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The Crypto-Dualism of Henricus Regius

Andrea Strazzoni

For anyone willing to inquire into the problem of the nature of human individuals in modern western philosophy, the revolutionary view of René Descartes represents the cornerstone for the evaluation of any other account of the essence of human being. Superseding the Aristotelian notion of soul as form of the body, Descartes's definition of soul as *res cogitans* and body as *res extensa* laid the foundation of the forthcoming theories on the nature and functioning of human mind and body. Hence, Cartesian metaphysics embodied a new, groundbreaking view of human being, since this was conceived as the union of two substances different *toto genere*, whose relation was hard to be accounted for since the first appearance of Descartes's theories. These, in fact, gave rise to several controversies from the time of the publication of his *Discours de la méthode* (1637) and *Meditationes de prima philosophia* (1641). Although many of these were engaged by scholars supporting an Aristotelian worldview, Descartes had also been attacked by those philosophers accepting a mechanistic account of nature, maintaining, however, a different approach on metaphysical problems. Besides the critiques moved by his friends and correspondents, like those contained in the *Obiectiones* to his *Meditationes metaphysicae* (1641), one can find attacks to Cartesian metaphysics in the academic context as well. The Dutch professor of medicine Henricus Regius (1598-1679), one of the first teachers of Cartesian physics in the University, is to be regarded as a foremost criticizer of Descartes's metaphysics. His views clashed with Descartes's in two occasions: first of all, when his positions on the accidental union of body and soul contained in his *Disputationes de illustribus aliquot quaestionibus physiologicis* gave rise to the well known Utrecht crisis (1641), provoking the harsh attacks of Gysbertus Voetius and Martin Schoock. Afterwards, with the appearance of Regius's main text in natural philosophy, his *Fundamenta physices* (1646), containing some positions on the nature of soul opposite to those of Descartes. The following replies and counter-replies of Regius and Descartes, actually, constitute a key example of the debates on human soul occurring in the Early Modern philosophy. Their study is crucial in

making clear the significance of logic, metaphysics and medicine in the development of the notion of soul and consciousness in Cartesian thought.

The current literature on Regius mainly focuses on his connections with the relevant context of the Utrecht crisis, on his relations with Descartes¹, on his views in medicine and natural philosophy², as well as on his notion of human being³. Being these a weighty source of the analysis of Regius's thought, I will focus on a still overlooked topic: namely, the logical and metaphysical arguments employed by Regius with regards to dualism. In fact, in the light of such arguments one can ascertain that his positions present some inconsistencies to be explained through the dualistic assumptions underlying his metaphysics, making his positions more close to Descartes's than it appears at first glance. Accordingly, my aim is to demonstrate that Regius's metaphysics was ultimately dualistic, as he refused to accept the materialist entailments of his positions. Such ascertainment is to be provided, actually, by means of an analysis of Regius's positions as these have been developed through his debate with Descartes.

1. *Medicine and metaphysics*

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- 1 E.J. BOS, *The Correspondence between Descartes and Henricus Regius*, Ph.D. dissertation, Utrecht 2002; T. VERBEEK, *La Querelle D'Utrecht: Rene Descartes et Martin Schoock*, Paris, Impressions nouvelles 1988; ID., *Ens per accidens: le origini della Querelle di Utrecht*, «Giornale critico della filosofia italiana», LXXI, 1992, pp. 276-288; ID., *Regius's Fundamenta physices*, «Journal of the History of Ideas», 55, 1994, pp. 533-551; ID., *Descartes and the Dutch. Early Reactions to Cartesian Philosophy, 1637-1650*, Carbondale-Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press 1992; ID., *Le contexte historique des Notae in programma quoddam*, in *Descartes et Regius. Autour de l'Explication de l'esprit humain*, ed. by ID., Rodopi, Amsterdam 1993, pp. 1-34; D.M. CLARKE, *Henricus Regius*, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2011 Edition), ed. by E.N. Zalta, URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/henricus-regius/>>.
 - 2 K.E. ROTHSCHUH, *Henricus Regius und Descartes. Neue Einblicke in die frühe Physiologie (1640-1641) des Regius*, «Archives Internationales d'Histoire des Sciences», XXI, 1968, pp. 39-66; P. FARINA, *Sulla formazione scientifica di Henricus Regius: Santorio Santorii e il De statica medicina*, «Rivista Critica di Storia della Filosofia», XXX, 1975, pp. 363-399; *Il corpuscolarismo di Henricus Regius: materialismo e medicina in un cartesiano olandese del seicento*, in *Ricerche sull'atomismo del Seicento* (conference acts, Santa Margherita Ligure, 14-16 October 1976), ed. by U. Baldini, Florence, La Nuova Italia 1977, pp. 119-178; T.P. GARIEPY, *Mechanism without Metaphysics: Henricus Regius and the Establishment of Cartesian Medicine*, Ph.D. dissertation, Yale 1990; T. VERBEEK, *The invention of nature. Descartes and Regius*, in *Descartes' Natural Philosophy*, ed. by S. Gaukroger, J. Schuster and J. Sutton, London, Routledge 2000, pp. 149-167; A. BITPOL-HESPÉRIES, *Descartes et Regius: leur pensée médicale*, in *Descartes et Regius*, ed. by T. Verbeek, op. cit., pp. 47-68; D. KOLESNIK-ANTOINE, *Le rôle des expériences dans la physiologie d'Henricus Regius: les «pierres lydiennes» du cartésianisme*, «Journal of Early Modern Studies», II/1, 2013, pp. 125-145; D. Bellis, *Empiricism Without Metaphysics: Regius' Cartesian Natural Philosophy*, in *Cartesian Empiricisms*, ed. by M. Dobre, T. Nyden, forthcoming.
 - 3 G. RODIS-LEWIS, *Problèmes discutés entre Descartes et Regius: l'ame et le corps*, in *Descartes et Regius*, ed. by T. Verbeek, op. cit., pp. 35-46; G. OLIVO, *L'homme en personne*, *ivi*, pp. 69-92; C.F. Fowler, *Descartes on the Human Soul. Philosophy and the Demands of Christian Doctrine*, Kluwer, Dordrecht 1999, pp. 248-267, 314-377; C. WILSON, *Descartes and the Corporeal Mind: Some Implications of the Regius Affair*, in *Descartes' Natural Philosophy*, ed. by S. Gaukroger, J. Schuster and J. Sutton, op. cit., pp. 659-679; D.M. Clarke, *The Physics and Metaphysics of the Mind: Descartes and Regius*, in *Mind, Method, and Morality: Essays in Honour of Anthony Kenny*, ed. by J. Cottingham, P. Hacker, Oxford, Oxford University Press 2010, pp. 187-207; V. ALEXANDRESCU, *Regius and Gassendi on human soul*, «Intellectual History Review», XXIII/2, 2013, pp. 1-20;

The controversy between Regius and Descartes had its roots in the teachings of Regius at Utrecht University, as these concerned physics as the premises of medicine: first and foremost, Regius is to be considered as a physician aiming to develop a theory of human health grounded in Cartesian physics. His first position at Utrecht University had been that of extraordinary professor of theoretical medicine in 1638, subsequently, in 1641, he was allowed to hold some disputations collected as *Physiologia sive cognitio sanitatis*⁴. Since the chair of natural philosophy was still held by the Aristotelian philosopher Arnold Senguerd, the disputations were not in physics but in physiology, or the theoretical explanation of bodily functions. This was not only a mean to avoid conflicts among professors: indeed, Regius was aiming to provide medicine with a foundation on physics. Hence, his theory of knowledge can be explained as a consequence of his medical interests⁵, leading him to analyse the functioning of mind in the light of bodily conditions. Accordingly, in his *Physiologia* every kind of *perceptio* – with the exception of those concerning immaterial entities as God or the soul – is defined as *organica*, or requiring the body in order to be carried on⁶. Actually, even the perception of universals is *organica*, as these are acquired through imagination⁷. The remark on the difference between *perceptio organica* and *inorganica* is the only allowance to Descartes's theory of pure understanding. Regius's account of perception concerns only the sensible acquaintance of movements through *sensus reflexus*, *reminiscentia* and *imaginatio*⁸, being these the basics for a purely sensistic account of human knowledge. In fact, in his further works he made explicit his refusal of any innate idea by identifying intellect with sensible perception, called therefore *sensus cogitativus*, and omitting any reference to inorganic perception⁹. Despite this point of disagreement¹⁰, however, no break-up occurred with Descartes, nor the disputations raised any quarrels within the University. On the other hand, in a further series of disputations taking place in 1641, *De illustribus quaestionibus physiologicis*, Regius infamously defined man as an accidental being¹¹, provoking the harsh reaction of Voetius. However, even if suggesting a more careful

4 H. REGIUS, *Physiologia sive cognitio sanitatis, tribus disputationibus in Academia Ultraiectina publice proposita*, Utrecht, ex officina Aegidii Roman, 1641.

5 The main works of Regius in medicine, actually, is his *Fundamenta medica*, Utrecht, apud Theodorum Ackersdycium, 1647, which had two further editions as *Medicinae libri quatuor*, Utrecht, typis Theodori ab Ackersdijk, et Gisberti a Zijll, 1657, and *Medicina et Praxis medica, medicationum exemplis demonstrata*, Utrecht, ex officina Theodori ab Ackersdijk, 1668.

6 «Perceptio est intellectus, quo res mente percipimus. Estque inorganica et organica. Inorganica perceptio est, qua mens nostra sine organo ullo percipit res imagine corporea carentes, ut Deum, animam rationales, etc. Perceptio organica est, qua mens nostra instrumento corporeo percipit res imaginationem corpoream habentes», H. REGIUS, *Physiologia*, op. cit. p. 33.

7 *Ivi*, p. 42.

8 *Ivi*, p. 33.

9 Cfr. H. REGIUS, *Fundamenta physices*, Amsterdam, apud Ludovicum Elzevirium, 1646, p. 252.

10 Descartes found the point questionable: cfr. the letter of Descartes to Regius of July 1641, R. DESCARTES, *Oeuvres*, ed. by C. Adam and P. Tannery, Paris, Cerf 1897-1913 (hereafter as "AT"), III, p. 66, attributing Descartes's remarks on universals to a letter of 24th of May 1641; E.J. BOS, *op.cit.*, p. 76 (dating it after the disputation).

11 H. REGIUS, *Disputatio medica prima... tertia de illustribus aliquot quaestionibus physiologicis*, Utrecht, ex officina

strategy to Regius and distancing from his words, Descartes seems to have been more interested in other problems, and he discussed Regius's phrases only urging him to prevent the criticisms of the theologians¹². Descartes's dismissal of the problem of accidental union testifies that other topics were more urgent in his agenda: above all, the definition of mind and body as independent substances.

Eventually, the crisis between Regius and Descartes exploded in 1645, as Descartes read a first draft of Regius's main text in natural philosophy, his *Fundamenta physices*, roughly following the structure of Descartes's *Principia philosophiae* and containing some critical points on the nature of soul. After reading Descartes's criticisms on the proofs of the book, however, Regius decided not to publish some of its paragraphs. In the end, these were included in his *Explicatio mentis humanae* (1647), as the theses II, III, V and XV¹³. The story of their disagreement, actually, is to be first acknowledged in their correspondence: in a letter of July 1645, after having read his *Fundamenta physices*, Descartes objects to Regius of having defined soul a bodily modification, as well as not having provided a consistent deduction of his physical explanations¹⁴. Subsequently, on 23th of July 1645 Regius replied accusing Descartes of feigning and of developing an “enthusiastic” metaphysics¹⁵. In such letters Regius addressed Descartes's misuse of evidence as the criterion for the recognition of truth, by which the Frenchman established the separation of thinking and extended substance. In fact, in his further works Regius will address two arguments for dualism, acknowledged by him as the leading proofs adopted by Descartes to assess the substantial being of human soul¹⁶. As claimed in his letter, indeed, Regius addresses the argument based on evidence as

Aegidii Roman, 1641, III, §§ 8-9.

- 12 Cfr. the letters of Descartes to Regius of the second half of December 1641 and of late January 1642: AT VIII, pp. 460-461, 491-492; E.J. BOS, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-91, 98-99.
- 13 Cfr. H. REGIUS, *Fundamenta physices*, *op. cit.*, pp. 245-255, 291-292, and *Explicatio mentis humanae*, appeared as some corollaries appended to Regius's disputation *Medicatio viri cachexia leucophlegmatica affecti*, Utrecht, Johannes a Noortdyck, 1647, also reported at the beginning of Descartes's *Notae in programma quoddam* (1648), in AT VIII-2, pp. 342-346. On the theses added to the original text of *Fundamenta physices*, cfr. pp. 342-343.
- 14 «Alii autem legentes assertiones sine probationibus, variasque definitiones plane paradoxas, in quibus globulorum aethereorum, aliarumque similium rerum, nullibi a te explicatarum, mentionem facis, eas irridebunt et contemnent, sicque tuum scriptum nocere saepius poterit, prodesse nunquam [...]. Prius, mentem, ut substantiam a corpore distinctam, considerando, scripseras hominem esse *ens per accidens*; nunc autem econtra, considerando mentem et corpus in eodem homine arcte uniri, vis illam tantum esse *modum corporis*», AT IV, pp. 249-250, E.J. BOS, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-188.
- 15 «Beaucoup de gens d'esprit et d'honneur m'ont souvent témoigné qu'ils avaient trop bonne opinion de l'excellence de votre esprit, pour croire que vous n'eussiez pas, dans le fonds de l'âme, des sentiments contraires à ceux qui paraissent en public sous votre nom. Pour ne vous en rien dissimuler, plusieurs se persuadent ici que vous avez beaucoup décrédité votre philosophie, en publiant votre Métaphysique [...]. Car ils vous répliquent qu'il n'y a point d'enthousiaste, point d'impie, point de bouffon qui ne pût dire la même chose de ses extravagances et de ses folies», AT IV, p. 255, E.J. BOS, *op. cit.*, p. 190.
- 16 On Descartes's arguments for dualism, cfr. A. KENNY, *Descartes: A Study of His Philosophy*, New York, Random House 1968, chapters 4, 10; B. WILLIAMS, *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry*, Sussex, Harvester Press 1978, chapter 4; G. BAKER, K.J. MORRIS, *Descartes' Dualism*, London, Routledge 1996; M. ROZEMOND, *Descartes's Dualism*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press 1998.

truth criterion and set forth by Descartes in his *Meditationes*: according to it, insofar we evidently conceive that body and soul are different, we can infer their being two distinct substances¹⁷. The second argument rebuked by Regius is based on doubt as means to distinguish between concepts, to be found in Descartes's *Discours de la méthode* and *Principia philosophiae*. Actually, the Frenchman argues that mind and body are two different substances because we can doubt of the existence of the body, whereas we cannot doubt of that of mind. Since their concepts are different *toto genere*, mind is a different substance¹⁸.

The rejection of such arguments is carried on by Regius both in his *Explicatio* and his *Brevis explicatio mentis humanae* (1647-1648), embodying those theses omitted from his *Fundamenta physices*. Still, the last chapter of *Fundamenta physices*¹⁹ contains some metaphysical assumptions opposite to Descartes's, embodying the basis of Regius's further criticisms. In this chapter, *De homine*, the Dutchman explains the difference between soul and body according to their essences, or *cogitatio* and *extensio*. Mind is defined as the faculty enabling man to perform cogitative actions, through which mind is conscious of itself. Conscience is thus the essence of any cogitative action²⁰. Moreover, mind is characterized as *organica*, as it relies on body in order to perform all its functions, or to acquire the objects of knowledge. Some cases of sickness, indeed, are used to prove that when the body cannot provide mind with its objects, we are neither conscious of any mental activity, nor do we retain any memory of them²¹. So far, Regius rejects innatism as superfluous in the explanation of cognitive phenomena²², furthering the points of his *Physiologia*. Still, the Dutchman states that the essence of mind is independent from the essence of body, as conscience is not extension: cogitative or conscious acts are only aided or hindered by bodily conditions²³. Whereas mind and body are different in essence, however, it is still open to doubt whether mind is a

17 «Et primo quoniam scio omnia quae clare et distincte intelligo, talia a Deo fieri posse qualia illa intelligo, satis est quod possim unam rem absque altera clare et distincte intelligere, ut certus sim unam ab altera esse diversam, quia potest saltem a Deo seorsim poni [...]. Et quamvis fortasse [...] habeam corpus, quod mihi valde arcte coniunctum est, quia tamen ex una parte claram et distinctam habeo ideam mei ipsius quatenus sum tantum res cogitans, non extensa; et ex alia parte distinctam ideam corporis, quatenus est tantum res extensa, non cogitans, certum est me a corpore meo revera esse distinctum, et absque illo posse existere», AT VII, p. 78.

18 AT VIII, p. 7.

19 *De homine*, in H. REGIUS, *Fundamenta physices*, op. cit., pp. 243-306.

20 «Ut corporis natura in sola extensione; sic mens humana in sola hominis cogitatione consistit. [...] Cogitatio est, qua actiones cogitativae ab homine primo peraguntur. [...] Actiones cogitativae sunt, quarum mens sibi est conscia. [...] Per cogitationem itaque hic intelligimus, non cogitandi actionem, sed [...] facultatem, sive principium internum cogitandi», *ivi*, p. 245.

21 *Ivi*, pp. 246-247.

22 *Ivi*, p. 251.

23 «Animae rationalis actiones licet a bona corporis dispositione iuventur [...] cum illud animae sive mentis sit instrumentum, eius tamen essentia, utcumque corpus fuerit dispositum, semper manet immutata et incorruptibilis, cum haec sit naturae a corpore et corporis dispositione plane diversae, utpote in sola cogitatione consistentis. Nec ex illa dispositione oriri queat, cum ea tantum varios, et varie sibi mutuo occurrentes, ac inter se concurrentes, et se mutuo insequentes motus, nullam vero vel minimam perceptionem, aut aliam vel levissimam cogitationem, sive actionem cum conscientiam producere possit», *ivi*, pp. 247-248.

substance, since it is defined merely as a faculty. Because we have no natural means to acknowledge whether mind is a substance, this doubt is solved by Revelation, assessing its substantial being²⁴. Being different in essence and substance, thus, soul and body are united by God's will and persevere in their union accordingly to inertia principle²⁵.

These points are developed first in Regius's *Explicatio mentis humanae* (1647), appeared after Descartes's accusation of plagiarism moved in the French edition of his *Principia philosophiae* (1647)²⁶. After having defined mind as a faculty²⁷, in the second article of his *Explicatio* Regius states that mind can be either a substance, a mode of corporeal substance, or an attribute of another substance. All these hypotheses, indeed, can be conceived without contradiction. Insofar extension and thought are merely different, that is, their concepts just do not entail each other, they can belong to the same subject²⁸. Thus, Regius addresses the presumed evidence of the distinction of body and soul, as well as the doubt argument. According to him, as far as we doubt of the existence of the body, we cannot state that mind is a mode of the body: this only implies, however, that we cannot state anything certain on its nature while we doubt of the existence of the body. Hence, the argument is rejected as it does not allow us to affirm anything on the nature of mind²⁹. Given the absence of any evidence on the nature of mind, Regius still appeals to Revelation as the only solution of the problem³⁰.

2. Metaphysics and logic of substance

The theses of Regius are exploded by Descartes in his *Notae in programma quoddam* of 1648, counter-replied by Regius in his *Brevis explicatio mentis humanae* of the same year. No further communications, actually, occurred between the two philosophers. As in his letter of July

24 *Ivi*, p. 246.

25 *Ivi*, p. 249.

26 Cfr. AT IX-2, pp. 19-20.

27 «I. Mens humana est, qua actiones cogitativae ab homine primo peraguntur; eaque in sola cogitandi facultate, ac interno principio, consistit», AT VIII-2, p. 342.

28 «II. Quantum ad naturam rerum attinet, ea videtur pati, ut mens possit esse vel substantia, vel quidam substantiae corporeae modus; vel, si nonnullos alios philosophantes sequamur, qui statuunt extensionem et cogitationem esse attributa [...], cum ea attributa non sint opposita, sed diversa, nihil obstat, quo minus mens possit esse attributum quoddam, eidem subiecto cum extensione conveniens, quamvis unum in alterius conceptu non comprehendatur. Quicquid enim possumus concipere, id potest esse. Atqui, ut mens aliquid horum sit, concipi potest; nam nullum horum implicat contradictionem. Ergo ea aliquid horum esse potest», *ivi*, pp. 342-343.

29 «III. Errant itaque, qui asserunt, nos humanam mentem clare et distincte, tanquam necessario a corpore realiter distinctam, concipere. [...] Nec obstat, quod de corpore dubitare, de mente vero dubitare nequaquam, possimus. Hoc enim illud tantum probat, quod, quamdiu de corpore dubitamus, illam eius modum dicere non possimus», *ivi*, p. 343.

30 «IV. Quod autem mens revera nihil aliud sit quam substantia, sive ens realiter a corpore distinctum, et actu, ab eo separabile, et quod seorsim per se subsistere potest: id in Sacris Literis, plurimis in locis, nobis est revelatum. Atque ita, quod per naturam dubium quibusdam esse potest, per divinam in Sacris revelationem nobis iam est indubitatum», *ibidem*.

1645, Descartes accuses Regius of maintaining that soul is a mode of the body, instead of recognizing his unconcern with its nature. Therefore, the Frenchman reverses the accusation of feigning to Regius, the Dutchman dissimulating his materialist notion of the mind, since many of his arguments prove that mind is a mode of the body. First of all, Descartes addresses Regius's rejection of pure understanding, or his reducing any concept to a corporeal impression. Hence, he draws some conclusions on the nature of mind accordingly with Regius's theory of knowledge, as it is expounded in his *Physiologia* and *Fundamenta physices*. In fact, since understanding is equated by Regius with imagination, mind turns to be something corporeal, as in the case of animals³¹. Admitting that mind is *organica*, according to Descartes, means to consider it as a mode of the body, or as one of its instruments³². Also, Regius's explanation of the union of soul and body through inertia principle can fit only the substance-mode relation, whereas it cannot explain the union of two substances³³.

On the other hand, other objections follow more strict logical and metaphysical considerations, as Descartes's efforts are aimed to show that conceiving mind as possibly being either a substance or a mode implies a contradiction. According to him, because mind is a substance or a mode according to its essence, one cannot admit that it can be either one of the two, as this would imply that it has a contingent essence³⁴. With this, Descartes addresses the apparent incompleteness of Regius's definition of the soul, which has *cogitatio* as its species, but whose genus – or its ontological characterization – is left undetermined. When Regius clarifies its genus, however, he considers it as something open to change, thus not actually belonging to its essence³⁵. In this way, according to Descartes, Regius reputes the ontological nature of the mind as something accidental to mind itself. Such fallacy in defining soul is followed by an error concerning the notion of attribute. As if mind would be an attribute of a substance, it will not be possible to state its being

31 *Ivi*, pp. 356, 363.

32 *Ivi*, p. 356.

33 *Ivi*, pp. 356-357.

34 «Distinguendum est inter illa quae ex natura sua possunt mutari (ut quod iam scribam vel non scribam; quod aliquis sit prudens, alius imprudens), et illa quae nunquam mutantur (qualia sunt omnia quae ad alicuius rei essentiam pertinent, ut apud philosophos est in consesso). Et quidem non dubium est quin de contingentibus dici possit rerum naturam pati, ut illa vel uno vel alio modo se habeant, exempli causa, ut iam scribam vel non scribam; sed quum agitur de alicuius rei essentia, plane ineptum est et contradictorium dicere rerum naturam pati ut se habeat aliquo alio modo quam revera se habet; atque non magis pertinet ad naturam montis ut non sit sine valle, quam ad naturam mentis humanae ut sit id quod est, nempe ut sit substantia, si est substantia, vel certe ut sit rei corporea e modus, siquidem est talis modus», *ivi*, pp. 347-348.

35 «*In articulo primo*, videtur velle istam animam rationalem *definire*, sed imperfecte: genus enim omittit [...] solamque exponit differentiam, quam a me mutuatus est: nemo enim ante me, quod sciam, illam *in sola cogitatione, sive cogitandi facultate, ac interno principio* (supple ad cogitandum) consistere asseruit. *In articulo secundo*, incipit inquirere in eius genus; dicitque *videri rerum naturam pati ut mens humana possit esse vel substantia, vel quidam substantiae corporeae modus*. Quae assertio contradictionem involvit non minorem, quam si dixisset rerum naturam pati, ut mons possit esse vel sine valle vel cum valle», *ivi*, p. 347 (italics in *Notae in programma* is by Descartes). Cfr. *supra*, notes 27-28.

merely different from another attribute (like extension), because between attributes any difference turns to be an opposition³⁶. Hence, it is impossible to admit that mind and body are two different attributes of the same substance – a proto-Spinozistic standpoint, acknowledged by Descartes as a misinterpretation of his own thought –, since such substance will have two natures³⁷. One can state, at most, that the concepts of modes and attributes are different, but still not opposed³⁸.

In the light of such objections, Descartes can rebuke Regius's appeal to Scripture: the Dutchman cannot admit that mind can be either a mode or a substance while maintaining that Scripture is right in stating its substantiality. The essence of mind is nothing but necessary: a change in its ontological status would entail its becoming something completely different, not to be considered as soul anymore. Regius's appeal to Revelation, thus, turns to be ironic³⁹. Moreover, as Regius is wrong in metaphysics and logic, since he mistakes the notions of mode, attribute and substance, and admits that the essence of mind is contingent, he cannot appeal to clarity and distinction as means to acquire the truth. According to Descartes, admitting that whatever one can conceive is possible – as Regius does with regard to being mind a mode or an attribute⁴⁰ – equates with his own rule of clarity and distinction, which is misused by Regius when he reputed being mind either a mode or a substance conceivable⁴¹. Moreover, Regius's rejection of doubt argument is not tenable, since it relies on a misunderstanding of the notion of mode. Such notion, indeed, entails

36 AT VIII-2, p. 349.

37 «Quod hic *noster* conatur persuadere, atque ad istud probandum subiungit haec verba, *vel si nonnullos alios philosophantes sequamur*, etc., ubi per *alios philosophantes* me aperte designat; primus enim sum, qui cogitationem tanquam praecipuum attributum substantia e incorporeae, et extensionem tanquam praecipuum corporeae, consideravi. [...] De [...] attributis, quae rerum naturas constituunt, dici non potest, ea, quae sunt diversa [...] uni et eidem subiecto convenire; idem enim est, ac si diceretur, unum et idem subiectum duas habere diversas naturas, quod implicat contradictionem», *ivi*, pp. 348-350. Cfr. *supra*, note 28.

38 AT VIII-2, p. 350.

39 «Neminem autem unquam vidi, qui affirmaret rerum naturam pati, ut res aliqua aliter se habeat quam docet Sacra Scriptura, nisi vellet indirecte ostendere se Scripturae illi fidem non habere [...]; verba enim eius sunt *per naturam dubium quibusdam esse posse, quod per divinam in Sacris Revelationem nobis iam est indubitatum*, in quibus [...] contradictionem invenio: [...] quod unius et eiusdem rei essentiam, quam repugnat non eandem semper manere (quia si supponatur alia fieri, hoc ipso erit alia res, et alio nomine indigitanda) supponat esse, per naturam, dubiam, ac proinde mutabilem», *ivi*, pp. 353-354. Cfr. p. 356 also: «quae duo tam manifeste contraria sunt, ut non putem, *Authorem* velle utrumque simul a lectoribus credi, sed ea de industria sic inter se miscuisse, ut simplicioribus quidem suisque Theologis Scripturae autoritate aliquo modo satisfaciat, sed interim nasutiores agnoscant, illum, cum ait, *mentem esse a corpore distinctam*, ironia uti, atque omnino in ea esse opinione, quod nihil sitquam modus». Cfr. *supra*, note 30.

40 *Supra*, note 28.

41 «Conatur autem, quae dixit, confirmare hoc syllogismo: *quicquid possumus concipere, id potest esse. Atqui ut mens aliquid horum sit* (nempe substantia, vel modus corporeae substantiae) *concipi potest; nam nullam horum implicat contradictionem, ergo*, etc. Ubi notandum est, hanc regulam, *quicquid possumus concipere, id potest esse*, quamvis mea sit, et vera [...]; non esse tamen temere usurpandam, quia facile fit, ut quis putet se aliquam rem recte intelligere, quam tamen praeiudicio aliquo excaecatus non intelligit», AT VIII-2, pp. 351-352. In his *Brevis explicatio*, actually, Regius will make explicit his appeal to *recte percipere* (italics in *Brevis explicatio* is by Regius): «*quicquid enim recte sive clare et distincte possumus concipere, id, saltem per divinam potentiam, potest esse atqui, ut mens aliquid horum sit, recte concipi potest; nam nullum horum implicat contradictionem, ergo ea aliquid horum esse potest*», H. REGIUS, *Brevis explicatio mentis humanae*, Utrecht, ex officina Theodori Ackersdicii 1648, p. 7, cfr. *supra*, note 28.

that of its substance. Accordingly, as one cannot doubt of a mode, but can doubt of its supposed substance, one has to acknowledge their being completely different, since the concept of such “mode” does not include that of its substance. Hence, by negating such consequence the objection of Regius turns to be inconsistent, as he ignores what is a mode⁴². He actually proves that mind is not a mode, still, he maintains that it can be a mode. In fact, Descartes seems to revert Regius's words, because according to him the Dutchman proves and admits that mind is not a mode, whereas he merely admitted that doubt cannot prove anything. In his further works Regius provides a more precise account of the essence of mind, detaching any ontological characterization from its definition. Also, he will distinguish the notion of mode from that of the substance. Therefore, even if in his *Brevis explicatio* (1648) he replies to Descartes's objection by reassessing that our doubting does not prove anything of the nature of thing, doubt being not a means to distinguish between concepts⁴³, in his overall account of the ontology of mind he will adjust his position to Descartes's interpretation of his words.

Regius's account of the essence of mind is provided, besides in his *Brevis explicatio*, in the second and third editions of his *Fundamenta physices*, or *Philosophia naturalis* (1654, 1661). First of all, in the *Brevis explicatio* Regius addresses Descartes's accusation of materialism as this is based on his theory of knowledge, clarifying that mind is *organica* because it uses body as an instrument. Still, this has no consequences on the nature of mind: not every instrument, indeed, is a mode of its user⁴⁴. The role of body in providing mind with its object, according to him, has no ontological entailments, since even an immaterial substance can operate through imagination. Moreover, Regius shows that insofar mind is defined as the *facultas cogitandi*, it can be a mode of the body, accordingly with the absolute divine power, as Locke would admit in his *Essay*. While it is necessary for mind to be the faculty of thinking, its being a substance is accidental⁴⁵. In this

42 «Ostendit, se plane ignorare quid sit quod a philosophis vocatur *modus*; in eo enim consistit natura modi, quod nullo pacto possit intelligi, quin contemptum rei cuius est modus in conceptu suo involvat, ut iam supra explicui; *noster* autem fatetur mentem posse aliquando intelligi sine corpore, quando scilicet de corpore dubitatur, unde sequitur illam tunc saltem dici non posse eius modum: atque, quod aliquando verum est de alicuius rei essentia vel natura, semper est verum; sed nihilominus affirmat, *rerum naturam pati, ut mens sit tantum corporis modus*: quae duo manifeste contradictoria sunt», AT VIII-2, p. 355. Cfr. *supra*, note 28.

43 «Etiam corpus plane negaretur, nihilominus mens posset istius negati corporis esse modus: quia corpus, quod negatur, nihilominus potest existere; cum affirmatio vel negatio nostra rerum non tollat, nec constituat, existentiam. Atque ideo hoc, quamvis negaretur, a mente tamen posset modificari», H. REGIUS, *Brevis explicatio*, op. cit., p. 9.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

45 «Est manifestum, quod mens, sive sit substantia, sive aliquod attributum, eidem subiecto cum extensione conveniens, sive substantiae corporeae modus, quo illa modificetur, quique sit eius tantum accidens: semper tamen est facultas cogitandi, in qua mentis essentia consistit. [...] *Errant itaque, qui asserunt humanam mentem clare et distincte, tanquam necessario a corpore realiter distinctam, concipere*. Cum ea [...] aequale tale attributum, vel substantiae corporeae modus, ac substantia per naturam, ob divina omnipotentiam, esse possit», *ibid.*, p. 8. Cfr. Locke's *Essay concerning human understanding*, IV, chapter III, § 6: «we have the ideas of a square, a circle, and equality; and yet, perhaps, shall never be able to find a circle equal to a square, and certainly know that it is so. We have the ideas of matter and thinking, but possibly shall never be able to know whether any mere material being thinks, or no; it being impossible for us, by the contemplation of our own ideas, without revelation, to discover,

regard, it has a contingent essence, like a clock can be made of sand, wheels or pillars, still being a time counter⁴⁶. This consideration of mind is furthered in his 1654 *Philosophia naturalis*. Whereas at the beginning of his *Notae* Descartes objects to Regius of having provided only the species in his definition of soul, then improperly regarded as something contingent⁴⁷, in *Philosophia naturalis* the Dutchman opens his consideration of man by defining mind as the internal principle or faculty by which cogitative actions are carried on. In this definition, the genus of mind is its being a faculty, whereas cogitative actions are its species. Such actions are characterized by conscience itself, or the proper essence – or specific difference – of mind⁴⁸. Being different in essence, soul and body are still not ontologically opposed, as the definition of the soul says nothing on its being a substance. Thus, one can infer the opposition of soul and body only by a *petitio principii*⁴⁹: so far, the substantiality of the mind is not proved by Descartes, but arbitrarily assumed – no matter of the actual function of such assumptions. Reversing Descartes's critiques, according to Regius the Frenchman mistook the concepts of genus and species in his characterization of soul as a substance. This is exemplified through the concept of animal, which does not include that of reason, whereas some animals are provided with reason⁵⁰. In the same way, mind can have different sub-species or ontological characterizations. The clear and distinct perception of the substantiality of soul has thus to be rejected, like that of the rationality of every animal. As if one would admit that mind is necessarily a substance, he could state that every animal is a man, as man is a species of animal genus, or that no animal can be conceived as irrational⁵¹. Accordingly, evidence as it is appealed to by Descartes is rejected by Regius on a logical ground: this is possible, however, because Regius adopts a different definition of mind. He can reject Descartes's evidence argument because he embraces a reductionist definition: evidence in conceiving mind as a substance is to be rejected insofar mind is defined only as a faculty. Such reductionist account, however, collides with other metaphysical assumptions of Regius.

whether Omnipotency has not given to some systems of matter fitly disposed, a power to perceive and think, or else joined and fixed to matter so disposed, a thinking immaterial substance: it being, in respect of our notions, not much more remote from our comprehension to conceive that God can, if he pleases, superadd to matter a faculty of thinking, than that he should superadd to it another substance with a faculty of thinking; since we know not wherein thinking consists, nor to what sort of substances the Almighty has been pleased to give that power, which cannot be in any created being, but merely by the good pleasure and bounty of the Creator. For I see no contradiction in it, that the first eternal thinking being, should, if he pleased, give to certain systems of created senseless matter, put together as he thinks fit, some degrees of sense, perception, and thought», J. LOCKE, *An essay concerning humane understanding*, London, printed for Awnsham and John Churchill, and Samuel Manship, 1706⁵, pp. 455-471.

46 H. REGIUS, *Brevis explicatio*, op. cit., p. 9

47 *Supra*, note 35.

48 H. REGIUS, *Philosophia naturalis*, Amsterdam, apud Ludovicum Elzevirium, 1654, pp. 334-335.

49 *Ivi*, p. 336.

50 *Ivi*, p. 337.

51 *Ivi*, pp. 339-340.

3. Regius's dualism

The debate between Regius and Descartes led to the emergence of some problems ultimately undermining Regius's metaphysics. A first problem concerns the proper content of the concept of mode: according to his reductionist definition of mind, indeed, Regius provides a reductionist account of modes also. In his 1654 *Philosophia naturalis* he argues that even if the concept of thought would include the concept of extension, thought could not belong to body, as in the case of the concepts of motion and figures. If these concepts would truly include that of extension, motions and figures will penetrate the very extension they modify⁵². This paradoxical conclusion leads to state that neither the concept of motion nor that of thought can include the notion of extension: only under this condition they can belong to extension itself as its modes. Regius, in order to justify the absence of any ontological characterization in the concept of mind, seems to deprive all the concepts of modes of their ontological reference. He embraces, actually, an extreme reductionism on the essences of things, which is hard to defend in Cartesian metaphysics, where modes always share their essence with the substance, according to an *inclusio essentiae*.

Also, Regius does not explain why mind could be a mode, whereas extension is, by essence, a substance or a substantial attribute: indeed, in his *Fundamenta physices* and *Philosophia naturalis* he admits that there can be only two kinds of substances, extended and thinking, defined according to their essential attributes. However, extension does not require body as a subject different from itself: in other words, the concept of extension entail that of substance, and a body without extension will be no substance anymore⁵³. Mind, on the other hand, can be a substance, a mode or an attribute of a substance provided with more attributes. An asymmetry is thus to be recognized in Regius's metaphysics, or between the substantial being of the mind and that of the body.

A last problem emerges from the debated points. As explained, Descartes defines soul as *res cogitans*, namely, he considers the ontological status as the genus in its definition, and the activity of thought as its specific difference. On the other hand, Regius defines mind as the faculty enabling man to perform conscious acts. Moreover, he states that matter cannot produce any conscious state⁵⁴. However, this point is inconsistent with Regius's unconcern with the ontology of mind. As a faculty, mind can produce conscious states, whereas it cannot as a bodily mode. One can conceive, for instance, mind as a corporeal complexion that gives rise to conscious acts, accordingly with

52 «Nam si cogitatio in conceptu suo includeret extensionem, non posset esse in subiecto extenso; alioqui enim fieret penetratio dimensionum [...]. Atque hinc patet absurdam eorum esse imaginationem, qui motum et figuram imaginantur in suo conceptu includere extensionem», *ivi*, p. 337.

53 H. REGIUS, *Fundamenta physices*, op. cit., p. 2. Cfr. his *Philosophia naturalis*, op. cit., p. 3.

54 *Supra*, note 23.

Regius's definition of mind. However, this contradicts his denial of being matter able to give rise to conscious states. Since conscience cannot be explained in mechanical way, Regius turns to be ultimately committed with the incorporeal nature of mind. In fact, Regius can be described as an inconsistent materialist, or a crypto-dualist. Also, he admits that mind, as long as its essence is different from extension, is incorruptible⁵⁵. It seems that Regius concedes more to the incorporeal nature of mind than what he would admit. Actually, he should have, more than define mind as incorruptible, state the indeterminacy of its corruptibility, as well as that of its substantial being. He seems, therefore, to maintain that mind is an incorporeal substance more than a bodily mode, whereas Descartes accused him to be a materialist. In fact, in his 1654 *Philosophia naturalis* Regius, probably aware of this problem, tries to maintain the incorruptibility of mind while admitting its corporeal nature: as he concedes that mind, since it relies on a corporeal subjects, is an indivisible atom⁵⁶. A similar position, in fact, can be found in Gassendi's objections to Descartes's *Meditationes* and in his *Disquisitio metaphysica* (1644)⁵⁷. Regius's consideration of conscience as something which cannot be mechanically explained, but by merely appealing to its essence⁵⁸, in any case, puts a dualistic perspective within his possibilism on the nature of soul.

In sum, Regius retains the basics of Descartes's metaphysics, or the necessary substantiality of matter and a non-mechanistic account of conscience, while supporting an ontological unconcern on the very nature of mind. This leads him to some inconsistencies: as that of the extreme reductionism on the essence of modes, or to his crypto-dualism. On the other hand, a complete mechanization of conscience – as Hobbes did – would have made Regius's unsystematic metaphysics consistent, at least in regard to his materialist suppositions. In fact, a mechanistic account of conscience implies that mind is a material mode or substance. So far, the way we know things has ontological implications: if not in respect to the role of body in providing images for mind – which can still be immaterial –, at least with regard to their acknowledgment by mind itself, i.e. conscience. The ultimate acceptance of the substantiality of matter through Revelation, on the other hand, makes Regius's standpoint on the nature of soul close to Descartes's, and ultimately consistent with his account of conscience. Actually, the way by which such ontological status is supported, making his metaphysics consistent with dualism, is definitely not Cartesian.

One can explain Regius's inconsistencies by appealing to his scarce interests in metaphysics,

⁵⁵ *Ivi.*

⁵⁶ «Illa tum in minima sensorii communi atomo, sive corpusculo propter parvitatem et soliditatem suam naturaliter indivisibili, posset existere», H. REGIUS, *Philosophia naturalis*, op. cit., pp. 345-346.

⁵⁷ For a comparison of Gassendi's and Regius's positions, cfr. V. ALEXANDRESCU, *op. cit.*, according to which the influence of Gassendi on Regius is to be traced back to the dissemination of Gassendi's ideas in the Low Countries by Samuel Sorbière (1615-1670).

⁵⁸ «Frustra itaque quaeritur, quomodo mens cogitet: cum illa hoc per essentiam suam iam explicatam faciat, ut corpus per extensionem, seu essentiam extensam, se extendit», H. REGIUS, *Philosophia naturalis*, op. cit., p. 334.

since his main concern was with the development of a natural philosophy as the basis of medicine. This is confirmed by his theory of science, conceived as an empirical and hypothetical enterprise⁵⁹ not grounded on any eternal truth, and by the very end of his work, or the establishment of a Cartesian medicine. Mainly aimed to practical purposes and guided by senses, actually, his approach left aside metaphysical questions. This can explain his inconsistencies from a historical point of view: that is, through the assumption that Regius did not pay to metaphysics enough attention. However, his empirical approach does not serve to account for his ontological perspective on the soul: indeed, the admittance of the sensistic origin of knowledge cannot be used as an argument for the materiality of the soul, as even for Descartes soul can be aware of the species of senses and imagination. On the other hand, Regius could have rejected Descartes's evidence argument for dualism by appealing to the illusory character of evidence, as every knowledge comes from senses and is influenced by temperaments⁶⁰. The supposed evidence of the substantiality of the soul, however, is not rejected by Regius on the ground of his sensistic approach, but on the basis of a different definition of soul, which is defined only as a faculty⁶¹. So far, Regius's inconsistencies do not admit an explanation on the basis of his very metaphysical arguments. A broader perspective, taking into account his medical interests as well as the demands of the academia – since a complete mechanization of mental processes would have made his philosophy unacceptable –, is thus to be adopted. The study of Regius's arguments, therefore, turns to be crucial in understanding the development of Cartesian philosophy in the Dutch context. Besides having influenced Descartes in developing his own account of the functions of human mind⁶², Regius's arguments disclosed some core problems in Descartes's metaphysics: concerning the entailments of theory of knowledge on ontology and the relations of substances and modes, later faced by Locke and Spinoza. In any case, Regius's dismissal of these difficulties through an appeal to Revelation testifies that other issues were more urgent in the Dutch context: first of all, the development of a rational medicine. Therefore, it is in the light of early modern medical thought, as well as by taking into account the political and theological problems entailed by the introduction of Cartesianism, that one can have a comprehensive acquaintance of the early modern notions of human individuality. Such perspective, in fact, can enlighten both the reasons of the emergence of the problems related to Descartes's

59 Cfr. his *Fundamenta physices*, p. 287: «an autem satis clare et distincte rem perceperimus et examinaverimus, mens secundum apparentiam tantum diiudicat. Illique tamdiu acquiescendum, donec contrarium vel aliud per experientiam vel alia ratione fuerit probatum. Alioqui enim nihil in humana vita decidi vel peragi posset».

60 «Cum enim infinita pene temperamentorum sint discrimina, quae iudiciorum producant diversitatem, innumerae etiam de rebus humanis iudiciorum debent esse dissimilitudines», *ibid.*, p. 306.

61 *Supra*, note 45.

62 Cfr. T. SCHMALTZ, *Descartes on innate ideas, sensation, and scholasticism: the response to Regius*, in *Studies in Seventeenth-Century European Philosophy, Oxford Studies in the History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, ed. by M.A. Stewart, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1997, pp. 33-73.

dualism, as those concerning the analysis of the functioning of mind from a medical perspective, and the solutions adopted to solve them, as the appeal to Revelation.

Andrea Strazzoni