

# Descartes in the Classroom

*Teaching Cartesian Philosophy in the  
Early Modern Age*

*Edited by*

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# Cartesian and Anti-Cartesian Disputations and Corollaries at Utrecht University, 1650–1670

*Erik-Jan Bos*

## 1 Introduction

In a short article published in 1995, Koert Van der Horst, curator of manuscripts at Utrecht University Library from 1975 to 2007, describes the limited sources available for the study of the university curriculum at Utrecht in the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup> He points out that his library features just 33 Utrecht lecture notes from this period, one third being class notes from courses given by the professor of eloquence, Johannes Georgius Graevius (1632–1703). As to philosophy proper—all disciplines except Theology, Law and Medicine, belonged to the Faculty of Philosophy—there is only one such notebook dating to before 1675, a dictated commentary by Daniel Voet (1629–1660).<sup>2</sup> Van der Horst furthermore emphasizes that many of the publications by Utrecht professors on which they would often have built their lessons are not present in the university library and not even in other Dutch libraries. Finally, only a small number of the countless academic disputations have been preserved, and these are hard to find.

Since 1995, the situation has dramatically improved, primarily due to the internet. Nowadays books that once seemed rare or untraceable can be found and, in many cases, even downloaded in the blink of an eye. The same advantages exist for locating disputations, although this usually involves some more effort, because both the author and the title can be sources of confusion: for the former, is it the presiding professor or the student?; for the latter, is the name of the disputation series part of the title? As to student notebooks, a recent research project at KU Leuven and Radboud University Nijmegen promises to fill this gap in our knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Van der Horst, “De twee vroegste *Series lectionum*.”

<sup>2</sup> See below. Utrecht University Library owns over 2,000 lecture notes; see Van der Horst, *Catalogus*. See also Van der Horst, “Collegedictaten.” I thank Bart Jaski, curator of manuscripts, Utrecht University Library, for the information that there are no seventeenth-century lecture notes among the acquisitions since 1994.

<sup>3</sup> As part of the KU Leuven *Magister Dixit* Project, Davide Cellamare (Nijmegen) and Mattia

This chapter investigates the reception and teaching of Cartesianism at Utrecht University between 1650 and 1670, based upon the disputations for and against Descartes, with special attention to the corollaries. Corollaries, usually a list of short propositions below the text of the disputation, may relate to the topic discussed in the disputation but do not necessarily relate to the said topic. Sometimes they address contemporary issues in philosophy and science, such as the Copernican system, Harvey’s discovery of blood circulation, or Cartesian philosophy. Corollaries can supply information on current debates within the academy, even when the texts of the disputations themselves are silent on these topics.

According to Descartes’s classical biographer, Utrecht University was “born Cartesian”.<sup>4</sup> After the founding of the university in 1636, its first professor of philosophy was Henry Reneri (1593–1639), a close friend and follower of Descartes. Apparently, he discussed the *Discourse* and the *Essays* with his students, but his disputations show no trace of Cartesianism.<sup>5</sup> In stark contrast, his colleague Henricus Regius (1598–1679), professor of medicine since 1638, openly taught Descartes’s philosophy, and had it defended during ten public disputations in 1640 and 1641.<sup>6</sup> It elicited a hostile response not just from the theologians, as should be underscored, but also from professors of philosophy and medicine. The subsequent ban on Cartesian philosophy in 1642 and the censure directed at Regius seemed to smother the introduction of Descartes’s ideas at Utrecht University, but these were only temporary setbacks, for the New Philosophy made a resurgence in Utrecht disputations in the 1650s which culminated in the next decade.

The main characters to whom we will turn our attention are the Cartesian Johannes De Bruyn (1620–1675) and the neo-Aristotelian Daniel Voet. In the same Faculty of Philosophy, they both struggled, on the one hand, with the philosophical tradition and the regulations of the academic senate and the *Vroedschap*, and, on the other, with the startling discoveries in science and medicine, as well as the rise of Cartesianism. On top of that, being mutually antagonistic, they struggled against each other, with De Bruyn in an underdog position at first, because he faced an anti-Cartesian majority at the university, led by Gisbertus Voet (Voetius) and Voet’s sons Paul and Daniel.

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Mantovani (Leuven) are collecting and analysing the lecture notes by Cartesian professors in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic and Leuven University. At present, the only articles published on Dutch Cartesian lecture notes are Verbeek, “*Principia*,” and Cellamare, “A Theologian Teaching Descartes.”

4 Baillet, *Vie de Descartes*, vol. 2, 2.

5 On Reneri, see Buning, “Reneri.”

6 On Regius, see Clarke and Bos, “Regius,” with further references to secondary literature.

Before turning to the Utrecht disputations, some preliminary words are required on the main characters De Bruyn and Voet, and on the phenomenon of disputations and the university curriculum at Utrecht. After that, we will deal with the disputations and corollaries themselves.

## 2 Johannes De Bruyn and Daniel Voet

Johannes De Bruyn studied at the Illustrious School of 's-Hertogenbosch in the early 1640s. Here he defended theological disputations under Samuel Maresius (1599–1673), who later became professor of Theology at Groningen University, and philosophical disputations under Florentius Schuyf (1619–1669), who published the Latin translation of Descartes's *L'Homme* (*De homine*, 1662) and became professor of Medicine in Leiden.<sup>7</sup> In 1643 De Bruyn enrolled at Utrecht University, graduating in philosophy the next year. He then moved to Leiden to study theology. At the recommendation of his philosophy teacher in Utrecht, Jacob Ravensberg (1615–1650), he was appointed Ravensberg's successor and on 3 June 1652 was inaugurated professor *extra ordinem* to teach physics and mathematics. His first known disputation was held on 20 October 1652.<sup>8</sup> In March 1656 he became full professor. De Bruyn never published a textbook, and hence his disputations are an important source of his views and his philosophical development. Next to disputations, he published a defence of the Cartesian theory of light against Isaac Vossius (1618–1689) (*Epistola ad Vossium*, 1663), and a defence (*Defensio*, 1670) of Cartesian method and metaphysics against the attacks by a professor of Theology at 's-Hertogenbosch, Reinier Vogelsang (ca. 1610–1679).

Daniel Voet matriculated at Utrecht University in 1644, where his father occupied the first chair in theology and his brother a chair in philosophy.<sup>9</sup> He took his degree in philosophy at the University of Harderwijk (1648) and became Doctor of Medicine at the same university in 1651. On 9 February 1653, he inaugurated as professor *extra ordinem* at Utrecht to teach logic and metaphysics, replacing Paul Voet (who took up a chair in Law). His first known disputation was held on 29 June 1653. He became full professor in April 1656. Except

7 On De Bruyn, see Van Bunge, Krop, Leeuwenburgh, Van Ruler, Schuurman and Wielema, eds., *Dictionary*, vol. 1, 175–176; Sassen, *Studenten*, 32–34.

8 De Bruyn (praes.) and Taeispil (resp.), *Disputationum physicarum prima de philosophia in genere* (Utrecht, 20 October 1652), the first of eighteen *Disputationes physicae* (1652–1660).

9 On Daniel Voet, see Van Bunge, Krop, Leeuwenburgh, Van Ruler, Schuurman and Wielema, eds., *Dictionary*, vol. 2, 1028–1029, and Dieckhöfer, *Daniel Voet*.

for his (very!) many disputations, he did not publish anything during his lifetime. After his death, his father and brother published several of what appear to be notebooks that he used for his classes in metaphysics and physics, the most important one being *Physiologia*, which was reprinted several times. A heavily annotated edition by Gerard de Vries (1648–1705), professor of Logic and Metaphysics at Utrecht, appeared in 1678; a third and enlarged edition in 1688 (reprinted in 1694).<sup>10</sup> The *Physiologia* shows that although Voet had to teach metaphysics and logic, his real interest was in physics and medicine.

### 3 Disputations and the University Curriculum at Utrecht

Disputations played an important role in the academic curriculum.<sup>11</sup> Much more than the static performances on obligatory subjects that usually constituted public lectures, public disputations showcased the current interests of the professors, and were more often than not lively events. There were, generally speaking, two kinds of disputations: *pro gradu*, submitted in order to obtain a doctoral degree, and *exercitii gratia*, to practise the skills of students. The ordinary disputations were submitted *sub praesidio* of the student's professor, who drew up the texts and was responsible for its contents. Disputations that were part of a series, e.g., De Bruyn's *Disputationum physicarum primadecima-octava* (1652–1660), were always the intellectual work of the professor. In the first decades of Utrecht University, this kind of disputation was the most common one in the Faculties of Arts, Medicine and Theology. In case of disputations *pro gradu* or *inauguralis*, the candidate had to defend the theses, which, if he is mentioned as author, he had composed himself to a greater or lesser extent, but the professor's approval was still needed. A hybrid form also occurred from time to time, when, in a *sub praesidio* disputation, the student would describe himself on the dedication page as *author et respondens*. The examples I have seen are never part of a series of disputations, and are often

10 Utrecht University Library owns three notebooks (MSS. 716–718) dictated by de Vries on Daniel Voet's posthumous works.

11 For the phenomenon of Dutch academic disputations, see Dibon, *Enseignement philosophique*, 33–49; Ahsmann, *Collegia*, 274–341 (German translation: Ahsmann, *Collegium*). For an outline of the situation at Utrecht University between 1636 and 1815, see Kernkamp, *Utrechtse Academie*, 145–170. Dirk Van Miert wrote a fine article on the role of disputations at Dutch Illustrious Schools and universities and their value as a source for intellectual history, with references to recent literature: Van Miert, "Disputation Hall." In the three following paragraphs I largely follow the text from my doctoral dissertation, Bos, "Correspondence," li–lii.



longer than the standard eight or twelve pages, which fact suggests that (much of) the text was indeed devised by the student. The presiding professor was however still considered responsible for the contents.

At the end of the text of the disputation there was often some space left for corollaries, in most cases announced as ‘corollaries of the respondent.’ They offered the student the opportunity to personalise the disputation, because the texts they had to defend were normally those of the professor. Yet the professor remained accountable, and ordinarily would not allow corollaries expressing views contrary to his own.<sup>12</sup> Some corollaries to the disputations by Voet and De Bruyn reoccur over and over again, and I suppose that students from time to time just borrowed propositions from earlier disputations, which they themselves liked or which they knew would make for a lively debate, and perhaps the professor had a list of corollaries at hand.

Because no records were held of the senate’s meetings during the first five years, we have no detailed description of the rules on disputations in Utrecht.<sup>13</sup> In later years, the subject was brought up again in the *acta* of the senate and in the resolutions of the *Vroedschap*, which provide us with the following picture. Disputations *pro gradu* took place in the Dom Church, in public and *sine praesidio*, that is, without a presiding professor who might come to the rescue. A *moderator*, either the rector or the promotor, supervised the proceedings. These inaugural disputations began at nine o’clock, and lasted until ten or a quarter past ten. Students took care of the first round of opposition, followed by the graduates. Priority was given to those in whose faculty the graduation took place.<sup>14</sup> Disputations *sub praesidio* were submitted in one of the auditoria. Theological disputations were scheduled on Saturdays, juridical and medical disputations on Wednesdays, and philosophical disputations took place on Wednesdays or Saturdays. There were to be no two disputations at the same time, unless they were juridical and medical. Disputations should be announced two weeks in advance to the rector. Of each disputation, 200 copies were printed; the printer should distribute 130 among the students, the *praeses* received 20 copies, the respondent 30, and the beadle

12 Rienk Vermij noted a corollary to one of De Bruyn’s disputations defending that “it is taught in Holy Scripture that the stars are rotating all round, and the earth is resting in the centre.” De Bruyn (praes.) and Shephard (resp.), *Disputationis physicae de alitura pars quinta* (Utrecht, 22 September 1660). The respondent, Nicolaus Shephard, remarked that he added the corollary “with kind permission of the President, who upholds the opposite.” Vermij, *Calvinist Copernicans*, 172.

13 Kernkamp, *Acta*, 102.

14 Wijnne, *Resolutiën*, 58–59, 64; Kernkamp, *Acta*, 160, 174, 220, 241, 526.

(*pedellus*) delivered the remaining 30 copies to the professors and members of the *Vroedschap*. The copies should be ready three days in advance, and the registrar would nail the title pages *ad valvas academiae*. The professors could publish up to ten disputations of eight pages at the expense of the municipality.<sup>15</sup> For the professors in theology and philosophy, this number was raised to twelve in August 1655, and to fourteen disputations of twelve pages in February 1669.<sup>16</sup>

Despite regulations on the ways in which a disputation should be conducted, it was more often than not a noisy happening. In 1648, the Leiden professor Adriaan Heereboord (1613–1661) stated that during a disputation the public should not “shout, laugh, pull faces, bleat, whistle, stamp, or make fun of the proceedings,” which implies that this kind of behaviour was in fact the order of the day.<sup>17</sup> Both the Utrecht municipality and the senate tried to suppress any mischief by imposing restrictions—for example, no drinking before a disputation, or no arms in the classroom—and in 1661 they even decided to place a fence around the respondent’s chair to prevent serious misconduct.

#### 4 Philosophy in the *Series lectionum* of 1656, 1659, 1663, 1668, and 1672

In 1995 Van der Horst made a most welcome addition to the limited sources available at the time: two *series lectionum* from the seventeenth century, the first ever to resurface from this period.<sup>18</sup> The first *series* gives the programme for the second semester (February to July) of 1656, the second *series* for the second semester of 1672. They show that professors were required to lecture in public four times per week. The philosophers lectured on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and held their private courses and disputations on Wednesday and Saturday. Typical for Utrecht, apparently, are the details supplied on private courses. We highlight below the information that these *series lectionum* provide regarding the philosophy professors, and we offer information about three additional *series lectionum* (1659, 1663, and 1668).

15 Wijnne, *Resolutiën*, 58; Kernkamp, *Acta*, 177–178, 220.

16 Wijnne, *Resolutiën*, 84; Kernkamp, *Acta*, 337; Wijnne, *Resolutiën*, 105; Kernkamp, *Acta*, 479.

17 Heereboord, *Sermo*; cited from Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch*, 65. On Heereboord, see Chapters 2 and 3, in this volume.

18 Van der Horst, “De twee vroegste *Series lectionum*.”

#### 4.1 *Second Semester, 1656*

Public lectures: De Bruyn will teach physics on Monday and Tuesday; on Thursday and Friday he will teach astronomy using Willem Blaeu's *Institutio astronomica* (Amsterdam, 1634; many reprints during the seventeenth century). Voet will teach logic on Monday and Friday, metaphysics on Wednesday and Saturday. Private courses: these are listed in the second section of the *series*, headed by the somewhat misleading title *Exercitia publica et privata*. Whereas this section contains many details regarding the theological programme, as to philosophy they merely state that disputations will be held on Wednesday and Saturday, and the courses in logic, metaphysics, physics, mathematics and ethics will be continued.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4.2 *Second Semester, 1659*

The *series lectionum* of the second semester of 1659 is lost, but the acts of the university senate and the Reformed Church council offer interesting information. In February 1659, Paul Voet called for a meeting of the senate, because of De Bruyn's announcement on the published curriculum (*series lectionum*) for the second semester to teach Descartes's *Meteors* and *Passions of the Soul*. Paul Voet strongly objected, pointing to the university decree banning the philosophy of Descartes. De Bruyn, however, did not give in, and even refused to accept the suggestion at least not to mention Descartes's name. The senate decided to inform the *Vroedschap*, but the burgomaster responsible for academic affairs, took the rector aside for a moment, urging him not to consult the *Vroedschap*, but to again warn De Bruyn not to mention Descartes by name.<sup>20</sup> The appearance of Descartes's name and works on the *series lectionum* was also discussed in a meeting of the Reformed Church council in March 1659. The council appointed a committee to take the matter up with the *Vroedschap*. A week later they reported back that the burgomasters had already talked to De Bruyn, who had promised not to mention Descartes's name anymore unless with the *Vroedschap*'s consent. To one of the members of the council—possibly

19 Van der Horst supposes that the lecture notes of Daniel Voet were written in this period (MS., Utrecht, MS. 715). These lecture notes, written by the student Johannes Rauwers, who matriculated in February 1655, bear the title "Dictata in Phisicam Senguerdi[i]," a commentary on Arnoldus Senguerdius's *Introductio ad physicam libri sex* (Amsterdam, 1653). See Van der Horst, "De twee vroegste *Series lectionum*," 272. Rauwers acted as respondent in a disputation by Voet in 1657; Daniel Voet (praes.) and Rauwers (resp.), *Disputationis metaphysicae, de formali ratione libertatis pars quarta* (1657), at the University Library Edinburgh. That Voet did not confine his teaching to logic and metaphysics is clear from his disputations: in 1654 and 1655 he held various disputations on vacuum, motion, and gravity.

20 Kernkamp, *Acta*, 336–337; cf. De Vrijer, *Regius*, 47.

Voetius, who in his capacity as minister also sat in the council—the burgo-masters ensured De Bruyn would not get permission to do so. In February the following year, a burgomaster informed the church council that he would see to it that the upcoming *series lectionum* did not mention a course on any of Descartes's writings.<sup>21</sup> We may conclude that as long as De Bruyn did not explicitly mention Descartes's name or his writings, he could discuss and teach Cartesian philosophy.

#### 4.3 *First Semester, 1663*

To the copies published by Van der Horst we can add a third *series lectionum*: the English naturalist John Ray (1627–1705) visited Utrecht and copied the programme of the first semester of 1663 in his travel journal. Unfortunately, he only mentions the public lectures.<sup>22</sup> Public lectures: Regnerus Van Mansvelt—a Cartesian who succeeded Daniel Voet in 1660<sup>23</sup>—will teach logic and metaphysical questions on Monday and Tuesday, on Thursday and Friday he will teach natural theology. De Bruyn lectures on physics on Monday and Tuesday, on Thursday and Friday he will continue his explanation of the foundations of mechanics.

#### 4.4 *Second Semester, 1668*

The reverse situation of March 1659 occurred in March 1668. The professors of philosophy protested against the announcement in the *series lectionem* by the theological professors to submit disputations on 'theologico-philosophical' subjects. The senate being divided, the question was put before the burgomasters, who subsequently agreed with the philosophers, forbidding the theologians to touch upon philosophical matters.<sup>24</sup>

21 *Het Utrechts Archief*, 746: Kerkeraad van de Nederlandse Hervormde gemeente te Utrecht, Acta 1658 mei–1660 oktober. (The dates of meetings mentioned are 21 and 28 March 1659, and 13 February 1660).

22 Ray, *Observations* (London, 1673), 45–47.

23 Regnerus Van Mansvelt (1639–1671) studied in Leiden and in his hometown of Utrecht. He defended philosophical theses under Daniel Voet—Daniel Voet (praes.) and Van Mansvelt (resp.), *Disputatio philosophica continens quaestiones illustres philosophicas* (Utrecht, 1656); British Library (536.e.12.(25), not seen by me)—and theological theses under Gisbertus Voet. He took his degree in philosophy with Daniel Voet in September 1658; *Album promotorum*, 14. Like De Bruyn, he was a staunch proponent of Cartesianism and wrote a confutation of Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, and he was involved in a polemic with Maresius concerning the latter's *De abusu philosophiae Cartesianae* (Groningen, 1670). See Van Bunge, Krop, Leeuwenburgh, Van Ruler, Schuurman and Wielema, eds., *Dictionary*, vol. 2, 672–674.

24 Kernkamp, *Acta*, 465–466; cf. De Vrijer, *Regius*, 60.

#### 4.5 *Second Semester, 1672*

De Bruyn lectures on physics on Monday and Tuesday, and on Thursday and Friday he explains the principles of astronomy. There are no public lectures in logic and metaphysics; Van Mansveld died in May 1671, and his chair remained vacant until de Vries's appointment in 1674. The deficiency is however remedied by De Bruyn in his private courses, who will teach in every philosophical discipline: logic, metaphysics, pneumatica, mathematics, physics, ethics, and politics, and he will read Grotius's *De iure belli ac pacis* (1625), and other authors at the request of the students. Significant for the history of the teaching of Cartesianism is the announcement of a public *Philosophicum Collegium Disputantium* on the *Principles of philosophy* of Descartes. This is a clear sign that the teaching of Descartes at Utrecht University had reached its summit. Decline was imminent, however: de Vries was a vehement anti-Cartesian, and De Bruyn's successor, Johannes Luyts, was no less opposed to Cartesianism.<sup>25</sup>

### 5 Resurfacing Disputations by De Bruyn and Voet

A stupendous number of disputations has been preserved in libraries all over Europe and North America, but, as Van der Horst pointed out, in 1995 it was still difficult to find them.<sup>26</sup> Disputations could be catalogued under the name of the student instead of that of the professor; disputations collected in a single volume received a general title (e.g., 'Dutch disputations, 1642–1674'), or they simply remained uncatalogued. In this respect, much progress has been made over the last decades: library catalogues have become accessible online, and many libraries have started to catalogue their disputations properly. Moreover, libraries have begun to digitise less attractive items, such as disputations, and to make them freely available on the internet. This enterprise was boosted by Google Books, digitising indiscriminately whatever is on the shelves of important libraries.

Thanks to these efforts, I was able to download no less than 89 disputations by Johannes De Bruyn, ranging from 1652, the year he was appointed professor of philosophy at Utrecht University, until 1670, five years before his death. All

<sup>25</sup> For de Vries, see Chapters 9 and 10, in this volume.

<sup>26</sup> When Van der Horst indicated that only a small number of the countless academic disputations have been preserved, he presumably referred to the disputations preserved in Dutch libraries. It is a fact that many Dutch disputations are owned by libraries outside the Netherlands, due, probably, to foreign students collecting and cherishing these rare imprints.

89 disputations come from the same collection in the Austrian National Library.<sup>27</sup> The British Library has 22 disputations defended under De Bruyn, which are all present in the Austrian collection as well. The Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin has 27 disputations by De Bruyn, one of which is not found anywhere else but which I, unfortunately, was unable to consult.<sup>28</sup> In contrast to these repositories, the Dutch libraries are quite poorly endowed: according to the *Short Title Catalogue Netherlands* the university libraries of Leiden and Utrecht have two disputations by De Bruyn apiece.

Is the number of 90 disputations close to the total number of disputations over which De Bruyn presided? Presumably not, because a philosophy professor at Utrecht could publish ten to fourteen disputations a year at the expense of the municipality (see above); De Bruyn, having taught at the university for more than 20 years, might, in principle, have delivered around 250 disputations. The 90 disputations we have so far cover the years 1652–1670; disregarding the last five years, we would still expect there to have been twice as much disputations as we presently have. As is shown in Figure 7.1 below, the distribution of the 90 disputations is uneven. There is a serious falling off in the number of disputations available from the years between 1658 and 1662, with each year having just three disputations or less (just one disputation in 1659 and 1661). During the last two years, 1669 and 1670, there is a decline in the number again. I have not found an explanation for these low numbers. Koert Van der Horst points out that a sharp decline in student numbers occurred between 1657 and 1662: the *Album studiosorum* lists just sixteen matriculations for 1657, whereas the yearly average for the previous five years was close to 200.<sup>29</sup> Despite this decline, no concerns about dramatically low student numbers are voiced in the acts of the senate or in the resolutions of the *Vroedschap*, and numbers of matriculations moreover seemed to surge back to normal levels shortly thereafter. In March 1661 the rector noted that during the last year (March 1660–March 1661) the university saw a record in the number of graduations.<sup>30</sup> In his history of Utrecht University, Kernkamp supplies the

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27 Monika Kiegler-Griensteidl, specialist in manuscripts and rare books at the Austrian National Library, kindly informed me that these disputations are part of the library's historical holdings, which means they most likely came to the library close to the time they were published. The exact provenance, however, is unclear.

28 De Bruyn (praes.) and Van Rhee (resp.), *Disputatio philosophiae aliquot nobilissimae materiae ex physica et mathesi selectae continens* (Utrecht, 11 December 1661). Cf. Hoogendoorn, *Bibliography*, 760.

29 Van der Horst, "De twee vroegste *Series lectionum*," 261, n. 1.

30 Kernkamp, *Acta*, 349. Between March 1660 and March 1661, 30 graduations took place.

explanation: early in 1657, the *Vroedschap* revoked the tax exemption on beer and wine for students as fraud had risen to unprecedented levels. As a result, weighing the costs, many students decided not to pay the registration fee.<sup>31</sup> And indeed, in 1660 and 1662 we encounter several students who defended theses without being registered in the album.<sup>32</sup>

Returning to the question of the number of De Bruyn's disputations, the acts of the senate mention no absence or illness of De Bruyn, nor of any other circumstance that may explain the low amount of disputations during 1658–1662 and 1669–1670. It thus seems safe to say that there must have been more disputations, although it is impossible to give an estimation of how many were lost or may yet resurface.<sup>33</sup>

The New College Library of Edinburgh University owns a collection of 78 disputations by Daniel Voet, ranging from 1655 to 1660. I was able to acquire copies of 24 disputations.<sup>34</sup> Other libraries have seven disputations that are not found in Edinburgh.<sup>35</sup> To these 85 disputations that have survived in their original format, we can add 26 disputations of which the original publication is missing so far, but which are reprinted in Voet's posthumous works.<sup>36</sup> The reprinted text supplies the date of the disputation and the name of the student, but corollaries are omitted. The total number of known disputations by Voet is then 111, which is much more than the 90 or so disputations the municipality would have paid for; who it was that took charge of these additional expenses remains unclear.

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31 Kernkamp, *Utrechtsche Academie*, 86–90.

32 Christiaan Melder, who became professor of mathematics at Leiden University, acted as a *respondens* in disputations by both De Bruyn, and Voet in 1660. Petrus Clerquius and Martinus Martens for De Bruyn, in resp. 1660 and 1662.

33 One possible way to shed light on the question is the study of the expense accounts of the town treasurer who paid out the university printers. Cf. Monna, "Gedichten," 260.

34 I thank Denise Anderson (Curatorial Assistant, Special Collections), and Elizabeth Quarmby Lawrence (Rare Books Librarian) at the Centre for Research Collections, Edinburgh University Library, for their kind assistance and information.

35 The British Library has nine disputations by Daniel Voet, four of which are not present in Edinburgh. The Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin has a single disputation, not available in Edinburgh. The Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek at Weimar, and the Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn both have a unique disputation as well. The Austrian National Library appears to have no disputations by Voet, nor does any Dutch library, according to *Short Title Catalogue Netherlands*.

36 These disputations are found in Daniel Voet, *Physiologia*, edited by Paul Voet (adding 14 disputations of his own), and *Compendium pneumaticae*, edited by Gisbertus Voet. More disputations are to be found in an extremely rare work, of which only one copy (not seen by me) seems to survive in the Bibliothèque publique et universitaire de Neuchâtel: *Meletemata philosophica*.

Finally, Aza Goudriaan (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) has been so kind as to provide me with a reproduction of 19 disputations by Andreas Essenius (1618–1677), professor of theology at Utrecht from 1653 to 1677.<sup>37</sup>

## 6 What Is Cartesian or Anti-Cartesian?

Before turning to the data-analysis of the Utrecht disputations and their corollaries, and investigating to what extent they were either Cartesian or anti-Cartesian, some remarks are in order as to what exactly defines these texts as either Cartesian or anti-Cartesian? Obviously, there is no clear-cut answer to that question, although the matter is somewhat more straightforward in those instances where Descartes is mentioned by name. Some examples of such corollaries are:

Does Descartes offer a valid proof of the equality of the angle of incidence and reflection? Denied.

Whether we have a clear and distinct idea of God, in the way Descartes explains it? Affirmed.

That Cartesian doubt is legitimate and does not lead to atheism has been proven very often in the disputations of our presiding professor.<sup>38</sup>

Very similar corollaries can be found where the only difference is that Descartes's name is not mentioned, but where the determination as to the category in which they belong is, again, simple:

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37 Essenius (praes.), *Disputationis practicae de conscientia [pars prima-decima nona]* (Utrecht, 1666–1668). The original disputations are kept at Pitts Theology Library, Emory University, Atlanta.

38 Daniel Voet (praes.) and Ketelaer (resp.), *Disputationum selectarum octava continens quaestiones duas de evidentia et certitudine pars tertia* (Utrecht, 23 February 1656): “An bene demonstrat Cartesius aequalitatem anguli incidentiae et reflexionis? Neg.”; De Bruyn (praes.) and Van Swanevelt (resp.), *Disputatio philosophica de libero hominis arbitrio* (Utrecht, 25 April 1657): “Num Dei in nobis sit quaedam idea clara, et distincta, ut Cartesius explicat? Aff.”; De Bruyn (praes.) and Witkint (resp.), *Disputationum physicarum decima-quinta de motu pars sexta* (Utrecht, 6 November 1658): “Dubitationem Cartesianam legitimam est neque ducere ad Atheismum sapissime in disputationibus D.C. Viri praesidis demonstratum est.”



Can doubt be a metaphysical principle? Denied.

The axiom saying that we must doubt everything until we find principles that are certain, does not pave the way to atheism but rather to wisdom.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, any corollary advancing the method of doubt, or claiming that animal behaviour is automatic, that we have an innate idea of God, or that the essence of the soul is thought—in short, hardcore Cartesian propositions, or their opposites—pose no problem. As we may assume that any student of philosophy in the 1650s would be well aware with whom to connect the concept of ‘doubt,’ we can predicate ‘Cartesian’ to any corollary speaking about doubt even when it sounds innocent enough, such as in “A learned man doubts anything of which he is not most certain.”<sup>40</sup>

“Atoms exist” (*Dantur atomi*); is that an anti-Cartesian statement? Descartes denied the possibility of atoms, and he was upset by the accusation that he was an atomist, but it is a corollary that is found several times in De Bruyn’s early disputations. De Bruyn, defended atomism in various disputations during the mid-1650s, but from 1658 onwards the contrary corollary is seen: “There are no atoms,” indicating De Bruyn had abandoned the idea of atomism. In any case, I do not count the corollary “Atoms exist” as anti-Cartesian.

Many corollaries are of course neither Cartesian nor anti-Cartesian, like “The Moon does not produce light,” and so on. However, when going over the numerous corollaries, it might be easy to miss specific Cartesian or anti-Cartesian statements. Contrary corollaries are a strong indication that something of that binary dynamic is at hand. Take for example the contrary corollaries “There is only one world” and “It is not contradictory that there is more than one world,” seen in various disputations in the 1650s. The thesis that only one world or universe exists, is not a very well-known Cartesian statement, but Descartes did make that claim in his *Principles of Philosophy* (II 22). For this particular corollary and several others, a curious work by Essenius, published under

39 Daniel Voet (praes.) and Vossius (resp.), *Disputationum selectarum sexta continens quaestiones duas de evidentia et certitudine pars prior* (Utrecht, 1 December 1655): “An dubitatio possit esse principium metaphysicum? N.”; De Bruyn (praes.) and Michielzon (resp.), *Disputatio physica de mari* (Utrecht, 14 May 1656): “Axioma quod dicit de omnibus esse dubitandum, donec certa principia invenimus, non sternit viam ad Atheismum sed potius ad sapientiam.”

40 De Bruyn (praes.) and Camp (resp.), *Disputationum physicarum septima de corporis loco et modo existendi in loco* (Utrecht, 14 December 1655): “Viri docti est de quacunque re dubitare, quarum certissimam cognitionem non habet.”

a pseudonym in 1656, is a convenient tool. The *Specimen of Cartesian philosophy expressed in several theses* lists 52 Cartesian propositions followed by the remark “Denied.”<sup>41</sup> Remarkably, the propositions are not followed by their refutation, but by quotations from Descartes’s works and letters where he made these claims. Presumably the intent here was to muster the students with the material to rebuke any proponent claiming Descartes had not said it as such or was misinterpreted.

Essenius’s compilation also helps to identify De Bruyn’s earliest disputation expressing core views of Descartes’s philosophy. It lists as proposition 29: “Are there three classes of matter, as three elements of the world?” which view De Bruyn defended in his disputation of 14 May 1653 (thesis iv).<sup>42</sup> A closer study of his pre-1656 disputations may yield more Cartesian-inspired views.

## 7 De Bruyn’s Cartesian Disputations and Corollaries in Numbers

The next four figures display the number of disputations submitted by De Bruyn and Voet per year. Additional information, such as the numbers of Cartesian or anti-Cartesian disputations among them, is visible in the columns. Every chart is followed by an explanation and an analysis.

Figure 7.1 shows how the 90 disputations by De Bruyn are distributed over the years 1652–1670. The vertical extent of the year columns gives the number of disputations that year, which number is also seen inside the column. Columns in blue denote ‘neutral’ disputations, that is without clearly recognisable Cartesian content; columns in orange indicate the number of disputations that do have Cartesian content. In 1652 De Bruyn submitted six disputations that were neutral with regard to Cartesian philosophy; in 1667 nine of the disputations defended by his students were clearly Cartesian. When a column is divided into both blue and orange sections, the total height is the sum total of disputations that year, and each coloured part has a number corresponding to the disputation type. 1656, for example, knew five neutral disputations and three Cartesian disputations. The grey column of 1661 represents the one disputation I have not seen; as I have explained above, it is the only known disputation from that year.

41 [Essenius], *Specimen philosophiae cartesianae, thesibus aliquot expressum* (Utrecht, 1656). The proposition “An proinde nec plures mundi esse possint?” is found on p. 19.

42 “An sint tria genera materiae; ut tria mundi elementa? Neg.”; [Essenius], *Specimen*, 15, referring to Descartes’s *Principia* III 52, AT VIII-A 105. See also Vermij, *Calvinist Copernicans*, 169–171, discussing De Bruyn’s disputations and corollaries regarding heliocentrism.

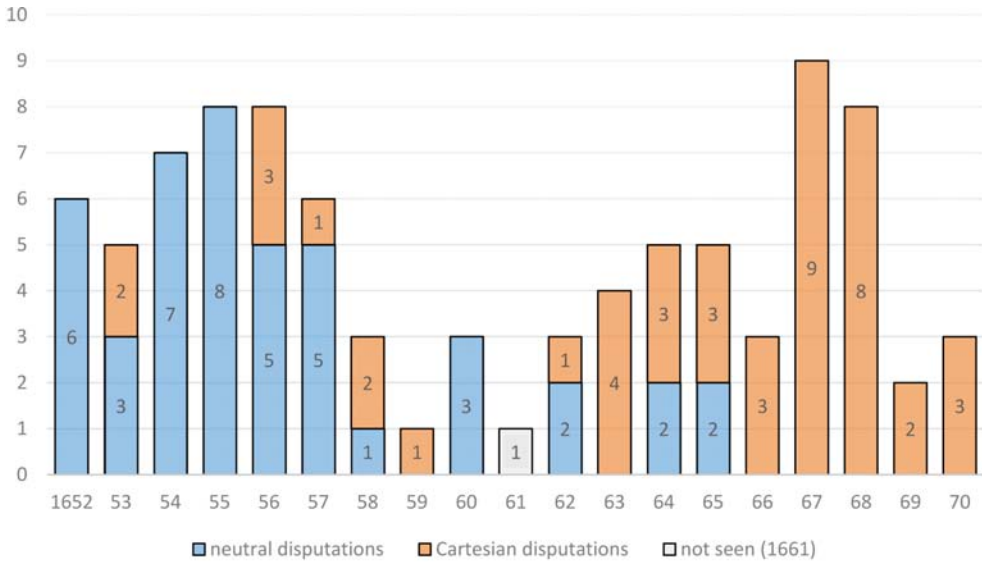


FIGURE 7.1 Disputations by De Bruyn,

Of the total of 89 disputations that were seen, 45 can be labelled Cartesian (51 per cent). De Bruyn's first Cartesian disputation was defended by Gerard Bornius on 14 May 1653. Gerard Bornius was a brother of Henricus Bornius (1617–1675), professor of philosophy at the Illustrious School of Breda (1646) and at Leiden University (1651). In *De mundo* the student explained that the universe consists of three types of matter: that of the Sun and the stars, that of the Earth, the planets and moons, and finally the aether that fills the space between these bodies. A son of Gisbertus Voetius, Nicolaas, one of Gerard's fellow-students in theology, adorned the disputation with a laudatory poem. In the second Cartesian disputation, on 10 December 1653 (first part), a student proposed that we must, for "once" (*semel*), ascertain ourselves of the foundations of philosophy, and call into doubt everything of which we do not have certain knowledge (theses IX and X).<sup>43</sup> Undeniably Cartesian as this sounds, it paves the way not for a Cartesian physics, but for an atomist worldview.<sup>44</sup> This eclectic approach may to some extent account for the fact that, in the

43 A clear reference to the opening sentences of Descartes's *Principia philosophiae* (1644), AT VIII-A 5, CSMK I 193: "It seems that the only way of freeing ourselves from these opinions is to make the effort, once in the course of our life [*semel in vita*], to doubt everything which we find to contain even the smallest suspicion of uncertainty." The expression is also found in the *Mediationes* (1641), AT VII 17, CSM II 12.

44 I will deal with De Bruyn's atomism in a future article.

subsequent two years, no overtly Cartesian ideas are found in De Bruyn's disputations. In 1656 three Cartesian disputations were submitted, the first having the same contents as the disputation defended by Bornius in 1653 (19 April 1656), the second on the tides (14 May 1656), and finally, the third disputation (2 July 1656) which happens to be the first in which Descartes's name is mentioned in the text.<sup>45</sup> In defence of the Cartesian philosophical method, it offers a long quote from Descartes's *Notae in programma quoddam* (1648) that fills almost an entire page.<sup>46</sup>

I have already discussed the uneven distribution of the occurrence of De Bruyn's disputations, for which I found no explanation. It seems likely that there were more disputations during the years 1658–1662 and 1669–1670, some of which may yet resurface. While De Bruyn did encounter opposition to his plan in February and March 1659 to discuss Descartes's *Meteors* and *Passions of the Soul* (and presumably to deal with them in disputations), it appears that he was authorized to continue if he refrained from mentioning Descartes by name. In the 25 disputations from 1655–1658, Descartes is mentioned just five times within the texts and/or corollaries. The first reoccurrence after 1658 is in 1662, so De Bruyn did, for the time being, comply with the demands of the senate and the church council. Remarkably, Descartes's name never appears in any disputations or corollaries between the years 1668–1670.

From 1662 onwards, the majority of the disputations—and during the five years up to 1670, all disputations—are strongly Cartesian. Whereas De Bruyn had previously been the only Cartesian professor among five opponents of Cartesianism (Voetius, Daniel and Paul Voet, Johannes Hoornbeeck, Andreas Essenius, and Matthias Nethenus), the Cartesians won ground in the 1660s: first

45 De Bruyn (praes.) and Van Swanevelt (resp.), *Disputatio philosophica miscellanea* (Utrecht, 2 July 1656). The respondent dedicated the disputation to Adriaan Heereboord. Swanevelt also defended theses of De Bruyn in 1655, dedicated to De Bruyn and the Amsterdam professors Arnoldus Senguerd and Alexander de Bie, and in 1657, dedicated exclusively to Jan Amos Comenius: De Bruyn (praes.) and Van Swanevelt (resp.), *Disputationum physicarum quarta de corporis divisibilitate* (Utrecht, 13 October 1655); De Bruyn (praes.) and Van Swanevelt (resp.), *Disputatio philosophica de libero hominis arbitrio* (Utrecht, 25 April 1657).

46 Descartes, *Notae in programma quoddam*, AT VIII-B 367–368, CSMK I 309, starting with “Secondly, I have never even taught that ‘God is to be denied, or that he can deceive us, or that everything should be doubted, or that we should entirely withdraw our confidence in the senses, or that we should not distinguish between being asleep and being awake’, and other things of that sort—doctrines of which I am sometimes accused by ignorant detractors. I have explicitly disavowed all such views, and refuted them with very strong arguments—stronger, I venture to add, than any that anyone before me has employed in refuting them.”

in the Faculty of Philosophy with the appointments of Van Mansvelt in 1660 and Graevius the next year, and with the appointments in Theology of Franciscus Burman (1628–1679) in 1662 and Louis Wolzogen (1633–1690) in 1664. The number of opponents was reduced to three: Voetius, Essenius, and Paul Voet. The other professor of Theology, Johannes Leusden (1624–1699), often sided with Voetius.

In the mid-1660s the Cartesian professors began to meet weekly, joined by the well-known Utrecht physician, philosopher and theologian Lambertus Van Velthuysen (1622–1685). This scholarly society, nicknamed the ‘College of savants’, discussed scientific and philosophical topics, and promoted Cartesian philosophy.<sup>47</sup> They will have also undoubtedly discussed all of the latest academic turmoil arising from the disputations. Three students were also alleged members of the society: Johannes Fuyck (1647–1703), who defended a disputation for De Bruyn on 18 May 1667, Antonius Van Schayck (d. 1714), respondent during three disputations of De Bruyn (15 December 1666, 27 April 1667, and 3 October 1668), and a further student for whom we have no further details of identification beyond the fact that he was named Specht.

Figure 7.2 shows the number of De Bruyn’s disputations that have ‘neutral’ and/or Cartesian corollaries. Columns that are (partially) blue denote disputations with ‘neutral’ corollaries (without clearly recognisable Cartesian content), (partially) orange columns indicate the number of disputations having Cartesian corollaries. In 1656, for example, De Bruyn submitted four disputations with neutral corollaries and four disputations with one or more Cartesian corollaries. The grey column of 1661 represents the disputation I have not seen (see above).

Of the total of 89 disputations that were seen, 56 have one or more Cartesian corollaries (63 per cent). The first disputation having a striking Cartesian corollary was defended on 12 October 1653 (“A wise man doubts anything, until he has found principles that are certain, which establish its truth”).<sup>48</sup> This recourse to the method of doubt in a corollary precedes by two months the first occurrence of such an appeal in the text of a disputation (10 December 1653).

All disputations after 1661 have Cartesian corollaries, each successively bolder than the one before. They testify that at Utrecht University in the 1660s, the prevailing attitudes had changed in favour of Descartes. One disputation

47 On the College of Savants, see the definitive article by Gootjes, “*Collegie der Sçavanten*.”

48 De Bruyn (praes.) and Van Sypesteyn (resp.), *Diputatio physica de causis descensus gravium* (Utrecht, 12 October 1653): “Viri prudentis est de quâcunque re dubitare, donec certa principia invenerit, quibus veritas ejus innititur.”

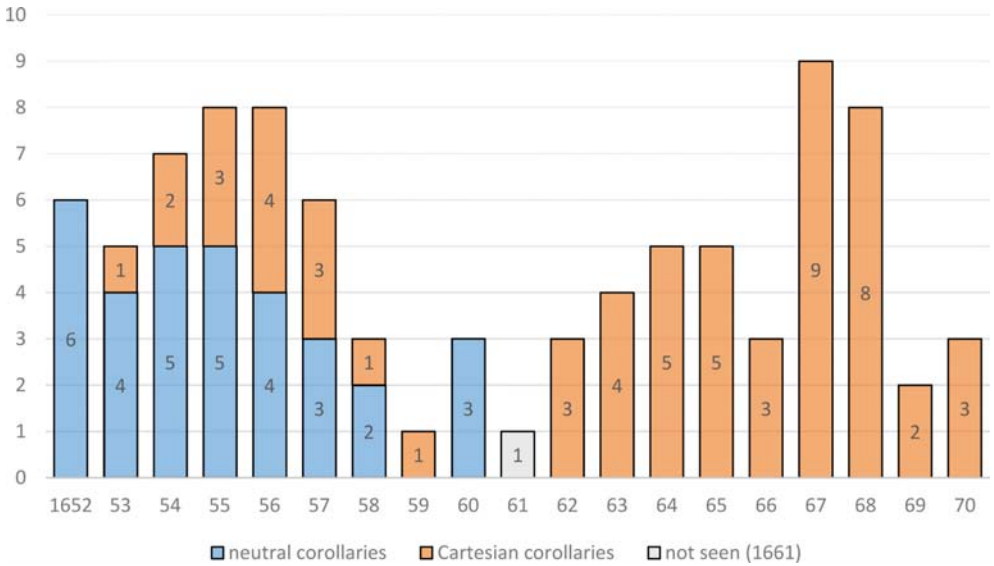


FIGURE 7.2 Corollaries to De Bruyn’s disputations

from 1665 stands out, however, for being neither overtly Cartesian, nor having overtly Cartesian corollaries. It was defended by Thomas Bolwerck (1645–1711), who dedicated the disputation exclusively to Arnold Senguerd (1610–1667), an Aristotelian philosopher who had taught at Utrecht University but moved to the Athenaeum Illustre in Amsterdam in 1648. Bolwerck, born in Amsterdam, honours his former professor, who was also his uncle.<sup>49</sup>

### 8 Voet’s Anti-Cartesian Disputations and Corollaries in Numbers

We now turn to the disputations by Daniel Voet. During the eight years of his professorship, he submitted at least 111 disputations, of which 85 survive in their original format, and 26 are known via their reprints in posthumous publications. I was able to consult 24 of the surviving disputations; three disputations

49 De Bruyn (praes.) and Bolwerck (resp.), *Disputatio physica de specialibus quibusdam motus effectibus* (Utrecht, 7 June 1665). The first corollary, “Caelum non esse animatum, nec ejus materia a sublunari distincta,” can be labelled Cartesian, but compared to the far more candidly Cartesian corollaries in the other disputations at the time, the labelling as such seems quite tenuous. Bolwerck defended a disputation under Essenius (*De conscientia pars quarta*, Utrecht, 1666), with the same dedication to Senguerd. Bolwerck became minister in Beusichem.

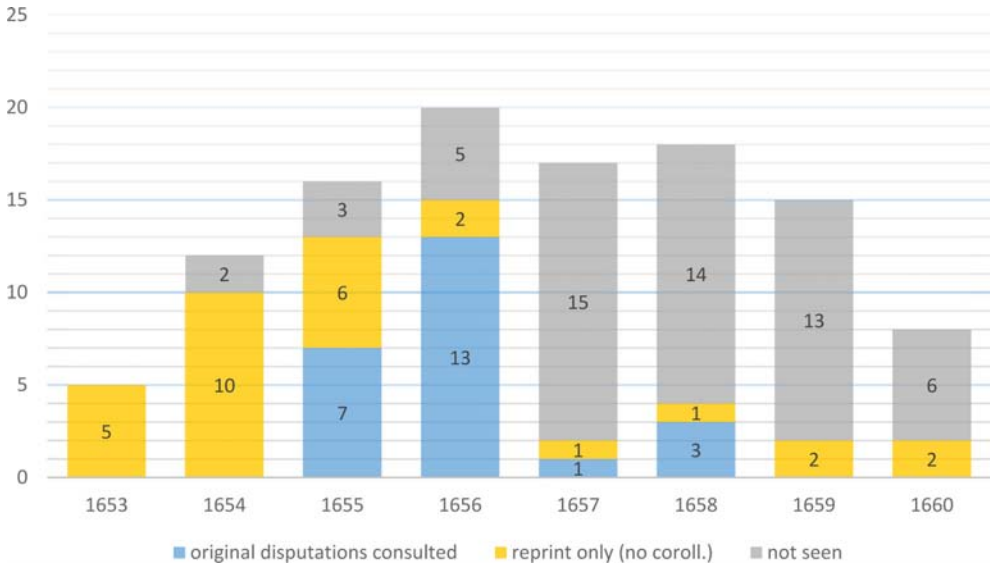


FIGURE 7.3 Disputations by Voet

that survive, but which I could not consult, are available as reprints; adding to these the 26 disputations solely known as reprint, we arrive at 53 out of 111 disputations (48 per cent), which I was able to access. This entails that no firm conclusions can be drawn, and that any interpretation remains provisory.

Figure 7.3 shows how the disputations by Voet are distributed over the years 1653–1660. The original disputations I have seen are coloured blue, those I have not seen are coloured grey. The reprinted disputations are in yellow, including the three disputations that were available to me in reprint (1654: 1; 1656: 2), while their original imprint is kept in New College Library, Edinburgh. One further caveat has to be made: the series *Disputationes ex theologia naturali selectae* (not consulted) comprises 39 disputations submitted between 1657 and 1660, but the catalogue of New College Library does not specify the year of publication of each disputation. I allotted the first seven disputations, all entitled *De natura spirituum*, to 1657, the next thirteen disputations (eight to twenty) to 1658, the next thirteen again (twenty-one to thirty-three) to 1659, and the last six disputations to 1660.

Figure 7.4 displays the disputations and corollaries by Daniel Voet directed against Cartesian philosophy, excluding obviously the 58 disputations not consulted. Each year has three or four columns. The first one (blue) gives the total number of disputations submitted that year. The second (yellow) column gives the number of disputations for which I had to use the texts reprinted in the posthumous works. The third (red) indicates how many dis-

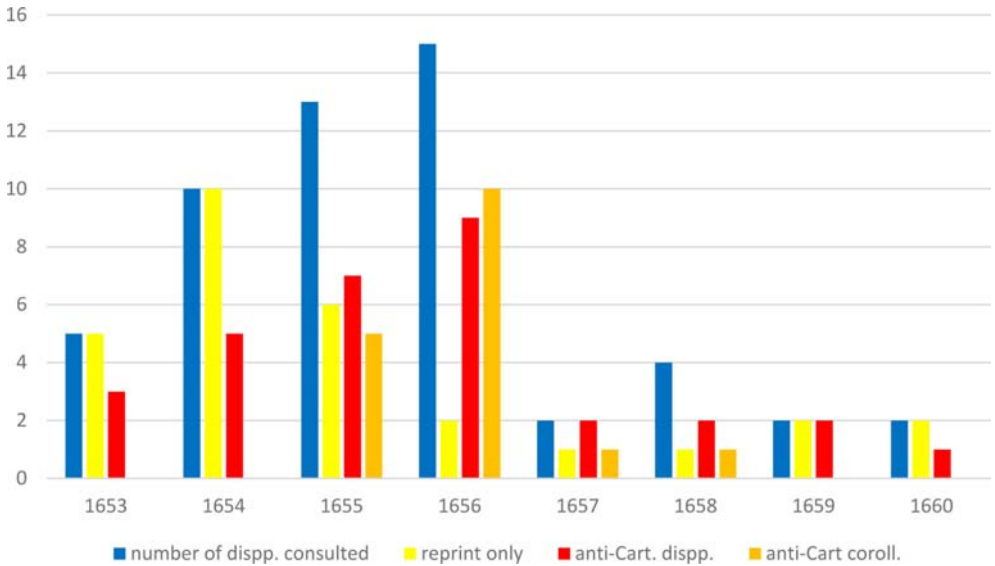


FIGURE 7.4 Voet’s anti-Cartesian disputations and corollaries

putations contain anti-Cartesian content. Finally, the fourth (orange) column gives the number of disputations having one or more anti-Cartesian corollaries. Note that the corollaries are omitted in the posthumous works, which is why disputations from the years 1653–1654 and 1659–1660 in Figure 7.4 lack such corollaries. We may, however, safely assume there were corollaries against Descartes added to these disputations, first, because the years in question knew anti-Cartesian disputations and will therefore have had similar corollaries as well, and secondly, because since the 1640s the Voetian faction habitually added corollaries against Descartes and/or Regius. Paul Voet, for example, added the following corollary, clearly against Regius, to one of his disputations of 1651: “Is the human soul an accident or an attribute, or a mode of the body, and is it only in the brain? Denied.”<sup>50</sup> The disputation has an additional set of six corollaries specifically announced as *Anti-Cartesiana*, of which the fifth reads “Is the first principle: I think therefore I am? The answer is: Nonsense.”<sup>51</sup>

50 Paul Voet (praes.) and Van Ryssen (resp.), *Disputatio metaphysica pro novitate essendi* (Utrecht, 15 November 1651): “An anima humana sit accidens seu attributum vel modus corporis, et an in cerebro tantum existat? Neg.”

51 Paul Voet (praes.) and Van Ryssen (resp.), *Disputatio metaphysica pro novitate essendi* (Utrecht, 15 November 1651): “An primum principium sit cogito, Ergo sum? Resp. nugae sunt.”



Daniel Voet took up where his brother had left off. In 1653, the first year of his professorship, he submitted three (out of five) disputations aimed against Descartes and Regius (see below). Voet particularly criticizes the attribution of a role to the pineal gland as the seat of the soul and of common sense (*sensus communis*).<sup>52</sup> He also attacks the Cartesian work published by Lambertus Van Velthuysen, *De finito et infinito* (1650), which attack he continued in 1654.<sup>53</sup> Voet's general anti-Cartesian stance did not prevent him from adopting various elements of the New Philosophy and other scientific results. Whereas the rector of the university had tried to prevent Regius from publicly discussing blood circulation in 1640, Voet mentions (and accepts) the discovery by Harvey in passing (14 December 1653). He agrees with Descartes and Regius on the central role in sensation of the nervous system, accepts the existence of valves in nerves, and in the main accepts Regius' explanation of muscle movement as well (especially 24 May 1656). While rejecting the pineal gland as the seat of the common sense, Voet agrees that such a locus is located in the brain, namely in the fourth brain ventricle, where, according to Voet, all nerves come together.<sup>54</sup> Unlike Harvey, Descartes and Regius are not credited with having contributed anything of value, but Voet comes close to saying something positive about Descartes when, in comparing views opposite to his own theory of motion, he writes that Descartes's argument is at least better than that of Gassendi (15 November 1654).

If the years 1653–1656 are representative, Voet attacked Cartesian philosophy in half of his disputations. The number of anti-Cartesian corollaries will have matched the number of anti-Cartesian disputations. The first extant corollary directed against Descartes reads “The idea of God is God himself” (19 May 1655). According to Reformed orthodox theology, the idea of God comprises completely his essence and attributes, and is thus God himself. Consequently, and contrary to Descartes's view, humans cannot have an idea of God. The opposing corollary, that we do have an idea of God, is found in various disputations by De Bruyn. Later corollaries defended under Voet attack the method of doubt, the Cogito as a metaphysical principle, or state that Cartesianism leads to atheism, and so on. By contrast with De Bruyn, Voet had no apparent hesitation in mentioning Descartes by name: in almost half of his disputations from 1653 and

52 Daniel Voet (praes.) and Niepoort (resp.), *De ubi spirituum* (Utrecht, 29 June 1653); Daniel Voet (praes.) and Beets (resp.), *De ubi spirituum, pars quarta* (Utrecht, 9 December 1653); De Bruyn (praes.) and Camp (resp.), *Disputationum physicarum septima de corporis loco et modo existendi in loco* (Utrecht, 14 December 1655).

53 Daniel Voet (praes.), *De ubi spirituum* (Utrecht, 29 June 1653, 15 March 1654, 28 June 1654).

54 Daniel Voet, *Physiologia* (Utrecht, 1661), VI, III, 12, 86.

1654 the name appears, but some caution is recommended here, as we do not have the original disputations, but only the reprinted texts edited by Gisbertus Voetius and Paul Voet. In original disputations, Descartes's name figures in five disputations from 1656 and 1657.

## 9 De Bruyn vs. Voet

On 25 April 1657, De Bruyn presided over a disputation on free will. Right at the beginning, the respondent reminded the audience that the question of human free will is discussed by both theologians and philosophers; the disputation will, however, deal with this question from a philosophical point of view only, leaving aside any theological issues. In what follows, De Bruyn offered a Cartesian explanation of free will, with many references to Descartes's works and letters (the first volume of the correspondence edited by Claude Clerselier in Paris had just become available). At the end, De Bruyn explained that the whole disputation had been aimed "at informing the students entrusted to my care about the opinion of Descartes, and to arm them against the scruples with which they may be injected by its adversaries."<sup>55</sup> One of these adversaries is mentioned in the disputation, namely the author of a pamphlet entitled *Den overtuyghden Cartesiaen* (1656) who hid behind the pseudonym Suetonius Tranquillus. Perhaps De Bruyn did not know that Voetius was the author, but he will certainly have recognised the pamphlet as Voetian. De Bruyn devotes just one of the ten theses of the disputation to refute a difficulty raised in *Den overtuyghden Cartesiaen*, so clearly the more substantial adversaries were to be identified elsewhere. One such adversary might have been Daniel Voet, who, in 1657, devoted six disputations to the question of free will and determinism (*Disputationis metaphysicae, De formali ratione libertatis*). Regrettably, I have not seen these texts.

Except for Suetonius Tranquillus, De Bruyn did not mention his opponent(s) by name, nor did he ever explicitly name Voet in his disputations; from his side, Voet adopted the same policy. Indeed, the university senate had decided, during the Utrecht Crisis over Cartesian philosophy in the early 1640s,

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55 De Bruyn (praes.) and Van Swanevelt (resp.), *Disputatio philosophica de libero hominis arbitrio* (Utrecht, 25 April 1657): "Plura de libero arbitrio dici possent, verum haec impraesentiarum sufficient, cum praecipue hic animus fuerit, *studiosos curae nostrae commissos, hinc informare circa sententiam Cartesii, eosque munire adversus scrupulos, qui ipsis ab adversariis possent injici*; atque hoc sufficienter factum esse putamus." (my emphasis). The translation is taken from Vermij, *Calvinist Copernicans*, 170.

that colleagues ought not to be attacked openly. And this decree was well observed, at first. But from 1655 onwards, as De Bruyn and Voet explained or refuted Cartesian philosophy in their disputations, their addition of corollaries contradicting corollaries previously added by their opponents made these attacks somewhat more pointed.<sup>56</sup> That these debates were animated events is shown by a corollary added by one of Voet's students (namely the son of professor Essenius) to a disputation defended in December 1656: "As far as I know, nobody has said that the new philosophers are magicians, and has attacked them using that argument."<sup>57</sup> Imbedded in eleven aggressively anti-Cartesian corollaries, it is clear that 'the new philosophers' refer to De Bruyn and his supporting students. As it happened, one of De Bruyn's students had added two corollaries on magicians in a previous disputation: "Magicians cannot change themselves into cats or other animals" and "Magicians do not go to their assemblies sitting on pitchforks and brooms."<sup>58</sup> In all likelihood, the discussion of these two corollaries occasioned much amusement amongst the opposing students, especially when some audacious student compared Descartes and Cartesians to magicians—echoing an accusation already voiced by Maarten Schoock in *Admiranda methodus* (1643). The outcry caused by these corollaries was enough for Voet's student to state no such magical things had happened, which, as we may expect, was enough to prolong the amusement.

It is remarkable that De Bruyn and Voet were able to continue their battle for so long without any complaints being raised in the senate. Apparently, both professors were quite happy to ventilate their opinions undisturbed. In December 1658, however, the senate finally stepped in, deciding that the professors of philosophy should, from that time onwards, abstain from tirelessly provoking and attacking each other in disputations and corollaries, and that if, on occasion, they had to differ in opinion, they should refrain from the use of cruel invective.<sup>59</sup>

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56 As already observed in Verbeek, *Descartes and the Dutch*, 88.

57 Daniel Voet (praes.) and Essenius A.F. (resp.), *Disputationum selectarum decima-quarta de errore, secunda* (Utrecht, 22 December 1656): "Nemo quod sciam dixit neotericos esse magos, eoque argumento eos oppugnavit."

58 De Bruyn (praes.) and Scharbach (resp.), *Disputationum physicarum duodecima de motu pars tertia* (Utrecht, 29 October 1656): "Magi non possunt se transformare in faeles nec alia animalia."

59 13 December 1658, Kernkamp, *Acta*, 335–336. The immediate cause for this directive were "certain philosophical corollaries," but it is not clear which corollaries exactly or who voiced them.

10 De Bruyn and Craanen on the Souls of Beasts

In 1654, Theodor Craanen (ca. 1633–1688), who later became a Cartesian professor at Nijmegen and then at Leiden University, proposed the following provocative corollaries to one of De Bruyn’s disputations:

The souls of beasts are also immaterial.

The souls of beasts are as susceptible of immortality as are the souls of humans.<sup>60</sup>

The council of the Reformed Church reacted with great indignation, and De Bruyn had to explain and defend himself during several meetings with the ministers. De Bruyn told them that the student had written and inserted the corollaries, but that he nonetheless accepted them as his own. He claimed not to know that they might be regarded by some as scandalous or a danger to religion, but refused to take them back or to apologise. When the council voiced their dissatisfaction and the affair escalated, De Bruyn decided to leave the Reformed Church, to become a member of the Walloon Church, whose minister in Utrecht was Louis Wolzogen. Although Daniel Voet did not immediately jump on this affair in his disputations, a student repeated Craanen’s second corollary with the qualification “Denied”.<sup>61</sup> It is probably no coincidence that in 1658 Voet presided over two disputations on beasts, dealing with questions such as whether animals can think, feel pain, and so on, although Craanen’s corollaries are not mentioned (10 and 24 March 1658).

In 1666, Essenius, professor of theology and also one of the ministers who had dealt with the ‘souls of beasts’ affair twelve years earlier, listed the ‘beastly corollaries’ among the manifold absurdities of Cartesian philosophy (10 November 1666). De Bruyn wrote a lengthy and furious reply, which he appended to his next disputation (12 December 1666). He gave a detailed account of what

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60 De Bruyn (praes.) and Craanen (resp.), *Disputatio mechanico-mathematica de trochlea* (Utrecht, 21 June 1654): “Animae brutorum etiam sunt immateriales. Animae brutorum aequè sunt immortalitatis capaces ac hominum.” The Cartesian stance of professor and student is shown by the first corollary, advocating the principle of doubt. Craanen’s corollaries were ‘prepared’ in a corollary to an earlier disputation, stating that there are no substantial forms except in beasts and humans; De Bruyn (praes.) and Clemens (resp.), *Disputationis physicae de alitura pars prima* (Utrecht, 29 April 1654). For Craanen, see Chapter 9, in this volume.

61 Daniel Voet (praes.) and Junius (resp.), *Disputationum selectarum undecima de quaestionibus de nomine pars prior* (Utrecht, 19 March 1656).

exactly had happened at the time, not sparing Essenius for his deceitful behaviour. But, surprisingly, De Bruyn now conceded that his defence of the corollaries was a mistake. Explaining himself, he said that he had erred because of the Aristotelian philosophy he had had to learn when he was a student; now he accepted the account given by Descartes.<sup>62</sup> Essenius is thus mistaken, according to De Bruyn, when he attributes these absurdities to Descartes; turning the tables, De Bruyn further states that if anyone accepts that animals have substantial forms, the conclusion that animal souls are immortal must also be theirs.

De Bruyn's extraordinary intervention probably aroused new interest in the 'souls of beasts' affair. Just like Essenius, the Voetian theologian Herman Wits (1636–1708) numbered De Bruyn's corollary on the immortality of animal souls among pernicious new opinions, claiming he had been present when it was being defended.<sup>63</sup> The minister and philosopher Petrus Allinga (d. 1692), entangled in a polemic with Wits, came to De Bruyn's defence. In his rejoinder, Allinga admits that in themselves the words are very offensive; however, they should be understood in their proper context. The proposition was uttered in an academic philosophical disputation, when philosophers are prone to advance provocative theses, which they usually solve with a distinction. It is generally known, Allinga continues, that philosophers often come up with extraordinary theses, which do not reflect their own views, only to test the skills of their students, or to allow themselves some space to explore specific points, or to discover difficulties in the opinions of their opponents.<sup>64</sup> Allinga then reveals that he too had been present at the notorious disputation:

I was also present at this disputation, and I still cannot forget the rude impoliteness of a certain student against the presiding professor, who,

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62 Indeed, his disputation of 12 Dec. 1663 has the corollary "Omnes actiones brutorem sint automaticae."

63 Wits, *Twist*, 276. Herman Wits became minister in Leeuwarden in 1668, and subsequently held chairs in theology at the universities of Franeker (1675), Utrecht (1680), and Leiden (1698). He enrolled at Utrecht University in 1651, at Groningen University in 1654, and again at Utrecht in 1655. That he actually witnessed De Bruyn's disputation from 1654 is not impossible, but strangely he does not mention De Bruyn, but refers to a disputation by Mansvelt from 1669. This explains why Thijssen-Schoute (*Nederlands Cartesianisme*, 44) assumes the corollary was Mansvelt's.

64 Allinga, *Verdedigingh*, 60. Petrus Allinga, a Cartesian-Cocceian theologian, matriculated at Utrecht University in 1651, and became minister at Wijdenes. On him, see Van Bunge, Krop, Leeuwenburgh, Van Ruler, Schuurman and Wielema, eds., *Dictionary*, vol. 1., 6–8.

being unlearned and unable to use reasonable arguments, used slander instead, yelling that this paved the way to atheism and denied the immortality of the human soul. I do not recall how the professor or the respondent explained the thesis, but I do remember very well that the professor neutralised these allegations, and called upon a prominent Utrecht preacher, also present, to attest to his religious orthodoxy and to the innocence of his explanation of the corollary. Our author [Wits] ought to have remarked this as well.<sup>65</sup>

In a quiet and moderate way, Allinga analyses the ramifications of the corollary, ultimately reaching the same conclusion as De Bruyn, that the thesis is the logical conclusion for everyone claiming that animal souls are substantial forms.

Evaluating the reports of De Bruyn himself and of his ally Allinga, it seems likely that the corollaries in question were invented during De Bruyn's private lectures, and that Craanen was audacious enough to defend them in public. Allinga states that philosophers often advance paradoxical ideas during their disputations, but the corollaries in question are unlike anything De Bruyn had proposed before. To me it seems that De Bruyn allowed the corollaries, only to demonstrate the untenability of the theory of substantial forms, or, as Allinga put it, to discover difficulties in the opinions of their opponents. That he was sincere in defending the corollaries before the church council in 1654 seems doubtful. His unyielding attitude towards the church council is reminiscent of Regius's behaviour during the Utrecht Crisis which was characterized by a determination never to give in. De Bruyn's stubbornness was, moreover, amply demonstrated in his conflict with Paul Voet in 1659.

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65 "Ick hebbe oock dit dispuyt by-ghewoont, en kan als noch niet vergeten de onbeschofte onbeleefttheyt van een seker Student tegen de *praesiderende* Heer *Professor*, welcke door sijn ongeleertheyt geen reden vindende om dit met reden tegen te spreekken, sich met lasteren socht te behelpen, roepende dat hier mede wierde gebaent een wegh tot *Atheisterye*, en geloochent de onsterffelijckhey van des menschen ziele; het is my ontgaen op wat wijze den Heer *Professor* of den *defendent* die stellingh heeft uytleeyt: doch dit is my in goede geheugenisse, dat dien Heer *Professor* tegen die lasteringh sich selven voor alle suyverde, en tot getuyge van sijn rechtsinnighey en onnosele uytleeggingh over dat *Corollarium* versocht een deftich *Leeraer* van *Utrecht*, welcke op die tijdt in dat *dispuyt* tegenwoordigh was. Dit behoorde onsen *Auteur* oock aengeteeckent te hebben." Allinga, *Verdediggingh*, 61. The "prominent Utrecht preacher (*Leeraer*)" is presumably Louis Wolzogen.

## 11 Conclusion

I offer three observations by way of conclusion. After reviewing the practice of the teaching of philosophy at Utrecht, my first observation is that—at least in the 1650s—the categories Cartesian and Anti-Cartesian were not completely black and white. De Bruyn developed from being an eclectic Cartesian in the early 1650s into an orthodox Cartesian in the 1660s. It seems that he initially he explored the possibility of integrating the concept of atomism into Descartes's system. Looking at the Figures 7.1 and 7.2 presented above, we get the impression that his turn towards orthodox Cartesianism was made shortly after 1656. It is presumably no coincidence that the turn occurred after the intense pamphlet dispute over Cartesianism that raged in the Dutch Republic between 1653 and 1656, inducing Cartesians to group together under the single aegis of the teachings of Descartes himself. The picture of Daniel Voet as anti-Cartesian is no more black and white, unlike that of his father. Voet, who in many respects was wholly anti-Cartesian, nevertheless accepted and endorsed the Regian/Cartesian explanation of muscle movement, which is not a minor issue in physiology, and also showed great interest in the nervous system and the brain.

The second observation is that corollaries preceded disputations. It is important to remember that before De Bruyn defended the broad spectrum of Cartesian philosophy in his disputations, students added corollaries covering the metaphysical and physical aspects of Cartesianism to the disputations. The corollary “Atoms exist” also appeared before De Bruyn discussed atomism in his disputations. This suggests that in corollaries we find an indication of the subjects that professor De Bruyn discussed with his students in his classroom but not yet in public. By allowing or perhaps encouraging students to append such corollaries, De Bruyn could test the waters. It also shows that students seemed eager to ventilate Cartesian positions; and when they added to a single disputation 15 or more radically Cartesian corollaries, and that happened in the 1660s time and again, one can really speak of a Cartesian frenzy.

My third and final observation is that however orthodox the Reformed theologians were at Utrecht, the Cartesian philosophers presented themselves in the 1660s as no less part of an orthodoxy. Because I have not studied all of De Bruyn's disputations in detail—let alone those of Van Mansvelt and Burman—it is presumably premature to say that De Bruyn and his colleagues developed no interesting amplifications or adjustments to Descartes's philosophy, as had the Leiden Cartesians De Raey and Geulincx. However, their teaching influenced an entire generation of philosophers, physicians, and theologians. Their names, and the persons to whom they dedicated the disputations, are known,

as are the exact dates of submission, and the persons who supported the students with laudatory poetry. Combining these data with those that can be retrieved from other sources, such as the various *alba studiosorum*, and the numerous Dutch disputations besides the 200 of De Bruyn, and Voet, and adding what is known of the careers of the students after leaving university, will give us a wealth of information on the scientific and social networks of the intelligentsia educated at Dutch universities. *Une mer à boire* perhaps, but as so much progress has been made since Van der Horst's article was published in 1995, such a project, in many ways, does not seem infeasible at all.<sup>66</sup>

66 As a first step, on my webpage at the Erasmus School of Philosophy, Erasmus University Rotterdam, I will make available my database in a spreadsheet format, listing about 15 different types of metadata for each disputation by De Bruyn, and Voet.