# Roger Ariew. Descartes and the First Cartesians.; Alexander X. Douglas. Spinoza and Dutch Cartesianism: Philosophy and Theology.

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could be gleaned by their intimate connection to the machines and processes that surrounded them and put those lessons to work by making them better. The fluid class boundaries and relative prosperity of eighteenth-century Britain provided fertile ground for such individuals to flourish. Russell follows Watt through this culture, watching him learn and make the connections that would make him successful as an inventor.

For the Victorian industrialists who benefited from his invention Watt was, of course, the perfect hero. He was heroic in the Smilesian self-help mode precisely because he came from humble origins. In this respect, at least, there is nothing new in the observation that the innovation that powered Victorian industrial supremacy came from below. It was a view of the world that suited the interests of nineteenth-century industrial masters very well indeed, since that was often how they saw themselves. Russell charts Watt's nineteenth-century afterlife to show how and why his posthumous image was put together. He shows how Watt himself ended up as a manufactured product.

There are points in the book, though, where the Silicon Valley vision of early modern British industrial culture that Russell offers becomes a little hard to swallow. The emphasis on practical knowledge and the agency of artful artisans is one that should be familiar to historians of science and technology by now, and Russell makes his argument convincingly. He has produced what is in many ways a compelling book that should be essential reading for anyone who is interested in investigating the origins of technological innovation. This only makes the almost entire absence of conflict in this story all the more surprising. Yes, Watt and others like him were artisans who made good—but where, in Russell's account, are the ones who didn't? We read very little here about the cultural conflict that accompanied the industrial innovation that Watt, Josiah Wedgwood, Matthew Boulton, and others spearheaded. The picture of early modern industrial life and rapid technological transformation offered here seems just a little bit too rosy. By leaving out the losers, there are times when Russell comes just a little too close to endorsing some very Victorian views about what made Watt special.

**Iwan Rhys Morus**

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**Roger Ariew.** *Descartes and the First Cartesians.* xix + 236 pp., bibl., index. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. £45 (cloth).

**Alexander X. Douglas.** *Spinoza and Dutch Cartesianism: Philosophy and Theology.* vii + 184 pp., bibl., index. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. £30 (cloth).

These two books both aim at reassessing Cartesian philosophy in light of the distinction between philosophy and theology. Rather than reading Descartes's or Spinoza's systems as isolated theoretical positions, they examine these figures' respective writings as specific dialogues with lesser-known thinkers on issues such as the relations between piety and natural science, natural theology and metaphysics, norms of conduct and rational conviction.

Roger Ariew examines how, within a few decades, Scholastic philosophy, the official doctrine still taught in French universities in the second half of the seventeenth century, was almost totally eclipsed from the intellectual landscape by Cartesianism. To understand how these "new" philosophers established themselves progressively, he analyzes the Cartesian *corpus* as an alternative to the Scholastic textbooks from the first half of the century. The three parts of *Descartes and the First Cartesians*, dealing successively with late Scholasticism, Descartes, and the Cartesians, are all divided into chapters on logic, ethics, physics, and metaphysics. Structuring his text in this way allows Ariew to account for the diversity of positions within each camp, both Scholastic and Cartesian, without obscuring the main thesis—namely, that the works inspired by Descartes's philosophy that rapidly replaced the Scholastic textbooks also cor-

rected Descartes and, most often, combined Descartes's philosophy with neo-Stoic (for moral philosophy) or neo-Scholastic (for logic) positions.

Alexander X. Douglas also adopts a comparative approach, situating Spinoza in his immediate historical context. Focusing on the Dutch conflict between theologians and philosophers, in *Spinoza and Dutch Cartesianism* he analyzes Spinoza's philosophy as a reply to the "separation thesis" developed by the Cartesians in reaction to the late Scholastics (Ch. 1): while the Cartesians stressed the independence of natural philosophy from theology in order to defend themselves from the charge of impiety (Ch. 2), Spinoza cast doubt on the possibility of maintaining a strict separation between philosophy and the "higher faculties" of theology, medicine, and jurisprudence. This basic argument provides the starting point for a reassessment of Spinoza's conception of divine power as developed in the *Metaphysical Thoughts* (Ch. 3); of his hermeneutic principle of *sola scriptura* in the *Theological-Political Treatise* (Ch. 4); and of the theory of ideas in the *Ethics* (Ch. 5). According to Douglas, "by denying the crucial distinction between will and intellect," Spinoza's *Ethics* weakened the Dutch Cartesian position according to which philosophical knowledge has no real implication for common-sense beliefs and practical life, so that the new natural philosophy presents no danger for religion (p. 112).

The two books are concerned with the same period, leading the reader from the seventeenth-century opposition between Scholasticism and Cartesianism to the eighteenth-century opposition between Cartesianism and Newtonianism. In both cases, historical reconstruction of institutional conflicts is combined with conceptual analysis of key texts. One can compare—even confront—the two books with regard to a number of shared concerns, issues such as the rejection of hylomorphism by Cartesian philosophers, the possibility and consequences of an *a priori* proof for the existence of God, the univocity of being, the definition of "second notions," or the important idea of "moral certainty." The presence of such common themes should, however, not overshadow the contrast between the methodologies and goals of the two authors. Douglas sees Scholasticism and Cartesianism as two separate camps, defending opposing views on the limits and role of philosophy. This approach enables him to highlight Spinoza's position as a third way. The historical positions that Douglas compares with Spinoza's are, however, reconstructed on the basis of only a few figures: Gisbertus Voetius and Antonius Deusing for the Dutch theologians; Johannes de Raey and Christophorus Wittich for the Dutch Cartesians. Moreover, along with the label "Dutch Cartesian," a good deal of the source material is borrowed from Theo Verbeek's well-known work on the "Quarrel of Utrecht." As for the Scholastic position, it is partly defined through the reading of Cartesians' contemporaries, partly reconstructed from the doctrines of Francesco Suarez, Duns Scotus, and Avicenna. Hence, the interest of Douglas's study lies less in its reconstruction of an intellectual landscape than in its original contribution to the interpretation of Spinoza's writings.

Ariew's book offers a completely different perspective on Descartes's historical context. Drawing on his extensive knowledge of both the source material and the existing commentaries, including the non-Anglophone ones, Ariew challenges three common historiographical assumptions: first, the notion that seventeenth-century Scholasticism reduced to a single view paradigmatically expressed in the writings of Thomas Aquinas or Duns Scotus; second, the notion that there existed a frontal opposition between the late Scholastics and the Cartesians; third, the notion that the scientific program developed by Descartes and the Cartesians was an attempt to "mathematize" nature (Edwin A. Burtt and Eduard J. Dijsktershuis are discussed on p. 132 ff.). To overcome such misconceptions he provides, for example, qualified accounts of Eustachius's metaphysics, Guillaume de Vair's moral philosophy, and Antoine Le Grand's logic, while also offering a reflection on the construction of labels such as "Thomist," "Scotist," and "Cartesian," be they polemically coined by seventeenth-century authors or imprecisely used by present-day commentators.

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