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Ludwig von Wolzogen and His Objections to *Meditationes de prima philosophia*[*]

In this article I intend to present one of the lesser known treatises produced within the Polish Socinian movement, which, as I intend to demonstrate, deserves a close and detailed discussion. The author of this treatise is Johann Ludwig von Wolzogen (ca. 1599–1661) and its title is *Breves in Meditationes Metaphysicas Renati Cartesii annotationes* [*Brief Notes on the Metaphysical Meditations of Rene Descartes*]. Wolzogen's entire essay is intended as a polemic against Descartes's views and is written as a detailed commentary on the *Meditationes de prima philosophia*. Its form and style closely follows that of the well-known *Objections* to Descartes's *Meditations* written by Caterus, Hobbes, Arnauld and Gassendi. Wolzo-

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gen finished the work on his treatise in 1646, though it only appeared in print in 1657 in Amsterdam, seven years after Descartes's death. Ten years after its initial publication, the treatise was reprinted in the series *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum*, in the collective edition of Wolzogen's work, entitled *Opera omnia, exegetica, didactica et polemica*, in the volume *Compendium religionis christianae*, pp. 79–90 (in two columns).[1]

Before beginning a proper discussion of Wolzogen's work, I would like to briefly address three questions, which, I believe, are noteworthy for both historical and substantive reasons. These questions concern a) the reasons why Wolzogen's treatise may still deserve attention today, b) the essential facts of Wolzogen's biography, and c) the place his *Breves in Meditationes Metaphysicas Renati Cartesii annotationes* occupy in the whole of his work.

I

One good reason why Wolzogen's treatise *Breves in Meditationes Metaphysicas Renati Cartesii annotationes* may merit our attention is the fact that this study represents chronologically the first substantive and fairly extensive discussion of Descartes's philosophy to appear in the realm of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. To be sure, Wolzogen was neither the first nor the only thinker within the intellectual circles of the Commonwealth to have noticed the appearance of and issued some remarks on the "new philosophy" of Descartes. Among those who ad-

[1] My references to Wolzogen's *Breves in Meditationes Metaphysicas Renati Cartesii annotationes* are based on the edition of his *Opera omnia* in *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum*, vol. *Compendium religionis christianae*, 79–90. As for the translation of Wolzogen's treatise into modern languages, only two versions exist: one in Polish and the other in Italian. The Polish translation was authored by Leon Joachimowicz and was published as *Uwagi do Medytacji metafizycznych René Descartes'a*, Warszawa 1959, in the series *Biblioteka Klasyków Filozofii*, with an introduction and notes by L. Chmaj. In 2012, the Latin original of Wolzogen's treatise was republished in Rome with a scholarly introduction by E. Angelini (J.L. Wolzogen: *Annotationes in Meditationes Metaphisicas Renati Des Cartis*, a cura di Elisa Angelini, Roma 2012, in the series *Sociniana* (Serie diretta da Emanuela Scribano)). In this edition the editorial introduction extends to page LXXX, while Wolzogen's own text covers 37 pages. At present, a translation of Wolzogen's work into English is being prepared by a team under my direction; the publication is planned for 2023. On *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum* cf. Jeroom Vercruysse, "'Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum': Histoire et bibliographie", *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* 21 (1976): 197–212.

dressed themselves to Descartes's ideas in speech and writing, we can name, apart from Wolzogen, Stanisław Lubieniecki, Andrzej Wiszowaty, Joachim Stegmann, Marcin Raur, Johannes Hewelius and Adam Kochański. None of these intellectuals, however, devoted a complete treatise to the discussion of Descartes's philosophy.[2] The early but extensive reception of Descartes in 17th century Poland was studied and presented in detail by Ludwik Chmaj in his numerous works. In L. Chmaj's opinion, the extent to which the new philosophy had made its way into the Polish intellectual circles of the time can be assessed by the number of disputes held in the academic centers concerning the merits and the drawbacks of these new ideas. According to L. Chmaj, the first scholarly milieux clearly to notice and appreciate the essential difference and even the opposition between the new and the old ways of thinking were the academic circles of Toruń and Gdańsk, with such outstanding personages as Heinrich Schaeve, Johannes Sartorius from Przeszów, Peter Jaenichen, Reinhard Friedrich Bornman (who were in principle favorably disposed towards the new philosophy); while their opponents, representing the conservative scholastic stance, consisted of, among others, Paweł Dalecki from Elbląg, Jan Krzysztof Rosteuscher, Samuel Masecovius, and the fiercest opponent of Descartes's ideas, the rector of the Jesuit College in Gdańsk, Georg Gengell, who believed that Descartes's philosophy is a straight path to atheism.[3]

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[2] Stanisław Lubieniecki, whose interests primarily concerned astronomy and cosmology, wrote a lot about Descartes's theories and new ideas. In 1649, he came to know Descartes personally (shortly before the latter's journey to Sweden) and discussed with him some questions concerning the motion of the Earth. Lubieniecki highly appreciated Descartes and believed him to be a great philosopher; he studied Descartes's works before composing his own *Theatrum Cometicum*, in which he repeatedly quotes the *Principles of Philosophy*. He believed Descartes's analytics to be superior to Viète's. Lubieniecki is reported to have greeted with joy the news that Descartes's opponents had been defeated in a number of disputes concerning astronomy (He learned about these disputes from another Socinian, Tobias Morsztyn. Morsztyn assisted at the debates held in Fraeker (1665) on the subject of comets. The argument was conducted between de Grau, professor in mathematics, and some supporters of scholastic philosophy, fiercely opposed to Descartes). However, Lubieniecki himself was not uncritical of Descartes and regarded some of his teachings as erroneous (cf. Ludwik Chmaj, "Introduction", in: *Uwagi do Medytacji metafizycznych René Descartes'a*, by Idem [Warsaw: PWN, 1959], xx).

[3] See Ludwik Chmaj, "Kartezjanizm w Polsce XVII i XVIII wieku", *Myśl Filozoficzna* 5 (1956): 67–103.

Another reason why we may still take interest in Wolzogen's treatise is the fact that it throws light upon the content and concerns of the intellectual life within the academic circles of the Polish Commonwealth during the early 17th century and confirms the opinion that the philosophical, theological and scientific culture in Poland at the time was, in principle, open to the fresh currents emanating from Western Europe. Indeed, this serves to disprove the hitherto widely accepted thesis that the intellectual life in the countries within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was at that time wholly confined within the conservative and decadent scholastic paradigm espoused by the Counterreformation and cut off from the philosophical and scientific developments in the West, and this remained the case until the end of the 17th, or even the beginning of the 18th century.

The third and very weighty reason for us to take interest in Wolzogen's work is the fact that it considerably contributes to our knowledge on the 17th century disputes around the *Meditations on First Philosophy*. As is well known, Descartes, having completed his *Meditationes*, decided to send manuscript copies of his work to a number of outstanding thinkers with a demand for thorough assessment and unsparing criticism (AT 3:297). With the assistance of Fr. Marin Mersenne, he succeeded in obtaining in a relatively short time six, and later seven sets of objections, to which he could prepare detailed and extensive responses. The first edition of *Meditations* was accompanied by six sets of *Objections and Responses*, the second with seven sets. Naturally enough, the publication of *Meditations* in 1642 did not end the debate on the content of this work and the ideas put forward therein – the discussion went on and attracted more participants. Wolzogen's treatise is a witness to this fact: it can rightfully be regarded as an integral part and a continuation of the objections advanced in the dispute of much of the 17th century philosophical world against the new philosophy of Descartes.

There is still one further aspect of Wolzogen's work which recommends it to our attention: it was a treatise issued from the milieu of the Polish Socinians (the Polish Brethren). The religious and philosophical movement of Polish Socinians has been recognised by recent research as having exerted a non-negligible influence upon the development of the progressive European thought of the period, both in the domain of theology and philosophy.[4] It is known that the Polish Brethren were keenly

[4] Lech Szczucki, *Nonkonformiści religijni XVI i XVII wieku. Studia i szkice* (Warszawa: PWN, 1993); Krzysztof Pomian, "Drogi kultury europejskiej. Trzy

in touch with the contemporary religious and intellectual developments in the West; to be sure, they were mostly interested in theological debates and the perspectives for peace between different confessions, though they did not ignore the emergent new philosophy, which they saw as an ally in their efforts to persuade rulers and societies to adopt a more rational approach to matters of faith and religion. A well-known fact is that the Polish Brethren had close friends among the Remonstrants; hence, they could develop propagandist activity in the Low Countries with the purpose of spreading their religious ideas. It was also not unusual amongst them to send their sons to study in Dutch schools. Indeed, there is available data concerning these Polish students in the Netherlands indicating that some of them read the works by Descartes with keen interest.

A notable personage active in promoting the interest in Descartes and his ideas among the Socinians was Martin Ruar.[5] He knew Marin Mersenne in person and with his assistance could bring most of Descartes's works to Poland. The exchange of letters between Ruar and Mersenne, which lasted from 1640 to 1644, reveals some very interesting details about the mental attitudes and intellectual concerns of some of the Polish Brethren. We learn from one of Ruar's letters that one can obtain some of Descartes's works in Polish bookshops; in another, we are told that Ruar is well acquainted with Gassendi's works, that he has thoroughly studied Gassendi's *De apparente manitudine solis humilis et sublimis* and that he wholly agrees with his arguments for the diurnal motion of the Earth. The following passage from Ruar's letter is well worth quoting as it indicates the position of the Socinians on the question of reason, science and authority:

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studia", in: *Renesans i Reformacja. Studia z historii filozofii i idei* (Warszawa: PWN, 1996); Zbigniew Ogonowski, "Der Sozinianismus und die Aufklärung", in: *Reformation und Frükaufklärung in Polen. Studien über den Sozinianismus und seinen Einfl uss auf das westeuropäische Denken in 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Paul Wrzecionko (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck und Ruprecht, 1977); Sarah Mortimer, *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution The Challenge of Socinianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[5] To complete the picture, it is worth noting, that there was another Arian believer and disseminator of Cartesian philosophy, who declared his Polish identity, even though he was a member of the Bohemian Brethren, namely Jan Placentinus-Kołaczek (1630–1683). He acquired a thorough grounding in philosophy and science in the schools of Gdańsk, Groningen, Leyda and Konigsberg and taught at the university in Frankfurt an der Oder, where he expounded the principles of Descartes's philosophy and physics.

> That I accept the diurnal motion of the Earth (I still entertain some doubts as to the annual motion), persuaded, as I am, by so many reasons that Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and your Gassendi have put forward, should not appear strange to you, the less so as we see so many contemporary mathematicians sharing this view.
>
> Now, what concerns your expressed opinion, that we should withhold our assent to this theory and wait first for the decision of the Roman Church on that issue, it seems to me to show a too submissive mind, in fact an almost slavish one. For why, in question, that is purely mathematical, should we obey rather the directors of the Church, who are often ignorant of these things, than mathematicians themselves? It clearly seems to me, that Gassendi himself, when leaving the final decision on this controversial question to the verdict of the Church, does so rather to avoid trouble in falling foul of the Church authorities, and not at all because he seriously thinks this course of action right.[6]

A close reading of the correspondence between Mersenne and Ruar makes one believe that Mersenne expected Ruar to pass his opinion on Descartes's *Meditations*. We know that Ruar had Descartes's work in his hands, yet he probably thought it too abstract and failed to study it closely. However, not to disappoint Mersenne, he presented the *Meditations* to Wolzogen and persuaded him to compose a detailed study (*annotationes*) on it.[7]

Johann Ludwig von Wolzogen (ca. 1599–1661) was an Austrian-born aristocrat (his titles were baron von Tarenfeld, Freiherr von Neuhäusel). His family was probably of Lutheran confession (some sources indicate Calvinism as his family background). It is not known where he acquired his thorough education; he may have studied at the University of Wittenberg. He had a particularly good grounding in mathematics.[8] In 1625, he left his native Austria and came to live in Poland. In the Polish Socinian movement he appeared relatively late; between 1641and 1646, he was a member of the court of Krzysztof Opaliński, the then voivode of Poznań, whom he accompanied on his journey to Paris in 1645. In Paris, Wolzogen renewed his acquaintance with the French mathematician

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[6] See L. Chmaj, "Wstęp", in: *Uwagi do Medytacji metafizycznych René Descartes'a* (Warszawa: PWN, 1959), xxi;

[7] See L. Chmaj, "Wstęp", in: *Uwagi do Medytacji metafizycznych René Descartes'a* (Warszawa: PWN, 1959), xix; see also L. Chmaj: *Bracia polscy. Ludzie – idee – wpływy* (Warszawa: PWN, 1957), 173–186.

[8] See R. Bordoli, "The Socinian Objections: Hans Ludwig Wolzogen and Descartes", in: *Socinianism and Arminianism, Calvinists and Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Europe*, ed. M. Mulsow, J. Rohls (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2005), 177–186.

Claude Mydorge and Father Marin Mersenne, whom he had formerly met during his first stay in Paris in 1638. Later, Wolzogen took his abode with Martin Ruar at Straszyn, a locality near Gdańsk.

Wolzogen was a fairly prolific writer, mostly interested in religious and theological matters. Most of his writing belongs to the realm of biblical exegesis; in particular, he left commentaries on the Gospels of Mark, Luke and parts of the Gospel of John – all written in the spirit of Socinian rationalism. Wolzogen was notable within the Socinian society for the very radical stand he took on social and political matters. He expounded his pacifist and egalitarian views in the treatise *De natura et qualitate Regni Christi* (1640s), in which he revisited the lively social debates held within the Arian society at the beginning of the movement and renewed the radical position of some earlier proponents of Arianism. A critical response to Wolzogen's radical theses was written by Jonasz Szlichtyng; Wolzogen responded to Szlichtyng's criticism with another treatise entitled *Adnotationes ad Quaestiones Jonae Schlichtingii*. Once again Szlichtyng responded and once again Wolzogen defended his views in a third treatise entitled *Responsio ad Jonae Schlichtingii* […] *annotationes in annotationes* […].

Social and political matters were, alongside theological controversies, of vital concern for the espousers of Antitrinitarianism in Poland in the early stages of the formation of the Socinian ideology. The early social controversies, held from the sixties to the eighties of the 16th century within the congregation of the Polish Brethren, brought victory to the moderate party. In opposition to the demands by the radicals, the institution of serfdom was accepted as legitimate within the Christian society, and members of the congregation were allowed to hold state offices.

Another resurgence of interest in and controversy over social and political matters in the Polish Socinian society occurred in the 1640s; this time, the impulse came from the radical wing of the Remonstrants in the Netherlands. An important personage within and the spokesman for this radical wing was Daniel van Breen, who in 1640 published in Amsterdam a treatise in Dutch on the nature and features of the true Church, the kingdom of God, gloriously to be built on the Earth by Christ. A Latin version of this treatise, entitled *De qualitate Ecclesiae glorioso per Christum in terris erigendo* soon appeared and circulated among the Polish Socinians. Before long, Van Breen's views gained approval among Polish Socinians and among the keenest espousers of them was Wolzogen himself. He made a translation of Van Breen's treatise into German shortly before writing his own *De natura et qualitate Regni Chris-*

ti, in which he went so far as to radicalize Van Breen's theses, considered by many to be extreme enough.

The following are Wolzogen's main assumptions concerning social and political matters.[9]

First, the state and the church are separate institutions and they radically differ as to their ends, the means applied to achieve those ends, and their respective duties toward human beings. The purpose of the state is to preserve peace and well-being of the earthly society, while the vocation of the church is to guide humans not to earthly happiness, but to the beatitude of the future life, which requires of the Christian the acceptance of suffering in this life along with the renunciation of earthly prosperity. What is more, the laws of Christ, by which the Church has to be governed, are radically and totally different from those on which the state is based and by which it functions. Hence, according to Wolzogen, in order to avoid an irreducible clash between the church (that is the church truly obedient to Christ's commandments) and the state, true Christians must keep away from the offices of state and the life of the state. According to Wolzogen, it is not that holding a state office is in itself sinful, and, consequently, the state and its offices should be abolished. However, the performance of official functions by a true Christian must lead him into sinful acts, because the laws imposed upon them by Christ absolutely forbid resorting to violence and coercion, which are, however, essential for the functioning of state offices.

Secondly, Wolzogen believes that any participation in war is inadmissible for true Christians. Every warlike activity is ultimately reduced to murder, robbery, violence and destruction, which are all abominations in the light of Christian law. Arguably, legitimate self-defence is, if not a moral duty, at least allowed to the Christian. Yet, this is not so, responds Wolzogen, for even warlike activities in defence of the native country involve no less than aggressive war killings and harm done to one's neighbor. Moreover, the defence of one's earthly native land is not the vocation of a Christian. The only vocation of a Christian, as it follows from the Gospel, is the unconditional submission to God and obedience to His commandments. Thus, in the case of war, the only legitimate options left to a Christian are either to surrender to the course of events

[9] The information on Wolzogen's views concerning social and political matters comes from the following books: S. Kot, *Ideologia polityczna i społeczna Braci Polskich zwanych arianami* (Warszawa, 1932), 124–133; Z. Ogonowski, *Socynianizm. Dzieje, poglądy, oddziaływanie* (Warszawa, 2015), 402–405; Z. Ogonowski (ed.), *Filozofia i myśl społeczna XVII wieku*, vol. 1, 228–242.

without attempting any form of defence by violent means, or to leave the area afflicted by war and move to a more peaceful place. Wolzogen's position remains equally inflexible with respect to personal defence: a true Christian, even if his life is put in danger by a violent assailant, will not apply any means and actions that might result in the assailant's death; thus, the only means of defence allowed to the Christian is prayer to God and submission to His will.

As for matters concerning social relations of legal inequality, submission and domination, Wolzogen's views are much less radical. He did not oppose the social structure based on inequality and domination and believed that serfdom and subjection are not opposed to the justice preached by the Gospel. However, he did not approve of the form of subjection which was dominant in Polish lands; in particular, he believed that Polish noble estate owners overburden their serfs with obligatory labor; he was particularly critical of the Polish legal system that made it impossible for the serfs to appeal against the verdicts of their masters to a neutral court of law, thus leaving the serfs practically defenceless against the willful decisions of their lords and reducing them to slavery.

II

Let us move now to the discussion of Wolzogen's treatise mentioned above, namely *Breves in Meditationes Metaphysicas Renati Cartesii annotationes*. On a general ideological plane, Wolzogen's analyses and criticisms of Descartes's *Meditations* are inspired by the theological views that were generally accepted in the Socinian society and formed its standard outlook. In this respect, Wolzogen's understanding and assessment of Descartes's philosophy may be held as representative of the general attitude of the Polish Socinians towards the new philosophy. However, on a specifically philosophical level, Wolzogen's discussion of Descartes follows to a considerable degree the critique of the *Meditations* formulated by Gassendi. Wolzogen was familiar with and highly appreciated the objections Gassendi made against the *Meditations*; in all likelihood, he was also acquainted with another treatise by Gassendi containing criticisms of Descartes's ideas, namely the *Disquisitio Metaphysica seu Dubitationes et Instantiae: adversus Renati Cartesii Metaphysicam, et Responsa*, which had been published in 1644. This second treatise enlarged upon the original objections Gassendi had made to some ideas put forward in Descartes's *Meditations*, which had been published in the first edition thereof as the *Fifth Set of Objections*; apart from quoting Gassen-

di's original criticisms and Descartes's replies to them, this new polemical treatise contained a new set of criticisms directed against Descartes's replies to the *Fifth Set*.[10]

Let us briefly restate the main points of Gassendi's criticism of Descartes. He objected, firstly, to the conception of innate ideas; secondly, to the conception of clarity and distinctness as criteria of the truth of our knowledge; thirdly, to the theory of nature and the way of knowing the human soul.[11]

In Wolzogen's treatise, exactly these three points of theory are singled out for discussion and criticism, which is a clear indication of Wolzogen's dependence upon Gassendi. However, he also approvingly quotes objections to the Cartesian ideas put forward by Caterus (*First Set of Objections*) and Arnauld (*Fourth Set of Objections*). Not satisfied with repeating criticisms formulated by other thinkers, however, Wolzogen offers a set of his own criticisms of Cartesian theories, which follow from his own reflections on the role of sense cognition in the process of our acquisition of truth and on the task, role and significance of philosophical cognition in religious life. The content of his critical arguments and the way he expounds them point to considerable independence and originality of his mind.

The style and arrangement of his critical discussion are also worthy of note. Wolzogen tends to support his own statements with references to philosophical authorities from the past, a feature resembling the manner of writing of Renaissance philosophical erudites and even scholastic writers. The authority he quotes fairly often is that of Aristotle, which perhaps shows his good grounding in traditional philosophy, though by no means indicates any affiliation with his contemporary school philosophy. His attitude towards the Aristotelianism of the schools of his day was typical of many progressive intellectuals of the time: he accepted the general empiricist assumptions of that philosophy and the theory of syllogism in logic, yet, being aware of the new advances in mathematics and other sciences, he realized that in these areas the old school philosophy cannot stand and must give way to new developments.

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[10] References to Descartes employ the following abbreviations: AT: Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, eds., *Oeuvres de Descartes*, 2nd ed., 11 vols. (Paris: Vrin/C.N.R.S., 1974–1986); CSM 2: *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Volume II*, transl. John Cottingham et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

[11] See J. Kopania, "Gassendi w świetle polemiki z Descartes'em", in: Pierre Gassendi, *Dociekania metafizyczne* (Kęty, 2017), 24.

The arrangement of the *Breves annotationes* basically follows that of the Cartesian *Meditations*: each of the six *Meditations* is discussed in turn with the notable exception of the *Fifth Meditation*, which is omitted altogether; thus, the *Breves annotationes* consist of five, and not, as one would expect, of six parts. The discussion of each *Meditation* follows a fixed simple pattern – a concise summary of the content of the *Meditation* under consideration is followed by a critical analysis.

Wolzogen's discussion of the *First Meditation* can be divided into two parts; in one part, he criticizes Descartes's idea to make the act of doubting the very starting point in our search for indubitably true and well-grounded knowledge. In the second part, he scrutinizes the three stages of progressing doubt as described in the *Meditation* and the three reasons for doubt advanced by Descartes.

As for the method of cleansing our mind from preconceived opinions and thus preparing it for the acquisition of well-founded knowledge by means of all-comprehensive doubt, Wolzogen is dismissive of it from the outset. In his opinion, the method of doubting seems neither effective in removing preconceived opinions from our minds, nor is it really necessary for this purpose. To be sure, Wolzogen shared Descartes's view that getting rid of prejudices is a necessary condition for the improvement of the thinking process; however, he also believed that the method proposed by Descartes is unable to do the job. According to Wolzogen, the method of doubt is not powerful enough to eradicate from our minds the opinions so firmly entrenched in them that we cannot imagine doing without them. Most of our prejudices were instilled in our minds during early childhood, thus becoming our habits and, so to say, our second nature. To dislodge them from our mental constitutions would take very powerful reasons and influences indeed. However, the reasons proposed by Descartes are not that strong; they are based on the fact that "senses are deceptive, our waking perception of reality is unsure, or that a powerful God leads us into error or a malicious demon deludes us" (p. 79).[12]

On the other hand, Wolzogen is of the opinion that the method of doubt proposed by Descartes is not at all necessary for us to get rid of our preconceptions. How did he arrive at this confident affirmation?

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[12] As can be seen from this, Wolzogen failed to remark that Descartes himself repeatedly states in his *First Meditation* that cleansing the mind from preconceived judgments is an unusually difficult task. This realization, however, did not shake his confidence in the effectiveness of his method of radical doubting in performing this task.

The ground for it is his very firm (if rather traditional) empirical viewpoint: to his mind, the correct use of our sense evidence makes error impossible; our senses never err, nor do they deceive us. If error results from our perceptions, the responsibility for it lies with our judgment, which is the work of our reason. True enough, some sense perceptions may prompt us to pass an erroneous judgment; nevertheless, it is the reason that is to blame in failing to judge properly the evidence of the senses and setting them apart from the projections of our imagination. To assess correctly the evidence produced by our senses is no difficult thing; every sane mind is perfectly capable of it, and no special abilities are required for it. To make correct use of sense evidence, one has to take into account the typical conditions which induce reason to form an erroneous judgment. These are: a) in the perceiving subject, a sense organ afflicted with illness and unable to function correctly; b) in the object, when one fails to distinguish a close from a distant object, an object at rest from one in motion, an object that appears all of a sudden from one that is stable and clearly in view; c) with respect to the environment, when one fails to perceive if some water, smoke, mist, movement of the air, stained-glass and such like stand in the way of our perception (p. 79). Thus, if proper consideration is given to all these things, when reason functions effectively, when it is circumspect in its actions, if it forbears from passing judgments on things without considering all the relevant circumstances, then one will surely avoid falling into error. No special operation of doubting is needed to arrive at unshakable certainty in our cognition, if we only know how to make use of our senses.

Having thus refuted the idea of methodical doubt, Wolzogen proceeds to consider the specific grounds offered by Descartes for doubting what we are usually inclined to accept as true. These are three in number: a) our senses are fallible; b) the difference between the waking state and the dream state is uncertain; c) we may fall victims to deception by an all-powerful God or a malicious daemon. Wolzogen offers confident answers to all three specified areas of doubt.

As to the first of the above reasons expressed by Decartes, he argues that although the senses sometimes fail us, this is always in specific and easily discernible circumstances, as, for example, with respect to very remote or very small objects. To conclude from this that senses always deceive us or that we should never trust sense evidence and reject sense knowledge as a whole is manifestly erroneous. Such a conclusion is as absurd as inferring that because we sometimes happen to err in our judgments, we should in turn abstain from judging altogether

and give up all efforts to find the truth by means of propositions. Consequently, we must reject as false the Cartesian rule which appears to warrant such preposterous reasoning, namely that we should "never to trust completely those who have deceived us even once" (AT 7:18, CSM 2:12). According to Wolzogen, the only legitimate application of this rule is in a situation when it is not in our power to avoid falling victim to deception. In circumstances, however, in which we can always check and examine all the relevant factors, allowing ourselves to be guided by this rule would be an act of imprudence rather than good sense.[13]

If the first reason for doubt advanced by Descartes is unreasonable, the other two are simply preposterous in the eyes of Wolzogen and deserve outright rejection. It is nonsense to hold we cannot clearly distinguish waking from dreaming; the difference between the two is as clear as that between the full light of noon and twilight, or between a square and a circle, when clearly seen at close range. Only a man suffering from mental disease, Wolzogen claims, could seriously maintain that our waking perception is uncertain; what is more, even Descartes himself, in his *Sixth Meditation*, claimed he had no doubts about whatever concerns the difference between waking and dreaming.

As to the third reason for the all-comprehensive doubt advanced by Descartes, who can really believe that there exists an all-powerful God or a cunning spirit capable of making one believe in the existence of a world, which in fact does not exist? According to Wolzogen, only a mind blinded with madness could believe something like that. No sane human being in full possession of his faculties could ever doubt the existence of the world he perceives in his waking state. What is more, even to suppose that a mentally healthy human being could experience states of disbelief in the existence of the real world would be tantamount to admitting that the human mind can represent to itself things that are self-contradictory, which is impossible, as "all philosophers correct in their thinking" admit, even to God.

Wolzogen concludes his discussion of the *First Meditation* as follows: "human mind has no just reason to doubt the existence of things" in the

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[13] Wolzogen offers an illustration of his thought: if some fraud took me in by telling me an untrue story, it would be prudent not to believe simple-mindedly whatever he found fit to tell me, unless I had a possibility to check the truth of his stories, especially if the cause that made him take me in persisted in existence. If, however, that very same man offered me one hundred ducats in payment, and I could ascertain the genuine value of this money by independent means, it would be of utmost imprudence not to accept this money only because he had once cheated me by his story (p. 79).

mind-independent world, "it has very serious reasons instead, which can make it certain of their existence […], namely, the infallible evidence of the senses" (p. 80). Hence, it is utterly incomprehensible that a method of doubt could be taken as the foundation of and preparation to the mind's search for truth.

The commentary on the *Second Meditation* begins with a question: is the method of doubt necessary for ascertaining the truth of the *cogito*? The answer, according to Wolzogen, is "no", for the proposition *cogito ergo sum* is self-evident and "no man in his right mind" could possibly question the truth of it. What he finds problematic in the *Second Meditation* is Descartes's argument for his affirmation "I am not any corporeal thing nor any property of a corporeal thing", based on the observation that the only apparent property of the "I", when the question "what this *I* is" is considered, seems to be thinking. Descartes believes himself thereby authorized to affirm, that his "I" is a "thinking thing", radically and essentially different from the "extended things" beyond the "I". Yet, Wolzogen discovers that Descartes's argument for his affirmation concerning the incorporeal nature of the *Ego* rests upon fragile foundations. This argument, for example, can be restated in the form of the following syllogism:

> Whatever I can assume not to exist in reality is not my mind.
>
> But I can assume, that no corporeal things and no corporeal properties exist in reality
>
> So my mind is neither a corporeal thing, nor a corporeal property (p. 80).

Wolzogen points out that the major premise of that syllogism is in fact not an established truth, but only Descartes's assumption, which he does not prove anywhere. Since the conclusion of a syllogism is already contained in its major, Descartes really assumes in advance what he claims to prove. First he assumes, albeit hypothetically, "non-existence of all corporeal things", and being unable in any way to suppose his mind non-existent, he concludes to the incorporeal nature of the mind. Yet, this reasoning, according to Wolzogen, resembles the following example: suppose someone wants to prove that Peter is not a man and makes an assumption that no men exist in reality, whereas Peter does exist; of course on the basis of such an assumption the conclusion would follow that Peter is not a man (see p. 80). To make his argument for incorporeal nature of mind acceptable, Descartes would have to prove beyond possibility of refutation, and not simply to suppose, that no bodies

exist in reality; since he is uncertain whether or not there are any bodies in reality, neither can he be certain that the mind, which is this "thinking thing", is not corporeal itself.

If Descartes responded to this criticism by pointing out that there are weighty reasons to assume the non-existence of corporeal things, namely the reasons for doubting the existence of the world of sense experience presented in the *First Meditation*, this would not really help his argument, for even if it were true that there are serious reasons for doubting the existence of bodily things, these would not give us any certainty as to the matter, even less would they justify the negation of the existence of bodies. And so long as we do not have certain knowledge concerning the non-existence of corporeal things, Descartes's argument for the incorporeal nature of mind remains invalid.

Having thus criticized one of Descartes's arguments for incorporeality of mind in the *Second Meditation*, Wolzogen proceeds to demolish another, in which it is argued that mind is incorporeal, because, as Descartes says "none of the things that the imagination enables me to grasp is at all relevant to this knowledge of myself which I possess" (AT 7:28, CSM 2:19). To put it another way, we imagine things that are corporeal, yet nothing we can imagine is included in the notion we have of ourselves; therefore, the nature of our selves is not corporeal.

According to Wolzogen, this second argument fails just like the first one, and for similar reasons: Descartes seems to ignore the difference between what he thinks about reality and how reality really is in itself beyond our thinking. If he limited himself to assertions about the content of his notions, e.g., if he stated that at the given stage of his reflections he only knows of himself that he is a "thinking thing" and of corporeal things that they are "extended things" and that these two notions are completely separate, he would speak reasonably and it would be a matter of course to agree with him. Unfortunately, he fails to keep within these limits and proceeds to make assertions about real natures solely on the basis of his concepts of those natures. For instance, from the fact that his notion of himself does not include any properties of corporeal things that can be grasped by imagination, he concludes that the very nature of himself is free from properties of corporeal things and is, therefore, incorporeal. This reasoning, Wolzogen points out, is exactly like the following: I know grass to be green, and I ignore all other properties of it; therefore, I conclude that the very nature of grass consists exclusively in being green. Descartes's mistake is to draw conclusions about the real nature of the mind on the basis of what he, at this precise moment, knows about the mind. However, for such inference to be valid,

one would have, at this precise moment, to possess a perfect and exhaustive notion of mind, that is, one's notion should grasp and fully express the very nature of the mind. But Descartes does not prove that what he knows about his own mind (his own self) corresponds really and exactly with the very nature of his self; he appears simply to assume such correspondence without any examination.

The whole of Descartes's treatment of the problem of incorporeality of mind, Wolzogen affirms, rests upon a false axiom, namely "things that are intellectually grasped by distinct concepts, are themselves distinct in reality" (p. 81). Obviously, however, the fact that we grasp thinking and corporeal nature by separate concepts is no proof that in reality these two are separate substances and that the human mind exists on its own as a complete thing that can subsist independently of bodily nature. Clearly it is perfectly possible that the human mind is just a property dwelling within a substance which is the human body (or that the human mind and body are two properties of one substance) (see p. 81).

The discussion of Descartes's treatment of the incorporeality of mind leads Wolzogen to the consideration and criticism of the Cartesian conception of substance and especially its relationship with its essential or principal attribute. It is well-known that Descartes affirmed the existence of two finite, created substances, each defined by one of two attributes, which jointly characterize all the realm of created reality. The principal attribute of corporeal substance is spatial extension, whereas the principal attribute of spiritual substance is thinking. The principal attribute of the substance is no accident in the Aristotelian sense; the substance cannot exist without its principal attribute. In fact, the connection between the two is so close that it really is identity. Thus, the spiritual substance is essentially "thinking thing" (*res cogitans*), and the corporeal substance is essentially "extended thing" (*res extensa*). Neither thinking nor spatial extension join their respective substances as already-constituted realities; it is *themselves* that constitute the reality of their substances. Even if the so-called "simple natures", such as existence, unity, enduring in time, etc., can be mentally separated from substance, they cannot exist apart in reality, but are necessarily related to the attribute which constitutes the relevant substance. It is not possible to conceive of substance without either thinking or extension, or to think either thinking or extension without conceiving substance. A substance does not exceed its principal attribute and holds no content beyond it. Thus, substance, in Descartes's sense, has no identity of its own, apart from its principal attribute; the attribute of a substance is the same as its substance, both in notion and in reality.

Concerning the concept of substance, Wolzogen prefers the traditional, Aristotelian and scholastic notion to the novel conception of Descartes. According to Wolzogen, who follows the scholastic teaching on this point, it is not possible to get at a clear and distinct positive notion of any substance: the only way we can know a substance is through grasping its separable accidents. The notion of the substance underlying these accidents is always devoid of any specific content (of any attribute, to use a Cartesian term). Thus, the essence of substantiality eludes all efforts by human intellect to grasp it; in fact, there is only one simple notion of substance, which is equally applicable to all particular substances. Wolzogen writes: "if I were to contemplate wax apart from all its accidents, I would not learn any more of it than I would of stone, wood, or other substance emptied of its accidents; this is so true that the notion of all substance as substance is one and universal, as well as confused and vague; whereas, by contrast, the notion of accident is much clearer and more perfect, as it enables clear cognition of things, which are distinct from one another thanks to their accidental features" (p. 81).

Wolzogen's discussion of the *Third Meditation* is quite complex and focuses on three matters: Descartes's so-called general rule of truth, the problem of innate ideas, and the proof of God's existence carried out in this section of the *Meditations*. The general rule of truth given by Descartes is the following: "*everything which* I *very clearly and distinctly perceive is true*". Before criticizing, as he does, the cognitive value of that principle, Wolzogen moves his attention to Descartes's conception of perfect and veracious God as the one who guarantees the truth of our clear and distinct cognitions. In the fifth and sixth paragraph of the *Third Meditation*, Descartes states: "whenever my preconceived belief in the supreme power of God comes to mind, I cannot but admit that it would be easy for him, if he so desired, to bring it about that I go wrong even in those matters which I think I see utterly clearly with my mind's eye" (AT 7:36, CSM 2:21). Therefore, he must "examine whether there is a God, and, if there is, whether he can be a deceiver. For if I do not know this, it seems that I can never be quite certain about anything else" (AT 7:36, CSM 2:21).

Wolzgen construes this statement as clearly showing that for Descartes, the proof of God's veracity is a necessary condition of the certainty of all our cognitions. If this is so, then unless he has already demonstrated the existence of a God who cannot be a deceiver, he cannot be certain of anything he thinks; in particular, there cannot be any certainty in what he has affirmed in the *Second Meditation* about his mind as being by essence a thinking thing (see p. 82).

Wolzogen is critical of Descartes's general rule of truth, regardless of whether God's existence has been proved or not. Even if we are sure that there is God who never leads anyone into error, the rule of truth is far from being the infallible guide to truth. There are various causes which may make one think that he clearly and distinctly grasps something which nevertheless is a falsehood; for example, one's weak ability to judge things or ordinary ignorance of many things relevant for the correct judgment (see p. 82). Hence, according to Wolzogen, this results in diverse and mutually contrary opinions in almost all fields of inquiry. After all, most of the proponents of those diverse opinions hold them because they are sure to know them clearly and distinctly; some are even ready to sacrifice their lives in defence or promotion of their convictions. This consideration is sufficient to conclude that Descartes's general rule of truth is far from infallible. However, if Descartes's rule is fallible, we need another principle and method to guide our minds and give us certainty that we do not fall victims to error when we comprehend something with sufficient clarity and distinctness. However, one would search in vain for such a method in the whole body of the *Meditations*, Wolzogen concludes (see p. 82).

Another of Descartes's ideas to attract Wolzogen's critical attention in his discussion of the *Third Meditation* is the conception of innate ideas. As a convinced empiricist, he decidedly opposes the theory of inborn knowledge: no arguments invoked by Descartes in the *Third Meditation* justify the presence in the mind of innate concepts or principles. All our concepts, he confidently asserts, are the product of abstraction from the content of our experience; this is true even of the notions that are the most removed from the concrete reality we perceive, such as those of substance, thing, or being. In particular, our concept or idea of truth, quoted by Descartes as an example of an inborn idea, cannot be held to be innate in our minds. Since "truth is no other than the agreement of our judgment with the thing about which we judge, it is clear that the idea of truth is no different from the idea of a thing but is the same. But there is no inborn idea of a thing; therefore, there is no innate idea of truth" (p. 82). Wolzogen's opinion is thus clear: the only reasonable position concerning the sources of our knowledge is that of genetic empiricism. Hence, he does not hesitate to claim that "if a human being could be born without any senses and solely with the ability to think, such a human being would not be able to think about anything" (p. 82).

Finally, in his discussion of the *Third Meditation*, Wolzogen takes under critical scrutiny Descartes's proofs of God's existence. In particular, he focuses on the first proof, whose structure is as follows:

1. I am a mind, that is a thinking thing.
2. Owing to my thinking I possess in my mind a variety of ideas, among which there is the idea of the infinite and most perfect being.
3. I cannot possibly be the cause of this idea, since my own objective reality is not equal to that of the object of this idea.[14]
4. Therefore there exists in reality another cause, which is responsible for the idea of the infinite being in my mind and which is a much more perfect being than myself. This must be so because there must be at least so much formal reality in the cause of an idea as there is objective reality in the idea itself (p. 83).

Wolzogen criticizes two aspects of thus reconstructed proof. For one thing, in his eyes, the first premise of this reasoning is not really certain according to Descartes himself, since according to him, the ultimate guarantee of certainty in our cognition comes from God, whose existence has not yet been proved at this stage. It is at this point that Wolzogen formulates his most general criticism of the whole method of proceeding within the *Meditations*. The entire process of reasoning in Descartes's work rests upon his general rule of truth (everything which I perceive clearly and distinctly is true), yet Descartes himself considers this rule as fully dependable in the *Fourth Meditation*, i.e., after he believes he has succeeded in proving God's existence. This means, as Wolzogen concludes, that everything Descartes believes to have established in his work prior to his proof of God's existence, including the *cogito* and the incorporeal nature of the self (*res cogitans*), should, by his own standards, be regarded as uncertain (see p. 83). To Wolzogen this observation amounts to a very strong objection; in fact, its meaning is very much like that of the so-called *Cartesian Circle*, the objection to Descartes's way of building his system, something which has had a long and complex history of discussion and is still regarded as one of the most problematic aspects of Descartes's philosophy.

Secondly, Wolzogen also questions the second premise of Descartes's proof of the existence of God, namely the one assuming the presence, within our minds, of an idea of the infinite and of a perfect being. That

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[14] According to Descartes, who refers here to scholastic terminology, "the 'formal' reality of anything is its own intrinsic reality, while the 'objective' reality of an idea is a function of its representational content. Thus, if an idea A represents some object X which is *F*, then F-ness will be contained 'formally' in X but 'objectively' in A". This is how J. Cottingham explains the meaning of the term "objective reality" in Descartes in his note to the *Third Meditation* (CSM 2:28).

we really possess such an idea is doubtful because the basis for assuming the innate nature of some of our ideas is, at the very least, highly questionable. Indeed, Wolzogen goes much further in his criticism by proceeding to question the very consistency of the concept of an infinite and perfect being. To him the very idea of such a being is self-contradictory. However, to him, the more damning aspect of the Cartesian concept of God is that such a concept is alien to the sense of a living God present in the minds of those who live by their faith. In fact, our finite minds are not capable of positively grasping infinity as such; we can at best arrive at a possession of some negative concept thereof, as of some reality lacking boundaries; infinity as a positive magnitude is simply beyond the scope of our intellects.

Wolzogen is no less critical of the second proof of God's existence found in the *Meditations,* the one inferring the existence of the necessary ultimate cause of the apparent effect which is the mind in possession of the idea of God as the infinite and perfect being.

The discussion of the *Third Meditation* in *Breves annotationes* ends on a more positive note: Wolzogen restates one of the traditional arguments for God's existence, a very different one from those proposed by Descartes and grounded in human psychology. The basis of this argument is the desire for a never-ending life which is present in all humans, the clear sign that "there dwells in the human being a hope for another life, eternal and happy". Since this hope is universally present in all human minds, it cannot be futile or impossible to materialize. Yet, the realization of that hope involves the resurrection of the dead and investing mortal beings with immortality, and only the most powerful agent could cause such effects. Most particularly, this powerful agent cannot be nature itself, by virtue of which we are mortal beings. Therefore, this potent cause capable of endowing human beings with eternal life must be more perfect than nature itself, and "this cause is called God" (p. 86).

Descartes's *Fourth Meditation* is concerned with the human faculty of will as the source of errors in human thinking. For Descartes, "the scope of the will is wider than that of the intellect": the will can extend its assent to what the intellect refuses to grasp as true; this, according to him, is the sole cause of error. Therefore, the sure and infallible way to avoid errors in thinking is firmly to control one's will. In Descartes's own words, "whenever I have to make a judgement, I restrain my will so that it extends to what the intellect clearly and distinctly reveals, and no further, then it is quite impossible for me to go wrong" (AT 7:62, CSM 2:43). Wolzogen rejects this theory outright. For him, it is not true that the scope of will is wider than the one of the intellect (see p. 86); in fact, the

will depends wholly on the intellect for its acts of willing. The will does not direct its approval or disapproval to anything, unless the intellect indicates to it what should be desired or avoided (see p. 86). Descartes appears to confuse two entirely different faculties: the will and the power of judgment. The latter is one of the functions of the intellect according to the classical scheme, which distinguishes three kinds of acts by the intellectual faculty: forming simple apprehensions, judging and reasoning. Yet, neither of these three functions, Wolzogen argues, has anything in common with the will, so if we go wrong in any of these three operations, the whole responsibility lies with the intellect, which fails to apprehend or judge correctly (see p. 86). Thus, it is not an undue intervention of the will in our thinking but the imperfection of thinking itself that is to blame for our failures to grasp the truth about things.

If this is true, then Descartes's golden rule for the avoidance of errors is futile. At best, it is too one-sided and fails to eliminate other causes of mistakes than simply the undue influence of the will. For this reason, it turns out to have little practical use in our efforts to arrive at the truth about things. Other rules should be proposed to distinguish clear and distinct cognition from the vague and confused one. We can see that most people believe themselves to have a clear knowledge about reality even though they often labor under gross misconceptions. Despite this, Descartes's *Meditations* do nothing to supply such rules.

The critical observation Wolzogen makes in his discussion of the *Sixth Meditation* relates first to the question of distinction between the intellect and imagination and secondly to the problem of the real distinction between mind and body.

Descartes believed that "imagination requires a peculiar effort of mind which is not required for understanding; this additional effort of mind clearly shows the difference between imagination and pure understanding" (AT 7:72–3, CSM 2:51). Imagination characteristically accompanies our intellect when it represents a corporeal and visible reality; it visualizes the represented reality and makes it, in a way, present before our perception. However, imagination is less clear and exact in its grasp of the proper object than intellect is: it can only confusedly represent a geometrical figure of a thousand sides (chiliagon), whereas intellect grasps exactly the defining property thereof.

However, Wolzogen finds Descartes's definition of the difference between the two faculties quite incomprehensible. He claims that the author of the *Meditations* failed to show convincingly that in thinking of a chiliagon we "understand that it is a figure consisting of a thousand sides just as well as we understand the triangle to be a three-sided fig-

ure", whereas "we do not in the same way imagine the thousand sides or see them as if they were present before us" (p. 87). Neither did he prove that we comprehend any given thing better and more clearly with our intellect than with our imagination; his affirmation that his idea of a chiliagon formed by the intellect is clear, whereas the representation of that figure given by his imagination is unclear and confused, seems quite arbitrary to the critic. In fact, Wolzogen claims that neither the representation of a chiliagon given by the intellect, nor the one given by imagination is really clear, for a clear representation of a thing is "that which distinctly and separately represents all the parts of the represented thing, and such is not the image of a chiliagon produced by our mind, whether by means of the intellect or by means of imagination" (p. 87).

An extensive quote from the *Sixth Meditation* opens Wolzogen's critical discussion of the problem of the "real distinction between mind and body":

> First, I know that everything which I clearly and distinctly understand is capable of being created by God so as to correspond exactly with my understanding of it. Hence the fact that I can clearly and distinctly understand one thing apart from another is enough to make me certain that the two things are distinct, since they are capable of being separated, at least by God. The question of what kind of power is required to bring about such a separation does not affect the judgement that the two things are distinct. Thus, simply by knowing that I exist and seeing at the same time that absolutely nothing else belongs to my nature or essence except that I am a thinking thing, I can infer correctly that my essence consists solely in the fact that I am a thinking thing. It is true that I may have (or, to anticipate, that I certainly have) a body that is very closely joined to me. But nevertheless, on the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in so far as I am simply a thinking, non-extended thing; and on the other hand I have a distinct idea of body, in so far as this is simply an extended, non-thinking thing. And accordingly, it is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it (AT 7:78, CSM 2:54).

Descartes's definition and restatement of the problem of the difference between mind and body is highly unsatisfactory in the eyes of the author of *Breves annotationes*: the problem is not whether mind is "a tangible and solid body", but "if it is not a subtle vapour or some airy or ethereal, etc., diffused through this thick body" (p. 54). At this point, Wolzogen refers to the doctrine of Gassendi, who rejected both the Aristotelian conception of hylomorphism and the Cartesian dualism of two created substances. To remove the gap between body and mind, he introduced dualism between the solid body and the subtle or rarefied

body. Wolzogen's comments on the mind-body distinction suggest that he shared Gassendi's position on that matter.

The thrust of Wolzogen's criticism of Descartes's position on the distinction between mind and body consists in pointing out that the whole strength of the latter's argument rests upon one principle, namely that "things which we know by means of a distinct concept are also distinct in reality" (p. 87). Wolzogen has already criticized and rejected this principle in his discussion of the proof of the incorporeality of mind in the *Second Meditation*. In his comments on the *Sixth Meditation*, he restates his position that the fact that given concepts are distinct as to their content need not imply that the objects to which these concepts refer are not in reality one and the same object; in the given case, the fact that the concepts of mind and body are distinct and mutually independent does not by any means authorize the assumption that mind and body are different realities, distinct one from the other. Here, Wolzogen invokes the authority of Duns Scotus (as did Caterus in the *First Objections* to Descartes's *Meditations*) and states that for two concepts to be distinct between themselves and yet refer to one reality it is enough that between the contents of these two concepts there remains a formal rather than real distinction. The formal distinction was postulated by John Duns Scotus as an intermediate distinction, coming between the merely conceptual distinction and the real distinction.

Wolzogen develops his critical examination of Descartes's distinction between mind and body with the observation that one could accept the conclusion that the mind is a thing completely independent of the body in terms of both essence and being, and that a pure mind might possibly exist without any corporeal being attached to it, only if one possessed perfect and complete knowledge of oneself and if this knowledge excluded any relationship with anybody whatever. Only if Descartes was in possession of such perfect cognition of his own essence and if that cognition revealed his self to be a purely spiritual being, could he uphold with absolute certainty his affirmation that the human mind is an essentially incorporeal being and bears no intrinsic relationship with the body. However, as the matter stands in terms of our actual condition, we do not possess perfect and complete knowledge either of our mind or of our body, and thus no man, not even a philosopher like Descartes, can rule out the possibility that the human mind is in its actual reality corporeal and that body as such is included in the essence of mind (see p. 88).

In any event, the conception of thinking as the constitutive attribute of the spiritual substance is strange and counterintuitive; actual think-

ing is a function, an ability to think a faculty of a substance and not the substance itself. Neither does Descartes's treatment of the distinction between a "complete and incomplete substance" throw any light upon the problem of the corporeal or incorporeal nature of the human mind (see p. 88).

Wolzogen is equally critical of Descartes's second argument for incorporeality of mind, which rests upon the assumption of the indivisibility of mind; in his eyes, this second proof fails to prove its point just as the first failed to do. Whether mind be divisible or not, depends on how it is understood. If it is taken in the sense of the "superior faculty" of the human soul, i.e., as the intellect and the will, the mind is undoubtedly indivisible. However, if mind is taken to be the whole substance or the whole soul, which is endowed with the faculties of understanding and willing, there will be nothing absurd in claiming that the human mind is divisible so long as a compelling proof is not offered of the mind's incorporeality (see p. 89). Here end Wolzogen's critical observations on Descartes's *Meditations*. How would Descartes himself have responded to them if he had had an opportunity to get to know them, we do not know. Yet, judging by his responses to the authors of the *Objections*, one can make a very probable guess. In all likelihood, he would have regarded Wolzogen's comments in the manner similar to the one with which he regarded the objections made by Caterus and Gassendi – as sterile and thoughtless repetitions of common-sense prejudices.

How to understand Descartes's polemical passion is a problem that has been debated for years within the scholarship on Descartes.[15] He is known to have reacted to criticisms with irritation and slightingly, which, however, did not deter him from engaging in a serious debate with his critics. It is reasonable to suppose that he would have treated Wolzogen and his *Breves in Meditationes Metaphysicas Renati Cartesii annotations* in a similar manner – regarding his critic with an air of superiority, while at the same time thinking it worthwhile to engage in a discussion with him.

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[15] See J.-M. Beyssade, J.-L. Marion (eds.), *Descartes. Objecter et répondre* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994).

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Summary

The article presents one of the lesser-known treatises produced within the Polish Socinian movement, written by Johann Ludwig von Wolzogen (ca. 1599–1661), under the title *Breves in Meditationes Metaphysicas Renati Cartesii annotationes* [*Brief Notes on the Metaphysical Meditations of Rene Descartes*]. It appeared in print in 1657 in Amsterdam and was reprinted in the series *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum* ten years later. In its entirety, the text is intended as a polemic against Descartes's views and is written as a detailed commentary on the *Meditationes de prima philosophia*. Here, I intend to demonstrate that Wolzogen's treatise deserves a close scrutiny. First of all, it considerably contributes to our knowledge of the 17th-century disputes around the *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Second, it represents the first substantive and fairly extensive discussion of Descartes's philosophy to appear in the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Third, it is a treatise issued from the milieu of the Polish Socinians (the Polish Brethren) that has been recognized by recent research as having exerted a non-negligible influence upon the development of the progressive European thought of the period, both in the domain of theology and philosophy.

Keywords: Wolzogen, Descartes, Socinian, Meditations