

## PREFACE

*Il serait dès lors non moins essentiel, pour une étude approfondie de Descartes, d'avoir sa correspondance bien classée chronologiquement.  
Or c'est ici que commencent les difficultés.*

Paul Tannery<sup>1</sup>

In 1638 the Dutch philosopher and physician Henricus Regius (1598–1679) introduced himself to René Descartes (1596–1650), allegedly because he owed his appointment as professor of theoretical medicine at Utrecht University to his being a Cartesian.<sup>2</sup> During the following years Regius established himself as the main advocate of Cartesianism at Utrecht. In fact, he was the first university professor to teach Cartesian ideas and to publish a number of disputations, which provide a fairly complete picture of Cartesian natural philosophy.

According to a passage in Descartes' *Epistola ad Patrem Dinet* (1642) Regius was converted to Cartesianism by reading the *Météores* and the *Dioptrique* (1637).<sup>3</sup> He seems to have developed a system of natural philosophy of his own, based on Cartesian principles, even before he introduced himself to Descartes. In Regius' view he owed his chair in medicine at Utrecht University to his expertise on the New Philosophy, which was the reason why he got in touch with the French philosopher in 1638 (R/D 1). In the correspondence that followed Regius discussed his projects with Descartes. As a result of these exchanges several series of disputations were submitted for discussion at the university, the most extensive being the six disputations Regius titled *Physiologia*.<sup>4</sup>

Descartes showed Regius his work too. He did not only send a first version of the *Meditationes* (1641) for comment to Regius (D/R 15), but also a copy of *Le Monde* (D/R 19B), the text of which Descartes had finished in 1633 but left unpublished because of the condemnation of Galileo. Regius probably used *Le Monde* in his second series of disputations, *De illustribus aliquot quaestionibus physiologicis*, which was submitted for

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1 TANNERY 1912–1950, VI, 293.

2 For literature on Descartes up to 1960, see SEBBA 1964; sources published between 1960 and 1984 are listed in CHAPPELL/DONEY 1987. For critical accounts of publications after 1984, consult the *Bulletin cartésien* published in *Archives de philosophie*. Recent biographies of Descartes are GAUKROGER 1995 and RODIS-LEWIS 1995. Studies on Regius include DE VRIJER 1917, DE VRIJER 1929, DECHANGE 1966, ROTHSCHUH 1968, FARINA 1975, FARINA 1977, GARIEPY 1990, VERBEEK 1993A (a collection of essays on Regius by various authors), VERBEEK 1994, VERBEEK 2000. Except for REGIUS 1640A and REGIUS 1650A, no modern editions of his works are available. For the biographical data of Regius, see my *Regius chronicle*. The only available modern biography is DE VRIJER 1917.

3 AT VII 582–583.

4 REGIUS 1641A.

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discussion in November and December 1641.<sup>5</sup> These disputations displayed the criticism of Aristotelian philosophy far more radically than the previous disputations. As a result, they caused great turmoil. The theologians led by Gisbertus Voetius immediately initiated disputations to vindicate Aristotelian philosophy, and attacked Regius and the New Philosophy. In January 1642, at the height of the Utrecht Crisis, Descartes helped Regius formulate an answer to the accusations, part of which was indeed used by Regius to write his *Responsio*. This pamphlet, published in February 1642, turned out to be highly offensive and was the immediate cause for the condemnation of Cartesian philosophy by the city council of Utrecht.

After the Utrecht Crisis Regius continued to work on a book on natural philosophy. As early as 1641, he intended to publish a compendium of the New Philosophy, but Descartes advised against it (D/R 17). However, when Descartes published his *Principia* in 1644, Regius felt free to continue the project. After Descartes had read the manuscript, he threatened to dissociate himself publicly from its contents (D/R 59). Regius, however, did not yield to Descartes, although some paragraphs to which Descartes had objected in particular were left out of the *Fundamenta physices* when it appeared in 1646. This could not satisfy Descartes, who was condescending about both the book and its author in the preface of his *Principes* (1647). Regius reacted by printing a short placard in which he set forth the theory on mind which had been disputed by Descartes.<sup>6</sup>

Descartes found in Regius an intelligent champion of Cartesianism whom he supported in his battle against Aristotelian adversaries. The Utrecht professor also broadened Descartes' philosophical scope; Regius drew his attention to matters he had not previously investigated (D/R 28). However, although Regius embraced Cartesianism, he did not endorse every aspect of Descartes' philosophy. In the end, Regius' different ideas on method and metaphysics caused the divergence of opinions. In this way Regius' thoughts formed a prelude to the direction which the development of Dutch Cartesianism was to take in later years.

As Verbeek observed in 1994, apart from De Vrijer's theological thesis of 1917 little has been done so far to establish the significance of Regius' work or study the way in which he took up Descartes' ideas and amalgamated them with his own. Consequently, Regius appears occasionally in the Descartes literature either as a hothead who spoiled Descartes' chances or as a crude empiricist who was insufficiently clever to understand Descartes' metaphysics.<sup>7</sup> Regius was portrayed in this way by Baillet (*Vie*, 1691) and his view has persisted well into this century.<sup>8</sup> Bouillier does not doubt Regius' intellectual

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5 REGIUS 1641B.

6 *Explicatio mentis humanae*, 1647.

7 VERBEEK 1994, 533–534.

8 COHEN 1920, 577; DUKER 1989, II.

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capacities, but his account is unsatisfactory because it is biased in favour of Descartes.<sup>9</sup> Bouillier still depends heavily on Baillet and pays no attention to the academic and religious situation in the Dutch Republic. The first objective study of Regius' life and work is DE VRIJER 1917, but the author was not able to give Regius full credit since he lacked Regius' disputations and his response to Voetius. This deficiency was somewhat remedied by the rediscovery of the *Responsio*.<sup>10</sup> Dibon gives a description of the history and the state of affairs in Regius research up to 1950, but presents no new facts.<sup>11</sup> A new impetus was the rediscovery of Regius' *Physiologia*. The preliminary study of Dechange was followed by Roths Schuh, who concluded that at the time of the *Physiologia* Regius did not know Descartes' *L'Homme*. Consequently, Roths Schuh credited Regius with more originality and independence than his predecessors had done. His conclusion was the reason for Farina to explore influences on Regius other than Cartesian.<sup>12</sup> Verbeek reports the rediscovery of Regius' important disputation REGIUS 1641B.<sup>13</sup> However, as his work aimed a complete view of the history of Descartes and the Dutch, it contributed little to Regius research. Although some contributors of VERBEEK 1993A clarify several conceptual issues, none of these explicitly deal with the correspondence or with REGIUS 1641B. Van Ruler and Fowler pay some attention to REGIUS 1641B and the *Responsio*, but only to oppose Descartes/Regius to Voetius.<sup>14</sup> Regius' first disputation at Utrecht University, rediscovered by De Waard and published in the new edition of AT in 1971 (AT III 726–734), and its follow-up, have been completely neglected.<sup>15</sup> The complete lack of a monograph study on Regius in the history of medicine is only partly resolved by Gariépy, who offers a detailed study of Regius' *Physiologia*.<sup>16</sup> However, his — in my view unwarranted — assumption that Regius knew *L'Homme*, diminishes the value of his conclusions regarding the originality of Regius' work.

In sum, none of the studies on Regius from DIBON 1950 onwards is satisfactory. Although the necessary sources have become available in the past decades, there is as yet no comprehensive study on Regius and his relation to Descartes. The major obstacle to this enterprise is, I think, the defective state of the available editions of the Descartes–Regius correspondence. For a clear understanding of the relation between Descartes and Regius, and for an objective and thorough assessment of Regius' philosophical and medical concepts, a critical edition of the correspondence between Descartes and Regius is an essential prerequisite. It is here where the problems arise. The actual text of the letters which were exchanged between Descartes and Regius is unknown. In 1657, Clerselier published 18 minutes of Descartes' part of the correspondence. All

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9 BOUILLIER 1854, I.

10 DE VRIJER 1929.

11 DIBON 1950.

12 FARINA 1975; FARINA 1977.

13 VERBEEK 1992A.

14 VAN RULER 1995; FOWLER 1999.

15 REGIUS 1640A; REGIUS 1640B.

16 GARIÉPY 1990.

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that remains of Regius' letters to Descartes are abstracts and quotations in Baillet's biography (*Vie*). In 1973, Esze published two unknown letters of Descartes to Regius.<sup>17</sup> The order of the letters as they were published in the editions of Adam/Tannery (1964–1971: AT), Adam/Milhaud (1936–1963: AM), Rodis-Lewis (1959: RL) and Bordoli (1997: B) is based on that of Clerselier, but since the rediscovery of *Physiologia* scholars have contested the dates of various letters.<sup>18</sup> However, none of the editors so far has extensively used Regius' disputations as a means to arrive at a more exact date.

The aim of my research is to provide a critical reconstruction of the correspondence between Descartes and Regius. The most dramatic differences with previous editions concern Descartes' part of the correspondence. I have discovered that several letters as published by Clerselier consist in fact of fragments of many more letters.<sup>19</sup> Further, I have revised almost every date established by AT, either narrowing them down or giving the letters an altogether new place in the correspondence. One of the most interesting features of the present edition is that it points out the many reoccurring passages from Descartes' letters in Regius' *Physiologia*. As regards Regius' letters to Descartes, in many cases I have been able to establish their precise date. Moreover, in clearing Baillet's at times confused way of presentation, I have arrived at an order of Regius' letters and their context which sharply contrasts with the standard view. In addition, my examination of Baillet's biography has yielded several passages relevant to Regius' letters which are not found in AT. Finally, the use of the many available sources, both published and unpublished, has resulted in a comprehensive historical annotation, conspicuously absent in AT, on the specific Dutch and especially Utrecht context of the relation between Regius and Descartes.

The present edition of their correspondence will be fundamental to future research into Regius and Descartes. It is the starting point for the establishment of a more exact view of Regius' philosophical and medical concepts, and both the differences between Descartes and Regius as well as Regius' debt to Descartes and vice versa. Moreover, this edition will, I hope, be useful to editors of future editions of Descartes' correspondence. Although every now and then autograph letters resurface, the works by the 17<sup>th</sup>-century editor Clerselier, his successors, and Baillet are still a major source for the correspondence of Descartes. A profound study into their work remains a desideratum, but it is my wish that my efforts in this respect on the correspondence between Descartes and Regius will prove to be of some value.

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<sup>17</sup> ESZE 1973.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. VERBEEK 1994; VERBEEK 1999. In 1966 Micheli published an Italian translation of several of Descartes' letters to Regius, proposing new dates in view of Regius' *Physiologia* I–III. His achievement, however, went completely unnoticed until Bordoli's translation of the correspondence of Descartes and Regius in 1997. For a review of Bordoli's edition, see BOS 2001.

<sup>19</sup> In most cases by using Regius' *Physiologia*, which text I therefore appended to this edition.