



The Matter of Mind: Reason and Experience in the Age of Descartes

Christopher Braider

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What influence did René Descartes' concept of mind-body dualism have on early modern conceptions of the self? In *The Matter of Mind*, Christopher Braider challenges the presumed centrality of Descartes' groundbreaking theory to seventeenth-century French culture. He details the broad opposition to rational self-government among Descartes' contemporaries, and attributes conventional links between Descartes and the myth of the 'modern subject' to post-structuralist assessments.

The Matter of Mind presents studies drawn from a range of disciplines and examines the paintings of Nicolas Poussin, the drama of Pierre Corneille, and the theology of Blaise Pascal. Braider argues that if early modern thought converged on a single model, then it was the experimental picture based on everyday experience proposed by Descartes' sceptical adversary, Michel de Montaigne. Forceful and provocative, *The Matter of Mind* will encourage lively debate on the norms and discourses of seventeenth-century philosophy.

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