Descartes’ Interactionism and Arguments against Cartesian Dualism

Descartes’ Interactionism
Animals don’t have minds—instead they are like mechanistic robots
What this shows about Descartes’ psychology and the division of
cognitive labor between the brain and the mind
- The mind is responsible for volitions and perceptions. [which in
turn are caused either by the mind itself or by the body]

According to Descartes, the mind and the body exhibit two-way interaction
The nexus of mind-body causation is in the pineal gland

Arguments against Cartesian Dualism
1. How can two entirely distinct kinds of substances interact?
   a. Descartes: in the pineal gland
      i. Princess Elizabeth: but that is just another physical organ
   b. Descartes: it is like gravity—not a physical object but it causes motion
      i. Elizabeth: gravity is a spatial phenomenon and works
         according to well-known laws of physics
      ii. Gravitational fields are features of physical objects. So this
          example doesn’t explain how two entirely different types of
          substances could interact.
2. The causal closure of the physical
   a. Smullyan’s thought experiment
      i. If the thought experiment makes sense to you, it is because it is
         plausible to think that all of your behavior is fully caused by
         physical events, such as event in your brain. But if this is true,
         there doesn’t seem to be any reason, nor any room, to believe
         in a non-physical mental substance.
   b. Law of the conversation of energy
3. Van Inwagen’s Remote Control Argument
   a. If Dualism were true, then when we were struck hard on the head we
      would lose control of our bodies while continuing to be conscious, and
      when we drank a lot of alcohol we would lose motor control but have
      clear minds
   b. It’s false that when we are struck hard ….etc
   c. So, dualism is false.