1. Introduction

Descartes’s notorious conclusion that mind and body can exist independently of one another seems to imply that psychology, which studies the mind, and physics, which studies the body, must be similarly independent.\(^1\) In the *Principia philosophiae*, for example, Descartes describes his efforts in physics to ‘accept, or require’ only the principles ‘of geometry and pure mathematics; these principles explain all natural phenomena, and enable us to provide quite certain demonstrations.’\(^2\) Psychology, by contrast, only exploits the techniques of practiced introspection to discover innate ideas,
as taught in the *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia*. In Meditation Two, in particular, we each learn ‘I am ... a thing that thinks; that is, I am a mind, or intelligence, or intellect, or reason—words whose meaning I have been ignorant of’ precisely because practiced introspection had yet to be exploited by psychologists. For Descartes, it looks as though psychology and physics are as independent as mind is from body.

The full implications of Descartes’s dualism between mind and body can easily be seen if we accept two less controversial claims: (1) the natural world is identical with the physical world, as defined by the subject matter of physics or natural science, and (2) psychology—the study of the mind—qualifies as a science. Adding (1) and (2) to Descartes’s dualism, we can infer that (3) psychology is not a natural science but an un-natural science. It also follows that (4) the mind is not part of the natural world and therefore must be un-natural.

There can be little doubt that (3) and (4) are rejected by psychologists and the majority of philosophers today, even if (1)–(4) are thought to accurately convey Descartes’s position. In this paper I will argue that Descartes does not unambiguously embrace (4). Rather, he blocks the chain of inferences from (1) to (4) by hesitating about psychology’s independence from physics. Interestingly, Descartes does this in a way that parallels a common Peripatetic hesitance on display in the commentary tradition on Aristotle’s *De anima*. More interestingly still, Descartes’s hesitance does not appear to trouble the majority of first generation Cartesians who, contrary to the current interpretive trend, allow physicists or natural scientists to study the mind. The exception, and the Cartesian who explicitly takes psychology out of the hands of the physicist and gives it to the metaphysician, is Louis de la Forge (1632–1666). This is the major claim defended in this paper: that it was De la Forge, and not Descartes, who first made the mind un-natural.

To substantiate these claims, I begin in the next section by showing that the mind was considered part of the natural world by Aristotle and a number of Renaissance *De anima* commentators. In sections three and four, I turn

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3 AT VII, 27; CSM 2, 18. Besides the idea of the mind, the other prominent innate ideas delivered by Descartes’s practiced introspection in the *Meditationes* are the ideas of God in Meditation Three and geometrical extension in Meditation Five. Significantly, one of the themes in the *Meditationes* is that the senses and sensory ideas are the obstacles to discovering innate ideas and the *Meditationes* is tasked with equipping us to distance ourselves from the senses in the pursuit of knowledge (see, e.g., AT VII, 162). By contrast, physics cannot proceed without relying on the senses (see, e.g., AT VI, 64–65).

4 AT III, 233, and again on 234.