

Sacramento Book Review



Below is a clipping of your book review that appeared in the January 09 issue of the *Sacramento Book Review*. Thank you for sending us the book.

Descartes' Bones

By Russell Shorto

Doubleday, \$26.00, 320 pages

Using the travels of the bones of Rene Descartes following his death in Stockholm in 1650, Shorto (*The Island at the Center of the World*) reintroduces Descartes and his philosophy to a new generation. Most people would recognize his most famous quote "*cogito, ergo sum*", "I think, therefore I am," but not much beyond that. Shorto introduces Descartes' other philosophical ideas and makes a good case for how they have become part of modern culture and thinking. The conceit of using the travels of his body's skeletal remains, and his skull (the two separated in the past and now reside in different parts of Paris) works up to a point, but the story gets distracted. The bulk of the book is a history of how Descartes' ideas and Cartesianism (the concept of disbelieving everything until one could prove it with fact) resonated through European history and are still used today. While the concepts covered are important and the stories interesting, the book lacks coherence throughout. Hard to recommend as a general audience book, more likely it will be enjoyed by a narrow history or philosophical readership.

