

# Preface

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This volume takes cue from the idea that the thought of no philosopher can be understood without considering it as the result of a constant, lively dialogue with other thinkers, both in its internal evolution as well as in its reception, reuse, and assumption as a starting point in addressing past and present philosophical problems. In doing so, it focuses on a feature that is crucially emerging in the historiography of early modern philosophy and science, namely the complexity in the production of knowledge.

The book explores the applicability of this approach to a long-considered arm-chair philosopher, namely René Descartes, who is now more and more understood as a full-blown scientist, networker, and intellectual *éminence grise* rather than as the mere philosopher of the *cogito*, as well as the originator of different “Cartesianisms” which encompassed many ideas and approaches for long captured by dichotomic historiographical categories as rationalism and empiricism, or speculative and experimental philosophy.

The essays gathered in the volume aim to address the ways in which Descartes’s philosophy evolved and was progressively understood by scientists, philosophers, and intellectuals from different contexts and eras, either by considering direct interlocutors of Descartes such as Isaac Beeckman and Elisabeth of Bohemia, early modern thinkers who developed upon his ideas and on particular topics as Nicolas Malebranche or Thomas Willis, those who adapted his overall methodology in developing new systems of knowledge as Johannes Clauberg and Pierre-Sylvain Régis, and contemporary thinkers from continental and analytic traditions like Emanuele Severino and Peter Strawson.