fall on Grass.

With these images of an implicitly feminine nature which offers itself to the male's appetites, and in nurturing him also ensnares him, Marvell is wittily revisioning the Hermetic fall. But because his erotic desire is directed to a green world, because his appetites are vegetative rather than sexual, he falls out of sexuality rather than (like the Hermetic Primal Man) into it; his "Mind, from pleasure less, / Withdraws into its happiness. ..." ²⁴ In this higher happiness, the masculine mind finds its own likeness in itself, rather than in a seductively deceptive image of that self reflected back at it by a moist female nature. Evading by a short-circuit of pure tautology the narcissistic misrecognition that entrapped the Hermetic Primal Man, the poet is able to fulfil that Man's desire to create:

The Mind, that Ocean where each kind
 Does streight its own resemblance find;
 Yet it creates, transcending these,
 Far other Worlds, and other Seas;
 Annihilating all that's made
 To a green Thought in a green Shade.

The movement of thought in these lines is vertiginous. If "shade" here carries any of the Hermetic and Neoplatonic resonances that I have argued are active in the *ombres* or *umbrae* of the Cartesian texts, then Marvell, having escaped the fall into sexual embodiment against which the Hermetic writings warn, might appear to be falling into some other form of embodi-

ment. But by his account the mind is no less decreative than creative; its creative act is so firmly committed to alterity, to "Far other Worlds, and other Seas," as to be at the same time an act of annihilation. A green shade is presumably the antithesis of the red and white shade or *umbra* into which one would fall through heterosexual eroticism, and it incorporates — or should one rather say "decorporates"? — all of creation in ideal form, as a "green Thought." These patterns are reinforced by the imagery of disembodiment in the following stanza:

Here at the Fountains sliding foot,
Or at some Fruit-trees mossy root,
Casting the Bodies Vest aside,
My Soul into the boughs does glide:
There like a Bird it sits, and sings,
Then whets, and combs its silver Wings;
And, till prepar'd for longer flight,
Waves in its Plumes the various Light.

Marvell's poem is a tour de force: one may well suspect that its conceit of a reversal of the Hermetic fall, and a divestment of the body by the soul through vegetative eroticism, involves a complexity of metaphorical transfer that it would be idle to search for in Descartes' less elaborately worked *Olympica* — or at least in the no doubt impoverished paraphrase in which that text has been preserved. But Descartes' melon, no less than those of Marvell, is a metaphor — and, no doubt, a sexual one as well. (If there are times when, as Freud claimed, a cigar is no more than a cigar, this is not one of those times.)

What does become clear from a comparison of these projects of asceticism is that the poet is enjoying himself a great deal more than the philosopher. There is something slightly batty about Marvell's fall into a vegetative eroticism, and out of his body. In his poem the grapes, nectarines, peaches, melons and flowers are represented as the initiators of (a)sexual contact, and he as the passive object of their vegetative desires — though insofar as they are metaphor, we are still within the arena of sexual desire, if with certain valences reversed. Marvell expresses a more conventionally masculine — one might almost say, scientific — subjectivity when, like a mad precursor of Linnaeus or Cuvier, he proposes to engage in the charmingly daft activity of carving the name of each beloved tree into its own bark. A severe reader, inattentive to the delirious element of play that suffuses this poem, might want to propose that there is something infantile and regressive in the closed

circuit of vegetative desire that Marvell finds in his garden. I would prefer to suggest that the poet may perhaps have succeeded, where so many others have failed, in what has by some been declared a futile quest — the search for a genuinely novel form of sexual perversion.

There is, on the other hand, a real sadness to the contrasting image of the windblown Descartes staggering off into the night, leaving behind not just the proffered melon, and the gentleman who wished to give it to him, but also the *umbra* of his own (feminine) body.

I find myself thinking, inconsequentially, of J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*. In that fable of infantilized heterosexuality there is a Wendy, the eternally mothering female, who with needle, thread and thimble reconnects the weightless male subject to his *umbra*. Should one regret, or perhaps rather be grateful for the fact that Descartes' sterner century was willing to accept, without this kind of compensatory make-believe, the grim consequences of psychic self-amputation?

University of Guelph

Notes

1. René Descartes, *Oeuvres philosophiques*, ed. F. Alquié, 3 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1963–73), vol. 1, pp. 181–2 (Latin text), vol. 1, pp. 412–13 (French text). The translation is, with some modifications, that of *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, trans. E. S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross, 2 vols. (1911; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), vol. 1, pp. 148–49.
2. "The Dreamer's Path: Descartes and the Sixteenth Century," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 49 (1996): 30–76.
3. The standard edition of the Hermetic writings is that of A. D. Nock and A.-J. Festugière, *Corpus Hermeticum*, 4 vols. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1960), which gives the Greek text with French translation; the standard English translation is that of Brian P. Copenhaver, *Hermetica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). The most widely circulated version of the Hermetic writings during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries consisted of Marsilio Ficino's Latin translation of fourteen short writings (mostly in dialogue form), accompanied by brief introductions from the pen of Ficino's younger contemporary Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, and followed by a longer text, the *Asclepius*, which had been available in Latin translation in Western Europe since the twelfth century. Because Ficino's translation differs significantly at some points from the critical editions of Nock-Festugière and Copenhaver, and because it is the form in which Descartes would have been most likely to encounter the Hermetic writings, I have chosen to use a sixteenth-century edition: *Mercurii Trismegisti Pymander, de potestate et sapientia Dei*, trans. Marsilio Ficino, ed. Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and Michael Isengrin (Basle, 1532). The best introductions to the Hermetic literature are Copenhaver's introduction to his translation, and Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind*

- (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), which largely supplants A.-J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, 4 vols. (Paris: Gabalda, 1950–54). See also Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), and Michael Keefer, "Agrippa's Dilemma: Hermetic 'Rebirth' and the Ambivalences of *De vanitate* and *De occulta philosophia*," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 41 (1988): 614–53.
4. *Mercurii Trismegisti Pymander*, sig. B3^V (*Corpus Hermeticum*, tractate 1): "*O populi viri terrigenae, qui vosmetipsos ebrietati, somno, & ignorantiae dedidistis, sobrii vivite, abstinete a ventris luxu vos, qui irrationali somno demulcti estis. . . Revocate iam vosmet, qui laboratis inopia, ignorantiae tenebris involuti.*" (Compare Copenhaver, I [28], p. 6.)
 5. *Ibid.*, sig. G5 (*Corpus Hermeticum*, tractate 13): "*. . . purga sensus corporis, solve te ab irrationabilibus materiae ipsius ultoribus.*" (Compare Copenhaver, XIII [7], p. 50.)
 6. The cosmogonic revelation recounted in the first tractate of the *Corpus Hermeticum* begins with a vision of a shadow (*umbra*) coiling down out of the primal light to form a *natura humida* (*Mercurii Trismegisti Pymander*, sig. A6^V). The Fall of Man is then narrated. When the divine Primal Man penetrated the seven planetary spheres, this moist nature, perceiving his divine beauty, smiled up at him with love, and he, seeing his own form reflected back at him by the waters of nature, loved that image, wished to be united with it, and hence became progenitor of a form confined within the natural order (sigs. A8^{r-v}). Our bodies are directly derived from the *umbra* and the moist nature: "*praecessit proprio corpori tristis umbra, ex hac quidem natura humida, ex hac vero corpus in mundo sensibili constitit, ex hoc denique mors ipsa scaturit*" (sig. B2). (Compare Copenhaver, I [4], I [12–14], I [20], pp. 1, 3, 5.)
 7. *Mercurii Trismegisti Pymander*, sig. G4: "*mundi deceptiones.*" Insofar as the first lesson of the Evil Genius of the *Meditations* is *decipior, ergo sum* ("I am deceived, therefore I am"), the expression might as well be Cartesian. (Compare Copenhaver XIII [1], p. 49.)
 8. *Ibid.*, sig. G6^V: "*At haec est regeneratio fili, non adesse ulterius corpori quantitate dimenso.*" (Compare Copenhaver, XIII [13], p. 52.)
 9. Descartes, *Oeuvres*, eds. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, 11 vols. (1897–1909; rpt. Paris: Vrin, 1974), vol. 10, p. 218: "*Sensibilia apta concipiendis Olympicis: ventus spiritum significat.*" ("Sensible things enable us to conceive the things of Olympus: wind signifies spirit.")
 10. Descartes, *Oeuvres*, vol. 10, p. 185: "*. . . il fut assez hardi pour se persuader que c'étoit l'esprit de Vérité qui avoit voulu lui ouvrir les trésors de toutes les sciences par ce songe.*"
 11. *Ibid.*, vol. 10, p. 182.
 12. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 584.
 13. Georges Poulet, *Études sur le temps humain*, vol. 1 (Paris, Plon, 1949), p. 24.
 14. Descartes, *Oeuvres philosophiques*, vol. 2, p. 1121.
 15. Descartes, *Oeuvres*, vol. 10, pp. 184–85.
 16. Marsilio Ficino, *Marsilio Ficino and the Phaedran Charioteer*, ed. and trans. Michael J. B. Allen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 233; Iamblichus, *Les mystères d'Égypte*, ed. and trans. Édouard des Places (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1966), VI.4, p. 185;

Mercurii Trismegisti Pymander, sigs. A6^v, B2. (Compare Copenhaver, I [4], I [20], pp. 1, 5. The Greek word which Ficino translates as “*umbra*” and Copenhaver as “darkness” is *skótos*.)

17. *Mercurii Trismegisti Pymander*, sigs. B2-B3^v, C2-C4^v, G3^v-G8^v. (Compare Copenhaver, I [20]-I [28], VII, XIII; pp. 4-6, 24, 49-54.)
18. Descartes, *Oeuvres*, vol. 10, p. 181.
19. See Henry More, *Epistolae quattuor ad Renatum Des-Cartes: cum Responsis Clarissimi Philosophi ad duas Priores*, in More, *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings*, 2 vols. (London, 1662; facsimile rpt. New York and London: Garland, 1978), vol. 1, sigs. Z-Ff4.
20. See Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical Religion 1640-1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 107-36.
21. See Michael R. G. Spiller, “The Idol of the Stove: the Background to Swift’s Criticism of Descartes,” *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 35 (1974): 15-24.
22. Quotations from “The Garden” and from Marvell’s Latin version of the poem (“*Hortus*”) are from *Miscellaneous Poems by Andrew Marvell, Esq; Late Member of the Honourable House of Commons* (London, 1681; facsimile rpt. Menston: Scolar Press, 1969), pp. 48-52.
23. Translation from George de F. Lord, ed. *Andrew Marvell: Complete Poetry* (New York: Modern Library, 1968), p. 234.
24. A reading of “To His Coy Mistress” might suggest that Marvell did not regard vegetative and sexual eroticism as mutually exclusive: “My vegetable Love should grow / Vaster then Empires, and more slow” (lines 11-12). But such a love involves an effectively perpetual deferral of sexual consummation (“... you should if you please refuse / Till the Conversion of the Jews”), and could be entertained only, one might suppose, as a means of whiling away the tedium of immortality.