
Descartes and the First Cartesians Revisited

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I am grateful that a set of fine scholars would be willing to reflect upon and write about *Descartes and the First Cartesians*. Their efforts are greatly appreciated and, on the whole, their observations are sound. It should be evident that I do not consider the work to be the final word on the subject of Descartes and Cartesians, that is, something exhaustive of it or complete for any of its topics. In fact, every time I reconsider an issue from my book, I find that there is more to be said even in respect to what I wrote about in great detail (see, for example, Ariew 2015 and Forthcoming a, b, c). I will reply to the commentators in the following order: 1. Domenico Collacciani; 2. Lucian Petrescu; 3. Martine Pécharman; 4. Sophie Roux; and 5. Tad Schmaltz.¹

1. **Domenico Collacciani** should be acknowledged for his fine presentation of the volume; I could not have done it better myself. What I liked most about the exposition is his appreciation of the reasons that drove me to begin the volume with a chapter on the institutional context of seventeenth-century scholasticism and another on the contents of late scholastic textbooks. I hesitated to include the obscure and challenging scholastic doctrines in a book about Descartes and Cartesianism, thinking that such accounts would not be to many people's tastes, but I keep in mind Descartes' response to Thomas Hobbes when he complained about the doubts Descartes raised in Meditation I. Hobbes said, "I would have preferred the author, so very distinguished in the realm of new speculations, not to have published these old things." And Descartes replied he would not have omitted them "any more than a medical writer could omit a description of a disease whose method of treatment he is trying to teach" (Descartes 1969, vii, pp. 172–73). I think in a loosely comparable vein that one could not omit

1. I am also grateful to Daniel Garber who edited this set of papers.

a description of seventeenth-century scholasticism in an attempt to understand Cartesian scholasticism.

I also very much esteemed the conclusion of Collacciani's essay and, in particular, his setting *Descartes and the First Cartesians* into the context of the earlier *Descartes and the Last Scholastics* (Ariew 1999), as an implied criticism of Etienne Gilson's work on Descartes and scholasticism. While Gilson's work should be admired and respected, his conception of scholasticism was too limiting: his *Index scolastico-cartésien* was really too much of an *Index thomistico-cartésien*.²

2. Lucian Petrescu raises the question of the status of logic in the early modern period. He argues that Cartesian logic, that is, what is found in the *Rules*, belongs to a new genre he calls the "art of discourse (*ars disserendi*)."³ Petrescu argues that the *Rules* would be setting itself up as a competitor to Aristotelian logic within the new genre. He considers the possibility that the art of discourse arose from Petrus Ramus' logic, but rejects the thesis, thinking that it more likely emerged from discussions internal to Aristotelian logic, a development of an older view that logic deals with mental operations. In the process we are treated to Franco Burgersdijk's perspectives on the status of logic in 1626 and a discussion of the Coimbran Jesuits' preliminary questions on dialectics as a science. This leads Petrescu to some fine investigative work on the source for the Aristotelian art of discourse, identified as a commentary on the *Prior Analytics* collected in the Wadding edition of the works of John Duns Scotus and referred to as Scotist by Claude Frassen. The pseudo-Scotist position, that the object of logic is concerned with mental acts, not things and concepts, appropriates some of the discussion from Book III of the *De anima* to conceptualize the Organon. As a result of this position, there was an explosion of logic textbooks organized around the three operations of the understanding.

Although Petrescu shows that the view predates the publication of Eustachius a Sancto Paulo's *Summa*, I still hold the (defeasible) thesis that Eustachius was the first textbook author to structure a logic text in accordance with the three operations of the understanding, setting up a clear debate later on in the century with Cartesians who accepted the pseudo-Scotist doctrine but added a fourth division to logic, having to do with method or order. Petrescu's evidence that the view predates the start of the seventeenth century is compelling. I could also see that position being discussed in Franciscus Toletus' *Commentary on Aristotle's Logic*, a work

2. I borrow the phrase from Igor Agostini (Agostini 2015, pp. 14 and 17). And, of course, I strongly support Agostini's project of the *Lexique scolastico-cartésien*, a considerably expanded version of Gilson.

predating Eustachius' *Summa*, but organized in a more traditional way. In his sixth preliminary question, Toletus rehearses several possible divisions of Logic, including one using the "three operations of the intellect": simple apprehension, composition or division, and reasoning.³

The status of logic in the early modern period, and in particular that of Descartes' logic, is an issue that interests me as well, even though in the book I bracketed away the question of what kind of logic Descartes' *Rules* might have been. Obviously, the manuscript of the *Rules* was not readily available in the seventeenth century, having been published in Dutch only in 1684 and Latin only in 1701, so any question about the *Rules* would be marginal with respect to the scope of my work and its influence on the first Cartesians. The general question about Descartes' logic is rather complex. I find compelling what Adrien Baillet said about it in his *Vie de Mr. Des-Cartes* (Baillet 1691, i, 280–86). Baillet had a copy of the manuscript of the *Rules* in his hands when considering the issue. As Baillet said, several people thought that Descartes' method in the *Discourse*—that is, the rules he prescribes for the conduct of the mind—constituted Descartes' logic. Others thought that Descartes' real logic was his *Geometry* because they considered it to be the key to all the sciences. Yet others believed Descartes' true logic was the *Meditations* because there he established "thinking" as the principle on which he wanted to base his whole philosophy. Baillet referred to Pierre Gassendi for this latter view, citing his Chapter 9, "The Logic of Descartes," from Book I of the *Syntagma* on the Origin and Variety of Logic (which also contains chapters on the Logic of the ancients, plus Ramon Lull, Ramus, and Francis Bacon). Gassendi says that the *Meditations* contains Descartes' logic because of the principle Descartes posits in the work, namely, "everything I clearly and distinctly perceive is true." For Gassendi, given that the mind can err when thinking, to keep itself from doing so, it provides for itself the art of logic whereby it can direct its own operations and attain truth by making its operations immune from error. According to Gassendi, Descartes "believed that there were enough resources in the intellect that it could come to have perfect knowledge of all things, even of the most abstruse ones, that is, not only of bodies but even of God and souls, by its own power."⁴ Though Gassendi's view is consistent with the new meaning of logic as *ars disserendi*, still, given the diversity of views Baillet produced, it seems

3. "Triplex autem est intellectus operatio: Prima, simplicium apprehensio, qua res ipsas singulas per se intelligimus: Secunda, compositio, seu Divisio, qua res intellectas unam alteri copulamur: Tertia, ratiocinatio est, qua ex noto ignotum discurretes decidimus: quae operationes similes sunt sermoni," Toletus 1572, fol. 9.

4. "ut intellectus possit vi sua in omnium rerum etiam abstrusissimarum, hoc est non modo corporum, sed Dei etiam, ac anima notitiam perfectam venire," Gassendi 1658, i, p. 65.

clear that what one meant by logic in the seventeenth century was broad enough to encompass what is discussed in almost any of Descartes' works.

Baillet continued his general question on Descartes' logic by referring to the Jesuit René Rapin mentioning an unfinished Descartes logic manuscript he called "*De l'érudition*"; Baillet could not locate the manuscript, unless Rapin's statement was a reference to the *Rules*. So Baillet returned to the method of the *Discourse* as Descartes' sample of logic. He asserted that what Descartes was content to sketch has since been brought to fruition by Johann Clauberg and by the author of the *Art of Thinking*. (Baillet mentioned as well the commentary on Descartes' *Discourse* by the Oratorian Nicolas-Joseph Poisson). That, of course, was the perspective I was trying to take in *Descartes and the First Cartesians*, that is, to examine the extensions of Descartes' logic in Clauberg and in the *Art of Thinking* (the *Port-Royal Logic*), as well as the latter's further extensions in the textbooks of Antoine Le Grand and of Pierre-Sylvain Régis.⁵

3. Martine Pécharman raises some important general questions about the subject of my book. One of her principal arguments is that the term "first" in the title *Descartes and the First Cartesians* is equivocal: first Cartesian becomes not so much a chronological designation, but an exegetical characterization, such that *Descartes and the First Cartesians* is not necessarily about the first Cartesians.⁶ I find much of what she says to be accurate, but I am bothered by the implication that I meant to exclude some early Cartesians as first Cartesians. So, I wish to reiterate what I think my intentions were in the book.

I did not set out to write a compendium of Cartesian philosophy in the mode of Francisque Bouillier's *Histoire de la Philosophie Cartésienne* (Bouillier 1868); my historiographical model was rather Henri Gouhier's *Cartésianisme et Augustinisme au XVII^e siècle*.⁷ Bouillier's two volumes are encyclopedic; they spend many chapters on Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, Nicolas Malebranche, and G. W. Leibniz, mention many Cartesians and anti-Cartesians, but devote very little space to any of them (a ten page section on Régis; half a page

5. The diversity of views about what constitutes Descartes' logic is at the base of Martine Pécharman's interesting case about the debate between Locke and Stillingfleet in the 1690s, Locke referring to the *Port-Royal Logic* as Cartesian, while his adversary Stillingfleet referred to a reliance on the rule of evidence as Cartesian (as Gassendi did).

6. Pécharman is not alone in questioning the term; Roux and Schmaltz do as well. I suppose I could have titled the book *Descartes and Seventeenth-Century Cartesians* or given it a subtitle such as *The Construction of the Cartesian System*. I preferred instead the contrast between the *First Cartesians* and the *Last Scholastics*, though the latter can also be criticized for not being about the last scholastics.

7. Gouhier 1978 or Schmaltz 2002, which is mostly limited to Desgabets and Régis on metaphysics and theology.

on Le Grand). In contrast, Gouhier has chapters on Marin Mersenne's and Antoine Arnauld's dialogues with Descartes; his book then unfolds a thesis of Cartesianism Augustinized (concerning Claude Clerselier, Louis de la Forge, the pseudo-Ameline, and Jacques Rohault) and of Augustinism Cartesianized (concerning Ambrosius Victor, Bernard Lamy, and Poisson). The work ends with a chapter on Port-Royal (Arnauld and Blaise Pascal) and a concluding one about historical consequences. By delimiting his thesis well, Gouhier finds a running thread through his complex material and manages to say something novel and interesting.

In keeping with my model, I did not set out to write about all Cartesians; for one, I considered the term "Cartesian" itself problematic.⁸ Whatever one thinks of as essential to Cartesianism was, I thought, denied by some Cartesian or another: the method of doubt, the *cogito*, the divisibility or indefinite division of matter, the real distinction between mind and body, etc. So, my rule of thumb was to think of "Cartesian" as an actor's category in the intellectual universe of the seventeenth century. The authors I decided to treat published works with Descartes' name prominently displayed in their titles or subtitles; they saw themselves as Cartesians and others saw them as such. But even then, I thought this was too large a group to make much sense of. I found a way to delimit the set further, using Robert Desgabets' division between two kinds of Cartesians. According to Desgabets, he proposed for himself what he called the first supplement to Descartes' philosophy, "in as much as he tries in it to correct Descartes' thoughts when it seems to him that Descartes has left the right path leading to the truth," contrasting this with what he called "the second supplement, the new application of Descartes' incontestable principles to phenomena he had not known, or to truths he had not spoken of," what Gérauld de Cordemoy, Rohault, de la Forge, Clauberg, and others had done (Desgabets 1985, "Nouvelle ou autre Préface"). Clearly Desgabets' division was neither mutually exclusive nor entirely exhaustive; this was evident in his thinking that Cordemoy, the unconventional Cartesian atomist, belonged in the group merely applying Descartes' principles.

I delimited still further the kinds of Cartesians who interested me, that is, the scholars working primarily on the second supplement, by considering only a subset of them, that is, by focusing on those who endeavored to write a complete body of Cartesian philosophy to rival the curriculum of the Schools. This, I asserted, was an important project that Descartes himself undertook but did not achieve. I sketched Descartes' plan for such a project, beginning with his idea to write a Cartesian textbook as a commentary to Eustachius a Sancto Paulo's *Summa*. Descartes began the

8. In what follows I am just quoting or paraphrasing from my Preface.

project, but even after he abandoned it and after he published the *Principles*, that is, his metaphysics and physics, he continued to hope for a complete corpus of Cartesian philosophy. The *Principles*, of course, was not such a corpus. Knowing what a scholastic course in physics would look like, Descartes understood that he needed to write at least two further parts to his *Principles of Philosophy*: “a fifth part on living things, i.e., animals and plants, and a sixth part on man” (Descartes 1969, viii_a, p. 315). But the two missing parts were not in themselves sufficient to complete his project. As he said in the Preface to the French translation of the *Principles*, he expected to do more:

I believe myself to have begun to explain the whole of philosophy in sequence [*en ordre*], without having omitted anything that ought to precede the last things of which I have written. But in order to carry this plan to a conclusion, I should afterwards in the same way explain in further detail the nature of each of the other bodies on the earth, that is, minerals, plants, animals, and above all man, then finally treat exactly of medicine, morals, and mechanics. All this I should have to do in order to give to mankind a complete body of philosophy. (Descartes 1969, ix_b, pp. 16–7)

Some Cartesians understood Descartes’ desire for a complete body of Cartesian philosophy. They set out to produce the desired product; this is the Cartesian activity I was trying to document. But I issued a couple of provisos. I warned that I was not trying to exclude other projects by Cartesians as properly Cartesian: “the task of formulating a system of Cartesian philosophy to rival that of the Schools is, I argue, an extremely important project among the Cartesians in the seventeenth century, but it is not the only properly Cartesian activity. It would be difficult to enumerate all the various Cartesian activities, just as it would be difficult to enumerate the various Cartesians in the seventeenth century” (Ariew 2014, p. xvi).

I also indicated that the term “Cartesian” need not be considered a permanent label or even one that carries across a philosopher’s various works. For example, although Spinoza gave lessons in Cartesian philosophy and wrote a kind of commentary on Descartes’ *Principles*, he ultimately did not view himself as a Cartesian, and Cartesians failed to see him as one of their own. Early Spinoza could be defended as a Cartesian; late Spinoza probably not. The case of Régis illustrates a similar complexity. Given his replies to Pierre-Daniel Huet’s *Censura Philosophiae Cartesianae* and Jean Duhamel’s *Réflexions critique sur le système cartésien de la philosophie de Mr. Régis*, it is clear that others viewed him, and that he viewed himself, as a defender of Cartesianism. The scholastic Duhamel plainly considered Régis as a Cartesian—even the main Cartesian of his time—and asserted it in the

preface to his *Critical Reflections*. Régis, likewise, in the preface to his *Réponse à Huet* indicated that he felt obliged to reply to Huet's attack against Descartes because of his allegiance to Descartes' philosophy; as he said: "given that my principles were almost the same as Descartes', I could not abandon the defense of Descartes' philosophy without neglecting my own."⁹ Régis put forward his most Cartesian persona in his replies to the anti-Cartesian attacks of Huet and Duhamel. Thus, Régis could be thought more or less Cartesian, depending upon which of his works one is considering, whether he is replying on behalf of Descartes, writing a Cartesian system of philosophy, or publishing a treatise in his own voice.¹⁰

It is clear that the works of the Cartesians display changes over time, that is, that the authors progressed (or regressed) in their views. For example, Jacques Du Roure altered his opinions considerably between his *Philosophy* and *Abrégé*.¹¹ Likewise, the various editions of Le Grand's *Institutions*¹² underwent numerous changes. There is a tendency to treat such things as static, but these authors' doctrines merit closer examination and are worthy of being treated separately in their own right. It is in keeping with this perspective that I very much appreciate Pécharman's comments about Du Roure's logic. I think she is right that Du Roure is much more Cartesian in his 1654 *Philosophie* and much less so in his later *Abrégé*, not only in his logic, but across all the fields, including metaphysics, physics, and morals. With respect to logic, I agree that starting one's logic with method might look Cartesian, but what Du Roure means by method does not have much affinity with Cartesianism; in fact, it is, as Pécharman argues, less Cartesian than what Du Roure produced in his chapter "La logique de Descartes," from the earlier *Philosophie*. All of this is also to say that there are many ways a logic could be called "Cartesian," as already noted.

4. **Sophie Roux** discusses what she calls "two minor claims"—about "moral certainty" and about Stoic Ethics in the seventeenth century—before

9. See also Huet's dedication of his (rather mediocre) satirical work, which is dedicated to "Mr. Régis, Prince of the Cartesian Philosophers," (Huet 1693, p. 3). There Huet mocks Régis as someone "recognized in all alleyways and among all spiritual ladies and virtuosi as the protector of subtle matter, patron of globules, and defender of vortices," (Huet 1693, pp. 3–4), and says that "he is more Cartesian than Descartes himself" (Huet 1693, p. 7).

10. One can compare Régis 1691a with 1691b, 1692, and 1704.

11. Respectively Du Roure 1654 and 1665. There are even variations to be examined between the editions of Du Roure 1653 and the corresponding *Physics* part of Du Roure 1654.

12. Le Grand 1671, 1672 [1675, 1678, and 1680], plus its English translation (Le Grand 1694).

turning to broader issues—about “system” and about the audience for the works of Descartes and the Cartesians. I too would like to discuss the particular issues before turning to the broader ones.

Moral Certainty. I defend the proposition that for Descartes moral certainty does not admit of a degree; despite his examples of code-breaking and knowing where Rome is, which are morally certain and seem to admit of degree, moral certainty should not be equated with high probability. My argument is that Descartes borrows his concept from the Schoolmen, for whom the concept was a commonplace, and that for them, as for Descartes, certainty and probability are separated as demonstrative science and as probable opinion: “Suárez uses the concept of moral self-evidence or certainty without any fanfare, assuming the kinds of discussion common to the commentaries of the Conimbricenses, Eustachius, and Arriaga. In these discussions, moral certainty is a species of certainty, carefully distinguished from opinion and high probability” (Ariew 2014, p. 148). Roux contends that I should qualify that claim. She cites some very interesting work by Sven Knebel on statistical modalities in early modern scholasticism. While I might have missed this development in the sources I cited, that is, in the logic texts of the Coimbra, Arriaga, and Eustachius a Sancto Paulo, I did not notice this kind of analysis in them; and I am fairly confident that these were the likely sources from which Descartes would be drawing his distinction. But even if one can somehow bring in probabilities to play in Descartes’ concept of moral certainty, this should not matter to the analysis that moral certainty is not to be equated with high probability. I also suggested that for Descartes moral certainty looks like a threshold concept. As I stated, “The case for our being morally certain that we could not construct a machine that flies like a bird might look to us like a case of high probability, but for Descartes it is, like his other cases, something beyond the pale. Building such a machine would be so difficult that Descartes is morally certain that it could not be done by us, though God has done it; the same for constructing a machine that actually uses language. Moral certainty suffices for the conduct of life, but not in the sense that it is a good rule of thumb or something highly probable” (Ariew 2014, p. 148).

Stoic Ethics. Roux questions my calling Cartesian ethics Neo-Stoic, given that Le Grand, who published a book about Stoic ethics, *L’homme sans Passions*, “explicitly distanced himself” from his former views, saying that he “now follows the sentiments of **Des Cartes**,” that his “business is not to explain the *Opinions* of others, but only to lay open the truth” (Le Grand 1694, p. 367, cited by Roux). Roux’s worry concerns the Cartesian moral

philosophy constructed from Descartes' Correspondence and the *Passions of the Soul*, that is, the ultimate morality derived from the main branches of the tree of philosophy, and not the provisional code of morality from *Discourse*, Part III (which is avowedly Stoic and Pyrrhonist). As I described the ultimate Cartesian ethics, it

was resolutely naturalistic: good is a perfection belonging to us; the greatest good cannot be connected with the goods of body and fortune, which do not depend upon us, but rather with the goods of the soul; the supreme good is a 'firm and constant resolution to do everything we judge to be best and to use all our power of mind to know these', and this by itself constitutes all the virtues; happiness and virtue are thus things in our control. (Ariew 2014, p. 207)

Descartes himself connects these views to Stoicism, given that he thinks the greatest good resides in virtue (vigor of resolution); he also adds that "it is the only thing that properly speaking deserves praise and glory," which he relates to Stoicism (honor or being deserving of praise) as well, and that "from this always results the greatest and most solid contentment in life," which he relates to Epicureanism (pleasure or contentment).¹³

I also pointed out that contemporaries recognized Descartes' ethics as Stoic early on. For example, Leibniz asserted, perhaps uncharitably:

[Descartes'] morality is a composite of the opinions of the Stoics and Epicureans—something not very difficult to do, for Seneca had already reconciled them quite well. Descartes wants us to follow reason, or else to follow the nature of things, as the Stoics said, something with which everybody will agree. He adds that we should not trouble ourselves with things that are not in our power. That is precisely the Stoic doctrine; it places the greatness and freedom of their much-praised wise man in his strength of mind to do without things that do not depend upon us, and endure things when they come in spite of ourselves. That is why I am accustomed to calling this morality the art of patience. The supreme good, according to the Stoics, and even according to Aristotle, is to act in accordance with

13. (Ariew 2014, p. 155; Descartes 1969, v, p. 83). The contrast with the views in scholastic textbooks is clear: "late scholastics also held that happiness cannot reside in any created good—not in riches, honors, glory, power, corporeal pleasures—most of them held that man's happiness, both natural and supernatural, resides only in God: perfect happiness cannot be obtained in this life, but man can obtain an imperfect happiness in this life; perfect formal happiness resides in the intellect, in the vision of the divine essence; and natural formal happiness resides in the activity of the intellect, that is, in the most perfect contemplation one can have of God in the natural order" (Ariew 2014, p. 207).

virtue or prudence, and the pleasure resulting from this resolution is properly the tranquility of soul or indifference [*indolence*] that both the Stoics and Epicureans sought for and recommended, under different names. We need only inspect the incomparable manual of Epictetus and the Epicurean of Laercia to admit that Descartes has not much advanced the practice of morality. (Ariew 2014, p. 206n.; Leibniz 1989, p. 241)

I think we can agree that Descartes' views on happiness and virtue are similar to those of the Stoics, and that both Descartes and contemporaries, such as Leibniz, would have accepted this characterization. As for Le Grand, we can see that he understood Descartes' views on happiness and virtue very well and would have accepted the description we gave of these views using the letters to Elisabeth and Christina. (Cf. Ariew 2014, pp. 197–98; Le Grand 1694, p. 347, col. b.).

Le Grand's autobiographical comments on Seneca and Descartes (to which Roux refers) can be found in a section of his *Ethicks* entitled "Of the Usefulness of the Passions or Affections of the Soul." There he adopts Descartes' view that the passions are advantageous to humans and that we should moderate only the excesses of the passions. Thus, he does distance himself from the views of the Stoics regarding the passions: "It is very notorious with what Virulence the *Stoicks* inveigh against the *Passions*, who being solicitous for the Tranquility of their *Wise Man*, have supposed them to be altogether Evil, and therefore to be avoided by him" (Le Grand 1694, p. 367, col. b.). Le Grand is clear about the difference between Descartes and the Stoics on the passions; as he says: "no understanding man will reproach me of Lightness of Inconsistency, for going about to unfold the usefulness of the *Passions*, and leaving the *Stoicks*, consider *Man*, not as Translated amongst the *Glorified Saints* in Heaven, but as placed amongst his *Mortal Brethren* here on *Earth*" (Le Grand 1694, p. 368, col. a). The Cartesian theory of passions does disagree with Stoic (and Scholastic) theory of passions in a number of respects. I would be willing to abandon calling Cartesian morals Neo-Stoic, but still I find the designation useful for indicating the filiation between Cartesian and Stoic views on happiness and virtue and on the praise that the virtuous man deserves.

System (*système*, *systema*). As a general issue, Roux reminds us that "system" had a new use in the second half of the seventeenth century; previously referring to such things as the order of the planets, "it began to designate any kind of order or disposition." Régis uses the term in this fashion but he also uses it, in his *Physics*, for a set of hypotheses "that are dependent

upon one another and so linked to one another and with first truths that they, as it were, necessarily follow and depend upon them” (Régis 1691a, i, p. 276, cited by Roux). Obviously, “system” is an important term for Régis, given that his three-volume work is called *Système Général selon les Principes de Descartes*. However, in *Descartes and the First Cartesians*, I asserted that the *Système Général*, although billed as an entire corpus and general system of Cartesian philosophy,

does not seem very systematic (in our sense of the word). Its various portions embody Régis’ adaptations of diverse philosophies, both Cartesian and non-Cartesian: Arnauld’s *Port-Royal* logic (mostly abbreviated and excerpted); Robert Desgabets’ peculiar metaphysics; Jacques Rohault’s physics; and an amalgam of Gassendist, Hobbesian, and especially Pufendorfian ethics. Ultimately, Régis’ unsystematic (and often very un-Cartesian) *Système* set the standard for Cartesian textbooks. (Ariew 2014, p. xii)

I also asserted that the title of Régis’ multi-volume work sets out its objectives: “The work is intended to be systematic and complete, that is, to satisfy all four parts of the curriculum—logic, metaphysics, physics, and morals (in that order). It also purports to be based on Descartes’ principles.” And I quoted from a letter by Régis’ contemporary Simon Foucher, in which he gives an account of the work, describing it as an amalgam of various treatises of disparate provenance:

You know that I think Régis has given the public a great system of philosophy in three quarto volumes with several figures. This work contains many very important treatises, such as the one on percussion by Mariotte, chemistry by l’Eméri, medicine by Vieussens and du Verney. He even speaks of my treatise on Hygrometers, although he does not name it. There is in it a good portion of the physics of Rohault and he refutes there Malebranche, Perrault, Varignon—the first concerning ideas, the second concerning weight, and the third, who has recently been received by the Académie royale des Sciences, also concerning weight. The *Meteors* of Lamy also in part adorn this work, and the remainder is from Descartes. Régis conducted himself rather skillfully in his system, especially in his ethics. (Ariew 2014, p. 177. S. Foucher to G. W. Leibniz, 30 May 1691.)

Despite this, Roux is right to assert that my discussion is incomplete. She points to an important debate in Physics in the second half of the seventeenth century between Régis who held that hypotheses should be consistent with one another and follow from first principles, and

Claude Perrault who, according to Régis, advanced series of arbitrary hypotheses in his *Essays de physique*. In this fashion Régis seems to follow Descartes who, at the end of the *Principles*, claimed as a virtue of his philosophy that it explained so many phenomena from a small set of hypotheses consistent among themselves and following from his first principles—that his philosophy “possesses even more than moral certainty.”

But this debate in Physics does not exhaust Régis’ uses of the term system, nor does it indicate the role it plays in the title of his work. In the Preface to the work as a whole, Régis rails against “the authors who have explained only some particular questions of Physics,” and “those who have composed only separate treatises of Logic, of Metaphysics, or Morals.”¹⁴ He asserts that “only those who have assembled into a single corpus all the parts of Philosophy have attempted the same design of his,” but he complains that there is little relation between the parts of the corpus they have tried to constitute: “to compose a natural body, it is not sufficient to join several parts together; these parts must also have some relations among themselves, without which they would produce only a difform and monstrous body.” Régis proposes instead what “could justly be called the *general System of Philosophy*,” in which all the parts of Philosophy are related and tied together such that “Morals supposes Physics; Physics supposes Metaphysics; and Metaphysics Logic.” And he gives an example of reducing a question of morals, such as “Why should people be sincere?” into the principles of ethics, such as self-preservation, which leads into questions of Physics about the preservation of the body, of Metaphysics about the origins of motions, and of Logic about the origins of the certainty of the truths discovered in Physics, Metaphysics, and Ethics. This is a very loose sense of “system,” somewhat different than the one at stake in the debate between Régis and Perrault, but not much different than what a scholastic would call subalternation. Scholastics think of Ethics as subalternated to Physics, though most of them would not think of Physics as subalternated to Metaphysics. Descartes does make this last move but would not think of Metaphysics as subalternated to Logic.

Ultimately, I am not sure that Régis is consistent even about this weak sense of “general system.” For Régis, morals, that is natural, civil, and divine laws, is in some ways separate from metaphysics. According to him, metaphysics can prove, for example, that God alone can make men happy or that he is the author of pleasure and pain. We could have perfect knowledge of these things, but still be unaware of our duties. We could

14. This and below can be found in the unpaginated General Preface of Régis 1691a, vol. i.

know “that God is the author of pleasure and pain and not know that we ought to refer these to the glory of God, and that we do refer these to it, as we taste pleasures and suffer pains in conformity with natural, divine, and civil laws; these regard Ethics properly, whereas the rest is only Metaphysics.”¹⁵

Audience. The other general issue Roux discusses concerns the audience for the work of Descartes and the Cartesians. She reminds us that “Among Cartesians, there were not only professors, but also authors and ... worldly experimentalists like Jacques Rohault, or still, polished conversationalists like Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle. ... Cartesian philosophy was [also] taught in *conférences* or private academies and discussed in salons.” True. *Descartes and the First Cartesians* probably should have concluded with another chapter or two about the social, institutional, and intellectual contexts for Cartesian philosophy at the end of the seventeenth century (a bookend to the first chapter on the institutional and intellectual context for teaching in seventeenth century colleges and universities). This is clearly an important project, but one that would require a great amount of additional research and perhaps a second monograph for me to accomplish suitably.

5. Tad Schmaltz poses two general questions, the first is whether Descartes is serious about Scholasticism, that is, whether “the sort of Scholasticization of Cartesianism to which the *First Cartesians* draws attention to is merely a matter of packaging.” The second is whether the Cartesians I discuss, that is, the authors of Cartesian systems of philosophy, played a central role in the widespread acceptance of Cartesianism within French universities at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Schmaltz answers both questions in the negative. And, of course, he could be right. He gives a detailed account of Cartesianism at the beginning of the eighteenth century, which I enjoyed very much. His narrative certainly goes beyond anything I wrote about the topic and, in many respects, I take it as an extension of my account. So, I do not wish to argue about either of Schmaltz’s conclusions. However, I do think that Descartes is serious about scholasticism, whether of the Aristotelian or Cartesian variety (at least as serious as he was about skepticism).¹⁶ And I am confident that the

15. (Régis 1691a, iii, p. 398). If the metaphysical “is” does not entail a moral “ought,” there must be some properly moral principles. But perhaps with Régis’ loose connections (as loose as the one holding between Metaphysics and Logic), Morals could still be said to suppose Physics that supposes Metaphysics.

16. Incidentally, I do not think that there needs to be a contradiction between Descartes’ statements that the *Meditations* “destroys the principles of Aristotle,” and that

Cartesian authors of textbooks were sufficiently influential at the end of the seventeenth century in French academic circles (or at minimum that Régis was) that I need not quibble about who had relatively greater impact. Still, I am interested in some of the reasons adduced by Schmaltz to support his conclusions. As might be expected, I believe the historical circumstances are more complex than he suggests and the supporting reasons not as conclusive. I will concentrate on the argument that the Cartesian manuals of Du Roure and Régis “were in the vernacular” and as such “were not suitable for use in schools,” and thus cannot explain “the increasing success of Cartesianism in the French academy.”

It is clear that writing in the vernacular increased significantly throughout the seventeenth century. The Oratorians even began to teach in French; in consequence, it was said that they were teaching Latin as a dead language. The decision as to whether to publish one’s book in French or in Latin must have become increasingly difficult. Descartes started to write treatises in physics and mathematics in French fairly early on: the *Dioptrique*, *Le Monde*, *Météores*, and *Géométrie*. He published most of these materials in French in the *Discours with Essais* in 1637. He did try to excuse the “obscurity” of part IV of the *Discourse* in his correspondence by saying that he “did not dare to expound at length the arguments of the skeptics” because of his concern for his (Francophone) audience: “these thoughts do not seem to me proper to include in a book which I wanted to be intelligible in some way even to women” (Descartes 1969, i, p. 560).

Women, of course, were not usually formally educated at the time and thus were not generally capable of reading Latin. A work in French might not have reached a broad academic audience but would have included women. Thus Descartes, having written the *Discourse* in French, wrote its sequel, the *Meditations* (a work dedicated to the Theologians of the Sorbonne), in Latin, and continued with the *Principles* in Latin. He reverted to French in *Passions of the Soul*. But, what should not be lost in all this: Descartes also made sure the Latin works were translated into French and the French works into Latin, all within a few years of the publication of the originals: *Discours and Essais* (1637) became *Specimina Philosophiae* with *Dioptrice* and *Meteora* (1644; *Geometria* was published separately in 1649); *Meditationes* (1641; 2nd ed. 1642) was also published as *Méditations* (1647);

he has “not employed any principles that were not accepted by Aristotle and all other philosophers of every age.” Descartes’ principles could be a subset of the principles that all philosophers use with other principles being rejected by him. Basically, Descartes believes that Aristotle and all other philosophers would accept his principles, not that he accepts all of theirs, Aristotle’s matter, form, and privation and Democritus’ atoms and the void being principles he does not accept.

Principia Philosophiae (1644) as *Principes de la Philosophie* (1647);¹⁷ and *Passions de l'ame* (1649) as *Passiones animae* (1650).¹⁸

I keep in mind Descartes' statement in 1637 to a Jesuit of La Flèche about the *Discourse*:

there is no one who seems to have more interest in examining this book than those in your Society, for I see already that so many people will come to believe what it contains, that (particularly for the *Meteors*) I do not know how they will be able to teach these from now on, as they do each year in most of your schools, unless they refute what I have written or follow it. (Descartes 1969, i, p. 455)

Descartes thinks that the *Meteors*, an essay written in French, will need to be taken into account by Jesuits teaching a collegiate course in physics in Latin, one containing materials derived from Aristotle's *Meteorology*. Moreover, his correspondence in 1637–1638 with Libertus Fromondus and Vopiscus Fortunatus Plemp, both academics at Louvain,¹⁹ seems to confirm his assumption that a French philosophical text would have influence in academic circles. The fascinating three-sided exchanges among Descartes, Fromondus, and Plemp was conducted in Latin, about many intricate details of Descartes' views on scientific methodology, optics, and human biology (the circulation of the blood in particular), all of them based on what Descartes published in the *Discourse* with *Essays*, a book written in French. Descartes expected his French book to be influential in academic circles even when written in the vernacular because he thought his audience will be teachers giving their own lectures (in Latin) based on his materials. As Descartes says, when preparing the summary of his philosophy he intends to publish with Eustachius's *Summa* (this time in Latin): "I think I can do this in such a way that it will be very easy to see a comparison between them, and ... even the least talented teachers will be capable of teaching my philosophy from this book alone" (Descartes 1969, iii, pp. 259–60).

A few decades later in the 1670s, when the College d'Angers was censuring the propositions taught by Oratorian professors (including Lamy), the penetration of Cartesianism into the academy was palpable.

17. But see also Leroux 2012, chap. 3; the author suggests that the "translation" of the *Principles* was more a collaboration with a dissatisfied Descartes rewriting much of what Picot produced.

18. *Passiones Animae* might have been published without Descartes having anything to do with it.

19. Fromondus was professor of philosophy and then theology; he assumed his chair as professor of sacred scriptures in 1636. Plemp was appointed professor of medicine in 1633.

As François Babin said bitterly about both the students and teachers in his *Journal* of the events at Angers:

Young people are no longer taught anything other than to rid themselves of their childhood prejudices and to doubt all things, including whether they themselves exist in the world. They are taught that the soul is a substance whose essence is always to think. . . . Some of them assert that animals are only machines and puppets without motion, without life, and without sensation, and that there are no substantial forms other than rational soul. (Babin 1679, p. 2)

While the propositions of the Cartesian professors that were being censored were written in Latin, the censors condemned them in French. Most of the documents were written in French, as were the students' and teachers' satirical poems and their *Arret burlesque*. The students and teachers had the *Discourse* and *Essays* in both French and Latin and could read some posthumously published Descartes essays as well (*Le Monde* in French; the *Treatise on Man* in French and Latin), it does not look to me as if it mattered much to them what language it was published in, whether in Latin or in the vernacular.²⁰

Babin also displayed the *Arret burlesque* in his *Journal*, as another example of the subversive attitude of the Cartesian rabble. Like all oral traditions, the versions of the *Arret* differed substantially from one another. There is an attempt to catalog all the variations in *Oeuvres de Boileau* (Boileau 1830; the *Arret Burlesque* is on pp. 99–111). The lines that are interesting for the present purposes are those heralding the heroes of the *Arret* who are helping Reason come into the University and expel Aristotle by force:

For a few years, an unknown called Reason tried to enter by force into the schools of the previously mentioned University; to this end, with the help of some rebellious individuals called Gassendists, Cartesians, Malebranchists, and Pourchotists, unappreciated folks, she put herself in the position to expel the previously mentioned Aristotle, ancient and peaceful owner of the previously mentioned schools, against which she and her partners had already published several books, treatises, dissertations, and defamatory arguments, wishing to submit the previously mentioned Aristotle to suffer before her an examination of his doctrine.²¹

20. In fact, the heroes of Schmalz's account mostly published in French as well: certainly Malebranche did, as did Joseph Privat de Molières, though not Edmond Pourchot.

21. Boileau 1830, pp. 101–02 giving a text from 1675 and noting the variations from 1671 and 1697 as: "Cartistes et Gassendistes"; 1702, the same, but adding "Malebranchistes"; 1674, "Cartésiens nouveaux philosophes, circulateurs et Gassendistes."

The unappreciated people, the rebellious individuals that were assisting Reason, started out being referred to as “Cartistes et Gassendistes” and then as “Cartésiens nouveaux philosophes, circulateurs et Gassendistes,” then apparently as “Gassendistes, Cartésiens, Malebranchistes et Pourchotistes,” before being shortened to “Cartistes, Gassendistes, et Malebranchistes.” Clearly, these were heroes of “Cartesianism,” very broadly-speaking. But just as clearly, Gassendi, Malebranche, Pourchot, and their followers, as well as physicians who accepted the circulation of the blood, were not the figures I thought to include in my study of Descartes’ philosophical influence on Cartesians, narrowly-speaking.

As I said in my conclusion, I focused on the academic context in France, with only a few glances at England and the Netherlands. There are other geographical contexts that need to be considered and, of course, the philosophy curricula of these other regions need not be the same as the ones in seventeenth century France. The whole study can be expanded to include the philosophies of Hobbes and Gassendi, and perhaps even of Leibniz and Spinoza (and all their followers), and many others, of course, producing a more complete history of philosophy and history of the philosophy textbook (or at least of logic, metaphysics, physics, and ethics) for the seventeenth century. Much work remains to be done; as Descartes would have said: I leave this task to my “nephews” (his term for future generations). I just hope to have provided an initial path into some of these complex materials. I do thank the fine scholars who have commented on *Descartes and the First Cartesians* (though they clearly are not my nephews or nieces); they have advanced this history significantly and expanded it beyond its initial conception.

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