INTRODUCTION TO THE CORRESPONDENCE

1. HISTORY OF THE MANUSCRIPTS

The history of the correspondence between Descartes and Regius is marked by misfortune. None of the original letters — the letters actually sent — survived the tempest of time. With two exceptions, all manuscript drafts and copies perished as well. The vast amount of manuscripts, which after Descartes’ death came into possession of the editor of Descartes’ correspondence, Claude Clerselier (1614–1684), and the material collected by him and his successors, were irretrievably lost at the beginning of the 18th century.¹ This collection contained copies of Regius’ letters to Descartes and drafts of Descartes’ letters to Regius. Fortunately, Clerselier did not hesitate to publish the latter in the first volume of Descartes’ letters published in 1657. Regius, however, did not permit Clerselier to print his side of the correspondence, and never gave up Descartes’ original letters, leaving Clerselier unable to check his version against the letters actually sent. After Regius’ death, Descartes’ original letters vanished without a trace. All that remains in manuscript of the correspondence between Descartes and Regius is an early 18th-century copy of two short letters of Descartes to Regius. These letters, not published by Clerselier, were rediscovered in Debrecen, Hungary; a Hungarian student of theology on peregrination along the Dutch universities copied them in his notebook.

Except for the two manuscript copies in Debrecen, we have at our disposal printed drafts of Descartes’ letters to Regius, but by far not all of them, published by Clerselier. For Regius’ side of the correspondence we have to rely on Baillet’s biography of Descartes, published in 1691 (Vie).

1.1. Descartes’ letters to Regius

1.1.1. Descartes’ legacy in Stockholm

The day after Descartes’ funeral in Stockholm, that is on 13 February 1650, the French ambassador in Sweden, Pierre Chanut (1601–1662), made an official inventory of the philosopher’s possessions.² Family papers, books and a duplicate of the inventory were sent to Descartes’ relatives in France, his wardrobe was given to his inconsolable valet.

¹ For biographical data on Clerselier, see DBF, VIII, 1524, which, however, contains two inaccuracies. First, according to DBF Clerselier’s sister Cathèrine (c.1599–1670) married Adrien Chanut, but the notice does not mention that Pierre Chanut married another sister of Clerselier, Marguerite, in 1626 (cf. the entry on Pierre Chanut in DBF, VII, 403–403). Second, Clerselier is not the author of the Objections appended to Descartes’ Meditatio de prima philosophiae (Paris 1641; Amsterdam 1642), but the translator of the Objections and Responses for the French edition (Paris 1647). Clerselier, who corresponded with Descartes and met him on several occasions, devoted the last 30 years of his life to editing the philosopher’s posthumous works. For his defense of Cartesianism, see BALZ 1930.

² On Chanut, see DBF, VII, 402–403; RAYMOND 1999. Baillet’s Vie is our main source of the actions
Chanut himself took care of Descartes’ scientific manuscripts. His initial plan to publish Descartes’ correspondence on the sovereign good with Queen Christina of Sweden and Princess Elizabeth failed to materialise, because Elizabeth refused Chanut her letters to the French philosopher. Diplomatic affairs prevented Chanut from investigating the manuscripts properly. Only after his arrival in the Netherlands in November 1653, where he was appointed ambassador, he found the leisure to inspect Descartes’ legacy more closely, undoubtedly stimulated by Descartes’ friend, the statesman and poet Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687). Chanut compiled, possibly with the help of Huygens’ son Christiaan, an inventory of the manuscripts found in Stockholm. According to Huygens and others, the ambassador intended to publish a selection of the correspondence. However, in 1654 Chanut sent the material to his brother-in-law Claude Clerselier in Paris. Clerselier immediately began preparing the publication, not of a selection of the correspondence, but of all of Descartes’ letters found in Stockholm. His editorial labor resulted in a three volume work, published in 1657, 1659 and 1667.

1.1.2. The first dispute between Clerselier and Regius

In the first volume of Lettres de Mr Descartes (Paris 1657), Clerselier included 18 ‘letters’ of Descartes to the Utrecht professor of medicine Henricus Regius. Of course, the taken in Stockholm immediately after Descartes’ death (Vie, II, 427–428), from which Adam and Tannery distil an account of the so-called Stockholm inventory and the history of Descartes’ manuscripts that has become communis opinio (see AT I XV–XIX and AT X 1–4). Recent research has shown that this standard view on Descartes’ manuscripts left in Sweden and Holland (on the ‘Leiden inventory’, cf. Vie, II, 386, 428–429/AT V 409–410) needs revision on several important points. In the present paragraph I summarise some of the results which Theo Verbeek and I will lay down in a forthcoming article on the Leiden and Stockholm inventories. Dibon raises some important points concerning the Stockholm manuscripts in his ‘Clerselier, éditeur de la correspondance de Descartes’ (DIBON 1990, 495–521).


4 Cf. Chanut to Elizabeth, 19 February 1650, and 16 April 1650, in AT V 471, 472–473. Elizabeth’s refusal is reported in Vie, II, 428 (AT V 474–475).

5 ‘Monsieur Chanut, qui possède tous les papiers du défunt, et pretend d’en faire imprimer quelques lettres d’eslite, desire feuilleter le tout avecq mondit Archimede [Christiaan Huygens], pour veoir ce qu’il y a enor de philosophique ou de mathematique dont on pourroit faire part au public, n’y ayant point de brouillon de ceste merveilleuse main, à mon advis, qui ne le merite’. Huygens to Elizabeth, 31 December 1653, HUYGENS 1911–1917, 194/AT X 3. Christiaan’s assistance may explain the presence of a copy of the inventory in the Huygens-collection in Leiden University Library. A second copy, which belonged to Clerselier, is kept in Bibliothèque nationale de France (cf. AT X 1–4). For Constantijn Huygens, see NNBW, I, 1186–1190. His correspondence is published by Worp (HUYGENS 1911–1917); the rediscovered correspondence with Descartes is edited by Roth in 1926 (ROTH 1926). A selection of his poems, with biographical introduction and references to further literature, is edited by Davidson and Van der Weel (HUYGENS 1996). On Christiaan Huygens (1629–1695), see NNBW, I, 1180–1186, and his recent biography ANDRIESSE 1993.


7 On Clerselier’s edition, see below, § 2.1.
original letters were in Regius’ possession, so the material Clerselier actually published consisted of drafts of Descartes’ letters to Regius. Some of them, Clerselier admitted, were imperfect. To one letter, which breaks off abruptly after Descartes’ announcement that he is going to expound his view on fever, the editor places the comment:

Deest reliquum. Et si candidê et generosê D. Regius velit agere, illud supplebit.\(^8\)

In his preface to the first volume Clerselier gives ample introduction to the Cartesian apostate Regius:

Je croy qu’il est de l’honneur de Monsieur Descartes, de faire remarquer aux Lecteurs la familiaritè et correspondance des lettres qu’il a eu avec Monsieur le Roy, Professeur en Medecin en l’Université d’Utrech [sic], afin que tout le monde scache avec quelle franchise il luy communiquoit ses pensées.\(^10\)

In the pages that follow, Clerselier contrasts Descartes’ ‘frankness’ with Regius’ disloyalty. While Descartes amicably and generously shared his thoughts, views and comments, Regius published them under his own name. Clerselier refers to Regius’ \textit{Fundamenta physices}, published in 1646, which book Descartes publicly denounced in the preface to the French translation of his \textit{Principia} (Paris 1647).\(^11\) Descartes accused the Utrecht professor of plagiarism: Regius would have taken most of his ideas on physics and medicine both from Descartes’ published works and from an unpublished manuscript, now known as \textit{Traité de l’Homme}. In his preface Clerselier reiterates the accusation of plagiarism, which he considers to be even more blameworthy because Regius’ tribute to Descartes in the preliminaries of \textit{Fundamenta physices}, acknowledging his debt to the French philosopher, disappeared in the second edition of the work (\textit{Philosophia naturalis}, 1654). For which Clerselier reproaches Regius:

Il me permettra, s’il luy plaist, de luy dire, qu’il auroit encore plus generuusement fait, si nonobstant le des-aveu que Monsieur Descartes a fait de ses écrits, il n’avoit pas laissé de rendre à sa memoire toute la reconnaissance qu’il luy doit, et d’avoyer publiquement qu’il n’a presque rien mis de bon dans son livre, qu’il n’ait apris de luy, soit par ses lettres, soit par ses conferences, soit par ses avis, soit enfin par ses écrits, tant ceux qu’il avoit dé-ja publiez, que ceux qui luy estoient tombez entre les

\(^8\) Allusion to Regius’ device to his portrait in \textit{Philosophia naturalis} (\textit{REGIUS} 1654): \textit{Candide et Generose}.
\(^9\) See D/R 24.
\(^10\) \textit{Lettres de Mr Descartes}, I, Preface, AT V 753.
Finally, Clerselier exhorts Regius to recognise his mistake and to show the courage to acknowledge his debt to Descartes in a third edition of his work. The Utrecht professor should furthermore shrug off his errant conceptions in metaphysics and replace them with orthodox Cartesianism. In order to disclose the nature of Regius’ errors in metaphysics to the French public, Clerselier translated Descartes’ *Notae in programma quoddam* (Amsterdam 1648), and printed it behind the letters to Regius in his *Lettres de Mr Descartes*.

Regius responded quickly by reissuing in the same year his *Brevis explicatio mentis humanae*, which had first appeared in 1648 in reply to Descartes’ *Notae*. In the preface of the second edition, a certain Carolus Fabricius — of whom we know nothing and who may be Regius himself — stood up for Regius. According to Fabricius, the sole purpose of Clerselier’s publication of Descartes’ confidential letters to Regius is to blacken Regius’ name. Letters edited with this goal are nothing but lies, they are made-up and fictitious. Descartes’ ill-treatment of Regius in his *Notae* rules out, so Fabricius claims, that the latter could repeat his laudations in the second edition of his physics. Further, Regius never saw the unpublished work of Descartes; by contrast, Fabricius suggests that Descartes copied material from Regius’ physiology, which the Utrecht professor shared with his French friend many years before its publication in 1646. Finally, as regards Regius’ ‘erroneous’ opinions on God and the human soul, the fact that Descartes remained silent after the publication of *Brevis explicatio* proves that he acknowledged he was wrong. The ultimate proof of this, Fabricius concludes, is the fact that after his move to Sweden in 1649 the philosopher publicly expressed his favourable opinion of Regius.

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12 Clerselier aims at *Le Monde*, and *L’Homme*. Chanut did not send all manuscripts at once. In 1654 Clerselier wrote two letters to the Groningen professor of Greek Tobias Andreae (1604–1676), which reveal that he had not yet received all of the items listed in the inventory. Moreover, Clerselier asks Andreae for a copy of *L’Homme*, which he does not possess. The work is not mentioned in the inventory either. This renders Clerselier’s claim in the preface to his edition of *L’Homme* (Paris 1664) that it is founded upon Descartes’ autograph suspect, something which Adam fails to notice (cf. AT XI 11, VI). Clerselier also requests Andreae to send him any copies of Descartes’ correspondence. Clerselier’s first letter is published in AT X 13–14, without addressee or date. Dibon established both elements from an autograph letter of Clerselier to Andreae of 12 July 1654 (DIBON 1990, 495–521).

13 *Lettres de Mr Descartes*, I, Preface, AT V 754.

14 ‘Adhaec ipsae illae literae, ita editae, per se nullam fidem merentur; sed pro mere ementitis, et ex post facto fictis, sunt habendae. Tantum abest, ut illae Regio quicquam obesse queant’, REGIUS 1657, 6.

15 See my commentary on R/D 12, *Context*.

16 Two letters by Robert Creighton (1593–1672), from Stockholm, to Regius give evidence of this. Both letters, dated 20 April and 12 June 1651, are appended to the second edition of *Brevis explicatio*. The relevant passage in the first letter is: ‘... fama celebritatis tuae penetravit, sparsa per tuum Cartesium, de te saepe, tuisque editis loquentem inter suos, ut nuper didici. Putabantque populares, aliqui, ad quos
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The reply, rather surprisingly, did not discourage Clerselier in writing to the Utrecht professor with an appeal for help in 1659. He was looking for assistance in drawing the figures for *Le Monde* and *L'Homme*. He offered to send Regius both treatises, but Regius declined. The Utrecht professor replied that he had never seen the works and that he had no desire to see them now. Moreover, he doubted the authenticity of those works because Descartes had not published them himself; Regius reminds Clerselier of the philosopher’s warning that nothing should be attributed to him which he had not published himself. Which dictum applies to the so-called letters to him as well, Regius implies.

In their dispute Clerselier and Regius do not consider one obvious question: Descartes’ original letters to Regius. Apparently, Clerselier never formally asked the Utrecht professor for (copies of) the original letters, and, less surprisingly but equally significantly, we have no evidence that Regius refused them to the editor of Descartes’ correspondence. The latter did insert a request in the first volume (*Et si candidé et generosè D. Regius velit agere, illud supplebit*), but one can hardly consider this to be a serious attempt to persuade Regius. As if Regius would generously supply the autographs after publicly receiving the stigma of an unfaithful friend, a Cartesian apostate and a plagiarist. In my view, the harsh attitude in the preface may be partly explained by assuming that Clerselier wrote to Regius before publication of the first volume, per-

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17 In 1659 Clerselier and Regius exchanged four letters: Clerselier to Regius, 25 April; Regius to Clerselier, 25 September; Clerselier to Regius, September (?), and finally, Regius to Clerselier, 9/19 October. Clerselier summarises his first letter in the preface to his edition of *L'Homme*: ‘Je le pris de se vouloir donner la peine de travailler aux Figures qui manquoient à son [Descartes'] Traité de l’Homme: ‘Je le pris de se vouloir donner

18 In reality, Descartes had sent Regius a copy of *Le Monde* in 1641 (cf. D/R 19b, Il. 75–79). Shortly before *Fundamenta physices* appeared, Regius got hold of a copy of *L'Homme* as well, at least according to Descartes (see D/R 13, n. 27).

19 *REGIUS* 1661a, 38: ‘Posteros hic oratos volo ut nunquam credant, quidquam à me esse profectum, quod ipse in lucem non edidero’ (*Dissertatio de metodo*, AT VI 579).
suading him to place the original letters — and perhaps a copy of *L’Homme* as well — at his disposal, to which Regius had replied negatively that he had no knowledge of that work and felt no need to supply his correspondence, which after all was confidential.

1.1.3. The letters sent to Regius

The fate of Descartes’ original letters to Regius is unknown. In his will of 26 December 1678 Regius left his manuscripts to his former student Petrus Wassenaer, but there is no mention of letters or papers in any of the subsequent wills.\(^{20}\) The letters never resurfaced and it is not inconceivable that Regius destroyed them. The two original items which were copied by a Hungarian student (see § 2.4), have not been rediscovered. The fact that the student copied exactly these two insignificant letters (d/r 34 and d/r 35) and not letters of a more substantial nature, strongly suggests that they were separated from the collection at an earlier stage. Perhaps Regius gave them away to satisfy the curiosity of a friend.

1.2. Regius’ letters to Descartes

1.2.1. The second dispute between Clerselier and Regius

A first trace of Regius’ letters is found in Clerselier’s preface to his edition of *L’Homme* (Paris 1664). After the account of his unsuccessful request to Regius to collaborate on the edition of *L’Homme* (see above), Clerselier turns to Regius’ letters to Descartes, which he would like to have published in the second edition of the first volume of Descartes’ correspondence:

*Toutesfois, pour dire les choses comme elles sont, je croy que Monsieur le Roy ne me desavoüera pas, quand je diray de luy, qu’il a fait autrefois l’honneur à Monsieur Descartes de le consulter souvent sur des questions de Physique et de Medecine, et en general de Philosophie, et qu’ainsi il l’a autrefois consideré comme une personne de qui il pouvoit apprendre. Et quand il ne le voudroit pas avouer, cela se justifie assez par les lettres de M. Descartes, et par celles que luy-mesme luy a autrefois écrites, dont j’ay de fideles copies, tirées sur l’original, lesquelles sont pleines de ces questions. J’avois eu la pensée de les faire imprimer dans la seconde Edition qui s’est faite l’année derniere du premier volume des Lettres de Monsieur Descartes,\(^{21}\) afin de justifier par les missives de Monsieur le Roy, que les lettres de Monsieur Descartes, qui leur servent de r éponse, ne sont point des choses controuvées et faites à plaisir, comme cet amy de Monsieur le Roy, dont j’ay déjà parlé, semble vouloir insinuer;\(^{22}\) mais

\(^{20}\) Wolfard Zwaardecroon de Jonge, notary public, drew up no less than 9 different wills and codicils between 26 December 1678 and 15 February 1679, which are kept in GAU, *Notariële archieven*, inv. no. U 80 A 5 (cf. DE VRIJER 1917, 75, 87). For Petrus van Wassenaer, see the Biographical Lexicon.

\(^{21}\) In 1663 Clerselier published a second edition of the first volume of Descartes’ correspondence, unaltered except for Descartes’ letters to Regius, which Clerselier rearranged (see § 2.1.5).

\(^{22}\) Carolus Fabricius.
Clerselier claims he possesses exact copies of Regius’ letters to Descartes, made after the original. A note in the so-called Exemplaire de l’Institut confirms Clerselier’s claim that he had the letters at his disposal. The note refers to letter no. 32 in the collection of Regius’ letters to Descartes (R/D 55, [13/1] 23 June 1645):

Voyez la 32e lettre des Ms de Regius a Descartes, datée du 23 juin 1645, où on lit ces paroles: Hesterno mane fasciculum tuarum chartarum accepi, etc., et dans une note marginale, M. Clerselier a mis ces paroles: Fasciculus ille est eius defensio contra Voetium.

According to this note, Clerselier placed a remark in the margin of Regius’ letter no. 32. This indicates that Clerselier indeed possessed Regius’ letters to Descartes, or to be more precise, ‘fideles copies, tirées sur l’original’.

The provenance of these copies is not clear. There are, basically, two possibilities. The simplest explanation is that Clerselier uncovered them among the Stockholm manuscripts. But it is not easy to understand why Descartes would take copies with him to Sweden, and not the autographs. The second possibility is that he received them from someone in the Netherlands. We know that he made a request for copies of Descartes’ correspondence to the Groningen professor Tobias Andreae. After Descartes’ death, Regius’ original letters will have been found in the trunk the philosopher left with Cornelis van Hogelande. Not much is known on the fate of the letters discovered, but we do know that Huygens’ letters were restituted to him by Van Hogelande. In the case of Regius, it is conceivable that this was not done, or only after copies were made, because of the break in 1645 and subsequent animosity between Descartes and Regius. Before leaving for Sweden, Descartes asked Van Hogelande not to destroy Voetius’ letters to Marin Mersenne (1588–1648), as a safeguard against the calumnies
of the Utrecht theologian. Perhaps Descartes’ friends made the same exception for the letters of the Utrecht professor of medicine.

1.2.2. After Clerselier: Legrand, Baillet and Marmion

After his publication of Descartes’ correspondence, L’Homme and Description du corps humain, and Le Monde (Paris 1677), Clerselier considered the publication of one last volume with the remaining items from Descartes’ manuscripts. In 1683, he finally made preparations for the publication of the volume in Amsterdam, but his death on April 13 of the next year prevented this completion of his life’s work. In his will he bestowed the manuscripts and a handsome sum of money to realise the project to Jean-Baptiste Legrand. Legrand, however, had the more ambitious plan to produce a completely new edition of Descartes’ correspondence.

The accessibility of approximately 80 autograph letters of Descartes to Mersenne triggered the idea for a new project. Clerselier had published the drafts of most of these letters, but the mathematician Gilles de Roberval (1602–1675), who possessed the original letters, had never allowed him to use the collection. After Roberval’s death, the letters became available at last. Legrand saw it as his first task to publish them in a new edition of the correspondence. Perhaps the confrontation between the original letters and Clerselier’s edition, which revealed much of the latter’s defects, inspired

30 ’Je ne scache point [...] qu’il y ait rien de secret dans aucune de ces lettres que j’ay laissées dans le coffre. Mais néanmoins, de peur qu’il ne s’y trouve quelques choses que ceux qui les ont écrites ne voudroient pas être lus de tout le monde, je crois que le plus sûr est de les brûler toutes, excepté celles de Voetius au Père de Mersenne, que vous trouvée insérées dans le couvercle du coffre, et que je desire être gardées pour servir de préservatif contre ses calomnies. Vous pourrez aussi lire toutes les autres, ou les laisser lire par quelques amis discrets, avant de les brûler, et même ne brûler que celles que vous voudrez; car je remets entièrement cela à votre discrétion’, Descartes to Van Hogelande, 30 August 1649, AT V 410.

31 ‘Il ne m’en reste plus entre les mains que de quoy faire un Volume de Fragmens, qui sera un ramas de diverses pieces, dont le triage est assez mal-aisé à faire, et dont ie me déchargeray volontiers sur le premier qui voudra bien en prendre la peine (...) ou, s’il ne se presente personne, qu’on attende avec patience ma commodité’, preface to the third volume of Descartes’ correspondence (1667), AT V 779. In 1677 Clerselier issued his version of Le Monde, which work had already been published in Paris in 1664 but not from the manuscript in his possession (cf. AT XI i–VII).

32 ‘... D. Clerselier in animo esse edere omnia posthuma, quaeque adhuc supersunt, D. R. des Cartes, et propterea pactum inisse cum Mr Boom typographic hic loci, qui ea latine et gallice brevi edet’, Pieter van Gent (1640–1693/4), from Amsterdam, to Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus (1651–1709), Kieslingswalde, 16 October 1683, in REINHARDT 1911, 18. For the context of the letter, see BOS 1999C.

33 The sparse biographical information on Legrand is found in Baillet’s preface to his Vie and an announcement in the Nouvelles de la République des Lettres cited below.

34 Alan Gabby, who kindly sent me his unpublished work on Roberval’s legacy, suggests that Mersenne lent the letters to Roberval, who kept them after the Minim died. Gabby’s suggestion is by far more plausible than Clerselier’s and Baillet’s accusation that Roberval stole the letters after Mersenne’s death, and is to be preferred to the view of Adam and Tannery as well, who maintain that Roberval was Mersenne’s literary executor.

35 The letters came into possession of Philippe de la Hire (1640–1718), professor at the Collège de France and member of the Academie des Sciences (DBF, 19, 329). La Hire communicated the letters to Legrand and Baillet, but they never became part of Legrand’s collection of manuscripts. A note, presumably in Legrand’s hand, on one of the letters bears the year 1684, which shows that the abbe began his editorial
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Legrand to track as many letters as possible.\textsuperscript{36} Needless to say that this slowed the work down considerably. In 1690 Legrand gave a concerned correspondent the following reassuring reply:

\begin{quote}
Je vous diray pour votre consolation, Monsieur, que tous les manuscrits de Mr Descartes qui n’ont point encore été imprimez sont en ma possession, outre 120 lettres que j’ay recueillies de diverses personnes.\textsuperscript{37}
\end{quote}

In the preface to his biography of Descartes Baillet relates Legrand’s efforts and, moreover, which letters he recovered:

\begin{quote}
Il a pris la peine d’écrire en Bretagne, en Touraine, en Languedoc, en Hollande, en Suède, et en Allemagne pour intéresser les parents, les alliez, et les amis du Philosophe dans ce dessein. Il a recouvré non seulement les lettres manuscrites de M. Regius Professeur d’Utrecht à M. Descartes; mais encore la plupart de celles de M. Descartes à M. l’Abbé Picot, à M. Clerselier, au sieur Tobie d’André, et à d’autres; celles de M. le Chevalier de Terlon Ambassadeur de France en Suède; quelques unes de celles de la Princesse Palatine Elizabeth de Bohême, de M. Chanut Ambassadeur de France en Suède, et de divers Particuliers.\textsuperscript{38}
\end{quote}

Among many other letters, Legrand was able to lay his hands on Regius’ letters to Descartes. But by 1663, Clerselier already possessed copies of these letters, and the note in the Exemplaire de l’Institut shows that Clerselier’s successors had the same collection at their disposal. What, then, does Baillet mean by saying that Legrand retrieved Regius’ letters? The key to the answer is found in the quotation from Baillet’s preface. According to the biographer, Legrand had obtained Descartes’ letters to Clerselier as well. It is unthinkable that Clerselier did not possess these letters, but yet Legrand did not discover them among the collection of manuscripts that was passed on to him. This means that Legrand did not receive all manuscripts formerly in the possession of Clerselier, which may be due to the originally modest objective of Legrand, namely labor immediately after Clerselier’s death (cf. AT III 319). For the La Hire collection and its much troubled history, see AT I LI–LXII, LXIV–LXXVI, AT II V–XVII.

\textsuperscript{36} The shortcomings of Clerselier’s edition are discussed below (§ 2.1.3).
\textsuperscript{37} Legrand to Chouet in Geneva, 10 April 1690; cited from AT I XLVIII. Regrettably, Adam does not mention the letter’s context nor its location. The correspondent is Jean-Robert Chouet (1642–1731) who introduced Cartesianism in the Academy of Geneva (HEYD 1982).
\textsuperscript{38} Vir. I, XXII (emphasis added). Baillet heavily profited from the correspondence unearthed by Legrand. Next to 37 letters by Regius’ and Æmilius, his biography records 29 letters by Descartes to Picot, 7 letters to Clerselier, 5 letters to Andreae; “à d’autres” probably concern 7 letters to the Descartes-family, 2 letters to Van Hogelande, one letter to Servien, and 2 letters to and from Villebressieu. The letters by Hugues de Terlon (c.1620–c.1690), on the transfer of Descartes’ body to France, date from the years 1665–1667 (12 letters). The letters by Princess Elizabeth are letters to Chanut. Except for the latter’s return letters, Baillet refers in his biography to 8 letters from Chanut to Descartes. Legrand is responsible for the resurfacing of Regius’ letters, the letters to Picot, Clerselier and Andreae. The other letters are partly retrieved by Baillet as well (cf. Vir. I, XXIII–XXVI).
to publish only Descartes’ unpublished works. Aiming at a revised edition of the correspondence, Legrand requested and received from Clerselier’s heirs the unpublished letters to Clerselier and Regius’ letters to Descartes.39

We may now discuss the last chapter in the history of Regius’ letters to Descartes. Baillet, to whom Legrand had given the manuscripts for his biography of Descartes, made extensive use of Regius’ letters, referring to them on numerous occasions and sometimes providing large quotations. Baillet suggests that Legrand indeed intended to publish them in the new edition of Descartes’ correspondence.40 But despite Legrand’s many years of editorial labor, he never managed to send anything to the publisher. After his death in 1704, the manuscripts and the money went to his appointed successor, a certain Marmion, professor of philosophy at the Collège de Grassins in Paris.41 An unfortunate choice, for Marmion died the next year without appointing a successor. The manuscripts were given to Legrand’s mother, and they have been lost ever since.

2. DESCRIPTION AND ASSESSMENT OF THE SOURCES

2.1. *Lettres de Mr Descartes, edited by Claude Clerselier (vol. I, 1657)*

In 1657 Clerselier published the first volume of Descartes’ correspondence, with the title *Lettres de Mr Descartes où sont traitées les plus belles questions de la Morale, Physique, Medecine et des Mathematiques*.42 The preliminary part of the quarto volume consists of a preface by Clerselier (22 pages, not paginated43), two pages with the inscriptions on Descartes’ monument in Stockholm, a table of contents and an extract of the royal privilege, dated 21 December 1656.44 The body of the work contains 119 numbered items (pages 1–663; errata on p. [664]). Next to 105 letters by Descartes, Clerselier included 11 letters to Descartes, his own correspondence with the English philosopher Henry More (2 letters), and a French translation of Descartes’ *Notae in programma quoddam*. The heart of the volume is formed by Descartes’ 31 letters to Princess Elizabeth. Quantitatively, the letters to Regius are second best with 18 items listed (nos. 81–98, pp. 474–535), followed by the 12 letters to Chanut. Other

39 The same may hold true for the letters to Andreae.
40 Sa lettre [R/D 3] est datée du IX de Mars 1639 et ne pouvant y renvoyer le Lecteur, parce qu’elle n’est pas encore publique, il est à propos de lui en représenter le sens en abrégé pour des raisons dont ont lui laissera ensuite l’examen’, Vie, II, 8.
41 The only source on the (mis)fortune of the manuscripts and their owners after 1691 is an announcement in *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* of June 1705, 697–699 (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1966, vol. 7, 180).
42 For a complete bibliographical analysis of the work, I refer to the new and exhaustive bibliography of Descartes’ works (1637–1704) by Van Otegem (Van OTEGEM 2002).
43 The preface is reprinted in AT V 747–755. In my references to Clerselier’s preface below I refer to the text in AT.
44 Achevé d’imprimer pour la première fois le 30 Janvier 1657 (beneath the privilege).
addressees, among whom Mersenne, Balzac and Clerselier himself, have a maximum of 4 letters. Correspondences having letters from both sides are those with More, the French mathematician Jean-Baptiste Morin, the Jesuit Ciermans, the Dutch physician Van Beverwijck and the Leuven professor of medicine Plemp. Almost half of the volume, nos. 1–51 consists of letters to royalty and diplomats (Princess Elizabeth, Queen Christina of Sweden, Chanut, etc.), which letters are arranged more or less thematically, for example, letters in which Descartes discusses his move to Sweden. The correspondence in the remainder of the volume is classified per addressee.45

Due to the variety of topics discussed in the correspondence the first volume found ready buyers, and in the preface of the second volume (Paris 1659) Clerselier proudly announced that the edition was completely sold out.46 A second edition appeared in 1663, ‘reveu et augmenté’, a somewhat exaggerated statement, as the only additions are French translations of several Latin letters.47 The most notable revision deals with the letters to Regius, the order of which Clerselier rearranged. The second edition is also in quarto, but counts only 540 pages, because the number of lines per page changed from 30 in the first edition to 36 in the second. A third edition, unaltered in lay-out and contents, appeared in 1667.48

2.1.1. Sources
For the letters incorporated in the first volume, Clerselier drew on several sources, but he found the majority of the letters among the “Stockholm” manuscripts. The inventory of the papers found in Stockholm lists several items dealing with correspondence:

A. Un assemblage de plussieurs cahiers liez ensemble, au nombre de dix, escrits d'autre main que de celle de Mons' Descartes, ou sont transcrittes plussieurs lettres recevus par Mons' Descartes, avec les responses qu'il a faiites, concernant des questions mathématiques, et quelques objections aux escrits de M'Descartes.49

I. Une liasse de plussieurs lettres et objections à Mons' Desc, par diverses personnes.50

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45 The sole exception are the letters to Mersenne, nos. 73 and 74, and nos. 101 and 102. In his introduction to Descartes’ correspondence, Adam offers a overview of all the letters in the first volume of Clerselier’s edition (AT I XX–XXI).
46 AT V 756.
47 Cf. AT I XIX–XX.
48 There are small differences between the three editions. Adam notices that the orthography varies in the different editions of Clerselier’s correspondence (AT I civ). Gabbey detected several variant readings in the correspondence with More (cf. AT V 668–677).
49 AT X 5.
50 AT X 10.
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T. Deux cents soixante deux feuillets in quarto des Minutes de lettres écrites par Monsieur de Cartes à diverses personnes.  

V. Quatorze feuillets in quarto et deux in octavo de minutes de lettres écrites à Madame la princesse Elisabeth de Bohême.  

Finally, there is an item in the inventory which seems, partly at least, to relate to correspondence:

Z. Une liasse d’environ 25 feuillets détachés sans suite, et quelques papiers volants, contenant la réponse à quelques objections et autres matières différentes.  

The inventory gives valuable information on the kind of letters found. It mentions, first, minutes or rough drafts (items T and V). Next, there were numerous, presumably original, letters to Descartes (item I). Item A is a collection of letters to Descartes with the philosopher’s replies, all in the hand of a copyist, which may suggest that Descartes had prepared the collection for publication.  

The Stockholm papers form the heart of Clerselier’s publication of Descartes’ correspondence. However, as the majority of the letters are rough drafts, sometimes in a deplorable state, Clerselier made use of other sources as well. Naturally, he possessed his own personal correspondence with the philosopher. From Morin and More he received copies of their epistolary exchange with Descartes. Finally, Clerselier also drew on previously published correspondence. The exchange of letters with Plemp and Van Beverwijck were taken from the latter’s Epistolicae quaestiones.  

In sum, the various sources supplied different kinds of material:  
1. rough drafts of letters sent by Descartes;  
2. duplicates, of letters both sent and received;  
3. original letters, by Descartes and to Descartes;  
4. published letters.  

The letters to Regius unmistakably fall in the first category; they are based on drafts contained in item T of the Stockholm inventory. Indeed, they were not previously

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51 AT X 11.  
52 AT X 12.  
53 AT X 12. I ignore here Descartes’ letter to the Utrecht Magistrates, the Lettre apologétique, of which a French version (item O) and a Latin version (item L) existed in the Stockholm inventory. Clerselier printed the French version in the third volume of the correspondence (AT VIIIIB 201–273). The Dutch translation, corrected and signed by Descartes, is published in DESCARTES 1996. Cf. BOY 1999, n. 8.  
54 Possibly, item A comprised the objections and the replies to the Discours, which Descartes intended to incorporate in a second edition of the Discours. Cf. Descartes to Huygens, 29 January 1639, ROTH 1926, 87–88/AT II 675–676; to Huygens, 6 May 1639, ROTH 1926, 89–90/AT II 677–678).  
55 Cf. CLE, I, Preface, AT V 751–752.  
56 VAN BEVERWIJK 1644. Cf. my commentary on AT 11, n. 11.
published and Clerselier did not have the original letters. As far as we know, Regius took no interest in mathematics, nor do his objections to Descartes’ works seem to have impressed Descartes to the extent that he would have considered to publish them with his replies.\textsuperscript{57} This rules out the possibility that Clerselier found the letters in the dossier listed A in the inventory.

2.1.2. Editorial problems

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Regius’ spokesman Carolus Fabricius called the letters to Regius published by Clerselier ‘fictitious and made up’. Clerselier seems to have anticipated remarks of a similar nature, but undoubtedly not as harsh as Fabricius’. In his preface he warns those who discover the letters they received from Descartes among the letters published in the volume, that the autographs may differ from the published texts. Clerselier gives two reasons.\textsuperscript{58}

First, the editor printed (the majority of) the letters after the manuscripts Descartes kept for himself. Transcribing the rough draft of a letter, Descartes may have changed something or made some corrections — as it often happens as Clerselier remarks — without adjusting the rough draft afterwards.

The second reason why a published letter may not be similar to the actual letter sent, is because the manuscripts used by Clerselier were in some places defective, or so badly written and chaotic, that he had to guess what the author actually meant. As a consequence, the editor was at times forced to supply words of his own and to fill in the occasional lacunas, which he did in accordance with ‘la fidelité que je luy dois’. Now, in the preface Clerselier states that he encountered these particular difficulties ‘en quelques endroits’, but in a letter to Andreae he is less restrictive:

\begin{quote}
\textit{... je vous diray que je travaille avec assiduité aux Lettres de Mr Descartes pour leur faire voir le jour dans peu de temps, mais comme je ne travaille que sur les brouillons qu’il se reservoit, qui sont pleines de ratures et d’omissions, et dont l’écriture est fort negligée comme est celle de la pluspart de ceux qui ne travaillent que pour eux mesmes j’ay toutes les peynes du monde a dechifrer ses lettres...}\textsuperscript{59}
\end{quote}

The drafts — or indeed rough drafts, as Clerselier does not speak of minutes but refers to the papers as \textit{brouillons} — were full of deletions and lacunas, and he had the greatest trouble in deciphering Descartes’ handwriting. However, continuing his letter to Andreae, Clerselier makes two exceptions to the above:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{57} Descartes replies to several objections raised by Regius in \textsuperscript{1/2}R 15 and \textsuperscript{1/2}R 45.
\textsuperscript{58} CLE, I, Preface, AT V 750–751.
\textsuperscript{59} DiBON 1990, 499.
\end{quote}

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Next to asking Andreae for the letters he received from Descartes — which Andreae sent to him but which Clerselier did not publish — and for the letters to More — with which request Andreae was unable to comply as Clerselier later asked the letters directly from More — Clerselier reveals that he does not need Andreae’s copies of the letters to Elizabeth and Chanut, as the material he possesses is clearly legible.

Returning to Clerselier’s preface, the editor reveals that the difficulties just mentioned were in fact the least of his problems. According to Clerselier, the disarray of the manuscripts posed the greatest stumbling block. The letters were written on loose sheets of paper, often without mention of the addressee or the date; the sheets were not in their proper order, and in many cases without catchword and without recognisable beginning or end. As a result, Clerselier had to read everything before deciding which sheets belonged together and, if possible, conjecturing to whom they were addressed. Clerselier apologises for any mistakes he made in this respect, but he is well aware, or so he claims, that the majority of the public is not at all bothered by these questions, as long as Descartes’ ideas are not distorted, and the presentation of the letters is made in an orderly fashion, to which matters complete attention has been given.

In his biography of Descartes, Baillet mentions the problems Clerselier encountered editing the correspondence, disclosing one additional complication. After paraphrasing the two points in Clerselier’s preface, he continues:

Plusieurs questions qu’il [Descartes] avait écrites en des lettres différentes et à des personnes différentes se trouvoient sur un même feuillet sans aucune marque des têms et sans aucune spécification des faits historiques.

This particular difficulty is not mentioned by Clerselier, but as Baillet was able to consult the Stockholm collection of manuscripts, there is little doubt that Clerselier had to cope with this problem as well. Unfortunately, Baillet does not say how he solved the difficulty.

Finally, Baillet gives a remarkable explanation for the disarray of the Stockholm manuscripts Clerselier encountered. According to the biographer, Descartes’ letters were already in a confused state when Chanut examined them, but an unlucky incident

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60 DIBON 1990, 499.
61 See n. 12.
62 Vie, II, 402.
made the chaos complete. The ship carrying Descartes’ manuscripts from Holland to Paris sank in the river Seine. After three days the chest containing the philosopher’s papers was recovered, and the manuscripts were rapidly hung out to dry, paying little attention to the original order of the manuscripts. Consequently, the gathering proved to be very difficult, and, moreover, some manuscripts had been damaged.

The volumes published by Clerselier do not show the amount of defects one would expect after all the troubles mentioned by Clerselier and Baillet. Clerselier did his best to iron out most of the defects. All one immediately notices, are the letters without addressee, the fact that most letters are not dated, and in some cases Clerselier’s remark ‘Deest reliquum’. Apart from these defects, the letters appear to be genuine letters, they have a salutation, and always end with the simple valediction ‘Je suis, etc’ or ‘Vale’. In other words, Clerselier did not conceal the problems dealing with the addressee and the date of the letters, but he edited the texts painstakingly with respect to the condition of the texts and in deciding which sheets belonged together. These interventions are not indicated in his edition, and the Stockholm manuscripts having vanished, it is impossible to determine exactly what they were. But we are not completely left in the dark. The surfacing of autograph letters makes it possible in some cases to compare the original letters with the drafts published by Clerselier.

Adam and Tannery were able to replace a significant number of Clerselier’s texts by the original letters. Placing the variants of Clerselier’s text in the apparatus, a clear picture arises of the differences between the two versions. Roth was able to do the same in his publication of the Descartes–Huygens correspondence. One of the letters in the latter edition caused quite a stir. It is a letter of consolation to Huygens after the loss of his brother Maurits. Roth remarked that between the original letter and the text printed by Clerselier, there is all the difference between a mildly agnostic view of immortality and the strict belief of theological dogmatism. The differences are, according to Roth, due to Clerselier’s meddling with the text, concealing any deviation from Roman Catholic doctrine. As a result, Roth advises to render suspect every reference to questions of religion contained in Clerselier’s edition of the correspondence. Against the real Descartes, Roth opposes the Descartes of Clerselier.

Dibon, I think, has sufficiently shown the untenability of Roth’s view. He rightly points out that the vast majority of variants between Clerselier’s texts and original letters
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can be explained by the difference between the draft and the letter sent, which is indeed the first reason given by Clerselier himself. The other differences are to be attributed to the editor, but we should keep in mind the difficulties Clerselier encountered, and any solution he chose and any modification he made need to be seen in the perspective of 17th-century usage of editing correspondence. Moreover, as the Stockholm manuscripts are lost, it is ultimately impossible to determine Clerselier’s alterations. Dibon concludes that we need to suspend our judgement of Clerselier as deliberately falsifying Descartes’ correspondence.

Dibon’s assessment of Clerselier clears the way for a systematic study of Clerselier’s edition of the correspondence. Given the loss of the Stockholm papers, the results of such a study will remain tentative. However, a profound study of Clerselier’s texts on the one hand and original letters and other sources on the other can shed light on the liberties the editor took. It may reveal what kind of modifications he usually made. My observations below give an indication of the kind of results we may expect from a systematic study of Clerselier’s three volume work.

2.1.3. Clerselier’s interventions: an outline

The difficulties the Stockholm collection of manuscripts presented to Clerselier and which he sums up in his preface, boil down to four kinds of problems:

1. the addressees (not mentioned in the majority of the manuscripts);
2. the date (idem);
3. the establishment of the text (complicated by the defective state of the manuscripts, lacunas and Descartes’ bad handwriting);
4. the reconstruction of a letter (deciding which sheets belong to one letter).

Before turning to the question how Clerselier dealt with these problems in the case of Descartes’ letters to Regius, I shall first outline Clerselier’s problem in solving these four points in general. Only the letters based upon drafts found among the Stockholm papers will be discussed, which exclude, in the first volume, Descartes’ correspondence with More, Morin, Plomp, Van Beverwijck and the letters to Clerselier (25 letters in all). Because the results below are not founded on a systematic study of Clerselier’s three volume edition of Descartes’ correspondence — in fact, as regards the first two problems I only consider the first volume — the results remain provisional.

1. Addressee. As for the addressees, Clerselier writes in his preface:

... n’ayant pu à cette fois mettre à la teste de toutes les lettres les noms de ceux à qui elles sont adressées, faute de l’avoir trouvé dans le Manuscrit,

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et pour ne l'avoir pu apprendre de personne, ny deviner par le stile, lequel pourtant m'en a fait mettre quelques-uns par conjecture. Et quand en cela ie me serois trompé, ie ne croy pas avoir fait tort à ceux de qui i'ay emprunté les noms.  

Clerelier’s claim that he did not know any of the addressees for certain is without doubt exaggerated, because in his letter to Andreae he knows which letters are addressed to Elizabeth and to Chanut. Indeed, the letters to Elizabeth will have posed no problem, since they formed a separate collection in the Stockholm papers. Such was not the case with the letters to Chanut, because Clerelier falsely attributes two letters to Chanut, whereas they were in fact sent to the French diplomat Brasset. He also conjectured that three letters were written to Elizabeth’s sister Louise, whereas they were directed to her youngest sister Sophie. In the first volume 16 letters remained without addressee. These letters are said to be addressed ‘A un Jésuite’, or ‘A un Père de l’Oratoire’, or, when the addressee seems to be a secular person, ‘A Monsieur ***’. Perhaps these designations are the result of thorough homework on the part of Clerelier, but it is not unthinkable that they reflect a pre-existing arrangement in the Stockholm papers, namely that a specific correspondence, for example with Jesuits or the letters to Chanut and Brasset, were collected together.

2. Date. In his preface Clerelier complains about the lack of any indication of date on the manuscripts. But despite this deficiency, the first volume has several sequences of letters which are chronologically correct. Careful reading of the manuscripts will have supplied Clerelier with clues, but the possibility that despite the disarray of the Stockholm papers some letters may still have been in their proper chronological order cannot be excluded.

3. Establishment of the text. Thanks to the editorial labour found in the Exemplaire de l’Institut, and the autograph letters rediscovered since, it is possible to compare Clerelier’s texts and the texts of the letters actually sent. Do the differences inform us as to the manner in which Clerelier dealt with the defective state of the Stockholm manuscripts, the lacunas and Descartes’ bad handwriting? Obviously not: as Dibon remarked, the vast majority of the differences can be accounted for by the difference between the draft and the final text of a letter. So either the material was not in such

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68 AT V 751 (emphasis added).
69 Cf. AT V 331, 349.
70 Cf. AT IV 495.
71 Except for five letters to Chanut (nos. 35–38 and 43) and a letter to Mersenne (no. 74), the only letters which have a date in Clerelier’s publication are those from Morin and the letters exchanged with Morin. Remarkably, Clerelier does not supply the dates of the letters Descartes wrote to him (nos. 117–119).
72 For example, the letters to Elizabeth, nos. 3 to 13 in Clerelier’s edition, and the letters to Elizabeth, Chanut and others, nos. 42 to 50.
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a bad shape, or Clerselier successfully solved most difficulties. The truth is without a
doubt somewhere in the middle.

Naturally, some cases remain in which we may have doubts about the authenticity
of Clerselier’s texts. Roth discussed the most extreme case. These doubts are fed by
a remark of Clerselier himself that he softened several acrimonious expressions and
suppressed the name of the person involved.73 An example of a doubtful passage is
found in a letter to Huygens. Descartes explains he is about to start a war with the
Jesuits. He admits it may not be the wisest thing to do, and Clerselier’s text continues:

Car, bien que ie scache assez, il y a long-temps, qu’il ne fait bon s’attirer
des adversaires ...74

Whereas the autograph letter reads:

car bien que ie scache assez il y a long tems le proverbe noli irritari

...75

crabrones ...

The difference between the rather bland turn in Clerselier’s text when compared to
the spicy saying in the autograph, is striking. But it is impossible to determine whether
or not we are looking at an alteration of Clerselier’s. The possibility that Descartes
deviated from his draft version when he copied out the text cannot be excluded. Possibly,
a systematic study of Clerselier’s edition may reveal a pattern in cases like these.

A closer analysis of Clerselier’s edition should pay attention to another kind of
alterations by Clerselier which we have not yet discussed, namely additions which the
editor inserted for what he believed to be the benefit of the reader. A good example of
this practice are his additions to the text in some of the cases in which Descartes refers
to one of his own works. In those cases Clerselier gives a page number when Descartes
does not (or at least not in his autograph letters). Moreover, in some cases Clerselier
supplies the page number of a French translation if Descartes referred to a Latin edition.
Sometimes Clerselier adds the indication ‘de la version française’, an obvious addition
by Clerselier if at the time the letter was written, no such translation existed.76

In his preface Clerselier informs his reader that many drafts had no recognisable
beginning or end. Virtually all letters in his edition, however, have a salutation and a
simple valediction like ‘Je suis, etc.’ or ‘Vale’, which raises the suspicion that some were
added by Clerselier. In one case it is certain that the salutation was added by Clerselier:

74 Descartes to Huygens, 31 July 1640, CLE III 593/AT III 103.
75 Roth 1926, 136/AT III 752. The proverb is Plautus’, Amphitruo II, 2, 707.
76 Additions like these are found in t/ô 31, l. 12; AT III 397–398ff, 427, 666; AT V 186.
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the editor believed that the text that follows is the beginning of a letter, whereas it is actually part of another letter. 77

Finally, the frequent use of a capital letter in designating a person instead of giving the full name in the correspondence edited by Clerselier, suggests that Descartes abbreviated personal names in his drafts. In two cases, we know for certain that Clerselier expanded these abbreviations and made a wrong conjecture. In two letters he printed ‘Le Roy’, believing that the ‘R’ in the draft stood for Regius, whereas Descartes actually meant Reneri. 78

4. The reconstruction of the letters. There are basically three methods to uncover these modifications. First, on the basis of remarks in the Exemplaire de l’Institut, in which numerous autograph letters are collated with Clerselier’s texts, indicating Clerselier’s mistakes in his reconstruction of the letters (in some cases the autograph letters examined by the annotators of the Exemplaire de l’Institut are still missing, leaving the precious notes in the Exemplaire as our only source). The second method to uncover Clerselier’s patchwork is by way of resurfaced original letters or (manuscript) copies. Finally, it is possible to divide a text presented by Clerselier as one letter on internal evidence and historical sources. As an example of the last method take CLE I letter 110, which text is split into three parts in AT and CM. The first and the third part date doubtless from April or May 1637, as the contents make it clear that the Discours has been printed though Descartes is still waiting for the privilege. 79 In the second part, however, Descartes writes that he has not yet seen Gibieuf’s De libertate Dei (Paris 1630), which work the philosopher read in 1631. 80

As regards Clerselier’s first volume, the editors of AT and CM make a reasonable case that four items actually consist of two or more (fragmentary) letters. Letter 110, addressed ‘A Monsieur ***’, consists of three fragmentary letters, the first probably to Germain Habert, the other fragments to Mersenne. 81 Letter 111 comprises a complete letter and a fragment of another letter, both presumably to Mersenne. 82 Letter 112 is made up of no less than three different fragments, presumably addressed to Mersenne

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77 Cf. AT II 330/CM VIII 58.
78 Descartes to Mersenne, 23 August 1638, AT II 330/CM VIII 58; Descartes to ***, [12 September 1638], AT II 379. The first mistake was already noticed by Baillet (Vie, II, 20).
81 See notes 79 and 80.
and Mesland. Finally, letter 116 consists of two fragments as well.

Even if we include the number of letters to Regius which actually comprise several fragmentary letters (see below), the first volume still contains the least number of mutilated letters. This can be explained, partly, because the letters to Elizabeth and Chanut seem to have been not very defective, partly because the first volume does not contain many letters to Mersenne, which collection proved to be the most vulnerable. In the second volume, 22 items consist of various fragments, the third volume 9 items. The majority of these are letters to Mersenne.

2.1.4. Clerselier’s interventions: Descartes’ letters to Regius

1. Addressee. Every letter to Regius is clearly marked as such by Clerselier’s announcement Clarissimo Viro Henrico Regio, followed by the number of the letter in his edition in Roman numerals. However, the first letter is introduced with a reservation — a reservation which applies to all subsequent letters: Clarissimo Viro Henrico Regio. Si bene divinavi. The reservation is cancelled in the second edition. Apparently, Regius’ reaction to the publication was evidence enough to convince Clerselier that his conjecture about the addressee of the letters was correct.

2. Date. The definitive conclusion that the letters are addressed to Regius, is not Clerselier’s only response to Regius’ criticism. Before sending the second edition to the press, he reconsidered the chronological order of the letters to Regius as well. The result is probably not due to attentive reading of the letters themselves alone. In the preface of his 1664 edition of Descartes’ L’Homme, Clerselier acknowledged that he possessed copies of the letters Regius wrote to Descartes (cf. § 1.2.1). The chronological order in the second edition was indeed much improved. In fact, Adam and Tannery replaced only four letters in the chronological sequence established by Clerselier in the second edition.

3. Establishment of the text. Very little can be said of the way Clerselier established the published text of Descartes’ letters to Regius from the manuscripts, because the Stockholm papers as well as the autograph letters are lost. Nevertheless, a few observations can be made.


To [Vatier], [17 November 1642], AT III 594–597; to [Mesland], [1645 or 1646], AT IV 348–350.

Most reshuffling of the letters in CLE II and CLE III can be traced in the concordance between CLE and AT (AT V 701–705). The following letters have subsequently been divided by the editors of CM: CLE II no. 76; CLE II letter 103 (into four parts instead of three in AT); CLE II letter 111. In several cases the editors of CM differ from Adam and Tannery in dating certain parts. That the problem does not exclusively concern the letters to Mersenne, is shown by CLE III letter 117, a letter to Van Schooten (9 April 1649, AT V 336–338). The existence of a manuscript copy of the second part of CLE III letter 117, published in AT V 565–566, makes it clear that Clerselier’s text actually consists of two distinct letters.

See my concordances between the first edition of CLE I, its second edition and AT.

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First, the specification editionis gallicae in D/R 45 [January 1642] when Descartes refers to his Essais (Discours 1637) is clearly added by Clerselier, since no translation of the Essais was available in January 1642 (the Latin translation was published in 1644). 87

Second, the manuscript copies rediscovered at Debrecen (D/R 34 and D/R 35) have a salutation and a valediction similar to those in the texts published by Clerselier. Of course, this does not guarantee the authenticity of those in Clerselier’s texts, but it does mean that we need to suspend judgement in this matter.

Finally, several passages in the letters as published by Clerselier reappear almost verbatim in Regius’ disputations of 1641 and his Responsio (1642). They bear witness to Clerselier’s trustworthiness.

4. Reconstruction of the letters. Clerselier indicates that of two letters to Regius he had only the first part (D/R 19A and D/R 24). But this does not mean that the other letters form a complete whole. Adam and Tannery have their doubts about some letters, but they are cautious not to divide any of them. They are right in this respect regarding D/R 38, which text cannot possibly reflect the text of the letter actually sent, but is impossible to reconstruct it. 88 Adam and Tannery also render two letters liable to the suspicion of being made up of (fragments of) two different letters (AT nos. 240 and 266), and in these cases I am less scrupulous than the editors of the great Descartes edition. 89 I divide AT no. 240 into D/R 19B and D/R 20, and I consider AT no. 239 (D/R 19A) as a rough draft of D/R 19B, the latter being either a final draft or a copy. This decision is solely founded on internal evidence of the letters. In my decision to divide AT no. 266 into D/R 31 and D/R 33, more or less along the lines suggested in AT, I also made use of a source unavailable to Adam and Tannery, namely one of the letters rediscovered at Debrecen (D/R 35).

I also divide AT no. 190, until now completely unsuspected of being made up by fragments of various letters. In AT, as in the second edition of CLE, it is Descartes’ first extant letter to Regius, and the only letter with a specific date (24 May 1640). I have established that Clerselier’s text consists of no less than 5 fragments of different letters: D/R 13, D/R 15, D/R 22, D/R 23 and D/R 27. This remarkable result is obtained by carefully comparing Regius’ disputations of 1641, in which the Utrecht professor sometimes quotes literally from Descartes’ letters.

2.2. La vie de Monsieur Des-Cartes by Adrien Baillet (1691)

In 1691 Adrien Baillet (1649–1706) published his biography of Descartes, La vie de Monsieur Des-Cartes, in two large volumes (totaling over a thousand pages). The
biography deals with every aspect of Descartes’ life, his ancestry, his education, his travels abroad, his works, both published and unpublished, his daily life, his appearance. The result is nothing short of an exhaustive encyclopedia on Descartes, in which, aided by the painstakingly detailed indexes, an answer to almost any question on the philosopher’s life can be found. The work is backed by numerous sources, which Baillet conscientiously cites in the margins of his work. Indeed, the margins are littered with references to published as well as unpublished sources. The latter sources make the interest of Baillet’s work today; the majority of these sources are no longer available to us, including Regius’ letters to Descartes. But the treasure has its price: despite the appearance of exactitude brought about by the marginal references the information Baillet gives is in many cases mistaken. Indeed, any answer the biography may supply needs to be treated with circumspection, unless it is backed by independent sources.

Several factors are responsible for the fallibility of Baillet’s work. First, the astonishing speed with which the work was completed: according to Baillet’s own biographer it took Baillet less than a year to write it.90 Now, Baillet was in fact working on the material left by Clerselier before that. In the second half of 1688 Baillet agreed to assist Legrand in sorting out the material for a biography and in collecting additional sources. In due course, Baillet’s role shifted from secretary to author, and early in 1690 he started the actual writing. The decision that Baillet should write the biography, and not Legrand, was taken by others, who more or less forced Baillet to accept the job. A better choice was hardly imaginable as Baillet had already proved that he could deal with loads of material and nevertheless produce voluminous works at short notice. Despite these excellent characteristics, inconsistencies, mistakes and confusion arisen from haste had not been avoided.

A second reason for a careful approach to Baillet’s work, is the fact that the author does not always indicate the border-line between fact and fiction. At times he shows a critical assessment of his sources, or he indicates the problematic interpretation of data, but in other cases the reconstruction of Descartes’ life springs from Baillet’s imagination alone. Finally, his unfamiliarity with the Protestant Low Countries, where Descartes spent most of his adult life, is a third cause of mistakes.91

90 For the details on Baillet and the genesis of Vie, I rely on SEBBA 1982. Another interesting study on Baillet’s biography is COLE 1992, ch. 2 (Cole sketches the difference of opinion between Adam, Gouhier, Sobha and himself on pp. 239–240).
91 Immediately after the publication, many errors were indicated by several people, including Christiaan Huygens, who recorded mistake after mistake (HUYGENS 1888–1950, X, 399–406; also in COUSIN 1865–1866, III, t. 1, 112–120). Criticism of a wholly different kind was voiced as well: the abundance of ‘irrelevant’ details and marginal references made enjoyable reading impossible. In response to the latter critics, Baillet published in 1692 an abridged version without references. The second Vie was apparently to the public’s liking, as it went through a reprint the next year. For the reception of Baillet’s Vie, see also WANG 1963, 323–331.
Introduction

All three factors must be kept in mind when considering Baillet’s account of the relation between Descartes and Regius. A rewarding source for Baillet was Clerselier’s collection of copies of Regius’ letters to Descartes. In the margin of his work, Baillet refers to no less than 33 different letters, often giving the number of the letter in the collection and/or the date of the letter.\(^{92}\) On the other hand, it is not always clear how Baillet used his source. Obviously, when Baillet uses quotation marks, there is no problem in connecting the reference in the margin to the main text. However, these cases are outnumbered by less straightforward references. Often, the boundary between the bit of information taken from a letter and the surrounding material is not evident, especially when several marginal references are found. In those cases, only context and secondary sources may shed some light. An illuminating example is the following, taken from a correspondence with very similar problems, namely Descartes’ letters to Claude Picot, which are primarily known from Baillet’s \textit{Vie}. The setting is the summer of 1644, when Descartes is in France and finally receives a set of copies of his \textit{Principia}, printed in Amsterdam. In the margin, Baillet refers to a letter to Picot of 29 July 1644:

\textit{M. Descartes, arrivant à Paris, trouva l’Abbé Picot et le P. Mersenne occupé du soin d’envoyer dans les Provinces du Royaume les exemplaires de ses Principes destinés pour les amis de dehors [\textit{in margine:} Lettr. MS du 29 Juillet à Picot]; mais qui attendaient l’Auteur pour lui laisser la satisfaction de faire lui-même ses présents à ceux de la Ville [\textit{in margine:} le P. Mersenne était sur le point de faire son voyage].}\(^{93}\)

At first sight, the passage appears to be Baillet’s paraphrase of the letter, in which Descartes thanked Picot for his and Mersenne’s efforts in distributing copies of the \textit{Principia}, when he arrived in Paris from the Netherlands. A closer inspection of the preceding chapter in \textit{Vie} makes it clear that that is not the case. In the preceding chapter Baillet gives a detailed account (based upon the letters to Picot!) of Descartes’ journey to Brittany after his departure from Paris around 11 July.\(^{94}\) Consequently, ‘arrivant à Paris’ means ’when Descartes arrived in Paris from Brittany’. So the letter in question was actually written before copies of the \textit{Principia} arrived in Paris, which finally happened in August 1644 while Descartes was staying in Brittany.\(^{95}\) We may draw two conclusions. First, the only piece of information which Baillet took from the letter, is Descartes’ request to Picot to distribute copies of the \textit{Principia}, when these copies will arrive in Paris. Second, starting from this request made before the copies arrived in Paris, Baillet invented a small history of what happened after they had arrived in Paris.

\(^{92}\) In § 2.3.1 I summarise my observations on the Clerselier collection of Regius’ letters.
\(^{93}\) \textit{Vie}, II, 221; AT IV 130.
\(^{94}\) Cf. AT IV 128.
\(^{95}\) Cf. AT IV 138.
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The second conclusion brings us back to Baillet’s imagination, the fruit of which is also present in Baillet’s account of the Descartes–Regius correspondence. The worst example is found precisely in Baillet’s account of the first contacts between Descartes and Regius. In other instances, Baillet’s story is so terribly confused that is impossible to make sense of it. And, finally, there is his misunderstanding of the Dutch situation.

There is no general approach to dealing with these problems, except for collecting secondary sources and reading the passages in context. Fortunately, something can be said in favour of Baillet. He does not always take things for granted, and sometimes he does mention that it is difficult to make head or tail of some aspects in the correspondence between Descartes and Regius. Moreover, thanks to his passion for details, or his meticulous regard for concrete reality as Sebba puts it, we can draw a fairly good picture of the relation between Descartes and Regius, sometimes even when the biographer errs.

2.3. The Exemplaire de l’Institut

The so called Exemplaire de l’Institut (ExI) is a copy of Clerselier’s three volume edition of Descartes’ correspondence which is kept in the Bibliothèque de l’Institut de France in Paris. The volumes are part of the manuscript department of the library (shelf marks MS 4469, 4470, 4471) because the works are riddled with numerous additional notes in handwriting. The Exemplaire de l’Institut is presumably the personal copy of Clerselier’s edition of Jean-Baptiste Legrand, who used it in his preparation for a new edition of Descartes’ correspondence (see § 1.2.2). The notes are the result of these preparations. Many letters, mostly to Mersenne which Clerselier was unable to consult, are collated with autograph letters. Every letter contains one or more notes which comment upon the addressee and the date of the letter. Unfortunately, the authors of the various hands which can be distinguished still remain to be identified with certainty, but there is only a limited number of candidates, namely Clerselier, Legrand, Baillet and the last person to have access to the entire collection, Marmion. According to Adam, one of the hands is without question Legrand’s, but he refrains from saying which one in particular.

The letters I examined in the ExI, the letters to Regius, have two sets of notes, each in a different hand, which are easily distinguished. Notes by, what I will call, the first

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96 See my commentary on R/D 1.
97 For example in R/D 16b.
98 An amusing example in Baillet’s insistence that Regius during his stay at Naarden ran into trouble with the Amsterdam fleet, Baillet’s literal translation of Classis (Vie, II, 5; cf. DE VRİER 1917, 13). For Regius’ Naarden episode, see the Regius Chronicle.
99 AT I xlix. Except for Adam’s remarks in his introduction to Descartes’ correspondence (AT I XLIII–LIII, LXI–LXV) there is no secondary literature on the Exemplaire de l’Institut. The announced photographic reprint of the Exemplaire de l’Institut, (J.-R. Armogathe and G. Belgioioso (eds.), Lecce: Conte) will disclose this important source and undoubtedly enable a closer analysis.

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hand, are found in the margin next to the head of a letter. The notes by the second hand — in an at times almost indecipherable handwriting — are written on separate pieces of paper inserted in their appropriate places in Clerselier’s edition. As an example of both sets of notes I give their comments on Descartes’ letter 96 in the first volume (ExI, I, 429). According to the annotators, the letter dates from July 1645. The note in margine by the first hand reads:

La missive de Mr le Roy est du 13 juin 1645 p. 70. La reponse de Mr le Roy est du 6e Juillet 1645, p. 71.\(^\text{100}\)

The note on an inserted leaflet by the second hand gives:

La 96 lettre du I Vol. est de M. D. a M. Reg., elle repond a la 32 de Reg. datee du 23 Juin 1645, ainsi celle cy est ecrite vers le commencement de juillet, je fixe cette reponse au 3e juillet et je l’éloigne le plus qu’il m’est possible a cause que M. D. dans le commencement de cette lettre debute par dire: Je ne scay pourquoi j’ay été si longtemps sans vous faire reponse; cependant la reponse de M. R. a cette lettre est du 6e juillet 1645, car on peut s’y convaincre par la lecture.

The notes of the second hand are more elaborate than the first set of notes, and they have a more definitive character. One of the notes in the second hand contains a reference to the Narratio historica — an account of the turbulent introduction of Cartesian philosophy at Utrecht University, published in 1643.\(^\text{101}\) Now, Baillet asked for this particular pamphlet in a letter to Niçaise.\(^\text{102}\) Baillet’s letter is undated, but according to Sebba it dates from the second half of 1688.\(^\text{103}\) If this is correct, the notes on the inserted leaflets are posterior to 1688. As the notes in the second hand render the first kind of notes obsolete, they presumably postdate the first notes.\(^\text{104}\)

The above example shows that the annotators used Regius’ letters to provide Descartes’ letters with a date as accurately as possible. However, as it turns out, the annotators were not particularly successful, for the letter they discuss above, D/R 17 in the present edition, does not date from 1645 but from 1641.\(^\text{105}\) Moreover, although the annotators possessed many of Regius’ letters, they often err in their conclusions. Indeed, the importance of the ExI for the Descartes–Regius correspondence is not

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\(^{100}\) The entire note was cancelled, possibly by the author of the second note.

\(^{101}\) ExI, I, 416; note on an inserted leaflet.


\(^{103}\) Sebba 1982, 52.

\(^{104}\) In their preliminary remarks on a letter of Descartes to [Princess Sophie], Adam and Tannery discuss one of the notes by the second hand, claiming that the handwriting is Legrand’s (AT IV 495). However, as they do not indicate how they arrive at their conclusion, I consider it a matter still open to debate.

\(^{105}\) See my commentary on D/R 17.
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due to the conjectures on the date of Descartes’ letters, but to the information these inferences supply on Regius’ letters. The notes mention the exact dates of Regius’ letters and sometimes even refer to the number of the letter in the collection. The ExI is in this respect not as rich as Baillet’s Vie, because for several of Descartes’ letters the annotators found no counterpart in the collection of Regius’ letters. Nevertheless, the notes confirm many of Baillet’s dates, sometimes supply an indication regarding the calendar (the Gregorian or the Julian calendar), and in one case the date of a letter not mentioned by Baillet (r/d 44). Further, the notes in the ExI occasionally give details on the contents of Regius’ letters which are not found in Baillet’s Vie. The most interesting bits of information are found in notes appended to Descartes’ letters to other people than Regius, in which the annotators used Regius’ letters to establish dates and/or addressees. Finally, Clerselier’s text of Descartes’ letters to Regius in the ExI shows changes in the text, but these are for the greater part nothing but corrections of printer’s errors and stylistic changes. Indeed, they cannot be anything else, as the annotators never got hold of the autograph letters to Regius.

2.3.1. The Clerselier collection of Regius’ letters to Descartes

We do not know how Clerselier obtained the copies of Regius’ letters to Descartes. He may have discovered the collection among the Stockholm papers, but it is not inconceivable that he received it on a later date from someone in the Netherlands. But it is certain that by 1664 he possessed the collection, which he presumably made use of to rearrange the order of Descartes’ letters in the second edition of the first volume (1663). After Clerselier’s death, the collection appears to have gone to his heirs at first, but was later retrieved by Legrand when he decided to prepare a completely new edition of Descartes’ correspondence, which edition, had it materialised, possibly would have included Regius’ letters as well (see § 1.2.1).

Baillet’s Vie and the annotations in the ExI provide the following picture of the collection. Each letter in the collection was numbered and the whole was paginated. Both Baillet and the annotators in the ExI refer to the numbered items, the first hand in the ExI gives several references to the page number of the letter as well. The last reference in the ExI is to Regius’ letter of 23 July 1645, number 34 in the collection, having page number 77.106 The highest number Baillet refers to is number 37. The collection contained at least two letters from another albeit closely connected correspondence. Baillet refers to a letter by Regius’ colleague Antonius Æmilius to Descartes, no. 9 in the collection (ÆM/D 5), and a letter to Cornelis van Hogelande, no. 37 in the collection.

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106 ExI, I, 430 (letter 97), in margine: ‘La reponse de Mr le Roy est du 23 juillet 1645, p. 77.’ Just like the note I quoted above, this note was cancelled as well.
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(R/VH 54). As the last letter is not addressed to Descartes, it may have been the last item of the collection as well.

Some further observations can be made. The collection was not complete. The most dramatic gap is 1641, of which year the collection had just one letter, whereas we have numerous letters of Descartes of that year. In the ExI none of the letters in the collection is used to date any of these letters. The only letter of 1641 is no. 14; no. 15 dates from 1642. The letters were more or less chronologically arranged; but there were letters without date. Letters 8 to 10 apparently had no date, as Baillet does not mention them, and the ExI does use letters 8 and 10 but does not mention the date either. If Baillet does not mention the date, it does not necessarily mean that the letter had no date at all. Just a few letters are not mentioned by Baillet or the ExI at all, namely nos. 2, 7, 28, 29, 35. The first two of these are probably R/D 3 and R/D 10. According to Baillet and the ExI letter 34 is the last letter exchanged between Regius and Descartes. Letter 35 is mentioned nowhere.

Regius lived in Utrecht, which province adhered to the old Julian calendar (Old Style: OS), as opposed to the new Gregorian calendar (New Style: NS) used by Descartes in Holland.\footnote{See my introductory note on the calendars in the Dutch Republic.} Baillet is aware of the difference, but mentions both dates of a letter only once (R/D 14B). Baillet is moreover not consistent; he may either give the date in OS or in NS. The same applies to the first hand annotator, but the second hand annotator, insofar as I was able to determine, only uses NS. That is why when both hands in the ExI give the same date of a letter, the date is presumably in NS.

2.4. Debrecen

A manuscript copy of two short letters by Descartes to Regius, D/R 34 and D/R 35 in the present edition, is found in a notebook by Johannes Dállyai Vas in Utrecht in 1710. These letters are not published in Clerselier’s edition of Descartes’ correspondence. The notebook is kept in the Library of the Reformed Transtibiscan Church District and the Reformed College, Debrecen, Hungary, shelf mark R 164.\footnote{Catalogued in FÉKETE/SZABÓ 1979, 40. The letters are published in ESZE 1973, with a photographic reproduction of the manuscript, and in DIBON 1985/DIBON 1990, 551–577.}

The cover title of the manuscript reads J. Dályai Vas, Her. Alexandri Röelli, Theologia sive Religio Rationalis. The manuscript consists of 262 ff., and measures 210 x 170 mm. Foliation starts only at f. 230v; the preceding part of the manuscript is paginated.

A librarian’s note, giving information on the provenance, is found on f. [1r]. Ff. [1v–9v] are blank. The notebook, headed Theologia Naturalis, covers ff. [10–230r], pp. 1–445 [=444]. On page [444], erroneously paginated 445, the notice Finis cum bono
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Deo. Trajecti ad Rhenum 1710, 27 Junij. There follow 8 blank pages (paginated 446 [=445], 247–253), and an Addendum Theologia Naturalis, with the double pagination 254–260 and 445–451 (sic). Two appendices, De aeternitate Dei (ff. 230v–234r), De scientia Dei (234v–238r), and an Index rerum (ff. 239r–245r) complete the notebook. Ff. 245v–259r are blank. The copies of the letters to Regius are on f. 259v (D/R 34) and f. 260r (D/R 35), preceded by the announcement Copia Epistolam Carthesii ad Cl. Regium Doctorem et Prof. Medicinae Ultrajectensem ex Ms. praefati transcripta (f. 259v). Ff. 260v–262v are blank.

The lecture notes and the copies of Descartes’ letters are in the same hand (Dállyai Vás’). The fact that the copyist tried to imitate Descartes’ signature (cf. D/R 34) suggests that the copies are made after autograph letters.

The manuscript was donated by the widow of Dállyai Vás, Zsuzsánna Zemlényi, to the archives of the Reformed Transtibiscan Church District at Debrecen on 20 January 1719 (according to a note on f. [1r]).

Background

The copyist of Descartes’ letters is the Hungarian student János (Johannes) Dállyai Vás or Was, who in 1709, after his studies at the Calvinist Reformed College of Debrecen, travelled to the Netherlands to complete his theological education at the universities of Utrecht and Franeker.109 His presence in Utrecht is attested from October 1709 till March 1711.110 In Utrecht he was a student of the theologian Herman Alexander Röell (1653–1718), who was popular and influential among Hungarian students.111 In the spring of 1711, he matriculated at the university of Franeker, where he met the famous theologian Campegius Vitringa (1659–1722) and the Cartesian philosopher Ruardus Andala (1665–1727).112 In July 1711 he returned to Hungary via Frankfurt a/d Oder.113

109 For Dállyai Vás, see apart from the sources given below, ESZE 1973, and SLUIS/POSTMA 1990, 35. Esze’s information on Dállyai Vás’ stay in the Netherlands contains some inaccuracies. The peregrination of Protestant Hungarian students to Utrecht University between 1636 and 1836 is studied in SEGESVÁRY 1935. For the number of Hungarian students at the University of Leiden, see WANSINK 1981, 11.

110 Mention in the Album amicorum of Dállyai Vás’ fellow countryman János Szárosi, dd. 30 October 1709 (Debrecen, R 685, f. 93r). The first reference in Utrecht in Dállyai Vás’ Album amicorum (Debrecen, R 687) dates from 10 March 1710 (f. 145r); the last one from 27 March 1711 (f. 112r). Dállyai Vás did not matriculate at the university, probably because he did not need to pay any fee (cf. SEGESVÁRY 1935, 23, 24).

111 Röell’s entry in Dállyai Vás’ Album amicorum is dated Utrecht, 19 March 1711 (f. 55r; text in ESZE 1973, 232). Dállyai Vás’ familiarity with the Röell family is attested by the inscriptions of Röell’s eldest sons Johannes (f. 110v) and Dionysius (f. 110r). On H. A. Röell, see NNBW, X, 821–823; BLGNP, IV, 372–374; VAN SLUIS 1988; VAN SLUIS/POSTMA 1990 (study of Röell and his Hungarian students).

112 Album. Stud. Acad. Fran., 298 (Johannes Was Dallyai, Hungarum, gratiss.). Entries of both Franeker professors are found in Dállyai Vás’ album: Vitringa (27 July 1711, f. 57r), Andala (6 Id. Jul. 1711, f. 65r).

113 The last entries made in Franeker in Dállyai Vás’ album are of 10 July 1711 (ff. 53r, 79r, 141v). On 29 July 1711 he visited the university at Frankfurt a/d Oder (ff. 49r, 50r, 135r). The date of inscription on f. 137r by a German student, Johannes Wolfen, Utrecht 26 December 1711, is probably mistaken.

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Shortly after his arrival in Debrecen he was appointed professor of theology at the Reformed College of Debrecen (1711–1715). During the last years of his life Dálllyai Vas was a minister at Debrecen. He died prematurely in 1718.

Dálllyai Vas probably copied the letters out of curiosity — perhaps Descartes’ mention of the great Reformed theologian Voetius helped as well (cf. D/R 34) — and as a souvenir of the historical person Descartes, whose philosophy inspired both his preceptors at Debrecen and Utrecht. He was introduced to Cartesianism by his professor at the Reformed College of Debrecen, the Cartesio-Cocceian theologian and philosopher Martinus Tönkö (1642–1700). It is no coincidence that he spent most of his time in the Netherlands in Utrecht, where Röell taught, who is renowned for his reconciliation of Cartesian philosophy with Reformed theology. We have no indication as to the owner of the autographs or when Dálllyai Vas copied the letters. It is possible that Röell once acquired them for the same reasons as Dálllyai Vas copied them out, but the latter’s Album amicorum contains an contribution by another Utrecht professor who may have found the letters equally interesting, the Cartesian professor of philosophy and mathematics Joseph Serrurier (†1742). In absence of any information on the owner of the autographs, nothing can be said as to how the letters got detached from Regius’ collection of Descartes’ letters.

3. THE PRESENT EDITION

3.1. The arrangement of the correspondence

Text

The head-note of every letter in the present edition gives the number, date and, in Descartes’ case, place of writing (whether or not Regius wrote all his letters from

114 Written communication by Dr. Cs. Fekete, Senior Librarian of the Library of the Reformed Transstibiscan Church District and the Reformed College, Debrecen.
115 On Márton Szilágy (Martinus Sylvanus) Tönkö, who introduced Cartesianism at the Reformed College of Debrecen, see TURÓCZI-TROSTLER 1934, 119–120, TÖRTÉNÉ 1964, 150–151, ESZE 1973, 213, and TÓTH 1979, 419–422, 437. The history of Hungarian Cartesianism starts with János Csere Apáczai (1625–1659), who between 1648 and 1653 studied at Franeker, Leiden, and Harderwijk, but mostly at Utrecht University, under Voetius and Regius. He married an Utrecht girl, Aletta van der Maet, and his ambition was to get a professorship in Utrecht, but eventually he returned to Hungary, where he became professor at the colleges of Gyulafehervár and Kolozsvár. In 1653, he published the first encyclopedia in the Hungarian language, which for (natural) philosophy, medicine and psychology draws almost exclusively on Descartes’ Principia philosophiae and Regius’ Fundamenta physice and Fundamentum medica, sometimes giving literal translations (APÁCZAI 1653). For Apáczai, see besides the studies in the history of Cartesianism in Hungary cited above, the monograph BÁN 1954 (French summary on pp. 563–585).
116 Dálllyai Vas indeed embraced Röell’s views in theology. Esze reports that one of Dálllyai Vas’ former students at Debrecen, who had never studied abroad, was charged with heresy because of his Röelian Christology (ESZE 1973, 235–236).
118 Cf. § 1.1.3.
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Utrecht cannot be established, but I assume that he did). Conjectural dates are put between square brackets.\footnote{On the double date of Regius’ letters to Descartes, see my introductory note on the calendars in the Dutch Republic.} I then give the source of the text, which is CLE I (1663) and the Debrecen manuscript for Descartes’ letters to Regius, and Vie and the ExI for Regius’ letters to Descartes. If the number of a letter by Regius in the Clereslier collection is known, this will be specified. Next, I list the place of the letter in the standard edition of Adam and Tannery (AT), and finally, I indicate the most common (AM, RL and CSMK) or otherwise interesting (M and B) translations of Descartes’ letters.

The line numbering is found in the left margin of the texts. In case a letter of Regius consists of more than one passage from Vie, the line numbering starts anew with each passage. These passages themselves are alphabetically listed [A], [B], and so on.

I use two sequences of notes. In the textual notes, listed by line number, I record variant readings, emendations, etc. Explanatory notes are keyed to superscript numbers.

**Commentary**

Since many letters are in need of annotation on date, text and/or context, each letter has a separate commentary. In the commentary I discuss respectively date (Date), my arrangement of the text (Text), and if necessary an elaborate note on the (historical) context of the letter (Context). In some cases, it is inevitable that I discuss the date of a letter and its context at the same time.

3.2. The establishment of the text

The different kinds of sources in which (remnants of) the correspondence between Descartes and Regius are found, necessitate a different approach to each source.

3.2.1. Clereslier’s Lettres de Mr Descartes

The basis of the texts is the second edition of Clereslier’s first volume of Descartes’ correspondence (1663), which I collated with the first edition (1657).\footnote{For the first edition (Paris 1657), I used a copy of the University Library of Leiden (546 B 13); for the second edition (Paris 1663), I used a copy of the University Library of Utrecht (Dijns 22-215).} The spelling of the long s, and of u and v has been made conform to modern usage for the convenience of the reader. In the rare cases that a j is used instead of an i, for example in ‘major’ or ‘alijs’, I have replaced the j with an i. However, I have respected the rule that if a word ends with a double ii, the last i is represented as an j, to which rule I found no exceptions. The ampersand (&) and the ligatures æ and œ are presented as et, ae and oe, and instantly recognisable contractions have been silently expanded. Word accents have
been reproduced on the basis of the second edition. Obvious misprints have been silently corrected. Variant readings between the first and the second edition are indicated in the critical apparatus beneath the main text. Corrections and conjectures are justified in the same apparatus. Additions are put between angle brackets. Initials have been expanded between angle brackets, unless there are doubts about the identity of the person meant. Interventions in the indention of the second edition of Clerselier are mentioned. The pagination of Clerselier’s second edition and AT is indicated in the right margin, the latter between square brackets and in italics.

In many of his letters to Regius, Descartes discusses drafts of disputations or other texts the Utrecht professor intended to publish. In his suggestions, approval or disapproval Descartes often alludes to or cites from the texts Regius had sent to him. In general, Clerselier indicates these words and passages, but he either uses italics or a capital letter. For instance, he uses italics in ‘Ubi habes vicinus aèr cuius particulae, etc. mallem vicinus aèr, etc, potest’, but a capital letter in the following passage: ‘In secundo, ais Idiopathiam esse morbum per se subsistentem; mallem dicere, esse ab alio non pendentem’.121 For want of a uniform approach, I have decided to follow the practice of AT, in which edition all these words and passages are italicised. In general, the differences with Clerselier’s second edition are not mentioned. As the use of italics involves changes in the original punctuation and capitalisation, I follow AT’s usage in these respects as well.

3.2.2. Baillet’s La vie de Monsieur Des-Cartes

The basis of the text is the Geneva 1970 Slatkine reprint. Printing errors indicated in the list of errata have been corrected, which explains some differences with the text presented in AT. Obvious misprints have been silently corrected. The remaining corrections are in angle brackets and they are justified in the critical apparatus. Baillet’s references in the margin of his work have been inserted in the main text between square brackets, preceded by the abbreviation i.m. (in margine).

The text is printed in an 10 point instead of a 12 point letter to stress the fact that we are not dealing with the original source, unless it is unambiguously clear that Baillet gives a direct quotation from Regius’ letter (regrettably in a French translation). Because Vie does not reflect Regius’ original wording, I have taken the liberty to modernise the spelling, for which purpose I used the edition by Adam and Milhaud (AM). In case a passage from Vie was not found in AM, the modernisation is mine. The use of the uppercase letter has been made conform to modern usage, except in the case of months, institutions, and academic, church and public offices. Punctuation has only slightly been

121 D/R 22, II, 2–3; D/R 24, II, 8–9.
adapted to modern usage. Commas have been added if this enhanced the understanding of the text. Unnecessary colons have been replaced by a semicolon.

3.2.3. Exemplaire de l’Institut

My reproduction of the notes in ExI is strictly diplomatic, except for the punctuation, which is virtually absent in the notes, and the original lineation. Additions and corrections by the authors of the notes in ExI are not indicated. My additions are put between angle brackets.

3.2.4. Debrecen

I collated Dibon’s transcription from the photographic reproduction published by Esze with the original manuscripts in Debrecen.\textsuperscript{122} Seeing that my text of both letters was based upon the first authoritative transcription, I limited the number of modifications. Small and unambiguous contractions are silently expanded. The minor corrections by the copyist are not indicated.

\textsuperscript{122} Esze 1973, 230–231.
INTRODUCTORY NOTES TO THE CORRESPONDENCE

1. THE CALENDARS IN THE DUTCH REPUBLIC

In the 17th century, there was a difference of ten days between Holland, Zeeland and Brabant on the one hand, and the other provinces of the Dutch Republic on the other hand. In the first three provinces, the new, Gregorian calendar was in use, while the remaining part of the Dutch Republic adhered to the old Julian calendar. In the commentary as in the footnotes to the letters all dates are either according to the Gregorian calendar alone, or, when discussing Regius’ letters and events that took place in that part of the Netherlands that adhered to the Old Style, I supply both the date in the Julian and in the Gregorian calendar, or add the abbreviation OS (Old Style). The date of publication of Regius’ Responsio is thus 16/26 February 1642. Descartes, who lived in Holland during his correspondence with Regius, dated his letters in the New Style (NS), but Regius, living in Utrecht, probably dated his letters to Descartes both in the Old Style and in the New Style. Baillet rarely supplies both dates, so often we do not know which calendar, the Julian or the Gregorian, is used. In case I succeeded in establishing the correct date, I designate the date of the letter in both styles, the calendar not used by Baillet in square brackets. For example, I date Regius’ first letter to Descartes [8/] 18 August 1638, meaning that Baillet only gives the date 18 August but that I have established that the precise date is 18 August New Style.

2. UtrechT university 1636–1650

It took only two years for the Illustrious School at Utrecht, founded in 1634, to be raised to the status of university. On 16/26 March 1636, a solemn celebration in the Domchurch, in the presence of members of the States of Utrecht, the Vroedschap, professors, students and numerous dignitaries, marked the birth of the fourth university in the Protestant Low Countries, after Leiden (1575), Franeker (1585) and Groningen.

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123 For more details, see STRUBBE/VOET 1960. Easter Days in the Julian and Gregorian calendars are also listed in the Oxford Companion to English Literature, Appendix IV.
124 For the early history of Utrecht University in general, see LONGOQ 1886, KERNKAMP 1936 and BIERENS DE HAAN 1936. The philosophical curriculum till 1650 is studied in DIJON 1954 and VERBEEK 1992a. The Theological Faculty is closely studied in DUKER 1989, II and III; the records of the Faculty are published in CRAMER 1932. TEN DOESSCHATE 1963 is a mediocre attempt to outline the history of the Medical Faculty. For a survey of the Faculty of Law, see VAN DEN BERGH/SPRUIT/VAN DER VROUWT 1986 and WELTEN 1987. The minutes of the Academic Senate since 1640 — there are no records of the first four years — are found in KERNKAMP 1936–1940, I (cited as Acta). The records of the Utrecht Vroedschap (city council) concerning academic affairs are published in Wijnne 1888 and KERNKAMP 1936–1940, I (cited as Resolutien). KERNKAMP 1936–1940 summarises the records already present in Wijnne 1888.
The **jus promovendi** was granted by the highest authority of the province, the States, but financially and administratively the university was an enterprise supported by the Utrecht Vroedschap alone. The board of governors, or *curatores*, counted no representatives of the States, as in other universities, but only members of the municipality. In Utrecht, the *Curatorium* consisted of the (two) Burgomasters, and some members of the Vroedschap. In fact it was most often the first Burgomaster who handled academic affairs.

From the outset Utrecht University prospered and attracted many students. The increase of students, partly due to the outbreak of the plague in Leiden in 1635, necessitated the Vroedschap to enlarge the staff. In 1634, the Illustrious School started with five professors, Gisbertus Voetius\(^{127}\) (theology and Hebrew), Antonius Matthaeus\(^{128}\) (law), the Faculty of Arts being represented by Henricus Reneri\(^{129}\) (philosophy), Antonius Æmilius\(^{130}\) (history) and Justus Liraeus\(^{131}\) (humanities). In 1635, they were joined by Bernardus Schotanus,\(^{132}\) professor of law and mathematics, and three lecturers,

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\(126\) KERNKAMP 1936–1940, I, vii–viii; KERNKAMP 1936, 94.

\(127\) *Resolutien*, 55, 56–57. Biographical data of (former) professors of Utrecht University who play a significant role in the Descartes–Regius correspondence, are found in the *Biographical Lexicon*.


\(129\) *Resolutien*, 36, 37.

\(130\) *Resolutien*, 34.

\(131\) *Resolutien*, 33–34. Justus Liraeus (Lyraeus), or Joost van Liere (c.1578–1646), was a student of Scaliger in Leiden. From 1598 till 1630, he taught at the Latin school in Middelburg. In 1630, he was appointed rector of the Heronymus school in Utrecht, succeeding Æmilius. His direction, however, did not befit the school, and the Vroedschap decided to appoint Æmilius, next to his professorship, rector once again. Liraeus was offered a position at the Illustrious School instead. BURMAN 1738, 198–200; NNBW, II, 819–820.

Arnoldus van Goor\textsuperscript{133} (moral philosophy), Arnoldus Senguerd(ius)\textsuperscript{134} (metaphysics) and Martin Schoock\textsuperscript{135} (rhetoric). Shortly before the inauguration of the university Willem van der Straaten or Stratenus accepted the chair of medicine.\textsuperscript{136}

The Faculty of Theology was without question the most important department of the university, taking care of the education of ministers.\textsuperscript{137} In 1637, Meinardus Schotanus\textsuperscript{138} was appointed next to Voetius, followed by a third professor, Carolus Dematius\textsuperscript{139} in 1639. Johannes Hoornbeeck succeeded Schotanus in 1644.\textsuperscript{140} The doyen of the Faculty, and the star of the university, was Voetius, a charismatic and zealous orthodox Calvinist. Under his guidance the Faculty became a staunch guardian of Reformed doctrine, with a keen eye for practical theology. The professors of theology were also ministers in Utrecht, and they soon got a firm grip on the consistory, before long turning Utrecht into the center of Further Reformation.\textsuperscript{141}

\textsuperscript{133} Resoluti\-en, 79. Arnoldus van Goor (c.1607–after 1665) studied philosophy and theology in Germany (Helmstedt, Bremen), the Netherlands (Groningen, Leiden), England (Oxford) and Switzerland (Geneva and Basle). He became Magister artium in Leiden in 1635. On 8/18 October 1638 his father-in-law the Utrecht minister Andreas Suavius (†1649) asked the Vroedschap to grant Van Goor honourable discharge, as the Prince of Orange appointed him intendant of his native county of Meurs (WINNE 1888, 35–36. Resoluti\-en, 129). In 1660, Utrecht University made him Doctor of Law (promotor: P. Voet). Van Goor published a collection of ten disputations submitted over the years 1635–1637: Disputationum philosophicarum practicarum pars prima: complectens ethicam generalem (Utrecht: Æg. Roman, 1637; copy in the library of Utrecht University). One of the respondents is Paulus Voet. A second collection of disputations, Collegium disputationum philosophiae practicae (Utrecht 1638), is considered to be lost.

\textsuperscript{134} WINNE 1888, 39–40; Resoluti\-en, 80–81, 131. Arnoldus Senguerd(ius) (1610–1667) graduated in philosophy in Leiden in 1629, after which he continued his studies in Franeker. In 1648 he accepted the invitation to become the successor of Caspar Barlaeus at the Athenaeum in Amsterdam. BURMAN 1738, 355–357; DIBON 1954, 203–206, 241–246; LINDEBOOM 1984, 1800–1801.

\textsuperscript{135} WINNE 1888, 37–38; Resoluti\-en, 83, 127, 129.

\textsuperscript{136} Resoluti\-en, 89–90. Willem Stratenus (1593–1681) studied medicine in Leiden and graduated in Padua in 1613. He settled in practice in his native town, Utrecht, where he became physician and was charged with the teaching of anatomy to surgeons. In his inaugural oration he stressed the importance of clinical teaching. After his professorship at Leiden University, he returned to Utrecht, where he became Burgomaster (1674–1676). He published only a few medical works. BURMAN 1738, 363–364; VAN DER AA, VI, 324; BAUMANN 1951; POELHEKKE 1961, 313; LINDEBOOM 1984, 1896–1898.

\textsuperscript{137} Cf. WANSINK 1981, 24–25, 32–33.


\textsuperscript{139} Resoluti\-en, 135. Carolus Dematius, or De Maets (1597–1651), studied theology in Franeker and abroad, among other places in Sedan. Before his appointment in 1639, he was minister at Scherpenisse and Middelburg. The day after his inaugural oration (2/12 June), Dematius was created Doctor Theologiae by Voetius. BURMAN 1738, 203–208; NNBW, VIII, 1094; BLGNP, II, 314–315; Album Prom. Rhen.-Traj., 1.


was consulted even in matters that did not regard the Faculty of Theology.

Just like the Theological Faculty, the Faculty of Law had three chairs. Cyprianus Regneri ab Oosterga succeeded Bernardus Schotanus when the latter accepted an invitation of Leiden University in March 1641. Henrick Moreelse accepted the third chair in 1644. The medical professor Stratenus had to wait till 1638 before he got assistance. His new colleague was Henricus Regius, professor extra ordinem (associate professor) in theoretical medicine and botany (full professor in March 1639). In 1646, Stratenus became the personal physician of the Stadholder Frederik Hendrik (1584–1647), and his frequent absence necessitated the appointment of Diemerbroeck in 1649.

The Faculty of Arts, responsible for the preliminary studies to the higher Faculties of Theology, Medicine and Law, had the most students, and consequently a larger staff. To replace Schoock and Van Goor, both leaving in 1638, and most notably Reneri (1639), Senguerd became full professor in 1638, and Daniel Berckringer took up moral philosophy in March 1640. The next year the Vroedschap appointed extra ordinem Jacobus Ravensberger and Paulus Voet, the former in mathematics but in 1644 also in philosophy (full), the latter, Voetius’ eldest son, in metaphysics (full professor in 1644), with additional lectures in Greek. Finally, Regius, at his own request, received permission to lecture on physics in 1640.

142 Resolutien, 145–146.
143 Acta, 202; Resolutien, 203–204. Henrick Moreelse (1615–1666), studied subsequently in Harderwijk, Utrecht and Leiden. His study tour in France brought him to Bourges, where he graduated in law. Before his appointment at the university, he was alderman (schepen) in his native city Utrecht. In 1652, he resigned from the university, and became member of the Utrecht Court of Justice. In 1661, he entered the Vroedschap and was elected Burgomaster from 1662 till 1664. BURMAN 1738, 231–234; NNBW, II, 941.
144 Resolutien, 127, 132.
145 WINNE 1888, 67; Resolutien, 248, 262. Ysbrand van Diemerbroeck (1609–1674) studied in Leiden and in France. In 1634, he graduated in philosophy and medicine in Angers. His medical dedication during the outbreak of plague in Nijmegen in 1635, yielded him the appointment as town physician. His being a Remonstrant did not interfere with his appointment in Utrecht (in 1649 extra ordinem, full professor in 1651). His major works are De peste libri iv (Arnhem: J. Iacobus, 1646), Anatome corporis humani (Utrecht 1672), and Opera omnia anatomica et medica (Utrecht: M. van Dreunen and G. van Walcheren, 1685). BURMAN 1738, 87–89; NNBW, III, 287–288; LINDEBOOM 1984, 440–442.
146 Resolutien, 136–137, 139. Before his appointment at Utrecht University, Daniel Berckringer (1598–1667) was governor at the Bohemian Court in The Hague. He received his doctoral degree in philosophy — necessary for lecturing at university — from the University of Groningen in April 1640 (the note to the entry in the Album, sine strepitu et pompa, is wrongly interpreted as ‘without being present’; the graduation was probably private. Cf. Album Stud. Acad. Gron., 446). In 1648, he started lecturing in eloquence as well. BURMAN 1738, 24–25; VAN DER AA, I, 110; DIBON 1954, 206–210.
149 See my commentary on it/d 12 below.