

A DISPUTE IN THE WORLD OF THE DEAD: RENÉ DESCARTES AND ANDREAS RÜDIGER

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Resumen: En 1731 un autor alemán anónimo publicó un diálogo del muerto continuando la tradición comenzada en la Grecia antigua por Luciano de Samosata. Hoy sobrevive una única copia del texto, publicada sin referencia del lugar de publicación o impresor y se encuentra ahora en el *Evangelisches Predigerseminar Bibliothek* en Wittenberg. Los protagonistas son el filósofo y físico Andreas Rüdiger (1673-1731) y René Descartes, quien representa en el diálogo a un tipo muy diverso de filósofo de la figura “histórica” que trascendió hasta nosotros en sus obras. Este artículo se propone reconstruir la composición de este texto raro y enigmático y contextualizar la perspectiva ideológica del autor en las controversias que animaban el trasfondo filosófico de las universidades alemanas de los comienzos del siglo XVIII.

Palabras clave: diálogo del muerto, Cartesianismo, problema mente/cuerpo, pietismo.

Abstract: In 1731 an anonymous German author published a dialogue of the dead, continuing the tradition started in ancient Greece by Lucian of Samosata. Today a single complete copy of the text survives, published without indication of the place of publication or the printer and now in the *Evangelisches Predigerseminar Bibliothek* in Wittenberg. The protagonists are the philosopher and physician Andreas Rüdiger (1673-1731) and René Descartes, who in the dialogue represents a very different type of philosopher from the “historical” figure passed down to us in his works. This article aims to reconstruct the composition of this rare and enigmatic text and to contextualize the author’s ideological perspective in the controversies animating the philosophical underground of early 18th-century German universities.

Keywords: dialogue of the dead, Cartesianism, mind/body problem, pietism.

1. An Arrival Among the Stars

In the appendix to his 1974 monograph *The Dialogue of the Dead in Eighteenth-Century Germany*, John Rutledge presented a catalogue of 18th-century *Totengespräche*. These were dialogues of the dead published in Germany in the wake of the circulation of Fontenelle's *Nouveaux dialogues des morts* and the enormous success of the fictional conversations composed by the German journalist David Faßmann, who published his *Gespräche im Reiche der Toten* in periodical form for over twenty years¹. The scholar also mentioned an anonymous dialogue between René Descartes and the physician and philosopher Andreas Rüdiger from Saxony, dated 1731 and described as "actually available" at the Staats-Bibliothek in Berlin². However, I have ascertained that the Berlin imprint was destroyed during the Second World War. I have hitherto succeeded in locating a single complete copy of the dialogue, undated and held at the Evangelisches Predigerseminar Bibliothek in Wittenberg; a second copy, in the Universitätsbibliothek in Erlangen, contains only the first part, but importantly has the same date reported by Rutledge³.

The text's rarity is matched by the absence of scholarly studies: the conversation is not even mentioned in the modern repertoires which list other contemporary dialogues of the dead on philosophical subjects⁴. It is virtually ignored in other publications on the impressive array of dialogues of the dead, hundreds of which appeared on a vast range of subjects throughout the 18th century in Germany⁵. This fashion, which started at the beginning of the century, together

1) FASSMANN, David, *Gespräche im Reiche der Toten*, Leipzig, Deer 1718-1739. On the German journalist cf. KASCHMIEDER, Käthe, *David Faßmanns „Gespräche im Reiche der Toten“ (1718-1740). Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Geistes- und Kulturgeschichte des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Breslau, Diss., 1934; LINDENBERG, Ludwig, *Leben und Schriften David Faßmanns (1683-1744) mit besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Totengespräche*, Berlin, Ebering, 1937; ECKHARDT, Nils, *Arzt, Medizin und Tod im Spiegel der von David Faßmann (1683-1744) in den Jahren 1718 bis 1739 herausgegebenen Zeitschrift „Gespräche in dem Reiche derer Todten“*, Düsseldorf, Diss., 1987.

2) Rutledge, John, *The Dialogue of the Dead in Eighteenth-Century Germany*, Bern-Frankfurt am Main, Lang, 1974, pp. 133 and 140.

3) The two parts are entitled respectively: *Curieuses Gespräche im Reiche derer Todten, zwischen [...] Andrea Rüdiger, und [...] Renato Cartesio*, s.l., s.n., 1731; *Besonderes curieuses Gespräche im Reiche derer Todten, zwischen [...] Andrea Rüdiger, und [...] Renato Cartesio* [...]. Anderer Theil, s.l., s.n., s.a.

4) Cf. for example the repertoire by RISSE, Wilhelm, *Bibliographia philosophica vetus*, vol. VII, *Doxoscopia*, Hildesheim-Zürich-New York, Olms, 1998.

5) An exception is the study by RENTSCH, Johannes, *Lucianstudien*, Plauen, Wieprecht, 1895, on which cf. *infra*, par. 3. On Rüdiger see SCHEPERS, Heinrich, *Andreas Rüdigers Methodologie und ihre Voraussetzungen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Schulphilosophie im 18. Jahrhundert*, Köln, Kölner Universitäts-Verlag, 1959; DE JONG, Karel H., *Rüdiger und ein Anfang! Kant und ein Ende!*, Leiden, Brill, 1931; CARLS, Wilhelm, *Andreas Rüdigers Moralphilosophie*, Halle, Niemeyer, 1894, reprint Hildesheim-Zürich-New York, Olms, 1999; LEINSLE, Ulrich G., *Reformversuche protestantischer Metaphysik im Zeitalter des Rationalismus*, Augsburg, Maro, 1988, pp.

with Rüdiger's death in the same year, inspired our dialogue's anonymous author to adopt this very popular genre and compose his fictional conversation, published without any indication of its place of publication or the printer.

The dialogue proper is preceded by an introduction in which the anonymous author tells us of Rüdiger's arrival in the 'world of the dead', understandably disoriented by this novel situation. The opportunity to verify at first hand the immortality of the soul, the non-existence of the *primum mobile*, the true nature of comets and the actual location of hell, to gaze down from the heights of the starry sky on the earth's movement around the sun – in his eyes resembling a bird roasted over a fire – temporarily distract the philosopher from the inhabitants of this place⁶. As is frequently the case in dialogues of this type, in this *Totengespräch*, too, the author must devise a justification for the encounter between the new arrival and an old inhabitant of the afterlife; he does so by imagining that the absence of better interlocutors in the vicinity drives Rüdiger, who would have preferred to talk to other thinkers, to engage in debate with Descartes:

As soon as Doctor Rüdiger had taken the place assigned to him in the world of the dead, he felt a strong inclination to speak particularly with the Englishman John Locke, whom he had admired when alive, or with Mr Thomasius, who had protected him in the world of the living. Yet since it is well known that neither the English nor the Germans are as talkative as the French, he was approached at once with a welcome by Mr Descartes, who had in any case heard much talk of him from the most recent arrivals in the world of the dead. He shortly began a conversation with him that, translated from the language spoken in the world of the dead, went as follows⁷.

Obviously there is nothing accidental in the decision to contrast Rüdiger

206-26; MULSOW, Martin, „Idolatry and Science: Against Nature Worship from Boyle to Rüdiger, 1680-1720“, in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, LVII (2006), pp. 697-711; CIAFARDONE, Raffaele, *Von der Kritik an Wolff zum vorkritischen Kant. Wolff-Kritik bei Rüdiger und Crusius*, in *Christian Wolff 1679-1754. Interpretationen zu seiner Philosophie und deren Wirkung. Mit einer Bibliographie der Wolff-Literatur*, ed. by W. Schneiders, Hamburg, Meiner, 1983, pp. 292-96.

6) *Curieuses Gespräche im Reiche derer Todten*, op. cit., pp. 3- 4.

7) *Ib.*, p. 10: “Da nun also Herr D. Rüdiger seinen angewiesenen Platz im Todten Reiche eingenommen hatte, fand er zwar eine grosse Neigung vornehmlich mit dem Engelländer Johan Locken zu sprechen, als welchen er in seinem Leben sehr hoch gehalten hatte, oder mit Herrn Thomasio zu reden als welcher sein Patron in Reiche der Lebendigen gewesen. Allein da bekandt, wie weder die Engelländer noch die Deutschen so gesprächig als die Frantzösen sind so fand sie auch so gleich Mr. Cartesius der sonsten so viel von D. Rüdiger durch die in Reich der Todten neuangelangte Passagier gehöret hatte zu ihm ein hieß ihn willkommen und fienge nachgehends folgenden Discours mit ihm an, welcher aus der im Reich der Todten gewöhnlichen Sprache übersetzt also lautet“.

with Descartes. An encounter between the doctor and Christian Thomasius, among whose followers he is still counted, or with Locke, whose gnoseology had attracted fierce criticism from Rüdiger but who shared his decided anti-innatism, would not have allowed him to stage a clash whose critical force was comparable to that unleashed by a conflict between Descartes and a philosopher who had professed a radical anti-Cartesianism in most of his works. The discussion would thus be anything but a measured exchange of opinions between two thinkers, a fact clearly apparent already in one of the first remarks entrusted to Descartes: he immediately addresses Rüdiger, citing information obtained from other inhabitants of the afterlife:

You have constantly refuted me and made efforts to prove in numerous writings how many mistakes I have made; based on what I am told of your works by judicious inhabitants of our world of the dead, I see that you have a greater ability to demolish and criticize the opinions of others than to think up something better and more certain yourself⁸.

Descartes, who died eighty-one years before his fictional encounter with the German philosopher, is thus imagined in the topical condition of someone who in the afterlife has not lost the ability to access information on cultural events in the 'world of the living'. These comments suggest a first level of interpretation of the text: the attacks which Rüdiger levelled at Descartes during his lifetime on crucial issues of gnoseology, physics and psychology would clearly be central to the debate between the two philosophers. However, we can raise a further issue: to what extent did the author use this expedient to tackle philosophical controversies which were still ongoing when the dialogue was composed? In other words, how far will he go in exploiting the potential of the *Totengespräch* genre?

A comparison with the sources and with other contemporary dialogues and an examination of the remarks made by the two philosophers (especially Descartes) will allow us to glimpse something more than a mere *divertissement* inspired by the now widespread fashion for writing dialogues 'in the world of the dead' behind the composition of this conversation. The dialogue should be read against the cultural background of those years, the debates and controversies of the early 18th century in which it is steeped. To access this deeper level of analysis we must go back to a controversy of some years previously, in

8) *Ib.*, p. 12: "Sie haben mich beständig wiederleget und in vielen Stücken zeigen wollen, daß ich mich irrig vergangen allein waß mir verständige Leute in unserm Todten Reich aus Ihren Schriften erzehlet, habe ich gesehen, daß Sie mehr Geschicklichkeit besassen, die Meynungen anderer Leute herunter zu machen und zu tadeln, als selber etwas besseres und festeres zu erfinden".

which Andreas Rüdiger had played a prominent role.

2. Descartes as Wolffian Philosopher

In 1723 the pietist faction at the University of Halle freed itself of what it had for some time considered an unwelcome presence. The speech pronounced two years before by Christian Wolff on the morals of the Chinese had supplied the definitive pretext for achieving a removal which had for years been hoped for, but the philosopher's expulsion was only the beginning of "the most intense and spectacular of all the German Enlightenment controversies"⁹. Indeed, a remarkable number of pamphlets against harmonicism, determinism, Wolffian Spinozism – and an equal number of rejoinders by Wolff and his followers – followed the philosopher's well-publicized expulsion from Prussia for decades. Among Wolff's detractors we also find Rüdiger, who in 1727, four years before his death and the publication of the dialogue of which he was a protagonist, had reprinted the fifth chapter of the *Deutsche Metaphysik*, "on the essence of the soul and of a spirit in general" (*Von dem Wesen der Seele und eines Geistes überhaupt*), adding his notes of refutation at the bottom of each page. Wolff's reply, already solicited by the Rüdigerian Adolph Friedrich Hoffmann in a short work against Wolffian logic, would never have materialized but for two students from Jena who took up the defence of the exiled philosopher in 1729 under the pseudonym "Hieronymus Aletophilus"¹⁰. Our dialogue thus appeared in the midst of the turmoil surrounding the scandal aroused by the 'evil' Wolffian philosophy: decades of heated exchange of polemical writings, student agitations and the birth of clandestine associations linked to the dissemination of Wolffism, countered by the intransigent censorship of the pietist faction which controlled the Prussian philosophy faculties during the philosopher's enforced residence at Marburg¹¹.

9) Israel, Jonathan, *Enlightenment Contested. Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 190.

10) HOFFMANN, Adolph F., *Gedancken über Christian Wolffens Logic, oder sogenannte Philosophiam rationalem. Nebst einem Anhang, worinnen gedachter Herr Auctor auf die von Andreas Rüdiger wider seine Meinungen von dem Wesen der Seele und eines Geistes überhaupt gemachten Einwürffe zu antworten eingeladen wird*, Leipzig, Heinsius, 1729; ALETOPHILUS, Hieronymus, *Erinnerungen auf die Gegen-Meinung der Meinung Herrn Hof-Rath Wolffens von dem Wesen der Seele und eines Geistes überhaupt [...] Frankfurt a. M.-Leipzig, s.n., 1729*. The Wolffian chapter reprinted by Rüdiger is found in WOLFF, Christian, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt*, Halle, Renger, 1720, pp. 453-574. For a more detailed account of these events see the introduction by Michael Albrecht to the anti-Wolffian text by RÜDIGER, Andreas, *Herrn Christian Wolffens Meinung von dem Wesen der Seele und eines Geistes überhaupt*; und D. Andreas Rüdigers *Gegen-Meinung*, Leipzig, Heinsius, 1727, reprint ed. by M.A., Hildesheim-Zürich-New York, Olms, 2008, pp. 5-7 and 13-16.

11) On the links between Wolffism and radical student groups cf. MULSOW, Martin, *Freigeister im*

News of these heated disputes obviously reaches the realm of the dead, giving Descartes an opportunity to express to the recently arrived Rüdiger all his impatience with the *Streitschriften*, the polemical writings exchanged in what had by now become a long-running controversy. The ideal proposed to counter the attacks of Wolff's opponents is that of the "connection between truths", an expression rendered precisely in German with that *Verknüpfung der Wahrheiten* which had already become a mainstay of the Wolffian method¹²:

CARTESIUS: those who spend their whole life publishing polemical writings certainly become famous among their contemporaries, but they do not achieve immortality for posterity. Those who wish to count on lasting fame after their death should write something useful and profound, which shows the connection between truths [...]. I am happy that we have now seen an end to these polemical writings on the Wolffian issue [...]. Certainly his philosophy will remain a resplendent light in the heavens of Knowledge [...].

D. RÜDIGER: you truly hold Mr. Wolff in high regard. I had a dispute with him, during which I published his opinions on the soul together with my refutations. I think that mathematics has done considerable harm to his philosophy, since he seeks a mathematical certainty which is not always to be found [...].

CARTESIUS: but mathematics refines the intellect. It is as if anyone who understands it holds in his own hands Ariadne's thread, with which he may save himself from the most intricate labyrinth of fantastical opinions and reach the road of truth¹³.

Gottsched-Kreis. Wolffianismus, studentische Aktivitäten und Religionskritik in Leipzig 1740-1745, Göttingen, Wallstein, 2007.

12) On the Wolffian Verknüpfung see for example WOLFF, Christian, Vernünftige Gedanken von den Kräften des menschlichen Verstandes und ihrem richtigen Gebrauche in Erkenntnis der Wahrheit (1713), in ID., Gesammelte Werke, sec. I, vol. I, ed. by H.W. Arndt, Hildesheim, Olms, 1965, pp. 132-33 and 260, n. 14; ALBRECHT, Michael, ‚Eklektik‘: eine Begriffsgeschichte mit Hinweisen auf die Philosophie und Wissenschaftsgeschichte, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, Frommann-Holzboog, 1994, p. 530; ENGFER, Hans-Jürgen, Philosophie als Analysis. Studien zur Entwicklung philosophischer Analysiskonzeptionen unter dem Einfluß mathematischer Methodenmodelle im 17. und frühen 18. Jahrhundert, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, Frommann-Holzboog, 1982, p. 243.

13) Curieuses Gespräche im Reiche derer Todten, op. cit., pp. 16-17: "CARTESIUS: Welche ihre ganzte Lebens-Zeit in Streitschriften zu bringen werden, sich zwar zu ihrer Zeit bekannt, aber nicht bey der Nachwelt unsterblich machen. Wer auf einen beständigen Nachruhm nach dem Tode gedencet, schreibe etwas nützlichcs und gründliches darinn er die Verknüpfung der Wahrheiten zeigt [...]. Ich bin sehr wohl zufrieden, daß die Streitschriften in der Wolfischen Sache nunmehr mehrentheils auch ihr Ende erreicht haben [...]. Gewiß seine Philosophie wird wie ein helles Licht am Himmel der Wahrheit stehen bleiben [...]. D. RÜDIGER: Sie halten gar viel von Herr Hoffrath Wolffens und habe ich auch einen Disput mit ihm gehabt, indem ich dessen Meinung von der Seele mit meiner Gegen Meinungen in öffentlichen Druck herausgegeben habe. Ich halte daß die Mathematicque seiner Weltweißheit viel geschadet, indem er überall eine mathematische Gewißheit suchen wollen, die doch nicht allenthalben, zu finden ist [...]. CARTESIUS: Zum wenigsten schärfte die Mathematique den Verstand, daß derjenige welcher sie wohl gelernt, gleichsam den Faden der Ariadne in der Hand hat, durch welchen er aus den verwirhesten Labrinth wunderlicher Meinungen sich glücklich zu rechte finden, und auf den Weg der Wahrheit gelangen kan".

The anonymous author's most daring move is make Descartes profess a boundless admiration for the individual who, born 29 years after his death, had lit the fuse of the ongoing controversies. The dialogue thus predictably leads into the argument over the relationship between mathematics and philosophical speculation which, intertwined with the debate on Biblical exegesis, had run through the whole of the 18th century in Germany, becoming one of the issues on which part of the great anti-Wolff battle was focused.

A prominent role in this dispute was played by Christian Wolff, whose youthful beliefs in the need to apply mathematical rigour to theology eventually led to his well-known identification of philosophical and mathematical method. Other protagonists of this *querelle* include Christian Thomasius and, 32 years after the publication of our dialogue, the pre-critical Kant of the dissertation on *Deutlichkeit*, who expressed his opinion on the issue during a competition held in 1761 by the Academy of Sciences in Berlin¹⁴. The relations between philosophy and mathematics also runs through Rüdiger's reflections, in a clearly anti-Cartesian and anti-Wolffian direction. To explain the radical difference between the two disciplines theorized by the philosopher we can cite his own extremely concise words in a passage of the *Physica divina*:

Ulterius mathematicorum *modi* sunt *varii*, quia possibles tantum: in philosophia contra unius rei una est causa, unus modus: causam puta adaequatam. Item mathematicorum modi possibles sunt omnes facile *determinabiles*, quia sunt in potentia hominis, & ad nullam aliam, quam humanam potentiam referuntur: modi vero philosophorum in physicis non item, quia referuntur ad infinitam Dei potentiam. Porro *species & opposita* mathematicarum sunt *perfacilia*, differunt erim solum quantitate, v.g. angulus acutus, obtusus, & rectus: at philosophorum species & opposita substantiis differunt & causis, non nisi acutiore acie cognoscendis¹⁵.

This is the background against which the dialogue's author wrote, outlined by reducing Rüdiger's complex argumentation on the non-assimilability of phi-

14) For an overview of these discussions see especially TONELLI, Giorgio, "Der Streit über die mathematische Methode in der Philosophie in der ersten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts und die Entstehung von Kants Schrift über die *Deutlichkeit*", in *Archiv für Philosophie*, IX (1959), pp. 37-66; BASSO, Paola, *Il secolo geometrico. La questione del metodo matematico in filosofia da Spinoza a Kant*, Firenze, Le Lettere, 2004; ENGFER, Hans-Jürgen, *Philosophie als Analysis*, op. cit. On Wolffian method see ID., *Zur Bedeutung Wolffs für die Methodendiskussion der deutschen Aufklärungsphilosophie: analytische und synthetische Methode bei Wolff und beim vorkritischen Kant*, in *Christian Wolff 1679-1754*, op. cit., pp. 48-65; ARNDT, Hans W., *Rationalismus und Empirismus in der Erkenntnislehre Christian Wolffs*, ib., pp. 31-47; GÓMEZ TUTOR, Juan I., *Die Wissenschaftliche Methode bei Christian Wolff*, Hildesheim-Zürich-New York, Olms, 2004.

15) RÜDIGER, Andreas, *Physica divina, recta via, eademque inter superstitionem et atheismum media* [...], Frankfurt, typis Matthiae Andreae, 1716, p. 18.

losophical and mathematical method to a few short comments. Alongside the passages already cited we should recall at least the accusation hurled by the German philosopher at some mathematicians that they are “von der Atheisterei nicht viel entfernt”. This expression accurately reflects Rüdiger’s stance, the object of a virulent attack by an anonymous group of *mathematici* and *mechanici*, who in a pamphlet attacked the anti-Cartesian, anti-Aristotelian and anti-Gassendian crusade of the *Physica divina*, a treatise conceived by the doctor as an alternative to the atheism inherent in the physics of these philosophers¹⁶. In the case of Descartes the author does not merely reduce the complexity of his thought to a few remarks – including the comparison of mathematics to Ariadne’s thread, an echo of that between the *filum Thesei* and the fifth rule proposed by Descartes in the *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*. He completely overturns Cartesian thought on the relations between Biblical exegesis and mathematical method, constructing a philosophical image of Descartes which is not so dissimilar to the tendency to undermine the separation of the theological and philosophical spheres typical of a certain Cartesian scholasticism¹⁷. The Descartes with whom we are presented is an impassioned champion of a mathematicizing exegesis of the Scriptures:

I do not see why we should not apply mathematical method to theology. The latter would lose none of its excellence; rather, it would be expounded in a more orderly fashion. Mathematical method [...] can be applied to all the sciences which possess good definitions [...]. As to the fact that articles of faith cannot be proven, but must be believed, I am in absolute agreement with you. But this does not prevent us from applying mathematical method to them [...]. If I collect everything that Scripture says about God, I can formulate a single definition of Him starting from this. I survey what the Holy Scriptures say about resurrection, in order to define it, and so on: once I am in possession of definitions I am able to apply mathematical method easily, to draw truths from the definitions, recombine them and finally put everything in its proper order¹⁸.

16) Curieuses Gespräche im Reiche derer Todten, op. cit., p. 18; Defension-Schrift derer Mathematicorum und Mechanicorum, wider Herrn D. Andr. Rüdigers in seiner Physica divina ausgestossene Injurien und Unwahrheiten, allen Gelehrten ietziger und zukünftiger Zeit zur Decision, Frankfurt am Main, s.n., 1717.

17) Cf. DESCARTES, René, *Regulae ad directionem ingenii* (1701), in AT, vol. X, pp. 379-80. For a broad overview on the debate over Biblical hermeneutics within Cartesianism, particularly lively in 17th-century Holland, cf. SCRIBANO, Emanuela, *Da Descartes a Spinoza. Percorsi della teologia razionale del Seicento*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1988.

18) Curieuses Gespräche im Reiche derer Todten, op. cit., pp. 46-47: “Warum sollte man die mathematische Methode nicht auf die Theologie appliciren können, indem doch diese nichts dadurch an ihrer Vortrefflichkeit verlieret, vielmehr in bessere Ordnung gesetzt wird. In allen Wissenschaften wo man gute Definitiones hat [...] lässet sich auch die mathematische Methode appliciren [...].

The first section of our dialogue concludes with this heartfelt apology for the use of the *mos geometricus* in Biblical hermeneutics. The author's pretext for failing to continue the conversation is the fatigue suffered by Rüdiger, who begs Descartes to spare him further disquisitions on the links between mathematics and Scripture, postponing the discussion to another occasion¹⁹. In fact, in the continuation of the dialogue announced immediately afterwards by the anonymous author, the reader would not find a resumption of the debate, as the conclusion of the first part would have led him to expect. The two philosophers make only a few incidental incursions into scriptural matters as part of a broad opening discussion of Aristotelian philosophy and probability (*Wahrscheinlichkeit*). Within a series of arguments and counter-arguments not lacking in tension and engaging him, among other things, in a vehement defence against Rüdiger's accusations of scepticism, Descartes would, for example, clarify that in the case of dogmas such as the Trinity, care was needed to avoid the mistake of those who attempted to demonstrate it on a purely mathematical basis without first believing in it²⁰.

We should note that the French philosopher continues in his apology of Christian Wolff, whose ghost hovers over both encounters, going so far as to defend Wolff's conception of philosophy as "Wissenschaft möglicher Dinge in wieweit dieselbe möglich sind"; Descartes also presents the philosopher from Breslau, for his excellent work on applied mathematics, as a sort of perfect continuer of Cartesian demonstrative method²¹.

Highly striking in this second conversation between the two thinkers is the absence of a motif which is absolutely central to the philosophical works of both Rüdiger, and of Descartes and Wolff: the relationship between mind and body. This was an absolutely topical problem, since the Wolffian *querelle* monopolized discussions of psychology in Prussia during these years. The debate of the period saw two main opposing positions: pietist influxism, with strong anti-occasionalist and anti-Cartesian overtones, and Leibnizian harmonicism in the version espoused by Christian Wolff. The latter justified his opposition to

Was Sie aber von den Glaubens-Artickeln in der Gottesgelahrtheit anzuführen beliebet, daß man dieselbe nicht beweisen kan, sondern vielmehr glauben muß, so bin ich darin vollkommen Ihrer Meynung, dieses aber hindert nicht, daß man deshalb die mathematische Methode auf dieselbe appliciren solte[...]. Wenn ich nehulich alles dasjenige was die heilige Schrift von Gott saget zusammennehme, so kan ich eine Definition von Gott machen. Halte ich alles das zusammen, was die Heil. Schrift von der Wiedergeburch schreibt, so habe ich die Definition von der Wiedergeburch und so weiter habe ich aber einmahl Definitiones so kan ich die mathematischen Methode leicht appliciren, aus denen Definitionen Wahrheiten ziehen dieselbe combinieren und alles in gehörige Ordnung bringen".

19) *Ib.*, p. 48.

20) *Besonderes curieuses Gespräche im Reiche derer Todten*, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

21) *Ib.*, p. 13.

the model of occasional causes with a purely physical argumentation hinging on the compatibility of the theory of pre-established harmony with Leibniz's law of the conservation of motive force²². The modes of interaction between soul and body is one of the main issues in the first part of the debate, and it is to this which we therefore return.

3. Pietism and Materialism

The clash between the two philosophers over the *commercium* between body and soul is outlined by the author closely following a series of Rüdigerian refutations of Descartes, such as that in the *Physica divina* (1716) or in the *Institutiones eruditionis* (1707), purged of many of their corollaries: the bipartition of the *spiritus* into *mens* and *anima*, the purely physiological aspects of the relationship between mind and body (the role of the animal spirits and the pineal gland, the function of the heart) and the associated treatment of talismans, natural magic and *signaturae*, demons, spectres and sleepwalkers, are all missing from the anonymous dialogue between Rüdiger and Descartes²³. In their exchange we find only the essential nub of the theory, which can also be read in Wolff's 1727 refutation, an original and complex approach in which numerous philosophical traditions and influences converge and with a solid grounding in Rüdiger's physics²⁴.

The stance adopted by the fictional Descartes immediately stands out for the clear defence of the dualism of substances; however his peroration ends only with a concise formula which, more than the argumentation of Descartes, resembles the scholastic developments of German Cartesianism and some of Wolff's attempts to reduce the *cogito* to the syllogistic form²⁵. Cartesian doc-

22) WOLFF, Christian, "Principia dynamica", in *Commentarii academiae scientiarum petropolitanae*, I (1728), pp. 217-38; ID., *Vertheidigung der Meinung von der bewegenden Krafft, welche sich in den Cörpern befindet, gegen Hr. Muys Einwendungen* (1739), reprint Hildesheim-New York, Olms, 1981, pp. 128-41.

23) RÜDIGER, Andreas, *Physica divina*, op. cit., pp. 153-56 and 160-90; ID., *Institutiones eruditionis, seu Philosophia synthetica, tribus libris, justitia, et prudentia, methodo mathematicae aemula*, Frankfurt am Main, Gleditsch-Weidmann, 1717³, pp. 241-45.

24) On the relationship between mind and body in Rüdiger cf. Michael Albrecht's introduction to RÜDIGER, Andreas, *Gegen-Meinung*, op. cit., pp. 7-13; KRIEGER, Martin, *Geist, Welt und Gott bei Christian August Crusius. Erkenntnistheoretisch-psychologische, kosmologische und religionsphilosophische Perspektiven im Kontrast zum Wolffschen System*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 1993, pp. 101-04 and 224-25; JAITNER, Wilhelm R., *Thomasius, Rüdiger, Hoffmann und Crusius: Studien zur Menschenkunde und Theorie der Lebensführung im 18. Jahrhundert*, Bleicherode am Harz, Nieft, 1939, pp. 15-20.

25) Cf. for example the Deutsche Metaphysik: „Wenn wir deutlich erkennen wollen, wie wir durch diese Gründe überführet werden, daß wir sind; so werden wir befinden, daß in diesen Gedancken folgender Schluß steckt: Wer sich seiner und anderer Dinge bewusst ist, der ist. Wir sind uns unserer und anderer Dinge bewusst. Also sind wir“ (WOLFF, Christian, *Vernünftige Gedancken von Gott*,

trine is reduced to a bare-bones reasoning culminating in the definition of the soul as a “thinking essence”:

However, I must distinguish between soul and body, which do not make up a single whole. The body and its essence consist in its extension in length, width, and depth. If the soul were extensive, it would itself be a body, but being corporeal it would be unable to achieve immortality [...]. The body is unable to think; the soul is not a body; the soul is in man; from this it follows that thought proceeds from the soul, and therefore that the soul is a thinking essence²⁶.

Rüdiger has no doubts as to the greater efficacy of his solution, and counters by denying that the essence of the soul lies in thought, provoking some malevolent insinuations from Descartes:

R.: it is proven that the soul thinks and that no body can think purely by virtue of its mechanical functioning. However, it does not follow from this that the essence of the soul resides in thought. The latter, as I have already <said> before, is a property of the soul, not its essence. In my philosophy, I postulate a difference between matter and body, and since something that is not material cannot exist, I do not think it is wrong to ascribe matter to the soul.

C.: just a little while ago you accused mathematicians of wishing to make everything in theology and psychology measurable, as one does with circles and triangles, and now you begin to claim that the soul is material, but you too could demonstrate this geometrically, since what is material is measurable²⁷.

der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, op. cit., p. 4). On the German reception of the cogito in the 18th century cf. RÖD, Wolfgang, *Le Cogito ergo sum dans la philosophie universitaire allemande au XVIII^e siècle*, in *La passion de la raison. Hommage a Ferdinand Alquié*, ed. by J.-L. Marion, Paris, PUF, 1983, pp. 305-22. On the relationship between Wolff and 17th-century syllogistics see the introduction by Hans W. Arndt to WOLFF, Christian, *Vernünftige Gedanken von den Kräften des menschlichen Verstandes*, op. cit., pp. 31-55; on the anti-Cartesian polemic underlying the syllogistics of the *Metafisica tedesca* cf. CORR, Charles, *Cartesian Themes in Wolff's German Metaphysics*, in *Christian Wolff 1679-1754*, op. cit., p. 115.

26) *Curieuses Gespräche im Reiche derer Todten*, op. cit., pp. 18-19: “Indessen aber muß ich doch die Seele von dem Körper unterscheiden, denn die Seele und Körper ist nicht einerley Ding. Der Körper nun und sein Wesen, bestehet in der Ausdehnung in die Länge Breite und Dicke. Wäre die Seele ausgedehnet, so wäre sie auch ein Körper, ist sie ein Körper so kan sie nicht unsterblich seyn [...]. Kein Körper kan gedencken, die Seele ist kein Körper die Seele ist im Menschen also kommt das Gedencken der Seele zu folglich ist die Seele ein gedenckendes Wesen”.

27) *ib.*, p. 19: “R.: Daß die Seele gedencket, und daß kein Körper vermöge seines mechanismi gedencken kan, bleibet wohl eine ausgemachte Sache, allein daraus erfolget noch nicht daß das Wesen der Seelen in Gedancken bestehe. Das Gedancken ist wie ich vorher schon einmahl eine Eigenschaft der Seelen, aber nicht das Wesen derselben. Ich mache nach meiner Weltweißheit einen Unterschied unter der Materie und dem Körper, und weil doch eine Sache die keine Materie

From the outset, Rüdiger's words anticipate some fundamental features of his approach to the problem of the modes of communication between mind and body: the distinction between materiality and corporeality and the affirmation of soul's material nature. According to the philosopher, extension is proper not to matter alone, but to all created things. The true prerogative of bodies is elasticity, resulting from the movement of ether (composed of *particulae radiantes*) and air (caused by the movement of *bullulae*). All elements are composed of *materia prima*, a substance created by God *ex nihilo*. Rüdiger thus postulated an equivalence between matter, extension and created nature, and ascribed all these properties to the soul²⁸. This identification gave the philosopher a double theoretical advantage which in his eyes made his position a decisive argument in support of orthodoxy. On the one hand his stance allowed for physical influx, strengthening the positions already adopted by Wolff's pietist adversaries who abhorred the underlying 'fatalism' of Leibnizian-Wolffian pre-established harmony; on the other, it avoided unduly mingling God and his creatures²⁹. Corporeality thus became the true distinction between soul and body, with the soul (or more accurately, as we will see below, the soul considered as *subjectum*) being characterized as a material and incorporeal extension.

This formulation of the classic problem concerning the modes of interaction between mind and body was undoubtedly a bold one, and not just because it was materialistic with clear mortalistic implications. The theory whose main points we have summarized above was truly unique in the philosophy of the time because it was espoused by a figure strongly influenced by the spiritual sphere of pietism: a philosopher who associated the assertion that the human soul possessed a material component and its mortality with a defence of the model of physical influx, explicit apologetic intents and a categorical condemnation of the positions of Descartes, Leibniz and Wolff. It is thus unsurprising that at the time Rüdiger's solution drew disdain from many, including Wolff's two student supporters, incapable of seeing that a characteristic such as elasticity might actually support *influxus*, and the Wolffian Georg Volckmar Hartmann. The latter was a doctor at Erfurt, who as a student had heard Wolff lecture at Halle and, with Carl Günther Ludovici, was among the first historiographers of Wolffism; in the pages of his *Anleitung zur Historie der leibnitzisch-wolffischen*

hat gar nicht subsistiren kan, so glaube ich daß man nicht unrecht thue, wenn man der Seele eine Materie beylege. C.: Kurz vorhero gaben Sie den Mathematicis Schuld, daß sie alles in der Lehre von Gott und der Seele mit einem Circkel und Dreyeck ausmessen wollten, und itzo fangen Sie selbst an, von der Seele zu urtheilen, daß sie materiell wäre, finde dieses statt so könnten sie auch die Seele mit Circkel und dreyeck ausmessen, indem doch alle Materie gemessen werden kann".

28) Cf. Rüdiger's preface to a *Gegen-Meinung*, pp. 8 and 16-18 (unnumbered).

29) Cf. respectively Rüdiger's preface to a *Gegen-Meinung*, op. cit., p. 9 (unnumbered); Id., *Physica divina*, op. cit., p. 87.

Philosophie (1737) he showed himself to be rather disconcerted to find the term 'matter' explained through the concept of creation³⁰.

It is the Rüdiger of the *Gegen-Meinung* who points out that designating extension as an essence of the body, alongside the belief in the material nature of the soul, might seem dangerous to many since it implied its mortality. However, he believed he could forestall any accusations of mortalism by hypothesizing that the soul was not immortal by nature, but that it could become so thanks to the intervention of divine grace³¹. The assistance of grace is not mentioned in our dialogue of the dead. Rüdiger does, however, concisely expound his belief that the soul was composed "aus einer unsterblichen Materie"; Descartes' reply is unsurprising: "That is easy to say, but not immediately provable. How can matter be immortal? The burden of proof now lies on you". Faced with this sort of answer, forcing him to respond to legitimate objections with more explicit proof, Rüdiger must clarify matters to his adversary:

My answer would require a long series of deductions: I would first have to explain what I really mean by the term 'matter', since it seems to me that before you did not truly understand my ideas on this, but in this way we will never come to an agreement in this discussion. I see that someone over there has started listening in and laughing at our philosophical conversation: perhaps our talk is too refined for him³².

If contemporary intellectuals did indeed have difficulties in understanding Rüdiger's notion of matter, this can also be explained by another feature, the theory of a soul consisting partly of a material substratum (*subjectum*), extensive and incorporeal, but *in abstracto*, as a part of the body, inextensive and immaterial, something divine and simultaneously a created force (*eine geschaffene Kraft*)³³. The author of the dialogue of the dead, who does not mention the latter doctrine, was well aware of the many difficulties besetting Rüdiger's psychology. We see this from his self-satisfaction at demonstrating that he cannot counter Descartes' objections: the German philosopher breaks off the

30) ALETOPHILUS, Hieronymus, *Erinnerungen*, op. cit., p. 39; HARTMANN, Georg V., *Anleitung zur Historie der leibnizisch-wolffischen Philosophie [...]*, Frankfurt am Mein-Leipzig, Cuno, 1737, reprint ed. by J. École, Hildesheim-New York, Olms, 1973, pp. 932-33, n. k.

31) Cf. Rüdiger's preface to *Gegen-Meinung*, op. cit., p. 8 (unnumbered).

32) *Curieuses Gespräche im Reiche derer Todten*, op. cit., pp. 19-20: "Meine Antwort forderte eine weite Deduction, dasjenige zu erklären, was ich eigentlich durch die Materie verstehe, denn ehe und bevor Sie meinen Concepten der von der Materie nicht völlig inne haben, werden wir auch in dieser Sache nicht einig werden können. Allein, ich sehe daß uns dort jemand zu höret und über unsern Philosophischen Discours zu lachen anfänget, indem er vielleicht vor seine Nase gar zu subtil seyn muß".

33) Cf. Rüdiger's preface to *Gegen-Meinung*, op. cit., pp. 21-22 (unnumbered).

discussion of immortal matter by distracting his interlocutor with the pretext of the inopportune interference of other dead people, listening in and laughing at their discussion. Something very similar happens when Descartes is entrusted with an argument that must have seemed irrefutable to a philosopher of the *Totenreich*, the continuing ability to think of the inhabitants of the realm of the dead, now without their body:

However, the soul is a spiritual and thinking essence. From your principles it should follow that it cannot think except through the body, but this is madness since the soul is an independent essence or substance [...]. From your premises we would be forced to conclude that if it were separated from the body it would be unable to think, but you see clearly that we can still do so here in the world of the dead³⁴.

Descartes's insidious objection forces Rüdiger to extract himself from the ongoing discussion as best he can, premising his reply with the statement that "I don't willingly discuss the condition of the soul after death, because I am not a theologian". Our anonymous author uses the same procedure when, ascribing to Descartes's adversary a very un-Rüdigerian terminology, he makes him postulate a distinction between a soul conjoined with the body (*dem Körper vereingte*), and one in and for itself (*an und vor sich selbst*), able to think even without its body:

C.: [...] the soul must have in itself the power to think since otherwise it could not exist without the body [...].

R.: we will never finish our dispute if we continue to argue in this way. You are speaking of souls in and for themselves and of the fact that they can think even without the body. But this is something I have never thought to deny. Even the angels must necessarily be able to think, although they are incorporeal, and so souls in and for themselves must also be able to do so [...]. We must therefore distinguish between the soul in and for itself and the soul which is joined with the body, to avoid concluding our dispute in an erroneous way. The soul in and for itself can certainly think without the opportunity afforded by the senses, but this is not an ability possessed by the soul which is joined to the body³⁵.

34) *Curieuses Gespräche im Reiche derer Todten*, op. cit., p. 38: "Die Seele aber ist ein Geist und ein gedenckendes Wesen nach Ihren *Principiis* aber müste folgen daß die Seele nichts gedencken könne als durch den Leib welches doch wieder alle Vernunft ist, indem die Seele doch ein Wesen an und vor sich selbst oder eine *Substanz* ist [...]. Dahingegen man nach Ihrem Grund-Sätzen den Schluß fassen müste, daß die Seele wenn sie vom Leibe abgesondert wäre, nichts gedencken könnte, wir können ja auch noch im Todten Reiche gedencken".

35) *Ib.*, 38-39: "C.: [...] die Seele muß doch eine Krafft in sich selber haben zu gedencken, weil

This is followed by Descartes' predictable and vigorous defence of the existence of innate ideas. Discomfited, Rüdiger is forced to bring into play both a vehement denial of the innatism which he had professed, especially in an anti-Cartesian dissertation of 1704³⁶, and the difficulty for a reader 'in the world of the living' of comprehending such subtle discussions:

C.: however, if the soul in and for itself can think without the opportunity afforded by the senses, it must possess within itself the ideas of which it thinks, in other words innate ideas must exist [...].

R.: our dispute is becoming excessively difficult: I am unable to express myself well on this issue, in such a way that a mortal reading our dialogue of the dead could fully understand. So I only wish to answer as follows: the soul in and for itself can think without the body but from this it does not necessarily follow that the ideas on which it reflects are innate and within the soul. As long as it is joined to the body, it draws ideas from the outside, through the senses. However, no-one can be sure that a soul without a body cannot also grasp something from the outside, by a means other than the senses, and that it therefore needs to have innate ideas within itself³⁷.

With these remarks the space devoted by the anonymous author to one of the most hotly debated issues of the *Frühaufklärung* ends. The contrast between a pro-pietist view of the relationship between mind and body and a more sharply dualistic one, however different from that of Descartes, had been the

sie sonst ohne dem Leib nicht bestehen [...] könnte [...]. R.: Wir werden unsern Streit nicht leicht endigen, wenn wir auf diese Arth zu disputiren fortfahren. Sie reden von der Seelen an und vor sich selbst und daß sie auch ohne den Leib gedencken könne. Dieses aber hab ich mir niemahlen vorgenommen zu leugnen. Es müssen doch nothwendig die Engel auch gedencken können, ob sie gleich keinen Leib haben, und also auch die Seelen an und vor sich selbst [...]. Wir müssen also die Seele an und vor sich selbst von der mit dem Körper vereinigten Seele unterscheiden, um in diesem Dispute keinen Fehl-Schluß zu begehen. Die Seele an und vor sich selbst mag ohne Gelegenheit der Sinnen allerdings gedencken aber nicht die mit dem Körper vereinigte Seele“.

36) RÜDIGER, Andreas, *Disputatio philosophica de eo, quod omnes ideae oriuntur a sensione*, Leipzig, Brandenburger, 1704.

37) *Curieuses Gespräche im Reiche derer Todten*, op. cit., pp. 39-40: “C.: Allein wenn die Seele an und vor sich selbst ohne die Gelegenheit von denen Sinnen vor sich zu haben gedencken kan so muß sie ja die Ideen von welchen sie gedencket in sich haben folgendes müssen es *ideae innatae* seyn von denen sie gedencket [...]. R.: Unser Disput gehet zu hoch und kan ich mich nicht wohl von dieser Materie also erklären, daß ein Sterblicher der diese unsre Toden-Gespräche lieset, es vollkommen verstehen sollte. Indessen will ich Ihnen nur dieses antworten. Die Seele kan ohne den Leib an und vor sich selbst gedencken, allein daraus folget noch nicht das die Ideen welche sie als denn überleget ihr eingebohren und in ihr seyn. So lange sie mit dem Körper verknüpffet ist, fasset sie dieselbe von aussen durch die Sinnen. Wer aber hat Sie versichert, daß eine Seele ohne Körper nicht auch etwas von aussen erkennen sollte, und zwar auf eine andere Arth als durch die Sinnen also brauchte sie dieselbe nicht eingebohren zu haben“.

subject of a dialogue of the dead published a year beforehand and even more explicitly engaged in the Wolffian issue.

4. Leibniz and Budde, Descartes and Rüdiger: Two Totengespräche Compared

The list forming part of the entry *Wolfische Philosophie* in Johann Heinrich Zedler's *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon*, written by the Wolffian Carl Günther Ludovici, counts more than four hundred *Streitschriften* exchanged during the dispute over Wolffism. At number 201 we find a dialogue of the dead whose protagonists are Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Johann Franz Budde, described as anonymous and sometimes attributed by modern scholars to David Faßmann³⁸. The only scholar besides Rutledge to deal with German dialogues of the dead who mentions the dialogue between Descartes and Rüdiger, Johannes Rentsch, classified these two texts in two different categories: the conversation between Leibniz and Budde among the *Gelehrtennekrologe* and that between Descartes and Rüdiger among the *Streitschriften*. The latter term is used without reference to the Wolffian dispute, to the extent that this category also comprises a dialogue between Friedrich Spanheim and the legendary medieval Pope Joan³⁹. However, there are an extraordinary large number of points of contact between the two dialogues, which are so similar that the two texts may even have been written by the same author.

The dialogue between Budde and Leibniz, again divided into two parts, covers an impressive variety of themes and motifs (of which apocatastasis, Chinese philosophy, the kabbala, traducianism and theodicy are only a few). However, it shares various major concerns with the conversation between Descartes and Rüdiger, and the author's prose presents some extraordinary affinities. Just as Rüdiger had chosen to refute Wolff by reprinting part of the *German Metaphysics*, adding his own criticisms in the footnotes, so Budde had composed a refutation of the same Wolffian work, this time reprinted by Wolff with his rejoinders at the bottom of the page⁴⁰. Both dialogues thus present

38) *Ausserordentliches Gespräch im Reiche derer Todten, zwischen [...] Leibnitzen, und [...] Buddeo*, s.l., s.n. 1730. LUDOVICI, Carl G., «Wolfische Philosophie», in ZEDLER, Johann H., *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon* [...], Leipzig-Halle, s.n. 1748, p. 1079. The dialogue is attributed to Faßmann by e.g. RISSE, Wilhelm, *Bibliographia philosophica vetus*, op. cit., p. 141; *Leibniz-Bibliographie. Verzeichnis der Literatur über Leibniz bis 1980*, ed. by A. Heinekamp, Frankfurt a. M., Klostermann, 1984, pp. 334-35. On this text cf. SUITNER, Riccarda, *Ateismo e pietismo in un dialogo anonimo della "Frühauflklärung"*, in *Dal cartesianismo all'illuminismo radicale*, ed. by C. Borghero and C. Buccolini, Firenze, Le Lettere, 2010, pp. 263-79.

39) RENTSCH, Johannes, *Lucianstudien*, op. cit., p. 43, nn. 46 and 48.

40) BUDDE, J. Franz, *Bedencken über die Wolffianische Philosophie, mit Anmerckungen erläutert von Christian Wolfen* [...], Frankfurt am Main, Andrea, 1724, reprint ed. by J. École, Hildesheim-

a contrast between a philosopher who had played a leading role in the anti-Wolffian crusade, close to pietism and recently deceased, like Rüdiger and Budde, who died in 1729, a year before the publication of the dialogue of which he is protagonist, and a philosopher of a previous generation, given the task of continuing the cause of the *praeceptor Germaniae* (Descartes and Leibniz).

Other themes common to both works are atheism, the obsession of the pietist theologians of the early 18th century and the polemical target of countless dissertations and treatises by the pro-pietist Budde and Rüdiger; the status of mathematics and its relations with philosophical speculation; the *vexata quaestio* of the communication between mind and body, the subject of the fictitious clash between the influxist Budde and Leibniz and between Descartes and Rüdiger, author of the controversial and highly personal version of the *influxus physicus* discussed above. These discussions are often introduced in the context of the characters' debate over the Wolffian issue; in the *Gespräch* between Budde and Leibniz the author makes the dialogue's main motif clear from the introduction, presenting us with a Budde who has just arrived in the afterlife and is determined to combat the monotony of life after death by starting a conversation with Leibniz. The latter, for his part, has not given up on entertaining an epistolary correspondence as he did in life, and his correspondents have in the meantime informed him in detail on the ongoing controversies between the pietist and Wolffian factions⁴¹.

The constant communication between the world of the living and the afterlife postulated in both dialogues is a perfect pretext for circumventing the difficulties of making the level of literary fiction compatible with that of history and biography. For obvious chronological reasons the author (or authors), especially for Descartes and to a lesser extent for Leibniz, could not avail themselves of pronouncements by the two philosophers on these recent disputes, connected to recent decades of cultural life in Prussian university towns. As a consequence, the interlocutors called upon to defend Christian Wolff inevitably pay the highest price for the literary transposition of these complex issues. Moulded by the pen of the anonymous author in such a way as to become plausible interlocutors for thinkers from whom they were separated by at least a generation, it is their ideas which are more or less deliberately simplified and distorted.

Although the remarks assigned to their protagonists are coated in a layer of ingenuity, however, the author of the two dialogues demonstrates an extraordinary erudition and philosophical awareness. The reader is required to have

New York, Olms, 1980.

41) Ausserordentliches Gespräche im Reiche derer Todten, zwischen [...] Leibnizen, und [...] Buddeo, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

a degree of familiarity with the academic controversies of the period and possess a broad range of erudite notions; without these, a fair understanding of the dialogue would be virtually impossible. The initial comparison in the dialogue between Rüdiger and Descartes with which we started, that between the movement of the earth around the sun and the roasting of a bird, is anything but a naive metaphor: in fact, it is a commonplace of Copernican literature, to be found also in Eusèbe Renaudot, Claude de Chaulnes, Pierre Gassendi and Cyrano de Bergerac⁴².

One of the first discussions between Descartes and Rüdiger turns on the expression “malim convivis quam placuisse cocis”, a motto which appears in the background of the title page engraving of the 1717 edition of Rüdiger’s *Institutiones eruditionis*⁴³. This is a fairly refined quotation, with which Rüdiger intended to allude polemically in his major work to the numerous detractors of his writings: it is the final line of Martial’s Epigram IX, 81 “Lector et auditor nostros probat, Aule, libellos/sed quidam exactos esse poeta negat/Non nimium curo: nam cenae fercula nostrae/malim convivis quam placuisse cocis” (“O Aulus, those who hear my little books praise them; but a certain poet says that they are not perfect. I don’t attach too much weight to him; for I would prefer the dishes on my table to please guests rather than cooks”).

From what we have seen above it is also clear that the tone of the debate between Descartes and Rüdiger (and of that between Leibniz and Budde) reveals the author’s in-depth knowledge of the controversies raging in the circles gravitating around the Prussian philosophy faculties, with whom he must have been in very close contact. The highly erudite nature of the Rüdiger-Descartes dialogue makes it fairly similar to an academic dissertation, decidedly overshadowing its original literary connotations as an expression of the *Totengespräch* genre. In the conclusion to the second part, the work’s dialogue structure even gives way to a *pastiche* constructed by juxtaposing long quotations from contemporary scientific dissertations⁴⁴.

“Halam tendis? Aut pietista aut atheista reversurus!” (“Are you going to Halle? You will come back a pietist or an atheist!”): this saying, very popular among the students of the early 18th century, shows how strongly the existence of two genuine competing factions was felt at the time. They were nonetheless intertwined, as demonstrated by the representative case of Christian Thomasius, protagonist among other things of a series of dialogues of the

42) Cf. CYRANO DE BERGERAC, Savinien de, *L’autre monde ou Les états et empires de la lune* (1650), ed. by M. Alcover, Paris, Champion, 1977, p. 16.

43) *Curieuses Gespräche im Reiche derer Todten*, op. cit., p. 11.

44) *Besonderes curieuses Gespräche im Reiche derer Todten*, op. cit., pp. 38-56.

dead with August Hermann Francke⁴⁵. The dialogue form of the two texts compared here is particularly well suited to 'staging', perhaps in a somewhat reductive but extremely effective manner, the clash between a 'rationalist' faction personified by Descartes or Leibniz, and the anti-Cartesian, anti-Wolffian and anti-Spinozan faction close to the pietism represented by Rüdiger and Budde.

The role of defender of Christian Wolff entrusted to Descartes does not conflict with the French philosopher's reception in early 18th-century Germany, generally in the shadow of Wolffian philosophy, in the light of which Descartes was misunderstood and exploited. In the environment gravitating around the Prussian philosophy faculties, initially the scene of Wolff's personal academic success and later anti-Wolffian strongholds until his return, Descartes' name was customarily used as a polemical weapon, especially by the pietists, concerned to explain the atheism imputed to Wolff with Cartesian impiety and its Spinozan and Leibnizian degenerations, and in perennial conflict with the Wolffian faction. Though the immediate target for pietist criticism is Wolff's philosophy, Descartes is often called into play in the dispute as one of the precursors of his determinism. Wolff's opponents habitually fail to name their adversary directly, preferring to shoot their polemical darts against Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz⁴⁶. Among the many examples we could mention Joachim Lange, a front-line figure in the initial stages of the anti-Wolffian campaign. In his *Modesta disquisitio novi philosophiae systematis de Deo, mundo et homine, et praesertim de harmonia commercii inter animam et corpus praestabilita* (1723), all the criticisms are levelled at Leibniz and Wolff, obviously the main polemical target of the pietist, is never named. Where mention is made of an anonymous metaphysics, this is none other than Wolff's *Deutsche Metaphysik*⁴⁷.

45) On these texts cf. SUITNER, Riccarda, *Der Krieg der Biographen. Zu den ersten literarischen Darstellungen der Leben von Christian Thomasius und August Hermann Francke*, in *Vita als Wissenschaftssteuerung*, ed. by K. Enenkel and C. Zittel, Berlin-Münster-Wien-Zürich-London, LIT, in press. The fictional conversations between Thomasius and Francke, between Leibniz and Budde and between Descartes and Rüdiger are part of a corpus of dialogues of the dead on philosophical subjects published anonymously between the late 1720s and the early 1730s. These texts have never been the subject of specific research, nor have they ever been seen as belonging to a unitary group; their authors and places of composition have often been erroneously identified. An exhaustive presentation of all the Totengespräche will be provided by the monograph which I am currently preparing.

46) SPARN, Walter, *Einleitung to BUDDE, Johann F., Elementa philosophiae instrumentalis, seu institutionum philosophiae eclecticae*, vol. I, Halle, Typis et impensis orphanotrophii, 1723, reprint ed. by W. Sparn, Hildesheim-Zürich-New York, Olms-Weidmann, 2006, p. XLV.

47) LANGE, Joachim, *Modesta disquisitio, novi philosophiae systematis de Deo, mundo et homine, et praesertim de harmonia commercii inter animam et corpus praestabilita* [...], Halle, prostat in officina orphanotrophei, 1723, reprint ed. by J. École, Hildesheim-Zürich-New York, Olms, 1986. Cf. WUNDT, Max, *Die deutsche Schulphilosophie im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, Tübingen, Mohr (Siebeck), 1945, p. 236.

The perspective adopted by the author of the dialogues between Leibniz and Budde and between Descartes and Rüdiger thus follows in the footsteps of a widespread dissimulatory practice which finds its extreme radicalization and dramatization in the encounter with the literary genre of the *Totengespräch*: in the two texts Budde and Rüdiger, Wolff's adversaries, level their attacks directly against the fictitious figures of Descartes and Leibniz, who become a sort of incarnation of the philosophical ideas stigmatized by the anti-Wolffians. Perhaps the most important feature of the dialogue between Rüdiger and Descartes is precisely this: the creation of two levels which tend to become confused, a refined exchange of roles between Wolff and Descartes, forced to champion Wolff's controversial and scandalous philosophy. This consideration can obviously also be extended to the dialogue between Leibniz and Johann Franz Budde. The entanglement in the two dialogues of the dead between Rüdiger and Budde's professed anti-Wolffism and their fictitious argument with Descartes and Leibniz is particularly successful because it is grafted onto a double polemic in which the two philosophers had engaged during their lifetimes: the main targets of Rüdiger's works were Wolff and Descartes, whilst some of Budde's writings had attacked "Leibnizian-Wolffian" philosophy. Through fictional arguments between thinkers, the two dialogues compared here thus help to paint a picture of a clash involving students and professors, theologians, doctors and philosophers: a great cultural battle which was to determine the fate of the *Aufklärung* and of which Leibniz, Budde, Descartes and Rüdiger were the direct or indirect protagonists.

(Translation from German by Erika Milburn)

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