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## Regius and Gassendi on the Human Soul

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## REGIUS AND GASSENDI ON THE HUMAN SOUL

Vlad Alexandrescu\*

Reshaping the neo-Aristotelian doctrines about the human soul was Descartes's most spectacular enterprise, which gave birth to some of the sharpest debates in the Republic of Letters. Nevertheless, it was certainly Descartes's intention, as already expressed in the *Discours de la méthode*, to show that his new metaphysics could be supplemented with experimental research in the field of medicine and the conservation of life. It is no surprise then that several natural philosophers and doctors, such as Henricus Regius from Utrecht, who had studied in Padua with William Harvey, rallied in support, in order to gain a more substantial theoretical basis for their research. Taking as his ground some general metaphysical assumptions, such as the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and perhaps the separability of the pure understanding, Regius intended to secure a new philosophy of man, which was able to reflect his medical interests and complement his account of human nature. This is the story that is now gaining currency, and it is surely accurate, at least in part. Desmond Clarke has recently defended the same view<sup>1</sup>, based on the remarkable studies of the Utrecht scholars Theo Verbeek and Erik-Jan Bos. Here I would like to challenge some aspects of this view and ask how Regius, who was perceived as the philosopher most closely associated with Descartes, became a betrayer of his mentor.

### THE METAPHYSICAL PROBLEM

Let us start from Descartes's statement in the Second Part of the *Principles of Philosophy* (1644), coming after the formulation of the third law of nature:

All the particular causes of the changes which bodies undergo are covered by this third law – or at least the law covers all changes which are themselves corporeal. *I am not here inquiring into the existence or nature of any power to move bodies which may be possessed by human minds, or the minds of angels, since I am reserving this topic for a treatise On Man.*<sup>2</sup>

\*I would like to thank the two anonymous readers of this paper for their useful remarks and objections.

<sup>1</sup> D.M. Clarke, 'Henricus Regius', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), edited by E.N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/henricus-regius/>; D.M. Clarke, 'The Physics and Metaphysics of the Mind: Descartes and Regius', in *Mind, Method, and Morality. Essays in Honour of Anthony Kenny*, edited by J. Cottingham and P. Hacker (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010), 187–207.

<sup>2</sup> 'Atque omnes causæ particulares mutationum, quæ corporibus accidunt, in hac tertia lege continentur, saltem eæ quæ ipsæ corporeæ sunt; an enim, et qualem, mentes humanæ vel Angelicæ vim habeant corpora movendi, non jam inquirimus, sed ad tractationem De homine reservamus', *Principia Philosophiæ*, II, 40, *Œuvres de Descartes*, edited by C. Adam and

This statement was received with disappointment by more than one admirer of the French philosopher. Indeed, after the publication of the *Meditationes de prima philosophia*, the European intellectual scene closely resembled a battlefield. The *Objections* formulated by the most knowledgeable representatives of School learning, but also by systematic philosophers who were not in the mainstream, such as Hobbes and Gassendi, had fostered a common line of attack, with reference to the inadequate explanation of the interaction between the two substances that make up man. What Descartes had to explain, in particular, given that motion is the most proper manifestation of matter, was the way in which the *mens* was able to make an impression on the body. Descartes scholars agree that the pithiest formulation of the problem is owing to Princess Elizabeth:

I ask you please to tell me how the soul of a human being (it being only a thinking substance) can determine the bodily spirits, in order to bring about voluntary actions. For it seems that all determination of movement happens through the impulsion of the thing moved, by the manner in which it is pushed by that which moves it, or else by the particular qualities and shape of the surface of the latter. Physical contact is required for the first two conditions, extension for the third. You entirely exclude the one [extension] from the notion you have of the soul, and the other [physical contact] appears to me incompatible with an immaterial thing.<sup>3</sup>

As I have shown elsewhere, Elizabeth extracted her question out of the reservoir of *Objections* which Gassendi had addressed to Descartes during the publication of the *Méditations*.<sup>4</sup> I have also offered there an explanation of the way in which Princess Elizabeth could have been initiated into Gassendist views, by highlighting an important intermediary of Gassendism in the Low Countries, namely Samuel Sorbière.

### SORBIÈRE IN THE LOW COUNTRIES

Even if at this point it is difficult to evaluate with certainty the magnitude of Sorbière's anti-Cartesian campaign in the Low Countries, what seems to be clear is that in the period 1642–1647 his undermining of Cartesianism was indefatigable. Thus, in a letter to Hobbes of 1646, Sorbière seems to refer to a well-established anti-Cartesian party which included William Boswell, Samson Johnson, Henricus Bornius, Henricus Regius and even Adrian Heereboord. He says that all these eminent people and sound philosophers placed their hopes in Hobbes and Gassendi:

P. Tannery, revised edition, 12 vols (Paris: Vrin/C.N.R.S., 1964–1976), vol. 8a, 65; *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, translated by J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff and D. Murdoch, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1984–1985), vol. 1, 242. My emphasis.

<sup>3</sup> '[...] en vous priant de me dire comment l'âme de l'homme peut déterminer les esprits du corps, pour faire les actions volontaires, (n'étant qu'une substance pensante). Car il semble que toute détermination de mouvement se fait par la pulsion de la chose mue, à manière dont elle est poussée par celle qui la meut, ou bien, de la qualification et figure de la superficie de cette dernière. L'attouchement est requis aux deux premières conditions, et l'extension à la troisième. Vous excluez entièrement celle-ci de la notion que vous avez de l'âme, et celui-là me paraît incompatible avec une chose immatérielle', Elisabeth to Descartes, 6 May 1643, *Œuvres de Descartes*, vol. 3, 661, Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and René Descartes, *The Correspondence between Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and René Descartes*, edited and translated by L. Shapiro (Chicago, IL and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 62.

<sup>4</sup> V. Alexandrescu, 'What Someone May Have Whispered in Elisabeth's Ear', in *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy*, vol. 6, edited by D. Garber and D. Rutherford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1–27.

You will hardly believe (even though you hear it from the most truthful of sources) what pleasure I gave to those excellent men and sound philosophers Boswell, Johnson, Bornius, Regius, Heereboord and others, when I told them they might hope for the publication of your book – and also of the earlier parts of your work. For they are all looking to you and Gassendi; and they have their eyes on you now that that mountain has brought forth the ridiculous mouse and made fools of us, having summoned us after such a long interval.<sup>5</sup>

It is in this context that Sorbière informed Hobbes that Louis Elzevier, who had already printed Descartes's physics and was now printing that of Hobbes, was about to issue out of his printing house in Amsterdam the physics of Regius, 'a distinguished man, whose thoughts in natural science are so well grounded' and of whom he expected 'many sound things'.<sup>6</sup> In Sorbière's eyes, the *Fundamenta Physices* was to play the role of a war machine against Descartes's *Principes*, even if he surely did not realise how anti-Cartesian Regius had become, since he notes in the same letter:

I fear that that distinguished man, whose thoughts in natural science are so well grounded, may not give us enough of his own way of thinking in his treatment of the subject: For he is too much 'enslaved to the hypothesis', namely that the sharp mind of Descartes has penetrated that innermost sanctuary of nature, which perhaps no man will ever fully inspect or know with certainty.

Sorbière's *mise en scène* seems to anticipate the challenge that Mersenne issued one year and several months later: 'If you do not dare to deliver the attack [against Descartes] in your own name, how many adversaries will there be, happy to lend it theirs?'<sup>7</sup> It seems, indeed, that Sorbière already saw Regius as enrolled in the anti-Cartesian legion, as he did other philosophers of the Low Countries, and considered them all ready to follow Hobbes and Gassendi, who were capable of inspiring their action. After all, he expected of Hobbes a treatise on physics which he could pit against that of Descartes.<sup>8</sup> The reservations he had about Regius seem

<sup>5</sup> 'Quàm gratum fecerim Viris summis, solideque philosophantibus Boswellio, Johnsonio, Bornio, Regio, Heereboordio, caeteris ubi de libri tui necnon partium operis priorum editione spem dedi, vix credas, quanquam verissimè narranti. Omnes enim te unum, Gassendúmque spectant, in te oculos habent, ex quo mons ille parturiit ridiculum murem, nosque tanto hiatus vocatos lusit', S. Sorbière to T. Hobbes, 21 May 1646, Latin text and English translation in *Thomas Hobbes. The Correspondence*, edited by N. Malcolm, The Clarendon edition of Thomas Hobbes, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), vol. 1, 128–30. The mountain is obviously Descartes and the mouse, the *Principia philosophiae*. Cf. G. Sortais, *La philosophie moderne depuis Bacon jusqu'à Leibniz. Études historiques*, 2 vols (Paris: Paul Lethielleux, 1920–1922), vol. 2, 204; C.F. Fowler, *Descartes on the Human Soul* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1999), 352.

<sup>6</sup> Hobbes, *The Correspondence*, vol. 1, 128–30: 'Regij Physicam Elzevirius Amstelodamensis qui tua quoque idem excudet, & Cartesiana excudit, jam sub prelo suo versat. Spero multa saniora in illo Opere haberi [...].' ('The Amsterdam Elsevier, who printed Descartes's works and is also printing yours, is just going to press with Regius' Physics. I hope there are many sound things in that book of Regius [...].')

<sup>7</sup> 'Si tuo nomine non audeas insurgere, quot inventurus es qui nomen suum libenter inscribant?', M. Mersenne to S. Sorbière, 5 November [1647], in Sortais, *La philosophie moderne*, vol. 2, 204–5. For the date of this letter, see *Correspondance du P. Marin Mersenne*, edited by C. de Waard and A. Beaulieu, 17 vols (Paris: G. Beauchesne, 1932–1988), vol. 15, 521.

<sup>8</sup> In a letter to Constantin Huyghens of 1 September 1646, in which he mentions his offer of several copies of his book to the Stathouder Prince of Orange and to Huyghens himself, Regius writes that the publication of the book is the work of 'several scholars' who, in publishing it, 'plunged it in great danger'. See T. Verbeek, 'Regius's *Fundamenta Physices*', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 55 (1994), 533–551 (545). Could Sorbière have been at the origin of the publication? Cf. C. Huygens, *Briefwisseling (1608–1687)*, edited by J.A. Worp, 6 vols (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1911–1917), vol. 4, 346–7.

nevertheless to indicate that he could rely on him only partially.<sup>9</sup> One way or another, the publication of the *Fundamenta Physices* in 1646 was the reason why Regius and Descartes parted ways, in a manner that had been anticipated by the dramatic exchange of letters of July 1645, written after Descartes had read a first version of the book.

Following Descartes himself on this point, several historians have noticed a shift in Regius's intellectual attitude after 1641.<sup>10</sup> Regius, let us remember, had risked a scandal when stating, much to Descartes's displeasure, that man is a being by accident.<sup>11</sup> This view is without doubt a result of the fact that, just like Princess Elizabeth two years later, he encountered the same difficulty in conceiving man's substantial unity after having accepted the real distinction of the substances. If the Princess was more concerned with the way she lived her emotions and passions, Regius had a medical background, which made it imperative for him to think of man primarily as a multitude of varying states. Nevertheless, this theory of being by accident was perhaps also germane to his own intellectual roots as a student of the University of Padua, as we will see further below.

It was in this first version of the *Fundamenta Physices*, presented to Descartes in 1645, that Regius developed his theory of thought as a mode of the body. Descartes declared he was staggered and distressed by what Regius apparently thought about such things and by the fact that he did not shy away from writing and teaching them.<sup>12</sup> He predicted great peril for him. Regius answered that he had based his position on the authority of Scripture and that Descartes, for his part, while claiming he was using the light of nature, was in fact weakening and betraying the cause of the soul.<sup>13</sup> The sequel to this exchange is well known, and it only served to deepen the two philosophers' disagreement and to precipitate their split.

Sorbière had arrived in the Low Countries in 1642, after having been accused of Socinianism by Pierre du Prat in front of the leaders of the Protestant Church.<sup>14</sup> He started paying visits to the most eminent men of letters, including Descartes, in Endegeest, where he met Picot and

<sup>9</sup> Sorbière's hope regarding Regius is qualified by the latter's belief that Descartes's intelligence had penetrated the sanctuary of nature, which possibly no other would ever be able to see or recognize: '*Sed vereor ne praeclarus ille vir tam bene in rem naturalem affectus non satis ingenio suo largiatur. Nam ille nimis δουλεύει τῇ ὑποθέσει scilicet Cartesianum acumen, adyta illa Naturae penetrasset, quae nemo fortasse vquam homo perspecta penitus, comperitque habebit*' ('But I fear that that distinguished man, whose thoughts in natural science are so well grounded, may not give us enough of his own way of thinking in his treatment of the subject: For he is too much "enslaved to the hypothesis", namely that the sharp mind of Descartes has penetrated that innermost sanctuary of nature, which perhaps no man will ever fully inspect or know with certainty'), S. Sorbière to T. Hobbes, [11/] 21 May 1646, in Hobbes, *The Correspondence*, vol. 1, 128–9.

<sup>10</sup> '*Prius, mentem, ut substantiam a corpore distinctam, considerando, scripseras hominem esse ens per accidens; nunc autem e contra, considerando mentem et corpus in eodem homine arcte uniri, vis illam tantum esse modum corporis [my emphasis]*' ('At first, in considering the mind as a distinct substance from the body, you write that a man is an *ens per accidens*; but then, when you observe that the mind and the body are closely united in the same man, you take the former to be only a *mode of a body*'). R. Descartes to H. Regius, July 1645, *Œuvres de Descartes*, vol. 4, 250, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, volume 3, The Correspondence*, translated by J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch and A. Kenny (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 255.

<sup>11</sup> In the third disputation of the second series, *De quaestionibus aliquot illustribus*, which took place on 8 December 1641. Cf. T. Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch. Early Reactions to Cartesian Philosophy, 1637–1650* (Carbondale/Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), 16.

<sup>12</sup> R. Descartes to H. Regius, July 1645, *Œuvres de Descartes*, vol. 4, 248–50 and Regius to Descartes, 23 July 1645, 254–6.

<sup>13</sup> H. Regius to R. Descartes, 23 July 1645, *Œuvres de Descartes*, vol. 4, 254–6.

<sup>14</sup> R. Pintard, *Le libertinage érudit dans la première moitié du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, nouvelle édition augmentée d'un avant-propos et de notes et réflexions sur les problèmes de l'histoire du libertinage* (Paris: Boivin, 1943, reprint Geneva: Slatkine, 2000), 339, 629.

Hogelande.<sup>15</sup> He also went to Utrecht where he met Regius, whom he had heard lecturing on Harvey's theory of the circulation of the blood, and with whom he had held several conversations.<sup>16</sup> Among the Dutchmen he met, Regius held a special place. The second professor to teach Cartesianism in the Low Countries after Reneri, he was seen as the favourite of the master of Endegeest. Sorbière later remembered this meeting in the following way:

Henricus Regius, physician, who at that time was around forty and expounded to his audience Harvey's doctrine of the circulation of the blood, impressed me, during the many conversations we had, as a man eager for knowledge and not without the sharpness of wit that makes one fit to seek it; I feared, though, that the same might befall him that had befallen many others who, with minds not yet purged of error, undertook this business with less success, as can be seen in the cases of Cardano, Scaliger, Bacon, Campanella, Fludd, [William] Davidson, [Etienne] de Clave, and as will be noted in the case of Descartes, whose enthusiastic ideas Regius admired and revered in the most astonishing manner.

He offered me, as a token of friendship, his *Physiologia*, which he presented in several theses and proposed for public debate; this won him the enmity of Voetius and of several others in love with the old follies, so that, when they submitted a complaint to the Courts, Regius was almost deprived of his post.<sup>17</sup> For, Voetius claimed, a corrupt popular philosophy breeds heresies in the Church and we must see to it that our [University] should not acquire a bad name, from its manner of philosophizing just as much as from its religion. Our University is new, and students might be frightened away, and parents might be afraid to send their children, if they hear that that man is a teacher here (God forbid that they do).<sup>18</sup> After he did away with the orthodox teaching about the substantial forms, he passed on to the idea of [*man as a*] *being by accident*, an opinion which introduces the mortality of the soul, and in fact completely expels the soul from the totality of things. So Voetius wrote a treatise entitled *The Orthodox Philosophy of the Substantial Forms of Things*.<sup>19</sup> Certainly, Regius was too confident and bold in using the title *Physiologia* for his theses. It does not behoove one man to promise an explanation of all the things that are embraced by the term 'nature', especially because we receive not a little help from those

<sup>15</sup> E.J. Bos, *The Correspondence between Descartes and Henricus Regius* (Utrecht: Zeno, 2002), 143.

<sup>16</sup> 'Ultrajecti plures sermones habui cum Henrico Regio medico, quem audiui publice in Academia opinionem Harvaei, etc.', S. Sorbière to M. Mersenne, 25 August 1642, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Latin 10.352, fols 46 verso–47 recto, printed only partially in F. Tönnies, 'Siebzehn Briefe des Th. Hobbes an S. Sorbière', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 3:1 (1889), 58–71 (65), and fully in Adam et Milhaud, *Correspondance de Descartes*, vol. 5, 209–210, *Correspondance de Mersenne*, vol. 11, 241.

<sup>17</sup> In fact, Regius was constrained, by a decree of the Utrecht Courts of March 1642, to teach only medicine and botany, after he had published, on 16 February 1642, an answer against Voetius entitled *Responsio, sive Notae in Appendicem*, cf. R. Descartes and M. Schoock, *La Querelle d'Utrecht*, edited and translated by T. Verbeek (Paris: Les Impressions Nouvelles, 1988), 118–19.

<sup>18</sup> In *Narratio historica*, the motivation behind the presentation of the *Corrolaries* on 18 December 1641, with a view to tempering the students' reforming zeal, was ampler, but included the following arguments: '[...] *metuerent ne nove et pro ratione temporis sic satis florentis Academiae incremento atque existimationi praejudicium aliquod adferrent gliscentes illae paradoxologiae. [...] quod viderent juvenes studio Theologico destinatos [...] et suae curae atque inspectioni a parentibus et patronis commissos, magis ac magis rixosis et ventosis disceptationibus implicandos et contentionibus assuefaciendos, atque hac ratione non satis feliciter ad Theologicam sapientiam et praxin praeparandos*' ('the fear that *paradoxology*, which was on the rise, should not prevent the flourishing of the Academy and blemish its reputation at a moment when its prosperity was already considerable, had primarily to do with its recent establishment. [...] There was a danger that the students of theology [...] who had been entrusted to them by their parents and tutors, could, by becoming involved in ever more vehement quarrels, become accustomed to this kind of dispute, which rendered them less disposed to the study and practice of theology'), *Testimonium Academiae Ultrajectinae, et Narratio historica qua defensae, qua exterminatae novae Philosophiae*, Rheno-trajecti, 1643, 25–6; translated by T. Verbeek, in *La Querelle d'Utrecht*, 96.

<sup>19</sup> *De rerum naturis et formis substantialibus*, defended on 23–24 December 1641.



who went before us, as Regius will confess. Therefore it would have been better to give it a title of this sort: *Exercises concerning Physiology*, or [etc.]. The other title raises too much hope, namely that once you've reached the end and understood the three disputations, there will be nothing more to add to this *pansophia*: which indeed I would not have dared hope for, even though I fervently desired it. I have read that *Physiology* and tried my hand at writing several philosophical remarks on it.<sup>20</sup>

During these encounters, therefore, Regius offered Sorbière a copy of his *Physiologia*, which had recently been published in the form of academic disputations. It seems that what Sorbière received was a copy that bound together only three disputations out of the nine which Regius had defended at the University of Utrecht.<sup>21</sup> If this was the case, the theory of the being by accident was not there, since it appeared only in the third disputation of the second series. Be that as it may, Sorbière reports having 'tried his hand at writing some philosophical remarks' on this work, which he had arguably communicated to Regius. This episode seems to have taken place during the summer of 1642, before the letter that Sorbière sent towards the end of August to Mersenne, but perhaps also before a letter which he sent in June to Gassendi, in which he informed the latter about the great respect Regius had for him:

Vossius remembers that ten years ago you gave him hope that you would shortly bring to light your commentaries on the philosophy of Epicurus. Rivet, Barlaeus, Heinsius, Regius and others, do not ignore what you did, and can accomplish, and I have heard them all, not without great satisfaction of soul, speaking befittingly of you.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> 'Henricum Regium, Medicum, opinionem Harvei de circulatione sanguinis tunc auditoribus suis exponentem, virum quadragenarium, et quem ex multis habitis sermonibus veritatis cognoscendi cupidum judicavi, nec sane carentem acumine quo posset indagare, sed verebar ne illi contigisset quod aliis multis, qui nondum bene defaeco animo huic negotio minus faeliciter incubuere, ut videre est in Cardano, Scaligero, Bacono, Campanella, Fluddo, Davissono, Declaves, et notabitur fortasse in Cartesio, cujus Enthiasmata mirum quam Regius suspiceret et veneretur. Dedit autem mihi, amicitiae tesseram, Physiologiam suam thesibus aliquot explicatam et disputationibus publicis propositam, quo ex facinore inconciliavit sibi Voëtium, et alios nonnullos nugarum vetustiorum amatores, ita ut instituta apud Magistratum querela pene exciderit munere; nam, ajebat Voëtius, ex corrupta vulgari Philosophia oriuntur haereses in Ecclesia, et cavendum ne [Academiae] nostrae male etiam audiant, quemadmodum ex Religione, ita ex philosophandi modo; Academia nostra nova est, absterreri autem possent studiosi vel parentes, ne liberos mitterent, si quid inaudirent doceri hic hominem esse (quod Deus avertat). Ens per accidens, sublata nempe orthodoxa doctrina de formis substantialibus: Quae opinio mortalitatem animae introducit; Imo animam penitus e medio rerum tollit. Scripserat igitur Voëtius tractatum titulum praeferentem, Philosophia orthodoxa de substantialibus rerum formis. Caeterum Regius nimis confidenter et audacius Physiologiae titulum usurpare visus est in Thesibus illis. Non est unius hominis explicationem polliceri rerum omnium quas naturae vox ambitu suo complectitur; praesertim cum non parum juvent qui praecesserunt, ut fatebitur Regius. Satius igitur fuisset titulum Praescribere hujusmodi de Physiologiae sive, etc. exercitationes. Sperare nimia facit titulus alius nempe perlectis intellectisque tribus disputationibus nihil superfuturum ad Pansophiam istam: quod sane sperare non ausim, licet vehementer id optarim. Legi Physiologiam illam, et animadversionibus quam plurimis philosophicis calamum exercui', Sorberiana, sive Excerpta ex ore Samuelis Sorbiere. Prodeunt ex Musaeo Francisci Graverol J.U. D. et Academici Regii Naumasensis, editio auctior et emedatior (Toulouse, 1694), 215–17, my translation.

<sup>21</sup> According to E.J. Bos, who has examined the rare extant copies, the three types of printed copies of the *Physiologia* include either the first three or the first six of the nine disputations (Bos, *The Correspondence*, 196). The volume offered to Sorbière, then, must have included the first three: H. Regius, *Physiologia, sive cognitio sanitatis. Tribus disputationibus in Academia Ultrajectina publice proposita* (Utrecht, 1641).

<sup>22</sup> 'Non immemor est Vossius ante decennium te spem ipsi tunc fecisse brevi proditura in lucem commentaria in Epicuream philosophiam. Non ignor[ant] quid praestiteris, & quid praestare possis, Rivetus, Barlaeus, Heinsius, Regius, alii, quos omnes audivi, non sine magna animi voluptate, de te ut par erat verba facientes', S. Sorbière to P. Gassendi, Amsterdam, 8 June 1642, in Gassendi, *Opera omnia*, vol. 6, 447, my translation.

If we leave aside three letters of 1644 quoted by Baillet, the correspondence between Descartes and Regius has a gap of almost three years before the letters of July 1645 which anticipate their split. It is in this period that Descartes's *Principia philosophiae* appeared, in 1644, as did – again in Amsterdam, under Sorbière's care – Gassendi's *Disquisitio metaphysica*, which groups together the *Objections* and the *Instances* against Descartes's *Meditationes*. Gassendi had dated his *Instances* 15 March 1642, even though they had started to be circulated during the preceding winter. Shortly after his arrival in Amsterdam, on 8 June 1642, Sorbière asked Gassendi to send him the manuscript, and informed him about his arrangements with Elzevier in view of publication, which would happen as soon as he had received them in Paris. Sorbière finally received them the following year, as witnessed by Gassendi's prefatory epistle to Sorbière, dated 9 June 1643, printed at the head of the *Disquisitio metaphysica*. It was only on 15 October of the same year that Sorbière announced that the manuscript was in print and would be ready at the end of December. The book came out in Amsterdam in February 1644.<sup>23</sup>

The Dutch reader was provided with a wonderful dossier, which placed Descartes's *Réponses* between the *Objections* and the *Instances* of Gassendi. The publication must have embarrassed Descartes. Gassendi resumed here his attack of May 1641 and added his responses to the *Réponses*, where he further clarified the points he had raised against the *Meditationes*.

I have shown elsewhere that on the particular question of the action of mind on body, the *Principes de la philosophie* did not make any essential contribution. Neither did Descartes come up with anything new when, two years later, on 12 January 1646, he sent Clerselier a response to a group of his friends who had reformulated and abridged the *Instances*:

There are two further questions which they add at the end: how can the soul move the body if it is in no way material, and how can it receive the forms of corporeal objects? These questions simply give me the opportunity to point out that the author of the *Counter-Objections* was being quite unfair when, under the pretext of objecting to my views, he put to me large numbers of such questions which do not require to be answered in order to prove what I asserted in my writings. The most ignorant people could, in a quarter of an hour, raise more questions of this kind than the wisest men could deal with in a lifetime; and this is why I have not bothered to answer any of them. *These questions presuppose amongst other things an explanation of the union between the soul and the body, which I have not yet dealt with at all* [my emphasis]. But I will say, for your benefit at least, that the whole problem contained in such questions arises simply from a supposition that is false and cannot in any way be proved, namely that, if the soul and the body are two substances whose nature is different, this prevents them from being able to act on each other. And yet, those who admit the existence of real accidents like heat, weight and so on, have no doubt that these accidents can act on the body; but there is much more of a difference between them and it, i.e., between accidents and a substance, than there is between two substances.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See B. Rochot's introduction to his edition of P. Gassendi, *Disquisitio metaphysica, seu Dubitationes et Instantiae adversus Renati Cartesii Metaphysicam et Responsa, Recherches métaphysiques, ou doutes et instances contre la métaphysique de R. Descartes et ses réponses*, edited and translated by B. Rochot (Paris: Vrin, 1962), VII.

<sup>24</sup> 'Pour les deux questions qu'ils ajoutent aussi à la fin, à savoir: comment l'âme meut le corps, si elle n'est point matérielle? et comment elle peut recevoir les espèces des objets corporels? elles me donnent seulement ici occasion d'avertir que notre Auteur n'a pas eu raison, lorsque, sous prétexte de me faire des objections, il m'a proposé quantité de telles questions, dont la solution n'était pas nécessaire pour la preuve des choses que j'ai écrites, et que les plus ignorants en peuvent plus faire, en un quart d'heure, que tous les plus savants n'en sauraient résoudre en toute leur vie: ce qui est cause que je ne me suis pas mis en peine de répondre à aucunes. Et celles-ci, entre autres, présupposent l'explication de l'union qui est entre l'âme et le corps, de laquelle je n'ai point encore traité. Mais je vous dirai, à vous, que toute la difficulté qu'elles contiennent ne procède que d'une supposition qui est fausse, et qui ne peut aucunement être prouvée, à savoir que, si l'âme



But in June 1645, one month before the letters that Descartes and Regius exchanged in July, Henricus Bornius, one of those whom Sorbière considered to be Gassendi's followers, reports a meeting between Regius and Descartes during which Regius asked his master whether he intended to respond to Gassendi's *Instances*. Descartes indicated that he would not, on the grounds that he had more important work to attend to.

On the question of the response to your refutation,<sup>25</sup> he [Descartes] does not want to say anything more. Mr Regius, an outstanding man in physics, went to pay his respects several days ago and asked him whether he wished to give a refutation of your writing: [since, he told him] he was certain that if he could show that your reasons failed, this would add a great deal to his fame. But he [Descartes] answered that he did not have enough spare time for that and that he had other, more important, work to attend to. Ever since your writing came into the hands of everyone, so profound is the silence concerning the praise of his Metaphysics, that one might now think it a dream that it was once received with such great acclamations.<sup>26</sup>

It seems that Regius's intention of having Descartes respond to Gassendi's *Instances* had a pre-history which can be traced back to February of the previous year:

Mr Regius, who claimed that this thick volume of *Instances* was full of sourness and insults [...] [Regius] talked to Mr Descartes about Mr Gassendi in order to spur him into taking revenge against an adversary whose merit seemed to him redoubtable for the success of their philosophy.<sup>27</sup>

Baillet also quotes another letter from Regius to Descartes, where he talks of his 'alarm' and which corroborates the same attitude on his part, both vindictive and bold. This letter is neither identified nor dated by Baillet.<sup>28</sup> Baillet goes even further quoting another letter in which Bornius informs Gassendi about Descartes's disciples insisting in April 1644 that Descartes should refute Gassendi's '*écrit*', as well as about the latter's cold answer.<sup>29</sup>

*et le corps sont deux substances de diverse nature, cela les empêche de pouvoir agir l'une contre l'autre; car, au contraire, ceux qui admettent des accidents réels, comme la chaleur, la pesanteur, et semblables, ne doutent point que ces accidents ne puissent agir contre le corps, et toutefois il y a plus de différence entre eux et lui, c'est-à-dire entre des accidents et une substance, qu'il n'y a entre deux substances', Œuvres de Descartes, vol. 9, 213, The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, vol. 2, 275–6.*

<sup>25</sup> I.e., Gassendi, *Disquisitio Metaphysica*.

<sup>26</sup> 'De responsione ad refutationem tuam ne verbum quidem amplius loquitur. Dominus Regius, Vir Summus in Physicis, ante dies aliquot ipsum salutatum ivit, qui petiit ab illo ut vellet scriptum tuum refutare: se certum esse, quod si demonstrare posse rationes tuas nullius esse momenti, magnam famae illius partem additum iri. Verum dixit sibi ad illud non satis iam esse otii, seque aliis, iisque praestantioribus, curis occupatum esse. Postquam scriptum tuum in omnium manibus versari coepit, tam altum de ipsius Metaphysicae laudibus silentium, ut putare somnium esse illam tantis acclamationibus olim exceptam esse', H. Bornius to P. Gassendi, 16/26 June 1645, Gassendi, *Opera omnia*, vol. 6, 489, my translation; *Œuvres de Descartes*, vol. 4, 238. Erik-Jan Bos supposes that this encounter took place in the period from 22 May/1 June till 28 May 1644/7 June, see Bos, *The Correspondence*, 182, fn. 7.

<sup>27</sup> 'M. Regius, qui prétendait que ce gros livre d'*Instances* était rempli d'aigreurs et d'insultes [...] [Regius] parlait de M. Gassendi à M. Descartes pour l'exciter à la vengeance contre un adversaire dont le mérite lui paraissait fort à craindre pour le succès de leur philosophie [i.m. Lettr. 27 Ms. de Reg. du 19 Février 1644]', Baillet, *Vie de M. Descartes*, vol. 2, 207–8; Bos, *The Correspondence*, 172.

<sup>28</sup> Bos (*The Correspondence*, 182, fn. 8) thinks that it could be Regius's lost letter of 13/23 June 1645, but there is no evidence for this.

<sup>29</sup> 'Les disciples\* [\*Regii Epist. Ms. ad Cartes.] de M. Descartes en étaient alarmés: et sur les instances qu'ils lui faisaient de vouloir pour l'amour de la philosophie réfuter incessamment cet écrit, il s'était contenté de leur dire froidement

Descartes's refusal to accept Gassendi's challenge remained an issue among the Gassendist party. This is what Bornius had to say to Gassendi one year later:

But, to be frank about what I think of this undertaking of Descartes's [of refuting Gassendi's *Disquisitioni*], I think it's as good as whitening an Ethiopian; *because he will not be able to disentangle himself from the net in which you've caught him* [my emphasis]. These are also the sentiments of the excellent Regius, who, on account of the publication of his physics, has also roused Descartes's ire against him to a considerable extent. The latter sensed, I think, that there are some things to be read there that differ from his opinions.<sup>30</sup>

If we were to date the reversal in Regius's attitude towards Descartes, it must have occurred during the period between May 1644 and May 1645, when Descartes postponed and eventually refused to give a helping hand to his friend, on a topic to which the latter had been particularly exposed during the quarrel of Utrecht. Regius had had to abandon the theory of being by accident and found he was on his own now, and had to come up with a solution to the difficult problem of the communication of the substances. Descartes's final refusal in June 1645 to come with a solution *tout court* led to the final touches which Regius added to his *Fundamenta Physices*, which he sent to Descartes in late June or the beginning of July, together with a cover letter in which he tried to save what could be saved in his relationship with Descartes.<sup>31</sup>

*que M. Gassendi n'avait pas pris sa pensée* [here Baillet seems to quote his next reference which is 'Pag. 480, op. Gass. ibid.', that is Bornius's published letter of 20 September 1644]; *que son gros livre ne méritait aucune réponse [...]*' ('Mr. Descartes's disciples' [\*Regii Epist. Ms. ad Cartes.] were alarmed: and when they insisted that he should, for the love of philosophy, refute that writing once and for all, he simply and coldly replied that Mr. Gassendi had failed to grasp his thought; and that his thick book did not deserve any kind of reply...'), Baillet, vol. 2, 211, my translation. In fact, Bornius's letter summarizes a lost letter that he had written to Gassendi on 1 May, cf. Gassendi, *Opera omnia*, vol. 6, 480. According to this report, Descartes seems to have promised a reply to Gassendi: 'And if I remember well, I had written something about Descartes's bragging, with reference to your latest writing against him, that, faced with his disciples' inquiry as to when he was going to refute that writing, he would only say that you did not grasp his intention, but, since he wanted to please them, he would insert some notes in his new publication that would make it easy even for a child to disentangle the knots', my translation. It is thus clear that from May 1644 to May 1645, Descartes's position changed completely.

<sup>30</sup> *Verum, ut sincere tibi meam de hoc Cartesii molimine sententiam aperiam credo ipsum Aethiopem dealbare; nunquam enim se ex illis, quibus illum irretitum tenes, laqueis se expedit; sic mecum iudicat optimus Regius, cui propter editionem Physices Cartesius etiam non parum est infensus. Subolfecit, credo, ibi quaedam lectum iri, quia [sic for qui] suis placitis abluunt*, H. Bornius to P. Gassendi, 9 July 1646, Gassendi, *Opera omnia*, vol. 6, 499, my translation. On Bornius, see Baillet's remark: 'M. de Sorbière se trouvait secondé dans son zèle pour la réputation de M. Gassendi par le sieur Henry Bornius d'Utrecht, qui avait été autrefois disciple de M. Reneri en philosophie, mais qui s'était fait gassendiste depuis à la compagnie de M. Gassendi [...]' ('Mr. de Sorbière found he was seconded in his zeal for Gassendi's reputation by Mr. Henry Bornius of Utrecht, who had once been a disciple of Mr. Reneri's philosophy, but who had meanwhile turned Gassendist in Mr. Gassendi's company[...]'). Baillet, vol. 2, 210, my translation.

<sup>31</sup> *Il le lui envoya pour l'examiner, plutôt pour ne pas laisser périr la coutume tout d'un coup, que pour profiter véritablement des leçons de son Maître [...]. M. Regius, qui avait déjà pris son parti, et qui s'était fortifié contre toutes sortes de remonstrances [...]*' ('He sent it to him so he could examine it, for the sake of not letting the custom perish all of a sudden, rather than with any intention of deriving some profit from his Master's teachings [...]. Mr. Regius, who had already established his allegiances, and who had fortified himself against any kind of complaint [...]'). Baillet, vol. 2, 268, my translation.

## REGIUS'S GASSENDISM

In intellectual history, in order to explain an actor's espousal of the ideas of another, one needs to suppose an intellectual affinity, which is often based not only on the force of the ideas themselves, but also on a common background, which translates as a series of lexical and conceptual analogies. This seems to have been the case with Regius and Gassendi, in whose common background Sorbière was certain to be able to play a role. In what follows I will point out where exactly Regius seems to follow Gassendi. For the latter, I will naturally refer to the *Objections* and the *Instances* against Descartes's *Méditations métaphysiques*, which Sorbière saw through the press in Amsterdam in 1644 as part of the *Disquisitio metaphysica*. For Regius, I will look at testimonies of his thought both before and after the letters of July 1645, which marked the time of his break with Descartes. In fact, the severe rules which Descartes had set for his intellectual commerce with Regius certainly prevented the latter from publishing the essence of his thought in his *Physiologia* of 1641. Without necessarily supposing a Cartesian act of censure on this first work, we have nevertheless to admit that there was one in the case of Regius's second work, the *Fundamenta Physices* of 1646. The content of this Cartesian censure is known from the correspondence: at stake is the theory of the soul as a mode of the body. It is thus admissible to go beyond the *Fundamenta Physices* to the *Explicatio mentis humanae* (which comprises the theses posted in 1647 by his student Petrus Wassenaer) and even on to the *Philosophia naturalis*, the last version of the same programme, published by Regius in Amsterdam, in 1654.

Following this path, we can come to a good appreciation of Regius's favourable response to Gassendi's teaching and, in particular, of the respects in which he had appropriated certain positions that Gassendi had formulated in his *Objections* and *Instances* against Descartes's *Méditations métaphysiques*. As far as Regius's final work is concerned, it is worthwhile to examine a chapter added as a preamble to Book Five, on Man, entitled *De mente humana, sive Anima rationali*.<sup>32</sup> The interest of this work, published four years after Descartes's death, also lies in the fact that, after the split that the French philosopher had made public in the prefatory epistle to the French translation of the *Principia philosophiae* of 1647 and which was also known thanks to the polemical exchange spurred by the publication of the *Explicatio mentis humanae* and of the *Notae in programma quoddam* of 1648, Regius expresses in it the essence of his thought, no longer fearing anything from his former mentor. In addition, this added chapter is a developed commentary on, and a defense of, the first fifteen theses presented in the *Explication de l'esprit humain* taken one by one, in such a way that we may ask whether the architecture of this text could constitute the body of argument by means of which he may have trained his student Petrus Wassenaer for the defense of December 1647, which never actually took place.

Let us note first of all that the general framework of the objections formulated by Gassendi at the beginning of his *Instances* is an attack on Descartes's rationalism with reference to the

<sup>32</sup> H. Regius, *Philosophia naturalis, editio secunda, priore multo locupletior & emendatior* (Amsterdam, 1654), V.1, 'De mente humana, sive Anima rationali', 334–59; French translation, possibly by Claude Rouxel, in *Philosophie naturelle de Henry le Roy, Docteur en Philosophie & Professeur en Medecine dans l'Université d'Utrecht, traduite de Latin en François* (Utrecht, 1687), 426–56. Rouxel signs, with van Zyll, the dedication of the book to Godaert van Thuil van Serooskerken, deputy in the States of Utrecht. Theo Verbeek makes the same attribution, see T. Verbeek, 'Le contexte historique des *Notae in Programma quoddam*', in *Descartes et Regius: Autour de l'Explication de l'esprit humain*, edited by T. Verbeek (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), 4. Rouxel was also translating Samuel von Puffendorf into French, at the same time: *Introduction à l'Histoire des principaux Etats, tels qu'ils sont aujourd'hui en Europe* (Utrecht, 1687).

‘existence of God and the separability of the human soul’.<sup>33</sup> We need to ask, in the next place, whether it is this question that lies at the core of Regius’s opposition to Descartes. Indeed, the same general objection that Gassendi made against Descartes, namely, that he glorified too much the power of reason,<sup>34</sup> was adopted by Regius, who shows several times during the same chapter that human reason is incapable of deciding on crucial metaphysical issues to do with the existence of God, the real distinction between the extended substance and the thinking substance, and the separability of the soul. Is it a coincidence that the exchange of letters of 1645 between Descartes and Regius highlights precisely this point?

I have only said that it is clear, by the holy Scripture, that the reasonable soul is an immortal substance; but that we cannot prove it by any natural reason, and that there is nothing that can decide whether it should be a mode of the body any more than that it should be really distinguished from the body. In this respect I think I have supported the authority of Scripture, as far as it was in my power to do so; instead, those who claim to make use of natural reason on this point, seem to defy divine authority and, while putting forward but weak reasons, betray the cause of the soul and of the sacred Scripture by carelessness or by malice.<sup>35</sup>

The general case against Descartes that Gassendi had built from his fourth *Instance* to the *Pré-ambule* of his *Objections* remains the overall framework within which Regius will continue to place his philosophical undertaking. According to Gassendi, to conceive of the existence of God and the separability of the soul means to go beyond the senses, and consequently to extend to intelligible things the qualities of sensible things. Even if the sensible things are a means to rise to the intelligible, and even if we can very well understand that God and the soul exist, we cannot affirm, as Descartes does, what God and the soul are.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> ‘*Quaeso te enim ecquae-nam est Metaphysica cogitatio? [...] Cum tua ergo ratio, ac intelligentia occupetur heic circa Dei existentiam, ac mentis humanae separabilitatem, idcirco non potest tibi esse alia Metaphysica cogitatio, quam ea, qua ratiocinaris, ac intelligis tum Deum existere, tum mentem separabilem esse*’, Gassendi, *Disquisitione metaphysica*, 22–3.

<sup>34</sup> ‘[...] *gloriarī te nimium de tua ratione ac intelligentia*’, Gassendi, *Disquisitione metaphysica*, 24–5.

<sup>35</sup> ‘*Je ne vous en ai dit autre chose, sinon qu’il est clair, par l’Ecriture sainte, que l’âme raisonnable est une substance immortelle; mais qu’on ne peut le prouver par aucune raison naturelle, et que rien n’empêche qu’elle ne soit aussi bien un mode du corps qu’une substance qu’en serait réellement distinguée. C’est en quoi je crois avoir affermi l’autorité de l’Ecriture, en ce qui dépendait de moi; au lieu que ceux qui prétendent se servir des raisons naturelles, en cette occasion, semblent se défer de l’autorité divine, et, n’alléguant que de faibles raisons, trahissent la cause de l’âme et des saintes Ecritures, par leur indiscretion ou par leur malice*’, H. Regius to R. Descartes, 23 July 1645, *Œuvres de Descartes*, vol. 4, 254 (Baillet, vol. 2, 270), my translation.

<sup>36</sup> ‘*Hoc tamen dico, dum ratiocinantur, ac intelligunt existere Deum, mentemque humanam esse separabilem, sapere illos supra sensus, ipsorumque cogitationem non posse non Metaphysicam esse. Nam sensuum est quidem, quod sensibilia percipiant; sed quod a sensibilibus ad intelligibilia progrediantur, et invisibilia Dei, ex iis, quae fecit, visibilibus intellecta conspiciant, hoc rationis est, atque intellectus. In eo differunt a te, quod tu putas te absque praeviis sensibus ad intelligibilia ferri, ac Dei, Mentisque non modo existentiam, separabilitatemque; sed etiam utriusque intimam naturam clare, distincteque intelligere; illi et habeant sensibilia pro gradu ad intelligentiam; et cum intelligent de Deo, Mentemque separabili quod sint; non perinde profitentur intelligere se quid sint*’ (‘I only say that when they [the ‘other’ philosophers] use their reason and intellect to form a conception of the existence of God and the separability of the soul, they judge of a thing that is beyond their senses, and thus that their thought is necessarily metaphysical. Because the perception of sensible things is a matter for the senses, but if one goes from sensible to intelligible things and begins to recognize God’s invisible qualities starting from the visible things he created, that is a matter for their reason and their intellect. They differ from you on the following point: you think you can reach intelligible things in the absence of any preceding sensation and that you can understand in a clear and distinct way not only the existence and separability of God and the soul, but also their intimate nature; whereas they, on the one hand, take sensible things as a means by which the intelligible can be accessed, and,

In the sequel to his thick volume, Gassendi systematically rejects the rational proofs both of the existence of God and of the separability of the soul. This will be exactly Regius's position in the *Explicatio mentis humanae*,<sup>37</sup> which he will develop in his *Philosophia naturalis*. For him, the problem is reformulated in two ways: on the one hand, we cannot determine whether man's mind is a substance or an accident,<sup>38</sup> and on the other, the idea that the soul forms of God does not prove his existence – in other words, a rejection of Descartes's ontological arguments.<sup>39</sup>

The remedy that Gassendi prescribes in his book for this incapacity of reason is revelation. He sees no problem in believing in the existence of God and the immortality of the soul by the authority of the Christian faith, but he does not believe in the 'proving force' of Cartesian reasoning.<sup>40</sup> It is precisely this fideist position that Regius will embrace in the *Fundamenta Physices*,<sup>41</sup> the *Explicatio*,<sup>42</sup> and then in his work of 1654 with reference to the separability of the soul,<sup>43</sup> and to the existence of God.<sup>44</sup> From now on, Regius's endeavor will be to construct arguments

on the other, while understanding very well that God exists and the soul is separable, do not claim that they can understand what God and soul really are'), Gassendi, *Disquisitio metaphysica*, 24–5, my translation.

<sup>37</sup> Regius, *Explicatio mentis humanae*, art. XV (the idea of God in us is not a convincing argument proving that God exists), III (the real distinction between mind and body is not a clear and distinct idea), *Œuvres de Descartes*, vol. 8b, 345, 343.

<sup>38</sup> 'Atque ita patet quod generalis mentis essentia, ratione oppositarum suarum specierum, sit contingens, ac proinde, quod ex natura determinari non possit, an mens humana substantia, an vero accidens, sit dicenda' ('We can see this very well that the general essence of the mind, with regard to its opposed species, is contingent, and that consequently we cannot determine by nature whether the mind of man is a substance or an accident'), *Philosophia naturalis*, V.1, 341, my translation.

<sup>39</sup> 'Hic autem conceptus de Deo, sive idea Dei, in mente nostra ita producta, in eaque existens, non est satis argumentum, ut quidam perperam existimant, ad existentiam Dei probandam. Cum non omnia existant, quorum ideae, sive conceptus, in nobis observantur; atque haec idea, utpote a nobis concepta, idque imperfecte, non magis, quam cujusvis alius rei conceptus, vires nostras cogitandi proprias superet' ('The concept of the Divine, or the idea of God, thus produced in our mind and existing in it, is not a sufficient argument in order to prove the existence of God, as some maintain on no ground: since not all the things whose ideas or concepts are observed in us exist; and this idea that we conceive only in an imperfect manner does not surpass, more that the concept of no other thing, the power of our faculty of thinking'), Regius, *Philosophia naturalis*, V.1, 357, my translation.

<sup>40</sup> 'Profecto enim et termaximi Dei existentiam, et Animorum nostrorum immortalitatem profiteor; ac haereo duntaxat circa energiam illius ratiocinii, quo tu tam ista, quam alia Metaphysica cohaerentia, probas' ('I affirm very firmly that I believe in the existence of God three times great and in the immortality of our souls; and I am only reserved as to the proving force of the reasoning whereby you want to sustain both these and other related points in metaphysics'), prefatory epistle from P. Gassendi to R. Descartes, in Gassendi, *Disquisitio metaphysica*, 10–11, my translation.

<sup>41</sup> 'Quod autem mens revera nihil aliud sit quam substantia, sive ens realiter a corpore distinctum, & actu ab eo separabile, & quod seorsim per se subsistere potest, id in Sacris literis nobis clarissime est revelatum' ('It is most clearly revealed to us, in Holy Scripture, that the mind is really nothing other than a substance, or something that is really distinct from the body and that, of itself, it can subsist apart'), in Regius, *Fundamenta Physices* (1646), 246, translation by D.M. Clarke ('The Physics and Metaphysics of the Mind', 197).

<sup>42</sup> Regius, *Explicatio*, art. IV (on the distinction and separability of the mind), art. IX (God is creator and preserver of the world), *Œuvres de Descartes*, vol. 8b, 343–4.

<sup>43</sup> 'Quod autem mens humana sit substantia, sive ens realiter a corpore distinctum, et actu ab eo separabile, quodque seorsum per se subsistere potest, id in Sacris literis, plurimis in locis, nobis est revelatum' ('But the Holy Scripture has in several places revealed to us that the human mind is a substance, or a thing really distinct from the body, and that, since it can be actually separated from it, it can subsist by itself separately'), Regius, *Philosophia naturalis*, V.1, 341–2, my translation.

<sup>44</sup> 'Qui intellectum habent [...] iis totum hoc dubium tollit divina in cum & de sacris literis nobis facta, revelatio, qua indubitabile est, Deum caelum, et terram, et omnia, quae iis continentur, creasse, & etiamnum conservare, hominemque ad imaginem suam fecisse [...]. Atque ita magna illa dubitatio, quae in animis recte philosophantium per naturam necessario utramque paginam, etiam in evidentissimis, faceret, per divinam revelationem, quae nobis in cum & de Verbo Dei est

that would ruin Descartes's demonstrations of the existence of God and the separability of the soul.

## DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE REAL DISTINCTION

A first set of arguments puts forward the impossibility of conceiving in a clear and distinct way, and thus to prove, the real distinction between the thinking substance and the extended substance. 'Those who maintain that we clearly and distinctly conceive of the human mind as something that must be really distinct from the body are mistaken [...].'<sup>45</sup> This is exactly the argument that Gassendi developed in several places of the *Disquisitio*:

[I]f, given that there is a duality in which one of the terms is conceived clearly and distinctly without the other [...] should we, for all that, really distinguish one from the other, and posit it separately from the other?<sup>46</sup>

Starting from this rejection of the real distinction, Gassendi nevertheless suggests a possible solution, which is to consider that the soul is not only a thought, but also a material thing:

From the fact that the concept of corporeity is not included in the concept of thought, you infer that the thing that thinks cannot be corporeal [...] this distinction does not prevent you, as a thinking thing, from also being a corporeal thing.<sup>47</sup>

Starting precisely from this gap, Regius tries to develop the argument of the coexistence of thought and extension in the same substance, in the case of man:

Someone might wrongly infer that, since extension and thought are different things, they are also opposed; because one is not the other and they contain contraries, such as being and non-being, since thought is thought and not extension. Because in this way we would form a paralogism *per ignorantiam terminorum*, as the logicians would say. Because even if extension and thought are not one and

*facta, quaeque per se manifesta, ac nullius probationis indigens, omnia alia, ut esse Biblia, & praecones Verbi Dei, aliaque, quae in Verbo illo continentur, manifestat, penitus evertitur* ('But those who have intelligence [...] are entirely persuaded of this truth by the revelation we have received in, with and by the Scriptures, which teaches us that God created the heavens and the earth with all that is contained in them, that he conserves them and that he created man in his own image [...]. Thus, the great doubt of those philosophers who seek certainty by demonstrative reasons is dispelled by divine revelation, which was made in, with and by the the word of God, and which being evident by itself, and in need of no further proof, declares all things unto us [...].'), Regius, *Philosophia naturalis*, V.1, 348, my translation.

<sup>45</sup> 'Errant igitur, qui asserunt nos mentem humanam clare et distincte, tanquam necessario a corpore realiter distinctam, concipere', Regius, *Philosophia naturalis*, V.1, 339, my translation; cf. art. III of the *Explicatio*, *Œuvres de Descartes*, vol. 8b, 343.

<sup>46</sup> '[...] an [...] cum duo quaedam sunt, quorum unum clare, et distincte sine altero intelligitur, distinguatur propterea reipsa unum ab altero, et seorsim poni ab illo possit', Regius, *Philosophia naturalis*, V.1, 570–1, my translation.

<sup>47</sup> '[...] ex eo enim, quod in conceptu cogitationis, conceptus corporeitatis non includitur, inferens eam rem quae cogitat, non posse esse corpoream [...] sic neque illa [distinctio] obstat, quin res cogitans, sis etiam corporea', Gassendi, Instance V on Doubt III against Meditation II: 'Non ex eo, quod cogitationis, et corporeitatis distincti conceptus sunt, probari res esse reipsa distinctas' ('By the conceptual distinction that exists between thought and body, one cannot prove that there is a real distinction between these things'), *Disquisitio metaphysica*, 120–1, my translation.



the same thing, and they are not suited together to the same subject when it comes to beasts and plants, they can nevertheless come into accord with each other in a subject such as man, and become his attributes, the attributes of a simple subject.<sup>48</sup>

Thus Regius follows in the steps of Gassendi, who had advanced in his *Instances* a powerful variant of the same argument in order to reject the real distinction:

While the differences that obtain between the species that are opposed under the same genus are opposed, nevertheless these differences of thought and extension do not by themselves involve any opposition between them; because thought excludes everything that does not think, but does not exclude everything that is extended; in the same way, extension excludes everything that is not extended, but does not necessarily exclude everything that thinks. The principle you invoke to ground that affirmation is not different from that of which I have numerous times shown the illusory nature, which has to do with the distinction that is said to hold in reality between two things considered by means of distinct concepts. For that is true for the relation between extension and thought taken as objects of contemplation, insofar as extension is considered only as extension, and nothing else, and thought as thought, and nothing else; but reasoning by passing from a state of pure conception of mind to the thing itself and, simply because you conceived of thought without conceiving of extension, concluding that it exists itself without extension, and that consequently the thinking mind is separate from the extended body – that is, in a word, nothing but a paralogism.<sup>49</sup>

#### A POSSIBLE SOLUTION: MIND AS A ‘WIND, FIRE, VAPOUR OR BREATH’

In fact, Gassendi had formulated in his *Instances* (1644) a solution to the problem of the coexistence of attributes in the same substance – the solution that Regius will also advance in his first sketch of the *Fundamenta Physices* (1646) and of the *Explicatio mentis humanae* (1648):

You hold that the thinking thing you call Mind and the thing called body, although linked in such a way that they seem to make up one single thing, are in fact two things which remain distinct and can be separated; while others hold that the Mind is a thing that is both thinking and extended, and that,

<sup>48</sup> ‘Male vero hic ita inferat aliquis: Cogitatio et extensio hic dicuntur diversa, ergo sunt opposita; quia unum non est alterum: et quidem contraria, quia includunt esse et non esse; nam cogitatio est, sed non est extensio. Hic enim esset magnus, ex terminorum logicorum ignoracione ortus, paralogismus. Nam quamvis haec non sint unum idemque, et ratione bestiae et stirpis in eodem subjecto non convenient; in alio tamen subjecto, ut in homine, consentire, eidemque, etiam secundum idem simplex subjectum, attribui possunt, vocantur opposita’, *Philosophia naturalis*, V.1, 336, my translation.

<sup>49</sup> ‘Cum oppositarum sub eodem genere specierum oppositae sint differentiae, hasce tamen cogitationis, et extensionis differentias nullam inter se prae se ferre oppositionem; quare et cogitationem excludere quidem quicquid non cogitat, sed non confestim quicquid est extensum; quemqmodum extensio excludit quidem quicquid extensum non est; sed non confestim quicquid cogitat. Non alio principio te niti, ut id asseras quam fallaci illo aliquoties jam memorato, de distinctione, quae reipsa sit inter duas res, quae conceptibus distinctis considerentur. Nam verum est quidem inter extensionem, et cogitationem in statu considerationis, quatenus extensio spectatur solum ut extensio, et nihil aliud, cogitatio ut cogitatio, et nihil aliud: at velle ex statu considerationis argumentari ad rem ipsam; et quia cogitationem conceptisti non concepta extensione, concludere ipsam esse absque extensione, et consequenter Mentem cogitantem expertem esse corporis extensi, hic demum est paralogismus’, Instance III on Doubt VI against Meditation II, in Gassendi, *Disquisitio metaphysica*, 158–61, my translation.

even if they think of it sometimes as thinking and sometimes as extended, which makes it look like it were two things, nevertheless it is only one, and that which thinks is not separable from that which is extended.<sup>50</sup>

This coexistence of thought and extension which constitutes the soul can take place, according to the Gassendi of the *Objections* (1641), in ‘some pure, transparent, rarefied substance like a wind, which pervades the whole body or at least the brain or some other part, and which animates you and performs all your functions’.<sup>51</sup> It is in the same *Objections* that Gassendi launched the formula that Regius retained, namely the soul as a mode of the body, with reference to several philosophical schools:

The principal point concerns the distinction between you and *body*. What body do you mean? Obviously this solid body composed of limbs which you undoubtedly refer to when you say ‘I have a body which is joined to me’ and ‘It is certain that I am distinct from my body’ etc.

And yet, O Mind, there is no difficulty about this body. There would be a problem if I were to follow the majority of philosophers and object that you are an *entelechy*, perfection, actuality, form, appearance, or, in common speech, ‘mode’ of the *body* [my emphasis]. Such philosophers do not acknowledge that you are no more distinct or separable from this body than a shape or other mode is separable from it; and this point holds whether you are the entire soul or else some additional *νοῦς δυνάμει* (‘potential intellect’) or *νοῦς παθητικός* (the ‘passive intellect’), as they call it. *But I would like to be more generous and consider you as the νοῦς ποιητικός or ‘active intellect’, and indeed to regard you as χωριστός or ‘separable’, albeit in another sense than theirs* [my emphasis]. Indeed, the philosophers I have just referred to regarded the active intellect as common to all men (if not to all things) and as enabling the passive intellect to understand in exactly the same way – and with exactly the same necessity – as that in which light enables the eye to see (hence they frequently compared it with the light from the sun and regarded it as coming from outside). But I shall consider you instead (and you will be quite happy with this) as a particular intellect exercising control in the body.

Now the difficulty, to repeat, is not about whether or not you are separable from this body (and this is why I suggested above that you did not need to have recourse to God’s power, by means of which those things which you understand apart from each other can be separated). Rather, the difficulty concerns the body which you yourself are – for you may be a rarefied body infused into this solid one or occupying some part of it. At all events you have not yet convinced us that you are something wholly incorporeal. And although in the Second Meditation you declared *that you are not a wind, fire, vapour or breath*, I did warn you that you had asserted this without any proof.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> ‘Cum tu autem velis rem cogitantem, quam Mentem vocas, et rem extensam, quam corpus dicis, tametsi ita connectantur, ut una res esse appareant, esse nihilominus duas res, quae distinctionem retineant, et separari valeant: alii volunt Mentem esse unam rem, quae extensa sit, et cogitans sit; et quamvis nunc ut cogitans, nunc ut extensa concipiatur, atque idcirco videatur duae res, nihilominus una sit, et illud quod cogitat, separabile non sit ab eo, quod est extensum’, Instance VII, Doubt III, against Meditation VI: ‘Non quaeri, an duae completae substantiae sint separabiles; sed, an duo quaedam separatim intellecta sint duae completae substantiae’, *Disquisitio metaphysica*, 568–9.

<sup>51</sup> Doubt V against Meditation II, in *Disquisitio metaphysica*, 136–7, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 2, 186.

<sup>52</sup> ‘Agitur heic primum de distinctione inter te et corpus. Quod porro corpus intelligis? Nempe hoc crassum ex membris constans, de quo sunt haud dubie haec verba: habeo mihi conjunctum, et, certum est me a corpore meo esse distinctam, etc. Atqui, o Mens, de hoc corpore non est difficultas. Esset quidem, si objicerem cum plerisque Philosophis te esse ἐντελέχειαν, perfectionem, actum, formam, speciem, et ut vulgari modo loquar, modum corporis: quippe illi non magis te ab isto corpore distinctam, separabilemque agnoscunt, quam figuram, modumve alium: idque seu sis anima tota, seu sis praeterea etiam νοῦς δυνάμει, νοῦς παθητικός, intellectus possibilis, seu passibilis, ut loquuntur. Sed agere placet tecum liberalius, te nimirum considerando ut ποιητικόν, intellectum agentem, imo et χωριστόν, separabilem: tametsi alia, qua illi, ratione. Cum illi enim istum staterent omnibus hominibus (nisi potius rebus) communem, praestantemque

This polemical text, which allows for multiple levels of interpretation, is above all an indication of Gassendi's Averroist background. Gassendi's contact with the tradition of Averroes occurred during the education he received in Aix-en-Provence thanks to the Père Philibert Fezaye, prier of Grands Carmes, which Jean-Robert Armogathe has beautifully highlighted in one of his articles.<sup>53</sup>

Besides the point he makes several times in the *Objections* and the *Instances*, which is that the soul is to be seen as something corporeal and subtle, which spreads through the whole body or through a part of the body of man, and which by means of contact and under the command of the will comes to impel the body into movement, Gassendi also invokes the Averroist interpretation of Aristotle's *De anima*, III, 4–5, according to which the passive intellect is a mode of the body in the same way that shape is one, and the agent intellect, common to all men, comes from without and acts on the passive intellect in order to make it understand, in the same way that light comes from without and acts on the eye in order to make it see.<sup>54</sup> Gassendi prudently avoids embracing this Averroist interpretation entirely, and notes that he takes the understanding to be particular to each individual (*specialis*) and not common to all (*communis*), which is crucial for securing the Christian doctrine of the human soul. For the rest, he does not distance himself from the Averroist doctrine, as he admits an agent intellect which comes from without, enables the passive intellect to understand and governs the body, remaining nevertheless separable from it.

Some historians have already tried to establish the links between Regius's fideist position and his education at the University of Padua.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, Regius received his doctoral degree in 1623, with Cesare Cremonini, a follower of Pomponazzi, as one of his examiners. And it is precisely in Pomponazzi that we find the definition of the human intellect as an act of the organic body, and depending on the body for its activities, a position he associates with a systematic rejection of the immortality of the soul.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, it was probably not this Alexandrist interpretation of

*intellectui possibili, ut intelligat, eadem prorsus ratione ac necessitate, qua lux praestat oculo ut videat; (unde Solari lumini comparare soliti erant, spectareque proinde ipsum, ut advenientem extrinsecus) ipse te potius considero (nam et tu quoque id bene vis) ut intellectum quamdam specialem, qui domineris in corpore. Repeto autem difficultatem non esse, sis-ne separabilis an-non, ab hoc corpore; (unde et paulo ante innuebam non fuisse necessarium recurrere ad Dei potentiam, qua illa sint separabilia, quae separatim intelligis) sed de corpore, quod ipsamet sis: quasi possis ipsa esse tenue corpus, intra crassum istud diffusum, aut in eius parte sedem obtinens. Caeterum nondum fecisti fidem esse te aliquid pure incorporeum. Et cum in secundâ Meditatione enunciasses te esse non ventum, non ignem, non vaporem, non halitum, admonita profecto es, id sine probatione fuisse enunciatum'. Doubt III against Meditation VI, *Disquisitionio metaphysica*, 542–5; *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 2, 233.*

<sup>53</sup> J.-R. Armogathe, 'L'enseignement de Pierre Gassendi au Collège Royal d'Aix-en-Provence et la tradition philosophique des Grands Carmes', in *Descartes et l'Europe*, edited by S. Murr (Paris: Vrin, 1997), 9–20.

<sup>54</sup> For the passive and the agent intellect in Averroes, see A. Elamrani-Jamal, 'Averroès: la doctrine de l'intellect matériel dans le Commentaire moyen au *De anima* d'Aristote. Présentation et traduction, suivie d'un lexique-index du chapitre 3, livre III : De la faculté rationnelle', in *Langages et philosophie, Hommage à Jean Jolivet*, edited by A. de Libera, A. Elamrani-Jamal and A. Galonnier (Paris: Vrin, 1997), 281–307. 'When we are dead we do not remember everything we knew during the connection of this intellect [the agent intellect] with the body. While it is joined with us, it thinks the intelligibles that exist in this world; when it becomes separated from us, it thinks its own essence', Averroes, *Commentaire moyen*, 298.

<sup>55</sup> C. de Waard, 'Regius et Descartes: à propos d'une lettre ouverte peu connue à Descartes', *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*, 137 (1947), 344–56; C.F. Fowler, *Descartes on the Human Soul*, 349.

<sup>56</sup> 'At intellectus humanus in omni suo opere est actus corporis organici, cum semper dependeat a corpore, tanquam objecto' ('But the human intellect in all its operations is the act of an organic body, since it always depends on the body as object'), Pomponazzi, *De immortalitate animae*, (n.p., 1600), IX, 47, English translation by W.H. Hay II, revised by J. H. Randall, Jr., in *Petrarca, Valla, Ficino, Pico, Pomponazzi, Vives. The Renaissance Philosophy of*

Aristotle that Regius followed, but rather an Averroist line of thought, long in use at the University of Padua, according to which the agent intellect, like a divine spark, would withdraw from the body at the time of death.<sup>57</sup>

In this sense it is worth noting the distinction that Regius introduces already in the *Physiologia* of 1641, between *organica* and *inorganica perceptio*, which seems to draw a line between the faculties of the soul attached to the body, such as perception through the senses, memory and imagination, and the pure intellect, which makes it possible to have the ideas of God and of the rational soul.<sup>58</sup> Erik-Jan Bos has recently drawn attention to this passage, in a study which aims to reconcile Regius's appeal to Revelation and his theory of mind.<sup>59</sup> In the *Philosophia naturalis* of 1654, Regius defined 'thought, or man's mind' or the 'reasonable soul' as the 'interior principle, or the faculty that is the primary source of the operations of man's thought'.<sup>60</sup> The word 'primary' has the role of excluding the 'parts of the brain that serve as instruments or as organs for the operations of thought.'<sup>61</sup> The theory of man as a being by accident of 1641 that had so alarmed Descartes, was certainly a way of expressing the same fundamental intuition: the active intellect is united with the body – including both the passive intellect and the lower cognitive faculties – in order to produce intellectual knowledge. In any event, starting from the *Fundamenta Physices*, Regius no longer speaks of *inorganica perceptio*. In the *Explicatio* he sketched a theory of the soul as a mode of the body which he rehearses but leaves open in the *Philosophia naturalis*. Since it is undecidable by reason, it has the advantage of simply excluding the problem that had tormented Descartes throughout his life and had ruined their intellectual solidarity.<sup>62</sup> The solution Regius found reconciles Paduan Averroism and medical pragmatism in a natural philosophy that still relies on metaphysics.

*Man*, translated and edited by E. Cassirer, P.O. Kristeller and J.H. Randall, Jr., (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 316.

<sup>57</sup> Theo Verbeek has drawn attention to a text where Zabarella develops the notion of *forma assistens*, which may have been at the origin of Regius's theory of man as a being *per accidens*. Be that as it may, Verbeek shows very clearly that, due to Regius, it became possible for Vossius to understand Cartesianism as a modern form of Averroism. See T. Verbeek, 'Ens per accidens: le origini della querelle di Utrecht', *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, sixth series, 71 (1992), 276–88.

<sup>58</sup> 'Inorganica perceptio est, qua mens nostra sine organo ullo percipit res imagine corporea carentes, ut Deum, animam rationales, etc.', *Physiologia*, III.1 (1641), edited by E.-J. Bos, 223.

<sup>59</sup> E.-J. Bos, 'Henricus Regius and the limits of Cartesian Philosophy', in D. Kolesnik, *Qu'est-ce qu'être cartésien?* (Lyon: Editions de l'ENS, forthcoming 2013).

<sup>60</sup> 'Cogitatio autem, sive mens humana, quae vulgo etiam anima rationalis dicitur, est internum illud principium sive facultas, qua actiones cogitativae ab homine primo peraguntur', Regius, *Philosophia naturalis*, V.1, 334, my translation.

<sup>61</sup> '[...] ad excludenda instrumenta cerebri, quibus actiones cogitativae, non primo, sed secundo, sive instrumentaliter, perficiuntur', Regius, *Philosophia naturalis*, V.1, 335, my translation.

<sup>62</sup> 'Mens humana, quamvis sit substantia a corpore realiter distincta, in omnibus tamen suis actionibus peragendis, quamdiu est in corpore, ea, meo et multorum philosophorum, tritissimam hanc quaestionem ventilantium, iudicio, est organica, sive corporeorum organorum indigens; ita ut plane nullas actiones sine corporeis organis perficere possit, eaque utatur corpore, corpus vero non utatur mente: cum mens intellectum et voluntatem, corpus vero nihil eorum habeat' ('Even though the soul of man is a substance really distinct from the body, nevertheless, I think, together with other philosophers who approached this matter, that, in order to perform all its actions while it is lodged in the body, it is organic and needs corporeal instruments, in such a way that without them, it could not effect any of its actions, and that it uses the body, although the body does not use it, as is visible from the fact that the mind is endowed with understanding and will, but the body has none of these things'), Regius, *Philosophia naturalis*, 341, my translation.

## POINTS OF CONVERGENCE

There is no space to analyze and contextualize here the other Gassendi-inspired arguments against Descartes's *Meditations* that Regius mounts in this chapter of the *Philosophia naturalis*. Let us mention Gassendi's objection that Regius takes over and develops concerning the fact that the soul does not always think, as for instance 'during deep sleep or indeed in the womb'.<sup>63</sup> Descartes's response to this consisted simply in saying that the soul thinks always, but that the body does not remember it always.<sup>64</sup> Regius extends the discussion to cases of 'fainting', 'great weaknesses', 'deep drowsiness', 'apoplexy' and 'other similar accidents'.<sup>65</sup>

For Gassendi, as for Regius, there is no certainty regarding the existence of things outside us, contrary to the demonstration in the sixth Meditation: a divine ruse, against which we are not forearmed, and an imaginary verisimilitude can give us the impression that fallacious demonstrations are valid. Nor are there innate ideas. There are no common notions engraved in our soul (e.g., the whole is bigger than its parts, etc.). We form such notions by means of perception of particulars followed by an induction or otherwise by following tradition. The so-called universal notions are acquired by means of observation of particulars and by the mind's induction.<sup>66</sup> Consequently for Regius, as for Gassendi, the idea of God is not innate. It is obtained through the observation of certain goods in men and through their amplification in the mind.<sup>67</sup>

Another point is the rejection of the ontological argument. Regius objects against Descartes that 'not all things we form ideas of exist actually',<sup>68</sup> and that, even if the existence of God is contained in the idea of God, we cannot say anything else but: if God exists, he exists necessarily.<sup>69</sup> In fact, by embracing this position, Regius expresses a point of view also announced by Gassendi in 1641.<sup>70</sup>

The rejection of the rational arguments for the existence of God continues with the rejection of the argument of the most perfect. There is no more objective reality in the idea of God than in the idea of a finite thing. True, 'the mind can form the idea of a thing more excellent than itself', but, since our understanding is imperfect, its conception of the infinite being cannot itself be infinite, and thus it cannot be a 'sufficient argument' for proving the existence of God.<sup>71</sup> Here, too, the argumentation comes entirely from Gassendi.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>63</sup> 'aut per soporem lethargicum, aut in utero etiam', Gassendi, *Doubt IV against Meditation II, Disquisitio metaphysica*, 123; *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 2, 184.

<sup>64</sup> Descartes's Response to Doubt IV against Meditation II, *Disquisitio metaphysica*, 126.

<sup>65</sup> Regius, *Philosophia naturalis*, 343.

<sup>66</sup> *Philosophia naturalis*, 355.

<sup>67</sup> Gassendi, Doubt IV, against Meditation III, *Disquisitio metaphysica*, 239; *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 2, 200, see also Doubt VII, *Disquisitio metaphysica*, 294; Regius, *Philosophia naturalis*, 357.

<sup>68</sup> *Philosophia naturalis*, 357. See quote at n. 39.

<sup>69</sup> Regius, *Philosophia naturalis*, 357.

<sup>70</sup> Gassendi, Doubt II, against Meditation V, *Disquisitio metaphysica*, 493; *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 2, 225.

<sup>71</sup> Regius, *Philosophia naturalis*, 360.

<sup>72</sup> Gassendi, Doubt IV against Meditation III, *Disquisitio metaphysica*, 239–41, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 2, 200; Doubt VII against Meditation III, *Disquisitio metaphysica*, 295, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 2, 206.

## CONCLUSIONS

The investigation of Samuel Sorbière's activity in the Low Countries allows us to conclude that he played a decisive role in the development of anti-Cartesian ideas. He had a threefold role. First of all, he published Gassendi's *Instances*, which may not have come out were it not for Sorbière's insistence. Secondly, he published them in Amsterdam, at the heart of a philosophical network of the first rank. Thirdly, he circulated them within this milieu, and made them available to key actors, who, thanks to their close relationship with Descartes, were familiar with his thought. For Elizabeth, this did not lead to anything much, since she was not a professional philosopher. The Gassendism that Sorbière acquainted her with was circumstantial, as was her Cartesianism. But in Regius's case, this diplomatic undertaking was crucial. Coming at a moment when Regius's doubts had reached their peak, due to Descartes's hesitation to articulate a convincing theory of the interaction of the substances that would also presuppose their distinction, Sorbière's presence cleared up things for Regius, at a time when, psychologically speaking, Regius had become weak. Descartes refused to go along with his explanation of the functioning of the intellect.

It is surely this moment that Sorbière had in mind in 1666, when he was writing to his old friend, while also perhaps stretching the truth for the sake of a compliment to Regius:

I very strongly approved of your method of philosophizing, I who had been much given to the Cartesian philosophy, to such an extent that I repressed the philosophical liberty that you yourself cultivate, especially in those matters where I see that you sometimes turned away from the Great Man. I am therefore thankful for this opportunity and I entreat you to make it so that the hidden argument that we have shared so far be manifested from now on in a more abundant manner, for instance by means of exchanges on literary matters. For I would love to know what you are doing, what you are undertaking, how you are and if you continue to love me, which it is my vivid desire that you should do.<sup>73</sup>

Joseph Millet, one of the first historians of Descartes's thought, was therefore right to summarize Sorbière's actions in the following way: 'Soon this Gassendist busybody rang the bells of victory and announced that the *Instances* had killed Cartesianism in Holland.'<sup>74</sup> We can only endorse Millet's judgment that Sorbière's action objectively nourished Voetius's opposition.<sup>75</sup>

It is clear, nevertheless, that Sorbière would not have been able to win Regius over if Regius had not already found some firm common ground with Gassendi. Their quasi-materialism was

<sup>73</sup> 'Doctissimo Henrico Regio Medico et Professori Ultrajectensi, Samuel Sorberius: Perijisse in itinere literas, quas ad te semel atque iterum Amicis dederam, vehementer doleo, Vir Doctissime, quippe pridem ex illis perspexisses quanti semper ingenium et eruditionem tuam servem. Bene est autem quod Grassio fidem habueris talia de me spondenti, et benevolentiam tuam ita mihi concilianti, ut Epistolis humanissimis rem testari volueris. Ego certe tuam philosophandi rationem sum-mopere probavi, qui Cartesianae ita addictus fui, ut libertatem Philosophicam, quam tueris ipse, retinuerim, praesertim in illis, in quibus video te a Summo Viro aliquando reversisse. Gratulor itaque mihi felicitatem istam et enixe rogo ut quae fuit inter nos latens animorum consensio, prodatur se deinceps paulo uberius, intercedent scilicet nonnulla literarum commutationes. Sciam enim libenter quid agas, quid moliaris, quomodo valeas et an me amare perseveres, quod ut facias imprimis exopto. Vale. Scribebam Lutetiae Parisiorum VI. Kal. Novembris. 1666', unpublished letter, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, MS Latin 10352, vol. 1, fol. 399 verso, my translation.

<sup>74</sup> J. Millet, *Descartes: son histoire depuis 1637, sa philosophie, son rôle dans le mouvement général de l'esprit humain* (Paris, 1870), 30–31.

<sup>75</sup> 'In Holland, Descartes encountered even more enemies. There, Sorbière, among others, wolfed down his physics, followed by Voetius's pack', Millet, *Descartes: son histoire depuis 1637*, 230.



associated with a fideism which they both endorsed openly. The Averroist teachings which had been disseminated at the University of Padua had influenced them both, with their introduction of an immortal agent intellect, in which all human beings participate, but which is linked to man only during his life. Cremonini had maintained that we cannot, by the use of reason alone, demonstrate the immortality of the soul, and he thus prepared them to reject Cartesian metaphysics.

Paradoxically, Regius's contribution to the establishment of the reputation of Gassendism has been deemed insignificant in intellectual history. Cees Leijenhorst noted that 'Regius's interpretation of form comes closer to that of Hobbes.'<sup>76</sup> And in a very interesting study, Noel Malcolm pointed out that Regius 'developed a more mechanistic, materialist philosophy of mind [...] which was ideally suited to the reception of Hobbesian theories'.<sup>77</sup> *Habent sua fata libelli!*

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<sup>76</sup> C. Leijenhorst, *The Mechanisation of Aristotelianism. The Late Aristotelian Setting of Thomas Hobbes' Natural Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 165: 'In his main work, *Fundamenta Physices* (1646) Regius follows this advice [given by Descartes, namely to retain the old term while changing its meaning]. He defines form as the sum ('comprehensio') of a set of accidents of matter, namely the motion, rest, position, size, and shape of the material particles. Regius's interpretation of form comes closer to that of Hobbes than the one propounded by Descartes himself. Hobbes plays with yet another meaning of the concept of form, especially in its original Greek name of *eidōs*. One of the connotations of *eidōs* is "that which is seen" or "appearance". Departing from his phenomenalist definition of accident, Hobbes describes form as the way a body usually appears to us. However, this external appearance is determined by an internal principle, which is not the incorporeal *forma*, but simply the specific motion of a body.' Regius, *Fundamenta*, 1, 4: '*Forma generalis (quae vulgo materialis nuncupatur et omnibus rebus naturalibus competit) est comprehensio motus vel quietis, item situs, figurae et magnitudinis partium, rebus naturalibus constituendis conveniens.*'

<sup>77</sup> N. Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2002), 42.