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Tad M. Schmaltz, *Early Modern Cartesianisms: Dutch and French Constructions*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. viii + 382pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$90.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-1904-9522-0.

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This important study supplements other significant recent publications on Cartesianism^[1] as well as Schmaltz's own earlier work on two leading early Cartesians, Robert Desgabets and Pierre-Sylvain Régis.^[2] The author sets out to trace various constructions of Descartes's thought that emerged in the writings of early modern Dutch and French thinkers, with an emphasis placed on the plural, and often incompatible, Cartesianisms that responded to different intellectual and social pressures. The list of authors coming under the big tent of "Cartesianism," even with sensible temporal and geographical restrictions, is potentially exceptionally long, and it presents the challenge of "-isms": namely, that they lead us into the uncertain realm of influence, a word whose occult astrological origins should not be forgotten. Nevertheless, this study makes an important contribution to the history of philosophy in detailing French and Dutch discourses that were offshoots of Descartes's philosophy in the mid-seventeenth century through the first stirrings of the Enlightenment. Schmaltz delimits this group as those who self-identify, or seem to self-identify, with the legacy of Descartes and with "Descartes's own research program" (p. 8), a rather heterogeneous collection of writers. The study is organized by a series of areas of Descartes's oeuvre that serve as focal points. Those include Descartes's metaphysics, with a focus on dualism and interactionism, the theological consequences of Descartes's speculative work, his physiology and medicine, and his physics. Those become the fixed points against which Schmaltz cuts across geographical distance and different *milieux*, including university faculties of medicine, of theology, and of philosophy, official national academies, and worldly settings of private academies and salons.

Schmaltz opens the study by considering two theological issues raised by Descartes's philosophy: the status of the sacrament of the Eucharist and the problematic reconciliation of grace and human freedom. The former debate centered more in faculties of theology in France, which associated Descartes and Cartesian accounts of the transubstantiation with Jansenism, the neo-Augustinian movement that was increasingly marginalized within faculties of theology. What is significant for the problematic history of Descartes and Cartesianism is that those condemnations—most notably the royal and the Sorbonne's condemnations of 1671—occurred at a time when there was increased acceptance and popularity of Descartes's work in faculties of philosophy and medicine in the Low Countries. Moreover, in France there occurred a parallel growth of interest in Descartes in French worldly circles and in educational settings of the

Benedictines and the Oratory, settings that were faithful to the teachings of Augustine. As for the problem of human freedom, in the 1670s, the Low Countries witnessed theological condemnations of Cartesian theses having a bearing on free will because Descartes and the Cartesians presumably diverged from the strong interpretation of grace. One important polemical strand that emerged from those debates was the increasing desire even within university faculties of Cartesians to “offer a form of philosophy free from entanglement in theological disputes” (p. 45).

Schmaltz then turns to the problematic relation of Descartes to the ancients and the moderns and traces Descartes’s own ambivalence on the matter, both sides of which were played out by Cartesians. On the one hand, Dutch Cartesians working within the university attempted to assert the continuity of Descartes’s work with the philosophical traditions of antiquity, where Dutch academicians used selective excerpts of Descartes’s philosophy to fill ideological and intellectual gaps in Aristotelian doctrine. On the other hand, French Cartesians represented Descartes as a modern, especially in later debates of the century. This characterization was in part due to para-philosophical issues as well as to the content of his philosophy itself. Descartes’s first editor, Claude Clerselier, targeted a broader intellectual world by emphasizing the works of Descartes written in French rather than in Latin. Moreover, this broader readership included women—many celebrated figures such as the Palatine Princess Elisabeth and Queen Christina of Sweden—and Descartes’s philosophy itself, read in at least a superficial way, contained justification for the equality of the sexes. Descartes’s writings thus played a modernist role in the long *querelle des femmes* in France.

Schmaltz then details the problematic attempt of Cartesians to forge a grand synthesis of Augustine and Descartes. The author starts from Henri Gouhier’s seminal distinction between Cartesianism supplemented by Augustinianism (loyal Cartesians like Louis de la Forge, Gérauld de Cordemoy, and Claude Clerselier) and Augustinianism supplemented by Cartesianism (Oratorians like André Martin and Nicolas Joseph-Poisson; Antoine Arnauld and other Port-Royalists). Nicolas Malebranche, perhaps the most celebrated adherent of both Descartes and Augustine, is situated as a neither-nor in his distinctive syntheses of the two currents. The focal points of those debates included such points of overlap as the beast machine and divinely established eternal truths. The fine point determining the camp into which one fell depended, in this case, on whether those truths were divinely established as gratuitous and indifferent or necessary and motivated products.

This rather arcane discussion of the history of early modern philosophy gives way to detailed attention given to the more significant matter of occasionalist variants of Cartesianism. Schmaltz centers his examination on forms of interaction, namely mind-body and the physics of body-body interaction. For the former problem, Descartes seemed largely to side-step a thoroughgoing account of interactionism. Although one can discern some gestures toward occasionalism in Descartes’s writings, Descartes avoided the problem by his references to “force” that accounted for mind-body interaction and with his references to the indubitability of experience, but this articulation became a larger challenge for “[Descartes’s] later followers” (p. 172). This problem was a point of concentration for many Cartesians, most notably for Malebranche, but even before him for the German theologian and philosopher Johannes Clauberg, who gestured toward occasionalism to account for mind-body interaction. Schmaltz argues convincingly that Antoine Arnauld evolved toward occasionalism as an explanation for mind-body interaction. As for body-body interaction, Schmaltz teases out occasionalist

interpretations in the physiology and physics of two of the most orthodox followers of Descartes, Louis de La Forge and Gérauld de Cordemoy.

Schmaltz reserves a special place for the truly systematic Cartesian occasionalists, the Dutch philosopher Arnold Geulincx and especially Nicolas Malebranche. The former focused on occasionalism in relation to ego and the external world, although he did not relate it to the question of human freedom as Malebranche would. Geulincx fully mobilized the *quod nescis* principle to rule out the strong claim that we produced our own voluntary motions or that the external world acted upon us to produce certain cognitive and affective states. Schmaltz appropriately focuses on Malebranche. By the time of the publication of the first volume of Malebranche's *Recherche de la vérité*, occasionalism was already a current in Cartesianism, but Malebranche's version was the most unequivocal and systematic. Malebranche saw himself as very much in line with Descartes, but his immanentist engagement of God, through the continuous efficacy of his will in all human interactions with the world, represented for many contemporaries, including Antoine Arnauld, a step away from Descartes and toward Augustine. This move was especially problematic when Malebranche necessarily extended this insight to the moral realm. How could we conserve human freedom (and responsibility) in light of the role attributed to the divine will if we were incapable of the production and modification of being? Malebranche resolved this dilemma by according the simple power of free consent to humans.

Schmaltz also investigates the profound effects of Descartes's opus on Dutch medicine from the mid-seventeenth until well into the eighteenth century. Significantly, that influence was launched by Henricus Regius, a great supporter of Descartes's physiology but a severe critic of his metaphysics. Regius thus solidified what had been a trend in Cartesianism, namely, the separation of his philosophical opus into segments adopted, commented, or displaced by Cartesians. Descartes's physics would undergo the same fate. Nevertheless, Regius helped to implant Cartesianism firmly in the academic soil of the Low Countries. In the 1680s, Cartesian medicine spread from there to medical faculties in German territories and in parts of France, especially around Montpellier. Those Cartesian models of iatromechanism had relatively short-lived success. Indeed, the fortunes of Cartesian medicine waned more rapidly in the Low Countries than in France and corresponded to the earlier turn away from Cartesian physics and toward Newtonian physics after the publication of *Principia Mathematica* (1687). In the first third of the eighteenth century, the most important medical writer and theoretician of the time, Herman Boerhaave, developed a form of iatromechanism that was entirely divorced from and superseded Cartesianism.

The other domain in which Cartesianism enjoyed significant success was in physics. The leading figures among Cartesian physicists were Jacques Rohault and Pierre-Sylvain Régis, who, Schmaltz argues, were more commentators than adapters of Descartes's physics. Their true accomplishment was to bring that system to a non-academic audience while also ensuring its later acceptance into the academic system in France by the late seventeenth century. As Newtonian physics and Kepler's laws of planetary motion began to present challenges, Cartesians in the Académie des sciences, led by Malebranche and Fontenelle, attempted to reconcile those doctrines with Cartesian celestial vortices with some degree of success until Maupertuis's *Discours sur les différentes figures des astres* (1732) decisively made the case for Newtonian physics based on gravitational attraction, a physics that fully displaced Cartesian physics by the mid-eighteenth century.

Schmaltz's study ends with the paradoxical ambivalence of the first consideration of Descartes's legacy in the eighteenth century. Was Descartes an ancient left behind with the Enlightenment, or a modern who opened the way to it? Was Descartes the modern metaphysician and practitioner of systematic doubt or the creator of a superseded physics and medicine? Was he the Descartes praised in D'Alembert's *Discours préliminaire* of the *Encyclopédie* or Descartes the fall-guy of the Prades Affair? In a sense, this question is answered by the great variety of and divergences among Cartesians: the question is just what we are talking about. Who speaks or claims to speak for Descartes? Who should claim to speak for Descartes? This leads me to two comments.

Schmaltz's study is both a history of philosophy, focusing on specific and well defined philosophical issues, and an intellectual history, charting the growth of Cartesian dogmas and the circumstances that allowed them to proliferate. He accomplishes the former with impressive skill and success, but the latter does not always yield a thoroughgoing account. What historically, socially, and intellectually accounted for the proliferation of Cartesianisms and for the appropriation of Descartes's work for different intellectual pursuits? An answer to this question would certainly involve greater attention to the growth of a lay intelligentsia and readership, of salon culture, and of private and institutional academies. Another related question is why there was a need for a reset in the disciplines of physics, physiology, and medicine, and why Descartes's and his successors' writings could and did serve to address that need. That discussion would also account for the emergence of "natural philosophy" from philosophy as the sciences emerged as at least semi-autonomous enterprises. (This would account at least in part for Cartesians severing Descartes's physics and physiology from the rest of his oeuvre.)

The other comment involves the relationships of Cartesians to Descartes. The label "Cartesian" connotes greater uniformity and homogeneity than it should, and yet in this study all would seem to be treated as equally "Cartesian." There were many grafts of discourses onto Descartes and grafts of Descartes's discourses onto other corpuses. Those constitute highly heterogeneous discourses that are all labeled Cartesian. The question of relationships is one of intertextuality. Cartesians seemed to deploy a number of strategies in building from Descartes, of which the two principal categories would be elaboration—that is, commentary that extended and completed the work of Descartes—and displacement—that is, the use of Descartes's philosophy to construct a distinct and different philosophical or scientific system. For example, La Forge and Cordemoy, regardless of possible occasionalist tendencies, in medicine and physiology and Rohault and Régis in physics, wrote elaborations of Descartes that would seem to work toward completing Descartes's oeuvre. Malebranche, however, seems to displace Descartes and construct a distinct philosophical system, regardless of his protestations to the contrary. In fact, probably no Cartesian could be so cleanly categorized as one or the other, but Cartesians could be graphed as points with respect to the two strategies: La Forge and Cordemoy would fall closer to elaboration and Malebranche closer to displacement. Would we be able to discern any revealing genealogy or historical trends, for example, the movement from elaboration to displacement? This could be a productive way to organize and think about Descartes's legacy and about the heterogeneous collection of Cartesians.

NOTES

[1] Although this list would be very long, it would include Roger Ariew, *Descartes and the First Cartesians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Thomas M. Lennon, *The Battle of the Gods and Giants: the Legacies of Descartes and Gassendi, 1655-1715* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993); Steven M. Nadler, *Occasionalism: Causation among the Cartesians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); and Theo Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch: Early Reactions to Cartesian Philosophy, 1637-1650* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992).

[2] Tad M. Schmaltz, *Radical Cartesianism: the French Reception of Descartes* (Cambridge, U.K. and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[3] Henri Gouhier, *Cartésianisme et augustinisme au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1978), pp.13-14.

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