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The *Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* is without close precedent in its field. Like other recent Cambridge histories of philosophy, it consists of a series of chapters on topics or themes – rather than on individuals – by authors chosen for their special interests and achievements. Together these contributions add up to a comprehensive, expert, and innovative overview, from a wide variety of vantage points, of a period which supplied the philosophical seed-bed of the modern (and ‘post-modern’) world. The story that emerges lays less emphasis than usual on supposed innovations in epistemology, more on the replacement (or transformation) of Aristotelian scholastic science, dominant though under attack at the beginning of the century, by ‘corpuscularian’ mechanism. This direct ancestor of present-day physics drew largely, for its philosophical credentials, either on Platonism or on the atomism of Epicurus. With its uneasy relation to religious and political disputes and its internecine divisions, it generated much of the energy, hardly paralleled before or since, powering philosophical debates. Like the debates themselves, the present volumes overspill a narrow conception of ‘seventeenth-century philosophy’ in both subject-matter and temporal scope. Their structure in part represents a seventeenth-century perspective, reflecting a time when the ‘philosopher’ was as likely to be peering through a microscope or preaching on divine justice as discussing scepticism, consciousness, or the concepts of good and evil. The contributors have often looked back to the ancient, mediaeval, and Renaissance ideas which informed the arguments examined. A guiding assumption is that context illuminates meaning, a principle with surprising consequences for the interpretation of classic, still influential, but often seriously misunderstood texts. The same principle facilitates reassessment of works formerly consigned to obscurity. The volumes include an extensive bibliography of both primary and secondary materials, as well as an appendix containing brief biographies and bibliographies for a wide range of philosophers. They are expected to serve not only as an important reference source for students and teachers but also as a valuable tool for research into the history both of philosophy and of ideas in general.



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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF  
SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY PHILOSOPHY

I



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# The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy

Volume I

EDITED BY

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with the assistance of Roger Ariew and Alan Gabbey



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## PREFACE

This Cambridge history had its origin in an outline that Michael Ayers made, at the request of Jeremy Mynott of Cambridge University Press, early in 1982, which was circulated for comment to a number of scholars in the field. In the summer of that year, Ayers was invited to be an editor of the book, and a search began for another editor. There had been many helpful responses to the original plan, but Daniel Garber's seemed to indicate particular interest in the project. In December 1982, Ayers visited Princeton University, gave a paper to Garber's seminar, and stayed a day or two to discuss the project. These lively discussions continued by mail, and in the fall of 1983 Mynott invited Garber and Ayers to be the coeditors of the book. Serious work began in September 1984 when Garber visited Ayers in Oxford and they began making concrete plans for the project. At this stage, consultations with editors of the immediately previous volumes were enormously useful. Garber would like to thank Norman Kretzmann for an informative and illuminating afternoon in a coffee shop at O'Hare Airport, discussing the practical details of *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*. Both of the present editors deeply appreciate the time spent with the late Charles Schmitt, then at work editing *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, during Garber's 1984 visit to Oxford. We have tried to live up to the sage advice of these superb scholars and editors during our own travail. Garber would also like to acknowledge advice given at the start of this project by Arnaldo Momigliano, a contributor to two generations of Cambridge histories, who graciously overlooked Garber's monumental ignorance of the history of Western thought and sought to advise him (and educate him) with great kindness.

Plan followed plan until we finally settled on desiderata. It took even longer to find people able and willing to carry out our somewhat utopian scheme, which was, indeed, yet further modified in this task. Then, since we had decided on an interventionist editorial rôle, the real work began. We wrote as detailed comments on the drafts as we could manage, or called on appropriate experts to do so, and rather often this led to further exchanges. Some contributors were prompt with initial drafts and rewriting; others were less prompt, and both the editors had to

spend time fulfilling other commitments. While we would like to thank all contributors for bearing with us during this long and difficult gestation, we are particularly grateful to those who turned their material in on time. But because of their promptness, their chapters may suffer by not including some of the most recent literature. We apologize for this and want the reader to know that such apparent deficiencies (the blame for which we take upon ourselves) are really a sign of deeper virtue. Gabriel Nuchelmans passed away during the last stages of editing; Michael Ayers is responsible for the final corrections in his chapters. This Cambridge history took far longer to produce than we had intended. But then it turned out to be far larger and more complex a task than we had ever expected. Partly for logistical reasons, the brunt of the final preparation of the typescript, including the work of checking the notes for completeness, the imposition of uniformity, of method of reference, the standardizing, as far as possible, of editions referred to, and the like, was borne by Daniel Garber. Otherwise, the two editors shared the work at each stage, but the order of their names on the title page reflects the relative weights of the total burdens borne.

Much of the work for this book was produced with the aid of the National Endowment for the Humanities (grant #RO-21434-87), whose support we gratefully acknowledge. We had optimistically hoped that we would be able to finish these volumes by the time the grant ended in June 1993. Although we missed our deadline, the grant did enable us to have some time off for research connected with the writing and editing of the volumes and to purchase the first generation of computers used in the production of the book. The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) also helped by funding a Summer Institute in the History of Early Modern Philosophy, held in the summer of 1988 at Brown University (grant #EH-20738-87). There, many of the contributors were able to gather and discuss their work in progress. We would like to thank Jules Coleman and the Council for Philosophical Studies for their help in applying for the grant, Brown University for its hospitality, and Dolores Iorizzo for her invaluable aid with day-to-day organization. Many others helped us while this work was in progress. A number of the contributors were consulted about issues outside their own chapters, and we gratefully acknowledge their advice. Alan Gabbey was virtually another coeditor during the discussions surrounding Part IV of the history, 'Body and the Physical World'. He helped divide up the chapters and choose contributors, and then read and commented on drafts when they arrived. Roger Ariew took charge of the Biobibliographical Appendix. He played a major rôle in deciding which figures were to be treated, in soliciting the entries (writing a large

number of them himself), and in the initial editing of the text. Heather Blair was Garber's assistant during the period of the NEH grant. She set up the structures for editing on computer and taught him how to use the rather daunting machinery carted into his office one December day in 1987. She also began the Bibliography and returned to help with bibliographical problems from time to time during the production of the volumes. Daniel Smith prepared the final indexes with admirable speed and accuracy as we sprinted toward the final deadline. Ben Martinez and Jacqueline Block helped realize the handsome device that appears on the cover of this book. D. Linda Asher, resident magician in the office of the provost at the University of Chicago, devoted too many hours to helping Garber in the final stages of the preparation of this book; without her invaluable aid, the project would have been delayed even longer. Others too numerous to mention responded to our requests for help and advice with dispatch and good cheer. But one deserves special mention, Terence Moore, the editor at Cambridge University Press who inherited our project. He is a very patient man.

DANIEL GARBER  
MICHAEL AYERS





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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The abbreviation is given in the left column; the full title, in the right.

### ARISTOTLE

<i>Post. an.</i>	<i>Posterior analytics</i>
<i>Pr. an.</i>	<i>Prior analytics</i>
<i>De gen. et cor.</i>	<i>De generatione et corruptione</i>
<i>Etc.</i>	

### BACON

<i>Nov. org.</i>	<i>Novum organum</i>
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### BERKELEY

<i>Pr. Hum. Kn.</i>	<i>Principles of Human Knowledge</i>
<i>3 Dial.</i>	<i>Three Dialogues between Hyals and Philonous</i>
<i>Phil. Com.</i>	<i>Philosophical Commentaries</i>
<i>New Th. Vis.</i>	<i>New Theory of Vision</i>
<i>Th. Vis. Vind.</i>	<i>New Theory of Vision Vindicated</i>

### CHARRON

<i>Sag.</i>	<i>De la sagesse</i>
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### DESCARTES

AT	<i>Oeuvres de Descartes</i> , Adam and Tannery (Descartes 1964–74)
CSM	Cottingham et al., <i>The Philosophical Writings of Descartes</i> (Descartes 1984–91)
CB	Cottingham, <i>Conversation with Berman</i>
<i>Disc.</i>	<i>Discours de la méthode</i>
Med. IV	<i>Meditatio IV</i>
<i>Meds.</i>	<i>Meditationes</i>

Obj. II	Second set of objections to <i>Meditationes</i>
<i>Pass. âme</i>	<i>Passions de l'âme</i>
<i>Princ.</i>	<i>Principia philosophiae</i>
Resp. II	Replies to second set of objections to <i>Meditationes</i>

## HOBBS

<i>Eng. Works</i>	<i>The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury</i> , ed. Molesworth (Hobbes 1839–45b)
<i>Lat. Works</i>	<i>Opera philosophica quae Latine scripsit omnia</i> , ed. Molesworth (Hobbes 1839–45a)
<i>Lev.</i>	<i>Leviathan</i>

## LEIBNIZ

<i>Disc. mét.</i>	<i>Discours de métaphysique</i>
Ger.	<i>Die philosophischen Schriften</i> , ed. Gerhardt (Leibniz 1875–90)
Ger. Math.	<i>Mathematische Schriften</i> , ed. Gerhardt (Leibniz 1849–63)
LAKad	Akademie Edition (Leibniz 1923– ).
<i>Mon.</i>	<i>Monadologie</i>
<i>Nouv. ess.</i>	<i>Nouveaux essais</i>
<i>PNG</i>	<i>Principes de la nature et de la grace</i>
<i>Spec. dyn.</i>	<i>Specimen dynamicum</i>
<i>Syst. nouv.</i>	<i>Système nouveau . . .</i>
<i>Théod.</i>	<i>Théodicée</i>

## LOCKE

<i>Ess.</i>	<i>Essay concerning Human Understanding</i>
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## MALEBRANCHE

<i>Rech.</i>	<i>Recherche de la vérité</i>
<i>TNG</i>	<i>Traité de la nature et de la grace</i>
<i>Ent. mét.</i>	<i>Entretiens sur la métaphysique</i>
Mal. OC	<i>Oeuvres complètes</i> , ed. Robinet (Malebranche 1958– 84)

## PASCAL

<i>Pens.</i>	Pascal <i>Pensées</i> [Lafuma numbering as in Pascal 1963]
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## PUFENDORF

*De officio**Elem. juris.**De officio hominis et civis . . .* (Pufendorf 1927)*Elementorum jurisprudentiae universalis . . .*

(Pufendorf 1931)

## SPINOZA

*De int. emen.**Korte ver.**Tract. th.-pol xiv**Princ. phil. cart.**Eth.**Geb.**De intellectus emendatione**Korte Verhandeling**Tractatus theologico-politicus**Renati Des Cartes principiorum philosophiae . . .**Ethica**Opera*, ed. Gebhardt (Spinoza 1925)

## SUÁREZ

*Disp. met.**Su., Op. omn.**Disputationes metaphysicae**Opera omnia* (Suárez 1856–78)

## THOMAS AQUINAS

*Summa th.**Summa theologiae*

## Miscellaneous abbreviations

*BHPC*Bouillier, *Histoire de la philosophie cartésienne*

(Bouillier 1868)

*DSB**Dictionary of Scientific Biography* (Gillispie 1970–80)*EP**Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Edwards 1967)



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## INTRODUCTION

MICHAEL AYERS AND DANIEL GARBER

The *Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* was planned to provide a comprehensive overview of European philosophy in the seventeenth century in a series of contributions, each written by an appropriate specialist or group of specialists. As in the immediately previous volumes in the series, and in deliberate contrast to most histories of philosophy, the subject is treated by topic or theme, rather than chronologically or by individual. Since history does not come in neat bundles, our response to the boundary problems engendered by such a project has been deliberately flexible. First, we have allowed our subject-matter to overflow, with the oeuvres of individuals and with particular debates, into the adjacent centuries. Contributors have also been encouraged to explicate the meaning and wider significance of seventeenth-century argument by reference to antecedent or, if it seemed appropriate, consequent theory. The former has often meant reference both to mediaeval and Renaissance ideas and to the antiquity directly studied and avidly plundered even by some of the reputedly most 'modern' philosophers. The geographical scope of the volume is admittedly more restricted, although we are pleased to be able to include one chapter on the intense interest of some European philosophers in Chinese culture and thought.

Second, we have allowed some compromise between what the term 'philosophy' meant then and what it means now. In the seventeenth century it was unremarkable if the same 'philosophers' who wrote on metaphysics, logic, ethics, and political theory, on the existence of God, or on the varieties of human knowledge and belief also made contributions to mathematics, offered an account of the laws of motion, peered through microscopes or telescopes, recorded the weather, conducted chemical experiments, practised medicine, invented machines, debated the nature of madness, or argued about church government, religious toleration, and the identity and interpretation of divine revelation. The present 'history of philosophy' includes neither a history of natural science nor a history of religious doctrine and practice, but much is said in it about the sometimes surprising connections between theory and argument in such areas and what is more recognizably in ancestral relation to the 'philosophy' (or philosophies) of

today. One fundamental shift is reflected in the change in the sense of the word 'science'. For (as the reader should beware) this word was still employed technically in the seventeenth century for all systematic, indeed philosophical, knowledge, a usage which looked back to ancient theories of knowledge at the same time as some philosophers were beginning to foresee something less like Aristotelian demonstration and more like the institutionalized, essentially speculative onslaught on the secrets of nature nowadays given the name of 'science'. The relationship between philosophy and theology has undergone, and was then undergoing, a similarly significant change. Yet, whatever philosophy has become, it still bears the marks of its history.

Third, the division of our story into topics or strands has necessarily been somewhat arbitrary. Our original plan underwent alteration and expansion in some directions in order to accommodate the interests and preferences of those invited to contribute; other editorial proposals fell on stony ground. Moreover, some authors tried to make their contribution as comprehensive as possible, whereas others offered a more partial, suggestive view of their topic. Some overlap has also proved unavoidable, and it is perhaps no bad thing in so far as different approaches to the same material can be complementary. Despite such changes, one central feature of our original plan still stands: the structure of the collection corresponds to one way, at any rate, in which an educated European of the seventeenth century might have organized the domain of philosophy, while emphasizing some of the issues likely to be of particular interest to students of philosophy in our own time. Thus, Part II deals with what would have fallen under the heading of 'Logic', typically the first serious philosophical topic that students were expected to study. Parts III–V treat successively the three types of beings generally, although not universally, recognized by seventeenth-century thinkers: God, bodies (or matter), and souls (including minds). Parts VI and VII, in Volume II, explore doctrines relating to the two sides of the soul or mind, its cognitive faculties and its faculties of will and appetite. Consequently, although epistemology was certainly important, it is not until Part VI that there is systematic discussion of the epistemological issues that philosophers today are likely to look back on, whether rightly or wrongly, as the most important concerns of early modern philosophy. There is a single theme which, despite the variety of their subject-matter, runs through many of the contributions, but it is a different one. At the beginning of the century, the intellectual world was dominated by a synthesis of Aristotelian and scholastic philosophy which dated back to the rediscovery of the main corpus of Aristotelian texts in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. This synthesis had had its critics since it first appeared, and

some of those critics had competing programs to offer. But in the seventeenth century one competitor came to rival and, eventually, to eclipse the philosophy of the schools: the mechanistic, or 'corpuscularian', philosophy, a descendant of ancient atomism and the ancestor of present-day physics. A main theme of the present volumes is the emergence and establishment of the different versions of this 'new philosophy', together with its variously worked out, often somewhat ambivalent relationships to traditional metaphysics, ethics, theology, logic, method, theory of knowledge, and other areas of thought.

As well as overlap, there are some regretted gaps. Our efforts to achieve a systematic treatment of seventeenth-century linguistic theory, for example, proved abortive. But one omission from Part I which the editors particularly regret is that of any extended discussion either of the rôle of women in philosophical debate or of seventeenth-century arguments, advanced by philosophers of both sexes, about the place of women in society and specifically in intellectual life. It was perhaps difficult to get such a chapter written partly because other work on this question was already under way. The reader must here be referred, for example, to the collection on women in early modern philosophy edited by Eileen O'Neill and forthcoming from Oxford University Press. Brief accounts of some of the more important female thinkers are included in our Biobibliographical Appendix.

References are in the first instance to editions in the original language of the text in question, with translations cited when available.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, all works mentioned or cited are referred to by their original titles. It may seem awkward and pedantic to call Descartes's familiar book *Meditationes* rather than *Meditations*, or Spinoza's main work *Ethica* and not the *Ethics*, but titles can be translated in different ways, and our general rule requiring original-language titles may make it easier for those who are not familiar with standard translations into English to identify some of the works in question.

When the book was originally planned, the editors shared the view that some movement was badly needed, with respect to the teaching of 'history of philosophy' in philosophy departments, towards a more historical approach to early modern philosophy. Indeed, an important purpose of this Cambridge history is to provide material for a reassessment of the canonical seventeenth-century texts which have long been familiar, if not second nature, to students of philosophy at every level. Such works as Descartes's *Meditationes*, Spinoza's *Ethica*, and Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* appear again and again in the curriculum from introductory courses to graduate seminars, while other writers of the period, even those, such as Kenelm Digby, Pierre Gassendi, or Nicolas Malebranche, who were giants to their contemporaries, are generally ignored. Whatever philosophical

or practical reasons there may be for this verdict of history, one consequence of such partial knowledge of the debate is that our view of philosophy as a discipline has largely been shaped by a standard account and critique, in many respects tendentious and over-simplified, of the opposed positions of which the canonical few are the supposed spokesmen. Commentators in the analytic tradition in particular, writing very much out of their own philosophical interests and preconceptions, have often lost sight of the complex context in which philosophy was written. In doing so, they not only have distorted its achievements but also have often denied themselves the tools necessary for the interpretation of the very words and sentences they continue to expound.

Contributors to the present volume do not in general avoid analytic discussion of the canonical texts, but they engage in it always with an eye on the wider intellectual context. This bias towards a more strictly historical approach ought not by any means to make the volumes irrelevant to present-day philosophical interests. Such is the continuing influence on philosophy of a certain largely dismissive estimate of seventeenth-century conceptions (e.g., of the notions of an idea, of matter, and of a substance) that a better grasp of their historical meaning could hardly fail to have a beneficial effect. We must certainly understand past philosophies before we can learn either from their insights or from their mistakes. One thing the editors wished this Cambridge history to demonstrate by example was that the historical and the philosophical understanding of a text are not as separable as philosophers have often seemed, from both their practice and their methodological pronouncements, to have supposed. To a significant extent, however, the situation has been remedied in the last few years at the level of publication and research. Several considerable books, for example, have been published in English on Gassendi and on Malebranche – if not yet (in 1997) on Digby.<sup>2</sup> The general level of published work on the relations between philosophers, and on their philosophical motivations, has also become more sophisticated. There have been new editions and translations of strangely neglected texts (Arnauld's philosophically fascinating *Des vrayes et des fausses idées* comes to mind, also the subject of both a recent translation and a recent monograph),<sup>3</sup> new journals and societies for the history of philosophy have sprung up, and there is, we feel, more interaction and a greater sense of community among an increasing number of those who teach history and do historical research in philosophy departments in the English-speaking world. We can hope that the present volume will further this tendency, and will aid such research, for the sake both of history and of philosophy.



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