

sus in consequence. It is obvious that, at this time, the cause of Cartesianism was looked upon as the cause of free inquiry and modern discovery, in opposition to that of bigotry, prejudice, and ignorance. Probably the poet was far from being a very severe or profound critic of the truth of such claims. "This petition of the Masters of Arts, Professors and Regents of the University of Paris, humbly showeth, that it is of public notoriety that the sublime and incomparable Aristotle was, without contest, the first founder of the four elements, fire, air, earth, and water; that he did, by special grace, accord unto them a simplicity which belongeth not to them of natural right;" and so on. "Nevertheless, since, a certain time past, two individuals, named Reason and Experience, have leagued themselves together to dispute his claim to the rank which of justice pertains to him, and have tried to erect themselves a throne on the ruins of his authority; and, in order the better to gain their ends, have excited certain factious spirits, who, under the names of Cartesians and Gassendists, have begun to shake off the yoke of their master, Aristotle; and, contemning his authority, with unexampled temerity, would dispute the right which he had acquired of making true pass for false and false for true;"—In fact, this production does not exhibit any of the peculiar tenets of Descartes, although, probably, the positive points of his doctrines obtained a footing in the University of Paris, under the cover of this assault on his adversaries. The *Physics* of Rohault, a zealous disciple of Descartes, was published at Paris about 1670,¹² and was, for a time, the standard book for students of this subject, both in France and in England. I do not here speak of the later defenders of the Cartesian system, for, in their hands, it was much modified by the struggle which it had to maintain against the Newtonian system.

We are concerned with Descartes and his school only as they form part of the picture of the intellectual condition of Europe just before the publication of Newton's discoveries. Beyond this, the Cartesian speculations are without value. When, indeed, Descartes' countrymen could no longer refuse their assent and admiration to the Newtonian theory, it came to be the fashion among them to say that Descartes had been the necessary precursor of Newton; and to adopt a favorite saying of Leibnitz, that the Cartesian philosophy was the ante-chamber of Truth. Yet this comparison is far from being happy: it appeared rather as if these suitors had mistaken the door; for those

¹² And a second edition in 1672.