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## 17th Century Mechanistic Attitudes and Speculations on the Magic of Optical Experiments

### *Summary*

The article deals with the 17th century experiments in optical machinery and their relation to the magical worldview and the mechanistic conception of the world. The period chosen for the study is the lifetime of René Descartes and his contemporary Marin Mersenne (1596–1650 to 1588–1648), i.e. the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, with a focus on the 17th century. The works of these figures articulate the most important strands of scientific thought in the 17th century: physics and metaphysics, rationalism and irrationalism, mechanism and naturalism.

**Key words:** mechanistic worldview, machine, automaton, magic, Descartes, Mersenne, Minimes, Jesuit theatre, optical experiments.