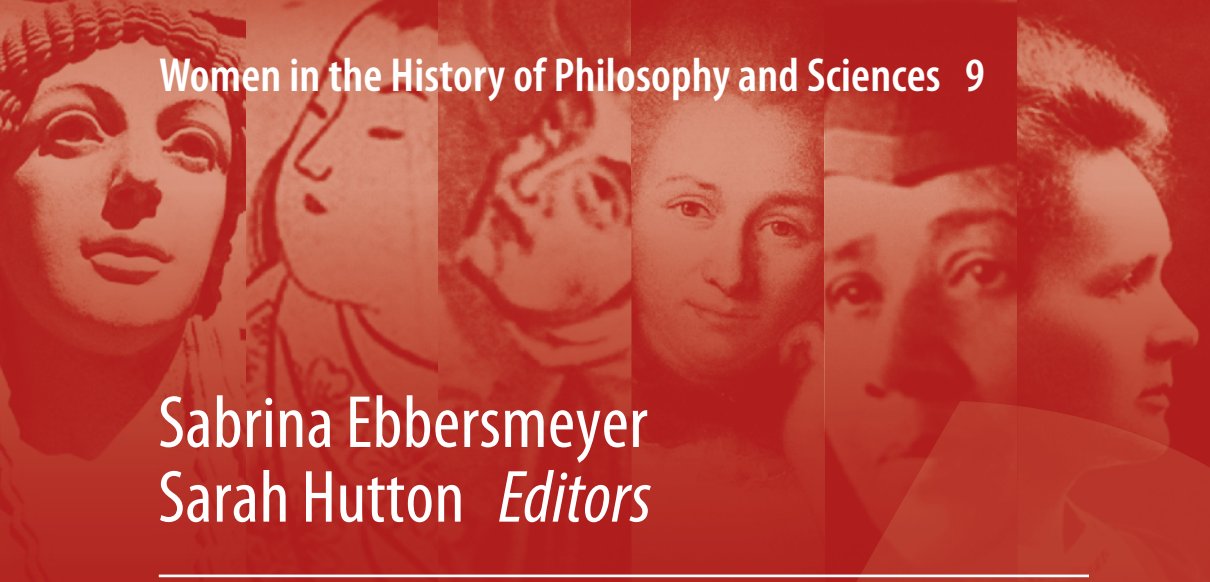
Women in the History of Philosophy and Sciences 9



Sabrina Ebbersmeyer
Sarah Hutton *Editors*

Elisabeth of Bohemia (1618–1680): A Philosopher in her Historical Context

Springer

Women in the History of Philosophy and Sciences

Volume 9

As the historical records prove, women have long been creating original contributions to philosophy. We have valuable writings from female philosophers from Antiquity and the Middle Ages, and a continuous tradition from the Renaissance to today. The history of women philosophers thus stretches back as far as the history of philosophy itself. The presence as well as the absence of women philosophers throughout the course of history parallels the history of philosophy as a whole.

Edith Stein, Hannah Arendt and Simone de Beauvoir, the most famous representatives of this tradition in the twentieth century, did not appear form nowhere. They stand, so to speak, on the shoulders of the female titans who came before them.

The series Women Philosophers and Scientists published by Springer will be of interest not only to the international philosophy community, but also for scholars in history of science and mathematics, the history of ideas, and in women's studies.

More information about this series at http://www.springer.com/series/15896

Sabrina Ebbersmeyer · Sarah Hutton
Editors

Elisabeth of Bohemia (1618–1680): A Philosopher in her Historical Context

Springer

Editors
Sabrina Ebbersmeyer
Section for Philosophy
Department of Communication
University of Copenhagen
Copenhagen, Denmark

Sarah Hutton
Department of Philosophy
University of York
York, UK

ISSN 2523-8760 ISSN 2523-8779 (electronic)
Women in the History of Philosophy and Sciences
ISBN 978-3-030-71526-7 ISBN 978-3-030-71527-4 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-71527-4

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Fig. 1 Portrait of Elisabeth of Bohemia. Engraving by Crispijn van den Queborn, between 1633 and 1652. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Contents

Note on Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used throughout this volume:

AT	René Descartes. *Oeuvres de Descartes.* 11 vols. Edited by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, first published, Paris 1897–1913. Reprint: Paris: CNRS, 1996.
CSMK	René Descartes. *The Philosophical Writings of René Descartes.* Translated by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch, and Anthony Kenny. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1984–1991.
S	Elisabeth of Bohemia. *The Correspondence between Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and René Descartes.* Translated by Lisa Shapiro. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press: 2007.

Editors and Contributors

About the Editors

Sabrina Ebbersmeyer is Associate Professor for the history of philosophy at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark. Working primarily on Renaissance and Early Modern philosophy, her research focusses on debates in moral psychology and philosophy of mind, on humanism and gender in the historiography of philosophy. She has published on numerous Renaissance and Early Modern philosophers, including Isotta Nogarola, Bernardino Telesio, Elisabeth of Bohemia and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. She is author of *Homo agens* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter 2010), has edited the volume *Emotional Minds* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter 2012) and translated the letter exchange between Elisabeth of Bohemia and René Descartes into German (München: Fink 2015).

Sarah Hutton is Honorary Visiting Professor at the University of York, UK. She has published extensively on early modern philosophy and intellectual history, especially on the Cambridge Platonists and in women and the history of philosophy and science. Her publications include *Anne Conway. A Woman Philosopher* (CUP), a revised edition of *Conway Letters* (first published by Marjorie Nicolson), and *British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century* (OUP). She has also published articles on Margaret Cavendish, Damaris Masham, Mary Astell, Catharine Macaulay and Émilie du Chatelet. She is President of the International Society for Intellectual History.

Contributors

Nadine Akkerman English Language and Literature, Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands

Lilli Alanen Department of Philosophy, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden

Mirjam de Baar Faculty of Humanities, Centre for the Study of Religion (LUCSoR), Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands

Sabrina Ebbersmeyer Philosophy Section, Department of Communication, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark

Sarah Hutton Department of Philosophy, University of York, Heslington, York, UK

Denis Kambouchner University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris, France

Gianni Paganini Università del Piemonte, Vercelli, Italy;
Research Centre of the Accademia dei Lincei, Rome, Italy

Carol Pal Bennington College, Bennington, VT, USA

Marie-Frédérique Pellegrin Faculté de Philosophie, Université Jean Moulin-Lyon III, Lyon, France

Dominik Perler Institut für Philosophie, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany

Martina Reuter Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland

Lisa Shapiro Department of Philosophy, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, Canada

List of Figures

Chapter 1
Introduction

Sabrina Ebbersmeyer and Sarah Hutton

> Wonderful things were said about this rare person: that to the knowledge of languages she added that of the sciences; that she did not entertain herself with the trivialities of the schools but wanted to know things clearly; that for that reason she had a pure mind and solid judgment; that she took pleasure in listening to Descartes; that she read far into the night; that she did dissections and experiments ….
>
> (Samuel Sorbière on Elisabeth of Bohemia, Sorbière 1694, 103).

Elisabeth of Bohemia, Princess Palatine (1618–1680) was famous in her own time for her learning, her philosophical acumen and her mathematical brilliance. Her wide-ranging interests extended to religion, science, politics and philosophy, and she was well-connected with seventeenth-century intellectual circles. But she has since suffered the fate of so many brilliant women of the past. Few sources for her own views survive. Although she is remembered today for her correspondence with the philosopher René Descartes, her original letters were lost,[1] and her philosophical standing was for long reduced to that of a "pupil" of Descartes or simply a "learned lady." Such attention as she received from historians centred chiefly on

[1] Claude Clerselier's edition of Descartes (1657–1667) prints 33 of Descartes' letters to Elisabeth (31 in the first volume, and the two letters on mathematics in the second volume). But Elisabeth refused permission for her letters to be included. It was not until 1879, after Frederik Muller discovery of the only known manuscript copy of her letters to Descartes in the library of Rosendael Castle (Muller 1876), that Elisabeth's letters were first published—in an edition by Louis Alexandre Foucher de Careil (Foucher de Careil 1879).

[2] Examples include: De Bury [Marie Pauline Rose Stuart] 1853; Benger [Elizabeth Ogilvy] 1825, Godfrey 1909.

S. Ebbersmeyer (✉)
Department of Communication, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark
e-mail: ebbersmeyer@hum.ku.dk

S. Hutton
Department of Philosophy, University of York, Heslington, York, UK
e-mail: sarahhutton@york.ac.uk

S. Ebbersmeyer and S. Hutton (eds.), *Elisabeth of Bohemia (1618–1680): A Philosopher in her Historical Context*, Women in the History of Philosophy and Sciences 9,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-71527-4_13

the drama and supposed romance of her personal history as a princess beset by the tragedies of a dispossessed ruling family.[2] However, new and welcome developments in scholarship have recently begun to restore her reputation as a philosopher and as an influential historical figure. The present collection of essays builds on this new scholarship to offer a cross-disciplinary perspective on Elisabeth in the context of the period in which she lived. The studies presented here explore aspects of her life and education, her friendships and contacts, her interest in politics, religion, and astronomy, as well as her philosophical views and her engagement with Cartesianism. The volume does not aim to be a comprehensive survey of Elisabeth's interests and activities. Rather, it is conceived as a contribution to a fuller picture of Elisabeth, and thereby to a better knowledge and understanding of her achievement.

1.1 A Life in Exile

Elisabeth was born in Heidelberg on 26 December 1618, the oldest daughter and third of the thirteen children of Frederick V, Elector Palatine (1596–1632) and Princess Elizabeth Stuart (1596–1662).[3] She was thus born into a ruling family with powerful links to Protestant royalty across Europe. On her mother's side she was granddaughter of King James I of England and VI of Scotland, and of Princess Anne of Denmark. On her father's side she was grand-daughter of Louise Juliana of Orange-Nassau (1576–1644) and cousin to the "Great Elector" (*der Große Kurfürst*) Frederick William of Brandenburg-Prussia. Her illustrious ancestry was briefly embellished in 1619 when her father accepted the crown of the Kingdom of Bohemia. His accession explains Elisabeth's title as Princess of Bohemia.[4] But Frederick's acceptance of the Bohemian crown spelled disaster for both his family and central and northern Europe. He was overthrown in events that lead to the outbreak of the Thirty Years War. The defeat at the Battle of White Mountain on 8th November, 1620, cost him not just the Kingdom of Bohemia, but also his Palatinate territories, earning him the mocking nickname of "Winter King". Thereafter the family was forced into exile, ending up in The Netherlands, where Elisabeth's father's uncle, Maurice of Orange (1567–1625), was stadtholder. Until the Peace of Westphalia brought hostilities to a close, Elisabeth grew up in exile staying first with their father's sister, Elisabeth Charlotte (1597–1660), Electress of Brandenburg,[5] eventually joining her family at The Hague in 1627/8. Despite the misfortunes which her family suffered, exile in The Hague provided a stable and relatively happy environment for Elisabeth's upbringing, during which she enjoyed both the benefits of education and opportunities for intellectual exchange. Like her siblings, Elisabeth received the education customary for the high

[3] For detailed accounts of Elisabeth's life see Guhrauer 1850, Creese 1993 and Wieden 2008. There is also further information in the essays by Carol Pal and Miriam de Baar.

[4] She had not originally accompanied her parents to Bohemia, but stayed with her brother Charles Louis and her grandmother in Heidelberg.

[5] Together with her brother Charles Louis (Karl Ludwig) (1617–1680).

nobility.[6] Her mother's court at The Hague attracted numerous scholars, and close contact with the court of Elisabeth's great uncle Frederick Henry, Prince of Orange (1584–1647), offered ample opportunity for stimulating intellectual exchange. Of course, as a Princess Elisabeth was destined from birth for a dynastic marriage. The most serious negotiations to arrange a marriage occured in 1633–1636 for a match with the Polish King, Władisław IV Wasa (1595–1648), but these failed, because she refused to convert to Catholicism.

Elisabeth's family was dogged by further misfortune on the personal front during their exile in The Netherlands. In 1629, Elisabeth's oldest brother and the heir to the throne, Henry Frederick (1614–1629), drowned in a shipwreck. Three years later, in 1632, Elisabeth's father died after a brief but severe illness. The outbreak of civil war in the British Isles in 1642 had a serious impact on the family's already strained economic situation. Elisabeth's sojourn in The Hague was brought to an abrupt end in 1646, when her brother Philip (1627–1650) was involved in an incident resulting in the death of the French nobleman Jacques d'Espinay. In consequence of this, Elisabeth was sent once more to Brandenburg to live with her aunt, Elisabeth Charlotte, Electress of Brandenburg, with whom she had spent the first years of her childhood. Elisabeth probably felt at home with her aunt, since she describes the court at Brandenburg as a place, " where I have been cherished since my childhood and where everyone conspires to take care of me" (S 146).[7] But she missed the stimulating intellectual climate of The Hague. With the Peace of Westphalia (1648), which ended the Thirty Years War, Elisabeth's fortunes improved, but not for long. In 1651 she returned to Heidelberg, where her oldest brother Charles Louis (Karl Ludwig) had been restored as ruler of the Lower Palatinate in 1649. Her intellectual life began to flourish again. The close relationship between the court and the academy in Heidelberg allowed Elisabeth to revive old intellectual contacts and to develop new ones (see below). But the prospect, of a permanent home and a brighter intellectual life were cut short following estrangement from her brother the Elector over his divorce and subsequent re-marriage. Elisabeth left Heidelberg, finding herself once again without a fixed abode.

1.2 Herford

Elisabeth's fortunes improved again in May 1661, when, thanks to the support of her cousin Frederick William of Brandenburg she was elected coadjutress of the imperial abbey (*Reichsfreie Frauenstift*) in Herford, of which Frederick William was patron.[8]

---

[6] For more information, see Nadine Akkerman's essay in this volume.

[7] While at the court in Brandenburg, Elisabeth was involved in the negotiations for the marriage of her sister Henriette Marie (1626–1651) to Prince Sigismund Kákóczy of Transylvania (1622–1652) (Wendland, 1906).

[8] Frederick William, the Great Elector, was the son of Elisabeth's aunt Elisabeth Charlotte of the Palatinate (1597–1660), sister of Frederick V, and George William, Elector of Brandenburg (1595–1640).

Founded in the ninth-century, Herford Abbey had survived the Reformation as a secular convent for daughters of the German nobility. The Herford *Frauenstift* was subordinated directly to the German emperor and was thus an independent territory within the Holy Roman Empire; its abbesses held the title of Imperial Princess (Wolgast, 2008; Schröder-Stapper, 2015). After the death of the incumbent abbess, Elisabeth Louise Juliane of Palatine Zweibrücken (1613–1667), Elisabeth succeeded as the new Princess-Abbess (*Kurfürstin Äbtissin*) on 20th April 1667. Despite initial financial obstacles,[9] Elisabeth was thenceforth assured of a permanent home, an income and temporal power. As abbess, Elisabeth had a political role. Famous for her religious tolerance, she exercised her power to support persecuted religious groups such as the Labadists and Quakers. As she told the Quaker leader, William Penn, "My house and my heart shall be always open to those that love him [god]" (Elisabeth to Penn, 17 November 1677, in Penn 1694, 269–270). Besides the Labadists and Quakers, Elisabeth also had contact with members of other persecuted religious groups. Among these was the spiritualist Friedrich Breckling (1629–1711) whom she met in 1674 and with whom she maintained a correspondence (Steiger, 2005, 41). She also corresponded with the spiritualist and Behmenist Johann Georg Gichtel (1638–1710) (Bernet, 2008). In 1676 and in 1677, she corresponded with the Quakers Robert Barclay (1648–1690), William Penn (1644–1718), Benjamin Furly (1636–1714) and George Fox (1624–1691) (Cadbury, 1912; Blanke, 2008).[10]

1.3 An Active Intellectual Life

For obvious reasons, accounts of Elisabeth's intellectual life have been dominated by her extensive correspondence with Descartes, who was introduced to her by the courtier and intellectual Alphonse Pollot (Descartes, 1996, AT III 577–578; III 660–661),[11] and with whom she corresponded from May 1643 until Descartes' death in Sweden in 1650. They also met regularly during the years 1643–1646, until Elisabeth was forced to leave The Hague. While her correspondence with Descartes provides great insight into Elisabeth's intellectual life, it constitutes only the most well-documented part of a wider picture. Although no philosophical writings by her have been discovered, her broad intellectual interests and her reputation as an exceptionally learned woman can be documented in other correspondence and through the scholarly works that were dedicated to her. From these it is clear that she was able to pursue an active intellectual life, engaging in a wide-ranging learned correspondence with many intellectuals of her age, including philosophers, politicians,

[9] See Carol Pal's essay for details.

[10] See also Sarah Hutton's essay in this volume For a first inventory of Elisabeth's extant correspondence see Ebbersmeyer (2020).

[11] For a critical evaluation of different approaches to Elisabeth's writings see Alanen (2004). Recently, however, there have been attempts to reconstruct Elisabeth's own philosophical position (e.g. Nye, 1996; Shapiro, 1999; Ebbersmeyer, 2014).

religious leaders and family members. Participating in various philosophical, scientific and political debates of her time, Elisabeth's unusual interest in the sciences and philosophy was recognised early on.[12] During her years in The Hague, Elisabeth was in contact with many intellectuals of various disciplines (see Creese, 1993; Pal, 2012; Alexandrescu, 2012). One of Elisabeth's earliest acquaintances in Holland was Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678), whom she first met in 1632, and with whom she formed a friendship which lasted until Van Schurman's death in 1678.[13]

Among Elisabeth's correspondences, her letter exchange with Descartes is the most important source for Elisabeth's philosophical views.[14] Hitherto, the best known, and most-discussed aspect of Elisabeth's philosophy, are her critical arguments in response to Descartes' account of the interaction of mind and body (e.g. Shapiro, 1999; Tollefson, 1999). But, as the essays in this collection document, these arguments represent only one aspect of their philosophical conversation. The correspondence with Descartes also discusses natural philosophy, practical ethics and political philosophy, as well as medical questions and mathematics (she developed an original solution to the so-called problem of *the three circles*, a special case of the *Apollonian problem*). The correspondence also testifies to her knowledge of other philosophers, among them Machiavelli, Hobbes, Gassendi, Digby, Henricus Regius and Cornelis van Hogelande). They also exchanged views on their reading, shared personal experiences and kept each other informed about important events in their lives.

Elisabeth's serious interest in science and natural philosophy is also apparent from her correspondence with two of Descartes' acquaintances—firstly the diplomat, poet, and composer, Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687), who served as secretary to Prince Frederick Henry,[15] and who continued to correspond with her after she left The Hague, providing her with new publications on various scientific matters. The second was the Dordrecht minister, Andreas Colvius (1594–1671), with whom Elisabeth exchanged books and views on theology and astronomy.[16] From 1642, she also had contact with the French philosopher and translator, Samuel Sorbière (1615–1670), friend and translator of Thomas Hobbes. Promoter of the philosophy of Pierre Gassendi, Sorbière was particularly famous for his engagement with Epicurean philosophy and discussed Descartes' *Meditations* with her (Descartes (1936–1963),

[12] Elisabeth was not the only member of her family to gain a reputation in the learned world: her brother Rupert (1619–1682) was one of the founding members of the Royal Society and her sister Sophia (1630–1714) would become famous as the patroness and correspondent of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716).

[13] Schurman (1648: 60–62), Pal (2012), and Mirjam de Baar's essay in this volume.

[14] The extant correspondence comprises 59 letters, 33 from Descartes and 26 from Elisabeth. Some of the letters have been lost. Descartes publicly expressed his admiration for the princess in the dedication of his work *Principles of Philosophy* (1644) to Elisabeth (Descartes, 1996, AT VIII A, 1–4). On Elisabeth as a philosopher, see Zedler (1989), Harth (1992), Shapiro (1999), and Hutton (2005).

[15] Huygens was also acquainted with Descartes and assisted in the publication of Descartes' work (Verbeek et al., 2003, 272–273).

[16] For more details on both, see Sabrina Ebbersmeyer's essay in this volume.

V, 317). (It is to Sorbière that we owe the portrait of Elisabeth quoted above). Correspondents from her last years include Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715) and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz.[17]

Evidence for Elisabeth's intellectual reputation can be gleaned from the acknowledgements she received in the form of dedications of books to her. In 1640, the English clergyman, Edward Reynolds (1599–1676), dedicated his *Treatise on the Passions and Faculties of the Soule of Man* (London 1640) to her.[18] In his dedication Reynolds mentions that Elisabeth read the treatise in manuscript and recommended it for publication.[19] She was also dedicatee of *Faces Augustae* (1643) by the Dutch poet Jacob Cats (1577–1660) and the theologian, philosopher and poet Caspar Barlaeus (1584–1648), the dedication to which contains a portrait engraving of Elisabeth by Crispijn van den Queborn with an inscription by Barlaeus (see Fig. 1).[20] Cats and Barlaeus were both members of the *Muiderkring*, a group of Dutch intellectuals, of which Constantijn Huygens was also a member. Frans van Schooten the younger (1615–1660) whom Elisabeth had supported in getting a professorship of mathematics in Leiden in 1645 (AT IV 339–341), dedicated his Latin translation of Descartes' *Geometry* (Leiden, 1649) to her. Later, in 1652, Sorbière asked for Elisabeth's permission to dedicate her one of his works on Epicurean philosophy (Sorbière, 1660, 66–77; Ebbersmeyer, 2014, 172), though this was never published.

An indicative number of dedications testify to her involvement with the re-establishment of the University of Heidelberg, originally founded in 1386. Despite the devastation of the country during the Thirty Years War, and the loss of the world-famous *Bibliotheca Palatina*, Elisabeth's brother Charles Louis set about rebuilding the university, and it reopened again on the 1st November 1652. Elisabeth's close involvement with restoring the university is evident from her correspondence, and from several works that were dedicated to her. The latter included dedications by the German poet Andreas Gryphius (1616–1664) (Powell 1960, 64), Johann Heinrich Hottinger (appointed as professor of Oriental languages and theology in Heidelberg),[21] Johannes Freinsheim (1608–1660) (an acquaintance of Descartes who served as councilor of the electorate and honorary professor at the University), and the Dutch theologian, Johannes Coccejus (1603–1669). It is very likely that Elisabeth advised her brother on professorial appointments, and may even have played a role in the

[17] The correspondence with Malebranche is now lost, but has been reconstructed by André Robinet (Malebranche, 1978, 130–133). One of Leibniz's letters to Elisabeth is extant (Leibniz, 2006, 659–666).

[18] Reynolds, would become leader of the moderate Presbyterians during the inter-regnum in England, and was appointed Bishop of Norwich after the Restoration.

[19] The book was reprinted many times, and was used as a university textbook at Oxford.

[20] See the Appendix below (p. 11) for a transcription and translation.

[21] In the dedication of the fifth volume of his *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Novi Testamenti Seculum* (1655–1667) to Elisabeth, Hottinger compared her to the Italian Protestant humanist, Olympia Fulvia Morata (1526–1555), who gave private lessons at the University of Heidelberg. After Elisabeth left Heidelberg in 1658, Elisabeth and Hottinger continued to correspond until Hottinger's death in 1667 (Steiner, 1886).

offer of a chair in philosophy to Baruch de Spinoza (1632–1677) in 1673 (Berghaus, 1984, 93–94).[22]

An important aspect of Elisabeth's intellectual activities was the crucial role which she played in the early diffusion of Cartesian thought in Germany. Even before she came to Heidelberg, she assisted in circulating Descartes' works at the courts in Berlin and Wolfenbüttel, where Descartes' philosophy was almost unknown (letters to Descartes 29 November 1646 and 21 February 1647). Additionally, Elisabeth most probably circulated several letters written by Descartes on the passions, since manuscript copies of these letters originating from Johann Caspar van Dörnberg (1616–1680) are now held by the Hessisches Staatsarchiv at Marburg (Bos, 2010). It also seems that Elisabeth's promoted Cartesian philosophy in Heidelberg (Bos, 2010). According to a letter by the German mathematician and natural philosopher Joachim Jungius (1587–1657) of 1655, a small group of students read Descartes' *Principles of Philosophy* in Heidelberg and the addressee of the letter had "benefited from the conversation with and, as it were, instruction in Cartesian philosophy" by Elisabeth (Elsner & Rothkegel, 2005, 803). She also assisted in circulating Descartes' two mathematical letters in manuscript form, which were not published until 1667, in the third volume of Clerselier's edition of Descartes' letters. The Swiss mathematician Johann Heinrich Rahn (1622–1676) refers in a letter to Hottinger (1[11] March 1657, Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, MS F 71, fo. 235) to copies of the two mathematical letters provided by Elisabeth. Rahn also discussed these letters with the English mathematician John Pell (1611–1685). Later, Elisabeth sent also copies of Descartes' two mathematical letters to the German scholar Theodor Haak (1605–1690), who in turn circulated the letters among English scholars, such as John Worthington, Samuel Hartlib and again Pell as can be seen from her letter to Haak (Berlin 9/19 May 1665) (Bos, 2010).

1.4 The Present Volume

The present volume seeks to reflect the new scholarship on Elisabeth and something of the broad range of Elisabeth's intellectual interests that emerges from this biographical portrait. We adopt a broadly historical approach to present Elisabeth's philosophical, scientific and religious interests within the context of her intellectual networks and the historical circumstances in which she lived. The essays are grouped under three broad headings: (1) Elisabeth's intellectual world, focusing on her education and networks; (2) Elisabeth's political thought and its context; (3) the philosophical themes in her correspondence with Descartes.

By way of background to Elisabeth's intellectual career, Nadine Akkerman provides a short essay which reconstructs her education at the Prinsenhof, in Leiden, from such sources as are available. She shows how this was shaped by the experience

[22] Spinoza declined the offer, despite Charles Louis being prepared to guarantee him *libertas philosophandi* (Spinoza, 1802, 638–641).

of her mother, the Winter Queen, who wanted to ensure that her children enjoyed the priveleges and education which she had been denied as a child.

This is followed by three essays on Elisabeth's friendships and intellectual and religious contacts. In the first of these Mirjam De Baar discusses the lifelong friendship between Elisabeth of Bohemia and Anna Maria van Schurman, in an essay which highlights the religious dimension of Elisabeth's interests. Having shown how and when Elisabeth and Anna Maria van Schurman first came into contact, she explores their respective views on the purpose of study for women, and the bond which linked them, despite their divergent intellectual and religious choices.

In her essay, "Elisabeth of Bohemia and the Sciences: The Case of Astronomy," Sabrina Ebbersmeyer discusses a neglected aspect of Elisabeth's intellectual life: her involvement with the sciences of her day. She first provides evidence from both her letters and the dedications of books, of Elisabeth's knowledge of a variety of scientific disciplines, including mathematics, medicine, natural philosophy and microscopy. She then focuses on Elisabeth's interest in astronomy drawing especially on her correspondence with Constantijn Huygens and Andreas Colvius, to show that Elisabeth was actively involved in contemporary astronomical debates. She concludes by arguing for a revision of our image of Elisabeth as a multi-talented intellectual, not just a critic of Descartes.

Sarah Hutton reviews the interconnections between the intellectual circles of Princess Elisabeth and Anne Conway in order to explore the question of what either knew about the other as a female philosopher, and whether either knew anything about the other's philosophical views. While it is clear that they had similar philosophical interests in Cartesian philosophy, and many acquaintances in common (from members of the Hartlib circle to Quaker leaders) limited sources mean that, beyond the fact that each was aware of the other, it is, frustratingly, impossible to be sure that there was any philosophical inter-change between.

A major new theme in this collection is the political aspect of Elisabeth's interests—both in the sense of political ideas and the practical business of governing. Carol Pal's essay "A Persistent Princess: How Elisabeth of Bohemia Constructed Her Personal Politics" argues that a consistent and life-long theme in Elisabeth's polymathy was her concern with the question of how best to rule. Drawing on family letters, other correspondence (including her letters to Descartes) and visitors' reports, she traces Elisabeth's development as a mature political actor, illustrating this with a detailed account of her role in securing her appointment as Abbess of Herford, and her activities as its ruler. Along the way the essay provides a valuable historical context which forms the backdrop to her political life.

As Gianni Paganini shows in his essay, "Elisabeth and Descartes Read Machiavelli in the Time of Hobbes" Elisabeth's discussion of Machiavelli's *The Prince* in her letters to Descartes is an important source for her political philosophy. In a comparative account of Descartes' and Elisabeth's thinking on politics, he shows that her emphasis on the experiential and her focus on the ends of government in maintaining the state, rather than how the prince acquires power, have much in common with the political realism of Machiavelli. Where Descartes subscribes to the view of Machiavelli well-established in the Renaissance, Elizabeth was more open-minded

in her reading of Machiavelli. Her realism about human nature which acknowledges the impact of the passions on human behaviour anticipates the political philosophy of Hobbes.

Lisa Shapiro continues on the theme of the political aspects of Elisabeth's interests, by comparing the demands entailed in being a philosopher and being a ruler. Her aim is to shed light on Elisabeth's remark to Descartes that ruling and studying each demand an entire person, a remark which implies that ruling and intellectual pursuits like philosophy are incompatible with one another. She argues that while the methodology and skill set of a ruler and a philosopher are in most respects very similar, rulers and philosophers are disposed to different emotions, which require them organize their lives around different principles. As a result a ruler and a philosopher have different affective profiles, the differences being such as to require an entire persons.

The last part of this volume explores Elisabeth's philosophical thought as expressed in her correspondence with Descartes. Elisabeth's famous criticism of Descartes' account of mind-body interaction and Descartes' remarkable comments on the topic have puzzled interpreters for years and received a lot of scholarly attention. As one might expect, this important topic is discussed anew in several of the papers, along with other philosophical questions that are of relevance in the correspondence, such as the problem of the compatibility of free will and providence, the limits of ethical internalism, the female body and the scope of Elisabeth's (and Descartes') Cartesianism.

Lilli Alanen's article "The Soul's Extension. Elisabeth's Solution to Descartes' Mind-Body Problem", reconsiders Elisabeth's philosophical position on the question of the mind-body interaction. Through a close reading of the correspondence, Alanen reconstructs the philosophical implications of the positions hold by Elisabeth and Descartes. Alanen argues that not only was Elisabeth among the first and fierce critics of Descartes using arguments similar to those already presented by others; but she also holds that Elisabeth actually anticipates a new and original solution to the problem that was only later developed by philosophers such as Spinoza and Locke. Elisabeth's new and original thought on the topic might also have had an influence on Descartes' thinking.

Martina Reuter continues with interpreting Elisabeth's philosophical position and its metaphysical implications. Investigating a sequence of six letters exchanged during the Fall of 1645, Reuter analyses Descartes' and Elisabeth's positions regarding the problem of the compatibility of free will and providence. By comparing Elisabeth's criticism of Descartes' account of the compatibility of free will and providence with her criticism of his account of the mind-body interaction, Reuter argues that at the core of Elisabeth's philosophical search we find a strong commitment to reason and a dissatisfaction with Descartes' concession of the incomprehensibility of God's nature. This leads Elisabeth to the position of a fideist skeptic.

Elisabeth's critique of Descartes' philosophy was not limited to metaphysical questions. She also challenged his ethical views, especially his internalism, as Dominik Perler shows in his paper. Analysing the letter exchange of the years 1645–1646, Perler first reconstructs Descartes' position on the question to what extend happiness is up to us and defines Descartes' position as internalist. Then he

explores Elisabeth's objections to Descartes' positions and reconstructs her own, more complex account of our access to happiness, which emphasizes the importance of external factors in our pursuit of happiness. By assessing the philosophical validity of Elisabeth's objections to Descartes, Perler concludes that Elisabeth deserves to be taken seriously as a philosopher in her own right.

Marie-Frédérique Pellegrin analyses the role of the female body in the correspondence between Elisabeth and Descartes. The female body is addressed in relation to three different contexts, i.e. in comments on Elisabeth's own bodily constitution, on Descartes' mother, and on pregnant mothers in general. Pellegrin shows that Elisabeth analyses herself using Cartesian principles and presents to Descartes the living experience of the mind-body union. By analysing the notion of the *weak sex*, which Elisabeth applies to herself, Pellegrin argues that Descartes rejects sexual parameters for analysing the bodily constitution. His arguments show that Elisabeth served as an *alter ego* of Descartes and as an incarnation of the new philosophy.

The last paper of the volume by Denis Kambouchner investigates Elisabeth's alleged Cartesianism and the question to what extent her criticism of Descartes' account of the mind-body interaction posed a threat to Descartes' philosophy. By investigating Elisabeth's practices of philosophy, it becomes apparent that despite her criticism, Elisabeth is basically Cartesian, studying philosophy and the sciences in the same spirit as Descartes. Kambouchner proposes to understand Descartes' own philosophical position pertaining the union of soul and body as being in development during the time of the correspondence with Elisabeth. Taking into account later texts by Descartes on the same topic, it remains doubtful that there was any real disagreement between Descartes and Elisabeth on this point.

1.5 Acknowledgments

The papers collected in this volume were presented at the international conference *Elisabeth of Bohemia (1618–1680): Life and Legacy* (Paderborn University, 18–20 May 2018), which was hosted at the *Center for the History of Women Philosophers and Scientists* of Paderborn University in celebration of Elisabeth's 400th anniversary. We would like to express our gratitude to all those who made this wonderful conference happen. The staff at the *Center*, most notably Ruth Hagengruber and Julia Lerius, and many student assistants worked tirelessly to make the conference a memorable event. We also want to thank the Herford women's history group, EigenSinn e.V. for their role in arranging for part of the conference to be held at Herford, and for their warm welcome there to participants. We are most grateful to the *Fritz Thyssen Stiftung für Wissenschaftsförderung* and the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Philosophie* for their generous financial support for the conference, which enabled participants from across Europe, the United States and Canada to come together to discuss Elisabeth's life and thought.

1.6 Appendix

Inscription from the engraved Portrait of Elisabeth by Crispijn van den Queborn (see Fig. 1)
ELISABETHA FREDIRICI BOHEMIAE REGIS. COM. PALAT. ET ELECT. S R I FILIA NATU MAXIMA.

FORTUNÆ DOMITRIX, AUGUSTI MAXIMA REGIS
FILIA, PALLADII GRANDIS ALUMNA CHORI,
NATURÆ LABOR, HOC VULTU SPECTATUR ELIZA.
ET FACIEM FATI VIM SUPERANTIS HABET.
EXULAT ET TERRAS, QUAS NUNC SIBI VENDICAT ISTER,
IURE, PATROCINIO, SPE PUTAT ESSE SUAS.
SI PATRIIS CÆSAR TITULIS SUCCENSUIT, ILLUD
FRANGERE DEBEBAT CÆSARIS ARMA CAPUT.

Elisabeth, Eldest Daughter of Frederick, King of Bohemia, Count Palatine and Elector of the Holy Roman Empire

Eliza, mistress of fate, eldest daughter of a venerable king,
Offspring of the great Palladian chorus,
The work of nature is seen in this visage.
And the face has the power to overcome fate.
Exiled from the lands, which the Danube now claims for itself,
By right, law, and hope considered hers.
If the emperor is enraged by hereditary titles,
Such a head ought to shatter the Emperor's arms.

Bibliography

Alanen, L. (2004). Descartes and Elisabeth: A philosophical dialogue? In L. Alanen & C. Witt (Eds.), *Feminist reflections on the history of philosophy* (pp. 193–218). Dortrecht: Kluwer.

Alexandrescu, V. (2012). What someone may have whispered in Elisabeth's ear. *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy, 6*, 1–27.

Berghaus, G. (1984). *Die Quellen zu Andreas Gryphius' Trauerspiel 'Carolus Stuardus'*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer.

Bernet, C. (2008). 'Daß Innerste meines Hertzens mittheilen'. Die Korrespondenz Johann Georg Gichtels an die Fürstäbtissin Elisabeth zu Herford. In Kreisheimatverein Herford e.V. (Ed.), *Historisches Jahrbuch für den Kreis Herford* 2009, Band 16 (pp. 203–220). Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte.

Blanke, L. (2008). Elisabeth und die Quäker. In Wieden (2008), 97–119.

Bos, E.-J. (2010). Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia and Descartes' Letters (1650–1665). *Historica Mathematica*, *37*, 485–502.

Benger, Miss [Elizabeth Ogilvy] (1825). *Memoirs of Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia, Daughter of King James the first*. 2 vols. London. Printed for Longman e.a.