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Greetings from Queen Christina of Sweden, To Louis XIV, The King of France,

This argument between Descartes and Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia is a mere matter of philosophical banter. Descartes believes in substance dualism, while Princess Elisabeth does not. According to Descartes, there are two different kinds of substances in the world, which result in his belief that a person is composed of two different substances. He calls these substances material substances and mental substances. I understand that substance dualism can be a difficult concept to understand, so let me explain to you first what a substance in this context is before I explain Descartes' view. A substance is simply something that has qualities, but the qualities do not have the substance. For example, the grass is green. Grass has the quality of being green, however, green does not have the quality of being grass. This is because many things can be green, but, nothing can be grass, except for grass. Now that I have defined substance, we will move on to material and mental substances.

Grass is considered a material substance, which is something that contains qualities, such as a height, weight, and depth. As another example, we will use a chair in your chambers. This substance has a height, weight, and depth, while it also has qualities of being made of wood and being the color brown. Like the color green, the color brown cannot be considered a substance because many things can be brown, but nothing can be the exact chair in your chambers that we are discussing. Now, like most, you would think that most things possess qualities, such as a horse, a door, or a coat. However, Descartes believes that mental substances exist. These are substances that exist in one's mind and have no weight to them, such as a thought or an emotion.

One would not say that my thought on the weather today is two feet tall. With this being said, Descartes' main belief is a person consists of two substances, mental and material. The result of this belief is the belief that a person has the duality of mind and body, therefore the mind, a mental substance, and the body, a material substance, work with one another to make a person, for example, feel tired, resulting in them getting into their bed and sleeping.

Descartes has many arguments to support his belief. His strongest argument is one in which he claims his mind is transparent to him in the sense that there is nothing that exists in his mind that he does not know is there. He then says his body is not transparent to him in this same respect, meaning he could currently have a cancer growing in his liver, but he does not know this because his body is not transparent to him in the way his mind is, therefore his mind and body are two separate substances that are not identical to one another. While his arguments are convincing, many argue that causation necessitates contact. This means that in order for me to knock over a cup, I have to come into contact with the cup in order to cause it to fall over. Using this in relation to Descartes' argument, this means that the mind cannot cause the body to do anything because the mind, according to Descartes, is a mental substance that has no physical properties, therefore has no surface for anything to come into contact with. In defense, Descartes uses the pineal gland to make sense of his argument, claiming that this material substance inside the body is where the mental interacts, causing the physical to have a result.

This argument is the one Princess Elisabeth challenges Descartes on. She claims that causation needs the transfer of momentum by an object that possesses mass and velocity. Further, the mind has neither a mass nor velocity, and therefore, a mind cannot cause the body to do anything. Returning to Descartes' defense of the pineal gland, Princess Elisabeth's claim

raises problems with Descartes' defense, mainly questioning how the mind, a mental substance with no velocity or mass, can interact with the pineal gland, a physical substance.

As you can see, this is a philosophical argument regarding the body and mind and how they interact. There is no harm in this conversation and I believe one that does not need a political interference. I hope this letter clarifies both Descartes' and Princess Elisabeth's arguments and puts your concerns at rest.

Highest Regards,

Queen Christina of Sweden