

RESEARCH

Animals and Cartesian Consciousness: Pardies vs. the Cartesians

Evan Thomas

Ohio State University, US
thomas.3172@osu.edu

The Cartesian view that animals are automata sparked a major controversy in early modern European philosophy. This paper studies an early contribution to this controversy. I provide an interpretation of an influential objection to Cartesian animal automatism raised by Ignace-Gaston Pardies (1636–1673). Pardies objects that the Cartesian arguments show only that animals lack ‘intellectual perception’ but do not show that animals lack ‘sensible perception.’ According to Pardies, the difference between these two types of perception is that the former is reflexive such that we both perceive an object and the perception itself, whereas sensible perception lacks this reflexivity. This notion of sensible perception was criticized by the Cartesian Antoine Dilly for violating the doctrine that all thought is conscious. However, I argue that sensible perceptions are not unconscious for Pardies. Rather, they are conscious perceptions that are unaccompanied by a kind of reflexive perception that is constitutive of attention. Moreover, I argue that when understood in this way Pardies raises a compelling objection to Cartesian animal automatists.

Keywords: animals; consciousness; introspection; Descartes; Pardies; Dilly; Cartesianism; automatism; minds

The Cartesian view that nonhuman animals are automata sparked a major controversy in early modern European philosophy.¹ Indeed, judging by the early modern literature devoted to this controversy, it may be rightly regarded as ‘a central preoccupation’ of early modern philosophers (Thomas 1996: 35). However, despite the recent interest in Descartes’s views on animals, comparatively little attention has been devoted to studying the subsequent early modern debate about animal automatism.² In this paper, I contribute to our understanding of this debate by providing a new interpretation of an influential objection to animal automatism raised by Ignace-Gaston Pardies (1636–1673). Pardies objects to the Cartesians that their arguments show that animals lack ‘intellectual’ perception, but that animals nevertheless have ‘sensible’ perceptions.³ My thesis, to be refined and explained below, is that this distinction at its core has to do with the presence and absence of attention. Intellectual perceptions are conscious perceptions accompanied by attention. Sensible perceptions are conscious perceptions which are unaccompanied by attention. Pardies’s view is that animals enjoy conscious perceptions but lack attention.

¹ In what follows, it can be assumed that my discussion is restricted to European philosophy.

² The most comprehensive work to date on the reception of Descartes’s views on animals in the early modern period is Rosenfield (1941). For some of the recent literature on Descartes’s views on animals see Cottingham (1978) Radner and Radner (1989), Sencerz (1990), Baker and Morris (1996), Sutton (2000), Gaukroger (2000), Morris (2000), Wee (2005), Thomas (2006), and Hatfield (2008).

³ The French terms are ‘connoissances sensibles’ and ‘connoissances intellectuelles.’ I have chosen to translate ‘connaissance’ as ‘perception’ rather than ‘knowledge’ for two reasons. Firstly, although the French verb ‘connaître’ could be translated as ‘to know’, this translation has connotations that Pardies would want to disavow given his attribution of ‘connoissances sensibles’ to animals. For example, the English ‘knowledge’ connotes the notion of a mental state that is justified and factive, but Pardies would presumably disavow such implications. Secondly, Pardies sometimes uses the word ‘perception’ to refer to these same states (*Discours* 150–51, §LXXVIII). Pardies thus appears to use ‘connaissance’ and ‘perception’ interchangeably.

Historically, Pardies's objection to the Cartesians was perceived as being so weak as to arouse suspicion. In *De l'Âme des Bêtes* (1676, hereafter *De l'Âme*), Antoine Dilly interpreted Pardies's sensible perceptions as being unconscious in the sense that we lack any introspective awareness of them and raised several objections to Pardies on this basis. Pierre Bayle found these objections so decisive that he accused Pardies of being a closet Cartesian who wrote with the intention of demonstrating the strength of Cartesian animal automatism in the *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* (1684: 25).⁴ However, several critics of animal automatism whose sincerity is not disputed approvingly cite Pardies as an influence.⁵ There is thus a question mark looming over the philosophical interest of Pardies's contribution to the debate over animal automatism. Part of what I hope to show in this paper is that this suspicion is not merited. Dilly's objections presuppose that sensible perceptions are unconscious. But Dilly is mistaken. Recognizing that sensible perceptions are conscious for Pardies makes his objection to the Cartesians much stronger than it otherwise appears.

Pardies is probably wrong to think that animals lack attention (Prinz 2018). But Pardies's contributions are nevertheless worth studying for several reasons. The debates between Cartesian animal automatists and their critics are rich and philosophically interesting. Pardies's contribution to these debates sheds considerable light on the issues at play and on the nature of Cartesian animal automatism itself. One lesson from the present study is that the Cartesian case for animal automatism is most compelling when one assumes a strong doctrine of the transparency of the mental according to which we have perfect introspective access to the contents of our thoughts. Pardies questions the transparency of the mental by suggesting that attention plays a role in facilitating our introspective access to our thoughts. Our introspective access to our sensible perceptions, which are conscious yet unaccompanied by attention, is consequently impoverished. An important strand in the debate over animal automatism, then, concerned the nature and structure of conscious experience. Pardies's distinction between sensible and intellectual perception is a philosophically interesting contribution to this discussion even if it does not represent the key to the distinction between human and animal cognition.

Here is a quick road map for the paper. I begin in §1 by providing an exegesis of Pardies's statement of the Cartesian argument to which he objects with his distinction between sensible and intellectual perception. In §2, I examine texts in which Pardies argues for distinguishing between sensible and intellectual perception. In §3, I introduce Dilly's objections to Pardies and argue that Pardies is not committed to the interpretation of sensible perceptions that Dilly's objections presuppose. In §4, I defend my main thesis that sensible perceptions are conscious yet unaccompanied by attention. In §5, I argue that it is this feature of sensible perceptions, namely that they are conscious yet unaccompanied by attention, that is most important for Pardies's objection to the Cartesians. I conclude in §6 by briefly sketching how various dimensions of Pardies's views hang together as well as some upshots for our understanding of Cartesian animal automatism.

§1 Pardies's Exegesis of the Cartesians

Pardies begins the *Discours De La Connoissance des Bestes* (1672, hereafter *Discours*) by stating the arguments of the Cartesians as persuasively as he can so that they will 'not reproach me with what they usually say, that our opinion is a prejudice, and that we condemn them without hearing them' (*Discours* 20, §X).⁶ Following this statement of the Cartesian arguments, Pardies makes objections to them and explains and defends his positive view according to which the soul of animals is a substantial form (*Discours* 147–237, §LXXVI–CXIX).

Pardies begins his presentation of the Cartesian arguments with the following:

It is certain that in us there are several motions which occur without the intervention of any thought from our soul. We digest meat without thinking of it, says the learned Boethius; we breathe also in sleep without taking notice of it. So that, according to the remark of St. Gregory of Nyssa, those

⁴ Several early modern authors appear to have followed Bayle on this point. See Gabriel Daniel (1693: 10), Jean-Pierre Nicéron (1729: 202–8). Some more recent authors have followed these early modern authors in classifying Pardies as a Cartesian, see for example George Boas (1933: 106–7).

⁵ Rosenfield (1941: 85) cites Jean Baptiste Du Hamel and Jean Gisbert as examples of critics of animal automatism who explicitly cited Pardies as an influence. She also notes substantial similarity between Pardies's work and arguments made by David-Renaud Boullier in his *Essai philosophique sur L'âme des bêtes* (1737). Most recent scholarship has either remained agnostic on this issue or defended the sincerity of Pardies's critique of animal automatism. For defenses of Pardies's sincerity see Rosenfield (1941: 84), and August Ziggelaar (1971: 107–12). Sophie Roux (2013: 10) suggests that the question of Pardies's sincerity is not well posed as it is impossible to settle.

⁶ Section number indicates the paragraph number in the *Discours*.

movements which do not proceed from any sort of thought, nor from any act of will, must be attributed to some other cause ... and as he said a little earlier, to the Body machine. That which I say of digestion and respiration, it is necessary next to understand of the palpitation of the heart, the beating of the arteries, the distribution of the spirits, and of all those other movements which we call natural, which always occur within ourselves, without our willing them.⁷ (*Discours* 21–22, §XI)

According to Pardies, the Cartesians claim that many motions of our bodies occur without our thinking about or willing them. Plausibly, this judgment is backed up by an appeal to introspective awareness.⁸ We know that we ‘digest meat without thinking of it’ because introspection confirms that we are thinking of other things while our stomach is digesting our food. The Cartesians conclude from this appeal to introspection that the motions of digestion do not depend on thought. Accordingly, given the Cartesian’s ontology, these motions must be *automatic*, that is, dependent on the mechanisms of the body-machine alone.

The Cartesians continue, according to Pardies, to cite examples of progressively more sophisticated behaviors which they take introspection to show are automatic—most of which echo examples from Descartes’s own writings. Among the examples that Cartesians appeal to are cases of reflex responses. For example, when our hand gets too close to a fire, we remove it automatically without any volition (*Discours* 23, §XII).⁹ And we close our eyes when someone’s hand comes near them even if we know that they are our friend and are only playing at hitting us (*Discours* 24, §XII).¹⁰ Introspection reveals that these reflexes can be triggered swiftly and without deliberation (*Discours* 23, §XII). And these motions do not introspectively seem to depend on volitions (*ibid.*).

The Cartesians continue, according to Pardies, by making similar claims about the motions we make to maintain our balance (*Discours* 24–28, §XIII) and the motions of our lips, tongue, and diaphragm when we are speaking (*Discours* 31–36, §XV).¹¹ The Cartesians also appeal to behaviors which initially require thought to be performed but are now habitual (*Discours* 39, §XVII). Consider, for example, the motions of an experienced lute player:¹²

And yet, is it not true that very often we play [the lute] without thinking about it, and that by mere habit we repeat the best performed pieces, without knowing what one does, and without even thinking that we have a lute between our hands? Why then could the birds not sing without thinking about it at all? And what knowledge do animals need, if they perform actions infinitely more simple than the motions of a musician who does these without any knowledge?¹³ (*Discours* 42–43, §XVII)

According to the Cartesians, lute players can play without thinking about what they are doing. The lute player is able to accomplish this feat through ‘artificial dispositions’ of their organs which unlike natural dispositions are acquired through practice (*Discours* 47–48, §XIX).

⁷ All translations throughout were prepared by myself and Haruka Akashi. I have included the original French to all of these original translations in footnotes:

‘Il est certain que dans nous-mêmes il se fait plusieurs mouvemens, sans qu’il y intervienne du côté de nôtre ame aucune pensée. Nous digerons les viandes sans y penser, dit le sçavant Boëce; nous respirons aussi dans le sommeil sans y prendre garde. De sorte que selon la remarque de S. Gregoire de Nysse, ces mouvemens qui ne procedent d’aucune sorte de pensée, ni d’aucun acte de la volonté, doivent dépendre de quelque autre cause ... & comme il avoit dit vn peu auparavant, de la machine du Corps. Ce que je dis de la digestion & de la respiration, il le faut encore entendre de la palpitation du cœur, du battement des arteres, de la distribution des esprits, & de tous les autres mouvemens qu’on appelle naturels, qui se font toujours en nous-mêmes, quand nous ne le voudrions pas.’

⁸ Terms like ‘introspection’ and ‘introspective awareness’ can be used in narrower and broader senses. ‘Introspection’ in its broadest sense is an act whereby one forms judgments about the contents of one’s thoughts on the basis of direct awareness of them. However, various philosophical proposals can be made about the mechanisms by which such awareness is acquired. In its narrower sense, ‘introspection’ is sometimes used to refer to a kind of deliberate focusing of one’s attention on one’s mental states. In this paper, I intend to use the term ‘introspection’ in its broadest sense and to remain neutral on various philosophical theories of introspection. What is important for our purposes is that we are able to form judgments about the contents of our thoughts on the basis of direct awareness for them.

⁹ See also *Passions* I.13, AT XI 338/CSM I 333; *Fourth Replies* AT VII 229–30/CSM II 161; *Letter to Mersenne*, 1 April 1640, AT III 48/CSMK III 146; *Letter to Marquess of Newcastle*, 23 November 1646, AT IV 573/CSMK III 302–3; *Treatise on Man* AT XI 141–42.

¹⁰ See also *Passions* I.13, AT XI 338–39/CSM I 333.

¹¹ See also *Passions* I.44, AT XI 362/CSM I 344.

¹² See also *Letter to Mersenne*, 1 April 1640, AT III 48/CSMK III 146.

¹³ [N]’est -il pas vrai qu’on jouë tres-souvent sans y faire réflexion, & que par la seule habitude on repete des pièces les mieux concertées, sans sçavoir ce qu’on fait, & sans avoir seulement la pensée qu’on a vn Luth entre les mains? Pourquoi donc les oiseaux ne pourroient- ils point chanter sans y penser, & que sera-t-il besoin de connoissance dans les Animaux, pour des actions qui sont infiniment plus simples que ces mouvemens d’un Musicien, qui les fait tous sans aucune connoissance?

Finally, Pardies attributes to the Cartesians the claim that introspection confirms that simple pursuit and avoidance responses to beneficial or harmful stimuli can be produced by appropriately disposed material bodies:

And it must be that God could make such a disposed body [i.e., a body disposed to pursue beneficial objects and flee harmful objects], because he has in effect made it so, and because we experience in ourselves, that without willing it, and without thinking about it, we make these same motions. And so it must be that the machinery of our body is so disposed, that at the agitation of the air which all of a sudden strikes our ears, there occurs a certain emotion in our brain ... and then certain nerves open and others close ... by which means we retire from this place where there is danger.¹⁴ (*Discours* 64–65, §XXVIII; see also *Discours* 128–30, §LXV)

Introspection shows that simple pursuit and avoidance behaviors, such as fleeing upon hearing a startling sound, can be automatic in humans. And, it was common in the early modern period to assume that the most sophisticated animal behaviors resemble the simple pursuit and avoidance behaviors of humans (Hatfield 2007; 2012). Consequently, the Cartesian concludes that the behaviors of animals lie within the scope of what can be explained automatically (*Discours* 66, §XXVIII). Call this the ‘introspective-analogical’ argument.¹⁵

Our simple pursuit and avoidance behaviors are typically accompanied by passions such as fear or desire. I accordingly refer to these simple pursuit and avoidance behaviors as passionate behaviors. The Cartesians’ appeal to introspection on passionate behavior introduces some difficulties. Consider a case in which I jump to my feet upon hearing a loud sound and flee the scene. In such a case, it seems that I experience a perception of the loud sound and a feeling of fear. Commonsense suggests that these thoughts play a causal role in producing the motions of my body. However, the Cartesians claim that ‘we experience in ourselves, that without willing it, and without thinking about it’ we exhibit passionate behaviors (*Discours* 64–65, §XXVIII). We can make sense of this claim in the following way. The Cartesian is noting that introspection suggests that passionate behaviors are at least sometimes not *preceded* by any thoughts which represent these behaviors as possible courses of action. We do not think about jumping to our feet before jumping to our feet. And, one might think, there are cases in which we do not think about fleeing a frightening scene before fleeing. Rather, we start running from the frightening scene without having thought about doing so or having chosen to do so. This marks an important contrast between some of our passionate behaviors on the one hand and those motions of our bodies that we regard as depending on *deliberation* and *volition* on the other.

These reflections suggest the following as a fully dressed reconstruction of the Cartesian appeal to introspection. The Cartesian observes that introspection shows that some motions of the human body are preceded by a deliberative process in which we think about possible ways we can act. We then form a volition which elects a certain course of action. Intuitively, the deliberative process revealed by introspection explains why our bodies move in the way that they move in these cases. But, the Cartesians claim, other motions of our bodies are not preceded by such deliberations. Motions such as reflex responses, habitual behaviors, and passionate behaviors may be accompanied by thoughts, but these thoughts do not precede these behaviors and represent them as possible courses of action. Consequently, the Cartesians claim, these motions of our bodies cannot be adequately explained by appeal to the thoughts which accompany them. These behaviors must instead be explained by appeal to the dispositions of the body-machine.

Pardies makes clear that his distinction between sensible and intellectual perception is intended to disrupt the Cartesian appeal to introspection. Referring to the Cartesian’s examples, Pardies writes:

¹⁴ Et il faut bien que Dieu puisse faire vne telle disposition, puis qu’en effet il l’a faite ainsi, & que nous experimentons en nous-mêmes, que sans le vouloir, & sans y penser, nous faisons ces mêmes mouvemens; & qu’ainsi il faut bien que la machine de nôtre corps soit tellement disposée, qu’à cette agitation de l’air qui frappe tout d’un coup nos oreilles, il se fasse vne certaine émotion dans nostre cerveau ... & ensuite que de certains nerfs s’ouvrent, & que d’autres se ferment ... par le moyen duquel nous nous retirons de ce lieu où il y a danger.

¹⁵ The conclusion that Pardies explicitly assigns to the introspective-analogical argument is relatively modest: introspection and analogy confirm that God *could* make automata that perfectly resemble animals in their motions (*Discours* 64, §XXVIII). However, the premises that Pardies attributes to the Cartesians can and were used in the period to support a stronger conclusion. If animal behavior resembles automatic human behaviors, then analogical reasoning supports not only the conclusion that animals *could* act automatically but that animal behavior actually is automatic. In other work, I attribute this more ambitious form of the introspective-analogical argument to Descartes. In my view this more ambitious argument was also articulated by several early Cartesians. See for example Claude Clerselier’s preface to an edition of the *Treatise on Man* (1677). This argument is also noted by Florens Schuyf in his introduction to a Latin edition of the *Treatise on Man*. A French translation of this introduction is included in the above cited work and the introspective-analogical argument is discussed (1677: 378–80).

And when one says that we make, without thinking, several movements which are well governed and proportioned to the goal that we could propose to ourselves; we want to say only that in these encounters we do not have any intellectual perception ... but we cannot argue, it seems to me, that there is no sensible perception ...¹⁶ (*Discours* 167–68, §XXCVI)

Introspection confirms that in the Cartesian's examples we act without intellectual perception but it does not show that we act without sensible perceptions. A full account of Pardies's notion of sensible perception should explain what feature of sensible perceptions makes it the case that the Cartesian appeal to introspection fails.¹⁷

The details of how this distinction disrupts the Cartesian appeal to introspection will be made clearer below. Roughly, Pardies's strategy is to claim that the Cartesians illicitly assume that the thoughts which cause our behaviors must take a certain form. Namely, they must be like the thoughts we have when we attentively deliberate. Consider a case in which we attentively deliberate about what to do and then elect a course of action. Our introspective awareness of the thoughts which constitute our deliberation strongly suggests that these thoughts play a causal role in producing our subsequent behavior. This is because there is a clear 'match' between the contents of our deliberation and our subsequent behavior. However, Pardies wants to insist that a thought could cause a behavior even if we are unable to identify such a match between the content of the thought and the behavior. Sensible perceptions are such thoughts. They are thoughts which do not take the form of an attentive deliberation. Consequently, we cannot identify that match between the contents of our sensible perceptions with the behaviors they cause that we find between our attentive deliberations and the behaviors they cause. To better understand Pardies's notion of sensible perception, we must turn now to examining the texts in which he introduces and discusses the distinction between sensible and intellectual perception.

§2 Sensible and Intellectual Perception

Pardies introduces the distinction between sensible and intellectual perception by first describing intellectual perception:

Spiritual perception, or if you will intellectual perception, is an intimate perception by which we perceive an object in such a way that we perceive that fact itself; that is to say, a perception which essentially carries with itself a kind of reflection which it makes indivisibly on itself, in such a way that we perceive very well that we perceive.¹⁸ (*Discours* 150–51, §LXXVIII)

Intellectual perceptions both represent some item external to the perception and reflexively represent themselves. Intellectual perceptions, then, are first introduced by a claim about their internal structure. Intellectual perceptions have a reflexive structure.

Pardies goes on to make clear that the reflexive structure of intellectual perceptions rewards us with a superlative introspective awareness of their contents. When we have intellectual perceptions, we are thereby poised to report their contents in a statement that begins with 'I.' Pardies illustrates intellectual perception with the example of reflecting on God's existence (*Discours* 151–52, §LXXVIII). When one thinks of God's existence, this suffices for one to 'intimately know' that one is having such thoughts (*ibid.*). There is no need for an additional mental act by which one reflects on one's own thoughts in order to say 'I'm thinking now of God and his existence' (*ibid.*). Similarly, when I intellectually perceive a rose I can say to myself 'yes I see it, and I know that I see it' (*Discours* 153, §LXXIX). Intellectual perceptions, then, also have a unique relationship to introspective awareness. Their contents are fully introspectively accessible insofar as in having them we are poised to report their contents in an 'I' statement.

¹⁶ Ainsi quand on dit que nous faisons, sans y penser, plusieurs mouvemens, qui sont d'ailleurs tres-reglez, & tres-bien proportionnez à la fin que nous pourrions nous estre proposé nous-mêmes ; on veut dire seulement que dans ces rencontres nous n'avons point des connoissances intellectuelles ... mais on ne peut pas contester, ce me semble, qu'il n'y intervienne de ces connoissances sensibles ...

¹⁷ There are several earlier discussions of this distinction and the role that it plays for Descartes. One can consult, for example, Rosenfield (1941: 272), Balz (1950: 131), Ziggelaar (1971: 91), Guichet (2005: 66) and Roux (2013: 10–16). This earlier work provides some insightful commentary on the importance of Pardies's distinction between sensible and intellectual perception. However, none make clear the role the distinction plays in disrupting the Cartesian appeal to introspection.

¹⁸ La connoissance spirituelle, ou si vous voulez intellectuelle, est vne perception intime, par laquelle nous appercevons tellement un objet, que nous nous appercevons de cela même; c'est à dire, vne perception qui emporte essentiellement avec elle vne espece de réflexion qu'elle fait indivisiblement sur elle-même, en sorte que nous connoissons fort bien que nous connoissons.

There is good evidence that Pardies regarded intellectual perception as capturing the Cartesian's conception of thought.¹⁹ When Pardies is expositing the Cartesian point of view, he notes that Cartesians hold that in order to perceive 'our soul makes itself another kind of painting, and in so doing considers it and regards it in herself' (*Discours* 93, §XLV). But the act whereby the soul makes this painting cannot be separated from the act by which the soul considers it: 'and by the very fact that we form this image, we consider it indivisibly and, as they say in the school, *intransitively*' (*Discours* 94, §XLVI). Pardies's uses of the terms 'indivisibly' and 'intransitively' both point to a connection with his notion of intellectual perception. He later uses the term 'indivisibly' to describe how intellectual perceptions reflect on themselves (*Discours* 150, §LXXVIII). And an intransitive action in the language of Scholastic philosophers is an action whereby a subject acts on itself (Mercier 1923: 533). Finally, he also claims that these perceptions which the Cartesian claims are experiences in the soul were called 'intellectual' by St. Augustine (*Discours* 94, §XLVI).

But Pardies thinks that the Cartesian is wrong to hold that the mental is exhausted by this kind of intellectual perception. In addition to intellectual perceptions, there are sensible perceptions. Sensible perceptions are not essentially reflexive and hence with them 'we perceive without perceiving that we perceive' (*Discours* 154, §XXC). Pardies illustrates sensible perception with what I will call the 'unnoticed friend example':

For example, it often happens that, the mind being extremely occupied with the consideration of some object which pleases us very much, we are so absorbed in this consideration, that we are no longer able to think of almost anything else. So that, with our eyes open, we do not even perceive the objects before us and one of our friends can pass by without our noticing.²⁰ (*Discours* 154, §XXC)

Pardies insists that in the unnoticed friend example you *see* your friend despite not noticing them (*sans que nous y avons pris garde*) (*Discours* 155, §XXC). To say you did not see your friend would be to say that you were temporarily blind which is implausible (*Discours* 155–56, §XXC). Pardies concludes that this is an example in which we see despite not perceiving that we see, that is, a case of sensible perception.²¹

From the above, we may conclude the following about Pardies's account of sensible perception:

- i) sensible perceptions are nonreflexive,
- ii) sensible perceptions are comparatively introspectively inaccessible.

Plausibly, the first dimension of sensible perception is intended as an explanation of the second. Our introspective access to our sensible and intellectual perceptions differ because of differences in the structure of these perceptions.

§3 Dilly's Worry and Analyzing Reflexivity

Having provided this initial exegesis of Pardies's distinction between sensible perception and intellectual perception, I now want to argue for a substantive interpretive claim. Namely, I will argue that none of the passages we've examined so far require us to endorse Dilly's interpretation of sensible perception. I'll begin by briefly showing that Dilly's worries about sensible perception presuppose that they are unconscious in the sense that we completely lack introspective awareness of them. Then, I'll argue that the passages we've examined do not commit Pardies to this view. In §4, I argue that in fact we have good reasons to endorse an interpretation on which sensible perceptions are not completely hidden from introspective awareness.

¹⁹ In §3, I argue that in fact Pardies's notion of intellectual perception is importantly different from Descartes's conception of thought.

²⁰ Par exemple, souvent il arrive qu'ayant l'esprit extrêmement occupé à la considération de quelque objet qui nous plaît beaucoup, nous sommes tellement absorbés dans cette considération, qu'il ne nous reste plus moien de penser presque à autre chose. Ainsi ayant les yeux ouverts, nous ne nous appercevons pas seulement des objets qui sont devant-nous, & vne personne de nos amis aura pû passer sans que nous y ayons pris garde.

²¹ There is an apparent contradiction in Pardies's discussion of sensible perception. On the one hand, Pardies introduces sensible perceptions as 'where we perceive, without perceiving that we perceive' (*Discours* 154, §XXC). However, he later goes on to suggest that although we do not perceive our friend (nous ne nous en étions point apperceûs) we nevertheless must have *seen* them (on a veu cette personne) (*Discours* 154–55, §XXC). Pardies thus seems to sometimes characterize visual sensible perceptions as a kind of perception and at other times as a kind of vision that does not amount to perception. In my view, there is no real inconsistency here and the tension results merely from terminological sloppiness. Pardies's description of sensible perception as a kind of mere vision in distinction from perception is a sloppy way of making the point that they do not amount to intellectual perceptions. However, given the numerous other places in which Pardies refers to sensible perceptions as perceptions I will continue to do so as well.

Dilly's first worry about sensible perception is epistemic. To be assured that we have sensible perceptions, our experience would have to provide evidence for them (*De L'Ame* 118, §XIII).²² However, sensible perceptions are by their nature perceptions we have without perceiving them (*ibid.*). Consequently, experience can provide no testimony of our sensible perceptions (*ibid.*). Dilly further argues that explanations that appeal to sensible perceptions have no explanatory edge over explanations that appeal to purely automatic processes (*De L'Ame* 118–20, §XIII). So, Pardies's posit of sensible perceptions also cannot be justified by arguing that they feature in the best explanation of observable behaviors.

Dilly's second worry is that Pardies's notion of sensible perception concedes so much to the Cartesian as to amount to a pyrrhic victory:

[T]his doctrine does not give to beasts anything but sensible thoughts which one has without knowing it, of the sort that it is true to say that when one hits a dog one causes him a sharp pain that he does not feel. And this same animal after three days of not eating will be hungry without being any more aware of it than he is of the hunger of dogs a hundred leagues from him.²³ (*De L'Ame* 121, §XIII)

Part of what is most controversial about the doctrine of animal automatism is the implication that animals lack consciousness. And Dilly's objection in the above appears to be that a view that concedes that animals lack consciousness thereby amounts to a pyrrhic victory over animal automatism. Dilly wryly notes that it is a pleasure to hear Pardies claiming that the behavior of a dog testifies to its love for its master, only for Pardies to then go on to claim that the dog has love without feeling this love (*De L'Ame* 121–22, §XIII).

However, none of the passages examined so far commit Pardies to the view that sensible perceptions are unconscious. Note, firstly, that the claim that we do not perceive our sensible perceptions does not imply that we lack introspective awareness of these perceptions. That conclusion only follows if we assume that introspective awareness requires perceiving our perceptions. But Pardies does not make this claim. Accordingly, sensible perceptions need not be wholly absent from introspective awareness. Pardies's denial of reflexivity to sensible perceptions can instead be interpreted as denying that we have a certain *kind* of introspective awareness of these perceptions. But denying that we have a certain kind of introspective awareness of our sensible perceptions does not imply that we have no introspective awareness of them.²⁴

The temptation to conclude that sensible perceptions must be unconscious rests on confusing two different senses in which thoughts can be reflexive. A thought is *minimally reflexive* insofar as the intrinsic nature of the thought makes us aware of what it represents and introspectively aware of the thought itself. There are good arguments that Cartesian thought must be minimally reflexive. For, as Hobbes pointed out, it seems that Descartes cannot claim that we are conscious of lower order thoughts by way of higher order thoughts (*Third Objections*, AT VII 173/CSM II 122). For, given that Descartes holds that all thoughts are conscious, a higher order theory of consciousness implies an infinite regress of higher order thoughts. So, it seems that consciousness must be a first order property of Cartesian thought.²⁵ Consequently, if sensible perceptions are conscious in a way that is consistent with Cartesian assumptions, they too must be minimally reflexive.

But, *prima facie*, a thought can be minimally reflexive without being representationally reflexive. A thought is *representationally reflexive* insofar as the thought both represents some object external to the

²² Section number indicates chapter number in *De L'Ame*.

²³ En troisième lieu cette doctrine ne donne aux Bêtes que de ces pensées sensibles que l'on a sans le sçavoir, de sorte qu'il est vray de dire qu'en frappant rudement un chien on luy cause une grande douleur qu'il ne ressent pourtant pas, & ce même animal apres avoir demeuré trois jours sans manger a une faim démesurée sans qu'il s'en aperçoive, ni qu'il en sçache rien, non plus que de ce qui se passe dans les chiens qui sont à cent lieuës de luy.

²⁴ It is illuminating to compare the interpretation I am proposing here to Alison Simmons's (2012:15) distinction between two different types of Cartesian consciousness: brute consciousness and reflective consciousness. Simmons claims that brute consciousness is built into every thought in the Cartesian mind. Brute consciousness confers us with a 'certain kind of acquaintance' with our thoughts (2012: 16). Reflective consciousness, in contrast, occurs only when a higher-order thought takes a lower order thought as an object. Simmons suggests that reflective consciousness is required for 'substantive knowledge' of our thoughts and is only acquired through acts of deliberate introspection (2012: 16). Simmons also points out that later Cartesians such as La Forge and Arnauld draw roughly this distinction (2012: 15). There is plenty of evidence, then, that early modern Cartesians were willing to recognize grades or different kinds of introspective awareness. Moreover, these philosophers held that one type of introspective awareness is built into thoughts, and another type is only acquired through thoughts which take other thoughts as objects. I'd like to suggest, then, that we can interpret sensible perceptions as possessing something like brute consciousness and intellectual perceptions as having something like reflective consciousness. Trying to articulate clearly the details of this distinction is a difficult and worthwhile task. But, the difficulty of this task should not dissuade us from taking seriously the view that Pardies accords a kind of inferior introspective awareness to our sensible perceptions.

²⁵ Simmons (2012: 7) makes an argument along these lines.

thought and represents itself. That is, the thought stands in a relationship with itself that is just like the representational relationship between the thought and the external object represented by the thought. One attractive way of explaining how and why Cartesian thought is minimally reflexive is by claiming that Cartesian thought is representationally reflexive. On this view, there is no difference between introspective awareness and other types of awareness besides a difference in the object of awareness. Cartesian thoughts make us aware of themselves in precisely the same way that they make us aware of objects external to us. But this is merely one of many possible ways of explaining how thought can be minimally reflexive. One could also hold that the way in which we are introspectively aware of Cartesian thoughts is wholly unlike how these thoughts make us aware of external objects. Indeed, this is arguably a commitment of any reading on which Descartes is a representationalist rather than a direct realist.²⁶

Pardies's claim that in sensible perception 'we perceive without perceiving that we perceive' only clearly denies that sensible perceptions are representationally reflexive (*Discours* 154, §XXC). But if minimal reflexivity does not imply representational reflexivity, then sensible perceptions could still have the minimal reflexivity necessary for consciousness. And Descartes himself seems to deny that minimal reflexivity implies representational reflexivity. In a discussion of why we have no memories of infancy, Antoine Arnauld suggests to Descartes that Descartes should draw a distinction between the reflexivity that is intrinsic to thought and a different kind of reflexivity that is necessary for intellectual memory (AT V 213). In his reply, Descartes rejects this distinction and instead distinguishes between direct and reflexive thoughts:

[T]he first and simple thoughts of infants are direct and not reflexive. ... But when an adult feels something, and simultaneously perceives that he has not felt it before, I call this second perception reflexive, and attribute it to intellect alone, in spite of its being so linked to sensation that the two occur together and appear to be indistinguishable from each other. (*Letter to Arnauld, 29 July 1648, AT V 221/CSMK III 357*)

Descartes asserts that infant thought is direct not reflexive.²⁷ Moreover, the thoughts which Descartes describes as reflexive and attributes to adults aren't representationally reflexive, they are merely higher order thoughts.²⁸ So in this passage Descartes seems inclined to deny that Cartesian thought is intrinsically reflexive. But Descartes is very clear that Cartesian thought is essentially conscious (*Fourth Replies, AT VII 246/CSM II 171; Second Replies, AT VII 160/CSM II 113*). An attractive way to reconcile these two claims is to say that Cartesian thought is minimally reflexive but not representationally reflexive. So the view that sensible perceptions are conscious but not representationally reflexive is in keeping with Descartes's conception of thought.²⁹

I take the above to show that there is nothing in the texts we've examined that require us to conclude that sensible perceptions must be unconscious even granting Descartes's assumptions about the nature of thought. However, this claim is compatible with the view that nevertheless the best overall interpretation is that sensible perceptions are unconscious. So, I turn now to making the case for my central thesis. Sensible perceptions are best interpreted as conscious yet unaccompanied by attention. This interpretation requires us to recognize a third dimension of Pardies's account of sensible perception:

iii) sensible perceptions are conscious yet unaccompanied by attention.

§4 Sensible Perceptions as Conscious yet Unaccompanied by Attention

Pardies associates attention with intellectual perception and the absence of attention with sensible perception. This is very explicit in his discussion of another example that he uses to motivate the postulation of sensible perceptions. Pardies observes that when our attention is occupied by the meaning of what we are reading, we may fail to notice certain visible features of a text:³⁰

²⁶ I allude here to a distinction in theories of perception. On direct realist views, perceptual states make us immediately aware of objects in our perceptual environment. On representationalist views, we are only immediately aware of perceptual representations and thereby mediately aware of the objects they represent. For a discussion of whether Descartes is a representationalist or direct realist see Hoffman (2002).

²⁷ Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this passage to me.

²⁸ The thoughts which Descartes calls reflexive are not thoughts which represent themselves but rather thoughts which represent other thoughts as having certain properties.

²⁹ Roux (2013) points out the similarity between Descartes's position in the response to Arnauld and Pardies's notion of sensible perception.

³⁰ Interestingly, Descartes makes an analogous claim about spoken language (*The World, AT XI 4/CSM I 81*).

We are attentive to the meaning of the words, but we pay no attention to the letters, which make by their diverse figure and arrangement all of the continuation of discourse. We do not notice if the characters are well formed or not [*Nous ne prenons pas garde si les caractères sont bien formez ou non*]. ... There may be italics mixed with roman font, without our noticing, and sometimes our application will be so great that we will not even make any reflection on the language in which the book is written. It must therefore be recognized that in this encounter we do not perceive the letters and the words of this book with this reflexive perception, by which we ourselves can realize that we perceive. ... But besides, it is manifest that we have seen these letters ... and that without that, we would have never comprehended the meaning, which we have nonetheless very well understood.³¹ (*Discours* 159–61, §XXCII–XXCIII)

In this passage, the fact that we are not paying attention to the letters of a text appears to explain why we merely sensibly perceive them. Pardies's unnoticed friend example also seems to be an example in which we fail to notice something (namely, our friend) due to the occupation of our attention (*Discours* 154, §XXC). And, Pardies also later describes sensible perceptions as taking place 'without that reflection, and without that *attention*, which alone is the character of the spirituality of our soul' (*Discours* 181, §XCV emphasis added).³² It is clear, then, that sensible perceptions are unaccompanied by attention.

The focal textual evidence for reading sensible perceptions as nevertheless conscious is found in Pardies's discussion of potential objections to his interpretation of the unnoticed friend example. Pardies anticipates the following objection: we do not see our friend at all because attention is necessary for vision (*Discours* 156, §XXC). Pardies replies to this objection by asserting that attention is only necessary for perceiving that we see. Pardies justifies this assertion by claiming that we know from introspection that we can see without attention:

For finally, it is evident that during this time [when we failed to notice our friend] we were not blind. We know this, and we say this, as we have experienced it, and sensed very well that we were not blind, that we had eyes, that the light did not vanish, that things were as they are now. It is then manifest that we saw then as we do now, and the only difference is that now we see with attention and that before we saw without it.³³ (*Discours* 156–57, §XXCI)

The words 'experienced' and 'sensed' indicate a role for introspective awareness in this passage. Introspective awareness confirms that during the time in which we failed to notice our friend we were not blind. We had a visual experience that represented 'that the light did not vanish' and that 'things were as they are now.' This appeal to introspection is taken to show that there is a distinction between *seeing with attention* and *seeing without attention*. In the unnoticed friend example, Pardies asserts, we do not fail to see our friend altogether. Rather, we merely see them without attention.

That Pardies is appealing to introspective awareness to vindicate his interpretation of the unnoticed friend example is made even clearer in the continuation of the passage:

But, moreover, it is obvious that *to see* essentially carries with it some sort of knowledge and vital perception. For, to see is not to receive rays of light, nor to have an image of the object represented in the back of the eye. To see means something more than this, for all these optical representations

³¹ Nous sommes attentifs au sens des paroles, & nous n'avons nulle attention à considérer les lettres, qui font par leur diverse figure, & par leur arrangement toute la suite du discours. Nous ne prenons pas garde si les caractères sont bien formez ou non. ... Il pourra y avoir de l'Italique mêlé avec le Romain, sans que nous nous en appercevions; & quelquefois même notre application sera si grande, que nous ne ferons pas seulement réflexion sur la langue en laquelle le livre est écrit. Il faut donc reconnoître que dans cette rencontre nous n'appercevons point les lettres & les mots de ce livre avec cette perception réflexive, par laquelle nous puissons nous rendre compte à nous-mêmes de ce que nous apercevons. ... Mais d'ailleurs, il est manifeste que nous avons veü toutes ces lettres ... & sans cela, nous n'en aurions jamais pû pénétrer le sens, que nous avons néanmoins fort bien compris.

³² Similarly, when Pardies is expositing the Cartesian point of view, he describes the soul as being 'intimately present and *attentive*' (my emphasis) at the part of the brain called the common sense (*Discours* 91–92, §XLIV–XLV). This is significant because, as I pointed out in §2, there is good evidence that Pardies takes his conception of intellectual perception to capture the Cartesian conception of thought.

³³ Car enfin, il est évident que pendant tout ce temps-là nous n'étions pas aveugles. Nous sçavons cela, & nous le disons, comme l'aïant ainsi expérimenté, & sentant fort bien qu'en effet nous n'étions pas aveugles, que nous avions des yeux, que la lumière ne nous a point disparu, que les choses étoient comme elles sont maintenant. Il est donc manifeste que nous voyions pour lors aussi bien que nous voions à cette heure; & toute la différence qu'il y aura, c'est que maintenant nous voions avec cette attention, & que tantost nous voyions sans elle.

can be made in an artificial eye. And when we consult ourselves, we are convinced by our own experience, that in this example we see in a sense that requires more than this.³⁴ (*Discours* 158, §XXCI emphasis original)

When 'we consult ourselves', we are 'convinced by our own experience' that we saw our friend in a sense that requires more than optical representations in an artificial eye.

I take Pardies to claim that we are directly introspectively aware of seeing without attention in the unnoticed friend example. Introspection thus confirms that we have conscious perceptions outside the focus of our attention. The suggestion that introspection can support the claim that we have conscious perceptions outside of the focus of our attention is intuitive and commonsensical although the claim is contestable.³⁵ This can be made clear by reflection on an example. For instance, right now I am focusing my attention on a computer screen. But, intuitively, I am conscious of more than my computer screen. It seems that I am introspectively aware of perceptions of other features of the room such as the wall behind this computer screen. These perceptions which I am introspectively aware of, but which lie outside the focus of my attention, are what Pardies calls sensible perceptions.

On this reading, Pardies's warrant for the postulation of sensible perceptions comes from our direct introspective awareness of them. Accordingly, sensible perceptions are conscious in the sense that we have introspective awareness of them. However, Pardies claims that in the unnoticed friend example we sensibly perceive *our friend*. This appears to attribute to our sensible perception a representational content, namely, our friend. And this claim about the content of our sensible perception is something that we are unable to determine introspectively. Pardies's view of sensible perceptions thus seems to be that although they are conscious they can have at least partially unconscious contents. A sensible perception can represent a portion of our visual field as being lit, as being roughly as we see it to be now, and as containing our friend passing through. Our introspective awareness of this perception, however, may reveal that we perceived things were lit and as roughly as they are now, without revealing that we perceived our friend passing through.

Pardies's claim that sensible perceptions are conscious but can have partially unconscious contents may seem paradoxical. However, the view becomes more intelligible when we recognize that it can be supported with something like the following reasoning about Pardies's unnoticed friend example.

- P1. Introspection confirms that we had a perception of an unattended portion of our visual field.
- P2. Our friend passed through this portion of our visual field.
- P3. If one perceives the area that a friend passes through, then one's friend is included in the content of this perception.
- C. Therefore, our friend was included in the content of our perception.

P2 is true by stipulation. P1 enjoys some intuitive plausibility. The weakest premise is P3. Prima facie, a perception could represent certain features of an area while omitting to represent other features such as a friend passing through. On the other hand, it's not hard to appreciate the pull of P3. When we perceive an area we typically also perceive the moving macroscopic objects in that area. What is important to note for our purposes is that whatever its merits this argument reconstruction assumes that we have an introspective awareness of sensible perceptions. Just so, if the above reconstruction is accurate, Pardies is committed to the view that sensible perceptions are conscious albeit they can have partially unconscious contents.

Pardies's use of introspective language constitutes the textual basis for claiming that sensible perceptions are conscious. For example, Pardies claims that 'when we consult ourselves, we are convinced by our own experience' that our vision in the unnoticed friend example amounts to 'some sort of knowledge and vital perception' rather than mere optical stimulation (*Discours* 158, §XXCI). However, while this language strongly suggests a role for introspection, it does not explicitly claim that introspection directly reveals the presence of sensible perception. Consequently, it is possible to give alternative interpretations of the role of introspection on which introspection *indirectly* supports the postulation of sensible perceptions. On these

³⁴ Mais d'ailleurs, il est évident aussi que *voir*, emporte essentiellement quelque sorte de connoissance & de perception vitale. Car enfin, voir n'est pas recevoir des rayons de lumière, ni avoir vne image de l'objet représentée au fond de l'œil; voir, dit quelque chose de plus, puisque toutes ces représentations optiques pourroient se faire dans vn œil artificiel. Et à nous consulter nous-mêmes, nous sommes convaincus par nôtre propre experience, que dans cette rencontre nous voyions d'vne manière qui dit quelque chose de plus.

³⁵ See Watzl (2011) for an overview of questions about the relationship between consciousness and attention.

indirect interpretations, introspection makes us aware of features of our conscious experience that are not identical with sensible perceptions but which give us reason to believe that we have sensible perceptions.

I reject these indirect interpretations of the role of introspection in Pardies's argument on grounds of charity. I assume that we have a pro tanto reason to reject interpretations that leave an author open to contextually plausible objections, that is, objections that plausibly would have appealed to contemporaries of the author. Thus, among a pool of equally textually plausible interpretations of an argument, we should prefer the interpretation on which the argument is least susceptible to contextually plausible objections. I assume this principle of charity because authors typically try to put forward arguments which are not susceptible to contextually plausible objections. Thus, if an interpretation flouts this principle of charity, we have a pro tanto reason to conclude that it does not accurately represent the author's intended argument. And, as I will turn to arguing now, I hold that indirect interpretations of the role of introspection in Pardies's argument for sensible perception flout this principle of charity. In fact, indirect interpretations make Pardies's defense of sensible perception so weak that we have good reason to conclude that these interpretations do not accurately represent Pardies's intended argument.

§4.1 Indirect Interpretations of the Role of Introspection

Pardies claims that in the unnoticed friend example we 'experienced' and 'sensed' that we were not blind (*Discours* 156–57, §XXCI). This suggests that we can reconstruct Pardies's argument for sensible perception in the following way:

- P1'. Introspection confirms that we did not experience total visual blindness during the time that we failed to notice our friend.
- P2'. Our friend passed through our visual field.
- P3'. If one does not experience total visual blindness, and one's friend passes through one's visual field, it is likely that one perceives one's friend.
- C'. Therefore, it is likely that we had a perception of our friend.

This reading avoids committing Pardies to the claim that we are directly introspectively aware of our sensible perception of our friend. Rather, we are only introspectively aware of not experiencing total visual blindness. A problem with this reading is that P3' begs the question against a charitable interpretation of the objection that Pardies has raised for himself. It is after all pretty obvious that the occupation of our attention does not produce total visual blindness. The objection that Pardies has raised for himself is most charitably understood as claiming that the occupation of our attention can give rise to *blind spots* in our visual field. And if we assume that it is plausible that we had a blind spot in the unnoticed friend example, then we should reject P3' which begs the question against this hypothesis.

This suggests that we should recast the above reconstruction as follows:

- P1". We are not introspectively aware of having any blind spots during the time that we failed to notice our friend.
- P2". Our friend passed through our visual field during this time.
- P3". If we are not introspectively aware of having any blind spots, and our friend passed through our visual field, then it is likely that we had a perception of our friend.
- C". Therefore, it is likely that we had a perception of our friend.

Introspection is relevant on this reading not because it directly reveals the existence of sensible perceptions, but rather only insofar as it fails to reveal the presence of any blind spots. However, this interpretation faces a similar problem to the last. This interpretation seems to assume that blind spots would manifest certain introspectable symptoms: a blind spot would be something like an introspectable black spot obscuring a portion of our visual field. Given that we do not introspectively notice such black spots in our visual field, this interpretation assumes, it is unlikely that we had any during the time that our friend passed by. But this is again a very uncharitable interpretation of the blind spot hypothesis. We could be blind to an area by simply failing to have a perception of the area. And the absence of a perception need not manifest any positive introspectable symptoms. We can be blind to our blind spots.

To sum up, when interpreting the notion of sensible perception, it is important to keep in mind that Pardies raises the blind spot hypothesis as a potential objection to his view. I've just argued that the most promising indirect interpretations of the role of introspection in Pardies's argument either depict Pardies as

straw-manning or begging the question against the blind spot objection. However, the direct interpretation of the role of introspection avoids this problem. For on this interpretation, Pardies rules out the hypothesis that he had a blind spot by claiming that he was introspectively aware of sensibly perceiving the area which it is alleged he was blind to. Consequently, the direct interpretation of Pardies's argument enables him to avoid a contextually plausible objection to this argument. So, we are justified in favoring the direct interpretation over indirect interpretations.

Another important reason why charity favors this interpretation is that it allows Pardies to avoid the criticisms that Dilly raises. I argue for this conclusion in §5.

§5 Sensible Perception and the Appeal to Introspection

I've just argued that sensible perceptions are conscious yet unaccompanied by attention. Prima facie, this interpretation can help to ameliorate Dilly's worries. For, if sensible perceptions are conscious, it is less tempting to claim that Pardies's conclusions amounts to a pyrrhic victory. Granted, Pardies's denial of attention to animals might leave him with an objectionably impoverished conception of animal minds. However, this does not imply that there is no significant difference between Pardies's view and Cartesian animal automatism. Moreover, my interpretation appears to make Dilly's epistemic worries more tractable. If we have a direct introspective awareness of sensible perceptions, then we have an introspective basis for their postulation. We postulate sensible perceptions in our theory of the mind because introspection informs us that such perceptions exist.

However, what I've argued so far does not fully address Dilly's epistemic worries. For I've argued that a part of Pardies's view is that sensible perceptions include unconscious contents such as our unnoticed friend. And the justification for claiming that our sensible perceptions include unconscious contents cannot be introspective. Rather, the argument for including unconscious contents in our sensible perceptions is an inference to the best explanation of puzzling cases like the unnoticed friend and reading examples. In these cases, the relationship between our introspective awareness of our perceptions and what we know about our perceptual environment calls out for explanation. In ordinary cases, when we are introspectively aware of perceiving an area of our visual field we would also be introspectively aware of perceiving any friend passing through that area. But in Pardies's cases of sensible perception, these usual patterns break down. For example, we can be introspectively aware of perceiving an area of our visual field, and yet fail to be introspectively aware of perceiving our friend passing through this area. The claim that sensible perceptions can include unconscious contents offers one explanation of such cases. However, there are alternative explanations of these cases which do not appeal to unconscious contents. For example, one might claim that one can perceive certain features of an area while simply omitting to represent other features, such as a friend passing through. Consequently, Pardies's justification for claiming that sensible perceptions can have unconscious contents looks like a weak joint in his system.

This is especially troubling given a natural interpretation of how Pardies's theory of sensible perception manages to undermine the Cartesian appeal to introspection. One might think that sensible perceptions undermine the Cartesian appeal to introspection *because* they have partially unconscious contents. Consequently, when we introspect we can fail to recognize that one of our thoughts has contents that explain a behavior. However, if Pardies's objection hinges on the claim that sensible perceptions include unconscious contents then Dilly's epistemic worries continue to pose a problem for Pardies. For it's unclear what compelling reasons Pardies has for claiming that the postulation of unconscious contents represents the best possible explanation of his puzzle cases.

In responding to this worry, it is helpful to keep in mind that Pardies's account of sensible perception is complex and multi-layered. Pardies's account of sensible perception includes both the claim that sensible perceptions include partially unconscious contents and the claim that sensible perceptions are conscious yet unaccompanied by attention. Both of these features of sensible perception raise problems for the Cartesian introspective-analogical argument. I thus find it helpful to distinguish between Pardies's thick and thin objections to the Cartesian appeal to introspection. Pardies's thick objection rests on the claim that sensible perceptions have partially unconscious contents. Pardies's thin objection rests on the claim that sensible perceptions are conscious yet unaccompanied by attention.

According to the thick objection, the error in the Cartesian appeal to introspection is that the Cartesian cannot rule out that our thoughts contain unconscious contents that could explain the behaviors in their examples. The thick objection presupposes the success of Pardies's abductive argument for including unconscious contents in our sensible perceptions. Because the thick objection presupposes this argument it remains open to Dilly's worry that the Cartesian can propose alternative hypotheses that equally account for cases like the unnoticed friend and the reading example.

However, in the event that Pardies's interlocutor proposes such alternative hypotheses, he can still retreat to his thin objection. According to the thin objection, the error in the Cartesian appeal to introspection is that the Cartesian illicitly assumes that the kind of thoughts which cause our behaviors are the kind we have when we are attentive and deliberative. Pardies has argued that not all our thoughts are attentive and deliberative: sensible perceptions are conscious thoughts that lie outside the scope of our attention. And Pardies claims that 'we cannot argue, it seems to me, that there is no sensible perception' in the Cartesian's examples (*Discours* 168, §XXCVI). By this, I take Pardies to be claiming that introspection confirms that in the Cartesian's examples we do experience sensible perceptions which could be responsible for the behaviors which the Cartesian claims are automatic. Such thoughts are not attentive and deliberative. And we cannot identify the match between their contents and subsequent behavior that we find between attentive deliberations and the behaviors they cause. Nevertheless, it is hasty to conclude that these sensible perceptions do not play a role in causing the behaviors the Cartesian regards as automatic.³⁶

Pardies's thin objection may be illuminated by applying it to the Cartesian's examples. Consider what it is like to drive a route that one is very used to driving—an example of the kind of behavior which can be performed merely out of habit and which the Cartesians allege can be performed automatically. In such a case, I may focus my attention on a philosophical conversation I am having with a passenger to the point that I am surprised by what I see on the road once I redirect my attention to it. Some philosophers want to say that in this kind of case one drives without any conscious experience of the road (Carruthers 1989). Pardies, however, belongs in the camp of those philosophers who believe that in this kind of example we are conscious of the road without paying attention to the road (Dretske 1993). In Pardies's view, once we recognize that we have a conscious experience of the road we cannot rule out the conclusion that our driving behavior depends on this conscious experience.

Similar remarks apply to the cases of reflex responses and passionate behaviors. The Cartesians claim that introspection shows that such behaviors can be produced without thought. But Pardies can again object that the Cartesians have overestimated what introspection shows because they have presupposed an inflated understanding of what the thoughts that cause our behaviors must be like. Granted, introspection confirms that reflex responses can be produced without our having to attend to a stimulus, deliberate about possible responses, and then form a volition to respond in a particular way. However, it does not follow from this introspective observation that we have no thoughts which could feature in the causal explanation of our reflex response. Our reflexes are accompanied by conscious states and we cannot rule out that these states play a role in explaining our reflex response.

Similar points with even more plausibility can be made in the case of passionate behaviors. Such behaviors may be triggered swiftly and without an act of will such as when I jump to my feet to flee upon hearing a loud sound. But the fact that I do not experience myself attentively deliberating and choosing a course of action in such cases does not rule out that my fearful behavior has a dependence on the thoughts which accompany this experience. In such an experience I am clearly having conscious perceptions of my environment. And, Pardies would urge, we cannot rule out that these conscious perceptions play a role in explaining our behavior.

Pardies's thin objection avoids Dilly's epistemic worries. This objection also fits well with passages in which Pardies seems to emphasize that what is important about the contrast between intellectual and sensible perception is that the former are attentive and deliberative. For example, Pardies writes that he can agree with Aristotle that there is a sense in which only humans have the faculty of thought (*Discours* 183, §XCVII). However, this is true only if we take 'thought' to refer to deliberation and 'that serious attention and reflection that we make on some object' (*ibid.*). That animals lack thought in this sense in no way blocks them from having true sentiments and sensible perceptions (*ibid.*). Prima facie, the contrast that Pardies draws here between human and animal cognition has nothing to do with animals having only thoughts with partially unconscious thoughts. Rather, the contrast between human and animal cognition is that only humans are attentive and deliberative. This fits perfectly with the thin objection. For, according to that objection, the key feature of sensible perceptions that raises a problem for the Cartesian appeal to introspection is that they are conscious yet unaccompanied by attention.

In this section of the paper I've raised a skeptical worry about the purported charitable benefits of my interpretation of sensible perception. I claim that my interpretation has the virtue of enabling Pardies to

³⁶ Indeed, Pardies develops a partial theory of how sensible perceptions combine with 'acts of sensible appetite' in order to produce behaviors. I do not have the space to explore this theory here, but interested readers can consult (*Discours* 172–73, §XC) for Pardies's description of acts of sensible appetite.

avoid criticisms which Dilly raised for his doctrine of sensible perception.³⁷ But if the reason that sensible perceptions pose a problem for the Cartesian is because they contain unconscious contents, then it seems that Dilly's epistemic worries remain unanswered. This is because even if Pardies's postulation of sensible perceptions can be justified by introspection, the claim that they include unconscious contents cannot. I've suggested in response to this worry that we can distinguish between Pardies's thick and thin objections to the Cartesian appeal to introspection. Pardies's thick objection is susceptible to Dilly's worries, but his thin objection is not.

§6 Conclusion: Cartesian Consciousness, Attention, and Introspection

In this paper, I've offered an interpretation of Pardies's objection to the Cartesians. According to this interpretation, the Cartesians have overstated what introspection shows in their introspective-analogical argument. Introspection does indeed confirm that in the Cartesian's examples we act without attention and deliberation. But, introspection does not show that we act without sensible perceptions, which I've argued we should understand as conscious yet unaccompanied by attention.

My interpretation emphasizes that sensible perceptions are conscious yet unaccompanied by attention. But I've also noted that Pardies takes sensible perceptions to be nonreflexive and relatively introspectively inaccessible. One might wonder how these claims are supposed to fit together in a unified way. This is a topic worth exploring further but which I can only treat in a cursory way in this paper. My view in a nutshell is that Pardies hypothesizes that attention is constituted by reflexive perception and that this reflexive perception facilitates greater introspective access to our thoughts. This theory of attention is intended to explain the contrast between attentively noticing a friend passing by versus failing to notice them because we were not paying attention. When we are not paying attention to an area of our visual field we do not reflexively perceive this area. We thereby fail to be fully introspectively aware of the content of our perception of this area. If we assume an indirect theory of perception, according to which our awareness of objects is mediated by our introspective awareness of our thoughts, it follows that our nonreflexive perceptions will provide us with a comparatively impoverished awareness of the objects around us. Consequently, when we merely nonreflexively perceive an area we can fail to notice features or events which we would otherwise notice.

One might expect, given the literature on Descartes's argument for animal automatism, that the early modern debate over animal automatism would turn on issues about the relationship between language and mind.³⁸ A lesson from the present study is that an important strand in the early modern debate over animal automatism instead concerned the interpretation and explanation of behaviors which bear an ambiguous relationship to conscious experience. Certain behaviors are preceded by a process of conscious deliberation in which we weigh various courses of action and then make a decision about how to proceed. Such behaviors are naturally interpreted as depending on our conscious deliberations. Other behaviors such as reflexes, habitual behaviors, and passionate behaviors bear a more puzzling relationship to conscious experience. These behaviors are at least sometimes not preceded by a process of deliberation but are nevertheless arguably accompanied by conscious experience. Cartesians urged that the absence of deliberation and volition counted in favor of regarding these behaviors as automatic. Critics such as Pardies suggested that this inference was too swift and that a dependence on conscious experience could not be ruled out. In this way, Pardies attempted to expand the scope and the role of the conscious mind in explaining human and animal behavior.

³⁷ One might wonder why we should prefer an interpretation on which Pardies avoids contextually plausible objections rather than one on which Dilly's criticisms avoid contextually plausible objections. For my view implies that Dilly has misunderstood Pardies which leaves Dilly open to a contextually plausible objection. On this point, we should note that Dilly raises the blind spot hypothesis as an objection to Pardies's interpretation of the example of the unnoticed friend. Dilly asserts that the experience of a man engaged in a profound meditation who does not perceive what happens around him does not support the postulation of sensible perceptions (*De L'Ame* 127, §XIII). In such a case 'the great application of the soul holds the seat of the common sense towards the same place in the brain, so that the impressions that come to that part from the external senses are unable on that occasion to make any thoughts in the soul of external objects' (*De L'Ame* 128, §XIII). In other words, we have a blind spot due to the occupation of our attention. Descartes gives roughly the same account of how the fixation of our attention can interfere with sensory perception in the *Treatise on Man* (AT XI 182), for discussion see (Hatfield and Dubouclez 2017). Importantly, however, Dilly does not mention at all that Pardies anticipates and responds to this objection. So, we have good evidence that Dilly failed to fully engage with Pardies on this point. We know that Dilly asserts without argument a claim that Pardies argues against, namely, that we had a blind spot in the unnoticed friend example. Given these circumstances, it seems reasonable to favor the view that it is Dilly and not Pardies who is susceptible to contextually plausible objections.

³⁸ See for example Gunderson (1964) and Chomsky (2009).

One final lesson that we can draw from the present study is that the debate over animal automatism engaged important questions about the nature and structure of consciousness. Descartes is famous for having given the impression that he endorsed the transparency of the mental according to which our introspective access to our thoughts is perfect.³⁹ Pardies's objections make clear the extent to which Cartesian animal automatism draws strength from a commitment to the transparency of the mental. The introspective-analogical argument relies on introspective judgments about the contents of our thoughts. Questioning the transparency of the mental can consequently have the effect of decreasing our confidence in the Cartesians' introspective judgments in their examples of purportedly automatic behaviors. Pardies recognizes this and appeals to examples which he takes to motivate distinguishing between different kinds or degrees of introspective awareness. When our conscious thoughts are accompanied by attention, our introspective access to them is superlative. When our conscious thoughts are unaccompanied by attention, our introspective access to our thoughts is impoverished. I have suggested that this dimension of Pardies's objection is ultimately the weakest because we can make sense of his unnoticed friend and reading examples without distinguishing between different degrees of introspective awareness. However, Pardies is right to draw our attention to the importance of these questions about consciousness and its relationship to introspective awareness for evaluating Cartesian animal automatism.

Acknowledgements

This paper has greatly benefitted from thoughtful feedback provided to earlier drafts by Lisa Downing, Julia Jorati, Richard Samuels, Declan Smithies, and Patrick J. Connolly. The paper also benefited from helpful discussion at the 2019 meeting of the Descartes Society session at the Eastern APA, as well as a 2019 colloquium at the Pacific APA. Finally, I would also like to thank the two anonymous referees for the *Journal of Modern Philosophy* who provided very helpful feedback and suggestions.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

References

- Baker, Gordon, and Katherine Morris. 1996. *Descartes' Dualism*. London: Routledge.
- Bayle, Pierre. 1684. *Nouvelles de La République Des Lettres, Mois de Mars*. Amsterdam: Henry Desbordes, dans le Kalver-Straat, près le Dam.
- Boas, George. 1933. *The Happy Beast in French Thought of the Seventeenth Century*. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press.
- Carruthers, Peter. 1989. "Brute Experience." *The Journal of Philosophy* 86 (5): 258–69. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2027110>
- Chomsky, Noam. 2009. *Cartesian Linguistics: A Chapter in the History of Rationalist Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511803116>
- Cottingham, John. 1978. "A Brute to the Brutes?": Descartes' Treatment of Animals." *Philosophy* 53 (206): 551–59. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819100026371>
- Cottingham, John, Dugald Murdoch, Robert Stoothoff, and Anthony Kenny. 1991. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes: Volume 3, the Correspondence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cottingham, John, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch, and Anthony Kenny. 1985. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. Vols. 1–2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Daniel, Gabriel. 1693. *Suite Du Voyage Du Monde de Descartes, Ou Nouvelles Difficultez Proposies a l'auteur Du Voyage Du Monde de Descartes Avec La Rifutation de Deux Difenses Du Systeme General Du Monde de Descartes*. Amsterdam: Pierre Mortier libraire.
- Descartes, René. 1677. *L'homme de René Descartes et La Formation Du Foetus, Avec Des Remarques de Louis de La Forge, a Quoy l'on a Ajouté Le Monde Ou Traité de La Lumière Du Mesme Auteurs*. Edited by Claude Clerselier. Paris: Charles Angot.
- Dilly, Antoine. 1676. *De l'Ame Des Bêtes, ou après avoir démontré la spiritualité de l'ame de l'homme, l'on explique par la seule machine, les actions les plus surprenantes des animaux*. Lyon: Anisson et Posuel.

³⁹ For some of the passages which have left this impression see *Fourth Replies*, AT VII 246/CSM II 171; *Second Replies* AT VII 160/CSM II 113; *Meditation 2* AT VII 29/CSM II 19. However recent important work has questioned whether Descartes is committed to a strong doctrine of the transparency of the mental. See for example Rozemond (2006) and Simmons (2012).

- Dretske, Fred. 1993. "Conscious Experience." *Mind* 102 (406): 263–83. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/102.406.263>
- Gaukroger, Stephen. 2000. "The Resources of a Mechanist Physiology and the Problem of Goal-Directed Processes." In *Descartes' Natural Philosophy*, edited by S. Gaukroger, J. Schuster, and J. Sutton, 395–412. New York: Routledge.
- Guichet, J. L. 2005. "Les ambiguïtés de la querelle de l'âme des bêtes dans la seconde moitié du XVIIesiècle: l'exemple du Discours de la connaissance des bêtes d'I.-G. Pardies (1672)." In *Animal et animalité dans la philosophie de la Renaissance et de l'Âge classique*, edited by Thierry Gontier, 59–75. Leuven: Peeters Leuven.
- Gunderson, Keith. 1964. "Descartes, La Mettrie, Language, and Machines." *Philosophy* 39 (149): 193–222. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819100055595>
- Hatfield, Gary. 2007. "The Passions of the Soul and Descartes's Machine Psychology." *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A* 38 (1): 1–35. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.shpsa.2006.12.015>
- Hatfield, Gary. 2008. "Animals." In *A Companion to Descartes*, edited by Janet Broughton and John Carriero, 404–25. Malden, MA: Blackwell. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470696439.ch24>
- Hatfield, Gary. 2012. "Mechanizing the Sensitive Soul." In *Matter and Form in Early Modern Science and Philosophy*, edited by Gideon Manning, 151–86. Leiden: Brill. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004221147_007
- Hatfield, Gary, and Olivier Dubouclez. 2017. "L'attention chez Descartes: aspect mental et aspect physiologique." *Les Études Philosophiques* 1 (171): 7–26. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3917/leph.171.0007>
- Hoffman, Paul. 2002. "Direct Realism, Intentionality, and the Objective Being of Ideas." *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 83 (2): 163–79. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0114.00141>
- Mercier, Désiré-Joseph. 1923. *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*. Vol. 1. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner.
- Morris, Katherine. 2000. "Bêtes-Machines." In *Descartes' Natural Philosophy*, edited by S. Gaukroger, J. Schuster, and J. Sutton, 413–31. New York: Routledge.
- Nicéron, Jean-Pierre. 1729. *Mémoires Pour Servir à l'histoire Des Hommes Illustres Dans La République Des Lettres. Avec Un Catalogue Raisonné de Leurs Ouvrages*. Vol. 1. Paris: Briasson.
- Pardies, Ignace-Gaston. 1672. *Discours de La Connaissance Des Bêtes*. Paris: S. Mabre-Cramoisy.
- Prinz, Jesse. 2018. "Attention, Working Memory, and Animal Consciousness." In *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Animal Minds*, edited by Kristin Andrews and Jacob Beck, 185–95. New York: Routledge. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315742250-18>
- Radner, Daisie M., and Michael Radner. 1996. *Animal Consciousness*. Buffalo: Prometheus Books.
- Rosenfield, Leonora Cohen. 1941. *From Beast-Machine to Man-Machine: Animal Soul in French Letters from Descartes to La Mettrie*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Roux, Sophie. 2013. "Pour une conception polémique du cartésianisme. Ignace-Gaston Pardies et Antoine Dilly dans la querelle de l'âme des bêtes." In *Qu'est-ce qu'être cartésien?*, edited by Delphine Kolesnik-Antoine, 315–37. Paris: ENS Editions. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.enseditions.8860>
- Rozemond, Marleen. 2006. "The Nature of the Mind." In *The Blackwell Guide to Descartes' Meditations*, edited by Stephen Gaukroger, 48–66. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470776476.ch4>
- Sencerz, Stefan. 1990. "Descartes on Sensations and 'Animal' Minds." *Philosophical Papers* 19 (2): 119–41. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/05568649009506333>
- Simmons, Alison. 2012. "Cartesian Consciousness Reconsidered." *Philosophers' Imprint* 12 (2): 1–21. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2011.03.012>
- Sutton, John. 2000. "The Body and the Brain." In *Descartes' Natural Philosophy*, edited by S. Gaukroger, J. Schuster, and J. Sutton, 697–722. New York: Routledge.
- Thomas, Janice. 2006. "Does Descartes Deny Consciousness to Animals?" *Ratio* 19 (3): 336–63. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9329.2006.00331.x>
- Thomas, Keith. 1996. *Man and the Natural World*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Watzl, Sebastian. 2011. "The Nature of Attention." *Philosophy Compass* 6 (11): 842–53. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-9991.2011.00433.x>
- Wee, Cecilia. 2005. "Animal Sentience and Descartes's Dualism: Exploring the Implications of Baker and Morris's Views." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 13 (4): 611–26. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09608780500293018>
- Ziggelaar, August. 1971. *Le physicien Ignace Gaston Pardies S.J. (1636–1673)*. Odense: Odense University Press.

How to cite this article: Thomas, Evan 2020 Animals and Cartesian Consciousness: Pardies vs. the Cartesians. *Journal of Modern Philosophy*, 2(1): 11, pp. 1–17. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32881/jomp.60>

Submitted: 31 July 2019

Accepted: 27 January 2020

Published: 22 September 2020

Copyright: © 2020 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.



Journal of Modern Philosophy is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Virginia University Press.

