John Austin SJ (1717–84), The First Irish Catholic Cartesian?

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Abstract
Early-Modern Irish Catholics exiled on the European continent are known to have often held prominent academic positions in various important colleges and universities. This paper investigates the hitherto unknown Scholastic legacy of the Dublin-born Jesuit John Austin (1717–84), a famous Irish educator who started his career teaching philosophy at the Jesuit college of Rheims in 1746–47, before returning to the country of his birth as part of the Irish Mission. These manuscript lecture notes provides us first-hand knowledge about the content of French Jesuit education in the middle of the eighteenth century, which does not correspond to its classical reputation of 'Aristotelian' scholasticism opposed to philosophical novelties. While stitching to a traditional way of teaching, Austin introduces positively elements from Descartes, Malebranche, Locke and Newton into the curriculum. The present paper focuses on his conception of philosophical certitude (*certitudo*), which he considered a necessary condition for the possibility of philosophical knowledge.

The history of early-modern Irish philosophy is divided into two almost hermetic temporalities: on one side, we have the Anglo-Irish Protestant tradition, with its hallmark institution Trinity College; on the other side, we have the exiled Catholic Irish tradition, represented by secular clergymen as well as members of regular orders such as Franciscans, Dominicans and Jesuits, mainly active in the vast network of Irish colleges on the continent due to the penal laws restricting Catholic education on Irish soil. Both traditions had one thing in common: a strong and peculiar linkage to France, in particular during the eighteenth century. For the Protestant tradition, it was due both to the English reception of the philosophies of Descartes, Malebranche and Port-Royal, and to the particular input of numerous French Calvinist exiles who settled in Dublin after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685). For the Catholic tradition, it was a somewhat later phenomenon: whereas the first generation of Catholic exiles where mainly linked to Spain and the Habsburg territories of Central Europe, France became the central port of call for eighteenth-century Irish Catholic intellectuals[1].

[1] A point well established in Whelan (2009, pp. 304–320).

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For the history of philosophy, this French predicament raises a paradox: it has long been admitted that unlike its Protestant counterparts, open to philosophical novelties of the age – empiricism and experimental philosophy, Cartesian idealism and Malebranchian spiritualism –, the Catholic Irish tradition remained firmly attached to medieval Scholastic traditions and their Aristotelian conceptualism[2]. And whereas most Anglo-Irish scholars from Trinity knew their Aquinas and did not neglect reading some Jesuit courses – Peter Browne for instance discusses sometimes Suárez at length – the Catholic tradition was reputed impervious to anything published in Protestant circles. In this paper, I will argue that such a stark contrast does not apply to the eighteenth century, often presented unilaterally as the 'Golden Age of Anglo-Irish intellectual history'[3]. A number of Irish Catholic scholars active on the continent were increasingly exposed to the 'new philosophies', and integrated Cartesian and Lockean insights into their apparently old-fashioned courses of philosophy. Some of them even managed to return to Ireland, with the progressive loosening of the anti-Catholic restrictions on educational activity.

Although scholarship on the philosophy of early-modern exiled Irish Catholics has made considerable progress, very little, if not nothing, is known about the *return* of this philosophical tradition to Ireland itself. At that time, Catholic education on the Irish soil was restricted to grammar schools for young boys, and almost nothing is known about the intellectual identity of the promoters of these schools. Most of them, however, had received a solid philosophical and theological education on the continent. This was the case of the Dublin-born Jesuit John Austin (1717–84), who will be the focus of this paper. While Austin's educational action is well documented and

[2] We do not have any global history of the *content* of the philosophy and theology of Irish Catholic churchmen on the continent, which is largely due to the fact that they were divided into competing traditions (Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans, seculars). But we do have a great number of quality monographs on prominent individual figures such as Luke Wadding, Michael Moore, Luke Joseph Hooke and others. For the institutional aspects, social network and the intellectual role of the Irish colleges, see the seminal Corcoran (1916), still relevant to understanding the penal laws affecting the Catholics, and the classical work of Corish (1985). For a general overview of this diasporic Scholastic tradition, see Robinson-Hammerstein (1971); O'Connor (ed.) (2001); O'Connor and Lyons (eds.) (2006); O'Connor (2009).

[3] An expression used by Berman (2004, part II, pp. 77–174, part II), reprinting studies dating back to the 1980s; Duddy (2004, p. xiii).

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acknowledged in most histories of Irish education, we actually do not know anything about the type of philosophy that stands behind his educational enterprise. In this paper, I will attempt to reconstruct Austin's conception of philosophy as 'knowledge of all things accessible to natural light', as it can be found in a hitherto unknown manuscript I recently discovered and identified in a French provincial library.

1. John Austin's Career

John Austin was born in Dublin in 1717, and he received his first education in one of the grammar schools opened by the Jesuits in the northern edges of the city[4]. Like many other Catholic boys, he had to leave Ireland to pursue higher education: at the time, France with its efficient network of Irish Colleges present in major university towns seemed a prime destination[5]. Austin's first port of call was Nancy, where he entered the Society of Jesus in 1735, at the age of eighteen. He is only one of an important community of Irish Jesuits active in the French Jesuit Provinces (the country was then divided into four Provinces, Champagne, France, Aquitania and Lyons), which produced a number of famous figures, such as Bernard Routh SJ (1695–1768), often rumored to have converted Montesquieu on his death bed, as well as a number of other returnees linked to Austin and the development of private schools in Ireland, such as Thomas Betagh SJ (1737–1811, trained in Pont-à-Mousson like Austin) and James Philip Mulcaile SJ (1727–1801, trained in Paris). The emergence of France is itself a noteworthy fact of a shift in intellectual influence: it stands in contrast with the past century, when Irish Jesuits were mainly attracted to places like Salamanca, Santiago de Compostela, Seville, Lisbon, Coimbra, Louvain and Antwerp, almost all Habsburg territories. It will also explain the strong French influence in the emergence of Catholic higher education in Ireland, and it will explain why Austin would show a particular interest in discussing Descartes, Malebranche and others. After his novitiate, he followed a very classical career path

[4] The classical biographical study on John Austin is O'Rahilly (1939), to be complemented by Finegan (1970); O'Neill SJ and Dominguez (ed.) (2001, vol. 1, pp. 271–72). He does not, strangely, have any entry in the *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus* by Carlos Sommervogel, nor in Webb (1878).

[5] The history of Irish Catholic colleges in France is well documented: see Swords (ed.) (1978); Chambers, in O'Connor (2001, pp. 157–74).

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for a Jesuit of his time: he enrols as student of philosophy at the Jesuit University of Pont-à-Mousson (1735–37), and then becomes a professor, first of humanities, then of philosophy, at the College of Rheims[6]. He must then have enrolled for his theological education: first in Rheims for two years (1745–47) – after which he is ordained priest on 22 September 1747 –, and then in Poitiers (1747–49), probably on the instances of Thomas Hennessy SJ, the Superior of the Irish Mission from 1729 to 1750. Poitiers was at the centre of a region which counted a great number of recent Irish immigrants and refugees, but also numerous long-established families with links to the Bordeaux and Cognac wine business[7]. The Irish College of Poitiers was then an important 'hub' for the Irish Jesuits prepared to be sent back to the country as part of the Mission, as Austin himself documents it in his correspondence[8]. There he finished apparently his theological education and ended his French sojourn as Prefect of discipline at the Irish College. In 1750, at the age of 33, he returns to Ireland, as assistant to the parish priest John Murphy at Saint Michael & John in Dublin. It is on Irish soil that he pronounces in 1753 his fourth vow (of 'special obedience' to the pope regarding the Jesuit mission), the ultimate Jesuit oath after the classical vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Austin starts his educational mission in Dublin, opening a private school at Saul's Court in 1760 which would soon attract a great number of talented and prominent students – dramatist John O'Keeffe (1747–1833) was for instance one of them[9]. Like all Jesuits, his

[6] According to Francis Finegan SJ, he taught philosophy from 1739 to 1744, but O'Rahilly's older study argues that he also repeated philosophy in 1744–45. The date of the manuscript suggests that he still taught this subject in 1746–47, while embarking on his theological studies, which was a very common practice. On the history and culture of the College of Rheims, see Dubois SJ (1956).

[7] The Irish college of Poitiers was one of last Irish colleges opened in France. It was established 1674 by Ignace Browne SJ – only Nantes would follow in 1689. On the history of the College, see Finegan SJ (1954); Delattre SJ (1956). More generally on the Irish presence in Poitiers and their social impact in the region, see the well-documented study Jahan (2013).

[8] See his comments in a letter written from Rheims in 1742 (O'Rahilly, 1939, p. 191).

[9] On the Irish mission during Austin's life, see Fenning (1965); on its role in the development of Catholic education in Dublin, see O'Donnell SJ (1999); Begadon (2009). For a general overview of the history of the Irish Jesuits, see McRedmond (1991).

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action was strongly impacted by the suppression of the Society in 1773: the Irish Mission had basically always been supported by the network of Irish Jesuits active in France and Spain, and at the time of the suppression, it counted with only 19 members. Austin becomes a secular priest of the diocese of Dublin and finishes his life as reputed preacher. His life-long companion Thomas Betagh becomes vicar general of the archdiocese of Dublin. John Austin dies about ten years after the suppression of the Society, in 1784, and he is buried at St. Kevin's Church in Dublin.

2. Austin's Manuscript in the Context of Irish Diasporic Scholasticism

John Austin's scholastic legacy is a long in-4° manuscript of 319 pages, corresponding to the first part of a course of philosophy taught in 1746–47[10]. It is a typical example of classroom notes, taken down by an anonymous student, clearly dated but unfortunately without any explicit reference to any place of transcription. It very probably corresponds to his last year at the College of Rheims.

Although we know a lot about Irish diasporic *students* in France, thanks to the work of historians such as Laurence Brockliss and Patrick Ferté[11], we still know almost nothing about diasporic *professors*, with the exception of the few figures who managed to get their works printed – such as Michael Moore (†1721)[12] and Luke Joseph Hooke (†1796), who held one of the most prestigious Parisian

[10] J. Au[s]tin, *Philosophiae pars prima. Logica* (no place, 1746–1747), Vire, Bibliothèque Municipale (now Médiathèque de Vire-Normandie), Ms. 36, 319 I wish to thank Mrs Élodie Loup for facilitating my access to the manuscript collections. Hereafter the manuscript will be abbreviated *PPP*.

The classical catalogue of Vire Public Libray by Fédérique (1889, p. 422) mentions it under the name 'Autin' and gives no further identification – the 's' seems indeed to have been added by a different hand. It belonged to the private collection of François-Michel Morin-Lavallée, a nineteenth-century local erudite and mayor of the town, who enriched the local library and had probably bought it elsewhere. This may explain its strange fate of ending up in this collection which has no specific relationship with Irish colleges. The subtitle says: *Tractatum hunc philosophicum accepi a venerando admodum Patre Au[s]tin Societatis Jesu anno Domini 1746 et 1747*.

[11] See Brockliss and Ferté (1987, pp. 527–72; 2004); O'Connor (2006).

[12] See the famous anti-Cartesian work by Moore (1692). On Moore and the Parisian context, see Chambers (2000; 2001) and Chambers, in O'Connor and Lyons (2006).

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chairs of theology[13]. Our documentary legacy is much more extensive for other Irish exiled traditions, in particular for the Franciscans active in the colleges of Louvain, Prague and Rome[14]. For the specific case of France, all we have are a few notebooks of lectures clearly taken down by Irish students under various French professors[15], and only three or four philosophy manuscript lecture notes effectively taught by Irish professors in France[16].

This documentary scarcity has a strong influence on our perception of the 'enlightened' or 'counter-enlightened' character of Irish Catholic philosophy: as both Éamon Ó Ciosáin and Liam Chambers have recalled, Irish professors in Paris were often associated with the Aristotelian reaction of Parisian college professors against Cartesian novelties[17]. Abstruse scholastic logical distinctions and formalities were even dubbed 'gibier d'Hybernois' ('game for the Irish')[18]. But a close scrutiny of newly discovered eighteenth century courses such as Austin's might well offer a different picture: the Irish professors actually closely followed the path of a typical post-Cartesian scholasticism, that had become mainstream not only in the secular *collèges de plein-exercice* of the University of Paris, but also in the French provinces of the Society of Jesus. From that point of view, Austin's manuscript is not just precious to understand the history of Irish Catholic philosophy, but also French Jesuit philosophy in general: whereas the French Provinces had arranged for the printing of a handful of courses of philosophy during the second half of the seventeenth century, only one complete course was ever printed during the entire eighteenth century, that of Gaspar Buhon

[13] On Hooke, see O'Connor (1995; 2014, pp. 420–38).

[14] See the classical study by Millet OFM (1964); Bhreathnach, MacMahon and McCafferty (eds.) (2009); for Prague in particular, see Kuchařová and Pařez (2015).

[15] A few of them are mentioned by Chambers (2009, pp. 217–18).

[16] Other complete lecture notes of philosophy taught in France, so far unnoticed by bibliographers, include: O'Keefe SJ, *Physica particularis* (College of Rennes, 1751), cop. Jacques Foucault de la Morinière, Rouen CNDP, Ms. 2006–3205, 279 p.; James McDonogh, *Quarta pars philosophiae seu physica specialis* (Plessis-Sorbonne College, Paris, 1771), cop. James Phelan, Maynooth, Russell Library, Ms. s.n., 411 p.; to be complemented with *Prima pars logicae, de idea seu perceptione* (Plessis-Sorbonne College, Paris, 1755–56), Saintes BM, Ms. 40, 440–652, and probably the anonymous *Prima philosophiae secunda, seu metaphysica* (1756), Saintes BM, Ms. 38, 723 p.

[17] See Ó Ciosáin (1999, pp. 141–46); Chambers (2009, p. 137).

[18] See Daniel (1700, p. 130).

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SJ (†1726) from the Province of Lyons[19]. All the rest of Jesuit teaching is kept in the form of manuscript lecture notes similar to Austin's, and with the exception of François de Dainville's seminal work on natural philosophy, none of them has ever been studied[20]. In particular, we lack precise information about the content of philosophy education in the Province of Champagne – the closest clearly identifiable manuscript course from Pont-à-Mousson I could locate related to Austin's dates back to 1699[21].

3. Austin's Introduction to Philosophy

Philosophy courses in the French provinces of the Society of Jesus were at Austin's time limited to two years[22], and divided into four

[19] Buhon (1723, 4 vols). On the relationship between printed and manuscript courses in the French Society of Jesus, see Schmutz (2007a), which is a tentative list of the most important printed French Jesuit courses of philosophy.

[20] On the importance of these manuscript 'cahiers', see again Dainville SJ (1991).

[21] The Jesuits of the Province of Champagne did not print any normative course of philosophy, and everything we know is kept in manuscript form. Among the few direct points of comparison with Austin's course, one could mention a logic course taught by Edmond Simonnet SJ in Pont-à-Mousson in 1699 (Metz BM, Ms. 1058 – not seen), as well as an anonymous *Cursus philosophicus* taught in Rheims 1713–14 (copied by A.-Fr. Terbarghorst, Gemeentearchief Maastricht, Ms. 264 – not seen), a printed thesis sheet from 1738 (*Theses ex universa philosophia*, def. N.-J. Lombard, Rheims, 1738; copy at the Newberry Library, Chicago, QB42.L5 1738) and a later course of logic taught by Ignatius Nickel SJ, *Principia philosophiae sive logica*, cop. Th.-B. de Pélichy (Ghent University Library, Ms. 367).

[22] On Jesuit education in France, see the classical studies by Dainville SJ (1991) and for individual records of colleges, see Delattre, *Les établissements des jésuites en France*. For a recent global panorama, see Grendler (2018), featuring also a complete list of Jesuit schools in France. The immense literature on the *Ratio studiorum* and the birth of Jesuit philosophical education is rather useless to understand what was going on already after the 1620s in most provinces. The classical monographs on major institutions such as Clermont College in Paris or the Collège of La Flèche all contain important information on the curriculum, but most focus on the earlier decades. See de Rochemonteix (1889); Dupont-Ferrier (1921). On the pre-Enlightenment context, see Northeast (1991). A thorough

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parts: logic, ethics, metaphysics and physics[23]. Such an order departed from the classical Aristotelian-Alexandrian order, which was logic, physics, metaphysics and ethics and to which the Jesuits had long remained faithful. The presence of ethics in the philosophy course was a French peculiarity, since in many other countries, in particular in Spain and Italy, it was replaced by moral theology. The first three parts were usually finished in the first year (logic taking the biggest temporal share), while the second year was dedicated to a long physics course, which at the time integrated largely experimental physics after a general presentation of Aristotelian concepts such as matter, form, time and movement[24]. From Austin, only the first part, corresponding to logic, survives. The whole course was preceded by a long section of general prolegomena (about 100 pages long), under the title *Introductio ad philosophiam*, and this text will be the focus of the present study.

By adding such an *Introductio*, the French Jesuits, to which Austin belonged, mimicked a practice that had been developed in the secular colleges, in particular at the University of Paris, such as Harcourt, Grassins, Plessis, etc. where it was a common practice since the middle of the seventeenth century. Much has been written about the important influence of Jesuit scholasticism on general university education during the seventeenth century, but since the 1720s, at least in France, influence changed sides. The new Parisian *collège*-philosophy of the first decades of the eighteenth century became normative and influenced the way the Jesuits themselves – as well as other religious orders in France – had to present their philosophy. French Jesuit courses of the 1720–50s resemble much more those of secular Parisian professors such as Edmond Pourchot (1651–1734), Jean Du Hamel (often confused with the more

appreciation of eighteenth-century Jesuit philosophy and theology in France is still needed.

[23] We don't know how Austin precisely organized his course, since we have kept only the introduction and the first part dedicated to logic. But he indicates himself the following order in his chapter on the division of philosophy: logica, ethics, metaphysics and physics. Cf. (Austin, *PPP*, p. 101). This order had already been followed one decade earlier at the College of Rheims (1738) in the printed *Theses ex universa philosophia* defended by Lombard. On the quadripartite structure of seventeenth century French philosophy courses, see Ariew (2014, pp. 41–105).

[24] On the teaching of Physics among eighteenth-century French Jesuits, see Dainville (1991, pp. 355–91) and some good observations on the 1700 French context by Feingold (2003). For a summary very dependent upon Dainville, see Lécrivain (2016, pp. 486–505).

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famous Jean-Baptiste Du Hamel, 1624–1706), Guillaume Dagoumer (ca. 1660–1745) and Pierre Lemonnier (1676–1757)[25], than the vast *cursus philosophici* of some of the seventeenth century Jesuit heroes – such as Pedro Hurtado de Mendoza SJ (1578–1641), Francisco de Oviedo SJ (1602–51) or Rodrigo de Arriaga SJ (1592–1661), which were all often reprinted in France and widely read during earlier decades within and outside of the Society[26].

Austin's *Introductio* is organized according to three chapters addressing the nature (ch. 1, *De natura philosophiae*), the existence (ch. 2, *De existentia philosophiae*) and the division of philosophy (ch. 3, *De divisione philosophiae*), with a small appendix on the history and origins of philosophy (*De origine philosophiae*). Most of his contemporaries treated the same matter according to a typified list of questions, inherited both of the Latin medieval reception of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*[27] and of the Roman tradition of Cicero and Quintilian, two important references in the traditional education system of the early Society of Jesus and in the scholastic tradition in general. Austin, like most of his French predecessors, proves a bad Aristotelian by starting with the *quid sit* question[28]. He starts by proposing his own definition of philosophy, by making three claims:

> First thesis: philosophy, according to its name, is the love and the study of wisdom. (…). Second thesis: philosophy, according to reality, is the knowledge (*scientia*) of things that can be known by natural light. (…). Third thesis: all things that can be known by the natural light are the object of philosophy[29].

[25] Du Hamel (1678), with reprints; Pourchot (1695) with many reprints; Dagoumer (1703) a rare first edition, reprinted and largely modified in 1746; Du Hamel (1705); Lemonnier (1750), many reprints and with manuscript testimonies going back to the 1720s. On the general context of this post-Cartesian college philosophy, see Brockliss (1987), and more specifically on the role of Pourchot and others, see Brockliss (2006).On their integration of Cartesian elements, see Ariew (2014); for the 1730s, see Hanna (1988) (about Lemonnier, who taught Diderot in 1730–32 at Harcourt College).

[26] On the classical structure of scholastic courses, see Thorndike (1951); and a precious typology in Blum (1998, pp. 158–81). On the impact of these courses, see Schmutz (2020).

[27] See Aristotle, *Anal. Post*. II 1, 89b26-32.

[28] So did also J.-B. Du Hamel, G. Dagoumer and Lemonnier, for instance. J. Du Hamel and G. Buhon SJ started more classically with the *an sit* question.

[29] Austin (*PPP*, pp. 14–15): 'Praenotiones (…) Thesis prima: philosophia secundum nomen considerata [15] est amor studiorumque sapientiae. (…).

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There seems to be nothing really original about this definition, but two points are nevertheless noteworthy: first, Austin follows the medieval tradition in clearly calling philosophy a *scientia* (the Latin scholastic rendering of Aristotle's *episteme*), and thus as the highest possible type of assent, as opposed to mere opinion; second, Austin insists on the fact that philosophy is based on natural light alone. During the late seventeenth century, French academic culture had been rocked by several acts of censorship, the Faculty of Theology reminding the Arts colleges that they should not dispute objects relating to theology. By insisting on philosophy as based on natural light, Austin recalls that what discriminates objects of theology from objects of philosophy is not their intrinsic nature, but the type of habit that allows them to be known: reason (or natural light), and not faith. French Scholastics thus clearly thought that God as the supreme spiritual being and the human soul were proper objects of *philosophy*, since they were accessible to natural reason, and could therefore be studied as part of the metaphysics section of the philosophy course. Metaphysics then usually contained a general section called 'ontology' (*ontologia*), and a special section called 'pneumatology' (*pneumatologia*), dedicated to spiritual being only, which included God and the human soul[30]. We do not, unfortunately, have kept a trace of Austin's lectures on this part of philosophy, but what he says about consciousness in his prolegomena is quite consistent with the common usage of the time.

Austin reminds us of the integration of immaterial beings into the scope of philosophy in his chapter on the division of philosophy, which answers the classical *quotuplex* question. According to its objects, says Austin, philosophy is divided into one part dealing with 'immaterial objects', and another one with 'material things'[31]. Austin does not dedicate a complete chapter on the 'causes' of philosophy, but he reproduces some elements of this classical topic in his appendix on the 'origins of philosophy'. According to a very Augustinian narrative of gift and fall, God was usually seen as the

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Thesis secunda: philosophia secundum rem considerata est scientia rerum naturali lumine cognoscibilium'; (*Ibid*., p. 31): 'Thesis [tertia]: res omnes naturali lumine cognoscibiles sunt obiectum philosophiae.'

[30] See for instance the division proposed by Dagoumer (1757, p. 8): 'Metaphysica ratione sui obiecti alia est generalis, quae Ontologia dicitur; alia specialis,quae vocatur Pneumatologia'.

[31] Austin (*PPP*, p. 100) ('De divisione philosophiae'): 'Philosophia (…) dividitur in duas partes, quarum altera tractat de obiectis immaterialibus, altera de rebus materialibus'.

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first efficient cause of philosophy, since he had impressed perfect philosophical knowledge into Adam's mind[32]. But after original sin, the philosophers were needed to 'restore' or 'repair' philosophy. Austin therefore finishes his introduction with a very short history of philosophy under the title *On the Restorers of Philosophy*[33]. He mentions the six ancient philosophical sects: Thales, Pythagoras, the Academics including Plato and Socrates[34], the Epicureans, the Stoics and the Peripatetics. The medieval Peripatetics are then presented as being the three schools of the Thomists, Scotists and Nominalists. He concludes his catalogue with the Anti-Peripatetics, among which he singles out Descartes ('a man of sublime genius'[35]), Gassendi, Malebranche, and two 'famous Englishmen' Locke and Newton[36]. The only Jesuit author mentioned in his catalogue is the independently-minded Honoré Fabri SJ (1607–88), commonly ranked among the Anti-Peripatetics[37].

The most interesting and the longest part of Austin's introduction is his second chapter dedicated to the *existence* of philosophy. It answered the traditional question *an sit philosophia*, which was often treated as first by his contemporaries (in good medieval Aristotelian fashion, the *an sit* has to precede the *quid sit*)[38]. If philosophy is defined as the *scientia* of things that can be known by natural light, then such a knowledge must be *possible*. This section of the *an sit* was therefore the classical place where the early-modern French Scholastics would discuss the quality of the knowledge accessible to the human intellect: can it reach the level of absolute certitude required for *scientia*? If not, then philosophy in the strictest sense of

[32] Austin (*PPP*, p. 101): 'Contendunt vulgo philosophi Adamum habuisse philosophiam, eamque in primo creationis instanti infusam'. Cf. for instance also Du Hamel (1705, vol. I, p. 76); Pourchot (1700, p. 155): '.Deus Philosophiam perfectam infundit Adamo'; Pourchot (1695. Vol. 1, p. 30).

[33] (Austin, *PPP*, pp. 102–104) ('De philosophiae reparatoribus'). Pourchot considered the other philosophers as the 'secondary cause of philosophy'. Cf. Pourchot (1700, p. 159): 'Philosophi omnes dici possunt causa secunda Philosophiae'.

[34] Interestingly, both Plato and Socrates are considered as defendors of academic doubt: 'ambo docebant dubium de omnibus', says Austin (*PPP*, p. 103). Same in Nickel (*Principia philosophiae*, p. 111).

[35] Austin (*PPP*, p. 104): '… vir ingenio sublimi'.

[36] Austin (*PPP*, p. 104): '… celeberrimi Angli'.

[37] On Fabri as a renovator of scholasticism, see Boehm (1965, pp. 305–60); Roux (2005).

[38] See for instance Du Hamel (1705, vol. I, pp. 1–2).

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the word is not possible. If yes, then one must refute those who argue that the human mind must doubt about everything or settle with probability. John Austin's presentation offers an interesting discussion of the Cartesian hyperbolic doubt at the light of traditional scholastic conceptions of degrees of certitude. As we shall see, this will lead him not so much to refute Descartes – as might be expected – but to integrate Cartesian insights into the classical scholastic framework.

4. Austin's Post-Cartesian Foundationalism

In most traditional Scholastic circles of the second part of the seventeenth century, Descartes's philosophy was perceived as a form of radical scepticism because of the argument of the hyperbolic doubt in the first *Meditation*[39]. This certainly stands in stark contrast with our common perception of Descartes today, where we tend to see him rather as a foundationalist or as a 'Conqueror of Scepticism', as Richard Popkin had labelled him in his seminal book on early-modern scepticism[40]. The argument that we must doubt of everything was also at the heart of two of the last condemnations of Cartesian doctrines: first, the royal anti-Cartesian formulary directed to the University of Paris (1691), prohibiting professors from teaching that one must 'doubt everything before being certain of any knowledge'[41]; and second the Jesuit condemnation of Cartesian propositions under General Michelangelo Tamburini (1706), of which the first one argues that 'the human mind can and must doubt

[39] On the first scholastic reactions to Descartes' hyperbolic doubt, see Ariew (1999, pp. 188–205), revised in Ariew (2011, pp. 295–329); Ariew, in Feingold (2003, pp. 157–94). For the reception on Cartesian philosophy among French Jesuits, see also the seminal work, Sortais (1929).

[40] See Popkin (2003, p. 143).

[41] Among the 1691 Formulaire, see the following propositions, as translated by Ariew (2014, p. 204): '1. One must rid oneself of all kinds of prejudices and doubt everything before being certain of any knowledge. 2. One must doubt whether there is a God until one has a clear and distinct knowledge of it. 3. We do not know whether God did not create us such that we are always deceived in the very things that appear the clearest'. See also Schmaltz (2017, pp. 51–52) for the full text and context. On the history of Cartesian censorship, see Ariew (1994); Ariew (1999, pp. 155–71); Schmaltz (2002, part III; 2004); Roux (2019).

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everything except that it thinks and consequently that it exists'[42]. If we look closely at these two condemnations, the Jesuit version seems to be more restrictive than the Parisian formulation: whereas the Parisian Formulaire speaks of *universal* doubt before certitude, the Jesuit condemnation speaks of universal doubt *with one exception*, namely that we think and exist. This means that from the Jesuit perspective, even a position that excludes one's own thought and existence from universal doubt is not acceptable. If our own existence and thought were the only certain objects of natural knowledge, then we would need a divine guarantee or supernatural knowledge for all other objects. The Jesuits saw the absolute certitude of the *cogito* as collapsing into fideism, invalidating thereby all our natural knowledge coming from the senses or from human testimonies[43]. This is clearly the picture John Austin must have had of Descartes: he is not concerned with portraying him as an absolute sceptic, but rather as an 'epistemic idealist'[44] who gives a too strong criterion for knowledge, so strong that it eventually discredits the task of philosophy.

Austin proceeds in two steps. First, to ascertain the possibility of philosophy, he argues that if philosophy is a *scientia*, and since *scientia* entails, in good Aristotelian fashion, truth and certitude, then we must admit that at least some form of certitude is required in order to practice philosophy. Austin argues that at least two things can be considered as absolutely certain:

> There must exist some infallibly true knowledge (*existit aliqua cognitio infallibiliter vera*). Proof: a judgment in which nobody can be fooled (*falli*) is an infallibly true; and there exists some

[42] On the elaboration of the list of propositions, see Dainville (1991, p. 372). The text of the censored propositions is easily accessible in Rochemonteix (1889, vol 4, pp. 89–90) with a translation by Ariew (1995, p. 224): '1. The human mind can and must doubt everything except that it thinks and consequently that it exists. 2. Of the remainder, one can have certain and reasoned knowledge only after having known clearly and distinctly that God exists, that he is supremely good, infallible, and incapable of inducing our minds into error. 3. Before having knowledge of the existence of God, each person could and should always remain in doubt about whether the nature with which one has been created is not such that it is mistaken about the judgments that appear most certain and evident to it.'

[43] This is the sense of the fifth proposition in the Jesuit list: '5. Beyond divine faith, no one can be certain that bodies exist – not even one's own body'.

[44] I take this expression from Pasnau (2017, p. 22 in particular).

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> judgment in the natural order in which nobody can be fooled. There are two such judgments: first, *I think*; second, *Nothingness has no properties*. In those two judgments nobody can be fooled[45].

The first example of certitude given by Austin is the Cartesian *ego cogito*. The second is an example that has been regularly used since the seventeenth century, *nihili nulla est proprietas* ('nothingness has no properties'): this means that there cannot be thought – a property – without a thinker, or a mode without a substance, and thus a property without some existence that sustains it[46]. During Austin's time, both axioms were clearly identified as properly Cartesian, even if most Scholastics were aware of patristic and medieval forerunners, especially for the certitude of internal acts. The explicit juxtaposition of both axioms had also been a commonplace, especially since Malebranche, whose works enjoyed an even wider readership in scholastic circles than Descartes':

> Nothingness has no properties. I think. Therefore I am. But what am I, I who think, at the time when I think? Am I a body, a mind, a human being? As yet I know nothing of all this. I know only that, at the time I think, I am something that thinks (Malebranche, 1997, p. 6)[47].

[45] Austin (*PPP*, p. 36): 'Thesis: existit aliqua cognitio infallibiliter vera. Probatur: iudicium in quo nullatenus falli possimus est cognitio infallibiliter vera, atqui existit iudicium aliquod naturalis ordinis in quo nullatenus falli possumus. Sint ista duo iudicia, primum ego cogito; alterum nihili nulla est proprietas, atque in his duobus iudiciis nullatenus falli possumus'. A decade later in Rheims, Ignatius Nickel SJ discusses similar questions not in the introduction (which he skips), but within the chapter on method, the fourth operation of logic. See Nickel SJ, *Principia philosophiae sive logica*, 111 sq. ('Utrum detur aliqua cognitio certa?').

[46] See Descartes (1985, p. 196): '… we should notice something very well known by the natural light: nothingness possesses no attributes or qualities (*nihili nullas esse affectiones sive qualitates*), there is necessarily some thing or substance to be found (*necessario inveniri*) for them to belong to'. For Descartes' use of this axiom, see Gouher (1962, ch. 10).

[47] For the French text, see *Entretiens sur la métaphysique*, in *Œuvres*, vol. 12, p. 32: 'Le néant n'a point de propriétés. Je pense, donc je suis. Mais qui suis-je, moi qui pense, dans le temps que je pense? Suis-je un corps, un esprit, un homme? Je ne sais encore rien de tout cela. Je sais seulement que, dans le temps que je pense, je suis quelque chose qui pense'. For a commentary, see Alquié (1974, p. 64).

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Austin does not mention neither Descartes nor Malebranche by name, but we clearly have here an interesting testimony of the evolution of philosophical references within eighteenth century Jesuit scholasticism. It is striking that Austin does not here use the classical first principle the scholastics had always opposed to the *cogito*, namely the Aristotelian Principle of Non-Contradiction. According to one of its formulations, it uses the language of properties: 'It is impossible for the same thing to belong and not to belong at the same time to the same thing and in the same respect' (Aristotle, *Met*. IV 3, 1005b19-20). The medieval Aristotelian commentators have extracted this principle from its initial semantical context ('if you say A, you cannot mean –A') in order to make it the first and firmest principle of metaphysics: since a substance cannot, for instance, have two contradictory properties at the same time. During the entire seventeenth century, scholastic readers of Descartes had systematically opposed this objective Principle of Non-Contradiction to the subjective *cogito*[48]. To give an Irish Jesuit example, one may recall the testimony of Richard Arsdekin SJ (1620–93), professor in the Flemish-Belgian Province at the colleges of Louvain and Antwerp, who compiled a list of all the classical philosophical axioms taken for certain in his *Tractatus de idea scientifica*, which is a useful summary of seventeenth century scholastic epistemology. Among them, he recalls of course the Aristotelian Principle of Non-Contradiction, and the classical earlier Jesuit Renaissance commentators on it, of which he singles out Pedro da Fonseca SJ (1528–99), and adds: 'this is most evident for everybody, except Descartes (*quod cuivis evidentissimum est, praeter Cartesium*)' (Arsdekin SJ, 1687, p. 270)[49]. Austin belongs thus clearly to a different generation: he is not concerned with portraying Descartes as a sceptic negating Aristotelian principles. On the contrary, Austin clearly seems to *endorse* Cartesian and post-Cartesian principles as sources of infallible knowledge.

[48] For a first presentation of this debate, see Schmutz (2007b).

[49] For a classical Jesuit discussion of the Principle of Non-Contradiction as first principle of certitude, see for instance Suárez SJ (1597, pp. 81–4). For another pre-Cartesian Jesuit example, see Marcellius SJ (1635, p. 22): '*Quodlibet est vel non est*. Est hoc primum principium affirmativum absolutum de esse rei, quo significatur naturalis et necessaria immediatio contradictorie oppositorum; talis nempe, ut impossibile sit, inter illa cadere aliquod medium.' The Spanish Jesuit de Ulloa SJ (1748, p. 13), also attacks Descartes as a negator of the first principle, quoting Arsdekin.

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In a second step of his discussion on the existence of philosophy, however, Austin formulates his own criticism of Cartesian method: if only such very abstract primary principles as those mentioned above could yield certitude, then the scope of philosophy as natural knowledge would be very limited. It is therefore necessary to investigate further what the conditions of certitude are, and Austin does so in a section entitled *De regulis veritatis,* 'on the rules of truth'. This Patristic expression had been revived by Descartes himself in the *Meditations*[50], in order to qualify his assumption that 'everything which I clearly and distinctly perceive is true'[51]. Austin's key argument is that the absolute or infallible type of certitude produced by the above-mentioned two axioms is the only possible type of certitude. Corporeal and social knowledge can also yield forms of natural certitude: they might be weaker than infallible certitude, but they can still be considered as certitude. This entails that we might well have *degrees* of certitude, rather than one absolute *a priori* certitude on one side and mere opinion or conjecture for the rest. Austin uses here a classical Scholastic distinction between three types of certitude:

> There are three types of certitude (*certitudo*)[52]: metaphysical, physical and moral. Metaphysical certitude is about what cannot be falsified in any possible way (*quod non potest subesse falsum*), not even by God. Physical certitude is about what cannot be rendered false, with the exception of God's [intervention]. Moral certitude is about what in the absolute could be rendered false, but that would only be the case if all honest men became liars[53].

[50] See Descartes (*Meditationes*, V, AT VIII, p. 70, 26) transl. John Cottingham, in: *Philosophical Writings*, vol. 2, 48: 'I was ignorant of this rule for establishing the truth'. The discussion of metaphysical principles under the title of *regula veritatis* quickly became common among Parisian post-Cartesian scholastics, such as in Besoigne (1714, f. 17v ff., in particular f. 21v): 'Evidentia prima est veritatis regula'.

[51] Descartes (*Meditationes*, III, AT VII, 35, 14–15, p. 23): 'So I now seem to be able to lay it down as a general rule (*pro regula generali*) that whatever I perceive clearly and distinctly is true (*illud omne esse verum, quod valde clare et distincte percipio*)'.

[52] I have consistently used the antiquated term of 'certitude', rather than 'certainty' with all its Wittgensteinian connotations, to render the Latin *certitudo*. For an excellent lexicographical synthesis of the emergence of the Latin scholastic meaning of *certitudo*, see Biard (2011).

[53] Austin (*PPP*, p. 57): 'Certitudo triplex, metaphysica, physica et moralis. Certitudo metaphysica ea est cui ne divinitus quidem falsum

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This tripartition is a late-medieval heritage: similar divisions could already be found in authors fourteenth- and fifteenth-century authors such as John Buridan, Peter of Ailly, Jean Gerson or John Mair, and it was a common staple of seventeenth century Jesuit philosophy courses[54]. The expression *quod subesse potest falsum* was common in medieval epistemology: the highest level of certitude, metaphysical certitude, cannot be about something false. Metaphysically certain propositions cannot be falsified by anybody, not even by God. This was the degree of certitude granted since the fourteenth century to the classical axioms of metaphysics, such as the Aristotelian Principle of Non-Contradiction[55]. Austin chooses to illustrate this level of absolute certitude by means of the Cartesian *cogito*. But this absolute type of certitude does not entail that all other forms of epistemic attitudes would simply be considered uncertain, and of no value for philosophy: Austin admits also the existence of 'physical certitude', which corresponds to the normal course of natural events, perceivable by our senses[56], and which only divine intervention could falsify[57]. The same reasoning applies for the third type of certitude, *moral certitude*, which

subesse potest; physica est ea cui falsum subesse non potest nisi ab ipso Deo; moralis est ea cui absolute falsum subesse potest, tamen subesse potest supponi nisi (…) omnes probi in mendacium conspirent».

[54] On the medieval distinction between different types of *certitudo*, see Zupko (2001); Biard (2012); Grellard (2015); Pasnau (2017, in particular the notes p. 174 ff). For a presentation of seventeenth century discussion of certitude, see numerous occurrences listed in Knebel (2000) *ad indicem*.

[55] The most radical case being Nicholas of Autrecourt, who considered the absolute condition of *non subesse falsum* as the only condition for science – thereby rejecting all other forms of knowledge into scepticism. See Autrecourt (1994, letter 2 p. 62): 'Excepta certitudine fidei, nulla est alia certitudo primi principii, vel que in primum principium potest resolve. Nam nulla est certitudo nisi illa cui non subest falsum…' On this theory, see Grellard (2005); Denery (2005, pp. 148–49). Reactions to Nicholas' position provoked a vivid debate about *degrees* of certitude.

[56] Cf. Austin (*PPP*, p. 76): 'Sensuum testimonium parit certitudinem physica circa existentiam corporum in particulari.'; Nickel SJ (*Principia philosophiae sive logica*, p. 132): 'Legitimum sensuum testimonium parit certitudinem physicam'.

[57] His definition here is very much in line with fourteenth-century definitions of *certitudo naturalis*. See for instance Buridan (2001), quoted by Zupko (2001, p. 175): '… another sort of human certainty (*certitudo humana*) on the part of the proposition is that of a true proposition which cannot be falsified by any natural power and by any manner of natural

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corresponds to our everyday beliefs: the classical example was the love of mothers for their children – they 'almost' all do love their children. The origin of this type of certitude is human authority or more generally testimonial knowledge. Austin says it can be produced by the testimony (*testimonium*) of a small number of wise men, or of a great number of 'prudent and honest men'[58]. Such knowledge is certain, and could only be rendered false in the very unlikely hypothesis that all honest men become liars[59].

The distinction between these three types of certitude was a very common philosophical theme in seventeenth century Jesuit textbooks[60], as well as in French secular college philosophy. It was also rapidly imported into post-scholastic English-language philosophy during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, both among Protestant and Catholic authors[61]. Diderot, a former student of Pierre Lemonnier in the 1730s[62], reproduces them in the

operation, although it can be falsified by a supernatural power and in a miraculous way. And such certainty suffices for the natural sciences.'

[58] Austin (*PPP*, p. 89); Nickel SJ (*Principia philosophiae sive logica*, p. 139): 'Hominum testimonium parit certitudinem moralem'.

[59] On the emergence of the concept of *certitudo moralis* between Jean Gerson and early-modern scholasticism, see Schüssler (2019, pp. 49–50), with further references; on uses in seventeenth century moral theology, see also Knebel (2000, *ad indicem*).

[60] See for instance de Arriaga SJ (1639, p. 200); de Peñafiel SJ (1673, 55b); Mayr SJ (1745, vol. 1, p. 506). After Austin in Rheims, it is also used by Nickel SJ (*Principia philosophiae sive logica*, p. 120).

[61] See for instance the commonly accepted definitions in Chambers (1751, vol. I, s.v.): 'Further, the schools distinguish three other kinds of *certitude*, with regard to the three different kinds of evidence whence they arise. *Metaphysical* certitude, is that arising from a metaphysical evidence: such is that a geometrician has of the truth of this proposition, 'that three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones'. *Physical* certitude, is that arising from physical evidence: such is that a man has that there is fire on his hand, when he sees it blaze, and feels it burn. *Moral* certitude, is that founded on moral evidence: such is that a person has, that he has got, or lost a cause, when his attorney and friends, send him express notice of it, or a copy of the judgment, etc.' See for instance the use of the same concept by Toland (1696, p. 17): 'humane authority, is call'd also moral certitude'.

[62] Cf. Lemonnier (1750, vol. I, p. 259): 'Certitudo (…) subdistribuitur in Metaphysicam, Physicam & Moralem. Metaphysica vocatur, quando motivum essentialem habet connexionem cum objecto cognito. Physica dicitur, quando, juxta leges ordinarias, infallibilem habet connexionem cum objecto cognito. Denique vocatur Moralis, quando connexionem

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Encyclopédie, and Austin's 1746 lectures were thus perfectly in the spirit of the time. But what remains relatively original is the way he understands the *motive* of metaphysical certitude. Austin identifies two distinct sources or motives capable of yielding metaphysical certitude. The first is evidence (*evidentia*), the second is 'consciousness' (*conscientia*), two sources that were again not commonly used in this context among earlier seventeenth century Scholastics, even within the Society.

Evidence, as the first source of metaphysical certitude, is defined by Austin as the natural 'relationship' certain ideas have with each other, and of which we have a *clear and distinct* perception[63]. Whereas medieval uses of the *certitudo* were both subjective and objective (one could speak of the *certitudo* of a thing)[64], early-modern Scholastics have tended to restrict *certitudo* to the subjective attitude of the mind which firmly adheres to a proposition without any possibility of doubt[65], as opposed to the objective 'motives' that yield this attitude. The property of a proposition provoking a certain 'clear and distinct' judgment was then called 'evidence' (*evidentia*), instead of certitude (Descartes' *regula veritatis*), and Austin says that such a clear and distinct perception 'forces the assent in an invincible way' (*invincibiliter rapiat assensum*)[66]. This distinction between objective

habet, ita probabilem, ut vir prudens ex illo motivo judicare possit.' See also Pourchot (1695, vol. 1, p. 25).

[63] Austin (*PPP*, p. 59): 'Thesis secunda: evidentia parit certitudinem metaphysicam'.

[64] A duality still present among many early-modern authors – Lemonnier for instance distinguished between the *certitudo ratione subjecti*, defined as the *imperturbabilitas* of the knowing subject, and the *certitudo ratione objecti*, which is the immutability of the object itself. A third type is the *certitudo motivi*, defined as the connexion between both. See Lemonnier (1750, vol. I, p. 259).

[65] See for instance Hurtado de Mendoza (1619, p. 200): 'Evidentia est claritas sive perspicuitas qua intellectus quasi videt obiecta, certitudo est firma determinatio adhaesioque intellectus ad verum ut verum est.'; Arriaga SJ (1639, p. 200): 'Adverto, certitudinem esse adhaesionem intellectus alicui veritati, sine formidine aut dubitatione an aliter se res habeat quam ab ipso cognoscitur.'

[66] Austin (*PPP*, p. 58): 'Thesis prima: datur evidentia. Explicatur: dari evidentiam nihil aliud est, quam dari claram et distinctam perceptionem habitudinis inter terminos'; (*Ibid*., p. 59):'Invincibiliter rapiat assensum. Ergo datur clara et distincta etc.' For a later discussion of this expression, see Gigot (1777, vol. 1, p. 183): 'Veteres definiebant evidentiam quemdam fulgorem qui mentem rapiebat: haec autem est vaga oratoris notio, non viri

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evidence and subjective certitude was a typical Jesuit doctrine: and Austin is here clearly in line with the Scholastic tradition of the Society which defined evidence as certitude *plus* clarity and distinction stemming from its object. This leads Austin to distinguish further between objective and formal evidence, using a propositional language: the realm of evidence is constituted by sets of 'evident' propositions, where objective evidence will express the necessary relationship between the terms of the proposition, and formal evidence the act of judgment which is necessitated by this relationship:

> Evidence is either objective or formal. Objective evidence is the relationship (*habitudo*) of one term with the other; formal evidence is the clear and distinct perception of this relationship. Formal evidence comes either from a true or direct judgment, either from a rational or reflexive judgment. The first corresponds to the immediate perception of the relationship (*habitudo*) between two terms, for instance when I say 'human being is rational'; the second is the immediate perception of the relationship between two or more judgments, as for instance when I say 'I think therefore I am'[67]

Medieval Scholastic authors often referred to these 'evident' propositions as *per se nota*, 'known by themselves', i.e. propositions of which the knowledge of the definition of the term would immediately entail a true assent to the proposition itself – and the medieval example of an analytic proposition such as *homo est animal rationale* is still used by Austin to illustrate a 'true and direct judgment'. In a later paragraph, he also gives geometrical and mathematical axioms:

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philosophantis. Evidentia, est perceptio convenientiae vel disconvenientiae idearum inter se'.

[67] Austin (*PPP*, pp. 57–58): 'Praenotiones. Prima: evidentia alia obiectiva alia formalis. Obiectiva est habitudo unius termini ad alterum, formalis est clara et distincta perceptio illius habitudinis. Secunda: evidentia formalis alia verii iudicii sive iudicii directi, alia iudicii ratiocinativi, sive iudicii reflexi. Prima est immediata perceptio habitudinis inter duo extrema ut cum dicitur homo est rationalis; secunda est immediata perceptio habitudinis inter duo aut plura iudicia ut cum dicitur ego cogito ergo existo.' The distinction between 'direct' and 'reflexive' evidence was already common in Parisian secular scholasticism around 1700–1710: see for instance Besoigne (1713, 19v): 'In evidentia potest distingui duplex sensus, sensus directus et sensus reflexus'; for a later testimony, see Gigot (1777, p. 51). The same applies for the distinction between objective and subjective evidence: see for instance Besoigne (1714, f. 21v).

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totum est maius sua parte, *bis duo dant quatuor* (Austin, *PPP*, p. 58), classical Scholastic examples of 'evident' propositions provoking metaphysical certitude, still used by many influential Jesuit logic courses of the previous century[68]. What is striking and somewhat original in Austin's presentation, is the unproblematic use he makes of a classical Cartesian proposition, or more exactly of a Cartesian inference (*cogito ergo sum*) in order to illustrate the formal evidence of a reflexive judgment. Obviously, he was certainly not the first to do so: secular college professors in Paris had already associated Aristotelian and Cartesian axioms in their definition of certitude since the 1670s[69], but it took time to be fully accepted by Jesuit authors to make the same use, and it does not appear in any of the classical printed courses that were used in France, only in manuscript notes.

Austin's post-Aristotelian endeavour is even more clearly illustrated in his presentation of the second source of metaphysical certitude, namely *conscientia*. Certitude is here not produced by a judgment of evident propositions, but by an 'interior sentiment (*sensus interior*) which testifies what happens within our soul and thereby signifies the existence of modifications of the soul.'[70] This definition of *conscientia* corresponds to what is rendered in English as 'consciousness', rather than 'conscience'. The complex process which led to use a term initially dedicated to speak of the practical

[68] See for instance Arriaga SJ (1639, p. 200): 'Denique certitudo *Metaphysica* est, qua ita proponitur obiectum, ut in ordine ad omnem potentiam non possit aliter esse, ut quam ego habeo de existentia Dei de illis principiis, *Quodlibet est vel non est, Quae sunt eadem uni tertio, sunt idem inter se*, & alii similibus, & de omnibus mysteriis revelatis a Deo, quae non possunt esse falsa etiam in ordine ad potentiam Dei absolutam.' Even the very pro-Cartesian Pourchot stitches to classical scholastic examples form metaphysical certitude, such as *totum est maius sua parte*. Cf. Pourchot (1695, vol. 1, p. 25).

[69] See for instance Besoigne (1714, f. 25r-25v) for a thorough discussion.

[70] Austin (*PPP*, p. 68): 'Conscientia est sensus interior qui nobis attestatur id quod intra animam nostram geritur et ita significat existentiam modificationum animae'. Compare with the definition in Pourchot (1695, vol. 1, p. 47): '… eam perceptionem, qua seipsam suaque cogitationes mens cognoscit, *conscientiam* appellari, quia suarum cogitationum, aut affectionum sibi conscia est, secumque quodammodo scit se cogitare, sive, se cogitantem intimo sensu aut sensione percipit.'; Gigot (1777, vol. 1, p. 176): 'Sensus intimus est illa affectio animae, quae anima intime sibi conscia est de praesenti suo statu. Dicitur etiam *Conscientia*'.

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intuition of right and wrong (the Patristic *synderesis*) to label the internal acts of the mind has been well documented[71]. Austin's Latin is here clearly in line with this new understanding of *conscientia* as self-awareness, and its remote source is once more the Malebranchian definition of conscience, which had been a common staple of Jesuit learning since its integration into the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* in 1704[72]. It is interesting to see Austin clearly differentiate consciousness from evidence as two *different* sources of metaphysical certitude, whereas earlier Scholastic secular authors simply associated them under the name evidence[73]. Within the Society of Jesus, enshrining the *sensus intimus* or *interior* as a source of metaphysical certitude had already a long history, even anterior to its popularization in the vernacular *Traité des premières vérités* (1724) by the Parisian Jesuit Claude Buffier SJ (1661–1737)[74] – who is not mentioned by Austin.

[71] A distinction of meanings recalled by another Jesuit perhaps linked to Austin, who taught at the College of Poitiers in 1744: de Laquilhe SJ (f. 11r-v): 'Conscientia seu sensus intimus est animae perceptio qua anima cognoscit se ipsam, facultates, affectiones, propensiones, etc. ubi nota quod multum differat sensus intimus a conscientia de qua in morali, per quam anima sibi conscia est et iudicat quid rectum fit et honestum, quid malum et illicitum.' On the duality between, conscience and consciousness, see the still precious historical development that can be found in Hamilton (1846, vol. 2, pp. 940–45). Among more recent studies, see Glyn Davies (1990); Balibar (1998), for the English-French vocabulary of consciousness; Knebel (2014, pp. 348–54).

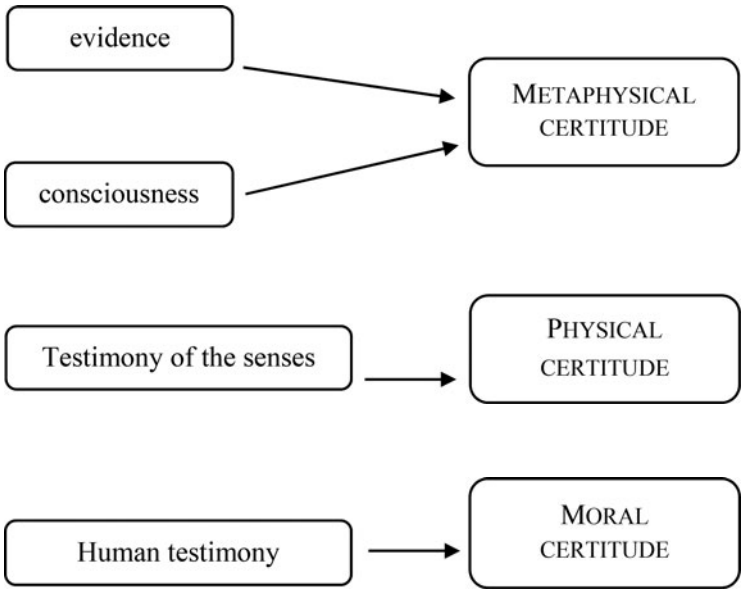
[72] Cf. *Dictionnaire universel françois et latin, vulgairement appelé Dictionnaire de Trévoux* (Paris, 1721), vol. 2, 820: 'En métaphysique, on entend par la *conscience* ce que d'autres appellent *sens intime*, c'est-à-dire le sentiment intérieur qu'on a d'une chose dont on ne peut former d'idée claire & distincte. Dans ce sens, on dit que nous ne connoissons notre ame, & que nous ne sommes assurés de l'existence de nos pensées, que par la *conscience*; c'est-à-dire par le sentiment intérieur que nous en avons, & par ce que nous sentons ce qui se passe en nous-mêmes'. On the influence of this definition, initially formulated in the earlier dictionary by Furetière (1701), see the seminal work by Rodis-Lewis (1950, p. 112 ff), and Ferraro (2019, pp. 92–3).

[73] See for instance the influential Parisian teacher Besoigne (1713, f. 17v-18r): 'Evidentia in nobis est sensus intimus quo nobis conscii sumus rem ita se habere quomodo a nobis percipitur. Atqui sensus ille intimus est per se notus, quemadmodum sensus doloris, voluptatis, etc., non potest non esse cuilibet manifestus.'

[74] The role of Buffier had been underlined by Spink (1978, p. 275). For other testimonies on the *sensus intimus* as source of metaphysical certainty, see Schmutz (2007); after Austin, see for instance Gigot (1777, vol. 1,

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Unlike Buffier, Austin does not restrict the object of this intimate sentiment or feeling to the awareness of one's existence, but opts for a more reflexive approach: we do not primarily perceive our existence, but the 'modifications of our soul', such as thought (*cogitatio*), pain (*dolor*) and joy (*laetitia*) (Austin, *PPP*, p. 68). These modifications resist divine intervention, they are 'mine' in such a certain way that they can produce absolute certitude.



The double criterion of evidence and consciousness, as sources of metaphysical certitude, can be found in several other later courses, both within and outside the Jesuit tradition[75]. The result of Austin's discussion of degrees of certitude – summarized in the above graph – is a peculiar blend of late medieval vocabulary with early-modern Cartesian and Malebranchian insights. From the late

p. 182): 'Hoc effatum, *Quidquid intime sentitur, hoc est verum*, est primum certitudinis principium, in his quae pertinent ad praesentem statum animae nostrae'; Caron (1760, p. 79), also identifies consciousness and evidence as the sources of metaphysical certitude.

[75] One decade after Austin in Rheims, Ignatius Nickel SJ also discusses (in the reversed order) consciousness and evidence as sources of metaphysical certitude: Nickel SJ (*Principia philosophiae sive logica*, p. 120): 'Testimonium conscientiae parit certitudinem metaphysicam'; (*Ibid*., p. 126): 'Evidentia immediata parit certitudinem metaphysicam'.

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medieval Scholastic tradition, he takes seriously the idea that certitude does not need to be absolute, but admits degrees; from the early-modern philosophical tradition, he looks at certitude from the point of view of the mental acts of the thinking and feeling mind. By putting these *Regulae veritatis* at the core of his general introduction to philosophy, one can also understand how his entire logic course is organized, and how it departs from the late medieval tradition. The proper object of early-modern Scholastic logic are not terms and inferences, as in late medieval terminist logic, but mental concepts, called *perceptions* or *ideas*, mental judgments about them (*iudicia*), and finally reasonings associating judgments (*discursus* and *methodus*)[76]. Ideas (or 'perceptions') can be clear and distinct, or obscure and confused; judgments can be metaphysically, physically or just morally certain. No trace of Austin's metaphysics course survives, but we can be pretty sure that its object and method can be deduced from what he says in the introduction about evidence and consciousness. Since the 1730s, the object of French Jesuit metaphysics courses was not the common being (*ens commune*) of the classical Suarezian tradition (existence and essence, possibility and actuality), but exclusively 'spiritual' or 'immaterial' being, including God, the angels, and the human mind (*mens*). The discussion of metaphysical certitude was therefore essential to provide solid proofs for the existence of the human mind, as separate from the sensory experience[77]. Austin's course stands clearly in the tradition which 'psychologized' both logic and metaphysics within the Scholastic tradition, in a way largely compatible with Port-Royal or the Lockean tradition.

5. Conclusion

Does all this make Austin the 'first Irish Catholic Cartesian', as suggested in the title of this study? John Austin was certainly not the

[76] *Theses ex universa philosophia*, def. Lombard, § 1: 'Logica mentis operationes spectat. Praecipuae sunt perceptio, judicium & discursus.'; Austin (*PPP*, p. 119): 'Operationes mentis sunt obiectum materiale logicae'; Nickel SJ (*Principia philosophiae sive logica*, p.c4), also lists the four operations of *perceptio*, *judicium*, *discursus* and *methodus*. On this general evolution, see Ariew (2014, pp. 43–57).

[77] For a point of comparison, see *Theses ex universa philosophia*, def. Lombard, § 3: 'Metaphysica praecipuè Spiritum contemplatur. (…) Spiritus creatus duplex: Angelus et mens humana: non nisi possibilitatem Angeli nos docet ratio, mentis vero humanae realiter existentis & spiritualitatem & immortalitatem demonstrat'.

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first Irish Catholic exiled professor to have embraced various elements of Cartesian and post-Cartesian epistemology. As we have seen, Cartesian and Malebranchian insights had penetrated almost all schools of traditional Scholastic philosophy during the first decades of the eighteenth century. In 1732, another Irish exiled scholar from Prague, the Franciscan Peter Arcedeckne (†1738), claimed that in 'France and Belgium', philosophy had become Cartesian, whereas in the rest of Europe, it remained 'Aristotelian' (Arcedeckne OFM. 1732, p. 49).[78] In spite of being schooled in Scotism, Arcedeckne was himself also strongly influenced by French college philosophy, in particular by Dagoumer and Pourchot, and could thus also compete for the title of 'First Irish Catholic Cartesian'. This shows that we should always be very careful when appreciating Scholastic temporalities: during the 'Golden Age of Anglo-Irish Philosophy', even Catholic courses of philosophy did not correspond to the received image of 'Aristotelian', 'Thomistic' or 'Scotistic' textbooks of earlier decades. They all integrated to a various extent innovations that had been developed by non-Scholastic thinkers such as Descartes, Malebranche and Locke. This integration of early-modern philosophy into the textbooks was facilitated by the fact that the classically trained Scholastics such as Austin could recognize, within the philosophy of the 'Anti-Peripatetics', a great number of elements that were compatible with the late-medieval tradition. Their discussion of the degrees of certitude perfectly illustrates this possibility, by relating the *cogito* or the *sensus intimus* with the traditional Scholastic discussion on the grades of certitude and the knowledge of our interior acts, which goes back to late-medieval Augustinianism.

One may finally argue that there is nothing really 'Irish' about Austin's philosophy, and that he is just a typical example of French post-Aristotelian scholasticism. Unlike the Franciscans, who kept a proper Irish Province and greatly contributed to the preservation of the Irish language and the study of its pre-reformation history, the Irish Jesuits were all part of foreign provinces and hierarchies.

[78] Arcedeckne's biography remains obscure, as underlined by Derr (2013, vol. 2, p. 2, under 'Archdekin'). He obviously taught at the College of the Immaculate Conception in Prague, and quotes typical Central European references, but his outstanding knowledge of Parisian scholasticism might suggest that he acquired some training there, or perhaps in Louvain. He finished his career as bishop of Killala in Connacht (1736–38). His philosophical relevance has been brought to my attention by a footnote from Knebel (2014, p. 372, note 119), who describes him as a 'well-informed (…) Irish Cartesian'.

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Once back in Dublin, Austin was not even able to teach Scholastic philosophy, but divided his intellectual activity between lower education and religious preaching. But as a typical representative of the Irish diasporic scholasticism in France – which attracted about three quarters of Irish exiled clerics during the eighteenth century – (Whelan, 2009, p. 310), Austin's integration of modern philosophy and traditional scholasticism has nevertheless contributed to shaping the intellectual identity of Irish Catholic culture. One of Austin's most prominent students in Dublin was the young Patrick John Plunkett (1738–1828), who would follow his master's footsteps and acquire further philosophical and theological education in Paris, before being consecrated bishop of Meath (1779). This strong French predicament explains why so many themes typical of the French brand of the Catholic Enlightenment could later be found back in Dublin as well as in the curriculum of Saint Patrick's College in Maynooth – almost exclusively staffed by Irish returnees from France and exiled French clergymen fleeing the Revolution[79]. The scholastic language of 'rules of truth', of degrees of certitude, of 'objective and formal' evidence, etc. became a hallmark of the very rationalistic philosophical education that would survive well into the nineteenth century and even beyond in the tradition of Catholic seminaries[80].

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[79] On this tradition, emphasizing the role of French returnees, see O'Connor (1981); Corish (1995, pp. 1–25).

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