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THE HIGHLIGHTS OF DESCARTES' EPISTEMOLOGY  
(AN INTRODUCTION)

*René Descartes ist in der Tat der wahrhafte Anfänger der modernen Philosophie ... Die Wirkung dieses Menschen auf sein Zeitalter und die neue Zeit kann nicht ausgebreitet genug vorgestellt werden. Er ist so ein Heros, der die Sache wieder einmal ganz von vorne angefangen und den Boden der Philosophie erst von neuem konstituiert hat, auf den sie nun erst nach dem Verlauf von tausend Jahren zurück gekehrt ist. Die große Wirkung, die Cartesius auf sein Zeit alter und die Bildung der Philosophie überhaupt gehabt hat, liegt vornehmlich darin, auf eine freie und einfache, zugleich populäre Weise mit Hintansetzung aller Voraussetzung von dem populären Gedanken selbst und ganz einfachen Sätzen angefangen und den Inhalt auf Gedanken und Ausdehnung oder Sein geführt, dem Gedanken gleichsam diesen seinen Gegensatz hingestellt zu haben.*

René Descartes is a bold spirit who re-commenced the whole subject from the very beginning and constituted afresh the ground-work on which Philosophy is based, and to which, after a thousand years had passed, it once more returned. The extent of the influence which this man exercised upon his times and the culture of Philosophy generally, cannot be sufficiently expressed; it rests mainly in his setting aside all former presuppositions and beginning in a free, simple, and likewise popular way, with popular modes of thought and quite simple propositions, in his leading the content to thought and extension or Being, and so to speak setting up this before thought as its opposite.

*Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane and F. H. Simson, 3:221

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Both enthusiasts and opponents of Descartes' philosophy agree that his reform of the way we understand both the mind and the foundations of knowledge revolutionized almost all our views on the nature of cognition and science. From the very beginning Descartes' epistemological programme was a matter of heated debate, in which a tone of criticism and opposition was sometimes heard (Gas-sendi, Hobbes, Voetius, Leibniz, Pascal, Huet, Locke, Hume).<sup>1</sup>

Criticism of Descartes' thought became more radical in the 20th century, especially within broadly understood analytic philosophy.<sup>2</sup> This was arguably influenced by a change in many paradigms at that time, such as the departure from foundationalism in favour of coherentism, a transition from internalism to externalism, or the break with the idea of studying concepts only in favour of studying meanings encoded in language.<sup>3</sup>

However, looking at the history of modern European philosophy in terms of the growing importance of epistemological considerations, we cannot but consider Descartes to be a kind of *terminus a quo* of all subsequent discussions. It is Descartes' doctrine that has prompted philosophers' interest in asking the following: What is the unshakeable foundation of knowledge? Which methods should cognition follow to be a fully-fledged scientific knowledge of reality? What can be the object of cognition? Can we count on the knowledge of reality as it is in itself, regardless of the subject who is perceiving it?

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<sup>1</sup> Francisque BOUILLIER, *Histoire de la philosophie cartésienne*, 3rd ed. (Paris 1868); Michael AYERS, "Theories of Knowledge and Belief," in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth Century Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Thomas M., LENNON, *The Plain Truth: Descartes, Huet, and Skepticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Roger ARIEW, *Descartes Among the Scholastics* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Roger ARIEW, *Descartes and the First Cartesians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Peter DEAR, *Mersenne and the Learning of the Schools* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); Theo VERBEEK, *Descartes and the Dutch: Early Reactions to Cartesian Philosophy, 1637–1650* (Carbondale/Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> Gilbert RYLE, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949); Charles PEIRCE, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover Publications, 1955); Richard RORTY, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979);

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan DANCY, *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985). Roderick CHISHOLM, *Theory of Knowledge* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966); 2nd ed. (1977); 3rd ed. (1989); William ALSTON, *Epistemic Justification: Essays in the Theory of Knowledge* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); William ALSTON, "Two Types of Foundationalism," *The Journal of Philosophy* 73 (1976): 165–85; Alvin GOLDMAN, *Epistemology and Cognition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986); Keith LEHRER, *Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974); Ernest SOSA, "The Foundations of Foundationalism," *Nous* 14 (1980): 547–65; Michael WILLIAMS, *Problems of Knowledge: A Critical Introduction to Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Keeping to the historical truth, we do not claim that epistemological problems did not exist prior to Descartes or that the theory of knowledge is only the work and invention of modern philosophers. Nonetheless, it is a fact that no philosophical doctrine before Descartes accorded such prominence and central status to reflection on cognition as did the author of *Discourse on the Method*. No doubt, one of the reasons for that was that Descartes was not only a “bold spirit” of philosophy, as Hegel put it, but also an outstanding mathematician and physicist. His personal education and the spirit of his times made him realize that at every stage of scientific discourse, the mind practising science should be aware of “a great disparity” that occurs in many cases “between an object and its idea”:

For example, there are two different ideas of the sun which I find within me. One of them, which is acquired as it were from the senses and which is a prime example of an idea which I reckon to come from an external source, makes the sun appear very small. The other idea is based on astronomical reasoning, that is, it is derived from certain notions which are innate in me (or else it is constructed by me in some other way), and this idea shows the sun to be several times larger than the earth. Obviously both these ideas cannot resemble the sun which exists outside me; and reason persuades me that the idea which seems to have emanated most directly from the sun itself has in fact no resemblance to it at all. All these considerations are enough to establish that it is not reliable judgement but merely some blind impulse that has made me believe up till now that there exist things distinct from myself which transmit to me ideas or images of themselves through the sense organs or in some other way. (AT 7:39–40, CSM 2:27)

The scientific experience *en bloc* and the testimony resulting from the empirical sciences emerging at the time created a climate and pressure in philosophy to consider the epistemic status of sensory data and the relationship between different categories of judgement in philosophical thinking. The discourse on the ontic status of things and its content became entangled in discourse on the status of experience, the foundation of knowledge and the method of obtaining proven and credible conclusions.

Descartes' epistemological views are still a subject of numerous disputes and interpretative discrepancies among contemporary historians of philosophy. These controversies concern both the way Descartes' epistemology is interpreted as well as its inherent value. The articles presented in this volume are the best proof of this. Yet they have a unique value in that they show very distinctly that Descartes' epistemology, despite the passage of time, is not only a respectable past, but is still a living and important source of inspiration for all those who are struggling with big questions concerning epistemological issues related to knowledge and its form, truth and certainty, concepts and judgements, principles and criteria, arguments for and against scepticism.

The Cartesian epistemological programme is very extensive in terms of content and covers a very long list of problems. Schematically, six problem groups can be distinguished within it.

The first group encompasses issues related to the method of doubt. Here, the focus is on: a) What is the role the method of doubt actually plays in the entire Cartesian epistemological programme? b) What is the actual scope and nature of this method? and c) what course does the method of doubt take in *Meditations on First Philosophy* and other writings of Descartes? By answering these questions, a more fundamental question can be resolved—to what extent was Descartes right in claiming that the method of doubt is both the only cognitive means with the power to guide us to what can give us total certainty, and also the only tool with which we can understand why the basis and source of knowledge in the strict sense is not experience but purely intellectual cognition?<sup>4</sup>

In the First Meditation reasons are provided which give us possible grounds for doubt about all things, especially material things, so long as we have no foundations for the sciences other than those which we have had up till now. Although the usefulness of such extensive doubt is not apparent at first sight, its greatest benefit lies in freeing us from all our preconceived opinions, and providing the easiest route by which the mind may be led away from the senses. The eventual result of this doubt is to make it impossible for us to have any further doubts about what we subsequently discover to be true. (AT 7:12, CSM 2:9)

The second group includes issues related to the famous *cogito (je pense donc je suis)*

This is a particularly important group of problems. The problems of this category concern, on the one hand, the question of where the exceptional certainty of the *cogito* comes from and, on the other, of what the role of the *cogito* is as the first principle—how can mathematical knowledge, knowledge about God and knowledge about nature and the world's existence be derived from our knowledge about our own mind on the basis of self-knowledge?<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Harry G. FRANKFURT, *Demons, Dreamers, and Madmen: The Defense of Reason in Descartes's Meditations, The History of Philosophy Series* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970); Edwin M. CURLEY, *Descartes against the Skeptics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978); Richard H. POPKIN, *The History of Skepticism from Erasmus to Descartes* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968); Janet BROUGHTON, *Descartes's Method of Doubt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Edwin M. CURLEY, "The *Cogito* and the Foundations of Knowledge" in *The Blackwell Guide to Descartes' Meditations*, ed. Stephen Gaukroger (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006a), 30–47. Bernard WILLIAMS, *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1978).

Archimedes used to demand just one firm and immovable point in order to shift the entire earth; so I too can hope for great things if I manage to find just one thing, however slight, that is certain and unshakeable ... So after considering everything very thoroughly, I must finally conclude that this proposition, *I am, I exist*, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind. (AT 7:25, CSM 2:16f)

... this piece of knowledge—I am thinking, therefore I exist—is the first and most certain of all to occur to anyone who philosophizes in an orderly way. (AT 8A:8, CSM 1:195)

The third group is comprised of issues concerning the general *truth rule*. On what basis did Descartes take “clarity and distinctness” to be the truth rule and when can we really be sure of the truth rule? On the one hand, we ask what relationship exists between a judgement about the *cogito* and the truth rule and, on the other hand, what relationship exists between the truth rule and the proof for the existence of God in Descartes’ epistemology.

I am certain that I am a thinking thing; do I not therefore also know what is required for my being certain about anything? In this first discovery, there is simply a clear and distinct perception of what I am asserting; this would not be enough to make me certain of the matter if it could ever turn out that what I perceived with such clarity and distinctness was false. So I now seem to be able to lay it down as a general rule that whatever I very clearly and distinctly perceive is true. (AT 7:35, CSM 1:24)

The fourth group covers issues related to the allegation of a vicious circle. An alleged vicious circle is probably the most frequently raised objection against Descartes’ epistemology. Assuming that only the proof for the existence of God justifies the reliability of our cognition, the question arises how we can supply a proof for the existence of God without assuming the certainty of our cognition.<sup>6</sup>

I have one further worry, namely how the author avoids reasoning in a circle when he says that we are sure that what we clearly and distinctly perceive is true only because God exists. But we can be sure that God exists only because we clearly and distinctly perceive this. Hence, before we can be sure that God exists, we ought to be able to be

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<sup>6</sup> Alan GEWIRTH, “The Cartesian Circle,” *The Philosophical Review* 50 (1941): 368–95; James VAN CLEVE, “Foundationalism, Epistemic Principles, and the Cartesian Circle,” *Philosophical Review* 88 (1979): 55–91; Gary HATFIELD, “The Cartesian Circle” in *The Blackwell Guide to Descartes’ Meditations*, ed. Stephen Gaukroger (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 122–41; Michael DELLA ROCCA, “Descartes, the Cartesian Circle, and Epistemology without God,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 70, no. 1 (2005): 1–33; Michael DELLA ROCCA, “Taking the Fourth: Steps toward a New (Old) Reading of Descartes,” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 35, no. 1 (2011): 93–110. John CARRIERO, “The Cartesian Circle and the Foundations of Knowledge” in *A Companion to Descartes*, ed. Janet Broughton and John Carriero (Malden, MA: Wiley–Blackwell, 2011), 302–18.

sure that whatever we perceive clearly and evidently is true. (*Fourth Set of Objections*, AT 7:214, CSM 2:150)

The fifth group of problems concerns the rejection of allegations resulting from cognitive errors. The problem pertains to tension between divine perfection and the undeniable fact of a cognitive error. It seems that a cognitive error—assuming that “everything that is in me comes from God”—undermines not only trust in divine truthfulness since God “could have created me so that I would never make a mistake,” but also trust in the truth rule and in our faculties and cognitive operations, the credibility of which is the key condition for us to solve all problems concerning the existence and nature of the external world.<sup>7</sup>

To begin with, I recognize that it is impossible that God should ever deceive me. For in every case of trickery or deception some imperfection is to be found; and although the ability to deceive appears to be an indication of cleverness or power, the will to deceive is undoubtedly evidence of malice or weakness, and so cannot apply to God.

Next, I know by experience that there is in me a faculty of judgment which, like everything else which is in me, I certainly received from God. And since God does not wish to deceive me, he surely did not give me the kind of faculty which would ever enable me to go wrong while using it correctly.

There would be no further doubt on this issue were it not that what I have just said appears to imply that I am incapable of ever going wrong. For if everything that is in me comes from God, and he did not endow me with a faculty for making mistakes, it appears that I can never go wrong. And certainly, so long as I think only of God, and turn my whole attention to him, I can find no cause of error or falsity. But when I turn back to myself, I know by experience that I am prone to countless errors. (AT 7:53–54, CSM 2:37–38)

The sixth group of problems concerns issues related to our perception of objects. What matters here is not the very proof of the world’s existence, but also a demonstration that the fact that we “see” objects in the external world via our senses does not imply that their cognition comes from our senses. Their perception comes from the mind and is only possible by referring to what we find in our mind.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Lex NEWMAN, “The Fourth Meditation,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 59, no. 3 (1999): 559–91. Zbigniew JANOWSKI, *Cartesian Theodicy—Descartes’ Quest for Certitude* (Dordrecht–Boston: Kluwer, 2000); C. P. RAGLAND, *The Will to Reason: Theodicy and Freedom in Descartes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> Daniel GARBER, *Descartes’ Metaphysical Physics (Science and its Conceptual Foundations)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Daniel GARBER, *Descartes Embodied* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

... in the Sixth Meditation ... there is a presentation of all the arguments which enable the existence of material things to be inferred. The great benefit of these arguments is not, in my view, that they prove what they establish — namely that there really is a world, and that human beings have bodies and so on — since no sane person has ever seriously doubted these things. The point is that in considering these arguments we come to realize that they are not as solid or as transparent as the arguments which lead us to knowledge of our own minds and of God, so that the latter are the most certain and evident of all possible objects of knowledge for the human intellect. Indeed, this is the one thing that I set myself to prove in these Meditations. (AT 7: 15, CSM 2:11)

Below, in a nutshell, we present the content of the articles collected in this special issue of *Roczniki Filozoficzne/Annals of Philosophy* devoted to Descartes' Epistemology.

In *Descartes (and Spinoza) on Intellectual Experience and Skepticism* John Carriero argues that Descartes' epistemology is rooted in his profound interest in and respect for what might be called intellectual experience, especially lucid intellectual experience. Lucid intellectual experience is Carriero's term for what Descartes calls perceiving clearly and distinctly. In Carriero's view this interest in intellectual experience was shared by Descartes' rationalist successors Spinoza and Leibniz. He argues that if we do not give enough attention to the character of such experience, we risk losing touch with a central motivation behind their respective epistemologies. What is, then, intellectual experience for Descartes? According to Carriero, intellectual experience is a matter of grasping essences and seeing the properties that flow from the essences. And it is worth keeping in mind that he thought of essences as mind-independent realities, grounded in the ultimate source of the universe's intelligibility which lends a certain systematicity to understanding. In the second part of the paper, Carriero considers intellectual experience in the context of skeptical doubt, particularly radical doubt. He argues that although Descartes and Spinoza are often taken to be opposed here, they share in fact more than is commonly appreciated. They both believe that if you are having a lucid intellectual experience, you will be unable to doubt. Being unable to doubt is integral to the experience. For this reason, Carriero says in the concluding section: "Spinoza and Descartes agree on the following points. When one is having a lucid intellectual experience, one can see, *inter alia*, that one is getting onto the truth. Because of this, such an experience is indubitable while one is having it. And they offer (competing) theories of the mind that trace its origin back to the First Principle in a way that explains why the mind gets onto reality. Without such knowledge, one may retrospectively doubt something shown by a lucid intellectual experience. For them, we can avoid this situation by

increasing our understanding through further lucid intellectual engagements with the world, especially with the essence of the First Principle, through which our mind originates. It is not necessary to have these engagements before we start to understand. But until we do, our knowledge will lack a certain systematicity and, with that, a certain stability.”

In her article *Epistemic Functions of Intuition in Descartes*, Monika Walczak proposes a new perspective on the notion of intuition in Descartes’ philosophy and its epistemic functions. First, she shows that intuition is essential not only in the context of justification (Cartesian synthetic method of proof) but also and especially in the context of discovery (Cartesian analytic method of discovery). It plays not only a role in the foundation of the *cogito* but also on different stages of constructing the system of knowledge. Next, Walczak argues that intuition has important functions in grasping simple natures, forming primary concepts, comprehending complex natures, forming primary propositions (including primary principles), and capturing relationships between them as well as building deductive reasoning (the role of intuition in deduction). Hence, intuition is the foundation for all primary stages of producing knowledge. It is an active and important element of pure thinking (*a priori*) in human knowledge and science. It fulfils these functions owing to its specific epistemic properties. Besides, she attempts to show that intuition is not an autonomous and complete type of knowledge. Nor is it an intuitive thesis, but rather the basis of a justification for theses (including the *cogito*).

Murray Miles, in *The Three Faces of the Cogito: Descartes (and Aristotle) on Knowledge of First Principles*, tries to interpret Descartes’ first principle against the backdrop of Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics*. First of all, he seeks to show that the Cartesian *cogito* has three distinct faces: (i) the proto-*cogito* (“I think”), (ii) the *cogito* proper (“I think, therefore I am”), and (iii) the universal *cogito* (“Whatever thinks, is”). According to Miles, the proto-*cogito* is an empirically known contingent matter of fact. It is perfectly certain for being warranted only by immediate introspection. The *cogito* proper adds a second truth, the existence of a substance or *res*. It is warranted by both introspection and a process of reasoning involving the principle of the natural light “nothingness has no attributes.” The universal *cogito* is an eternal or necessary truth devoid of existential import. Like “nothingness has no attributes” and all other innate principles of the natural light, it is already obscurely and confusedly present to consciousness in the apprehension of the proto-*cogito* in which it is concretely instantiated. It becomes clearly and distinctly known *in abstracto* through the very process of reflection on the proto-*cogito* that led (via the implicit understanding that “nothingness has no attributes”) to the explicit knowledge of the *cogito* proper. Moreover, it is the same process



that leads—depending on how we direct our attention—to the clear and distinct knowledge *in abstracto* of the universal *cogito* and “countless” other eternal truths of the same kind, including the nothingness-has-no-attributes principle. Thanks to this reconstruction, according to Miles, we arrive at “a non-circular, non-logical, and ultimately non-mysterious process by which first principles implicitly contained in a complex intuition are gradually rendered explicit (and, if abstract, grasped in their abstract universality). This process bears a striking family resemblance to that intuitive induction (“grasping the universal in the particular”) which Aristotle scholars have distinguished from empirical forms of induction.”

Przemysław Gut, in his article titled *The Epistemic Significance of Current Clear and Distinct Perceptions in Descartes' Epistemology*, discusses the epistemic role that Descartes believed was played in knowledge construction by current clear and distinct perceptions (the ideas or propositions which appear most evident to us when we are attending to them). First, he points out that in recent literature we can find two interpretations about the epistemic status and function of current clear and distinct perceptions in Descartes' epistemology. The first may be called the psychological, the second normative. The latter states that current clear and distinct perceptions are utterly immune to all doubt, even before God's existence is proven and the general truth rule is established. Thus, their certainty is for Descartes not merely psychological but normative. Next, Gut claims that there are plenty of reasons for the normative interpretation. However, he notes, there are also some difficulties with this interpretation. Therefore, after presenting positive arguments for the normative interpretation (sections I–IV) he discusses the difficulties of textual and substantive nature that the normative interpretation needs to address if it is to be upheld (sections V–VI).

In *The Fourth Meditation and Cartesian Circles* C. P. Ragland and Everett Fulmer offer a novel interpretation of the argumentative role that the Fourth Meditation plays within the whole of *Meditations*. This new interpretation clarifies several otherwise head-scratching claims that Descartes makes about the Fourth Meditation, and it fully exonerates the Fourth Meditation from either raising or exacerbating Descartes' circularity problems. They imply that the Fourth Meditation may raise circularity problems for Descartes in two different ways. “First, merely by arguing for the Truth Rule, the Fourth Meditation may rule out non-circular interpretations of Descartes' overall project. Such interpretations limit Descartes' aim at removing doubts about clear and distinct perception, but a full-blown proof of the Truth Rule seems to reach for more than a mere removal of doubt. Second, Descartes' *way* of arguing from God to the truth rule may be fatally flawed. On close examination, the Fourth Meditation proof seems to rely on a premise that it is

merely a strengthened version of the Truth Rule. But if so, then Descartes' argument uses the Truth Rule to prove itself. In contrast to the traditional "external" circle sketched above, this would be a much more obviously vicious "internal" circle." Ragland and Fulmer argue that the Fourth Meditation does not add to Descartes' circularity issues. The proof of the Truth Rule is compatible with non-circular readings of Descartes' project. Also, the details of Descartes' proof do not really involve him in ("internal") premise circularity. This however, as argued by Ragland and Fulmer, does not imply "that the *Meditations* as a whole avoids vicious circularity. Perhaps the Third Meditation or other texts still sufficiently motivate a circular reading of Descartes' overall project. But if so, the Fourth Meditation adds nothing to that motivation. Despite initial appearances to the contrary, the Fourth Meditation, at least, is perfectly innocuous."

Typically, it is assumed that Descartes' epistemology is organized around three major commitments. The first is to foundationalism, the second is to infallibilism, and the third is to internalism. Stefaan E. Cuypers, in his contribution titled *The Curious Sensations of Pain, Hunger and Thirst. Reliabilism in the Second Part of Descartes' Sixth Meditation*, has no intention of negating this standard account of Descartes' epistemology. Yet, he argues that the discussion of the epistemic status of bodily sensations—especially the sensations of pain, hunger and thirst—in the second part of Descartes' Sixth Meditation, shows that Descartes adopts a fallibilist, externalist and reliabilist position as regards the knowledge and beliefs based on bodily sensations. His argument for this conclusion is justified by an analysis of both the criterion of nature's teachings and the concept of true errors of nature, which Cuypers tries to expose using Wilfrid Sellars' distinction between the logical space of reasons and the empirical space of causes.

In *Cartesian Social Epistemology? Contemporary Social Epistemology and Early Modern Philosophy* Amy Schmitter wants to show us that although it seems sensible to agree that Descartes presents an individualist picture of scientific knowledge, at the same time, as underscored by Schmitter, Descartes does allow some practical roles for reliance on the testimony and beliefs of others. According to Schmitter, Descartes reasons for committing to individualism raise important issues for social epistemology, particularly about how reliance on mere testimony can propagate prejudices and inhibit genuine understanding. The implications of his views are worked out more fully by some of his immediate successors. Schmitter examines how François Poulain de la Barre and Mary Astell analyze the social conditions for epistemic agency in a Cartesian vein.

Krzysztof Wawrzonkowski, in his *Thomas Hobbes's Elements of Law and His Third Objections to Descartes's Meditations*, endeavours to present the axis of

the dispute between Hobbes and Descartes on the grounds of *Meditations*, and its most important moments. He focuses primarily on analysing the most important accusations made by Hobbes and the reconstruction of some of his views, which at the time could only be found in *The Elements of Law, Nature, and Politics*. This work was the first major and coherent attempt to speak out on cognitive-theory and social issues. Then, he goes on to defend the postulate that understanding the content of the *Objections* requires knowledge of this work. The mature form of the work shows that the Englishman already had his views well thought out and could feel quite confident in formulating critical remarks on Descartes's philosophy in their light, to which, it seems, he may have owed quite a lot.

In *The Cartesianism and anti-Cartesianism of Locke's Concept of Personal Identity*, Adam Grzeliński focuses on the relationship between the conceptions of personal identity presented by Descartes and by Locke. Contrary to common readings, he claims that the difference between them cannot be reduced to a simple contrast between rational substantialism and genetic empiricism. Locke does not give up his substantialist position but delimits two spheres: natural cognition with its foundation in experience and philosophical speculations, by means of which he tries to present a rational interpretation of religious dogmas, consistently with his epistemological programme. According to Grzeliński, Locke's criticism is directed against the Cartesian notion of a thinking thing as a substance independent of the body and his description of the differentiation of experience; his depiction of human subjectivity is expanded in relation to Cartesian philosophy: personal identity gains explication at four complementary levels: psychological, biological, sociolegal, and religious.